Making Disciples 2

Session Two

Issues related to making disciples of BMBs*

1. Introduction

"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." (Jn. 20:21)

How do we measure the effectiveness of what we do? One way is to see how incarnational our ministry is.

Heb. 3:1 ***"Consider Jesus, the Apostle……."*** How did the Father send the Son?

- Birth into the world – He shared our experience – He emptied Himself (became poor)
- He was involved in the life of the world – criticized for fraternizing with pub keepers and sinners (Mt. 11:19; Lk. 15:1)
- In His death He took on Himself our sin. The disciple is not above the master. He must deny himself and take up his cross daily.

Are we paying the price of modelling ourselves on Him?

The Problems

- Ineffective discipling of new BMBs partly accounts for many disappointments in Church Planting. What are the obstacles to effective discipleship?
- Some quote 80% as the number of new BMBs who don't continue in their faith.
- Satellite TV/radio ('distance evangelism') tends to encourage solitary isolated believers. The question is, why and how can we improve our retention rate?
- Many workers have not been adequately trained to disciple. There is a lack of training materials. If they exist they are not well known or easily accessed.

Three requirements:

(a) Faithful teaching of the Word of God – so an educational assumption

(b) The gathering together of disciples in order to be a community. *'The church is the barn into which the grain is gathered and the barn is also the place from where the seed is taken out and sowed into the field.'* So there is a social dimension to disciple-making.

(c) There is also a cultural dimension in disciple-making. What of the 'old life' requires an intelligent rejection and what can be retained?

Here are a few basic assumptions:

- Discipleship is integral to all church planting efforts.
- We have failed to disciple well partly due to the use of inappropriate methods developed in other contexts.
- There has been little systematic reflection.
- We need to stress that it is the Holy Spirit who enables disciples to grow – so prayer.
- We need to work on:
  - ✓ The content of what is to be taught to a disciple and at what stage
  - ✓ The content in the context of the culture – i.e. what is timeless truth and what truth is described in a culturally conditioned way
  - ✓ Issues around the individual vs community identity
  - ✓ Spiritual warfare and demonic oppression
  - ✓ The role of persecution and suffering as part of discipleship

- Much of initial discipleship is 're-evangelism' and the content and style of our evangelism affects all subsequent discipleship. We are also modelling.
- The expatriate plays a key role (vs. the national discipler)
  - ✓ It is a general rule that those who have won the hearts and trust of the local people are those who speak the language fluently and who live a relatively simple lifestyle. (Balanced with the need for family survival)
  - ✓ Credibility issues need to be faced. One's role (job) and witness need integrity for there to be credibility.
  - ✓ The key factor in discipleship is the depth of the relationship between the disciple and the discipler. It is **the relationship** that will change the life of the disciple – not meetings.
  - ✓ The short-term vs longterm mentality in discipleship is important. Patience is needed. Issues have to be dealt with several times.

2. Adequate conversion – the birthing process – how to be a good midwife

2.1 <u>The Western Model of Spiritual Birth</u>

The following characteristics seem to be typical of how westerners think of the spiritual birthing process. Most of them probably arose as an over-reaction to Catholicism:

- It tends to be **theoretical** and cerebral. The emphasis is on the ability to repeat the correct doctrine.
- It is **instantaneous** – hence the 'born again' language. Yet we all know that transferring loyalty takes time – from an Islamic system to a Saviour.
- It is **individualistic.** This model works well in a 'Christianised' culture – as it is in the USA and as it was in the UK up to the 1960s. This culture is increasingly being broken down and so this model is increasingly ineffective. Sadly much of the evangelism among 'neighbours' still uses assumptions and methods developed for work among nominal Christians.

2.2 <u>Inadequate Conversion</u>

James Engel reported the following (EMQ April '90):

- Gradual conversion is the most common way in which those with little or no prior exposure to meaningful Christian background come to faith in Jesus.
- Gospel knowledge doesn't become efficacious until there is some grasp of the **implications** of the truth in the context of life goals, felt needs and basic motivations.
- There is no distinct decision per se as is usually found in extended problem solving. Rather there is a gradual change of allegiance. An overt act such as a verbally stated prayer or going forward at a meeting is **not** normative in salvation and it can be highly misleading when it is interpreted as signifying salvation.
- The process of making disciples begins before conversion, proceeds through the conversion process and is unending as the new believer grows in faith and maturity.

  The probable reason why so many apparent BMBs backslide and fail to grow at all in their love for the Lord Jesus is that they are 'still born'. They never were 'born again' to begin with. This is our failure!

2.3 <u>Healthy Birth</u>

In the birthing process there are **four** elements:

- Faith in Jesus
- Repentance
- Baptism in the Holy Spirit
- Baptism in water

The last is not as essential as the other three are. But it is an important outward and visible sign of what has occurred inwardly. As such it is very helpful. Let us look at each of these elements:

- **Faith in Jesus**

As our 'neighbours' are coming out of a background of generations of false teaching, it takes **time** and careful **teaching** to bring them to a place where they have enough understanding to sustain a new direction of love and allegiance to the Lord Jesus. It takes **time** to clear away the rubbish of wrong concepts of God, of scripture, of sin and of Jesus.

Teaching should start at the beginning – Genesis – and focus on God's progressive revelation of Himself – i.e. whole passages of Scripture. Avoid jumping from verse to verse all over the Bible.

From Genesis move on to Moses and the Law and sacrifice. Go through the Old Testament prophecies of the coming of the Messiah. Study Matthew or Luke looking at Jesus, the Kingdom of God and Jesus' call to forsake all and follow Him. All this needs to be put in a **story form**.

- **Repentance**

The key roots of sin in our 'neighbours' lives need to be cut off as they come through the birthing process. In general, there is an area where, as Westerners, we are weak. We often emphasise faith and neglect repentance. Both are necessary.

Examples of repentance:

- ✓ **Zacchaeus**: He repented of stealing from the poor and returned the money fourfold. (Lk. 19:1-10)
- ✓ **New believers in Ephesus**: They repented of their occult practices and accordingly burned their very valuable occult books. (Acts 19:18-19)

Notice that in both cases repentance involved public restitution demonstrating their sincerity.

How do we teach a Biblical view of sin and repentance? One helpful method is to go through the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20) and the Sermon on the Mount. (Mt. 5-7) As you go through these passages carefully with your 'neighbour' you can help him/her identify the roots of sin in his/her life. You can then work through this and decide an appropriate form of repentance and restitution. In this way he/she knows exactly what he/she has **to do** in order to follow Jesus.

By now your 'neighbour' is beginning to realise the meaning of the Lordship of Jesus over all aspects of life. He/she is beginning to see that following Jesus involves a constant life of repentance, apologies, confession and brokenness. All this involves counting the cost. But obedience in this area gives the opportunity of victory over sin, assurance of forgiveness and the joy of knowing the approval of Jesus. Jesus always linked repentance and joy!

Often the process takes time. Repentance is often costly and involves accepting shame. In an honour/shame culture this **is** very costly. What if the process stops through an unwillingness to repent? Then your focus should be on prayer and a renewed focus on Jesus (i.e. the faith aspect) and what He has accomplished.

Especially look at Mt. 11:28-30:

"Come to Me all who labour and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Don't push for an untimely birth. Allow the Holy Spirit to do His work of convicting of sin.

Finally, it is **essential** to apply the same demanding standards of holiness and repentance in our own lives. Failure in this area causes a failure in our witness to the liberating power of the forgiveness of sin.

- **The Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

This too needs to be taught. It is a wonderful counter-balance to the negative aspects of repentance and restitution. Our 'neighbours' need to **experience** the Holy Spirit in their hearts.

Experiences and signs of the Holy Spirit vary a great deal, but they are all accompanied by:

"…a pouring into our hearts of God's love through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Rom. 5:5)

Our 'neighbours' experience an amazing sense that they are **accepted** by God and loved by God.

"***For you didn't receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ – provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him."*** (Rom. 8:15-17)

Our 'neighbours' come from cultures where religious **experience** is prized – whether on Hajj or in Sufi meetings or just at Friday prayers. Sermons are not often directed to the mind, but rather to the emotions. Have you ever seen Shia' on the tenth day of Muharram? It is sheer emotion that causes them to cut themselves with knives.

So without a deep subjective experience of God's love, of having peace with God and of God's Fatherly care, prayer and worship are impossible. Solid faith and repentance lay the foundation of being filled with the Holy Spirit since the Holy Spirit is given to those who obey. (Acts 5:32)

Teaching followed by the laying on of hands and a simple prayer of faith opens up the way for Our Father to send the Holy Spirit into the believer and bring about regeneration and all the other precious gifts that the Father wants to give to us His children.

- **Baptism in Water**

This issue creates questions such as when? and by whom? I would like to cover this briefly.

When? Soon! Long delays, a long period of probation etc. are not Biblical. It is wise to put new believers through some basic course (8-12 weeks).

By Whom? By local believers if at all possible – baptism is into **a family**, so the new believer needs to be introduced into a group. However, Acts 8:26-39 does give us a Biblical exception.

3. What is discipleship and what is the process of discipling?

3.1 <u>What is Discipleship?</u>

- ***"Teaching the next generations"*** (Deut. 6:1 ff)
- Carrying out God's plan – read God's instructions to Joshua in Josh. ch. 1
- Training a small group – Mt. 10:1-15

Discipleship is the process of reproducing in someone else what the Spirit of God is doing in you, in such a way that they are enabled to reproduce it in a third generation.

In other words it is training someone until he/she can train others and actually does so.

What are the goals of a discipling ministry?

Among other things, they are to see emerging a people who are living on the basis of **Biblical priorities**.

These are defined in John 17 as:

- Progressive commitment to Jesus
- Progressive commitment to the Body of Jesus (i.e. the church)
- Progressive commitment to the work of Jesus in the world

Each one of these is really important. Over emphasis or lack of emphasis on any one of these will lead to imbalance.

3.2 <u>What is the process of discipling?</u>

Among other things there is a basic emphasis on **training in small groups**. In such groups the BMBs can learn how to study the Bible, how to pray and how to worship and praise the Lord.

In small groups the BMBs learn how to relate, share with one another and support one another. Their commitment grows both to one another and to the wider Body of Christ. The small group also forms the basis of their witness and service in the world.

I want to emphasize again that **modelling** has a far greater impact than the **content of teaching** when it comes to reproduction of discipleship. No matter what is taught about the various Biblical truths, if the modelling of that truth doesn't support and illustrate that teaching, then it won't be effective!

So the discipleship of BMBs is affected by all the activities you have carried out from the very beginning of the work. It is affected by:

- ✓ how you pray
- ✓ how you are trained and how you prepare yourselves
- ✓ how you form your identity in the new culture
- ✓ how you do evangelism
- ✓ how you live an incarnational lifestyle
- ✓ how you form 'church'
- ✓ how you prepare leaders and so on.

So discipleship as an aspect in the process can't be separated from the whole. As you apply Biblical patterns and expectations, effective discipleship will happen. The spiritual life is intended to be one in which each one of us is responsible to pass on that which we have received. ***"Freely you have received, freely give!"*** (Mt. 10:8)

"From those to whom much has been given, much will be required." (Lk. 12:48)
The parable of the talents is all about this principle. (Mt. 25)

This whole process looks something like a mother duck (Jesus) leading a procession of ducklings. In one sense, only the first duckling is following the mother duck! The second duckling is following the first and so on. No one of us is "fully mature" having attained to the fullness of the measure of the stature of Christ. (Eph. 4:13) But each of us needs to say, as Paul did, ***"Follow me as I follow Christ"*** (1 Cor. 11:1).

4. Issues that need to be covered in initial discipleship

The early days are of crucial importance. The theory of bonding and imprinting probably has some validity in this context. (Remember Konrad Lorenz' experiments with ducklings – right after hatching there is a bonding period (a period of sensitivity to modelling) that is widespread in the animal world (and in humans!)). So spend a great deal of time with a new believer during this period.

4.1 <u>General Issues:</u> (not prioritised)

- The nature of God (Biblical versus 'neighbour' culture)
- Grace and forgiveness
- Legalism
- Worship and singing
- Prayer and intercession
- Feeding their spirits from the Word of God
- Fasting
- Handling demonic attacks
- Expectations and handling persecution
- The value of group discipleship
- Avoiding extractionism – the problems of running away
- The careful, cultural way to express their faith – storytelling
- Dealing with financial/economic problems – unemployment – micro-finance schemes
- Emotional healing for post-traumatic stress disorders
- Our identity as children of God

- Understanding baptism
- Understanding and experiencing the Holy Spirit
- How to have a pure thought life
- Learning how to be generous

4.2 Family Issues

There are a number of family issues including:

- The age of conversion
- How and when should the family be told of the change of allegiance to Jesus?
- Marriage – how to tell your spouse
- Marriage – finding a believing partner
- Marriage – to an unbelieving spouse
- Developing godly patterns of loving your spouse – resolving conflict, forgiveness and reconciliation etc.
- Polygamy
- Children of the second generation
- Being divorced for your faith

This paper can't deal with each of these issues in detail. Here are just a few thoughts to stimulate your thinking and discussion.

The age of conversion

There was a 14 yr old girl in Egypt who was the daughter of a famous sheikh. She had a dream in which the Lord Jesus appeared to her. The next day she told her family she wanted to be a Christian. This got her into a great deal of trouble. She was beaten frequently and tried to run away several times. Finally she did escape and contacted a Christian pastor saying she wanted to identify herself as a Christian and find shelter in the Christian community. The pastor's advice to her was, *"Go home, tell your father it was all a mistake. Return to the Dar-el-Islam. Keep your relationship with God and your love for Jesus a secret **until** you have finished your education and are financially independent."*

What would you have said? What would you have done? Does child evangelism have any validity within an Islamic context? Sons are treated differently to daughters. Daughters are often advised not to tell their families until after they have finished their education. Why do you think they are given this advice?

Telling the family about the new allegiance

Is it wise to go straight to your father and tell him you are now a Christian? There are two issues: **when** and **how**.

The key issue here is the really huge amount of shame that comes on the family if it is known that one of them has become an apostate. Often the only way to mitigate this shame is an 'honour killing' or expulsion out of the community. So the **when** and **how** should be determined by finding ways to minimize the shame associated with becoming a believer in Jesus.

The when:

- ✓ Not at the beginning!
- ✓ Build up the believer's ability to 'honour his father and his mother'.
- ✓ Make sure he/she has repented, confessed and put right any broken relationships within the family.
- ✓ Teach him/her the art of telling stories – an indirect approach.

The how:

- ✓ Don't let him/her use the word 'Christian'. It will **always** miscommunicate.
- ✓ Encourage the BMB to identify at an early stage with a respected older person in the extended family – someone like the paternal grandmother – someone the BMB can trust and

to whom he/she can slowly leak the story. This person can then act as a mediator between the BMB and his family.

- ✓ Try to tell what has happened in such a way that it will be seen to strengthen the honour of the family. Family preservation is the primary objective of the culture. To this end the children are brought up in an Islamic worldview. The role of the father is to assure the child becomes a functioning part of the 'Ummah'. The role of the mother is to retain the emotional bond – especially with her sons.

So the new believer needs careful tutoring in **how** and **when** to tell the family about his/her new faith in Jesus. Ask BMBs you know how they told their families and how they **wish** they had told their families of their commitment to be a follower of Jesus.

Marriage

Finding a partner who is from the same background and who is following Jesus is difficult. In different places the ratios of men and women coming to faith are quite different. In North Africa single men (usually students) are coming to faith in a ratio of 10:1. In Cairo, in one church, there are 5 women BMBs to every BMB man. Various schemes have been proposed to solve this problem. What would you propose?

The marriage ceremony is a problem. Should you have it in a church or in the mosque? How do you make the marriage **legal**?

What about 'mixed' marriages where one partner is a BMB and the other is not? Is divorce acceptable? How and when should a BMB tell his wife what has happened to him?

Then there are the complexities of polygamy. What if a man with multiple wives comes to faith?

The children of the second generation

So often there is a lack of teaching and a lack of models for BMB families. Their children struggle with their identity at school. The school sees them as Muslim children with Muslim names. School consists of a heavy curriculum usually involving a great deal of Islamics.

How does a child answer questions in school? Do we encourage a type of schizophrenia – i.e. one thing at home and another thing in school?

5. A Curriculum for life-changing discipleship

5.1 Stages of discipleship

It is helpful to break down discipleship into stages and phases. This helps curriculum development. These stages are: The seeker – the pre-discipleship phase.

1. The new believer
2. The beginning disciple
3. The growing disciple
4. The serving disciple
5. Shepherds
6. Elders

To make it a little easier to understand we will look at the first three of these.

- **The Seeker**

The goal: To expose the seeker to compelling truth and light touching the heart, the mind and the will so he/she is turned round, is willing to repent of sin and is ready to begin to love Jesus.

The major activity: prayer, evangelism and incarnational ministry

The strategy: To pray for the relatives and close friends of existing BMBs and invite them to begin learning for themselves about 'The Way'. BMBs are the very best evangelists. Help them to use existing corridors of trust.

The tools: These will vary from place to place. It is important to constantly revise the number of useful tools and to add to the 'Tool Box'.

Tools should include:

- ✓ A seeker's Bible reading guide – selected passages from the Bible for them to read
- ✓ Verses to memorise
- ✓ A study of the Book of Genesis – 'Begin at the Beginning'
- ✓ A number of key stories
- ✓ The Jesus Film and other videos
- ✓ Various evangelistic books
- ✓ BCCs, booklets etc.
- ✓ Possibly a visit to a house church (security permitting)

➢ **Stage One: The New Believer**

The goal:

- To ground the new believer in the basics of the faith
- To integrate him/her into a house church
- To prepare him/her for baptism

The major activity: Prayer and initial follow-up – it probably won't be clear when the decision to turn in repentance was made. Be prepared for an overlap between the Seeker Stage and the New Believer Stage.

The strategy (the ideal!):

One or several of the serving disciples should be spending extensive time with the new believers. Much of this time should be one-on-one answering questions from the Bible.

The tools:

- ✓ A follow-up Bible reading schedule
- ✓ The Ten Commandments check list
- ✓ 8-10 session new believers' Bible Study Programme covering the basics of the faith.
- ✓ Ralph Shallis' book, **From Now On**
- ✓ A Bible study of the Book of Luke

➢ **Stage Two: The Beginning Disciple**

The goal: to cover the basic issues involved in following Jesus

The major activity: To integrate the beginning disciple into a discipleship group (it may be a 'cell' or a house group). Usually it is best if the others in the group (except the leader – a shepherd) are at the same level i.e. all are beginning disciples.

The strategy: The disciple grows by learning, sharing, praying and working with a small home fellowship.

There are four areas to focus on in initial, immediate discipleship:

1. **Assurance of salvation**
   - ✓ Walk through the plan of salvation frequently – use the 'Bridge Method', 'The Roman Road', Rev. 3:20 over and over again.
   - ✓ Don't give up. They are 'lost sheep' and it takes time to understand the way home!
   - ✓ Go over what Jesus accomplished in His death and resurrection in great depth.
2. **Learning to walk with God**
   - ✓ Mk. 1:35 – our model is the Lord Jesus – alone with His Father
   - ✓ Teach him/her to pray
   - ✓ Teach him to feed himself from the Bible. Use the four basic questions:

What is the truth? (What should I do?)
What is not right?
How do I put right what is wrong?
How do I stay right?

3. **Being and doing church**
   - ✓ Explain about types of church and the Body of Christ
   - ✓ Explain about communion, worship, group praise
   - ✓ The POUCH concept

   Give them a vision for evangelism – to win their family
   (Noah, Lot, Rahab, Cornelius, Philippian Jailor)

4. **God's nature and His will for our lives**
   - ✓ Why did He save us?
   - ✓ What is God like?

   The tools:
   - ✓ An annual Bible reading schedule
   - ✓ A study of Acts
   - ✓ Teaching on the basics of the spiritual disciplines: prayer, worship, fasting, feeding the spirit and maintaining joy

Each team should develop a well-stocked 'Tool Box' of useful materials for each of these stages. Just looking at these three stages it is clear that there should be an overall strategy of curriculum development for seekers and for the six stages of discipleship.

All sorts of questions arise at this point:

- How can we involve BMBs in the curriculum development?
- How should we teach the lesson plans? Remember that the way people learn is very culture bound. Many people prefer memorizing facts. How do we impact head, hands and heart?
- Do our 'lessons' meet the stated goals? What is the best way to evaluate how well we are doing in our training?
- How do you evaluate the most effective tools in your 'Tool Box' for a particular individual?

5.2 Twelve Suggestions for Curriculum Development

- **Aim at life-changing lessons**

Following Jesus is a way of life. The curriculum (i.e. the collection of lessons in sequence) should ADdress **all** areas of life not just 'the spiritual'.

Each lesson should have its own 'Tool Box':

- ✓ Written materials
- ✓ Cassettes, videos
- ✓ Useful stories etc.

The goal of each lesson ought to help the BMB to experience God and keep growing in love for Him. It should help the BMB understand him/herself (appreciating their new standing in Jesus) and grow in his/her ability to love others and indeed to love all God's creation.

Input from BMBs is vital, so avoid a 'lecture' style. It is best to teach what are often called inductive Bible studies. In this way the members of the group discover the meaning of the passage for themselves. They learn how to apply it to their own cultural setting.

Great emphasis must be given to the fact that the Holy Spirit and the Word of God itself are the authority behind what the Bible teaches. The BMB must understand this and **not** ascribe authority to the ex-pat worker.

- **Focus on the whole Word of God**

The curriculum should help the disciples to go through the Bible and find for themselves the answers to life's questions. So don't just give them the answers! Go to the text of Scripture and help them to seek the answer to their questions from the text of the Bible. This builds up trust in the Word of God as the source of all wisdom. Like Paul in Acts 20:27, teach 'the whole will (counsel) of God'.

- **Teach the lessons in an order appropriate to your group's urgent felt-needs**

There is no correct order in which to teach God's truth. Cognitive learning styles differ in different cultures. Every group needs its own curriculum.

There are perhaps five levels of complexity in teaching – from the simple to the complex:

Level One: Simple translation from what you learned in your own culture – i.e. 'Love one another' is simply said in your host's language.

Level Two: The vocabulary is adjusted to the current cultural idioms.

Level Three: Illustrations are changed to refer to local experiences.

Level Four: Instructions are re-structured to relate to the learning style of the students.

Level Five: The content of the whole lesson is recast to reflect the worldview of the learners.

At which level do you think Paul was operating as he taught the disciples in Romans, Corinthians, Galatians etc?

Again, more advanced BMBs are vital in all this. If it is to **change** lives, the curriculum must **touch** lives – emotionally, intellectually and in the area of the will. Imported material from other cultures rarely accomplishes this. Find out from the more mature BMBs **what works**!

There are two key factors:

- <u>The current felt-needs of the disciples</u>

  Don't stick to a pre-planned sequence of lessons. Teach the group about issues they are currently wrestling with. This will help them to see how the Bible is relevant to their situation.

- <u>The learning style of the specific group</u>

  Ask them how they best remember things. Use stories, proverbs, and examples from real life. Always evaluate afterwards.

- **The curriculum should challenge both the individual and the whole of the culture**

As they interact with a Biblical worldview, the disciples constantly need to see, "I need to change" and "We need to change". As individuals change and as the worshipping community changes, this will begin to challenge "the structures of sin" within the culture.

- **Effective curricula are those that have been widely field-tested**

Curricula need to have exhaustive input from the learners – i.e. the disciples – as well as from those teaching the material. In any course there will be inadequacies. These may be cultural, theological or application weaknesses that become obvious with use. These issues can be altered or eliminated.

- **Effective curricula have a narrow focus but a broad application**

As a discipler of others you need to learn the art of omission! Aim at a narrow focus. Emphasise essential, basic truths that need to be readily reproduced by believers so they can disciple others.

For example: Jesus reduced the innumerable Jewish laws down to two essential, basic laws, ***"You shall love God…and you shall love others as yourself."*** (Mt. 22:37-38) This basic message is easy to understand but it is of very wide application.

Narrowness in content with breadth in application allows for a quick understanding by the disciple. This then leads to an exploration of how to apply this truth in the disciple's particular cultural setting.

- **An effective curriculum integrates all aspects of life**

Be as holistic as you can! Lots of subject matter needs to be included in the curriculum:

- The spirit world
- Rites of passage
- Health
- A theology of work
- God's purpose in history
- Family life and marriage
- Bringing up children etc.

If you don't cover all areas, voids will occur that will be filled from other sources and hinder the disciple from growing. To do all this effectively you will need to spend many hours discussing issues with more mature believers from within your own 'neighbours' culture. If there are none, then ask those from a near culture.

- **Effective curricula are graded**

Jesus said, ***"I have much more to say to you, more than you can bear now."*** (Jn. 16:12)
In Hebrews the writer makes a distinction between teaching the mature in faith and teaching those who are 'babies' in faith. (Heb. 5:11-14) Develop a curriculum for each of the six stages of discipleship. In many ways John's method of teaching in 1 John is the best. In 1 John he has three or four points and he repeats these several times. But he doesn't **just** repeat them. When he gets to a point it is not just review. He repeats the point and then adds to it! This is called 'helical' teaching. It is very effective since it builds constant review into the process of adding information. Study 1 John and you will see 'helical teaching' done brilliantly!

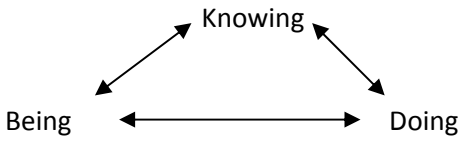
- **Encourage the learning group to build solid relationships**

Group-culture people prefer group activity. So focus your application of principles towards the group, "How are you all going to apply this?" The reason is that group-culture people find it very difficult to take action alone. You should raise questions like, "How can we help Mustafa in his family situation?" So teach, study together, discuss together and make group applications together.

- **Call for immediate action in response to teaching**

As a Westerner, I like facts and I like to ask the question, 'Why?' In other words, I enjoy cognitive knowledge. But I find it much more difficult to take the next step – what am I going to do with this knowledge? Learn how your 'neighbours' learn.

There are three key concepts:

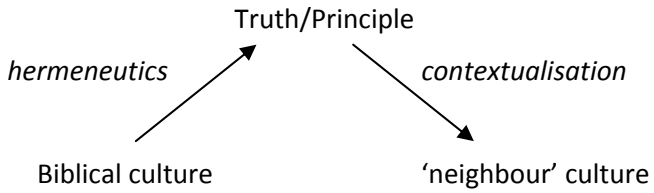


Different cultures emphasise the steps of interaction in different sequences. On the road to Damascus Paul responded as a typical Semitic person, ***"What shall I do?"*** (Acts 22:8, 10).
Arabs usually learn by doing, so reflective action becomes central. Many words of Jesus are action words: give thanks – remember – say – come down – encourage one another – forgive etc.

In 'doing-cultures' it is important to emphasise this as well as reflection on what you do. This leads to second step knowing.

- **The curriculum should build into the disciple an ability to interpret the Bible faithfully**

  You might not want to use the word! But you have to teach them hermeneutics (principles of Biblical interpretation). Essentially this is learning to extract **truth** and **principles** from their cultural setting in both the Old and New Testaments. These truths and principles then need to be put into the context of your Neighbour's culture – the process of contextualisation.



  Both hermeneutics and contextualisation are subjects too large to explore here.

- **As you get into the serving disciple, shepherd and elder stages let the BMBs determine the design of the curriculum**

  Let the ownership be with the national believers as early as you can. Let them design the order and the way in which things are taught. Encourage them to contextualise. Help them to see the line between good contextualisation and the error of syncretism.

6. Finding Biblical Functional Substitutes for Cultural Patterns

A 'functional substitute' is a term borrowed from cultural anthropology. In your discipling of new believers, if you uncritically accept all the cultural practices of our 'neighbours', you may well end up with a very unbiblical lifestyle. The principles of the Kingdom frequently challenge "the world" of our 'neighbours' culture.

All cultures lie under the influence of the principalities and powers and forces of wickedness (Eph. 6:10-11). To some extent all cultures have been demonised. These aspects of the culture have to be "put off". (Col. 3:5-14) However, "putting off" is not enough. If you ask a new believer to abandon some cultural aspect or ceremony without replacing it with something else, you will have an emotional and social void. The emptiness won't last long and the new believer will revert back to previous cultural practices and fall into sin.

What is needed is a Biblically acceptable cultural substitute for the cultural custom that is being "put off" – i.e. it should be replaced with something to "put on".

6.1 <u>Areas in the cultures of our 'neighbours' where we should look for Biblically Functional Substitutes</u>

- <u>Aspects of folk religion and religious rituals</u>

  Ritual and 'magic' fill the emotional, social and physical needs of many people. However, they are permeated with the occult and Biblically functional substitutes are needed. The areas of culture that need "putting off" vary from culture to culture.

  Areas we need to look at include:

  - Agricultural cycles and how they are marked and celebrated
  - Dedication of buildings
  - Protection for travel
  - Protection from curses
  - Attracting the opposite sex
  - Events surrounding human life cycles:
    - conception
    - birth

- naming
- circumcision
- initiation into adulthood
- marriage
- death

As a team, study the various aspects of the culture such as:

- How is property viewed?
- What about domestic and communal authority?
- Who controls labour and productivity?
- Is there a theology of work?
- Who makes decisions in the family?
- What is the place of ritual in the lives of the people?

Also study issues that relate to children such as:

- Praying before and during pregnancy for the mother and the child
- What of the sanctity of life of the unborn?
- Dedicating babies
- Use of songs for baby dedications
- The amount of money spent by families at rites of passage parties

➢ <u>Areas of sickness</u>

Many Muslim cultures have procedures to be followed when someone is sick or has a congenital disease or disability. In urban centres western secularism is replacing some, but not all, of these procedures.

Two suggestions have been made:

a) Retain the relevance of religion in this situation.

b) Meet inherent and felt needs.

Both of these will help avoid a cultural void. Cultural voids occur when believers "take off" the old elements of the occult but don't "put on" anything new. Their felt need remains unmet. Something must fill such voids. Mt. 12:43-45 warns us that the end result might be worse than the situation at the beginning. In the Roman Empire in the second century A.D. Gnosticism filled a cultural void in the church.

Syncretism is an evident sign that Christian workers have not succeeded in filling the voids of felt needs. Cultural voids also give rise to legalism. Luke writes, ***"You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed and all of them are zealous for the law".*** (Acts 21:20) Legalism can easily fill a cultural void.

A church planting team needs to identify potential cultural voids. Neglect in this area will give a new church either a strong pull to syncretism or a pull into formalism and ritual. Another feature of a cultural void is dualism – i.e. God is interested in our future destiny but not in our daily lives. So the best way to deal with Folk Islam and its ability to meet felt needs is **not** to repress it or ignore it, but to replace it with a Biblical functional substitute.

➢ <u>The family and sickness</u>

Church leaders can:

- advise adoption over divorce in the case of barrenness
- Provide assistance to the sick and to those who have lost loved ones
- Gather for prayer at the home of the sick – James 5:14-18
- Encourage a family commitment to Christ

6.2 Who should start the Biblically Functional Substitutes?

Should it be expatriate church planters or national leaders when there are some? The answer is that **neither** should act independently of the other. If ex-pats take charge of the process they bring in foreign elements. Legalism easily sets in and ex-pats become police officers enforcing new laws! If only nationals are involved then the danger is syncretism.

6.3 The Goal of Biblically Functional Substitutes

There are two goals:

i) To clarify the Gospel and God's Word within cultural forms

ii) To introduce a better life than the one offered by the previous belief system

Biblically functional substitutes must present **visual** and mental images that attest to a living, active, caring God who promises believers present assistance and who guarantees hope for the future.

In Hebrews the author makes a comparison between Jesus and their previous religious rituals:

- Jesus is better than the angels – 1:4
- Jesus provides a better covenant than the first – 7:22
- Jesus is a better high priest – 8:6
- Jesus offered a better sacrifice than animals – 9:23
- The Kingdom is better than "the promised land" – 11:16
- etc.

We need to demonstrate the same sort of differences in regard to Islam and show how they lead to a better way of life.

6.4 Guidelines in conveying Functional Substitutes

- Identify the traditional components and functions
- Identify areas of compatibility
- Identify areas in need of change
- Implement the revision then review and adjust as needed

The goal is to develop national leaders who understand the Biblical principles and apply them in a culturally relevant way. To do this they must have a deep respect for their own culture, yet be willing to evaluate it and jettison all that is not helpful for believers – some of which will be specifically harmful. This process begins with group analysis of a question such as:

*What are the components/institutions regarding **weddings** in this culture?*
How do "things" work?

Proceed with steps as follows:

- Isolate all the component parts
- Compare each part with Biblical principles
- Discover the function of that part in terms of felt needs in the culture – why is it there?
- Determine what can be kept unchanged in that component and what must be changed
- Find a Biblically functional substitute for the component that meets the emotional, social or physical felt need

In this way ceremonies and rituals can be transformed. These decisions should be re-evaluated over a period of time.

Summary

Most Muslim peoples operate holistically. For Gospel is to be relevant to them it must be accompanied by a holistic worldview. To develop this worldview there is a need to introduce Biblically functional substitutes that are culturally acceptable and meaningful. The dangers are very great if cultural voids are created!

7. A Strategy of Reproduction

Everything alive was created to reproduce itself. Our goal is **not** just to see 'neighbours' saved or to plant churches. We want to start churches that will rapidly reproduce themselves by starting many other churches that will also reproduce themselves rapidly.

The usual perception in the West is that church planting is a two-step process:

Step One: When our church is large enough, strong enough and trained enough then we will move to step two.

Step Two: Start to plant out another church.

But step two rarely ever happens!

I would like to introduce you to another **Two-step Process** for church starting:

1. An element of the miraculous

Jesus said, ***"I will build my church!"*** (Mt. 16:18). In looking at the history of church plants among our 'neighbours', there is always an element of the miraculous in the initial indication of where to start and with whom to start.

Often someone is really open to the Gospel and prepared by the Holy Spirit. Some groups call this person a 'man of peace' – see Lk. 10. In Luke 10 Jesus told His disciples that as they went where He sent them, He Himself would come to those places. So when Jesus told His disciples to, "Stay in the house" of a man of peace, the implication is that He had **readied the harvest**.

There are three good examples of a 'man of peace – or better 'a person of peace': **Lydia**, **Cornelius** and **the Samaritan woman** at the well. There are three characteristics common to each of these three people:

- They were receptive.
- They were people of reputation – whether good or bad.
- They were able to influence others.

The Gospel then flowed from them to their *'oikos'* (household or circle of influence).

So prayer is a very vital part of **Step One**. It is also important to spread the 'seed' of the Gospel widely and then to expect **and look for** signs of a miraculous response. In this context dreams and visions are often common.

2. Never do what the new believers can't do

- Don't preach to them 45 min. messages that would get high grades in a homiletics class!
- Don't quote famous preachers and learned commentators. Why? Your new disciples might learn a lot from the message, but they will say to themselves, *"I'll never be able to preach like that. It will take years of study and learning and I'll never be able to cope!"*
- So limit yourself to short messages – a story perhaps – with just one point. Your aim is that the new disciples will say, *"Well, perhaps I could share a message like that."*
- Don't pray long and deeply theological prayers.
- Don't introduce non-indigenous worship songs, styles or instruments.
- Constantly ask yourself, *"Am I a good model that is easy for new believers to copy?"* They should be able to do everything you do.
- As they mature, you can advance (longer messages etc.). Remember that your life **will be** copied and **should be** copied!

This is the art of reproduction.

8. Moving towards a Believing Community

In the past, the emphasis was on evangelism by winning individuals. Today the emphasis is on evangelisation by multiplying churches. This reflects the growing awareness of the importance of community and the place of the church in God's plan. Clearly, **the goal of evangelism** is not merely to make disciples, since this doesn't do justice to the Biblical understanding of the church. **The goal of evangelism is the formation of a Christian community.**

There are a few implications to this:

- The evangelistic task isn't complete until it becomes self-perpetuating. Jesus didn't separate follow up from evangelism. It was all in the same package – "making disciples".
- The church is "the community of God's people" with some structure based on some form of large-group **and** small-group gatherings.
- Evangelism and discipleship must be a team-based ministry for neither Jesus nor Paul normally evangelised alone.

We have mainly focussed on one-on-one discipleship. Yet our goal is **church planting movements**. A key factor is to see 'neighbours' journey **together** to Jesus and enter the Kingdom **together**.

At first glance it is true that in the ministry of Jesus the focus was on key **individuals**. But, although He called them as individuals, some of them were brothers and others were business partners. Jesus and His team demonstrated community as they walked, talked, ate, served and stayed together.

When you read Acts you begin to see the development of a believing community and how it reproduced itself. With the exception of Philip, all ministry is carried out with others and not as an isolated individual.

We must always remember that our goal is **believing communities** that will have the potential to change society round about them.

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*Believers from a Muslim background