

SEEDBED

2005, Second Trimester

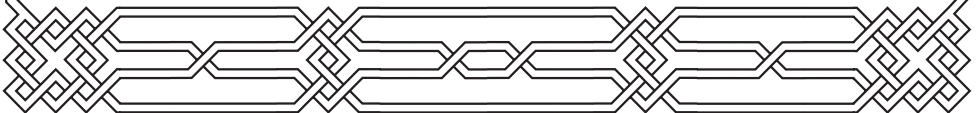
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EDITORIAL

The world is in turmoil these days as terrorism and suicide bombers bring death and destruction. News commentators interview politicians and police authorities in their search for explanations. As Christian workers in the Arab world, we look more closely at questions of theology and seek to understand the thinking and practices of the Muslim peoples we know. At the same time, we press forward in our efforts to share the Gospel with them. We hear amazing stories of God's work to reveal Christ in a variety of situations throughout the Arab world. We do not lose heart, but continue to make Him known and to disciple those Arab Muslims who are coming to faith in Christ.

This issue of *Seedbed* has a variety of articles to stimulate our thinking of how we evangelise and how we disciple. We are reminded also of the importance of prayer behind all our efforts. I look forward to your reactions and suggestions that are stirred up by our colleagues' articles. Have you any experience with the

question of coincidence that IL has raised from his teaching of students? Or can you add to Um Ithnain's guidelines for personal evangelism? What has been your involvement with transformational development as described by SM? What practical suggestions can you make for its implementation? How have you applied its principles to church planting issues? What advice do you have for discipling MBBs and encouraging their formation of a community?

Bear with us as we continue to work through the electronic publication of *Seedbed* — both for AWM colleagues and for other subscribers. If you have not yet contacted us to let us know if you would like the electronic version, please do so soon. We are trying to bring our records up to date as well as to develop a system of archives for past issues. If you would like any of the materials mentioned by our authors in this *Seedbed*, please get in touch with me.

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Let's Make Disciples

By Khalil Abd el Nour

Editor: *The following article is about a book in Arabic for the discipleship of Middle Eastern believers from a Muslim background. I asked the author to give us his reasons for preparing this material and his objectives for its use. His insights and experience may prove helpful to others who are working on similar ministry tools. His book is available through AWM Media publications.*

Let's Make Disciples is my effort to provide suitable material for the discipleship of believers from an Islamic background. At first glance, it may seem no different from any other Christian discipleship book written by and for Middle Eastern Christians. In actual fact, the book grew out of my experience in discipling new believers from a Muslim background and I wrote it uniquely with them in mind.

Intended Audience

I developed this material keeping in mind the new believer who is firmly in the faith but without a solid grounding in the content of the faith. He or she may have bounced from church to church (as is the case where I live) or foreign worker to foreign worker, but not acquired a systematic approach to Scripture. Since the book is for a literate person, I have never used it with anyone who has less than a secondary school education. I believe the content could be used with illiterates, but it would have to be recast by a responsible communicator in order to fit the needs of non-readers.

Since the book *Let's Make Disciples* was published and distributed in Egypt, it was necessary to employ common Christian terms without any

Islamic language. I decided to take all Bible quotations from the Van Dyck-Al Bustani version because that one is prevalent in Egypt. However, I tried to avoid over-used Christian expressions and to define those that may not be clear. I believe the translation *Kitab al Hayat* can also be used profitably.

Content

I have written from a historical theological perspective in order to provide a structure through which to understand God's revelation. This framework is the covenant theme found in the covenants of the Old Testament (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and David) that are fulfilled and culminated in the New Covenant inaugurated by Jesus Christ. I emphasize the perspective that God works with His people through history and through the connectedness of the biblical revelation, including its continued application to our contemporary situation. In the first half of the book, I examine the Old Testament and seek to lay a foundation for understanding Christ and the Gospel. My first three chapters look closely at Genesis 1-3 in order to establish a proper understanding of who man is (created in the image of God), his role in the universe, his relationship to the rest of the

created order – to the environment, the animal world and other human beings, especially in the marriage relationship. (If you were under the tutelage of Wendell Evans, you will note his influence here.) I further study the covenants in successive chapters, adding one on Joseph (portrayed as a unique character who preserved God's covenant with the fathers) and another on Isaiah's suffering servant (as an Old Testament portrayal of the life and work of Christ). In the last half of the book, I concentrate on Christ's teaching through the Sermon on the Mount (four chapters), the Upper Room Discourse of John 13-17 (five chapters) and Peter's restoration in John 21 (one chapter).

Why do I feel that the historical perspective is important in discipling new believers from Islamic background? Precisely because the historical perspective is missing in their former faith. The Qur'an relates stories, but not history – and certainly not the history of God's redemption of a people. Furthermore, the skills of biblical interpretation take on a new urgency if believers understand that God is revealing Himself through the history of the Scriptures. New believers need to learn interpretive methods that are second nature to many of us. Some of them are: interpret in context, interpret the Old Testament in light of the New, seek for the intent of the author rather than look for meaning in

contemporary events and see Christ as the central theme of the Scriptures.

In addition to this historical perspective, each lesson has an associated topic. I have chosen topics that help new believers grapple with some of the difficult issues of our faith. They include: original sin, faith, three primary growth areas for all new disciples (mind, will and emotions), holiness, providence, the believer's relation to the law, repentance, principles of interpretation, Jesus' sonship, the divine and human nature of Christ, spiritual disciplines, the Lord's Supper, the Holy Spirit, assurance of salvation, personal worship and persecution. I do not treat these subjects exhaustively, but I try to provide a biblical framework for them.

Use of the Book

The Bible study section is in a question-and-answer format with model answers provided at the end of each chapter. The disciple has the opportunity to think carefully about the questions and write out his own answer in the space provided before consulting the model answers. At the outset, I state that no book can make disciples but rather that disciples make disciples. Ideally a leader can easily use the content with his/her small group. The leader need not even distribute the book to those in the discipleship group but can use the questions in his/her individual preparation for the study while leaving only the Bible as the text for the small group session. This reinforces the

value of turning to the Bible to answer our questions.

However, a small group will not be an option in many situations in the Muslim world. Isolated believers can benefit from the book and study through it on their own. This is why model answers to the questions are provided. Each chapter has about three memory verses. If the individual works conscientiously, he should be able to complete a lesson easily in a week's time (about half an hour each day). There are 21 lessons so six months should be more than adequate to cover the contents of the book.

A Final Comment on Discipleship

In closing, I want to make a few disclaimers. In no way do I see this book as the final word on the discipleship of Muslim background believers. In fact, now that I have used it myself in a small group, there is much I wish to change or adapt. I see the book as a collective starting point and I anticipate that it will be rewritten and edited in order to become a more

suitable tool for discipleship. I hope that others will build on this subject of discipleship by writing on it more extensively. After all, *teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you* is the 'stuff' of our call. If you use the book, please send me your comments and suggestions. You may influence the next edition!

Secondly, discipleship is done in community. Believers learn from each other. If the book can be used to assist the church to gather Christ's sheep and help them pour over God's Word, then its intent will have been realized.

Finally, may the Lord, the Spirit, lead His body to teach the whole counsel of God in lands and among a people that have often received only the crumbs of Christ's teaching. There will be no church unless there are disciples. If there are disciples (true ones), there will be a church. If there is a church (a true one), disciples will be reproduced, which means there is hope.