Session Two

A look at what God is doing

1. What is your vision for your people group or church-planting situation?

The wrong question is: What can **I** do? For it is not about what **you** can do! Make a clear distinction between **my** ministry and what **we all** (our team/our field) want to see God accomplish in and through us: **Our Vision**.

Often there is a lack of **intentionality** in what we do. We are not strategically selective. So often we work with whoever crosses our path (often expatriates) and with methods we feel comfortable with – often developed at home and out of our current context.

All the evidence suggests that the Gospel is more readily acceptable when an "insider" presents it – someone known well and trusted, who loves you and has your best interests at heart. In the Muslim World, this implies a relative or close family friend. If our methods of evangelism can't easily be reproduced by the new MBB, then the most effective method (i.e. new believers) in reaching people with the Gospel is lost. These methods may work for us as expatriates, for often we are "honoured", but if they are not reproducible then they need to be changed. The conclusion of this is ultimately: **get the MBBs to do all the work of evangelism!**

A word about cities: what about a team vision for a city rather than a people group? This usually does not work! Muslim cities are often very heterogeneous. Massive, rapid urbanisation has not homogenised rural people. Most Muslim cities are "large conglomerations of villages" – i.e. all the different peoples in the country (or even surrounding countries) are not evenly distributed about the city, but are to be found in one or two locations – "villages". So a vision for the whole city would need multiple teams each with different and separate strategies for each "village".

God is moving through **people groups**. Why? There is a huge amount of missiological research on this, but basically it is because lost people will listen to the message of the Gospel more favourably from their own people than from anyone else.

The key is to get the Gospel reproducing in every people group. It may travel from the city to the original people group area or it could go the other way from the villages to the city.

Ultimately, our goal should be that of John the Baptist. We, as expatriate workers, should get less and less significant in the task of evangelism and discipleship. In John 3:30, John the Baptist said, ***"He must increase, but I must decrease"***. Are we willing for this? It is noticeable in researching church planting movements that when questions like, 'Who was the first person to talk to you about Jesus?' are asked, very rarely is it an expatriate. Questions like this tend to produce 'an upside down tree'. Extended research can be made to identify the originators, but in the local histories within the church, the originators are often unknown. Their history starts later when their own people were involved.

The right questions to ask are:

What does God desire to happen here?	**What is it going to take to achieve this?**

These are God-sized questions and they demand God-sized answers! No little visions please.

What God desires is that His name should be glorified everywhere! So our goal is not evangelism, not making disciples, not planting churches, not even church planting movements. **Our goal is God's glory!**

What does it mean to glorify God? John 15:8, ***"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."*** So, in effect, we need to acknowledge that God has been revealed to us in the person of Jesus.

Our goal is to make Jesus famous, honoured, loved and obeyed by as many people as possible among our people group. Multiplying believers brings glory to God.

Secondly, when we are Christ-like – demonstrating some of the attributes of Jesus – we bring glory to God. We see the physical and character qualities (i.e. the DNA) of the parents in the children. Do people see the life of God in us? Since we are children of God, they should. As a result God is glorified. Jesus said that in the last days lawlessness will increase and the love of many will grow cold (Mt. 24:12) Zeal and passion characterised the Lord Jesus. Do they see these qualities in us?

It isn't enough just to live where you are. God desires to see His glory! He hasn't sent you to where you are just to be there. He wants you to be fruitful. You are there because there are lost people there. His goal includes evangelism, discipleship, church gathering, but all this is a means to an end – the glory of God.

In summary our goals are:

- To be Christ-like
- To reproduce Christ-likeness in others

2. A very brief look around the world.

Church planting movements are rare. There are probably no more than 50 in the world today. Here is a little information about a few.

In India

- **Madhiya Pradesh:** There are over 4000 new churches that have been birthed in the last seven years.

- **Bihar:** Among the Bhojpuri people there are over 11,000 new churches, and nearly one million believers in less than 10 years. At a recent conference of Bhojpuri church leaders, there were over 10,000 leaders. They have regularly held schools for church planters. This is in the area that was known as the graveyard of missions. Biharis are poor, ungovernable, with Naxalites and dacoits ravaging the countryside. Victor John has recently published an 80-page report on this amazing movement.

- Among the **Bhil people of Maharashtra**, there are 3,600 new churches and 33,000 baptised believers in the last four years. The Bhil people are a 'caste'. 'Bhil' means a bow and originally this 'caste' were all archers. Albert Nathaniel did a study of church growth among the Bhil people in 2005.

- In Bangalore among the Karenese there are 106 new churches and more than 1000 believers in less than two years.

- In a Varanasi district (Varanasi is the holiest city of Hindus) there are now over 1000 house churches.

- There is the rapid growth of OM's **Good Shepherd Churches** – about 1000 new churches each year. No wonder Hindu militants are angry!

In China

- **In South China**

  - In one area – 920 new house churches and over 90,000 baptised believers in the last 8 years. This started with three small churches running a church planting school. They have continued to run it.
  - In another area 1,700 new churches have been started and 48,000 believers were baptised in one year (2004). This movement began in 2001
  - In another area:

    January 2000: one small church was started in someone's house

    March 2000: 20 small house groups had been started

    July 2000: 327 house churches with 4,000 baptised believers

    January 2001: 908 house churches with about 12,000 baptised believers

    In 2001: 3,535 **more** house churches birthed with 53,430 more baptisms

    Jan.-June 2002: another 9,320 new house churches birthed with 104,542 baptisms

    By Dec. 2002 another 15,000 new house churches birthed with 160,000 baptisms

  Then there was a considerable slowdown. This part of South China was the centre of the SARS epidemic and many of the key leaders of this movement died. It has since recovered. John Chen, one of the leaders, reported some of the earlier house churches had produced 17 generations of church in just one year (2004).

  The key in China for this exponential church growth is the training of local church planters. The resources are in the harvest. So the issue is not how many expatriate church planters can we place in the harvest? But how many MBB church planters can we train and how quickly can we train them?

- **In North China**, in one particular area, on average 1,700 new house churches were birthed each month. In August 2005, in this area, 2,400 new churches were birthed in that one month!

In Latin America

- In the decade of the 90s, Christians in Cuba overcame relentless government persecution to grow from 235 churches to more than 4000 churches with more than 30,000 new believers awaiting baptism. Only ordained ministers can baptise and they are doing so as fast as they can, but they can't get through the backlog.

  Hab. 1:5 ***"Look among the nations and see; wonder and be astounded! For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if I told you!"***

  One Baptist pastor in Cuba who was responsible for 6 churches meeting in church buildings, found it very difficult to visit all 6 churches. There was a fuel embargo and he had no fuel for his vehicle. So he went to the Communist officials and asked for fuel vouchers. They always refused him. Eventually one senior government official said to the pastor, *"You Baptists are only concerned about church buildings. Why don't you meet in homes?"* In reflection afterwards the pastor said to himself, *"If God can speak through Balaam's donkey, He can also speak through a Communist official!"* And that is how it started – a new wineskin!

It is noticeable that one factor leading to a church planting movement is an unstable political environment.

In the Muslim World

- The movement among the **Kabyles in Algeria** has about 60,000 believers now.
- **In Bangladesh** there may be about 125,000 baptised MBBs gathered in about 3000 locally led Isa Jama'ats. The leaders of the Jama'ats are called Imams (in Arabic = one who stands in front).

  There is now a question about their Christology (Isa Jama'ats = Jesus groups). None of these MBBs go to the local mosques. They have stayed in their culture, but shifted their allegiance to the Lord Jesus. They call themselves Isa-i-Muslims i.e. ones who have submitted to Jesus. These churches have a missionary concern and are beginning to send workers to Pakistan, to the Maldive Islands and to West Bengal in India. Their advice is: *"Leave the light on and the door open for further conversations"*.
- **In Iran** there are about 150,000 MBBs. Almost all meet in house groups – see the book **The Coming Fall of Islam in Iran** by Reza Safa.
- There has been a CPM amongst **the Sudanese in West Java.**
- **In Central Asia** there has not been exponential growth, but steady growth.
  - ✓ **Kazakstan:** There were about 28 Kazak MBBs in 1989. Currently (2006) there are about 10,000 Kazak MBBs.
  - ✓ In 1989 in **Uzbekistan** there were about 50 MBBs. Now (2006) there are well over 5000 Uzbek MBBs.
  - ✓ There has also been church growth among **the Kyrgyz**.

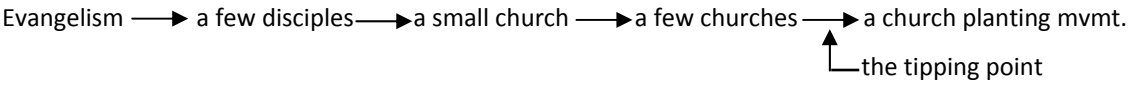
The question is: **Why is there rapid church growth in some places and not in others?**

We need to ask some fundamental questions:

- How did it get started?
- What are some of the factors that cause rapid growth?
- What can we learn and adapt from what has happened?

No doubt, in some cases, we will conclude that we **can't** apply these lessons in a context that is too different. In other cases we can learn and use some of these lessons by adapting them in our situation.

Read and re-read the Acts and see what happens! Martin Gladwell, in his book called, **The Tipping Point**, states that there is a clear 'tipping point'. Before this point there is ordinary steady growth until the tipping point is reached and then there is exponential growth. Something like:



One of the difficulties is that often churches don't plant churches. Expatriates plant the first churches. Local MBBs don't think they can or even that they will be allowed to plant churches. With the wrong models you get 'mule' churches that are **incapable** of reproducing themselves. This involves using a poor paradigm of church – often buildings, large programmes requiring professional staff and a seminary trained, ordained team.

Simple paradigms that start with teaching new believers to form small home-based discipleship groups with expatriates infrequently present, often lead to the MBBs realising that they **can** start small house churches themselves. When they start to do this on a regular basis, then you are moving towards a tipping point and exponential growth.

However it is possible to abort a church planting movement. Near Carthage in Tunisia there is an enormous marble cathedral, built in the middle of nowhere, very near the 2nd- 4th century city of Carthage (a major 'Christian Centre' in the 3rd- 5th centuries AD). Roman Catholic French people built it as a monument to French colonialism. It is a beautiful building, but it is a model to all Tunisians of what a 'church' should look like. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why church planting has been so difficult in the last 40 years in Tunisia. Tunisian believers have a completely unreproducible model of church.

So resist shortcuts to glory. Don't invest in the outward – the showy. Don't invest a lot of foreign money for you only create dependency. Don't try and build really big churches of several hundred believers. Remember big churches "leak" like a net. The key is training MBBs to be church planters.

Defining a church planting movement

Here is a five-point definition:

"Church planting movements are **rapidly multiplying, indigenous, churches planting churches** that sweep across **a people group** or **population segment**."

Key phrases in the definition.

- **Rapid:** how fast is rapid? Probably much more rapid than you are comfortable with! For in a CPM there is lots of immaturity! It can get very messy!
- **Multiplication** is a key concept. As you trace what has happened back to its beginnings, it starts with one or two churches that multiply. They produce daughter churches and these 'daughters' reproduce themselves. Eventually, as you map it out, it begins to look like a tree with many branches.
- **Indigenous**: the planted churches sit comfortably within the cultural context. CPMs don't start by 'spontaneous combustion'. In the 1930s Roland Allen wrote a book about church growth in China called **The Spontaneous Growth of the Church**. It is a good book with a poor title. In all church growth/CPMs, someone has intentionally started them. They have studied the culture and contextualised "church" into their local context. The role of the expatriate is one of **initiation** not **continuous leadership**.
- **Churches planting churches**: CPMs involve **the whole church** being committed to planting out new churches – not just the leadership or some individual.
- **A people group** or **a population segment in the city**: Don't think in whole cities. Cities are usually made up of many people groups. Reaching whole Muslim cities is a myth. It doesn't work. Muslim cities are usually made up of a conglomeration of 'villages' of all the people groups in the country.

The key to a CPM is clarity of the message of the Gospel in the local culture. It is the **Gospel** that is the power of God and God will use MBBs who are not yet perfect or with low levels of maturity, if they have understood and begun to be changed (transformed) by the Gospel.

Often you need to train 20-30 MBBs in the basics of church planting before you can identify a 'spreader' among them (or even a super-spreader). A 'spreader' is someone with the spiritual gift of an evangelist.

Often expatriate workers/CBB pastors **slow down** church growth because there is a desire to:

- ✓ control what is happening.
- ✓ bring into the church aspects of our own culture.

The role of 'mythiology' is very powerful and one of the concepts is that only expatriate workers should start new churches.

So, we are studying **what God is doing** not because it is a new fad but because:

- God's Spirit is at work and we need to learn from what He is doing. We are still disciples learning from Our Master.
- He has specific roles for us to play. It has always been very dangerous to dismiss the work of God and it has always been dangerous to dismiss God's call on His people. Recall the story of William Carey expressing his call to India to the church leaders in the Northampton Baptist church: *"When God wants to win the heathen, He can do it without your help".*

  Throughout the missionary advance of the church it is clear that **people do matter**. They can make an enormous difference. Not only in the Old and New Testaments, but people like Henry Martyn, Hudson Taylor, Samuel Zwemer and a host of others.

  God wants to use **us** as His instruments. The essential work has already been done on the cross, but the plan for this news to be spread to the nations is **us**! So we need to align ourselves to God's purposes. This may mean changing our actions and our behaviour. ***"Christ in me the hope of glory"*** – our goal is "fruit that will last" bringing glory to God.
- Nothing else brings greater glory to God than seeing thousands being swept into the Kingdom by a CPM. Our vision is the glory of God covering the Muslim World like the waters cover the sea.

Why are CPMs so important?

1. God is at work in them and He is becoming well known, well-loved and glorified.
2. He has specific roles for believers to play in the CPM – the whole spectrum of evangelism – discipleship – leadership development – church planting and church reproducing.
3. Nothing on earth so rapidly multiplies the glory of God.
4. There is lots of evidence for failed strategies – for example: the empty cathedrals of Europe, the decline in church attendance and the irrelevance of much western Christianity to western culture. God is not being honoured.
5. There is a need for new wineskins – don't pour the new wine into old wineskins. If you do, they will burst and the wine will be wasted.

Five components of every effective church planting team

1. There is an effective entree to the Gospel.

By this we mean there is an easy way that is being used to introduce the Gospel. You have a good reason to talk about Jesus that makes sense to the listener. This method must be reproducible by new MBBs – i.e. they feel comfortable using the method among their close friends and family. Also the method helps there to be a smooth transition from talking about platform issues to talking about the Gospel. A good platform gives many opportunities to share about Jesus, but usually what is also needed is a tool to use in these opportunities. This is the entree.

Sometimes the entree can be:

- The Camel Method
- Learning to "tell your story" well
- Having the colours of the wordless book (green, black, red, white, gold) as a bracelet or a handkerchief. "Why do you have such a funny handkerchief?" "Oh, you don't want to know it's very complicated". They will keep on asking and then finally you can explain the colours.

- Learning to make conversational switches
- Using the rope trick and other "tools" to get started

Remember, the Holy Spirit is everywhere convicting the world of sin of righteousness and of judgment. You have an ally **in** every Muslim – their conscience! It often remains quiet for years. But when the conscience hears the truth, it always responds to the truth with affirmation. Perhaps that is one of the reasons we get angry responses to a quiet presentation of some truth. An inner voice is convicting the listener of the truth of what has been contrary to their belief system.

As we share the Gospel, we turn on the light in their "souls". This divides people. They are either cockroaches and run away and hide from the light or they are moths and are drawn to the light. **So find non-confrontational ways to turn on the light as much as possible.**

Some have struggled to do this because their **platform** is highly secularised and all religious identity has been suppressed. There is an integrity issue here! Make sure your platform allows you to have a "religious identity". Tell people you decided to go to the Muslim World to tell people how much you respect and love Muslims.

2. There is an effective evangelistic method or methods.

This method or methods must easily be reproducible by MBBs.

- In some countries this is the problem with the Jesus Film. It requires a VCR/TV that is only owned by the middle-class.
- "Telling your story" is an effective way.
- Beginning to pray for Muslims has been the main evangelistic "tool" in Algeria. Why is it so effective? It conveys to them that you respect them, care for their welfare and that you are religious people. The teams in Qatar have found that praying for people is effective because God answers prayer. People are amazed and very much more open.
- The most effective way people come to Jesus is through personal testimony by people (usually relatives) they know, love and trust. Many MBBs come to faith after hearing the story of what happened when a relative or close friend came to faith in Jesus.
- The interpretation of dreams is another effective method. A good story to tell is the story of the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus and Peter's misunderstanding of what he thought he saw and God's correction of Peter.
- Occasionally deliverance from demons has been effective bringing a family to faith.
- On every visit teach your friend a verse of Scripture.

3. There is effective short-term (immediate) discipleship for newborn believers.

- Again this needs to be easily reproducible by local MBBs.
- Condense it so that you can teach it in seven sessions.
- Remember, most people are aural preference learners. Don't use written materials as the main source of information. Use stories and get them to memorise Scripture.
- The purpose is to get them started on their walk with God.
- Aim at insider-insider discipleship models. It is better than outsider-insider models.

Four short topics for initial (immediate) discipleship

- **Assurance of salvation**
  - Walk through the plan of salvation with them many times (i.e. in each of the seven sessions).

- ✓ Use the bridge method, the 'Roman Road' (going through Romans).
- ✓ Explain all that Jesus accomplished in His death and resurrection – especially dealing with redemption and dealing with our shame.
- ✓ Revelation 3:20 etc.

- It takes a long time for this to really sink in.
- When it is clear, give them a really nice, small 'birth certificate' for them to keep in their Bible.

➢ **Begin to 'Walk with God'**

- This is a phrase often used in Genesis.
- Our model is the Lord Jesus – see Mark 1:35.
- Teach them to talk to God – in praise, thanksgiving, confession and in intercession.
- Teach them to read, meditate and memorize God's Word.
  - ✓ Give them a reading list.
  - ✓ Give them passages to learn – Psalm 23 etc.
  - ✓ Teach them to ask questions of the text:
    - What is the truth in this passage? What is it teaching me to do?
    - In the light of this passage, what is not right in my life?
    - How do I put right in my life what is wrong?
    - How do I stay right?

➢ **Explain about Being and Doing Church**

➢ **God's nature and His will for your life**

- Say, " Let's look at the Bible – God is……."
  It is helpful if you have attended the leader as a person course for this focuses on the character of God.

  It takes time for him/her to replace an Islamic concept of God with a Biblical concept of God.
- "Why do you think God saved us?"
  Introduce them to finding God's will for their lives.

4. There should be an effective method of church formation that the team plans to use

- You need to explain about different types of church.
  - ✓ The heavenly and on earth church - universal body of believers – our 'Umma'
  - ✓ The local church – semi-autonomous in a new work of local churches
- You need to explain about the 5 'P's when the church meets together:

  Praise: worship, communion.

  Prayer: intercessory/supplication

  Participative **P**reaching

  Partying: fellowship

  Problem-solving as a group.
- Remember all that you do needs to be reproducible by fairly new believers.

  The POUCH Approach

  P articipation in the 5 'P's

  O bedience to God's Word – not the preacher. The Bible is authoritative. They are to be like the Bereans (Acts 16)

U npaid – multiple leadership

C ells – small accountability groups (3-5 in a group)

H ouse churches that aim to multiply

- Most people going to the Muslim World have not planted a church within their own culture. If they have, it is not reproducible within their new culture. In other words, indigenous church planting doesn't occur.
- Therefore, we need to learn radical ways to "do" church.

5. There needs to be leadership development.

- CPMs require 'leadership factories'.
- There may be short-term leadership training, but development needs ongoing mentoring.
- Don't train people out of their context, at least until they have moved from being a 'shepherd' to an 'elder'.
- Remember leadership development requires discernment in shedding negative aspects of their culture and replacing them with Biblical functional substitutes.

We need to think ahead in all 5 areas and begin to plan. Often 1 and 2 are OK, but 3,4 and 5 are missing or 4 and 5 are OK, but we have no believers – i.e. 1, 2 and 3 are missing.

Questions for discussion

1. Is a CPM possible among **our** people group?
2. Does our strategy include all five elements?
   (usually we focus on just the first two)
3. Are all five being reproduced among the MBBs I work with? If not, is this because they are not reproducible?