

EDITORIAL

Back to Basics – Sharing the Gospel with Muslims

In your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. 1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)

A recent conversation that I had with *Steve ties the well-known verse above with the theme of this Seedbed—sharing the gospel with Muslims. He had recently resumed his commitment to spending time in the Word and in prayer daily. He excitedly shared with me that since resuming his daily disciplines a few weeks prior, he had discovered a renewed passion to share Jesus with whomever he met. He then told of three opportunities he had just had to share Christ. Steve experienced at least part of what Peter is talking about above—when we consecrate Christ as Lord and keep him central in our hearts and minds, we are far more eager to explain him to others when opportunity arises.

When was the last time you took the opportunity to share the reason for your hope with a Muslim? One of the very simple yet profound realities about church planting is that it normally *begins with evangelism*. Until we have someone interested in the gospel, someone who wants to learn more about Christ—about the truth about God as it is revealed to us in the Scriptures, we cannot plant any churches! For reasons that are sometimes difficult to comprehend, it has often been the case in our ministry teams that we have plenty of servants, and would-be teachers and disciplers, but very few gifted and eager evangelists.

This issue of Seedbed is focused on evangelism. Joy takes us on the journey from initial contact with Muslims into profound spiritual conversations that can lead to their salvation. L.D. Waterman describes the various ways of making contact and starting conversations about the gospel that are such an exciting part of the Watson approach to CPM. Many who have gone through the CPM training testify that it has given them a renewed eagerness and capacity in evangelism. In Gail's write-up of a conversation I recently had with some gifted Arabic-speaking evangelists, we learn from colleagues who are gifted in and very excited about sharing their faith. In Kronk's assessment of the impact of dreams and visions, we are reminded that Christ himself has often already revealed himself to the Muslims we may meet and often our task is to help them along with the next steps in *their journey to faith*.

Our hope is that this issue (including four reviews of books on witnessing) will both inform you and inspire you to continue looking for every opportunity to share the reason for your hope—the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

May we all know the joy of having a heart to share Christ, and the ability to do so with ever increasing anointing and grace.

— Don Little, Editor (seedbed.editor@sent.com)

Letter to the Editor with Response by L.D. Waterman

Dear Don,

Thank you for the recent issue of Seedbed (Dec 2011, Volume XXV (2) on CPMs), which I have quickly devoured from beginning to end. I especially liked the way you structured it as a dialogue – an article pro-CPM, with two questioning and a response, then the reverse, then a great article by a North African describing his ministry approach in his own culture. (I also enjoyed the book reviews, and may be purchasing a couple of books soon.) One can certainly feel the wisdom of the Proverb that one person sounds correct, until you hear the other side – we learn a lot in sharpening one another. It was interesting to compare a bit of a cold feel from CPM (with the official weekly studies, required performance, and not being allowed to interact with sub-groups – somehow artificial and Western), with the great warmth and life of the North African's very relational approach.

In comparing the pro and con on CPM, I have a few comments. First, I note that while it is hard to find much wrong with an approach using the Word and trusting the Spirit (who is present in believers who are given different gifts, making up the body), I do not find many examples of it being used in the Gospels or in Acts. It is not an approach born out of exegesis of Jesus' and the apostles' methodology. This doesn't mean it's bad, it is just that, like with any approach, we should consider its strengths and weaknesses—see how it could be improved, compare it against other approaches, and consider for which contexts it might be best suited.

I do wonder if the CPM approaches are not better suited for places where there is high receptivity to Christ and the Bible rather than great opposition. Of course I'd really like to see some approaches that are built out of an exegesis of Jesus' and the apostle's methodology – what they modelled and taught as they went two by two, proclaiming and healing, teaching and exhorting.

Of course, our situation now is different, certainly with respect to proclamation – most of us are not Jews and there are very few synagogues in the region open to hearing about the Christ and with god-fearers in attendance. Furthermore, in Muslim lands open proclamation in public is not generally possible. Approaches based in homes, places of work, marketplace or recreation are possibilities – not that location is the key - especially if they can apply some of what Jesus, the apostles, and other believers did as they shared the gospel (and eventually the whole counsel of God) with others.

Secondly, I find it hard to understand the logic of why a week of training is needed if a local who I train or whom my trainee trains only needs a couple of hours using the approach. Why is there such a huge difference?

Thirdly, I notice that I am thinking of the CPM approach as an approach to

evangelism – which is where most of us in this region are struggling. (We also struggle with discipleship, although we might think we know something about that in theory; but we long for more to believe in and follow Christ.) Of course CPM is mixing evangelism and discipleship, and starts out with mostly unbelievers doing things we usually think of believers doing (like evangelism and discipleship training). Certainly, this particular way of using not-yet-believers is one of its distinctives, and one of its controversial elements. That being said, a holistic ministry approach of making disciples that combines or transitions birthing and nurturing elements does seem to have advantages.

Thank you again for an excellent issue.

William

**Associate Editor, L.D. Waterman,
responds to William's letter and clarifies...**

Dear William,

Thank you for your thoughtful response to the last issue of Seedbed, which focused on pros and cons of the Discovery approach to CPM. When you write 'I do not find many examples of it being used in the Gospels or in Acts,' I presume you're referring specifically to the Discovery Group approach to proclamation, since numerous other aspects of the approach (such as proclamation to groups rather than individuals and looking for persons of peace) are clearly found in the Gospels and Acts. Notably, some of the approaches you wrote that you'd 'really like to see ... that are built out of an exegesis of Jesus' and the apostle's methodology' are in fact significant elements of the Discovery model. For example, the training explicitly encourages going out 'two by two, proclaiming and healing.' Perhaps if you have an opportunity to attend a training event in the Discovery model you would like it better than you think.

Concerning specifically the facilitated discovery approach to proclamation, you are right that 'just that like with any approach we should consider its strengths and weaknesses...and consider what context it might be best suited for.' It is just one tool, as are friendship evangelism, street preaching, tracts, electronic broadcast media and altar calls. Ironically, though, contrary to your wondering 'if the CPM approaches are not better-suited for places where there is high receptivity to Christ and the Bible rather than great opposition,' one of the counterintuitive CPM principles is 'Expect the hardest places to yield the greatest results.' The truth of this principle is illustrated numerous times, for example, in Jerry Trousedale's book *Miraculous Movements*. (See my review of this book in this Seedbed.) As workers in various parts of the world over the past decade have heard about CPMs and said 'It won't work in our kind of context,' God has time and again been pleased to do what some of his children were saying couldn't be done.

About your statement, 'I find it hard to understand the logic of why a week training is needed, if a local who I train, or who my trainee trains, only needs a couple of hours using the approach': this is apparently a misunderstanding. The First Steps Discovery CPM training is intentionally designed to be reproduced with anyone, in essentially the same basic form (ten lessons) in which it is first presented (with an oral version now being fine-tuned for oral learners). There's not a different standard for near-culture or local workers. You are right that cross-cultural workers from every culture carry significant 'baggage.' Those within a Muslim culture, who initially come to faith and are disciplined through the Discovery approach, would have a maturing process much *longer* than one week, but less of their equipping would need to be unlearning some bad habits of 'Constantinian' Christianity.

Again, thank you for your careful consideration of the issues under discussion and your thoughtful interaction with them.'

L.D. Waterman