

*Technical Explanation: Each lesson needs around 5000 words (story plus lesson) I use the formula where the number of words * .006 = time. So, 5000 words will equal 30 minute of lesson. I also calculate that every question = about 3 minutes of discussion. The discussion times can be much longer if the teacher wishes. Most lessons have story A, lesson A, question set A, story B, lesson B, question set B. My goal has been to produce 30 minute lessons accompanied by 30 minutes of discussion. If the VCDs are around 1 hour in length, then two lessons should fit onto one CD.*

Lesson One

Gaining an acceptance

Technical Notes (17 minutes lesson)

This lesson is a bit shorter, as it is assumed that time will be needed to introduce the study, set up equipment, get to know other students, and pray for the course.

Story: 1692 words = 10 minutes

Lesson: 1,100 words = 7 minutes

Question set: 10 questions = 30 minutes

Story

Mr. Li had only recently arrived in the Middle East. He was excited to be there, and looked forward to sharing Jesus with Muslim people. However, the culture and the people were all very strange to him, and he spent the first few weeks simply adjusting to his new surroundings. He was surprised to discover how hot it was during the summer, with daytime temperatures rising to over 40 degrees Celsius. Thankfully the weather cooled off in the evening, so he could sleep very comfortably. People told him that during the winter he should expect cold, rain and perhaps snow. It was hard to believe since the summer was so warm.

Mr. Li's job was working in a hospital, overseeing the sweepers and cleaners. All of the cleaners were Muslims, most from other countries. Many of the cleaners were from very poor backgrounds, and who were not very clean themselves. Mr. Li had to work hard to monitor their work and encourage them to do a good job.

Mr. Li had come to the Middle East with a desire to share the gospel with Muslim people. So, each morning when he would meet together with the sweepers, he would assign them their cleaning duties. Using his broken English, he would welcome them to work that morning, and then tell them that he had a word of wisdom for the day. Usually he chose something from the teachings of Jesus. Most of them didn't know much English, and MR. Li didn't know the local language, so the cleaners would sit quietly while he read to them a Bible verse and tried to encourage them in their work and attitudes. Then we would assign them their cleaning duties for the day. While this was Mr. Li's official work, his heart's desire was to witness to the national people and plant a church among them. The problem was Mr. Li lived on the hospital compound with other Asians. It was quite hard to meet any national people. Then one day God opened a door of opportunity for Mr. Li.

One day, one of the western doctors in the hospital, Dr. Wilson, who was also a believer, stopped Mr. Li in a hallway. Dr. Wilson had noticed Mr. Li's Bible and recognized him

as a Christian. However, the two seldom saw each other at the hospital. That day, however, the doctor asked Mr. Li if he would like to accompany him on a visit one of the local leaders. Mr. Li's heart was filled with thankfulness. Finally God was opening a door of opportunity for him, and he graciously accepted Dr. Wilson's invitation.

That evening, Dr. Wilson took Mr. Li in his car and drove across town to where the local leader or sheik lived. They drove into the more modern area of the city and parked the car in front of a large building with a small garden in front of it. Together they walked up to the front door and rang the bell. A young man met them at the door and welcomed them. As they entered the house, they removed their shoes, and stepped onto a very expensive looking Persian carpet. They were shown into a very long room with large chairs ornately carved from wood. After a few minutes the local ruler and another well dressed man entered the room.

Mr. Li and Dr. Wilson rose to their feet. The two Arab men shook the doctor's hand and then Mr. Li's. They seemed to barely notice Mr. Li. They sat for a few minutes and the doctor exchanged greetings with the sheik, asking him how he was, how his family was, and the sheik asked about the hospital. The sheik and doctor Wilson seemed to be well acquainted.

After a few minutes of small talk, a young man came to the door and announced that the food was ready. They rose and the sheik motioned them towards the door. Dr. Wilson indicated that the sheik should go first. The sheik insisted that the doctor should go first. In the end Dr. Wilson accepted and turned to the door. Mr. Li quietly followed. They entered into another room where they sat on the floor before a low table covered with many different kinds of food and drink. Then another young man entered with a large bowl of warm water and a towel. The doctor dipped his right hand into the bowl and then dried it on the towel. Mr. Li was unsure what to do, so he did just as the doctor had done. The sheik and the other Arab man also washed their right hands and then indicated that they should eat. On the table was a very large plate with a huge pile of rice crowned with pieces of meat. The host poured a creamy white liquid over the rice and indicated that they should start. The sheik and his friend moved around the other side of the table. Mr. Li waited to see what would happen. The Arab men placed their hands directly into the plate of rice, taking a handful of rice and liquid, squeezing them to form a lump. Then they flipped the balls of rice into their mouths using their thumbs. The doctor tried it but was having a hard time. Mr. Li decided he should try. Placing his hand into the food, he discovered that it was quite hot. He tried squeezing the rice but it just came out between his fingers. The Arab men were smiling and someone offered Dr. Wilson a spoon. He shook his head and tried harder.

"Look" the sheik smiled. "Try this." He then ripped off a small piece of flat bread and used it to pinch the food. Mr. Li followed and this time was successful. The food had a strong rather sour taste. Then the men dug their hands in again, mixing it with small pieces of meat they ripped off with their hands. Mr. Li recognized the meat as sheep meat. The large platter contained ribs with meat attached to it.

Their sheik continued to eat as long as his guests were eating. After a while, the doctor stopped eating. Mr. Li also stopped wanting to be courteous. When they were all done, the sheik called out and the young man entered the room with more warm water and another towel. They each washed their right hands and then dried them on the towel. Then they moved back into the sitting room.

As Mr. Li sat in a large, uncomfortable chair, he wondered what I should say to his host. He silently prayed, but wondered how he could even speak to such a wealthy man. He knew nothing of what this man faced each day. How could he, a lowly worker say anything that this man would even consider? He didn't have time to think any further, for the sheik asked the Dr. Wilson about him.

"Where is this man from?"

"My friend, Mr. Li is from China. He works at the hospital."

"Oh, China," the sheik smiled and turned to Mr. Li. "Are you a Muslim?"

Mr. Li was surprised at the direct question. "No" he said. "I am not."

"That's too bad" the Sheik said, "You must not have heard about our great religion. I am sure once you hear, you will be happy to become a Muslim."

Mr. Li stared. He didn't know what to say.

"Let me tell you about our prophet." The sheik continued. "He was the greatest man to ever live. God sent him to be a prophet to all people, and through him, God revealed his word, the Qur'an. This is God's message to all mankind." The sheik smiled warmly at Mr. Li. "Do you have a Qur'an?"

Mr. Li wasn't sure how to answer. "No" he said truthfully, "I do not."

"I will get you one," The sheik was now excited. "What language would you like it in?" He paused. "The Qur'an is always in Arabic, but it is now being made available with different languages that accompany the Arabic. Would you like English or Chinese? I have English ones here in the house."

Mr. Li did not know what to do. He did not want to refuse his host. He really didn't want a Qur'an. "English is fine." He managed to say. The sheik smiled, and began talking about the glorious religion of Islam and how it unites all men together as brothers.

Dr. Wilson tried a few times to say things, but he never managed to counter the sheik's comments. After an hour the doctor began to prepare for leaving. As they rose, the sheik smiled and told them "I'm so glad that both of you have come to our country. In your countries, you did not have a chance to see the glories of Islam first hand. Here you will be able to see how wonderful our society is, and experience Islam for yourselves. I'm sure that given time, you will have to agree with me that Islam is the most wonderful religion on earth." He shook Mr. Li's hand. "There are a few Muslims in your country, but, in-sha-allah, some day all of your countrymen will recognize the superiority of Islam, and the truths in our glorious Qur'an. At that point the young man appeared at the door with a Qur'an in his hands. He reverently placed it into Mr. Li's hands as they departed.

Once he was home, Mr. Li had time to think about the visit. He had come to this country as a messenger, but he was starting to understand that the local people did not want to hear anything he had to say. They did not consider him to be a messenger. In fact the opposite was true. They believed that they had the true religion and that Mr. Li needed to convert to their religion. How was he, a foreigner going to share Christ with these people? Even Dr. Wilson hadn't been able to say anything. How was he, a mere sweeper going to win Muslims to Christ?"

Lesson (A)

When a Christian worker first arrives in a new culture he faces a credibility problem. He comes as a messenger of the Gospel, hopefully having prepared himself before hand and hopefully with some ministry experience in his own cultural setting. He should have a good knowledge of the Bible, an understanding of what the Gospel message is, and a tool-box which contains some useful tools for sharing that message.

Once the Christian worker arrives on location, he will usually discover a credibility problem. Why should anyone listen to him? He doesn't speak the language, doesn't know the culture and isn't aware of the issues that people face among whom he is hoping to develop a ministry or plant a church. Thus, his first job is to overcome the hurdles that keep him from being accepted as a valid messenger, that is, someone who can speak into the local situation with insight and understanding.

Language

The first task the Christian worker faces is that of learning language. This is not just learning to chat with friends and neighbors. It requires learning to express himself in terms which communicate deep truths. This is not a simple task. Language learning is a major effort that requires hours of time and great amounts of energy. No language can be learned in a couple of months, even if someone spends their full time in concentrated study. Everyone, however, can learn another language. For some it will be harder, and for some, a bit easier.

Culture

As with language, many new workers assume that cultural adaptation is a relatively easy thing, simply learning how to act in different situations. While this is the first step, you may never grasp what is really happening in many situations if they do not have a deeper feel for the culture, and the principles that are coming into play.

The main tool that new workers must use in learning culture is that of learning language. Language affects culture, and culture affects language. How can the new worker relate to his audience and come across as a credible messenger if he does not understand language and culture?

In several further lessons we will examine more closely some universal cultural patterns, expressed in the terms guilt-based, fear-based and shame-based worldviews.

Credibility

Why should anyone listen to you? When you arrive you will know little of the language, the culture, the local situation and the struggles that the local people are going through. When missionaries first approached the nomadic Bedouin of Arabia, they were not accepted. They knew nothing of life in the desert, herding animals, and inter-tribal situations. The Bedouin saw the missionaries as outsiders whose message wasn't relevant to their situation. In order to bridge this gap, we as messengers of the Gospel must address several issues:

Know who you are and your role in society

What will people think of you when you are living among them? Will they think of you as a missionary or will you simply be another Asian living down the street? Perhaps once they get to know you they will think of you as a simple Jesus-loving fool from a foreign country who happens to live next door.

Let's think for a few minutes. What do Muslims think of when they think of a godly or religious person?

For instance, a religious Muslim man would:

- Pray five times a day facing Mecca
- attend weekly prayers at the mosque
- read and chant his Qur'an, often in public
- often have loud chanting or preaching playing in the background of his home or workplace
- wear special clothing, a robe and head-dress, and sandals
- perhaps have a dash of red dye in his beard, and perhaps a special beard that signifies his religious standing

If religious people are easily identified in your target culture, how are the people around you going to know you are godly? Why should they listen to you speak on the topic of religion if you do not appear religious?

For many Christians the only public thing we do is 'talk about Christ.' Everything else is done in secret. We don't pray in public, read our Bibles out loud in the market-place, or have loud Christian music playing. When we become missionaries, we are faced with the challenge of learning how to be transparent in our Christian lives, and allow others around us to see us as 'people who are deeply in love with Jesus.' But should we do the same as the Muslims, and parade our religion before men?

Questions for Reflection and Group Discussion (A)

Stop the video here and discuss together what the Bible tells us in Matthew 6:1-8.

1. Should Christians parade their religion before men?
2. If people cannot see that we are religious or love Jesus how will they know what it is to be a Christian? What do you think should be the evidences of Godliness in our lives?

Lesson (B)

One of the ways to demonstrate our faith and the love that is within our hearts is to serve others. Start asking the Lord to show you opportunities where you can serve those around you. Your acts of service will speak loudly, and will be remembered long after the things you have said are forgotten.

Build bridges into the lives of others

As you meet new people in your target culture, try to find things that are of common interest between you. If you have no common interests, then develop some. This means that you have to become interested in the things that they are interested in. Over the years missionaries have had to develop interests in the history, politics, economy, religion, sports and local issues of their target communities. In order to enter into conversations and identify with your audience you too will have to expand your areas of interest. When you can engage your audience in conversation about the issues that concern them, you move a step closer to being seen as a credible messenger.

Work at becoming an insider

This is more than having knowledge and the ability to talk about local subjects. 'Becoming an insider' includes living and acting as an insider. It has to do with everything about you, from the clothing you wear, how you walk down the street, to what time you eat your meals, and what you eat. The more time you spend with local people, the easier this will become. Being adopted by a local family or tribe is a great help. This usually only happens when we display our weaknesses and ask our Muslim friends or neighbors for their help and support. Your weakness in the area of culture and language is often the key to opening up opportunities in the lives of others. Rather than approaching people as a teacher, approach them initially as a learner. If you are willing to learn from them, they may eventually become willing to learn from you.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion (B)

1. Think of your present experience. When you witness to others, do they accept you as a credible messenger? Why or why not?
2. How are you seen in the society around you now? Are you seen as a religious person? Why is this?
3. Have you or any in the group ever lived in another culture? Have any of you learned another language? If so, how hard or easy was it?
4. Once you reach your target ministry area, do you think people will accept you as a valid messenger? Why or why not?
5. How much do you know about your target people, their history and their culture? Are there ways you can improve your background knowledge so that you can better understand them?
6. What are some of the evidences of Godliness in your present culture? Will these be the same in your target culture?
7. Read 1 Corinthians 9:18-23. What do you think these verses mean?
8. In what ways can you also 'become all things to all people' among the people you work with?

Lesson Two

Becoming a Messenger

Technical Notes (29 minutes lesson)

Story A	1353 words = 8 minutes
Lesson A:	1139 words = 7 minutes
Question set A:	5 questions = 15 minutes
Story B	470 words = 3 minutes
Lesson B	1837 words = 11 minutes
Question Set B:	6 questions = 15 minutes

Story

After his visit to the sheik's house, Mr. Li was very discouraged. Back in his home country he had been looked to up to by those in the church as someone who was able to share his faith with others. People knew him and respected him. Here he was a stranger, just another Asian worker who walked passed people on the street without being greeted.

As Mr. Li prayed about what he should do, he felt the Lord directing him to learn the local language. One of the men on his cleaning crew, Ahmed, was from a neighboring country, but could speak the language. So the next day Mr. Li approached him and asked him if he would help him. At first Ahmed was very reluctant. How could he teach? He was only a sweeper.

"May I ask you questions?" Mr. Li asked. "For example, what is this?" He held up a pen. The man brightened. "That is a *gulum hibr*."

"See," Mr. Li smiled. "That wasn't so hard."

That afternoon Mr. Li asked about a number of items and learned ten new words which he wrote down. All of them were the names of common things: a door, a window, paper, pencil, book and so on. That night he worked hard to memorize them. The next morning he asked his helper, Ahmed, to test him. Mr. Li didn't do very well. Yes, he knew the names, but he had trouble pronouncing the names correctly. So during the day, whenever he had a chance he would take out his paper and go over the list. That night he obtained ten new words and memorized them. It was going to be hard work, but he had made a start. Mr. Li figured that if he memorized 1000 words, he would be able to talk to anyone. If he learned ten new words every day, he would reach his goal of a thousand words in three months. Then he might try sharing something of the gospel with the sweepers and cleaners that he worked with.

At the end of three months, Mr. Li was very much encouraged. Everyone seemed pleased to be helping him, and he was now putting simple sentences together. This enabled him to go shopping, and order meals at the nearby eating house. While he enjoyed the rice and bean meals, he was struggling to enjoy eating bread everyday for breakfast and lunch. But Mr. Li was determined to become a part of the community that he lived in, and that included eating local food.

Sharing the gospel, however, was much more difficult. Mr. Li realized that he didn't have the right words to use. One night he had an opportunity share with Ahmed a little about his religion. He tried explaining that his holy book was the Bible, and that God spoke to him as he read. Ahmed looked very puzzled. "God speaks to you?" he asked, shaking his head. "How is this possible?" Ahmed looked very concerned. "Mr. Li, do you hear voices?"

Mr. Li was alarmed. "No" he said. "I don't hear voices. As I read, God speaks to me."

Ahmed shook his head. "No" he insisted. "Muhammad was the last prophet. He heard God's voice. Only prophets heard God speak, and our prophet was the last one to hear God speak. It cannot be."

As Ahmed left, Mr. Li was very disappointed. How was he going to share the gospel? He didn't know where to start. That night Mr. Li poured out his heart to God. He had worked hard to start learning the language, but now even that didn't seem to help much. That night Mr. Li recommitted himself to learning more language. He needed to learn to express himself better, and he needed to learn the Muslim religious words.

The next week as Mr. Li was working around the hospital he noticed a young western man sitting in a courtyard, reading a book. As Mr. Li walked passed he recognized the book as being a Bible. After finishing his errand, Mr. Li returned and saw that young man still sitting there. Using his best English he approached him and smiled. The young man looked up and also smiled.

"Bible?" Mr. Li asked.

"Yes" the young man smiled. "Are you a Christian?"

Mr. Li nodded. "Are you?" he asked back.

The young man's smile broadened. "Yes" he said. "Sit down."

Mr. Li. was overwhelmed with joy at meeting another believer. He sat down and together they tried to communicate with one another. The young man's name was David. He was from America.

"I am from China" Mr. Li said proudly. "I have come here to tell people about Jesus."

David looked worried and glanced around him nervously. "Not so loud" he said. "Someone might hear you."

Mr. Li was puzzled. Everyone in the hospital knew he was a Christian. Why was this brother so worried?" They spoke in hushed tones. Mr. Li explained that he was learning the language, but was still struggling with communicating to people about Christ. "Can you help me know how to tell people about Jesus?" he asked David.

"Sure" David said, "I can help you." He took a small yellow booklet from his pocket. "I use this book, it is called the Four Spiritual Laws. I was training in using this back home in America." He handed it to Mr. Li. "Here, you can have this one, I have lots more."

Mr. Li was very happy to have a tool that he could use to help him share Christ. After their visit, David and Mr. Li decided to meet in three days time in the same courtyard.

That evening Mr. Li read through the small booklet. “Yes” he thought. “I will try and use this with Ahmed and see if he understands the gospel better.”

Several days later Ahmed and several other sweepers were sitting around their small work room and the discussion turned to religion. The men proudly explained to Mr. Li that they prayed five times a day. “Do you pray?” one of them asked.

“Yes” Mr. Li was happy to have a chance to talk about his faith. “I pray many times a day.”

“Really?” they said. “We don’t see you pray.”

“I pray every morning and evening, and also while I am walking around the hospital.”

The men started laughing.

“What’s so funny?” Mr. Li asked.

“When we pray, we face the Holy city of Mecca, and bow down. How can you do that walking around?” they laughed.

“Oh” Mr. Li said. “I don’t do formal prayers like you do. I just talk to God.”

“You talk to God?”

“And he hears God talk to him!” Ahmed added.

The men turned to Mr. Li in amazement. “Do you hear voices?” one of them asked in amazement.

Mr. Li shook his head. “It’s more than that. If you would like to learn about my religion, I would be happy to tell you.”

“Sure” one of them said. “Let’s learn about Chinese religion.

“This isn’t Chinese religion.” Mr. Li said. “I follow Jesus. It’s all written in my Holy books, the Bible.”

“OK” one of them said. “Tell us about your religion.”

Mr. Li took out the small yellow booklet that David had given him. He opened to the first page and read: “God loves you, and offers a wonderful plan for your life.” Then he quoted John 3:16. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes...”

“Stop” the men said. “God does not have a son. You speak blasphemy!”

Mr. Li looked up, startled by their anger.

“God is one” they said. “God is complete”

“God does not take or give in marriage” another insisted.

“God did not have a son” another shouted, and they started talking so fast that Mr. Li could not follow what was being said. After a few minutes the angry men left. Mr. Li looked at the small yellow booklet. It had been no help at all. In fact, it had only made his friends angry.

Lesson (A)

Mr. Li’s story reminds us that we should have a plan if we want to share the gospel with Muslims; we should have the right tools. Every workman has a toolbox. Before he begins

a career in construction he is apprenticed and trained in the use of his tools. Then, using his tools and the materials at hand, he is ready to begin construction.

Christian ministry such as church-planting is very similar in that the end goal is the “construction of a church,” that is, a community of believers meeting together, feeding each other spiritually, and multiplying themselves. The work of the evangelist is to begin the construction. Like the workman, the evangelist should have his evangelism-toolbox filled with useful tools.

No workman would imagine constructing a building with just one tool, no matter how proficient he might be in the use of that tool. Even two tools would be very limiting. A hammer and a saw might just be sufficient, but construction would be slow and tedious. A box or even a cart full of tools is far better.

In these lessons we will introduce you to three basic principles that must be considered when evangelizing and planting a church. In the third set of lessons we will provide you with a sampling of tools that are available to help evangelists to Muslims. Given the right situation, these tools have proven to be effective when sharing the gospel with Muslims.

A number of years ago a missionary in Yemen observed a team of Western agricultural experts trying to teach Yemeni farmers how to grow crops in dry conditions. The Westerner experts set up their equipment, laid out their fields, and applied their tools and techniques, which had been developed in ultramodern Western universities. Amazingly, the Yemeni farmers got better crops from their fields than the frustrated Western experts next door. True, the Westerners knew some things that the Yemenis didn’t know, but the old Yemeni farmers knew what had worked for them, their parents, and their grandparents for years.

In growing his own garden, the missionary learned from the Western experts that the soil was deficient in potassium, so he added potassium. From his Arab neighbors he learned that there was a particular kind and quality of dust found only in certain locations. When that dust was finely sprinkled on his garden it protected the plants from the burning sun while allowing light to filter through. The missionary’s garden looked dusty and dirty but it grew a tremendous harvest.

Like that dust, some of the tools and techniques we will suggest are not fancy and glamorous. They may seem simple and basic, even dusty and drab. But our goal is the fruit they produce, not their appearance.

When it comes to evangelism and church planting among Muslims, there are very few experts. However, during the last twenty five years more and more missionaries have become successful evangelists and church-planters.

A young missionary tells us the following story:

“When I met some successful evangelists to Muslims, I was amazed at their success, but then I realized that their success lay in their toolbox and the techniques with which they

applied these tools. As a result, I've made it my business to dig around in other folks' toolboxes asking silly questions like "What is this?" and "How do you use that?" and "What else do you use?" I then added some of these tools to my own toolbox, and started to train and encourage others in their use."

Now there is a danger here. You might assume that once you have the right tools and some experience in how to use them, you will automatically become a successful evangelist and church planter. Nothing can be further from the truth. The Bible clearly teaches us that "unless God builds the house, those that labor, labor in vain" (Psalm 127:1). We are God's workmen, and thus should be trained in the use of the Scriptures and "always ... ready to explain it" (1 Peter 3:15). But it is the Holy Spirit that does the real work in drawing men to God.

Never assume that you can make someone a Christian. Only the Holy Spirit can open eyes to make them see truth. It is God who stands at the door and knocks, not the evangelist.

Remember that success in ministry does not come simply from having and using the right tools. We can have the right tools and use them well, and still may not see results. Results come from God and the grace of God at work at the time of witnessing, and also with God's timing in the situation, for the Spirit blows when and where He chooses. We must be prepared as workers, and allow God to order the events of our lives to bring us into situations where He can use us.

What, then, is our role? Our role is to be a worker, equipped and ready for use. We should have our toolbox ready, be trained in the use of our tools, know the Scriptures well, and be available to the Holy Spirit. When people are seeking, God usually leads them to those who have prepared themselves to be useful. The evangelist must prayerfully listen and consider the situation. Then, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, he opens his toolbox and chooses the appropriate tool. If he doesn't have the right one, the evangelist needs to arrange the situation so he can get help from his fellow workers.

It is well to remember that different tools fit certain personalities and certain opportunities. The outgoing evangelist in the marketplace needs different tools from those counseling children. It would be impossible for us to provide you with every tool that you need for every circumstance. So we have chosen a small sampling of the tools that are available and will practice them in the next set of lessons.

Along with tools, we must also look at the spirit in which the tools are used. A tool used without love is useless. Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 13 that whatever we do, we must do it in the spirit of love. The first verse could perhaps be rendered: "Even though I speak the language fluently, and have perfectly prepared my presentation, and understand all there is to know about culture and worldview, and can discern the personal perspective of the person I am talking to, if I do not have love, I can do nothing."

Love compasses more than we realize in our culture context. It means more than not hating, it means more than being generous or long suffering. It may also be expressed by language learning and long term commitment. As we minister to people, can they see the love of Christ in us and our actions?

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion (A)

1. Have you led people to Christ before? Was it in your culture, or a radically different culture?
2. How many evangelism tools do you have in your toolbox that you can use without much preparation? Do you go through the same presentation every time or use different techniques with different people?
3. Read II Corinthians 5: 9 – 14. What are some of the things that motivated Paul and his companions to witness for the Lord?
4. What motivates you to be a messenger of God's grace and salvation?
5. How can you bring more love, or a more loving spirit into your evangelistic efforts as a team?

STORY (B)

When Mr. Li stopped for afternoon break, a message was waiting for him. "You are wanted in the director's office at 4:00." Mr. Li frowned. He wondered what the message could be about. He quickly drank his tea, and then made his way through the hospital to the director's office. The secretary outside asked him to sit in the waiting room. After a long wait, she came and asked him to follow her. A few moments later she showed him into a large office. The director was sitting behind his large desk, apparently hard at work. Then he looked up.

"Mr. Li, I have been reading the reports we have about your work. You are a good worker. For the first time in a long time the sweepers are working well, and the hospital is clean. You have done a good job." He paused. "However, I have heard reports that you are preaching your religion all over the hospital. This will not do. This is your place of work, not a place of preaching." The director looked stern. "Mr. Li, we in this country are Muslims. We follow the true religion. Some day you may come to accept Islam as the true way." He paused again. "Mr. Li, I am responsible for the people who work in my hospital. We have many good Muslims here, and I am responsible for them. Mr. Li, those who do not follow Islam are going to hell. It is my duty to protect my workers, yes, I am responsible for even their very souls, as long as they are working here for me. So I ask you, please refrain from preaching your religion here in this hospital. You are here to work, not preach. If you insist on preaching, I will have you thrown out of this country and sent back to China.

He stood and frowned at Mr. Li. "If you want to be a Christian, you can be a Christian. This is a free country. But you are not allowed to preach your religion here. This is a place of work, not a place of preaching."

He picked up a sheet of paper. “I am going to be watching you very closely. If I see another report about you preaching, I will take action.” He paused. “You can go now, but no more preaching.”

Mr. Li turned and left. He didn’t know what to say. Back in his room he threw himself onto his bed, and then slipped to his knees. Pouring out his heart to God, he sobbed and asked God to forgive him for being failure. He had come to this Muslim country to preach Christ, and now he was forbidden to do so. How would he ever win a Muslim to Christ? How would he ever start a church?

Lesson (B)

Several years ago a young missionary began to search for successful evangelists to Muslims. He looked in four major Middle Eastern countries and tried to find missionaries who had led Muslims to Christ and had started groups of believers. He wanted to learn from these people and study the tools that they used. As he searched, he began to notice certain patterns emerging.

One of the first things he discovered was that there was not one personality type common to these evangelists. Some evangelists were very bold and upfront but the most numerous were quiet, non-confrontational people.

These evangelists came from a variety of backgrounds and ages. Some were Westerners and some were Asian. Some were believers from a Christian background, some from a Buddhist background, and others were believers with a Muslim heritage.

However, when he had finished assessing the tools, techniques and personalities behind them, he felt he was still missing something. This bothered him and he began searching again. There was some mysterious quality about these people that made them attractive to non-believers; something that was almost magnetic; something that drew people to them.

As he searched the young missionary asked God to show him what he was looking for. A few weeks later the young missionary was visited, by an older veteran missionary from another country. One evening the two of them passed by the local Arab church, where the young missionary needed to stop for a few minutes to see someone. The youth meeting was just finishing and the older missionary spent a couple of minutes in the courtyard talking with some of the local youth while the missionary went about his business. Most of these young men were on the periphery of the church, attending only occasionally. The young missionary quickly finished his business and the two moved on to another appointment.

The next afternoon, the young missionary had a surprise visit from several of these young men. They arrived at his door inquiring about the old man who had been at the church the night before. They wanted to visit him. When the young missionary explained that the old man had left the country that morning, they were downcast and commented that they wanted to study the Bible and they wanted this old man to teach them! After they left the young missionary sat in his chair amazed. He had lived in this neighborhood

for more than a year. One of these boys had helped him find the apartment he was living in. But during that year, none of them had asked him to lead a Bible study. In fact, when these young men were around the young missionary, the discussion was seldom about spiritual things.

Yet, when the old missionary talked with them for ten minutes, they were ready to commit themselves to attending a Bible Study. The young missionary felt hurt, but also felt challenged. He needed to find out what it was that had attracted them to the old missionary. The more he thought about it the more he recognized this quality in all the successful evangelists he had met.

Old stories he had heard took on new meaning. The people who “approached the evangelist” in the coffee shop; the rich court judge who came late one night to ask about God; the willingness of people to study the Bible with them. These things happened to other people but never to the young missionary. In almost every case, there was something about these successful missionaries that made them attractive. People almost “wanted” to study the Bible with them. It was humbling for the young missionary to realize that he didn’t have this quality. It was challenging and almost frightening to try and find out why.

Taking pen and paper, he began to write out a short list of qualities common to these evangelists. First, these evangelists were intimately familiar with their Bibles. They knew their Bibles, they studied their Bibles. When asked a spiritual question, their first reaction was to reach for the Bible. Each of them loved the Word, and was a student of the Word. People around them had the impression that these were men and women of God. Even in common conversation, references to spiritual things were a normal part of their exchange. It wasn’t forced; it flowed out of a life steeped in the Word of God.

This saturation with the Word of God made these people recognizable as men and women of God. He wrote that down, but knew there was still more to it than this.

The young missionary pondered over the matter for some weeks, and then, as he visited with one of the successful evangelist he broached the subject with him. The young missionary explained all that he had found, but admitted that he was not convinced this was all. There was still a missing component.

The evangelist listened thoughtfully, and then he smiled. “I’ll tell you what it is.”

The young missionary smiled too, thinking, “Sure, but it’s not that easy.”

“It’s the Cross,” the evangelist explained. “Go again and examine every case you are studying. See if there is not some point, or a number of points in each of their lives, where these men or women reached a tremendous crisis; a crisis that destroyed them; a crisis that brought them to their knees; a crisis that stripped them of themselves, where they died to themselves, and cast their whole lives onto God.”

“A Cross Experience. Death to self. Casting themselves on God.” The words rung in the young missionary’s ears. Just one year before, he and his wife had faced a tremendously difficult experience. It had brought them to their knees. It had crushed them, almost destroyed them, and had left them asking “Why?” The only answer they could find was that they needed crushing so that their old natures would be destroyed and that Jesus could shine through. In his heart, the young missionary knew that this was just the beginning of the work of God in his life. The trials God had taken them through hadn’t yet done a complete job and God was taking them through more and more experiences, showing them one thing after another in their lives that needed to be dealt with.

As the young missionary sat there, re-experiencing some of the pain he had recently gone through, he suddenly realized that this evangelist was right. Each one of the successful evangelists he was studying had gone through very difficult experiences. Most of the time, the young missionary had considered these experiences as satanic opposition to their work, but now he saw the hand of God at work in their personal lives. The words of a famous Dutch woman, who had spent years in a German war prison, echoed in his ears; “God’s finest tool in our lives is the tool of suffering.”

The young missionary didn’t know all the evangelists he was studying in detail, but the Lord brought to his mind situation after situation. Long ago the old veteran missionary and his wife arrived back in their home country, devastated. They were serving God in the Arab Gulf when their doctor prescribed the drug Thalidomide during her pregnancy. When their son was born, he was born without arms and legs. The young missionary had visited in their home several times in years gone by, but somehow he had never shared their pain until this moment.

Another dear brother had been imprisoned, threatened, and lived with constant uncertainty. Another missionary family had been betrayed by the local Christian community; another had tremendous difficulties with their own mission organization, while others had been falsely accused of all kinds of evil.

The young missionary now saw God’s hand in each of these situations. God was at work in each of these lives. The young missionary had been looking for successful tools: tools that had been worked on and developed, honed to perfection, tools ready for his use in the ministry. And all the while, God had been looking for tools: tools that had been worked on and developed and honed to perfection, tools ready for His use. God’s tools were people. God was more interested in the character of the evangelist than He was in the tools that the evangelists were using.

God was looking for lives that He could live in; lives that wouldn’t hide Him, but would let Him shine through. Like the ‘saints in the stained glass windows in church,’ they are beautiful because the light shines through them.

Suddenly the young missionary realized that non-believers weren’t attracted to the evangelists, they were attracted to God. People who are true seekers are seeking for God.

They may not know it, and might not express it in those words, but when they see God in His beauty being lived out in the lives of His people, they are attracted to Him. In order for Jesus to truly shine through a life, the hard exterior has to be broken and removed.

A life broken and used by God is not something that the evangelist has done. It is the work of God. That's why it is often hard for new workers to write home about what they have accomplished. Often God is doing more work in their personal lives than God is doing through them in the lives of others.

As the young missionary reviewed the lives of these evangelists, it was a relief to discover that not all had experienced traumatic events. They were not all "tough nuts" to crack. Some had quietly and obediently submitted to God and had learned to die daily to self. Others, it seemed, needed a more traumatic event to get them moving down the right road. However God did it, He did it in the right way for that particular person or family. You see it is God who makes a person fruitful. It is not something they have done themselves. God's fruitfulness comes about when God has free rein to work in their lives, and this may involve real suffering. Therefore we should regard disasters and tragedies accordingly, and look for God's hand in them as he works on our own lives.

And so at the beginning we need to recognize that our own lives are the primary tool that God is seeking to use. He will begin to use your life by breaking it and clearing it of a lot of personal rubbish. If you have begun to steep yourself in the Word of God, and are preparing yourself with basic, useful tools to tackle the job of evangelism and church planting, God will, in turn, find places in His kingdom where He can put you to work for His honor and His glory.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. Do you feel that some people have better personalities for evangelism than others? If so, which kinds of personalities do you think are better suited to doing evangelism?
2. List some of the situations in your life that God has used to break you.
3. Do you think brokenness is something to be valued? Why?
4. Would you describe your life as a life filled with God's Word? Does it flow out from you in a natural way?
5. What do you think is meant by the verses (Matthew 16:24) "Take up your cross" and I Corinthians 15:31 "I die daily?"
6. Personal Reflection: How clearly does God's light shine through your life? What things in your life might be limiting or negatively affecting God's light shining out to others?

Lesson Three

Five Types of Evangelism

Technical Notes (33 minutes lesson)

Story A 2742 words = 15 minutes

Lesson A: 1011 words = 6 minutes

Question set A: 4 questions = 15 minutes

Story B 740 words = 4 minutes

Lesson B 1300 words = 8 minutes

Question set B: 4 questions = 15 minutes

Story A

Several days later Mr. Li met David in one of the hospital courtyards. David smiled and motioned for Mr. Li to sit beside him. “So how is it going? He asked. “Did you get a chance to use the Four Spiritual Laws book I gave you?”

Mr. Li looked down. He was embarrassed to say anything but he wanted to be honest with his friend. “Perhaps I didn’t really understand how to use it,” he began. David waited for him to continue. “I tried using it with some of the men in my crew. When I read John 3:16 to them they became very angry. They were upset that the verse said that God had a son.”

“I guess that makes sense” David said slowly.

Mr. Li looked up. “What happens when you use it?”

It was David’s turn to look embarrassed. “Actually,” he admitted. “I have never really used it here, only at home in America.”

“Do Americans get upset when you say God had a son?”

“No, most don’t really care much about God and religion.”

“So you haven’t used “The Four Spiritual Laws” with a Muslim?”

“No,” David paused. “Look, I’m sorry about this. I just thought that whatever worked at home would work here.” He paused. “Were the men really angry?”

“Yes, for a while they were, but they seemed to calm down. Things went OK after that, until I was called into the director’s office.”

“Oh, oh”

“He was very upset, and threatened to send me back to China if I ‘preached’ again. I don’t know what he meant by preaching. All I did was read one Bible verse to the men.”

“I’m very sorry” David said. “I was only trying to help.”

The two men sat quietly in the courtyard, not saying much after that. Then David brightened. “I think you went too fast. Maybe the men were not ready for the Bible yet. Perhaps they needed some ‘friendship evangelism’ first.”

Mr. Li was puzzled. “What is friendship evangelism?” he asked.

“Oh, that’s when you make friends with someone, and concentrate on the relationship. It takes time but you become really close to someone. Then you look for opportunities to say things about the Bible and stuff. If you are a good friend they don’t become so angry.”

“It sounds like it takes a long time.”

“Yes” but this is what all the missionaries are doing now. “It takes time, but when you have good friends, they don’t get angry, and you can share more of the gospel.”

“Do you have Muslim friends that you are doing this with?”

“Yes, I’ve been building friendships with three people. My landlord, his son, and a young man I met in the market.”

“So what sort of things do you do?”

“Well, I visit them, drink tea with them, and talk.”

“What do you talk about?”

“Whatever they want to talk about. We’re just friends. Sometimes I help them with English, sometimes they help me with the local language.” David paused. “Look it’s easy. Everyone is doing it. Just relax and build friendships with a few people, and God will provide you with opportunities to share something, someday.”

As the two of them parted, David encouraged Mr. Li not to rush, but to take time and build relationships.

Several months later, Mr. Li was much more relaxed in his workplace. He no longer read a scripture verse with the men in the morning. He was no longer plagued with thoughts about how to evangelize Muslims. Since Mr. Li was no longer talking about religion, Ahmed seemed to have warmed up to him more, and their relationship was deepening. The director was much happier with Mr. Li as well. He would sometimes acknowledge him in the hallways and was always friendly with him. Mr. Li on the other hand was improving in his language. He could join the different circles of people in the hospital, and talk with them on many different subjects. Mr. Li was now enjoying his life at the hospital. He could joke and talk with people without feeling pressured that he should be talking about God.

In fact, over the months, Mr. Li almost forgot about wanting to share the gospel. It started with his prayer life. Since he no longer felt pressured to share about Christ, he no longer felt pressure to spend time in prayer each day. At first it was only once that he missed his prayer time. He had slept in one morning, because he had been out late the night before, drinking tea and talking with the men. He rushed to get into the workroom, and by the time his long workday had ended he had few thoughts about God. That night he fell into his bed, tired and ready for sleep. He turned over and closed his eyes, forgetting all about praying. The next day Mr. Li felt bad about missing his prayer time, but over the following weeks, it happened again, and then a third time. After a while it was only a couple of days a week that he remembered to pray.

But on the other hand, his relationships were growing. One of the men who worked at the hospital, named Mustafa, invited him to his home, and soon he was a regular visitor there. On weekends they would travel to a picnic spot in the country. Mr. Li enjoyed these visits very much. He enjoyed playing with Mustafa’s children, and talking about life in China. Mustafa was always interested in learning about China, its peoples, history and accomplishments.

Mr. Li continued to visit with David, although these visits became sporadic as both of them became more involved in the lives of people around them. In fact they soon became quite busy, and their visits dropped off.

Some time later, something happened while Mr. Li was visiting the local vegetable market. Just as he was paying for his vegetables when the merchant remarked on his language. "You speak the local language" he said in surprise.

"Just a little" Mr. Li responded meekly.

"No, you speak better than I speak." The merchant insisted.

"You are too kind" Mr. Li insisted. "I am only learning your language."

As he turned to go, a young man stepped up beside him. "Where are you from?" he asked him.

"I'm from China" Mr. Li said.

"China?" the young man said. "I've always been interested in China. How long have you been here?"

"About half a year" Mr. Li started to walk along the street towards his home.

"Do you live near here? I would like to visit you."

"I live up at the hospital workers compound" Mr. Li replied.

As they walked along, the young man asked many more questions. As they talked, Mr. Li began to think about 'friendship evangelism.' Perhaps this was God's way of providing him a new opportunity. As they talked Mr. Li learned that the young man's name was Ramadan, the same name as the Muslim Holy month. Ramadan was from a nearby village and was in the city looking for work. When they reached the workers compound Ramadan continued to talk and follow him, so Mr. Li proceeded to his room. Ramadan seemed eager to see inside.

"So this is where you live. Do you live alone?"

"I have a room to myself, as I am the supervisor. The rest of the men sleep in that large room."

"Where is the bathroom?"

"We all share the toilet, and we share the shower as well."

"Is this your kitchen?"

"Yes, we make tea here, and sometimes cook something small. Most of us eat at the hospital."

Ramadan seemed genuinely interested in Mr. Li. They agreed to meet again the next afternoon.

The following afternoon Ramadan showed up exactly as he promised. Mr. Li made him some tea, and they started to get to know one another. Ramadan came from a large family, with many sisters and brothers. He also had many other relatives as both his mother and father were from large families. Ramadan was in his early twenties. He was a Muslim, and his family were all Muslims. He was unemployed and looking for work. But work was hard to find. Most jobs paid too little. Ramadan was staying at a rooming-house in the center of town. During their visit Ramadan asked Mr. Li about China. Where the Chinese Muslims? Did Chinese drink whiskey or beer? He had heard that opium came from China. Had Mr. Li ever seen opium or hashish? Was it true that most young people in China were men? What would the Chinese do if there were not enough women to provide husbands for all the men?

At the end of the visit Mr. Li was very tired. These were hard questions to ask. He didn't really have the vocabulary to discuss them and also he didn't know how to answer these questions. They left him a bit disturbed.

On their third visit, Ramadan asked Mr. Li if he had any sisters. Ramadan was single and looking for a wife. He also asked Mr. Li if he would help him get a visa to China. At the end of the visit Ramadan invited Mr. Li to visit his family in the village. This pleased Mr. Li as he felt that a visit to a village would be very helpful, and he would get to know Ramadan better. Ramadan continued to ask questions, and seemed interested in everything that Mr. Li had in his room, (except his Bible). Ramadan never asked any questions about this. Before they departed, Ramadan arranged that on Friday, the Muslim holiday, he would visit the village. Ramadan would come to his house at 8 in the morning, and they would travel to the village.

On Friday Mr. Li was up early, to prepare for leaving. Ramadan arrived and together they walked down the hill towards the center of the city. From there they took a small bus to the edge of town where there was a very large bus station. Buses came from all over the country to this one point. Together they boarded a bus that was going north, and waited for the bus to fill up. After a half hour, the bus was finally filled and the driver got in. First he collected the fares from everyone. Ramadan told Mr. Li how much the fares were and Mr. Li paid for both of them. Ramadan never offered to pay, even for his own bus ride. After a few minutes the bus left. As they drove along Ramadan pointed out various places and towns along the way.

The ride to the village took over an hour. Once they arrived in the village, Ramadan pointed the way and together they walked along a narrow road, and then they turned into a path between the fields. Although most of the grass was brown and the path was dry and dusty, it still reminded Mr. Li of his home. He felt strangely homesick.

Ramadan's home was a simple cement block house of two rooms. One room was for the women, and the other room was for the men. A very small kitchen was off of the women's room. There was no bathroom. Mr. Li was shown into the men's sitting room. It had a bare cement floor with narrow mattresses placed around the walls. Small cushions marked the spots between the seats. Mr. Li and Ramadan sat and visited. One by one, Ramadan's little sisters and brothers came into the room. They were shy, and tried to push each other into the room. They stared at Mr. Li's eyes and made a joke about Chinese. Ramadan scolded them, and they soon sat, but their eyes never left Mr. Li's. Although he felt uncomfortable, Mr. Li tried to ignore the children and look around him. The room was bare, except for a small shelf high in one corner of the room. It held two books, one of them obviously a Qur'an. In another corner several blankets were stacked on top of each other. After a few minutes a woman's voice called out, and Ramadan left the room. He returned a few minutes later with a small platter containing four tea cups and a brass teapot, plus some leaves. Setting the platter on the floor he proceeded to place some green leaves in each of the four cups. He then opened the lid of the tea-pot and poked inside with a small spoon. Then he closed the tea pot and began to pour the hot,

sweet, thick tea into each of the cups. When he was finished he passed the first cup to Mr. Li who took it into his hand. Realizing that it was very hot, he quickly set the cup down onto the cement floor. Ramadan passed the other two cups to his three little sisters and two brothers to share.

After a few minutes Mr. Li tried his tea. It was still very hot, sweet, and had a mint flavor. It was very good. Ramadan and Mr. Li sat for a long time, talking and sometimes just looking out the open door at the fields. After what seemed like hours Ramadan's father came home. Mr. Li thought he understood something about the mosque. Then he realized that this was Friday, and Ramadan's father had probably been attending Friday prayers at the mosque.

Ramadan's father was very friendly and seemed pleased to have Mr. Li in his home. He seemed to ignore Ramadan and concentrated on visiting with Mr. Li. They talked of China, agriculture, livestock, and politics. After a long period of time the women called from the other room. Ramadan and his father rose, and went to the door where a large tray of food was passed into the room. Ramadan's brothers and sisters disappeared and only the three men moved around the large platter of rice and meat. It was enough to feed ten people. Mr. Li did his best to eat the food, using his hands in the proper manner. He was pleaded with himself for becoming more adopted to the culture.

After the meal they visited again for a while, and then walked in the fields. Ramadan's father pointed out several plants, and talked to Mr. Li about the wheat and barley that they were growing. As the sun started to set, Ramadan and Mr. Li returned to the village where they waited for an hour before a bus came by that had room for them. It was quite late when Mr. Li finally arrived home, but Mr. Li was happy, it had been a good day.

Two days later Ramadan came by Mr. Li's house. It was late afternoon, and Mr. Li had just finished his afternoon rounds through the hospital. Ramadan seemed happy to see him, and asked him about his visit and what he enjoyed the most. Then Ramadan turned to Mr. Li.

"Can you help me with something?"

"Sure, I will try."

"I would like some whiskey. Do you have some?"

Mr. Li was very surprised. "If you do not have some, could you buy some for me tomorrow? There is a Christian store near here that sells it."

"Why don't you buy your own whisky?" Mr. Li asked.

"Because it is forbidden to Muslims."

"Then why do you want it?"

Ramadan paused. "I want to convert to Christianity. Then I can drink whiskey freely."

Mr. Li was so shocked he didn't know what to say. "You must have some whiskey here. Or beer, You are a Christian aren't you?"

"Yes, I am a Christian" Mr. Li said slowly. "I don't understand this."

"I want to convert to Christianity." Ramadan said. "I want to travel to China and marry a Christian woman."

“Why?”

“Because being a Christian is better than being a Muslim. You have freedom. I want to drink. I want to enjoy women.” He paused. “Do you have any magazines?”

“Magazines? What do you mean?”

“You know... magazines ... Pictures of women. You are a Christian, you must have some.”

“No, I do not have anything like this.” Mr. Li said emphatically.

“Can you get me a girl?” Ramadan asked. “I’ve heard that there are Christian girls that are available. Can you tell me where they are?”

Mr. Li began to get angry. “I know nothing about this” he said, trying to control the anger in his voice.

“I have to go,” Ramadan suddenly announced, rising to his feet. “Thank you for the tea.” He quickly went to the door and left. Mr. Li sat in shock. What had happened? He wasn’t sure what to think.

Lesson A

In analyzing the various successful evangelists, one of the first common denominators I noticed was that none of them majored in using the “friendship evangelism” approach that is commonly practiced by many of today’s evangelists and church planters. While none of these evangelists was opposed to making friends or building friendships with those they were trying to reach, most of them mentioned that they did not see friendship evangelism as a missiological strategy that should be exclusively followed. In fact, there were those who were quite adamant that friendship evangelism was lacking as a missiological strategy. They felt that too much emphasis was put on this approach when other approaches might work better.

Friendship Evangelism

For many years, friendship evangelism has been promoted in the west as the best approach to winning people to Christ. Most western Christians now assume that this is the only normal way to witness. They simply live their Christian lives before others, without saying very much. Few western Christians question this approach, as it is generally accepted that this is the way we witness.

In Muslim countries, old traditional methods of evangelism, like visiting from door-to-door, preaching in the open air or in tent meetings has proven to be very offensive in Muslim countries. So most western missionaries accept that friendship evangelism is the only viable alternative.

When the young missionary started making his list of things that were common to successful missionaries in Muslim lands, he discovered that none of the successful evangelists were using this approach. On the other hand, most other missionaries use this as their basic strategy.

As with all evangelistic attempts there were some successes, but most western missionaries never really got around to presenting Christ to their friends. After all, having

spent so much time and energy developing friendships, they were loath to destroy them by telling their friends that they were going to hell. Only a few missionaries, with special spiritual gifting in evangelism, had any measure of success.

The concept of *Friendship Evangelism* is a strange contradiction for many cultures, as friendship evangelism focuses on reaching several chosen individuals rather than a broad group of people. Most missionaries are driven by the desire to be successful in ministry. But how do you report successful friendships? Eventually they wake up and realize that friendship-based evangelism isn't geared at making friends, it's really focused on getting converts.

One missionary comments: During my years of ministry as a church planter I have had many opportunities to observe, and to use, friendship evangelism. I've seen well-meaning missionaries give their lives to a few close friends. They've taken years to build friendships within these families. When they write their reports back to their churches they describe the friends they are making, the family events they attend, and some of the individuals they are closest to. But many of these missionaries have told me how terribly difficult it is to share the Gospel with their friends. Having built a good friendship, they feel that if they now share the Gospel they will betray the friendship. It's as though they've used these people, befriended them for a reason, and now years later the reason becomes clear.

Remember the young man who asked Mr. Li for whiskey? He was using his friendship with Mr. Li to try and get things. Mr. Li felt betrayed and used by his new friend. What do you think our Muslim friends will think when they discover that the whole reason for our friendships is so that we can convert them to our religion? Often they feel betrayed and used.

In some situations, missionaries have decided that their lives will have to reveal the Gospel as they are never going to get around to having a good talk about the gospel. In some cases those who depend of friendship evangelism end up with something that is neither friendship nor evangelism. Some of their contacts get friendship; some get evangelism, but many get neither!

So why is friendship evangelism so attractive? First, it is a comfortable, secure kind of ministry. Westerners spend a lot of energy, time, and money on being comfortable. They want a home that is pleasant to live in. They want a place where they can get away from the hustle of life and relax. Therefore they want comfortable surroundings to relax in, some Western books to read and western videos to entertain them. So while the culture around them is unfamiliar and uncomfortable, their homes become an important refuge. Since friendship evangelism is the most non-threatening form of evangelism it nicely fits into the kind of comfort and security many westerners want to enjoy.

Friendship evangelism is also a readily available easy option. Door-to-door work, street meetings, crusades and open witnessing are very difficult, if not impossible in many Muslim settings. Friendship evangelism also fits an active western lifestyle where

evangelism must fit in between the kids' schooling, their after-school activities, mission team meetings, social events, and the other expatriate gatherings that missionaries want to attend. Two or three friendships may be all that western missionaries can manage, and it still gives the impression that they are doing something of spiritual value.

Since few western missionaries reach a high level of fluency in the language they often find that they function best when chatting with people on a friendship basis. Thus, friendship evangelism fits their level of language ability.

The young missionary, however, discovered that the successful evangelists he studied usually had a totally different approach. While they made friends with their neighbors and colleagues at work, these friendships were true friendships. If their friends asked them about their religion and their beliefs, the evangelists were happy to share with them. Often conversations about faith flow out of a mutual closeness and concern in their relationship. But these evangelists never made friends with the intention that evangelization was the goal of that friendship. Their friendships were true friendships, open and clear of any ulterior motives.

Answer the following questions and then we will move on to looking at five different kinds of evangelism.

In your small groups take fifteen minutes and discuss the following questions.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. What do you think is meant by the term "Friendship Evangelism"?
2. Have you had any success moving from a friendship to a relationship where you could freely talk about Christ? Describe.
3. Do you feel you have gifts in evangelism? Has it been quite easy to lead people to Christ?
4. Do you have teaching gifts? Have you ever used this gift to lead someone to Christ?

Story B

When Mr. Li met with David again in the hospital courtyard, Mr. Li shared about his struggles with Friendship-Evangelism. "It's not going too well" he said. "I can make friends, but there really isn't much evangelism. What would happen if I had to leave soon? What would I have accomplished? Making some good friends?" He looked over at David. "How is it going with you? Have you shared about Jesus with any of your friends?"

David hung his head. "No, I've got some good friends, but we seldom talk about religion. They are not really interested in talking about God. They usually talk about sports or politics."

"Perhaps Friendship Evangelism doesn't really work here" Mr. Li suggested. "I wonder if there is another approach."

"Well you cannot stand on the street corner and preach. And if you talk to people about Jesus, you might get in trouble and get thrown out of the country."

“What do you think we should do?”

“Well” said David with a slight smile. “What would Jesus do?”

“He preached to crowds.” Mr. Li thought out loud.

“Did he?” David asked. “He didn’t preach, he usually told stories.”

“Yes, he told parables.”

David looked amazed. “And he didn’t explain them, did he?”

“No, people came afterwards, at night sometimes, and asked him what the stories meant.”

“I think we should do a study in the Bible” David suggested. “Let’s see what the Bible says about different ways to share the gospel with people.”

“OK” said Mr. Li. “Let’s meet back here on Thursday and discuss what we found.”

The following Thursday the two met and started to compare notes. They had found a number of different ways of sharing the gospel.

“The first one I found was in I Thessalonians 1:5” David started. “It is one of my favorite verses. The gospel didn’t just come in word only. The last part says “as you know what manner of men we were among you.” Their lives spoke the gospel. So I think the first one should be called “Life-Style Evangelism. Our lives speak out the truth.”

“But: Mr. Li countered “it wasn’t just their lives. The gospel came by word. That was preaching. I was thinking about Jesus. He was always preaching. People called him “rabbi” or teacher. Everywhere he went, people respected him because he was seen as a teacher. I think this should be called ‘teacher-based evangelism.”

“Yes, I see your point” David said, “he did teach, but Peter and Paul stood up and proclaimed the gospel. They weren’t just teaching, they were proclaiming it to crowds, or in front of government people. Perhaps we could call that “Proclamation Evangelism”

“I think there is another kind.” Mr. Li pointed out. “The Bible tells us in Acts 18 that Paul reasoned with the Jews.”

“I think that means that he debated with them.”

“I think this was not teaching, or proclamation. He was confronting them and their ideas.”

“Yes” David said excitedly. “We could call this Confrontation Evangelism.”

“Well” said Mr. Li slowly. “What about Friendship Evangelism. Is it in the Bible?”

“I was thinking about that, and the only verse I found that might work was I Thessalonians 2:8. *We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.* (NIV).

After they had discussed some more, the two of them took a piece of paper and drew a chart with the five types of evangelism on it.

Life-style ↔ Friendship ↔ Teacher-based ↔ Proclamation ↔ Confrontation

David looked at the list. “I think that the order they are in is significant.” He commented. “Life-style uses the least amount of words. Then friendship.”

“Yes, and on the other end, confrontation is the strongest, and then proclamation is next.”
“I think it is interesting that teacher-based evangelism is in the middle. I would like to learn more about it.” David thought out loud.

“Perhaps we should study this more and meet on Monday to see what we have discovered.” Mr. Li suggested as they were getting up to leave. Both of them were excited about what they were learning.

That night Mr. Li renewed his commitment to Lord. He asked God for forgiveness because he had been letting his spiritual life slide. He asked God for an opportunity to again speak to Ahmed about Jesus.

Lesson B

Many missionaries leave their home countries believing that they are quite spiritual. Our fellow churchmen, and often our families lift us up to great spiritual heights. To them we are sacrificing our futures and our security to travel to far-off parts for the Kingdom of God. And we often believe their platitudes, arriving in the country of our calling feeling that we have sacrificed a great deal, and thus are wonderful spiritual beings.

Hopefully, arrival on the field soon shocks us out of our self-deception. As we struggle with strange languages, cultures, and loneliness, our real self comes out. When we meet Muslims, we will often discover that they look down on us and consider themselves to be more spiritual than us. If we only engage in Lifestyle or Friendship evangelism, this impression of us is only reinforced.

Clash of Agendas

Many years ago when the first western Christians arrived in Muslim lands, they tried to use the same evangelism methods they had developed in the west. These missionaries had an established agenda. However, they quickly discovered that the Muslims already had their own agendas, and were eager to convert the missionaries to Islam. No sooner would the evangelist get started on his agenda when a Muslim would make a comment: “Oh yes, your Scriptures have been changed, haven’t they?” or perhaps “How could God have a son?” Many conflicts arose when these two agendas clashed.

As a result, when the West started talking about friendship evangelism, there were many sincere missionaries to Muslims who thought that this approach held great promise. If the missionary had no other agenda than making a friend, and in the process slipping in some quiet discussion, then the clash would disappear. However, since the missionaries now had no agenda for presenting a clear picture of salvation, they seldom got around to doing this. Most of the religious discussion now centered on the Muslim agenda. Although Christian workers still wanted to see their friends saved, they no longer had a clear-cut agenda to lead their friends step by step to the Cross and ultimately to the foot of God’s throne.

Now, this creates a very large problem. Since missionaries often struggle to talk about religious topics, they end up feeling that any religious discussion is a success. Sometimes

they report to their home churches about the “good conversations” they are having with their Muslim friends. However, on closer examination these discussions usually have to do with the Muslim agenda, and not the Christian agenda.

Some missionaries feel that once the Muslim’s agenda has been dealt with then the discussion would naturally go on to the Christian agenda. There are two problems with this. First, the Muslim’s agenda can go on and on and on. Muslim scholars like Ahmed Deedat have worked hard to expand the Muslim agenda. Satan is also busy contriving lies and rumors to add to the Muslim agenda. In the end the missionary will end up dealing with “Muhammad in the Bible” or the alleged stories of astronauts in space hearing the Muslim call to prayer, or the sordid lives of some American television evangelists, and other things.???

Most missionaries struggle to switch from the Muslim agenda to talking about Christ. Shockingly, some missionaries have never considered discovering the best method of presenting the Gospel to Muslims. Perhaps they never expected to be given the opportunity. Perhaps they never had the opportunity because they were so busy with the Muslim agenda.

When the young missionary studied the successful evangelists in the Middle East he discovered that they all had agendas. Each one worked out various ways to present the Gospel. When they met someone, their ultimate goal was to start on their Christian agenda. Along the way, they dealt with the other person’s agenda. If the Muslim objected about the Scriptures, they had an answer. That answer invariably ended with an invitation to look into the Christian faith. If the Muslim objected about the Sonship of Jesus, the evangelist had an answer that again ended with an invitation to study Christian doctrine. Given the least opportunity, the evangelist took it, and began his own agenda of presenting a clear and understandable picture of Christianity.

This is what we call teacher-based evangelism, and this course will go about helping you prepare to be a Christian teacher in a Muslim setting.

Biblical Basis for Teacher-based Evangelism

Is teacher-based evangelism biblical? Can it be supported from the Word of God? Consider Jesus. The words *preach* and *teach* are used in relation to Jesus many times. The Bible presents us with a picture of Jesus being a teacher and healer. Notice the identity Jesus had among the people. They gave him titles like “Rabbi” and “Good Teacher.” Fifty-two times the New Testament draws our attention to the fact that Jesus was actively teaching. He taught in the synagogues, in the temple, in boats, in the street, in the desert, on a mountain, in cities, and in villages.

As Jesus disciplined His followers, especially the twelve, he taught them to become fishers of men. His teaching included things like: “As you go, preach” (Matthew 10:7); “Preach from the housetops” (10:27); “Preach the Gospel to all creatures” (Mark 16:15); “When the Gospel is preached in all the world, then the end shall come” (Matthew 24:14).

The Bible tells us that after Jesus' ascension into heaven the "disciples went everywhere, preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). When Peter and John were taken before the Sanhedrin court, the court "told them never again to speak or teach about Jesus" (Acts 4:18). When the disciples were imprisoned, and an angel released them, the angel instructed them, "Go to the temple and teach the people this message of life!" So the apostles entered the temple about daybreak and immediately began teaching (Acts 5:20, 21).

Paul, writing to the church at Corinth, begins his letter by pointing out the differences between human wisdom and godly wisdom. The whole chapter is steeped in wisdom about how to teach, not with clever answers and arguments, but rather, in brokenness and humility, the "message of the Cross." Paul emphasizes that he was not sent to baptize but to preach (1:17). He points out that he knows "how foolish the message of the Cross sounds to those who are on the road to destruction" (1:18). However, "since God in His wisdom saw to it that the world would never find Him through human wisdom, He has used our foolish preaching to save all who believe" (1:21), "and so then we preach that Christ was crucified" (1:23).

There are two important points here. First there is "human reasoning," and secondly there is the "foolishness of preaching." Preaching and teaching are the core of our work as evangelists. It may seem foolish to those who are listening, it may seem foolish to us, but it is the method chosen by God. The pattern laid down in the Scriptures is that God leads us in our proclamation, and the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God and speaks it into the hearts of those who are listening.

Remember the chart of the various evangelism styles. The ones on the left are the least offensive and the ones on the right are the most offensive. Teacher-based-evangelism fits into the middle position.

All of these styles of evangelism are useful, and should be used at the appropriate time. Proclamation Evangelism includes distributing literature, radio and TV, and other forms of communication. Confrontation evangelism includes debating and speaking out in government courts and religious circles. While these are useful, they are not as direct and useful and teacher-based evangelism where the teacher or preacher has opportunity to fully explain the gospel message.

In your small groups take 15 minutes and discuss the following questions.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. Do the people you work among already have a spiritual agenda for you? Do they want to reach you with their religion? What are some of the things that are on their agenda? How will you move from their agenda to yours?
2. How comfortable are you in a teaching/preaching situation? Do you need more experience in this area? What are some ways you can get this experience?
3. Can you think of some proclamation methods that could be used in your ministry? What are some of the good methods of getting the message out to large numbers

- of people? What keeps you from using these methods? Fear, finances or other things?
4. Describe the following evangelistic situations, and classify which type of evangelism style is being used. John 3: 1 – 21, John 4: 3-30, Acts 3:1-26, Acts 8: 26 – 39, Acts 17: 1-33, I Thessalonians 1:5 – 10

Lesson Four

The Art of Teaching

Technical Notes (43 minutes lesson)

Story A 906 words = 5 minutes
Lesson A 2017 words = 11 minutes
Question set A 5 questions = 15 minutes
Story B 1944 words = 11 minutes
Lesson B 2885 words = 16 minutes
Questions set B 4 questions = 10 minutes

Story A

Mr. Li spent a lot of time during the day thinking about what he and David were discovering from the Bible. The idea of different types of evangelism interested Mr. Li very much. Then one evening, when reading the Bible, Mr. Li read the story of the farmer sowing his seed in Matthew 13. As he thought about the story, Mr. Li suddenly realized that not only were there different types of evangelism, there were different types of people. The Bible referred to people as soil. “I wonder” Mr. Li said to himself, “If some types of evangelism work better for some types of people?” He thought of the men that he worked with. Most of them were not at all interested in what he had to share. Ahmed, however, was somewhat interested, and sometimes asked him a question. Ahmed was different from the others. He still wasn’t seeking the Lord, but he was at least open.

Mr. Li tried to concentrate his thoughts. Did Jesus ever minister to people who were Not Interested? He thought about the crowds of people who came for healing, or to see something spectacular. Did they want to hear the message or were they simply coming to see or experience something. Perhaps they were not really interested in what Jesus had to say. How did Jesus reach out to them? He decided that he would ask David the next time they met.

David, on the other hand was doing some thinking about Jesus, and how he witnessed to others. He could only find one or two places in the Bible where Jesus gave the ‘gospel’ to people. Usually he told stories. Sometimes he preached. Sometimes he taught people.

Several days later David and Mr. Li had opportunity to meet again in the hospital courtyard. They sat under a tree and discussed their findings.

“So there are not only different kinds of evangelism” Mr. Li said, “there are different kinds of audiences. Jesus called them different kinds of soil. Some people are ready to hear, some will hear a little, and some will hear nothing.”

David studied the passage in the Bible for a minute. “The farmer scatters seed on all the types of ground,” He commented. He doesn’t just go for the good soil. That’s what I would do.”

“Yes, but how do you tell the good soil from the bad soil?”

“I don’t know.” David looked puzzled.

“Remember Ramadan.” Mr. Li said. “I thought he was going to be a good friend, and someone I could share Christ with, but he was only interested in whiskey and women. He wasn’t very good soil.”

“But Jesus shared with everyone.”

“I don’t know” said Mr. Li. “In Matthew 13:26 a few came to Jesus to ask what the stories meant.”

“That’s it” David said excitedly. “Jesus told stories to the crowds. That’s how he spread the seed. Everyone heard the story. No one was offended by the stories. Stories are for everyone. But those who were interested, those who were the good soil, they came back for more.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Li slowly. “I can see that. But what are we to do, tell stories?”

“But isn’t that what Jesus did all the time? If he told stories, shouldn’t we?”

Mr. Li looked puzzled. “But I don’t know any stories... unless they are Bible stories. Maybe those will do.”

A couple of days later the Lord provided an opportunity for Mr. Li to share a story. The men had gathered for tea break. It was hot, and no one was very interested in going back to work very soon. Several of the men were telling stories about things they had done over the weekend. Finally one of them turned to Mr. Li. “What about you?” he asked. “What did you do this weekend?”

“He probably read his Bible.” One of the other men teased.

“Yes” Mr. Li said, recognizing an opportunity. “I read an interesting story that the prophet Jesus told. Would you like to hear it?” He didn’t wait long but started his story right away before anyone could object. “Jesus said that the kingdom of God was like a man who was deeply in debt to his employer. When his employer called him in to repay his debt, he didn’t have the money, so he begged his employer to give him time...” As Mr. Li told the story, he sensed that the men were quite interested. When he finished, he never explained the story. He simply told them “That’s what I read over the weekend.” He poured himself another cup of tea, and one of the other men started talking about sports. After a few minutes they finished their break and headed out to work. Mr. Li wondered if the story had done any good. “At least” he thought to himself “They heard something from the Bible and didn’t object.” Several days later he had opportunity to tell another story. Then a few days later Ahmed, one of the men, was feeling sick and asked for the day off. Mr. Li stopped by his room to check on him, and then offered to pray for him. To his surprise, Ahmed didn’t object at all. Mr. Li bowed his head, thanked God for Ahmed and the work he did every day, and then prayed for his health, asking that God would help his body to heal quickly. That evening, Ahmed was feeling better, and he seemed to be much warmer towards Mr. Li.

Lesson (A)

How long does it take to explain the Gospel to someone? Could you do it in ten minutes or less? At one time in Yemen, a missionary tried developing a “Quick Gospel Message” for Muslims. As he tried different approaches he discovered that nothing seemed to work. No matter how carefully he worked at his plan, he found in practice that he needed a lot more time. There were so many misunderstandings, such a completely different worldview, and incredible language problems, (in which the Muslim Arabic language did not contain the words or concepts he sometimes needed), that there was no way he could package something together that would work in a single presentation.

Realizing that he couldn’t do it in ten minutes, he began wondering how long it would really take. This was one of the burning questions he had as he visited the successful evangelists. What does one include in a Gospel presentation?

Over time, watching them at work, he realized that these successful evangelists had all developed a pattern, but it was different than what he had expected. As he watched and listened, he soon realized that they never once tried to explain the Gospel in a single sitting. They would attempt to minister some spiritual truth to people to meet them at their level of spiritual understanding and need. These evangelists were always meeting new people. Sometimes it was through their work or through an evangelistic program, but in most cases it was through the normal course of life, as they met neighbors, friends of friends, and business people. While each of them had developed their own approach, the underlying principle was the same. In every case, the evangelists would bring up spiritual things and then judge the spiritual interest of the new person. They would then deal with each one differently. In the simple chart below, we can illustrate spiritual progression in a person’s life.

This chart is very simple. The concept behind it is simple, but the impact on people’s lives can be profound. In effect, the chart gives us six broad steps to spiritual maturity, starting with those who are not interested in the Gospel, and ending with those who are Christian leaders. Please remember that the terms that are used are not an expression of any particular theological position. Rather, they are an attempt to analyze what is happening in the mind of the person you are trying to deal with.

Six Steps of Spiritual Development

1. Not Interested
2. Somewhat Interested
3. Seeker
4. Convert
5. Disciple
6. Leader

Whenever the successful evangelists met someone, they began to assess his or her spiritual development, and target their ministry accordingly. Their aim was not so much to lead the person to Christ immediately, but rather to move him or her along from one

stage to another. They often felt excited as they saw a person move forward from one spiritual plane to the next.

Not Interested People

Not Interested People are simply those who are not interested in what Christians have to say. The world is filled with Not Interested People. In some cases they are not interested in religion. They simply want nothing to do with what they perceive as religious. Most Muslims on the other hand are interested in religion, but not Christianity because they think they know all about Christianity, and are convinced that it is wrong. Lies, misunderstandings, self-righteousness, and pride often bind them in their ignorance. Whatever the reason, the evangelist will come across many people who are not asking for the Gospel, and do not respond when given an opportunity to learn more about Christianity. If people are not interested in our message, we need to carefully consider how we are packaging our message, and what sort of impression we are making on our audience. Everyone seems to have opinions about Christianity, but many Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists have never had much interaction with a real believer. The evangelist must seek to interact with these people by challenging their opinions, world-view, and their closed-thinking or false understanding about Christians.

Sometimes it is ministry to their physical or emotional needs that awakens an interest within them. Sometimes it is the realization that they have been misinformed about Christian things. Sometimes it is the life of a Christian that speaks to them. Whatever it is, the evangelist seeks to challenge them out of their complacency. Most of us hesitate to speak about prayer, fasting, or our relationship with God, with shopkeepers, hairdressers and others whom we meet during the day. These evangelists, however, are always bringing spiritual topics into their conversation and saying things to catch people's attention and challenge their thinking.

This is similar to the approach Jesus took when He used parables and proverbs to speak to people. Surprisingly, He often did not explain them. He spoke in order to make people think. He would simply say things, and wait for people to come to Him later for an explanation. Few of us would ever imagine dealing with people like that. We want to give a short, concise, total presentation of the Gospel. This however, should not be our goal with people who are *Not Interested*. Rather, we should seek to provoke questions, rather than answer them.

Many *Not Interested People* never move to the next stage. The young missionary was surprised at the number of successful evangelists who were quick to abandon their work with a particular Not Interested person, stating that when they saw that God was investing His time and energy in that person's life, then they would follow suit. They would continue to challenge that person's complacency whenever they met him, but they wouldn't pour their life's energies into someone who was not interested.

Most of these evangelists felt that those engaging in friendship evangelism spent far too much time with *Not Interested People* and in doing so wasted time they could have used to seek out, pray for, and work with more receptive people. Rather than visiting a few

select people, these evangelists visited many people in the community. They spent time talking to shop owners, hairdressers, neighbors and people whose homes were open to them. Wherever they went, they were quick to share something of the Gospel, often using parables or proverbs, or short brief statements that are full of meaning. When they saw a spiritual response, they followed it up.

When a person comes with a spiritual question, he or she has started to move to the next spiritual stage. The evangelist can rejoice at this, because a spiritual battle has been won. Such a person is now moving on to being somewhat interested.

Somewhat Interested People

When a person who was not interested begins to show interest in learning about Christianity; he has moved on to becoming '*somewhat interested*.' This is often a real work of God. Often this stage begins with a simple curiosity. Perhaps they will ask us "Do you pray?" or "Do you fast?" The evangelist should carefully answer these questions so that they lead to other questions. For instance we may answer, "Yes, I fast, but Christians fast differently from Muslims." This kind of response encourages further questions. This is an art that every Christian should learn when witnessing. By giving answers that provoke further thought, the evangelist can encourage the person to seek out answers. If the evangelist tries and explains everything at once, it is often too much for the listener. When asked "Do you fast?" the evangelist should not begin a long explanation about how Christians fast. This is not what the person asked about, and a long answer might only turn them away. A short answer that introduces something they don't know about can create further curiosity and further questions leading them deeper and deeper into Christian truths.

Many people, once they become interested in knowing more about Christianity, slowly become aware of their own spiritual needs. They may compare their lives to that of a Christian. They may compare their lives to what they feel is their own religion's goal of spirituality and perfection, and start seeking ways of attaining this. Sometimes *Somewhat Interested People* begin to delve deeper and deeper into their own religion, as a response to the claims of Christ. From the outside this can look like a spiritual step backwards, when it is actually the natural outcome of their spiritual hunger. If you as a Christian turn to your Scriptures when challenged, shouldn't we expect Muslims to turn to their own religion to seek answers there? Seekers usually start in the places where their families and religious leaders tell them they will find answers. Once a *Somewhat Interested People* has turned their attention to Christianity to see if it has answers, this person has moved much closer to becoming a *seeker*.

SE - Seeker

A seeker is someone who has heard parts of the Gospel message and now feels that he or she must reconcile the difference between his own position and the claims of Christianity. Here we are not using this term as a theological statement of any kind. We are simply trying to represent the mindset of those who have arrived at the point where they are wrestling with what they know of Christianity on one hand, and the teachings of their religion on the other. Obviously both cannot both be right. At this point, the seeker is

taking the initiative, rather than being drawn along. Usually a *Not Interested Person* takes no initiative, and thus the messenger must work at penetrating the walls that the *Not Interested Person* has put up. The *Somewhat Interested Person* takes some initiative in response to promptings by the messenger, and dialog is entered into. The *Seeker* however, takes the initiative and strives to discover which of the two viewpoints is true. When messenger feels that someone has become a true seeker, they should work hard to arrange the circumstances so that the seeker can learn more in a student-teacher relationship. There are two options here. One is that the evangelist takes the seeker to a teacher and the other is that the evangelist himself moves into the role of teacher. Whatever the arrangement, the teacher needs to be able to spend sufficient time with the *seeker* to give him a clear presentation of the Gospel.

Most Muslim cultures are oral cultures. Very few people read much more than the morning newspaper. Therefore if they want to know something they turn to those who have knowledge. Everyone has opinions but only those who have studied have knowledge. As the world is full of rumors and lies, most information should not be trusted unless it comes from a trusted source, such as a teacher.

When witnessing, personal testimonies are useful in that they are accounts of what has happened in an individual's life. There is no greater expert on a life than the person living it. However, when the topic moves beyond personal experience to that of truth or theology, the seeker usually wants to get his information from an established source. Therefore the messenger must either be able to present himself as an authority, or introduce the seeker to someone else who is. The latter is often easier, unless the seeker already sees the messenger as a religious authority. From our own point of view, we must never consider ourselves to be an authority on Christianity, but must always be careful to reveal that our authority is based on a higher authority: that of the Word of God.

It is important for the teacher to have two things in place. He must have a sense of direction whereby he can systematically cover the basics so that the contact gets a complete picture of Christianity. He must also demonstrate some authority as he speaks on the Bible and the Christian faith. The seeker is looking for answers and he wants them from an authority.

It is our moral duty to give the seeker the best Gospel presentation possible; something that is understandable and speaks the Gospel clearly.

CV - Converts; DS - Disciples; LD - Leaders

These last three stages on the Spiritual Development chart will be taken up in a later lesson when we deal with the gospel message, friendship-discipling and church-planting.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion A

1. Can you write a short outline of things you would share if you had a short period of time, say fifteen minutes to share the gospel with someone?

2. Make a list of some of your friends. Decide where they are at in their relationship with Christ. Not Interested, Somewhat Interested, Seeker, Converts, Disciple, Leader
3. How many Not Interested people do you meet in a typical day? What are some creative ways that you can demonstrate to them the love of God? Can these people see you as a spiritual person? Start praying about ways that you can demonstrate or verbally share something of your spiritual life with the Not Interested people in your life.
4. Are there any Somewhat Interested people in your life? Who? What sort of things do you talk about? Are you always prompting them or do they open discussions? What are some ways that you can continue to encourage these conversations, and lead them to more questions, without you always being the one to initiate the religious conversations?
5. How does this chapter describe Seekers? What makes them different from Somewhat Interested People? Do you have any seekers in your life?

Story B

Over the next few months David and Mr. Li continued to share stories with those around them. Rather than explain them, they would simply tell the stories, and leave the meaning up to the listeners. Sometimes they would say things that would make their listeners think. Sometimes they would offer to pray for people or situations. No one ever refused them, when they offered to pray.

One day, while visiting at the hospital, David told Mr. Li that he was starting to have some good conversations with his landlord's son, Mahmood. They were discussing some of the Muslim's objections to Christian doctrine. Every time Mahmood came up with a new objection, David would tell him that they would discuss it the next time they met. Then he would contact Mr. Li and together they would discuss what David should say. One day, David confessed to Mr. Li that he was struggling to explain things in the local language. "You are really much better at the language" David said. "Why don't you meet with Mahmood and share with him?"

"He is your friend, and you have a relationship with him" Mr. Li answered. "I don't know him at all."

"Well, if it is possible, can I ask him if we could all meet together sometime?"

"OK" Mr. Li said, "But don't force the issue. You want Mahmood to be comfortable with you. He might be upset if others knew he was asking questions."

Several days later David excitedly reported to Mr. Li. "I've arranged that you visit Mahmood." He said happily. "He is very excited about meeting you."

"What did you tell him about me?" Mr. Li asked, suddenly alarmed.

"I told him that you spoke the language much better than I did, and that you were a religious teacher who could explain what it was to be a Christian."

Mr. Li was shocked and angry with David. How could he have done such a thing? His language was not very good, and he wasn't a religious teacher. He just wanted to share Jesus with Muslims.

That night as Mr. Li prayed, he poured out his heart to God. “Oh God,” he cried “How can I do this? I am not a religious teacher. I don’t know what to say!”

Suddenly Mr. Li felt God’s presence in the room. It was warm and reassuring. Then he remembered something that the elders of his church had said as they sent him out. “We send you to preach and teach among the Muslim people.”

“You really are a teacher” God whispered into his heart. I have prepared you, you are my instrument.” Mr. Li wrestled with God for a long time until he finally surrendered and felt peace in his heart. Then he asked God to guide him, and he began to write notes on a piece of paper. He would start in the book of Genesis and explain how man was created, and how sin entered the world.

The following day Mr. Li traveled across town to David’s apartment. It was much nicer than the room that Mr. Li had at the worker’s compound. David’s sitting room had very nice sofa chairs, a bookshelf full of books, a small TV and a stereo. There were photos of his family on the wall.

David was excited to have Mr. Li finally visit his apartment. He served Mr. Li some tea, and sat to discuss their meeting with Mahmood. Mr. Li shared what God had put on his heart. After a short time of prayer, there was a knock on the door. It was Mahmood. Mr. Li glanced over at David. He was dressed in ragged shorts and a T-shirt. Mr. Li had dressed carefully for the occasion and was wearing his best clothes.

Mahmood was a slender young man with black hair and a small black mustache. He was nicely dressed and smiled when Mr. Li greeted him. He seemed a little surprised that Mr. Li was Asian not American. “Are you from America?” he asked.

“No.” Mr. Li smiled. “I am from China.”

“Are you a Christian?” Mahmood looked puzzled. “I didn’t know there were any Christians in China.”

“Yes, I am a Christian” Mr. Li responded. “There are many Christians in China, although not everyone is favorable to us.”

“I thought that Chinese were infidels, worshiping other gods.”

“China has many different kinds of people. Some are atheists and don’t believe in any God. But there are millions and millions of believers in China.”

“Was it always like this?” Mahmood asked.

“No, at one time there were few Christians in China. But God has blessed his people, and now we are many.” Mr. Li paused. “Would you like to know more about what Christians believe?”

“Yes” Mahmood smiled. “I used to think that Christians worshiped three gods, but David tells me that you worship only one God.”

“Perhaps it would be good if we studied the scriptures themselves, to see what they teach us.” Mr. Li started. “The truth is in God’s word, and we should read it to understand what he is saying to us. This is his word, revealed by the ancient writers and prophets.”

“Has it been changed or corrupted?”

“No,” Mr. Li explained. “Historians have discovered very ancient copies of these writings, and they have not been changed. Scribes were trained, and they carefully copied the scriptures. Each passage was checked and re-checked by other scribes to make sure that there were no changes.”

Mr. Li reached into his bag and got out his Bible and his notepad. “Let’s turn to the first chapter and see what it has to say.” David suddenly straightened. “I have a copy here somewhere” he said. “He looked around the room, and then got down on his hands and knees to look under the sofa. “Oh, here it is. I guess it fell on the floor” he said, retrieving the book from under the chair. Mahmood looked surprised and a bit alarmed.

“Please read the first two verses” Mr. Li began.

Mahmood took the Bible, and quickly read the verses.

“OK,” said Mr. Li. What do these verses tell us?”

Mahmood looked blank.

“What do they say?”

Mahmood was still puzzled.

“Perhaps you should read them again.”

Mahmood again quickly read the verses.

“OK, what do you think these verses are telling us?”

“What do you mean?” Mahmood said. “They are from a holy book. I cannot discuss or question them. They mean whatever they say.”

Mr. Li smiled. This was indeed very strange. “Mahmood, do you think God gave us his words to simply memorize and receipt, or do you think he wanted us to learn something from them.”

“I suppose he wanted us to learn from them.”

“Then perhaps we should discuss what he wanted us to know.”

“But isn’t it wrong to discuss holy books? I might understand it wrongly. That’s why it is important for a teacher to guide me.”

“Mahmood, do you think God is incapable of speaking clearly and plainly?”

“No, he can do anything. But our holy book is very difficult to understand.”

“Long ago” Mr. Li began. “The prophet Moses wrote down what God revealed to him about the creation of the world. This knowledge was written so that we might have record and understand. It is not secret knowledge. It is plain and easy to understand.” He paused. “Now let’s consider the first verses of the Bible. What does the Bible tell us that God did?”

“He created the world” Mahmood answered.

“Very good” Mr. Li answered. Let’s discover how he created, and what he did.

The three men gathered around the Bible, and together they read the story of creation and discussed it. Mr. Li used the notes that he had prepared the night before to guide Mahmood through the first two chapters of Genesis. Mr. Li had planned to also cover Genesis chapter three but Mahmood was having trouble with something that Mr. Li had said.

“From what you are telling me” he said “The world was a perfect place. Adam and Eve were very happy. Nothing was wrong. Didn’t they ever fight?”

“No” Mr. Li smiled. “God is perfect, and what he created was perfect.”

“That makes sense” Mahmood replied “but the world today is not perfect. Didn’t God create this world? Why is the description in the Bible so different from what the world is today?”

“That,” said Mr. Li is what we will study next. He looked at his watch. “Our time is passed, so let’s start there on our next study. When can we meet again?” Together they decided to meet in three days times.

Mr. Li was excited when he returned to his room. Over the next two days he carefully prepared his notes so that he would be fully ready for guiding Mahmood through Genesis chapter three, and beyond.

The next Bible study went well. When they were finished, Mahmood asked Mr. Li if he could have a copy of his notes. Mr. Li was surprised. He had prepared his notes for his own use, and he hadn’t thought that he would give them away to anyone, especially Mahmood. But he didn’t want to disappoint Mahmood, so he gave him his notes.

They agreed to meet the following Friday. Mr. Li arrived at David’s apartment early, and they talked and prayed together. Then they waited for Mahmood to arrive. After a while it appeared that he would be late. They talked some more, and waited. After two hours it was apparent that he wasn’t going to show up. As they were leaving, David met his landlord in front of their building. “Is Mahmood around?” he asked casually after they had greeted one another.

“NO, he went out early this morning. I don’t know where he went. I don’t think he had anything special up. Perhaps he is down in the market with his friends.” David and Mr. Li exchanged glances as they left.

Mr. Li returned home wondering if things were OK. Perhaps Mahmood was upset with him for something he had said. He waited a few days and then contacted David. “So have you seen Mahmood?”

“Yes, I talked with him, but he doesn’t seem very interested in Bible Studies.”

“What?” Mr. Li said. “I thought he was doing very well.

“I asked him what the trouble was,” David continued. “He seemed to say that the Bible was a very thick book, and we had only studied the first three chapters. He said that it would take years to study our way through it.”

“That’s too bad.” Mr. Li said thoughtfully. “I wasn’t planning on taking years. I just wanted to make a good start. There is so much in Genesis that he needs to understand first.”

“I asked him if he wanted to do at least one more study, but he declined. When I pushed him a bit, he said that he had your notes, and he would read those.”

Mr. Li was very disappointed. He returned home and tried to think through what he could have done better. Perhaps they should have set a limit to the studies. Perhaps he should have told Mahmood that he could explain the gospel to him in three or four visits, or five or six hours. Perhaps he should not have used notes. It would have been much better if Mahmood had a Bible rather than his poorly written notes. “Oh God” he prayed. “I wish I could have done better. Please give me another opportunity to share the gospel and help me do a better job next time.”

Lesson B

When we minister in a different culture, we need to discover how teachers act and live in that particular culture. What are the things that a teacher should do or not do, to enhance and reinforce the lesson material? What should the teacher expect of the student, what do students expect of their teacher?

We should never assume that we know all about communication and teaching. Learning to be an effective teacher in another culture is a life long process. As we learn more of the culture, we should readily adapt our teaching style to be better communicators. When we first enter a culture, we often have trouble seeing things as they are. Everything is new to us, and we may be enjoying the culture rather than analyzing what is happening around this. This is why it is important to expose yourself to local teachers. When doing so you may recognize that much is done for outward appearances to impress men. That is not the way of Christ. There may be, however, some aspects of behavior that one must adopt to be recognized as a teacher. Get to know some local teachers in your community. Visit some Muslim schools and observe how the teachers behave. If you cannot visit, simply stand near a local elementary school and observe or listen. Remember that these are teachers teaching children. How can you observe teachers teaching adults? Do they teach differently at a college or university? What about at the mosque? Perhaps you can watch lessons being taught on television. What makes a teacher successful? What does he do to get and command respect? How does he control his class? Remember that an excellent teacher holds the attention of the class, and probably does not struggle with control. How can you become such a teacher? Ask around in the community. Discover what people think are the characteristics of a good teacher. If you are to be seen and accepted as a teacher, you should be aware of these characteristics, and carefully pray through which of them you will adopt in your own life.

We will now discuss several things to look for when assessing how a teacher acts and what he might look like. Consider each of them carefully, as the total image you portray may make or break your success.

Culture & Language

Culture is important. Study your target culture carefully. There is a reason for everything people do. They may not know the reasons, but there are always reasons. Delve into the culture, and seek to understand how people act and how they relate to each other. If it is impolite to point the bottom of your feet at someone, then never do it. Try to be conservative. Watch and listen. Try imitating another person's actions. What makes you uncomfortable? Why?

Some years ago Dr. Billy Graham, a very successful Christian evangelist visited Egypt. He was asked to appear on local television. He accepted and he was interviewed on TV before the entire Egyptian public. During the interview he sat on a chair and the man interviewing him sat across from him. During the interview he crossed his legs and unthinkingly pointed the bottom of his foot towards the TV camera. In America this was common and no one would think anything of it. In Egypt, the TV camera zoomed in at

the bottom of his foot. A few minutes later they ended the interview and the entire country was angry at Dr. Billy Graham for pointing the bottom of his foot at everyone in the country. In effect, this was saying “I am walking all over you!” Is culture important? Yes, we must be very careful that we do not offend people, without intending or perhaps even knowing it.

Dress

Dress is important. Teachers often hold an honored place in society. One who does not dress appropriately will soon lose the respect of the students and others in the community. How you dress on the street is important. How you dress in your home and answer the door is important. You might even have to abandon your favorite forms of dress and adopt something more formal or culturally acceptable in the land you are going to. Watch carefully how the local people look at you. What do they look at first? In some cultures people judge others by their shoes. So, missionaries there have taken to wearing formal shoes most of the time, keeping them polished and presentable. In some countries it is possible to dress very casually in the early morning, but much better clothes are worn in the evening.

Styles of Teaching

Most of us have attended school in our home countries and thus have preconceived notions of what makes a good teacher. Never forget that our opinions are based on our own culture and philosophy of education. Study the styles of teaching used in your target culture, and adapt these to your use. Visit a local school or observe teaching taking place on television, such as from a mosque or temple. In some situations you might decide that the teacher portrays too much pride. Consider how you can portray yourself as knowledgeable without coming across as proud.

Use of Notes

Have you ever noticed that Muslim teachers seldom, if ever, use notes? The use of notes indicates two things to the audience. First, the speaker doesn't know his material well enough to speak without them and, secondly, the notes are the authority. Remember Mahmood? He wanted to get a copy of Mr. Li's notes, and then, having obtained the authoritative document, didn't return for further lessons. As a teacher of the Bible, it is vitally important that you use the Bible and the Bible alone. You want to communicate that the Bible is the sole source of your authority. You want the seeker to seek God in the pages of His Word. Don't introduce another authority, and refer to it more frequently than you do the Bible. If you must use notes, then write them on a small card and slip it into your Bible where you can refer to it occasionally. If the student wants some material, then he should take a Bible.

Seating

If you have never attended a teaching session in a school or mosque then make it a point to attend, or observe on television. Notice that teachers often sit, but are elevated above the audience or in a place of authority. Study your local culture so you can immediately see if there are “seats of honor” or places in the room that command more authority than others. You will need to decide for yourself if you want to or need to make use of this cultural

aspect of position. You may want your guest to sit in the place of honor. After all, Jesus taught His disciples to take places of lesser authority and asked His followers to do likewise (Matthew 23:5-12).

Handling of the Scriptures

How does a religious teacher handle the Scriptures? If the Scriptures are your sole authority and if they are the Holy Word of God and you love and respect them, then treat them accordingly. Don't place your Bible on the floor; don't place other books on top of it; and don't write in it. Having said this, there are exceptions. I have seen Muslims marvel at a well-read Bible, which has been carefully marked. The worn, marked Bible can show the seeker how much you love and study its pages. That said, the general rule is: treat your Bible as a precious or even sacred object if you expect others to respect it.

Refreshments

Most missionaries say that it is best not to serve refreshments during the teaching time, especially if you are struggling to assert yourself as a teacher. Refreshments can be distracting; besides, most students don't drink tea while a school lesson is going on. A cup of tea offered before the lesson is possible; but clear it away before the lesson begins. More can be offered after the lesson.

Location

Whenever possible, teaching should take place in a neutral place. While it is possible to teach in a restaurant or public place, this can be fraught with difficulties and distractions. The seeker himself may be nervous about meeting in such a public place, and if he doesn't show up, the teacher must wait around for a considerable time in case he has been delayed.

If there is no suitable, neutral location, then the teacher's home is often the best place for him to meet with his students. It is important, however, to have a place where you can sit and teach, rather than lounge around. Some people object to the idea of bringing a seeker into a foreigner's home, as there may be cultural things that will overshadow the lesson, but the teacher's home is private and the number of distractions can usually be controlled. If possible, the sitting room should be as similar as possible to those found in other local homes. Often westerners fill their sitting rooms up with books, pictures, and other paraphernalia that make them feel at home, but makes their Muslim visitors feel on edge. If at all possible, a good teacher or evangelist should have prepared an easily accessible room that resembles a typical sitting room or teaching location for people from your target culture.

Number and Length of Sessions

One of the greatest difficulties you will face is getting the student to attend all the sessions. This is one reason why introducing a teacher is so useful. The teacher demands greater respect from the students because he is making an effort to come and teach. If at all possible, use a national teacher. These are usually men or women of standing in the local community.

When two missionaries work together they can use *vice-versa teaching*. In this case two Christian workers, usually in different locations, coordinate together, each one being the teacher for the other's contacts. Thus each evangelist tells his contact that he has a friend who is a religious teacher. This teacher is willing to teach a short course on understanding Christianity (or the Gospel). If the seeker is interested, the evangelist arranges to introduce his contact to the teacher. If the seeker is not interested, then they continue their relationship, talking about issues, with the evangelist occasionally repeating the invitation to meet with a teacher. The strength of this approach is that the evangelist can act as a sounding board after each session. The evangelist can also ask his contact questions and encourage him to attend the next lesson, offering to go with him, if needed. This creates a triangle, with the contact, evangelist and teacher all relating to one another.

Remember Mahmood? Even though he had stopped coming to the teaching sessions, David could still approach him, because David was still his friend, and not the teacher. This is the strength of visa-versa teaching. If Mr. Li had someone who was ready to sit with a religious teacher, he could introduce David as the teacher.

If possible it is always best if the teacher is a national who can speak the local language well, and relate from the same cultural and religious background. On the other hand, in fanatical Muslim settings it is sometimes better if the evangelist is from another culture. Any Muslim seeking truth outside of Islam would be immediately confronted by his family and neighbors. Thus talking to a foreigner may seem safer to a Muslim seeker because the foreigner is not connected to his immediate family circle. If this is the case, the evangelist may find it advantageous to circulate through the wider community, finding those who are interested in learning about Christianity. Then, as seekers emerge, they could be passed over to a local believer (or another evangelist) who would act as the teacher.

As for the length of the lessons, evangelists over the years have struggled with the questions of "How much and how soon?" The author of the Discovery Lessons found that he could not cover the basics in less than six hours. When seekers were invited to attend a "Bible study" they often shied away, simply because of the open-endedness of the commitment and because of the thickness of the Bible. By limiting the studies to a minimal number of hours, students would more readily commit themselves to attend. Six one-hour sessions seem more palatable than an open-ended commitment.

While six one-hour sessions can be covered in a week, it is often wiser to leave a longer period of time between the sessions. The student is covering so much new material that he needs time to think about it and assimilate it. In some cases, however, teachers have successfully used three two-hour sessions. You, as the teacher, must decide with the student on what commitment he can make.

Repetition and Memorization

There is an old Arab proverb that says, "Repetition can teach a stone." Memorization is a learning tool often used by Africans and Asians, so don't be afraid to encourage memorization. Students can memorize Scripture verses as well as the broad outline you

are covering. So don't be afraid to ask your students to memorize. However, don't rely solely on memorization. Many other mediums can be used. Songs, dance, drama and narratives are also useful tools. But they are only tools, and should be combined with other forms of learning so that understanding and application happen.

Adaptability

Don't be afraid to teach someone. As you progress through the material, you will begin to assess how interested he is, and for what reasons. If he is merely seeking to gain knowledge, but is not personally interested in Christ, then the material can be presented simply as lessons on Christianity. If the student begins to respond to the material and you can see evidence of God's work in his heart, then the material can be made much more direct. Try to be sensitive to the seeker's questions. Someone seeking to trap you may ask you questions about Muhammad or the Qur'an, or some other Scriptures or teaching. Gently remind the student that these are lessons about the Christian faith, and return to the lesson material. You need to trust God to guide the student as he forms his own opinions about his own religion.

Keeping to the point

Know and communicate the material for each lesson and only have 2 or 3 sub points. That's all! Memorize the outline and resist the temptation to teach too much material in one session. Remember that many of the concepts you are teaching are totally new to the Muslim student, and may be hard for him to grasp. Sometimes one simple thing you say may require hours of thinking before the student can accept it. For the Muslim, simply grasping the concept that God created a perfect creation may be overwhelming. But it is a necessary lesson, for if creation isn't damaged then it doesn't need fixing. This is why the Discovery Lessons spend the entire first lesson examining the perfect creation.

Who should be present?

Opinions vary between the successful evangelists. Most agreed that the best situation is one-on-one, or the student and his Christian friend (if they are doing vice-versa teaching), and the teacher.

If there are to be more, then there are several things to consider. Some teachers mention that in teaching a group, the students should outnumber the Christians so that it doesn't appear that the Christians are ganging up on them. This, in reality, is often hard to arrange. Often the teacher will want to apprentice a new teacher or a Christian observer will want to sit in on a lesson. If this is the case, then the observer should act as an observer, a silent prayer partner, and never enter into the discussion unless invited by the teacher. When the teacher is waiting patiently for an answer from the student, it is often hard for the observer to resist the temptation to help by answering the question.

The dynamics change when there is more than one student. All the evangelists agreed that they would only prefer to deal with two or more students if these were already the best of friends. If they are going to think and act as a group then it can be helpful to deal with them as a group. This takes more skill, as the students can hide behind one another's

responses, defend one another, and create an argumentative atmosphere. If everyone in the group is a seeker then it may be possible to move them as a group closer to Christ.

Almost all evangelists agree that the presence of persons of the opposite sex should be avoided and that female teachers should deal only with female students and male teachers with male students. The only occasion when students of the opposite sex should be together is if they are a married couple. In most cases it is unwise to teach an engaged couple together, as it may appear that this is an occasion for courting rather than study. Even teaching a brother and sister together should be avoided unless they are young children or older, respected members of the community.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. If a person wanted you to tell them what the Christian faith was all about, what would you say? Do you have a plan? If you needed a teacher, who could you call on?
2. If you are currently in a cross-cultural situation, is your house different from the people you want to reach? What might make your sitting area comfortable or uncomfortable for them? How are their houses different from yours? Are there things you can change to make them feel more at home?
3. What is Jesus teaching in Matthew 23:5-12? Does your culture have 'seats of honor'?
4. Why do you think it might be best to separate genders at a Bible Study?

Lesson Five

Parables, Proverbs and Storytelling

Technical Notes (33 minutes lesson)

Story A 875 words = 5 minutes

Lesson A 1468 words = 9 minutes

Questions set A 5 questions = 15 minutes

Story B 1127 words = 6 minutes

Lesson B 2136 words = 13 minutes

Questions set B 4 questions = 15 minutes

Story A

After his experience at trying to teach Mahmood, Mr. Li became discouraged. He had failed in every attempt he had made to share the gospel. So far he had been in a Muslim country for almost two years. He had learned to speak some of the language, but he had never once been successful in explaining the gospel, and no one had come to Christ. Every time he tried to share the gospel he either made a mess of it himself, or his listeners became angry with him. Now all he seemed able to do was tell occasional stories from the Bible to the men he was responsible for.

One day as he was sitting in front of the hospital watching the crowds of people flowing in and out of the hospital, bitterness swelled up inside of him. “Look” he said angrily to God. “Look at all of these people. They are all going to hell. And I am here, and I can do nothing. I have given almost two years and... nothing.” Mr. Li clenched his teeth. “Oh God, I feel so useless. Why did you bring me here? I’ve done nothing for you.” In the back of Mr. Li’s mind, a plan was slowly forming. He would leave his job and return to China. But first he must find a place in China away from his family and friends, where he would not be known. Perhaps if he moved to some remote area of China he could win people to Christ, plant churches, and thus redeem himself before his family and friends. Here in this Muslim land he had only been a failure.

Over the next few days, the plan grew in Mr. Li’s mind. He calculated when his pay would arrive, how much he had been able to save, and how much an airplane ticket would cost. At the same time he felt guilty, and wondered if he might be running away from God.

One night he prayed “God if you want me to stay in this country, then show me that you are using me. Otherwise, I am going to buy the plane ticket and leave.”

That evening he went for a talk in a sparse grove of trees outside the hospital. It was cool in the shade, and some of the hospital workers would gather there. Choosing a corner to himself, he stood with his back to the grove and looked out over a nearby valley. He really didn’t feel like mixing with others. Then he heard someone approaching him, and smelled their cigarette smoke.

“Excuse me” a feminine voice spoke “can I talk with you for a minute?”

He turned and looked with surprise into the face of a young Muslim woman. She was smoking nervously. “I didn’t mean to bother you,” she started “but I have a question for you.”

“Its OK” he said gently, glad that they were in a common area with other people around. No one seemed to notice them at all.

“I would like to ask you a question about a story you told some time ago.”

“Oh?” said Mr. Li. He couldn’t remember ever telling a story when this young woman was around.

“Yes, you told the story to my uncle. He told us the story that night. I’m not sure I understood it right. It seemed to be a rather odd story.”

“What story is that?”

“It was a story about the prophet Isa (Jesus).” She paused to draw heavily on her cigarette. “You said that a woman was brought to him that had been caught in adultery.” Mr. Li smiled to himself. He remembered how hard he had worked to make sure he had the right word for adultery, and how hard it had been to remember it when telling the story.

“My uncle told us that Jesus said “Let he who is without sin cast the first stone. Is that right?”

“Yes” Mr. Li replied. The girl’s eyes were bright and questioning. “But there was more. He told her that her sins were forgiven her, and that she should go and sin no more.”

“That’s that part I don’t understand” she whispered. “How could he forgive sins?” she paused. “Who can forgive sins?” A tear formed in her eye. “If he could forgive her sins, can he forgive mine?”

Suddenly all the anger and sadness left Mr. Li’s heart. He realized that God was answering his prayers. God was telling him, through this woman, that he was being used. This woman was like Nicodemus, who came by night to learn more.

“Yes” he assured the woman, “Jesus can forgive you of your sins, but this is not the place to talk. Can I arrange so you can meet a woman and talk to her.”

The woman’s eyes flashed with understanding. “Of course” she said, suddenly aware that they were in a public place.

Mr. Li smiled. Can I meet you here tomorrow at the same time and give arrange with you then who you can meet?” She nodded, and then silently left. Mr. Li was very pleased, and headed for a telephone where he could call David and ask him to help him find a Christian woman who could help them.

Lesson (A)

How does one go about impacting a community for Christ? Many western missiologists tell us that the secret to impacting a community is through its leaders. In a sense this is true, as the community often follows the leaders. However, when you first enter a community, you may not have access to the leaders. Other missionaries have suggested that the evangelist should focus on heads of families and once these come to Christ the rest of the family will follow. This too is true, but in practice, due to their busy life-styles, it is very hard to find heads of families, and sometimes even harder to win them to Christ.

In these lessons we would like to suggest a slightly different approach. The Bible calls us to be salt and light in our witness to the world. When salt is added to a pot of boiling rice, the salt affects everything in the pot. And so a salt-type witness is one that affects the whole community. Our presence and our witness affects whole families and communities. Light is different. It shines in the darkness, penetrating one area at a time. So, a light-type witness focuses on one or two individuals, endeavoring to share truth in a way that brings those individuals to Christ. Our witness to the world should be both salt and light.

Salt-Type Ministry

As you move into a cross-cultural setting you should develop a desire to see the whole community come to understand what following Jesus means. This will have three major impacts on the community. First it will influence *Not Interested People* making them aware that there are another way of thinking, and other religious options. It also opens doors for *Somewhat Interested People* to ask questions more openly, and it lowers the resistance of the whole community towards the new converts as they come to Jesus.

Impacting a community takes time. Many evangelists think only of working with people one on one. Trying to impact a community of any size through the one-on-one method would take a long time. In response to this, the Western approach has been to develop mass media tools that work as salt. Mass media tools such as newspaper advertisements, literature and video distribution, radio, and TV can all work as salt, influencing a community in general. These are greatly used of the Lord, and we should never minimize their impact. There are, however, other tools that are also available.

Some of the successful evangelists the young missionary studied had a particular interest in moving their whole community towards a greater awareness and understanding of the Gospel. They had a salt-type ministry which was very simple; so simple that many Western-minded workers overlook it.

Many of our daily chores are actually opportunities to be salt to the community. A visit to the stores, the mechanic, the park, and to neighbors are all part of being salt. Evangelists should look for opportunities to speak in simple ways that made people think.

The young missionary first saw this in the life of an evangelist who came to visit him while he was ministering in the country of Yemen. This man had an amazing gift of speaking to people along the path of life, turning most conversations towards spiritual

things. He would then say things that would make the listener think, and then leave the topic.

On one occasion, a Yemeni man asked him about the price of a bride in his country. The evangelist thought for a moment and then replied that the price of a bride was very great. The Yemeni was shocked. This was obviously not the answer he was expecting. The evangelist took the opportunity to teach a short lesson. He explained that in Yemen brides only cost money. In his country, a bride costs much more than money. The man needed to give his heart to the bride. He would have to promise to love and cherish only this one woman. The price was very expensive, he told the listener, because when a man gives his heart to his bride, she gets everything in his life. The evangelist paused, then looked the Yemeni in the eye and continued. He pointed out that this is exactly like God. God doesn't just want our money, or our prayers. He wants our hearts. And when God has our hearts He has all of us.

The story was very simple, but it caused the Yemeni audience to think. The evangelist's objective was not to convert the Yemeni, but to make him think about a fundamental truth of the Gospel. It was an excellent example of how to minister to a *Not Interested* individual. It left the people with something to think about, and it impressed on them that the teller of the story was a religious teacher of some sort.

Every missionary to Muslims should work on developing this skill. It will take time to develop, but the results, both in ministry and in personal satisfaction, will make it very worthwhile.

A missionary tells the story about when a Muslim taxi driver offered a him a cigarette. He politely refused, and then a few moments later asked the taxi driver if he knew why he didn't smoke. The drive said no, and asked why. The missionary told him that God has given us two important things in this life, a body, and time. When we reach Judgment Day God will ask us what we did with the body He gave us, and what we did with our time. If we misuse our bodies, we will need to answer to God about it. The taxi driver was quite surprised with his answer, so the missionary continued. "So many people in this part of the world think that God will only judge them about things like prayer or fasting. But God will want to know what we did with our bodies, and also with the time we have on this earth. Many of the prophets spoke of these things. There will be lots of surprises on Judgment Day." The object of such a conversation was not to witness, but rather to sow salt. Many Muslims pride themselves on being more religious than others. The missionary tried to shift the conversation from a physical topic to a spiritual one. As the majority of Muslim Arabs smoke, he discovered that there are many opportunities to share on this topic. Whenever the conversation allowed, he would try to share how a Christian's outward actions need to be a response to Christ changing us from within.

In trying to be salt to the community it is important to speak provocatively as the two stories above illustrate. It is also effective to use parables, proverbs or stories to communicate a truth. Once a missionary told this to a group of Muslims; "Imagine a truck load of ceremonially clean meat. What would happen to that whole truckload of

meat, if I mixed in one teaspoon of pig meat? Sin is like that. We think the small things don't matter very much!" The Muslims reacted strongly, saying that one small piece of pig meat would ruin the entire truck load.

The advantage of good stories is that they are easy to pass on. In our community, people spend a lot of time visiting each other. They often rack their brains trying to think of good and clever things to say to stimulate the discussion and keep it going. Stories, parables, and provocative sayings about the Gospel will be passed around the community, and the effect is a kind of Gospel salt that influences the general attitude and understanding of the community about Christian things. This is important as a salt type ministry helps prepare the community for the presence of the church that will one day exist there.

One day the missionary's wife asked him if he had ever talked about God judging us for using cigarettes. Apparently the conversation with the taxi driver had been told and retold all around the community, and some weeks later the missionary's wife heard the ladies discussing it. This is the wonderful result of sowing salt, telling stories, and saying things to make people think.

Light Type Ministry

Ministering light is another skill. Since light is usually focused on those who are seeking the truth, those endeavoring to minister light need to know how to give a gospel presentation which will clearly communicate into the mind of the contact. This type of ministry is generally focused on those who are *seekers*, or at least *somewhat interested*, and usually takes the shape of some form of teaching. We will look at light type ministry tools in later lessons.

In this lesson we will concentrate on using proverbs, parables, and stories for *Not Interested People* and *Somewhat Interested People*.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion A

1. Is your community aware that Christians are living among them?
2. What are some salt-type ministries that your team is involved in to widely affect your community?
3. Would mass media tools such as newspaper adverts, literature and video distribution, radio, and TV work in your community? Why or why not?
4. If mass media will not work, how will your team go about impacting the community at large?
5. What are key methods of communication in your community? How important is mass media, do people visit with each other? Do they gather in certain places to communicate? Do they live isolated lives, but watch mass media?

Story B

Mr. Li was very happy to learn that David knew of a Christian woman missionary who could help him. They arranged to meet by the grove of trees around dusk. Mr. Li went early to pray. There were very few people around. Once the sun started to set, people would come to the trees in the coolness of the evening. For an hour or two there would be

people around, enjoying the cool wind that blew in from the valley below. As he prayed, he thanked God that he was again part of what God was doing in someone's life.

After a few minutes he saw the young woman approaching. Mr. Li looked around in panic. He really didn't want to be seen talking very long to a woman, in this place. True, it was a public place, but men and women did not mix freely in this society, and besides that, people might want to know how they knew each other. Before he could think what to do she approached him. She glanced around, realizing that several people were watching. "Excuse me, do you have a light?" she asked, producing her carton of cigarettes. Mr. Li looked helpless. "I'm sorry, I don't" She smiled in mock disappointment, and produced a lighter from her purse and proceeded to light her own cigarette. "Do you remember me from last night?" she asked quietly?"

"Of course" Mr. Li added. "That's why I returned tonight. I have a friend coming that you can talk to." He paused. "My name is Li he said. Mr. Li. I work in the hospital."

"I know" she smiled. "I know all about you. You're the story teller. I've heard your stories from many people." She brought the cigarette to her lips. "My name is Mona, and I would love to hear one of your stories."

Mr. Li caught a glimpse of David and a young woman coming up the path towards the trees. He sighed in relief. After they had introduced themselves to each other, David suggested that Anna, the western girl, and Mona could stay and talk and he and Mr. Li would leave.

"But first I want to hear a story." Mona said. "I've never heard Mr. Li tell a story."

David shrugged and pointed to Mr. Li. "OK, let's hear a story."

Mr. Li nodded. He had been praying hard. Then he suggested that they sit on some large rocks. When they were seated he began.

"There once was a young man who enjoyed life, and wanted to experience everything. He felt that his home life was far too restricted, and he wanted to get out and go places and do things. So he went to his father to get some money. However he knew his father wouldn't give him very much, maybe just pocket money, so he asked his father for his inheritance, so he could go out into the world and make his own living. His father was quite surprised and disappointed, but in the end, he gave him his money and the young man set out.

Over the following months, the young man had a good time partying, eating and drinking, and spending his money. With his money he could buy whatever he wanted. Wine, women, song, everything was his. Until his money was gone. And when his money left, so did his friends. With no money he couldn't afford a place to live, and couldn't buy food. Soon he was homeless and hungry. To make matters worse, there was economic trouble at that time, and life was hard for everyone. With no work and no money he began to wander around looking for a way to live. Finally he met a man who told him that if he wanted to eat, he could look after his pigs." Mona screwed up her face in disgust. "So he went into the field to watch over the pigs. The problem was the man would only pay him after he worked. The young man was so hungry that he looked through the garbage the pigs were eating to find something to eat." Mona looked sick. "Finally he came to his senses and thought to himself, 'There is plenty to

eat in my father's house. Why don't I go back there? I know I have shamed him, but perhaps he will let me work like one of his hired men. So he headed back."

"I know how this story will end," Mona said sadly. "His family will kill him. When they know how badly he has shamed their name, they will all kill him."

Mr. Li waited for a minute and then continued.

"As he came along the road towards his village, his father was sitting out in front of the house. As he watched the road, he recognized his son. With a shout he leapt to his feet and started running down the road towards his son."

"Here it comes" shuddered Mona.

"My son, my son, he cried. And he threw his arms around his son. But the son pushed him off. "Father, I have sinned" he said. "I am unworthy to be your son. Please let me come back as your hired man. I am so cold and hungry." His father shouted for the people in the house to come.

"I knew it. This is going to have a terrible ending."

Mr. Li smiled and shook his head. "Not this time, he said softly.

"The young man's father called for the family robe to be brought and with it he covered up his son's rags. Then he called for shoes to be put onto his feet. Lastly he took the family ring from off his own hand and put it onto his son's finger. He then called for everyone to prepare a great feast, for his long lost son was home."

Mr. Li turned to Mona. "Jesus told this story to show us that God is not like a great Sultan, but rather like a father."

There was a long pause, and then Mona whispered under her breath "A thing never once seen before: a flying turtle." Mr. Li recognized this as a local proverb. For a moment there was silence then Mona spoke again in a very soft voice. "I would like to know more about this. It is so different from everything I've been taught."

After some sharing, Mr. Li and David walked back towards the hospital. Anna and Mona exchanged phone numbers and made arrangements to meet the next day. Mr. Li's heart was rejoicing as he returned to his small room. Perhaps, just perhaps, God was going to do something through him. In his heart he knew that he would not return to China. God wanted him just where he was.

Lesson B

People of every race or culture have their own ways of communicating among themselves, as in music, art, and drama. By far the most commonly used mode is verbal language. There are different forms of verbal language; for instance, common language, locally understood idioms, secret language, and proverbs. Proverbs are common in every language. One of the signs of a wise teacher is his use of proverbs or local wisdom. Anyone wishing to be recognized as a teacher should be skilled in the use of parables and proverbs.

Proverbs are normally short sayings which contain wisdom or illustrate a truth, usually by contrasting two situations. Most proverbs are short, direct statements.

Proverbs usually have two meanings: the literal meaning and a deeper meaning. The deeper meaning of a proverb is not always apparent. Proverbs can always be changed slightly in order to make them fit different circumstances. The teller may delete, paraphrase, elaborate, or transfer elements in it. Likewise, the hearer must be smart enough to interpret and grasp its meaning.

The best way to learn proverbs is to ask wise old people in your community to teach you some. If you visit a lot in the community, you will hear proverbs being used continually. Write them down. If people know you are interested in collecting proverbs they will often be willing to help you discover more. New proverbs are always being composed, and old ones are adapted or given new meanings to suit new situations. Anyone who is creative and observant and has the ability to reflect and deduce a moral lesson from common happenings can compose a proverb.

The ultimate purpose of the proverbs is to teach wisdom. Thus they are used to comment on life or teach a moral lesson or give advice on how to live. In many countries, a person rarely speaks more than a few sentences without quoting a proverb.

The ultimate purpose of proverbs is to impart wisdom. As a result, proverbs can be extremely useful and effective as a tool for teaching. They are short and easy to remember and are often popular for their humor. They provoke vivid images in the mind. Things that are otherwise abstract and difficult to grasp can be relatively easy to understand when explained with a proverb. They are, as it were, sweeteners to effective communication. It has been said that speaking without citing proverbs is like eating soup without salt. Since proverbs are important tools in communicating wisdom, we need to ask God's help in learning how to use and apply proverbs in our daily communication. James 1:5 tells us: *If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.*

Biblical Proverbs

Proverbs are used in both the Old and New Testaments. They can be found throughout the Bible: "*Like mother, like daughter*" (Ezekiel 16:44); "*The parents have eaten sour grapes, but their children's mouths pucker at the taste*" (Ezekiel 18:2); "*A dog returns to its vomit*" (2 Peter 2:22). The best known, however, is the collection in the Book of Proverbs.

The Hebrew word for "proverb" comes from a word which means "to be like" or "to be as." Thus, in the Book of Proverbs the message is often given by comparing two things and showing their similarity in some respect: "*Timely advice is as lovely as golden apples in a silver basket*" (Proverbs 25:11), or "*A person who doesn't give a promised gift is like clouds and wind that don't bring rain*" (Proverbs 25:14).

Another style commonly used in Proverbs is that of contrast, showing the difference between two things. This is common in chapters 10-15: "*Wise people don't make a show of their knowledge, but fools broadcast their folly*" (12:23). Sometimes conditional statements are used. For instance, "*If you repay evil for good, evil will never leave your*

house” (17:13), and “*Plans succeed through good counsel; don’t go to war without the advice of others*” (20:18).

The Book of Proverbs does present some problems for us. First of all, since a proverb is often a play on words in its original language, it can be hard to translate it into another language. When learning another language, you may hear people use a proverb which they obviously enjoy, but is meaningless to you. Even if you understand the meaning of all the words, you may still not understand the meaning of the proverb. It was only after you understand the context in which it was used and the background material to which it referred that you can begin to understand the proverb.

Many Christians have discarded the use of biblical proverbs. Since we do not live in a Middle Eastern setting it is hard to understand Hebrew proverbs when they are translated into English. This, however, should not discourage us from using proverbs with others we are trying to reach, since proverbs may play an important part in communication in their own cultural and literary backgrounds.

Possible Objections to the Use of Proverbs

Not all Christian workers like the idea of using proverbs in preaching the Christian message. Some feel that since proverbs are part of traditional culture, Christians should not use them. They may be reluctant to use proverbs in case they overshadow Bible texts or themes, since some proverbs are so vivid that they may be more easily remembered than the Bible texts they are meant to help explain. These Christians may also be uncomfortable with using traditional proverbs for fear that some of the teachings they contain may conflict with the teachings of the Bible.

These are well-founded fears. We must be careful, as Christians, to choose our use of proverbs wisely. Many proverbs teach good moral values. These are of use. Teachers must never build their teachings around proverbs, however. Proverbs should only be used to explain or illustrate biblical truths. They should be chosen carefully, especially since some hidden meanings may not be readily apparent. Proverbs that teach what is in opposition to what the Bible teaches should not normally be used, but they may be cited if the intention is to show a better way through biblical revelation. Jesus did a similar thing when He declared: “*You have heard that ... But I say....*” (Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28). For the Christian, the Bible, as the revealed Word of God, must remain the highest authority when it comes to considering which religious claims to believe or conduct to follow.

Parables

Many western Christians have trouble with using parables. In the west, Christians are careful to explain everything in detail. They love systematic theology that carefully works through detailed answers. As a result they struggle with stories that have loose ends but it is obvious that Jesus himself and other teachers in the Bible who used parables seemed to have no problems with loose ends. Neither do most Muslim people.

Parables are stories. They are fiction, not true stories. Usually westerners so much desire to share truth that fiction has no place in their teaching. Most westerners don't want to risk making up stories so we rarely use parables unless they are directly from the Bible. Telling parables, however, is a biblical skill that we as Westerners seem to have lost. It usually doesn't come easily to us.

Why use Parables?

It must be remembered that parables are stories that get attention, bring involvement, produce emotion, and hide the truth from antagonists.

Parables can be very effectively used to minister to those at *Not Interested* or *Somewhat Interested* without causing offense. Jesus used many parables this way. The crowds that followed Him were made up of many types of people. Through his use of parables and proverbs, everyone heard Him and thought about what He said. Jesus knew that the true seekers would return to ask Him personally about the meanings behind what He had said.

What do parables do for us?

Why would we want to use a parable anyway? Why not just speak the truth? All of the successful evangelists that the young missionary studied used parables for illustrating points, bringing things into contrast, sifting and drawing people out, giving people something to ponder on, appealing to reason, and ambushing listeners. Ambushing includes setting up a story, developing a thought that people identify with and then *wham!* hitting them with a truth. We can see this, for example, in Nathan's parable to David (2 Samuel 12:1-7) and in the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

Parables are useful when dealing with people raised in an oral tradition. In Yemen, a one missionary tried using a short presentation of the Gospel. It never worked. No sooner would he say something then folk would start with their objections. So with some of his colleagues, they thought and prayed about it and searched the Scriptures to see what Jesus would have done. They discovered that He told parables. Of course they knew this all along, but somehow it never occurred to them to use parables themselves.

The amazing thing was that when Jesus told parable He didn't bother to explain them! He allowed those who were thinking and seeking to ponder over the parable, and then approach Him later. Sometimes they even came at night to ask what the parable meant. Most people never came and asked, but some did! Using parables will help separate the *Not Interested* from the *Somewhat Interested*, and may help you identify *Seekers* from a group of people.

When the missionaries visited a village, they introduced some basic Christian concept in their conversation and illustrated it with a parable. They gave no further explanation and moved on to another village. At first they felt this was the wrong way to communicate. They had been trained in Western Bible colleges to give direct talks, bring people to a conclusion, and then ask for a decision. However, when these two brothers visited these same villages some months later, they discovered that the people had thought about what had been said and now wanted to know more. So another teaching was added, a parable

given and they left again. In this way Christian thought and teaching were slowly introduced and taught in a number of villages.

Sources of Parables

From the parables of Jesus three sources can be discerned:

1. Nature: for example, the parable of the sower (Mark 4:1-9); the seed growing secretly (Mark 4:26-29).
2. Everyday life: such as the parable of the yeast (Matthew. 13:33); the ten virgins (Matthew. 25:1-13), the laborers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16); the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32); and the unjust judge (Luke 18:2-8).
3. Well-known events: for example, the parable of the high-ranking man who was about to be made king although he was hated by the citizens, and the man who gave gold coins to his servants to trade with (Luke 19:12-27). Historians have identified the activities of this person with those of Archelaus, son of Herod the Great. Imagine doing this today, starting your parable with: *“There once was a president of a great nation, who decided to invade a smaller nation that offended him.”* You would immediately have the attention of your Muslim listeners, and maybe many others as well.

Another feature in parables is that behind what seems to be one plain truth lies another deeper or more general truth. Jesus used this kind of story. He said that the kingdom of heaven was as valuable as a piece of land with hidden treasure. This parable describes the need to sacrifice everything else in order to possess it (Matthew 13:44). In the parable of the wedding feast (Matthew 22:1-4), Jesus clearly explains that if you want to enter the kingdom of God, you must not wait to accept the invitation.

Problems with Parables

There are a number of difficulties that a would-be storyteller will encounter:

1. One must understand the language well in order to be a good storyteller.
2. One must understand the local culture well in order to make the story have punch.
3. One should have some experience or gifts in story telling. Half a story is in the telling. Comedians make their living by being able to tell stories and jokes better than the average person. Everyone, especially in an Islamic setting, appreciates a good parable teller.
4. Last, parables don't work well outside of their intended setting. Many Biblical parables lose their meaning because the intended audiences don't understand the context. If you have never seen a vine, how is it helpful to learn that our relationship with Jesus is like a vine? In some cases, where people don't understand the parable used in the Bible, we may need to make up new parables, rather than quoting stories they don't understand.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion B

1. How might you use the following Biblical proverbs? Proverbs 25:14, Ezekiel 18:2, Proverbs 17:13, 2 Peter 2:22
2. Why do you think Nathan used a parable when speaking to David in 2 Samuel 12:1-7? Did this approach work?

3. What were some of the “inside” understandings of the Good Samaritan parable in Luke 10:25-37 that were only obvious to those who knew Jewish history?
4. If you wanted to illustrate the fact that a little sin is as bad as a big sin, what sort of parable could you tell? Can you make up a parable that might speak to your target people?

Lesson Six

Contextualization

Technical Notes (30 minute lesson)

Story A	724 words = 4 minutes
Lesson A	1093 words = 6 minutes
Question set A	3 questions = 15 minutes
Story B	1012 words = 6 minutes
Lesson B	2313 words = 14 minutes
Question set B	4 questions = 15 minutes

Story A

Mr. Li arrived at Zay'id's home exactly at 8 o'clock. That was when he had been invited. He was welcomed and shown into the formal reception room where Zay'id father was waiting. Zay'id shook his hand and warmly welcomed him. He smiled happily and was pleased that Mr. Li had come to his home. Zay'id was an employee at the hospital, and he had heard some of the stories that Mr. Li had told. He had invited Mr. Li to visit him, and was now pleased that he had arrived.

As they sat and talked, Zay'id rose and took a coffee urn and two very small cups. Carefully he poured a very small amount into a cup and passed it to Mr. Li who looked into the cup. There was only about 1/3 of a cup full in the bottom of his cup. He wondered why he had not been offered a full cup. Zay'id father drank his cup, and when he returned it to Zay'id he rolled the cup back and forth several times. Mr. Li noticed it. Zay'id laughed. This is new for you isn't it? Mr. Li nodded.

“Well, when you don't want any more coffee, you shake your hand back and forth to indicate that you have had enough.”

Mr. Li tried it. He rolled his hand several times, and Zay'id took his cup. Then they sat and visited. Zay'id father soon started telling him about their local culture. “There once was a western man who learned about our culture. He learned to shake his cup when he didn't want any more to drink. Then when he was eating the meal, his host kept insisting that he eat more, so he finally took the great tray of food and shook it back and forth.”

Zay'id and his father laughed loudly. Mr. Li smiled and tried to join in. Soon Zay'id poured out several glasses of sweet tea, and they sat talking and visiting. Then after an hour into their visit, Zay'id rose and took the coffee urn. He carefully poured 1/3 of a cup into each one and served Mr. Li and then his father. After the very small cup of coffee, they continued their visiting. Mr. Li wondered about the small cups of coffee. He wondered if this was some sort of ceremony. When they were drinking tea and eating some simple food, he asked Zay'id about the coffee. Zay'id smiled. "I'm sorry, I guess you don't understand our culture. When you visit a home you are offered coffee three times. The first 1/3 cup means "peace." This cup of peace is offered soon after you enter the house. If it is not offered, then we really don't want you here." He looked stern. "Maybe we would kill you." Then he smiled to indicate he was joking. Mr. Li wasn't quite sure.

"I'm glad I was offered the cup of peace" Mr. Li joked.

"Then halfway through the visit, we offer the cup of friendship. This indicates that we are more than just a peace with each other. We are friends."

"And you offered me the cup of friendship. That is very nice. I hope we will always be good friends" Mr. Li added. Then he paused. "What does the last cup mean?"

"That one you haven't had yet. You get that at the end of the visit. That is the cup of the sword."

Mr. Li was shocked. "The sword?" he asked. "I hope you never offer me the cup of the sword."

"Why, are you afraid?" Zay'id teased. "It is because you do not understand it. What the cup of the sword means, is that we will protect you with our lives. We will use our swords to protect you from whoever you are afraid of. No questions asked. We are bound by honor to protect you, and you are bound by honor to protect us. That is how deep our friendship goes."

Mr. Li sighed in relief. After another hour of visiting, he looked at his watch. "I'm sorry" he said, "but if I am to find a bus back to the hospital I need to go soon."

"Not before you drink the 'cup of the sword' Zay'id smiled, offering him another 1/3 of a small cup of coffee. Mr. Li graciously accepted before leaving.

Lesson (A)

Every culture is different from every other culture. If we have never experienced another culture, we may not realize how differently people think in other places. When we move to another culture in order to share Christ with people, we must seek to understand the culture, and the people.

Our first months may bring us many surprises as we discover how things are done, and how people relate to one another. Most Muslim cultures are very complex, with meaning attached to many actions and things.

As we mentioned, you should never point the bottom of your feet at someone. When sitting on the floor, Muslims are very careful about how their feet point. Women generally do not look men in the eyes. In Western culture, everyone is taught to look the other person in the eyes, otherwise they believe that they portray that they are lying. In Muslim cultures eye contact between men and woman is avoided. Men may look, but

women look away, or down. If they look at men directly in the eyes, it communicates that they are open to a relationship.

In the same way, many actions have meaning. When one visits a traditional Arab home, the visit follows a general pattern. Mr. Li discovered this when visiting in Arab homes. Everything has names and meanings. If someone fills your coffee cup to the top, then they are telling you that you have had all three cups (peace, friendship and sword) and you should now leave. Thus it is important to know this, and to communicate effectively through our actions. If not, we may be offending people without knowing it.

On a deeper level, the evangelist should work towards understanding the values and convictions that people have. The evangelist needs to understand the basic philosophies from which the principles of life have been developed. For example, someone from China may quickly disregard something the government tells him to do. This comes from years of living under atheistic governments. But a westerner who has lived under governments that are sympathetic to Christians may feel obliged to do whatever the government tells him, even if it is harmful to himself. Therefore, differences in values and convictions can bring about misunderstandings between Christians and can hinder our communication with Muslims.

Values

What do you value most? Every society is different, and will answer this question differently. What do your Muslim neighbors value most?

Think about the following. Are these important values in your society?

- Honesty (telling the truth 100% of the time)
- Sanctity of life
- Freedom of movement
- Freedom of speech
- Rights to access education
- Equality of the sexes
- The right to quality employment and pay
- The right for quality of life

The values listed here are important values in a western society. They are things that western people may fight and die for. What do you think are important values in your society?

As you can see, it is hard to classify these. Some of these values are important to some people while different ones are important to others. Only after living and working in a community for a long period of time can one really begin to understand the values of that community.

Convictions

Convictions come from values. Because society has certain values, people develop certain convictions about what feels good and right. While society may not openly say

these things, these convictions are usually held by the majority of people. In most Western countries, almost everyone would agree with: “More is better.” People want more money, larger houses, better automobiles, fancier food, and more and more things. “More is better” is the basic conviction that drives western materialism.

Most North Americans like to visit stores. So, when in America, the cultural thing to do is to visit large shopping malls and spend time looking at and choosing things one wishes to buy. There are two principles that drive this habit: the obsession with owning material goods, and the obsession for options or choices. Once one understands these two convictions, the obsession with shopping becomes clearer, and so do other North American cultural actions. Shopping is driven by materialism, which is simply an expression of “More is better.”

We can then understand why North Americans build huge malls with hundreds of stores under one roof. It is because Malls provide more shopping options; thus they are seen as better places to shop. In following the same thought pattern we can begin to understand the alarming high divorce rate in the west. There is a desire for more options in marriage. Additionally, people change churches regularly. They have a desire for more options in church, which leads to people switching churches or pastors every couple of years. It may help us understand why western students switch university majors 2-3 times during their studies, and why North Americans often switch their careers several times during their lifetime.

But understanding materialism and the desire for options is only the beginning. Materialism and obsession with options are the natural outcome of the conviction that “More is better.”

When you enter a new culture, you will be faced with people who have different values and conviction than what you have. For instance, in the Muslim world, women usually cover their hair. At first you may just accept this as a cultural norm. But if you start asking why, you will start to discover some of the convictions. Some people say that it demonstrates that women are of less value than men, and must publicly demonstrate that they are subservient to them. In Yemen you may discover that some women are afraid that an infidel (non-Muslim) might see their hair and as a result they will hang from their hair in hell. Is this in the Muslim Qur’an or Hadith? No, but it is still a strong tradition in their culture.

When you arrive in a country with the message of the Gospel, you must endeavor to make your message understandable in that culture. An evangelist once said that the Gospel is like a beautiful pearl. If it is thrown into the mud, people won’t recognize it for what it is, and will trample it underfoot. However, if it is clean, sparkling, and placed on velvet in a beautiful, polished box, they will stop and admire it. Your life and actions are part of building the box and providing the velvet background. You must be sensitive to ethnic and tribal differences, family preferences, and individual understanding as you present the gospel.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion A

1. When thinking of your target culture, number the following values in importance from 1 - 9 (Honesty, Sanctity of life, Freedom of movement, Freedom of speech, Rights for education, Equality of sexes, The right to work, The right for quality of life, Honor)
2. In western society we have some basic convictions that influence how we live and act. For instance, we might say "More is better" or "do it as long as you don't hurt someone else." What are some convictions you feel your target culture has? Discuss these with your other team members and see if they also have the same perception. Why or why not?
3. What are some of the ways that your target culture classifies people? (Successful, Religious, Cultural, Good Person, Hard Working, Rich/poor) Are some of these better or worse than others?

Story B

Several weeks had passed since Mr. Li had last seen David, who was away at a conference. Mr. Li looked forward to having his young American friend around, so they could encourage one another, and learn from one another. When David returned he was very excited. He had been to a neighboring country where he had attended a conference for Christian workers reaching Muslims. At this conference they had taught him all about contextualization, or how to put the Christian message into a Muslim context. They had taught that since the word "Islam" means to be submitted to God, Christians could say that they were Muslims. David returned excited to be a *Muslim for Christ*. At the conference they had taught him how to face Mecca when he prayed and how to act like a Muslim. David was excited about this, and felt that this would help remove tensions between him and other Muslims. After all, they would see him as one of their own, and would accept him better. During his visit with Mr. Li he announced that he was going to go to the mosque and pray.

"David" Mr. Li protested, "You are an American. If you go to the mosque there may be fanatics there that will oppose you!"

"No, I'll be OK. I've got an invitation to go to the mosque from the Muslim guard at my apartment building. I asked him if I could and he got me the invitation."

"David, what do you want to do there?" Mr. Li asked in alarm.

"I can go stand there and pray with them, just like they do. I can tell them that I am a Muslim for Christ."

"David, I think I should go with you. I'm afraid that something will happen to you. Maybe I can act as your translator. You speak English to them and I will translate. Don't use any Arabic. That way I can be in between. Perhaps they will be more merciful to me, as I am not an American."

“OK.” He agreed, but we need to go soon if we are to get to the mosque near to my house.

When they arrived, there were about twenty men at the mosque. A young man came to greet them and welcome them at the door.

“Hello; my name is Mr. Li and I am a translator for this man. I didn’t come for religious reasons, just to translate.” He smiled and they were off to a good start. But it didn’t last long. They had some tough questions for David.

“So you think you are Muslim?”

“Alhamdulillah.” (Praise be to God)

“What about your Islamic religion; what do you think?”

Mr. Li did not envy David that night. He was squeezed and squeezed. Slowly they backed him into corners. At one point Mr. Li whispered, “David, let’s go.”

But they kept pressing him. “Do you believe that the Qur’an is the Word of God?”

“There are many good things in the Qur’an,” he answered.

“No, wait. That is not what we asked. Do you believe that the whole Qur’an was spoken by God himself?”

Then someone else interrupted them in English. “Hold on here; you don’t need interpretation. I can speak better English than your translator.” Mr. Li recognized that the man had a good American accent. Perhaps he was a professor at a university. Mr. Li felt really humbled by his English.

“Tell me, Mr. David,” the man continued in English, “what does Islam mean to you? Is it running to the light of Islam from the darkness of Christianity?”

“Oh my goodness,” Mr. Li thought, “this is very direct.”

“Well, there are many good things in Islam....”

“Let’s go back to that question that my colleague just asked you. Did you say that you believe in the Qur’an as a whole?” He spoke like a lawyer.

“OK, David, enjoy it.” Mr. Li thought to himself. “You wanted this; let’s see if you can get out of it.”

Then to his horror David said, “Yes.”

“Excuse me please.” Mr. Li interrupted. “Can I halt this talk? Let’s get out of here, David.”

One of the other men suddenly spoke up. During the discussion, he had been looking at Mr. Li and not saying anything. He just stared. When Mr. Li told David to stop, that man said, “Excuse me. Can I ask you a question, Mr., ah... what was the name?”

“Mr. Li.”

“Mr. Li, are you two evangelists? Are you trying to reach us for Christianity?”

“Yes,” Mr. Li admitted, still wanting to run. “Look, I apologize for my friend. He just wanted to share with you his love, through an Islamic cloak, but it doesn’t work. We are Christians and we are sorry to have offended you.”

“Why didn’t you just talk to us? Why not come and say, ‘We want to tell you about Christ?’ Talk plainly. Why do you come here and lie that you are a Muslim?”

“Look, I’m here as a translator.” Mr. Li protested.

The man scowled. “You’re here as his boss.”

“No, I’m not his boss. We both work at different companies.”

“You both are evangelists, and you are guided him. I watched you talking to David in English. You really wanted him to say something different, and you added some things in your interpretation. We all know English here.”

“Oh,” Mr. Li gasped. “Who are these people?” He thought to himself. “OK,” Mr. Li said aloud, “I apologize. I am an evangelist. We just wanted to share about Christ.”

“Why didn’t you tell us from the beginning? You could have sat here in front, and we would have given you time and listened to you?”

“Oh really? I’m sorry. Good night.” Mr. Li took David by the arm and together they left the mosque. David was really ashamed of himself.

“Do you really believe in the Qur’an?” Mr. Li asked him later when they were back at the hospital.

“No, no, I just didn’t know what to say.” David admitted.

Mr. Li and David then got on their knees and asked god to show them a better way to answer questions when they were put to them.

Lesson B

Contextualization

It is normal for Christian missionaries to want to communicate without offending their listeners. Offense can happen very easily, and often the speaker doesn’t realize what the hearers are thinking. Not only must our words be accurate our lifestyle must demonstrate and even enhance the message we want to communicate.

If a single woman says she has been set free from sin but dresses and walks as would a prostitute in the target culture, no one will believe her message. If a man says he is a teacher but dresses in shorts, T-shirt, and sandals as if he were an unemployed young man on the streets, no one will believe he holds such an honored position. Then when he speaks about knowing God as his personal Savior, everyone will think he is telling more lies.

So it is important for us to carefully consider our lives and our message, and to make sure that we are not acting or speaking in a way that is offensive to our listeners.

Our Identity

Often we live in our own little world, unaware of what others are thinking and of the impact that we are having on others. They watch us and evaluate us by our dress, our actions, and our words. So, when you enter a Muslim community, people will immediately try to identify what sort of person you are. Below is a simple illustration of a typical Muslim identity line. Most Muslims use this when evaluating people that they meet.

Islamic Fundamentalism <—————>Westernism

Most Muslims believe that they fall somewhere between two extreme types of people: either Muslim fundamentalists on one hand or Westernized, nominal Muslims on the other. Everyone is somewhere between these two. What you wear, how you act, where you live, and possibly your language, all identify you as being closer to one end of the scale than the other. Most Muslims are moving, either quickly or slowly, towards one side or the other of this scale. It's hard for them to stay stagnant in the middle. Since this is what is happening in the Muslim community, you will also be judged by the same standards.

Contextualization is the effort to display and teach the Gospel message within the context of the local people. The object of contextualization is to make our message understandable to Muslim people by stripping off unnecessary cultural baggage from the messenger's culture. In doing so we face a struggle: if we identify too closely with one extreme (the fundamentalists in the illustration above) our Christian message becomes very confused: legalism and grace mixed together. If we identify with the opposite extreme our message also becomes confused: permissiveness and grace mixed together. This is what makes contextualization so difficult.

The Goal of Contextualization

There are lots of books written on contextualization and many different ideas are being promoted. As you minister to Muslims, you will come across Christians acting in different ways. All of them have a desire to share Christ. However, not all of them act the same way.

You will meet Christians who try to live a totally integrated lifestyle in order to reach Muslims. Years ago a Western missionary tried this in India. He dressed as an Indian, ate Indian food, and lived in an Indian house. However, he was disappointed when people called him “sahib” (teacher). So he moved to a very poor part of town, and identified with the poor. He got a job on a road construction crew, and people still called him “sahib.” He asked the men around him why they called him “sahib.” They thought for a minute and then told him that it was because he used a toothbrush. He got rid of the toothbrush and used a stick to clean his teeth as the other workmen did. And people still called him “sahib.” One day in desperation he asked a wise man why he was not considered an Indian. The man replied: “It is because your mother was not an Indian.” No matter how hard we try we can never completely identify with those from other cultures. Not because of outward cultural issues, but because of biological and sociological issues. Our goal however is to be a cross-cultural minister of the gospel, bringing the gospel from our own cultural background to those from a Muslim background. Identification is important, but total identification may be impossible.

There are others who try to enter into Muslim culture in such a way that converts will have an example of how they should act. This is highly commendable and thoughtful. However, I have seldom seen it work in a Muslim setting. An outsider doesn’t have the same family and tribal responsibilities as the local person. The latter has to relate to his family and community in a totally different way from an outsider. None of the successful evangelists that were studied supported this approach, or promoted it. Instead they encouraged them to use their position as ‘sahib’ or teacher to its best advantage.

A third method is to work in a cross-cultural setting, trying to bring the Gospel from one culture to another. These missionaries realize that they must remove from their message those things that are culturally offensive to the target culture. They must be very careful not to insist, or even suggest, that something from their culture is more acceptable or preferable. They enter into the target culture as much as they possibly can so as to be able to present the Gospel clearly. They then seek to help the converts discover how they can live a Christian life within their culture, while explaining that they themselves do certain things because this is what their home culture accepts. The new convert needs to be free to be led by the Holy Spirit in working out the Gospel in his own culture.

Despite all our efforts at contextualization, we must realize that we will never ever be able to enter completely into another culture, language group, or religious community. The Bible gives us several examples of contextualization but no where does someone become 100% identified with the other culture.

Biblical Examples of Contextualization

There are two important examples of contextualization in the Scriptures. While there are also others we could look at, we will concentrate on these two: Jesus and the Apostle Paul.

The Lord Jesus

Missiologists sometimes use the term “incarnational ministry” to describe Jesus’ identification with mankind. Jesus experienced everything that we experience in life. However, although He did this He did not enter into our sin. He lived as a religious Jew and as a religious teacher, under the law. While He demonstrated the weakness of the law to deal with sin in the inner life, Jesus did not sin. He did not need to enter into the bondage of sin in order to lead us free from that bondage.

It is important that all contextualized ministries carefully limit the extent of their contextualization. The line is sin, or the appearance of sin. The religion of Islam is a system of works bound by tight codes of conduct. We may try to live and conduct ourselves in ways that are not offensive, but we must be careful not to enter into the system of works, or appear to be in bondage to a system of works. While it is true that Jesus was under the law, He did not abandon the law but demonstrated that inner change was needed.

While Jesus does illustrate incarnational ministry to some extent, (he left heaven and adapted to human life), he only ministered within the culture he had been raised in. He learned no foreign languages for ministry purpose and he dropped out of normal life and became itinerant in his ministry. There was a place for itinerant teachers in his culture, but most teachers were not itinerant. He required his closest followers to abandon their jobs. He operated within the culture in as much as he was a man raised in it, but he selectively scandalized the culture at many key points. He was not for or against the culture – it was not about culture. He did not attempt to move into a foreign culture and did not fit smoothly into his own. In much the same way, missionaries today must not become so enamored with Muslim culture that they forget to challenge people with the claims of the Gospel.

The Apostle Paul

The Apostle Paul was born of Jewish descent, but grew up in a Gentile city. He studied under Jewish teachers, but was also a student of secular Greek philosophy. As a Pharisee under the teacher Gamaliel, Paul was in training to someday sit on the Sanhedrin court. (Acts 5:34, 22:3) This was a special Jewish court that prided itself in hearing cases being presented in any language that was necessary. Translators were not used. Each member of the Sanhedrin court was required to learn seventy languages, (based on Genesis 10) that represented all the major languages of the world. The apostle Paul was superbly prepared by God to be a cross-cultural missionary to the Gentile world.

Paul’s great struggle was trying to integrate the new Gentile converts into churches filled with Christians from a Jewish background. Paul tried to teach and witness in such a way that, whatever the audience, they would accept him and his message. To the Jew he preached as a Jew; to the Gentiles, he preached as a Gentile.

The Book of Romans is an excellent example of the kind of teaching that Paul would give to a Jewish audience living under Roman Law. Paul had wanted to visit the Jews in Rome, but since he had been prevented till that time (Romans 1:13-15), he decided to write to them instead. In Romans, Paul quotes the Old Testament and appeals to the

Jewish knowledge of the Scriptures as his basis for argument. In contrast to this, we have the sermon on Mars Hill (Acts 17:16-34) where Paul spoke to a purely Gentile audience. The discourses are very different. On Mars Hill, Paul appeals to the Greek teaching of there being a god they do not know. He then quotes (Acts 17:28) from their own secular philosophers to illustrate some of his teachings. His use of Scriptures is limited, but he still boldly proclaims creation, salvation, and the resurrection. Paul demonstrates to us that even though he is a Jew, he can still bridge the gap between the Jew and Gentile, and teach in a way that is understandable to the Gentile.

Paul could do this because his early childhood in a Gentile city gave him the necessary background. He had been prepared by God to be a cross-cultural communicator. He understood many of the values and convictions held by the Gentiles in Greece and Rome as well as those held by the Jewish community and probably spoke Hebrew, Greek and Latin, the leading languages of his day.

As we can see in these two Biblical illustrations, neither Jesus nor Paul aimed to adopt or blend into their target cultures. They operated within recognizable roles, but neither was ruled by culture. They were both master communicators, effectively bridging gaps between cultures with their clear communication of the Gospel. Neither, however, tried to adopt and live totally within and under their target cultures.

The Offense of the Cross

While we should struggle to remove those things that are obviously offending our hearers, the danger with contextualization is that sometimes Christians try to remove the offense of the Cross. We must remember that there is something offensive about salvation. **Salvation is not fair. It is a gift to us, but it is not fair to God.** Many people struggle with this as they conclude that God did something out of His natural character. We need to demonstrate this side of salvation as “the love of God expressed for us.”

The Muslim Community

Muslim religious scholars often talk about something called the *umma*. The best English word for this is ‘community.’ In many cases converts from Islam struggle to leave the close support of the Muslim community for the loose fellowship found in most churches.

Christian workers frequently want to make the transition to Christianity easier for converts from a Muslim background. They try to strip all the external, non-necessary trappings from Christianity and fit it into the Muslim setting. They dress as Muslims, develop Jesus mosques, and place a Muslim facade on Christianity in an attempt to make it less offensive. But they seldom develop ‘community.’ Theologically, the new convert is able to see and understand the Gospel; he can exercise faith and experience gifts and is able to enter into ministry. What he struggles with most is the idea of leaving community. The key thing here is “belonging.” Community is not based on likes, dislikes or what is fun, it is about belonging and feeling secure. Coming out of community is to feel exposed and vulnerable.

In most places where large numbers of Muslims have turned to Christ, the common attraction isn't contextualization but rather the presence of an alternative community. Often missionaries form a community among themselves, but this usually excludes converts from Islam.

Tragically many western Christians struggle with Christian community and want to get rid of it so they can act independently while most converts from Islam struggle with the lack of Christian community and want it so desperately.

A Muslim coming to Christ needs to be given a greater sense of joining than of leaving. If a person is always identified with what he has left, he will always feel he has lost something. If he is identified with something he has joined, he will feel part of the group he has joined. Many converts from Islam go back, simply because they can't shake off the feeling of loss.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. How closely should a missionary identify with his Muslim community? Think of these examples: a) dress the same b) eat the same food c) keep the same daily schedule d) raise and educate his family the same way e) worship God the same way (praying towards Mecca). Where should Christians draw the line in being like their Muslim neighbors?
2. In your current situation, when people come to Christ to they have a new identity, and know who they are? What sort of identity do they have? Are they seen as leavers or joiners? Is this a good situation, or should it change?
3. Read Acts 19:20-26. Did the new believers have a new identity or was their identity that of leaving Judaism? What was their identity?
4. Read Acts 9:1 & 2. What was their new identity here?

Lesson Seven

Honor and Trust, Near and Far

Technical Notes (24 minute lesson)

Story A	1002 words = 6 minutes
Lesson A	1248 words = 7.5 minutes
Question set A	6 questions = 15 minutes
Story B	1077 words = 6 minutes
Lesson B	755 words = 4.5 minutes
Question set B	5 questions = 15 minutes

Story A

Every Tuesday Mr. Li had the afternoon free, so he would often visit the street of shops in the center of town where Zay'id's father owned a shop. This Tuesday when he dropped by the store a young boy sat at the desk. Mr. Li was somewhat **disappointed** as he wished to buy something from the store. However, since this was the store of his friend's father, we went ahead and ordered what he needed. He sat by the table while the young man went about getting things that Mr. Li had asked for. When he was done, he carefully paced them all in a bag, slowly adding up the price. Mr. Li, who was always very careful with his money was also doing the math. Most of the items he had purchased in the past, so he knew about how much they were. When the boy was done, Mr. Li asked him how much it would be. In his head he had calculated around 20 dinars. The young man thought for a moment and then replied "Fourty dinars." Mr. Li's heart sank. Even if they bartered back and forth, they might end up at thirty, which would still be too much money. Frustration began to build in him.

"Can we check the prices of the individual items?" he asked.

The young boy looked **doubtful**, but he emptied the bag onto the desk. Each item required that he check the notebook that Zay'id's father kept in a drawer. As they were nearing the

end of the process, Zay'id's father returned. He greeted Mr. Li warmly and then asked the young boy what was happening. The young boy's face filled with pride.

"I am selling the foreigner these things." He said indicating the goods on the table.

"And what price did you come up with?"

"I am charging him Fourty Dinars." He said with pride.

Zay'id father looked alarmed. "No, No, you don't understand" he said to the boy. "Fourty Dinars is the far price. This is Mr. Li, a good friend of my family. We need to charge him the near price."

"Oh," said the boy. "In that case the price is 20 Dinars."

Zay'id father smiled, and Mr. Li happily paid for his goods. Before he could leave, he was invited to drink tea and visit. Then he was invited to their home for the supper meal.

"Please come" Zay'id father said. "Today is a special meal. Yesterday my son graduated from secondary school, and today our whole family will celebrate."

Mr. Li had time, so he waited until the store closed and together they made their way to Zay'id's home. There Mr. Li met Wasfi, Zay'id's younger brother who had just received his school marks. As they waited for the meal, relatives began to arrive. Soon the sitting room was filled with men, all uncles and cousins of Zay'id and Wasfi. Just when Mr. Li thought that the room was totally full, there was a commotion, and the center of the room was cleared so that a large platter filled with meat could be brought in. Wasfi took a water jug, a basin and a towel over his arm and began to move from guest to guest so that the men could wash their hands. The women and younger children were obviously in another room.

After everyone had washed their hands, Zay'id's father motioned for them to gather around and eat. Mr. Li squeezed in beside the other men, and using his right hand he began to eat from the platter. The other men were pleased at his ability to eat with his fingers, and Mr. Li felt very much at one with them all.

After the meal, Wasfi again brought the water jug, basin and towel, and moved from man to man until everyone has washed his right hand. No sooner had he finished this, when glasses of hot sweet tea were passed around the room.

Now that everyone had eaten and they had tea, there was opportunity to relax and talk. Mr. Li sensed however, that there was a purpose to this meeting. Wasfi's grandfather opened the conversation. "So my son, how were your school grades?"

"Oh father, I passed all my subjects."

"May I see your report?"

"Yes, here it is." One by one the men around the room took the small piece of paper and examined it. Wasfi seemed a bit nervous. As the paper passed Mr. Li he could see that Wasfi had done well in some of his subjects, but his average was around 80%.

"Well, what are we going to do with Wasfi?" the grandfather asked.

"His marks are good enough to go to technical school" someone offered.

"I had hoped for a dentist" another man said.

"You always want a dentist" another answered. "It's just your bad teeth."

“Yes, but he needs 90% to get into dental school” the first man replied. “So dental school is out.”

“What about the army?” another asked.

“It’s an option. He could go for officer’s training.”

“Let’s not forget technical school” another uncle spoke up. “There is a growing need for those who install central plumbing. How many of us will want central plumbing in our homes in the next couple of years?”

“But what about the summer time? What does he do then?”

“Install air conditioning” the uncle responded. More and more homes are getting air-conditioning.

“So what about it?” the grandfather turned to Wasfi. “What is it that you are thinking about?”

“I’m interested in computers.” Wasfi answered. “I’m sure there are lots of jobs for computer operators.”

“Yes” another uncle exclaimed. “They are looking for computers over at the customs house.”

“Customs!” exclaimed another man. “That would be excellent. Our family has no representation in customs.”

“Nor any dentists” a voice complained.

“How long will this training take?” someone asked, and the conversation turned to how quickly Wasfi could start training, and if he might still get a job at the customs building.

Lesson (A)

In many Muslim cultures, people think of themselves collectively as a group rather than individually as people. Tribes and families are very important. There is an Arab proverb which states: “I against my cousin, my cousin and I against the world.” To one looking in from the outside, these people may appear to be against each other, but in reality they will always stand together when something threatens them. This group is very important to Muslims and Muslim culture. In many cases, being in or out of the group is defined by nearness or farness.

There are a number of ways that nearness is evaluated and considered:

1. Blood relations
2. Married relations
3. Adopted relations (those they choose to include)
4. Hospitality requirements (neighbors, business)

There are a number of other things to consider. Religion marks you as near or far. If you are from a different religion than others you are far. Physical features will mark you as far. If you have different color skin, hair color, or eye shape. Language can mark you as near or far as well. Arabs make good use of the different dialects of Arabic to differentiate between who is near or far. A language tutor may be reluctant to teach his own dialect to a foreigner without permission from the family and will make many excuses to his student as to why he cannot do so. As a result, foreigners are normally taught classical Arabic. On the other hand, learning a village dialect and being adopted into a tribe can be very powerful in building relationships.

Nearness can also bind you to a code of ethics and honor commonly practiced by the group. By adopting the dialect or accent of a group or in some other way becoming “near,” it may be assumed by the community that you are making a commitment to live in submission to that group.

Honor

Imagine growing up in a system where you are constantly thinking about the group or tribe. All your life, “we” is very important. You interact on a weekly or daily basis with your aunts, uncles, and cousins who live nearby. You discuss everything as a group - the price of food, appliances and land, job prospects and local and international news. Group knowledge is important and often takes preference over individual knowledge. Everyone knows everyone else’s business, and you share what you learn, know, and experience with the group.

In theory, at least, each person in the group helps everyone else and shares in everyone’s joys, excitement, sadness, and grief. You wouldn’t dream of missing the wedding of someone in the group. When a member of the group dies, you sit with his family for several days. You don’t need to speak; you just sit near them, sharing their grief.

Weddings are important events. If the wedding is from within the group, a great celebration commences. If the wedding is between two different groups, then a great deal has to take place to bring the two groups together, and to establish the growing nearness of the groups. When a young man wants to ask for a girl’s hand in marriage, he takes with him those of authority in his group. The family on the bride’s side must seriously consider the joining of the two groups together in this way. Then, when the wedding takes place, a number of events occur that illustrate the coming together, not just of a man and woman, but of two groups. Similarly, when a student is considering which occupation to pursue, he consults his tribal group. His personal preference is weighed in the context of the needs and wants of the group.

Every group dreams of having its own members in various positions in the community. Store owners, gas station owners, mechanics, electricians, engineers, lawyers, doctors, dentists, pharmacists, and, of course, members in the police, army and civil service. These people not only serve themselves, but are available to serve the group. They act as mediators for their group. For example, before someone gets his car registered or applies for a telephone, he checks to see if he has a mediator in that part of the government to help him.

Once the owner of a new electrical shop expressed amazement that he was getting customers that he didn’t know! When he opened his shop, his vision had simply been that of serving his own group.

In many cases similar types of stores group themselves together. Westerners have often puzzled over the presence of two, three or four hardware stores or pharmacies located side by side. It seems strange to Westerners to have groups of identical stores bunched

together like this. In the Muslim mind-set, however, it makes a lot of sense. First of all, you support your own group and go to the store of the one who is “nearest” you. If that store doesn’t have what you want, you can check with another store only one or two doors away.

Honor

Most Arabs strive for honor. They look for honorable jobs, honorable houses, honorable cars, and honorable clothes. The sheer number of Mercedes cars on the streets in many Middle Eastern countries often strikes newly-arrived foreigners as strange. They also notice that many men dress in suit jackets or smart national dress. Everyone needs to appear honorable and to work with others to raise the honor of their group.

Landlords may consider themselves honored by having foreigners living among them. If you, however, put on old clothes to do mechanic work our car, or wash our car in front of everyone, then they may become embarrassed. Most families would rather hire someone to fix and wash their cars. This is so that they can continue to project how honorable and good their family is. For most Arabs, the ultimate goal in life is to promote their tribes and raise the honor of their tribe by working together with the other members of the tribe. Thinking and acting as an individual out of line with the tribe, is unthinkable.

Trust

Within this system of honor, Muslims learn not to trust anyone outside of their group. Some people become very afraid when they realized that they have to do something without a mediator. Even trusting someone within the group can be difficult. Many Muslims admit that they wouldn’t trust a doctor or politician or lawyer or employer whom they didn’t know or wasn’t near to them. Even with someone who is near, they might also be wary.

Trust is therefore a major hurdle for them to cross. If you can’t trust people who are near, how can you trust God, who is far away? Christianity teaches us about the love of God and the promises of God. Within Islam, God is far away. He does not act out of love. God is almighty and can do anything He wants, either good or evil. He created both of them. Hope, in Islam, is placed, not on God or on someone else’s actions for you, but on your own actions. You work your way in, and trust that your mediator (the prophet Mohammed) can do the rest for you.

The great struggle that many true *seekers* face is learning to love and trust God; to take His Word as a tried and true promise and to rest in God’s work for us. In other words, they have to learn to trust God by faith rather than by nearness.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion A

1. What are the important groupings of people in your target culture?
2. How important are cities, towns, families, tribes, etc?
3. What are some of the ways people consider “nearness” in your target culture?
4. How might your target culture view these Bible verses? (Mark 1:15, Ephesians 2:13, Hebrews 10:22)

5. Does family honor play an important role in the lives of the people you are working with? How do you know this?
6. How important is trust in your target culture? Do people trust doctors, professionals, or politicians? Do they trust you?

Story B

Zay'id began dropping by Mr. Li's room after work. He would often bring some food from his family, or just stop for a visit. After a while Zay'id's questions turned to religion, and he began asking Mr. Li significant questions about what Christians believed. Mr. Li was now spending considerable time praying for Zay'id and his family, and he decided that it was now time to start to share more openly with Zay'id.

The next time Zay'id stopped by, Mr. Li asked him if he would like to learn about Christianity and what Christians believed. He would be happy to take him through a couple of lessons, or to invite a friend of his over, who could explain Christian beliefs to him. Zay'id thought about it for a moment, and then declined. However, after several weeks had passed, Zay'id agreed to the study when Mr. Li suggested it again.

After they had met several times for lessons, Mr. Li began to wonder about religious freedom in a Muslim country. It seemed very strange to him. In the two years that he had been in the Muslim country, he had never heard of any government reactions, and there was no apparent government persecution of Christians. He was not restricted from studying with Zay'id, and a bookstore in town sold Bibles in the local language. He began to wonder if the talk about persecution of Muslims was all lies. The following week, he asked Zay'id what it might mean if a Muslim changed his faith to becoming a Christian. How would this affect the Muslim's life? Zay'id thought for a minutes and then said that it would probably be very dangerous. He might be killed. This puzzled Mr. Li, as he had never seen to be any government action against Christians.

One day an excited cleaner came running down the hall to Mr. Li's room. "Mr. Li" he called out excitedly. "You are needed at the pharmacy. There is a big problem developing there, and the director wants all the heads of departments down there right away, including you."

Mr. Li put on his coat and hurried over to the pharmacy building. A large crowd had gathered outside and angry voices were shouting and arguing. Realizing that the hospital director wanted responsible people near the trouble, Mr. Li began to make his way through the crowd. He eventually stepped up near the hospital director who was arguing with several men. Mr. Li looked around. There seemed to be a number of very angry men, some of them armed with knives, and a few held pistols.

"How do you know he did it?" the hospital director protested.

"The medicine came from him" One of the men shouted pointing to the hospital pharmacist. "We checked with other doctors. It is the wrong medicine." The hospital director looked at the box of pills that the men held up. "You are right, this is not the medicine he should have had."

“And my brother died from that medicine” one angry man shouted. “Because he died, that man will die. He pointed at the pharmacist who was hiding behind the hospital administrator. Several men behind him were frantically talking on cell phones.

“Calm down everyone, this needs to be handled properly” the hospital administrator protested waving his hands. “No one is going to kill anyone here. That will solve nothing.”

“If you protect him, then we will kill you too.”

Mr. Li wondered if the few hospital employees standing near the administrator would be enough to handle the crowd.

Just then two policemen pushed their way through the crowd. They stood between the hospital people and the angry crowd and demanded to know what was going on. After stopping the shouting, they began to put together the story. The angry crowd believed that the hospital pharmacist had given the wrong medicine to a man, and after he took it he died. His relatives had gathered, and they had come to the hospital seeking revenge.

“You cannot touch him” the policemen said. “If you cannot solve this, we will take the pharmacist to the police station, and you can state your case there.”

“It’s blood for blood” an angry man cried out. This man’s life must be taken, because of my brother’s life.”

Just then a group of well dressed businessmen pushed their way into the crowd. They came up behind the hospital administrator and formed a protecting wall around the pharmacist.

“We speak for the pharmacist” one of the men said. “We are his family. Who dare’s challenge us.”

The man who lost his brother explained what tribe they were from, and what the problem was. Men on several sides of the argument started calling on their cell phones. “The honor of our family is at stake” the brother said. “We demand blood for blood.”

“Who will speak for your side of the family?” the businessman asked.

“My uncle will be here in a few minutes. He will represent us.”

The onlookers in the crowd started to drift away as they waited for the tribal representative to arrive. In the mean time several more policemen arrived and the two groups were separated on opposite sides of the hospital courtyard. Mr. Li stepped aside and watched the process.

After some time, the two representatives met in the center of the courtyard, each backed by his tribal family. The case was laid out again. Mr. Li noted with interest that the tribal representatives were much respected by each side of the family. Obviously they were men of renown and respect.

After an hour of debate and argument, the pharmacist’s family agreed to pay ten thousand American dollars in cash to the offended family. The men discussed this for a few minutes and then it was agreed. A cheque book was produced, and the money was immediately paid. The policemen stayed until the event was over and the crowd had dissipated.

That night Mr. Li thought about what had happened. Suddenly it was very clear to him. Muslims take great pride in being Muslims. If a Muslim converts, he dishonors his family and they will want to take revenge. Persecution would come from the immediate family members, not from the government.

As Mr. Li thought about this, he wondered if there might be a way to demonstrate that following Christ was an honorable thing, not a dishonorable thing. Maybe, just maybe the family wouldn't be so upset.

Lesson B

In Middle Eastern tradition, barbers perform many functions. Not only do they cut hair and give shaves and have the honor of performing circumcisions, but the barbershop is often the center of community and of group information and communication. Looking for a house to rent can be a challenging job. Many landlords only want to rent to those who are somewhat close to them, so few landlords advertise. If you are searching for a house to rent, you not only ask those you know, but you always check with the local barber or corner grocery man.

In our neighborhood, the barber also has another, long-held responsibility. In a drawer in his shop he keeps a pistol and some ammunition. When the gun is needed, he will rent it out. Hopefully it is never needed, but when someone dishonors their tribe, then it is the responsibility of the oldest brother or uncle to punish that person and, if the offense is large enough, to become the executioner. If, for instance, a young girl becomes pregnant out of wedlock, it is the duty of her eldest brother, or eldest uncle, to preserve the honor of the family. This person will rent the gun, and then wait for the right opportunity. Standing in the middle of the street, he waits until the person emerges, and then announces to everyone on the street that he is preserving the honor of his tribe. After shooting the offender, he returns the gun to the barbershop and turns himself in to the police. He will probably stay in jail for several weeks or months until the police are sure that this was an honor killing, and that there will be no reprisals and that no other tribes were affected.

In the small country of Jordan, during the first six months of 1995, an Arab newspaper reported that there had been over one hundred honor killings. Each year there are hundreds of honor killings in Iran.

One young Christian Arab man found himself in an awful position. His sister ran away from home and married a man from outside her group's religion. As this young man was the eldest brother, it became his responsibility to kill her. Since he had become a follower of Jesus, he refused. As a result, he became an outcast from his group. His uncles were very upset by his refusal, and offered one of their sons to do the killing if the boy's family would pay. Eventually the young man's father stood by him and then his whole immediate family became outsiders. He could no longer visit the homes of other family members, and his tribe would no longer pay for his schooling, find him a wife, or protect him when in danger.

Obviously a person's group is more than just a support group to get him work, a wife, a house, and a car: they are also his insurance company, and his guardians.

Impact on a new convert's life

It can be devastating for a new convert to lose his group! Not only does he lose his whole social support but he also loses his identity. The issue then becomes how to help the new convert openly profess faith in Christ without being killed, punished, or banned from his tribe.

Persecution

Persecution arises when communities consider that a new convert has dishonored them. For example, in many cultures a son must honor his family, and if he does not, both the father and the group maybe dishonored in the eyes of outsiders. No matter how nice the young man may be, taking a different and unsanctioned direction is a rejection of paternal authority, and implies rejection of the ways of all his forbears. Identity is tied up in religion, so to change religion is to renounce (in their eyes) the identity of the whole community. This is more of an outrage than merely being badly behaved.

Persecution can come from many corners. First of all, family members can feel dishonored. There are also those who feel that the honor of the religion needs protecting. In some countries, courts and government officials may feel compelled to protect the honor of their national religion or the honor of their country (for instance, if they consider themselves a Muslim country).

If you are trying to disciple a new believer, you must consider how to train the new convert to portray his change of heart in an honorable, rather than an offensive, way. This is what the next lesson is about.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. How important is the family or tribal group to the people in your culture?
2. What happens to people when they lose the support of this group?
3. Is there some way that people can become followers of Jesus, and still stay in their old families and tribes? Have you heard of this being done?
4. Is persecution an issue where you live? Are people persecuted because they follow Christian principles or because they have left the group? Has their leaving or changing brought same upon the group?

Lesson Eight

Friendship Discipling

Technical Notes (30 minute lesson)

Story A:	621 words = 4 minutes
Lesson A:	1673 words = 10 minutes
Question set A:	5 questions = 15 minutes
Story B	842 words = 5 minutes
Lesson B	1977 words = 12 minutes
Question set B:	4 questions – 15 minutes

Story

In the months that followed, Zay'id began to regularly meet with Mr. Li. During their times together, Mr. Li would teach Zay'id from the scriptures. Mr. Li began with the story of creation and then found he needed to explain to Zay'id about the prophets. "All of the prophets did two things" Mr. Li explained. "All of them pointed to sin in the people's lives and called them to repentance. The second thing was, all of the prophets pointed to someone, a promised person, who would come after them. This person was known as the Messiah." Taking his Bible in hand, Mr. Li began to show Zay'id what the Old Testament had to say about the promised Messiah. "All of the prophets looked forward to the one that God would send who would free his people. Not just physically, but free them from the power of sin and evil."

When the time was right, Mr. Li then introduced the person of Jesus Christ. Very carefully he took Zay'id through the scriptures, demonstrating that Jesus fulfilled everything that was spoken about him by the prophets. "They even predicted his death, how he would be led as a lamb to the slaughter." Mr. Li pointed out. "This would be God's sacrificial lamb, for the sins of the world."

Zay'id carefully studied these things. Not much was said about Islam or the prophet Muhammad. Mr. Li concentrated on Jesus, and let Zay'id come to his own conclusions

about Muhammad. All of the prophecies pointed to Jesus. After carefully explaining what it meant to be a true follower of Jesus, and the costs that were involved, Mr. Li asked Zay'id if he would like to become a follower of Jesus. To his surprise, Zay'id said "yes." A few minutes later they were on their knees and Zay'id prayed to accept Jesus death on the cross in place of his sin.

In the weeks that followed, Mr. Li was excited about teaching Zay'id new truths from the scriptures. He however, cautioned Zay'id not to say too much until he had studied more and could give good answers for the things he now believed. After several weeks Zay'id began to look downcast, so Mr. Li kept the study very short and decided to try and find out what was bothering Zay'id.

"I don't like hiding things from my family." He said. "My family asks me what I am doing here all the time, and why I don't come home straight from work." He paused. "Sometimes I lie to them and tell them that I stopped to watch a movie, or visited the shops in town. I think they are beginning to suspect something."

Mr. Li thought for a while. "Do you want to stop meeting for a while?"

"I love reading the Bible and learning about Jesus." Zay'id said. "I don't want to stop now. But I also love my family, and I don't want to disappoint them either."

"Perhaps we should meet less often. The men here are beginning to wonder about us as well. We are always sitting along, talking."

"Is there some way that I can get a Bible and read it in secret?"

"I will ask around and see if I can get you a small Bible that you can put in your shirt pocket. Perhaps you can read at home, and then our discussions will be shorter."

Zay'id looked discouraged. "Will it always be like this? Will I always need to be careful, and live two different lives?"

Mr. Li considered this for a minute. "No," he said. "We are going to start praying about this, and seeing if there isn't a way that you can openly be a follower of Jesus."

Lesson (A)

When a Muslim accepts the Lord, he is immediately put in a place of tension. On one side is his new Christian faith, and on the other side are his old religion, his family, and the Muslim community. Usually the convert comes to Christ through the witness and teaching of another believer, and as he grows in the Lord, the tension begins to build. Who should the convert relate to? How can a convert from Islam relate his new faith to his family and community?

Tragically many converts decide that they cannot reconcile the two. The obvious solution is to develop two faces. With one face the convert welcomes Christianity, meeting with

other Christians, praying, reading the Bible, and studying together. This is where his heart is. With the other face, he lives and relate to his Muslim family and community. He has a mother, brothers, sisters and perhaps spouses and children. This is also where his heart is, and so the tension builds. Soon one of five things will happen.

1. First, the convert may abandon his new faith and go back to what is familiar and safe for him. This may be because of persecution or pressure, but often it is because he feels he cannot exist in a two-faced situation. As long as he has two faces there is always the strong temptation to abandon the Christian face and assume the old one.
2. On the other hand, the convert may completely identify with the Christian face and reject his old one. This was often encouraged in the past, as believers took on new names, and identified completely with a Christian community. In the most extreme cases these converts were killed or kind Christians helped them emigrate to the West, or to another country, where they could abandon their old Muslim face, and live solely with their Christian face. By doing this, they sacrificed their family and community and their ability to witness to them. In recent years, some of these converts have started to rebuild contact with their family and community, but in most cases this is a very difficult road to take and it is a long time before they are accepted again.
3. Another option is that new believers live as if he still follows Islam, hiding the fact that he has received Christ. In many cases these secret believers become so filled with fear that they will be discovered that they cease all association with Christians. In one situation a convert lives in constant fear of his teenage son who comes home from school full of anger and bitterness at the Christians and Jews who, he considers, are the source of the world's problems.
4. Other converts are so distraught with the two faces that they eventually become mentally unstable. One such man wanders the streets in ridiculous clothing, recognized by all as crazy. In another case, an Arab convert began to claim that he was not an Arab but actually a Westerner. He called himself by a different name, refuses to recognize his family, and claims he is a citizen of a Western country. His mental condition then slowly deteriorated over the years.
5. The fifth possibility is that through the work of the Holy Spirit, and often with the help of a discipler, the convert can learn to unite the two faces, discovering freedom in Christ. He no longer hides behind two faces, but now lives with one face, living as a follower of Jesus in his family setting. This, I believe, should be the chief and primary aim of a discipler.

The following are five major concerns for a person who is attempting to disciple a new convert from Islam:

1. Keeping the convert physically alive

2. Uniting the two faces
3. Encouraging spiritual growth
4. “Coming out” as a follower of Jesus
5. Integration into a fellowship

Recognizing the two faces

It is important to recognize that, at the beginning, almost all converts will develop two faces. This is normal and, at first, may be advantageous. At home, and in their community, they continue to be who they always have been. They are often afraid of betraying their family group so they continue to portray their original face. As Muslims they may continue to pray five times a day, and in some cases they may, after considerable pressure, even go on the pilgrimage (Haj). However they may act with their families, they usually do so out of pressure rather than choice.

Since they are also seeking or have found Christ, they develop a second face. This is the one that the religious teacher and other Christians are most familiar with. When with their Christian friends these converts can open up their true inner selves a little and ask, seek, discuss, and pray.

Many Christian workers are encouraged as they see the seeker or new convert growing in the faith, learning about the Bible, and developing some spiritual maturity. And then, bang! All of a sudden, he is gone, or he slows down very quickly, and soon stops seeking or growing. The Christian worker may wonder what has happened. It's hard to know, but most of the successful evangelists emphasized the need to help the convert unite his two faces.

The most effective way to do this is for the discipler to become intimately acquainted with both faces. This requires a lot of work and time on the part of the discipler.

Discipling cannot be equated with an expectation to meet one night a week for Bible study and prayer. The discipler must commit himself to spending many hours with the new convert, visiting the home, and demonstrating to him that the Christian life is honorable, even in a Muslim setting. This kind of “friendship discipling” will require getting to know the individual members of the family, understanding their situations and the pressures and blessings they bring into the convert's life. Even more important than this, the discipler must not allow the convert to live a two-faced life forever. When inconsistencies and lies become apparent, the discipler must recognize these and deal with them. It is very important that the convert comes to realize that the strength and beauty of the Christian faith is rooted in the truth. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, and this knowledge needs to be exercised in the target culture where lies are often an acceptable way to cover up anything.

Keeping a convert alive

In some situations, a new convert will be tempted to rush home and tell his group about what he has found. In his spiritual immaturity and zeal, he may even attack Islam, claiming that it is all lies, and thus invoke the wrath of the family group and every

religious zealot in the community. Sometimes these rash converts are expelled from the group; sometimes they are killed. It is imperative that you, the messenger, do everything you can to guide the new convert in the first few days of his new walk with Christ.

Most evangelists encourage the new convert to keep a low profile for a while, at least until they are ready to “come out” and expose themselves. The teacher then concentrates on preparing the convert to step out as a Christian, not in a dishonorable and disrespectful way, but in a way that is honorable and respectful. After all, following Christ is not something that is dishonorable.

Meeting the other face

The key to uniting the two faces, is to become familiar with the convert’s other face. You must assume that there is another face and begin to visit the convert in his home to know him in his natural surroundings, and to discover his family and group relationships.

There are five goals that I believe should be worked on:

1. Understand how the convert has related to the family group in the past.
2. Recognize those who will be opposed to the convert and make them the focus of concentrated prayer.
3. Recognize group weaknesses and sinful behavior so they can be addressed in the discipleship sessions. Don’t generalize but be very specific with the convert in this area.
4. Recognize the convert’s own weaknesses and sinful behavior that will need to be addressed in discipling sessions.
5. Subtly, but clearly, help the convert understand that he cannot live a two-faced life. Promise, and give him, all the support he needs in working out his new faith in his old surroundings.

Uniting the two faces

Recognizing and knowing the two faces goes a long way in starting to help the convert deal with them. Once the convert knows that you know him, both in your discipleship sessions and in the family situation, it becomes much easier to identify and deal with issues as they arise in his life. In the past, the convert related all his problems and issues to his family group, and drew from them the wisdom that he needed in order to make wise decisions. Now that he has a new teacher and new Christian friends, he needs to start drawing wisdom from them as well.

The sooner the discipler starts to know the other face, the easier the process will be. If the teacher begins this process even before the seeker makes a full commitment to faith, the seeker will not feel guilty or ashamed of his Islamic background and tribe and he will more easily move from the Muslim community into a Christian community.

This process is an important one, and takes a lot of effort, especially if the teacher and other Christian contacts don’t have a long association with the new believer. The discipler will need to judge how much teaching the convert has had before he came to Christ, so he will know how much time will be needed for the discipleship process. Don’t

be discouraged though; most of us took years and years before we were at a place where we could disciple others.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion A

1. Are new believers put into a place of tension in your present community? Do you know people who have done the following? Abandoned their new faith, Become like a foreigner, Become secret believers, live an unstable life swinging back and forth, and do you know some who lives successfully as a follower of Jesus?
2. Is it important to counsel new believer from Islam in order to keeping them alive during their first few weeks after conversion? What would you say to them?
3. Have you recognized the “two faced syndrome” among new believers in your cultural setting? What do you think of this?
4. Think of a new believer you would like to help. In what ways could you work towards understanding how this new believer has related to the family group in the past? Who do you think might oppose the new believer?
5. What are some things you might try in order to help unite the two faces of the new believer?

Story B

Every day or two Zay'id would meet with Mr. Li for Bible Study. On the days between they would try and meet for coffee at the hospital cafeteria, or Zay'id would drop in to visit in Mr. Li's room. Mr. Li had cut up a small New Testament so that Zay'id could take one or two pages home each day in his shirt pocket. When time allowed, Zay'id would read the pages, often studying them again and again.

One day Zay'id's mother was washing clothes and asked Zay'id for his shirt. Without thinking, Zay'id passed his shirt to his mother and went to his room for another one. When he returned, he discovered his mother reading the pages from his pocket. Zay'id was horrified, and terrified of being discovered. He quickly snatched the pages from his mother. When his mother asked what they were, he said they were 'nothing,' and left the house. A short time later a shaken Zay'id related the story to Mr. Li.

When he finished, Mr. Li sat and looked at him. Then quietly Mr. Li said, “So that's what it is. It's all nothing?” Zay'id was stunned. This was not what he had meant to portray by the story. Mr. Li continued: “After all this time together, after everything you've said and done... it's all nothing?”

“No!” Zay'id protested. “It's not 'nothing'. I've met Jesus. He has changed my life. Before this my life was empty. God was far away. But now He has touched my life, He has changed me and I'm His follower. It's not 'nothing'.”

Mr. Li smiled. “Zay'id, that's wonderful. You've just said your testimony. Do you think you could tell that to your family?” Together they looked into the Word of God, studying what it meant to talk about one's faith and not to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.

The next day, Zay'id's oldest brother came to talk to him. He explained that their father had sent him to discover what the papers were that their mother had found. Zay'id paused, and gathered his strength knowing that Mr. Li was praying for him. He then shared his testimony with his brother. His brother listened, and then said, "I'll talk it over with our father."

Several days later Zay'id's brother approached him again. "I've talked it over with father," he said, "and we've agreed that during the last few months we have seen a real change in your life. You really are different, better than before. We've decided to let you continue to read the writings of the prophet Isa."

That night as Zay'id met with Mr. Li he was so amazed and so filled with joy and thanks. He had made his first step in coming out. The road would not be easy, but now that he had started down it, he was excited and encouraged. Perhaps some day he could be free to love Jesus openly in his community, and not just he himself, but others with him.

The next day was a holiday for Zay'id. He showed up at Mr. Li's room and he stayed for hours. The following day, as soon as his work was over, he came back. This began to happen day after day. At first Mr. Li welcomed Zay'id, but he soon found all his time taken up with Zay'id. This began to worry him, and he spoke to David about it.

"Don't stop him" David encouraged Mr. Li. "Let him come to your room. I'm sure he needs a place to go. You don't need to entertain him. Just give him a place where he can read and meditate. He may just enjoy being around you, in a place where there isn't foul language and continual discussion about women and money."

At first Mr. Li felt awkward as Zay'id would come regularly to his room, often for hours at a time. He would frequently spend an hour or two reading from the Bible; then he would ask questions, and later would read again. He enjoyed the visits that David made to Mr. Li's room as well. Sometime David, or Mr. Li would sit with him and discuss the scriptures with him. Weeks went by, and Mr. Li and David gave Zay'id as much attention as they could, all the while allowing him space to just read the Bible, or listen to Christian music.

A few weeks later, Zay'id brought a young man to the Mr. Li's room. He explained to him that this room was available if he wanted to read the Bible, listen to Christian music, or discuss Christian things. In the weeks that followed the two young men grew into three. They didn't want the Mr. Li to do anything, except allow them to read, meditate and ask questions when they had them. To them, the important thing was that they had a place to go to for quiet solitude and also fellowship. Mr. Li hadn't quite realized it, but in his little room a Church had come into being.

Lesson B

Friendship discipling

Most successful evangelists agree that it is unwise to put all your evangelistic efforts into people who are *not interested*. A lot of time and energy can be spent building friendships and bridges which may not lead anywhere. However, these evangelists have discovered that once someone comes to Christ, they now require a serious investment of time and effort. This often means some contact with the new disciple every day, and often for extended periods of time. There are three things to recognize here that may be important for the new convert:

1. Usually he needs to feel he belongs and has joined a new support structure and group of friends.
2. He needs spiritual input everyday. He doesn't know how to feed himself. A good thing to talk about is what he has read that day from the Word of God. If he hasn't read anything, it may mean that he doesn't have the opportunity at home. Allow him time to read by himself, and then discuss what he has read.
3. He may want to discuss non-spiritual items. This is an important step in his life, as he learns to relate all of his life to Christ and the fellowship of believers. You will need to make time for this as well.

Spiritual Growth

Momentum in the area of spiritual growth can be maintained by beginning a series of Bible studies that are designed to help the new disciple grow. The difficulty in using most Western-produced course material is that they assume a certain level of basic background Christian knowledge.

In designing your own discipling material, make sure you cover fundamental topics such as: Who is God, and The Different Persons of the Trinity. Consider tackling such topics as: Biblical Authority in Place of Fear; Characteristics of the Believer; Life and Gifts of the Body; Faith; Praise; The Believer and Suffering; The Kingdom of Christ; Baptism; and The Cost of Discipleship.

'Coming Out' and Making a Stand

Is it possible for a convert to be recognized by his family and community as a follower of Jesus and still be accepted in the community? Many converts believe that it is possible. However, a number of things must be in place for this to occur.

At the beginning the convert will usually lose some standing in the community. There will always be those people who will be suspicious. However, if the community is prepared properly, and the convert lives a holy and godly life, then most family members can be encouraged to accept the changes in his life as positive, not negative.

The whole area of "coming out" can be very frightening for the new convert, and even for you the discipler. Much prayer and preparation needs to go into the process. Sensitivity needs to be exercised so that the new disciple will recognize God-given opportunities to open up a little and share with his family.

When doing “friendship discipling” it is important that the discipler get to know the family from the earliest stage possible. If the discipler has the respect of the family it will help. It is certainly better than the family finding out that one of their members has been listening and following a total stranger. Remember our story? Mr. Li had built a solid relationship with Zay’id’s father. When Zay’id is caught reading from the Bible, Mr. Li’s relationship with the family was instrumental in preparing the way for Zay’id to have permission explore Christian things.

By getting involved at an early stage, the discipler can assist the convert in his coming out experience. For instance, during the first few months of his new walk with God, the convert should make himself a model member of the family. After this, he might want to approach the most sympathetic family elder (possibly an uncle or aunt), and explain that he has a problem trying to please God. He could then share some of his experience being careful not to offend or alarm the family. He should stress that he does not want to hurt or dishonor his family, but wants to follow God with his whole heart. The Christian discipler should coach the new convert in what he is going to say, and cover him with prayer during this time. Generally the family elders will try and reason the new convert out of his new faith, but if he or she becomes convinced that the convert is virtuous, sincere and honorable, they may take up the role of intermediary with the rest of the family. The fact that the convert has sought a way to preserve family honor will be a big point in his favor.

Working through the Discipleship Process

Discipleship has two parts. On one side there is growth in intellectual knowledge about the new faith. On the other, there is a change in actions, life-style, and attitudes. In the West, too many Christians believe that discipleship is about accumulating knowledge. However, the Bible teaches us that discipleship is about obedience to God. Jesus hardly ever taught doctrinal classes. For Jesus, discipleship was a form of apprenticeship where he lived along side of his disciples, allowing them to see his life, and experience life with him. When discipling a convert from Islam, what the new disciple does and how he lives is initially more important than what he says.

It is important to think and consider what changes we would expect to see in a new believer’s daily and weekly life as a result of his coming to Christ and encourage these changes. Since some of our ideas may be brought over from our own cultural Christian experience it is good to check these ideas with other Christian workers to get a balanced idea of what should be done. Working in multinational, multi-denominational teams can help us, as we get a much wider perspective on this. Every Christian culture has its strengths and weaknesses and we must be careful to encourage the new believers to emulate Christ in a way that is God honoring within their own culture.

A number of missionaries have used a catechism to teach new believers. A catechism is a system of teaching Christian doctrine that was developed during the European Christian reformation, that uses questions and Biblical answers. By using a catechism, the new

believer can understand Christian teaching and can respond to questions. In many cases students can memorize the whole catechism, especially the scripture verses that answer each of the questions. The teacher, however, needs to make sure that the believer understands clearly what the teaching is about, and why he believes it, because his former religious beliefs were most likely memorized and not well understood or applied.

Beyond these basic elements of faith, we need to be careful how we interpret Scripture. Even though we say the Word is our rule of faith and conduct, we may struggle with which parts of it to read literally and which parts to read figuratively; which parts are commands, and which parts are more about heart attitudes. Why do we expect more from the new believers?

We need to be very careful at this point to let the new believers understand the Scriptures in the context of their own background, and to relate the teachings of Scripture to their own culture in their own way. Much of our understanding of Scripture is dictated by our own culture. It is very unwise to burden someone with our cultural baggage, so that all the converts who come after are shackled with it.

Take a fresh look at the Bible and discover the tremendous freedom there is in Christ to worship Him in many ways. In his various letters, Paul demonstrated that the Gospel should be worked out in each specific community. This working out, however, must be with great care (fear and trembling.) The form that our study and worship takes is less important than the fact that worship and Bible Study take place.

Many of the successful evangelists discovered that trying to get new believers into a Bible study is just as likely to fail as trying to get Muslims to read their Qur'an. It doesn't usually happen. Muslims in general are not a reading society. While the Qur'an provides doctrinal beliefs and regulations, most Muslims rely on the *umma* (decisions of the community elders) for their guidance.

In such a situation the discipler may need to help new believers find Christian community based situations and methods for understanding the Scriptures and finding guidance. At the same time he still needs to emphasize the need and blessing of personal time spent in communion with God through prayerfully reading the Word on his own. 同时，他也需要强调个人与神独处的重要，存着祷告的心来阅读神的话语。

A Place of Refuge

When we think of reading the Scriptures, most of us think of finding a place alone in our house where we can read. When a Muslim thinks of reading the Scriptures, he often thinks of going to the mosque to read, meditate, and listen to others.

It is important for every Christian discipler to visit the local mosque to note what is happening throughout the day. There is more to the mosque than prayer and preaching times. Mosques are usually open, day and night, and the faithful can always find a place to read and meditate. Some mosques have study rooms or schools attached. Friends often

meet outside and if one is traveling and has no place to sleep, the Muslim can always sleep at the mosque.

When he accepts Christ, the new believer is isolated from the mosque. As a result, he needs a place where he can read, meditate, and quietly visit with fellow believers. Churches are often simply meeting halls which are normally locked between meetings and thus do not provide an alternative to the mosque.

The disciple maker's home may be the only place of refuge with a Christian spiritual atmosphere that he knows. As a result, it is very common for a new believer to want to come to the home of his teacher to read, meditate, and listen to discussion with others. As more and more come to Christ, a place of corporate refuge should be established. Remember the young men meeting in Mr. Li's room? For them, having a place of refuge was very important. In today's modern busy cities, this is more and more of a problem, and Christians must be prepared to open their homes to those who need a place of quiet refuge.

Conclusion

Anyone who comes to Christ needs to discover a personal way of prayer and praise that is not foreign to him. They also need and a way and a place to meet with God through the Word. Here are some activities which you might use to guide new believers in their study of the word:

- After reading a series of verses, ask him if he can identify a proverb or saying that expresses the same thought. If he cannot read, you may have to read it for him, slowly, several times.
- Ask him to memorize one key verse from each section.
- If the verses contain a story, ask him to memorize it and then tell the story back.
- Ask him to construct a prayer based on the lesson. It may only be a sentence or two from each section, but it means he has something to offer to God, as well as being reminded of what he has learned.
- The new believer also needs a place to fellowship where he may be encouraged, a place to find and understand God's will, and a way to relate his new faith with his community in such a way that he will eventually be free to be himself, both in his walk with Jesus and in his community.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. Do you have a plan for helping new believers grow spiritually? What topics, or what material do you plan on using?
2. Where would be a good place to meet with new believers? How often do you think you should meet with them?
3. Do new believers have places of refuge that they can go to if they want to study the Bible, listen to music or messages, and spend time with God or in fellowship with others? What is available for males and also for females?
4. Read Acts 12:8-14. Did Peter have a place to go when he was released from prison? Whose house was it? What time did he arrive? Was this a place of refuge?

Lesson Nine

Understanding Worldviews

Technical Notes (24 minute lesson)

Story: 1570 words = 10 minutes

Lesson: 2233 words = 14 minutes

Questions: 6 questions = 35 minutes

Story

The sun was very hot when Mr. Li left the hospital for the shops in the center of town. He was going out to look for a gift to take to Mahmood, the son of David's landlord. Sometime after Mr. Li's failed attempt to share the gospel with Mahmood, he had gotten a scholarship to study at a distant university. Now a year had passed and Mahmood had returned. Mahmood's father had invited David and Mr. Li to their house to celebrate. Since this was an important occasion, Mr. Li spent the whole afternoon searching for a suitable gift. He considered buying chocolates, but the sun was too hot, and they would melt before he returned to the hospital. He stopped and looked at watches but couldn't decide. He looked at fancy pen sets. He stopped at the sweet shop and looked at pastries. Then he looked in a book shop. The books were not very interesting, but Mr. Li's attention was drawn to the calculators. Since Mahmood was studying math, perhaps a calculator would make a nice gift. After looking at them for a while Mr. Li realized that they were quite expensive, and Mahmood would probably already have one. As he walked down the street he continued to ponder his problem. Mahmood had started Bible studies with them and he wanted to make a good impression so that the opportunity might come to start them again.

A few minutes later something caught his attention and he smiled. In a shop window was a set of eight small tea glasses with gold colored trim. They looked very nice, and the price was within what he wanted to spend. He asked the shop keeper to wrap them nicely as a gift and then he returned to the pastry shop to buy a box of good quality pastries as a second gift. Then he rushed home to prepare for the party.

Putting on his best clothes, Mr. Li took the bus across town to the apartment block where David lived. His landlord lived on the second floor above the stores, while David lived on

the fourth floor. When he turned to corner onto the street Mr. Li was shocked to discover that the street had been closed, and a very large black woven tent now occupied the street. The tent was filled with white plastic chairs, and loudspeakers were blaring out very loud music. Mahmood's father approached him and welcomed him. He shook his hand warmly, and then led him over to where Mahmood was sitting. Mahmood stood to his feet and welcomed Mr. Li, who smiled, greeted him, and placed his presents on the small table before Mahmood where other presents were also sitting. Then Mahmood's father took Mr. Li around the tent introducing him to the other men who were present. There were no women in sight. Most of the men were family members and a few were visiting neighbors. Small cups of bitter coffee were passed around followed by small glass cups of sweet tea. During the following hour, more and more men arrived. The music was so loud that Mr. Li had to shout to be heard.

Eventually David arrived. He was dressed in shorts and a dirty T-shirt, with sandals on his feet. He looked shabby compared to the other men present. Mr. Li noticed that he did not bring a present. He spent most of his time with the young teenagers in a back corner, and did not go around the tent greeting the men. Mr. Li slowly made his way around the tent, greeting different people until he got near to David.

"How are you?" David asked him with a smile. Mr. Li was prepared to shake David's hand, as he had been shaking everyone else's hand but David never offered his, and seemed to ignore Mr. Li's hand.

"I'm fine." Mr. Li was quite disappointed with David's appearance. "I see you came to the party. I'm hoping we can make amends with Mahmood and rebuild our relationship. It would be nice to start studies with him again."

"Yes, that would be good" said David thoughtfully.

"Did you bring him a gift?" Mr. Li asked gently, not wanting to embarrass David, but wanting to encourage him to think what he could do to help build the relationship.

"Gift?" David frowned. "No, I didn't think of a gift." He looked surprised. "I guess I should get him something, it looks like others have been bringing gifts." He paused. "Do you think that they noticed that I didn't bring a gift?"

Mr. Li looked at him steadily without answering. "I guess you noticed" David said glumly. "I'll slip out and get him something."

Mr. Li returned to chatting with people while David rushed off to a nearby store. Mr. Li reminded himself that David was young, and an American. Perhaps that was why he was acting so strangely. After what seemed like a very long time, David returned. His present wasn't wrapped, but it had a ribbon and a bow on it. When he placed it before Mahmood, Mr. Li realized to his horror that it was a mirror. "What was David thinking? Was he purposely trying to destroy what was left of their relationship with Mahmood?"

Later that evening Mahmood's father called everyone to attention, and announced that the food was coming. The men all stood back as great trays of rice and meat were brought into the tent. The men crowded around them and began to eat. David, it seemed had already left.

After the party Mr. Li returned home, discouraged and very upset with David. Two weeks went by and he heard nothing from David, nor did David visit the hospital compound. By this time Mr. Li was very upset with the young American missionary.

The following week Mr. Li became sick. First he had some fever, and then his stomach became sick. He spent three days between his bed and the bathroom. He felt that he was going to die, and several times cried out to God for strength. Ahmed dropped by the second evening and brought Dr. Wilson with him, who gave him some medicine. After a few days he began to feel better. By the end of the week he was up and around, although he was still not standing for long periods of time. It was then that David arrived. He came happily through the hospital courtyard, and when he spotted Mr. Li he smiled. "I've got some good news" he said. "My mission agency has arranged that I can go home to America in three weeks. I'm so excited about going to see my family."

Mr. Li was happy for David, but he was also disturbed. David had not greeted him and had not asked how he was. He showed no interest in Mr. Li and obviously didn't know how sick Mr. Li had been. "Here, I have something for you" David said. "Some of the other American missionaries and I got some money together to help you, being from China and all, we figured you could use this." He thrust an envelope into Mr. Li's hands. Mr. Li felt very embarrassed. "Why had David told the other missionaries that he was poor? What else was he telling them?"

"I've got to go" David said abruptly, and he turned to leave. As Mr. Li watched him go he tried to suppress the anger and frustration growing within him. "Maybe it's good you go back to America" he thought to himself, but he didn't dare say it.

Several days later, Dr. Wilson, the Christian doctor at the hospital sat with Mr. Li for lunch in the hospital cafeteria.

"How re things with you Mr. Li?" Dr. Wilson asked.

"Oh, I'm feeling much better now, thank you for your help."

"I'm glad you are better physically, but you look sad, or disturbed about something. Are things OK back in China?"

"Yes, my family are all well."

"How are things here at the hospital?" Dr. Wilson asked.

"Everything is fine here too. I enjoy my work and it seems to be going well."

"Then what is the problem?"

"It's my American friend, David. I just don't understand him."

Dr. Wilson smiled. "You seem to be adjusting to the Muslims OK, but now you are having cultural problems with Americans?"

"I don't know if it is cultural problems." Mr. Li replied. "Maybe I don't understand him. But he seems to do everything wrong. I wonder if he is angry with me for something."

"What seems to be the problem?" Dr. Wilson asked. Mr. Li then outlined what had happened at the party the night before. Dr. Wilson chuckled. "It sound's like David is not very culturally sensitive. I'm sure he doesn't mean what you think he communicated. Perhaps you should talk to him and tell him all the things he was doing wrong."

"They weren't really wrong, they were offensive" Mr. Li explained.

"But if he acted wrongly, then he needs to learn how to act correctly in the future."

Now it was Mr. Li's turn to be puzzled. Didn't Dr. Wilson understand that David had been offensive? This wasn't a question about right and wrong ... it was about acting appropriately, about offending others. Dr. Wilson didn't seem to quite understand either. Perhaps it was because he was an American too.

Lesson

In the first eight lessons we looked at the importance of being accepted as a valid messenger. This is only the first step in sharing the Gospel and planting churches with Muslims. Once we have gained a hearing, it is vitally important that we are able to share a message that is understandable and relevant to Muslims. If we are to be effective cross-cultural communicators, we must understand the **worldview** of our audience and be able to communicate effectively within that worldview. When we have trouble communicating or understand people from other cultures, it is often because we have different worldviews and see things differently. What may seem perfectly normal to us may seem very strange to someone from another culture. This is part of the problem that Mr. Li and David were having.

Definition

A worldview is a description of the way a group of people live, act, think, and relate together. It is in essence a model of how people think and view the world.

Worldviews in the Bible

In the beginning there was only one language and one worldview. Everything in the Garden of Eden was in harmony. Communication was clear between mankind, and also between mankind and God. If you were asked: “Where did all the languages of the world originate?” You would most likely point to the Tower of Babel.” Languages first fragmented at the Tower of Babel and they have continued to fragmented down through history. But if you were asked: “Where did all the worldviews and cultures originate?” most Bible believing Christians would be puzzled. Hopefully the next couple of lessons will help you understand worldview and why it is important when sharing the gospel with others.

The Biblical Bases for Worldview

There are three basic worldviews presented in Bible. The first two chapters of the Bible describe a worldview that was untainted by sin. While some people have tried to imagine what it was like to live in the Garden of Eden and hold an Edenic Worldview, few of us can begin to imagine what this type of worldview was like.

In the same way, the last two chapters of the Bible describe a coming world that will be without sin, yet we will have passed through an experience where we were stained by sin. Someday, the followers of the Lord Jesus will enter into this state, and hold a Heavenly Worldview.

Between the first two and the last two chapters of the Bible we have the Sin-Based Worldview. All of us are living under the influence of sin.

Edenic Worldview → Sin-Based Worldview → Heavenly Worldview

It is important to grasp this larger picture, in order to understand our own perspective on worldview. Every person on the face of the world is tainted by sin. Every one of us is affected by sin, and every one of us struggles to live in a world saturated with sin and the effects of sin.

A Missionary's View of Sin

The only reason that the Christian missionary enterprise exists today is because sin exists. Sin began in the Garden of Eden and has affected mankind ever since. The missionary enterprise of the church exists simply for the purpose of addressing sin and the results of sin among the peoples of the earth; communicating to people everywhere the Gospel of God's grace provided through the cross of Christ.

Since the missionary effort is so closely attached to sin it is important for us to have a very clear understanding of how sin entered the world and the immediate impact that this sin had on the human race. Unfortunately, most Christians know very little about sin, other than their struggle to overcome it.

As mankind multiplied on the face of the earth, sin multiplied, until today we have a world full of people, and thus a world full of sin. If we can understand the significance of what took place in the Garden of Eden we can begin to understand the peoples of the world today in their various lifestyles as they try to cope with sin and the influences of sin in their communities.

The Results of Sin

If you were asked the question: What are the results of sin, based on Genesis chapter three, what would you answer? separation from God? Pain? Death? Sickness? frustrating work?

While these are true, they really aren't the results of sin. Rather, they are the results of God's *punishment* on sin. To find the results of sin on mankind we need to examine Genesis chapter three and discover what happened to Adam and Eve in the time between their sin and God's judgment. That is the key to understanding what sin does to mankind. Once you understand what sin does to mankind, you can begin to understand how mankind responds and deals with the effects of sin. This response is fundamental to understanding what happens when one's worldview is formed.

Guilt

The Bible points out that there were three specific ways that sin affected Adam and Eve in the garden. These three are found in Genesis chapter three. In verse seven, the Bible tells us that Adam and Eve "knew" that they had sinned. This knowledge of sin is nothing other than our conscience, or the feeling of guilt. When Adam and Eve sinned, they felt their conscience tell them that they were guilty. They suddenly knew and experienced right from wrong. This knowledge of good and evil is common to us today. While Adam and Eve were in their perfect state, they never felt their consciences condemning them. When they ate the forbidden fruit, they felt the sting of their conscience, and they knew right from wrong. When Adam sinned, he was not only guilty of eating forbidden fruit,

but in that one act, guilt passed upon him and through Adam onto all of mankind, forever. In the western world, the emphasis on guilt is so strong that many Christians fail to notice the other results of sin.

The Western attraction to the guilt aspect of the fall and, consequently, the guilt aspect of salvation is due in part to Western preoccupation with guilt as a Western worldview. Much of the English speaking world and parts of Europe have worldviews that focus on this aspect of man's guilt, and/or his freedom from guilt. This is what is called a "guilt-based worldview."

Shame

Guilt was not the only influence of sin in the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve realized they had sinned, they immediately hid themselves (v. 8). Adam and Eve were ashamed. Shame had come upon Adam and Eve, but their shame was not for them alone. Shame, like guilt, passed upon all of mankind from that point on. As a result, man is not only in a position of guilt, but from this point on man is also in a position of shame before God.

It is interesting to note that the subject of shame is addressed in the Old and New Testaments. You can find references to it in the imagery of the temple, in the messages of the prophets, and, more importantly, in the death of Christ on the cross. Shame is repeatedly mentioned in the New Testament, especially in the teachings of Christ in the Gospels.

Anthropologists and sociologists have discovered that many cultures around the world focus in on the aspects of shame and honor, rather than guilt and innocence. Honor and shame are paramount to understanding their worldviews. The shame-based cultures of the world span an area from Morocco to Korea and cover much of what is known today in mission circles as the 10-40 window. They also exist among the aboriginal natives of Australia and North America.

Fear

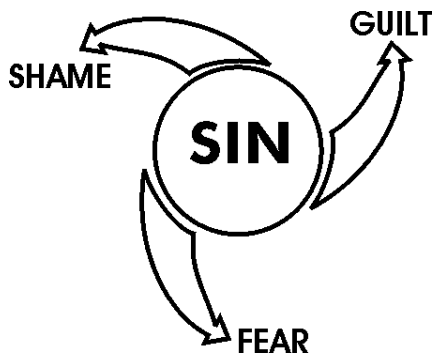
There was a third influence that went into effect when man sinned. When God came to speak to Adam and Eve in the garden, Adam told God that they had hidden themselves because they were afraid (v 10). The third influence of sin was fear, and fear came upon Adam and Eve as well as the whole human race. Before this, man enjoyed the presence of God. Now he cowered in fear, and fear passed upon all mankind from that point on.

From Genesis three we see that man is not only in a position of guilt and shame, but man is also in a position of fear before God. Moreover, the subject of fear is addressed in the Old and New Testaments. You can find it in the imagery of the temple, in the messages of the prophets, and more importantly in the Garden of Gethsemane before the death of Christ. The New Testament also repeatedly addresses the issue of fear. For example: "You did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons." Romans 8:15 (ESV) and "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." I John 4:18(ESV)

Anthropologists and sociologists tell us that many cultures in our world can be grouped together and labeled fear-based worldviews. These cultures often focus in on fear of spirits and the supernatural world. The aspect of fear is paramount to understanding their worldview. Fear-based worldviews are found in Africa, Central and South America, and some islands in the Far East, and parts of Asia.

Confusing Terms

In Western evangelical theology, Christians often confuse words like guilt and sin, freely interchanging them as if they had the same meaning. We need to carefully distinguish between the two. Sin is an act of rebellion against God. It can be a willful act, or something we fail to do. Guilt, shame, and fear, on the other hand, are the results of sin, as illustrated in the drawing below.



We will discover as we work our way through this topic that when God deals with sin, he also deals with the guilt, shame and fear attached to that sin.

Worldview

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve experienced guilt, shame, and fear. These three responses to sin make up the basic building blocks of worldview. It is similar to the three basic colors that an artist mixes to make all the colors of the universe. That's the way it is with worldview. There are many different kinds of worldviews, but when carefully examined, they can be better understood when looking at them in the light of man's response to guilt, shame and fear.

In the Garden of Eden, man had one language, one worldview, and one culture. The Bible tells us that the languages of the world resulted from the Tower of Babel, but where did all the worldviews and the cultures of the world come from? They are the natural outworking of man, as he has wrestled with these three results of sin. Some people, like Cain in Genesis 4:14 experienced events that filled their existence from that event onward, with fear. Others, like Ham, the son of Noah, in Genesis 9:21-25, lived under the stigma of shame. As people spread out over the earth, some of the cultures that emerged were more sensitive to guilt, shame or fear than others. And so today it is possible to classify worldviews using these three measures.

If the Bible is what it says it is, (that is, God's communication to mankind in every place,) then the Gospel message in the Bible should address each of these basic building blocks, and speak specifically to them.

We must be careful, however, not to try and fit each culture into one specific category. These building blocks are similar to an artist, creating thousands of variations from three basic primary colors. How much of each primary color is used determines what the final color will be. In the same way, all three building blocks are present in all cultures and worldviews, but how much of each one is present determines the actual type of worldview that emerges.

Having determined this, one must also consider how people in a particular local culture react to the elements of the overall worldview. As an example, when Arabs are shamed, they often react by taking revenge on those who cause the shame, but when Japanese are shamed, they may react by committing suicide. So when we observe an action taking place in a culture that we do not understand, we must consider how these three building blocks influence that culture and bring about the action we do not understand. In most Muslim cultures, shame and honor are more important than guilt and innocence.

Conclusion

When man sinned, three great conditions came upon mankind. By sinning man broke God's law and consequently was in a position of guilt. By sinning man also broke God's relationship and consequently was in a position of shame. Finally, when man sinned he broke God's trust and was from that point, in a position of fear.

As cultures and worldviews developed over the millennia that followed, many gravitated towards one of these perspectives. This polarization has created three mega-trends in worldview. While the majority of worldviews fit into these three classifications, there are many worldviews which draw equally from two or all three building blocks.

In the following lessons we will examine guilt, shame and fear based worldviews in order to see how the Bible relates to them and how we might best share the gospel.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. What was your reaction when learning about the three different types of worldview?
2. Have you been exposed to other worldviews before this? What worldviews have you interacted with? Do you still think in terms of the worldview you grew up with, or have you begun to understand and think according to other worldviews?
3. Describe some ways that the Edenic Worldview (Genesis 1 & 2) different from the Heavenly Worldview (Revelation 21 & 22)
4. How do these differ from the sin-based worldview that we live under?
5. Have you studied sin before, as part of your theological training? How did it impact your life and understanding of the Bible? Is dealing with sin a central part of the Gospel message? Why?

6. When you discussed guilt, shame and fear based worldviews, do you find yourself championing one worldview while marginalizing others? Why do you think this is?

Lesson Ten

Guilt-based Worldviews

Technical Notes (37 minutes lesson)

Story A	969 words = 6 minutes
Lesson A	1336 words = 8 minutes
Question Set A	4 questions = 10 minutes
Story B	589 words = 3 minutes
Lesson B	3284 words = 20 minutes
Question Set B	5 questions = 15 minutes

Story

Several days later, David stopped by the hospital for a visit during the lunch break. He seemed happy and genuinely glad to see Mr. Li. As they talked, Mr. Li wondered if he might be able to direct the conversation towards the party the evening before. He was curious to know why David acted like he did. Thankfully, David broached the topic first.

“Thank you for your help at the party the other day. I totally forgot about bringing a gift. I never remember those kind of things?”

“Really?” said Mr. Li. “Gifts are important. Don’t you like getting gifts?”

“I never really got many gifts when I was growing up” David said. “My parents always bought me whatever I needed when I wanted it. I guess gift giving is important in this culture.”

“Is it not important in all cultures?”

“No, I don’t think so. The important thing was that I was there. The right thing to do was to show up. I forgot that in this culture, the right thing is to also give a gift.”

Mr. Li was puzzled. “So you gave a gift because it was the right thing to do?”

“Of course,” David answered. “I was wrong to forget a gift.” He paused. “When you reminded me, I felt really guilty. It was my bad. So I went and bought him a really nice gift.”

“Your gift was a really nice gift.”

“Yes, that mirror cost me a lot of money. Did you see the pattern that was engraved on it? I hope that the nice mirror makes up for my coming without a gift.”

Mr. Li looked at David for a long time. David looked guilty. “Did I do something else wrong?”

“I don’t know. In my country we would never give a mirror as a gift.”

“Really” David looked puzzled. “Why not, it’s a very useful item?”

“David” Mr. Li began. “Gifts speak about what is in your heart. A sweet gift speaks of sweetness between you. Dishes, like the tea cups speak of hospitality and warmth. A gift of medicine would express my concern for your well being. But a mirror...” Mr. Li was lost for words.

David waited impatiently. “Yes, a mirror. What does a mirror speak of?”

“A mirror speaks of examining yourself. It says “You should look at yourself.” It is like ... criticizing.”

“That’s stupid,” David countered. “Gifts don’t speak. A gift says “I’m a gift. It says that I did the right thing in bringing one. Gifts don’t have meaning. That’s simply wrong and stupid. I did the right thing in bringing a gift, not the wrong thing.”

Mr. Li was shocked at David’s response. “In my country, people would be offended by the gift of a mirror.”

“Well, that is your country.” David argued. “This is not your country. It is not your culture. Here the right thing to do is to bring a gift. I did the right thing. I don’t think that gifts speak.”

“In this culture, everything speaks.” Mr. Li said softly. “Even the different cups of coffee have different names.”

“That’s absurd” David responded. “I’ve never heard that.”

“Ask your Muslim friends sometime.”

David was about to respond when Zay’id entered the courtyard and greeted them. He offered to buy them tea from the little teashop, and together they sat on some large rocks under the trees.

David began. "I'm so glad I have both of you together. Perhaps you can help me with a language problem."

"Zay'id can help you" Mr. Li smiled. "I'm still a learner."

"I've been trying to share the gospel with a friend, and I need to know the word for 'guilt.' All of us are guilty before God."

Zay'id and Mr. Li exchanged glances. "This one is for you" Mr. Li said with a smile. "I don't know the word for guilt."

"What do you mean by guilt?" Zay'id asked.

"Well, if you did a bad crime, and were taken to jail, then you are guilty."

"Yes, murderers, and rapists are guilty." Zay'id replied, "But you cannot use that word with your friend. It is a very strong word, and if you did not murder or rape, then you are not guilty."

"But what about a child who steals a cookie?" David asked. "Is he not guilty of stealing?"

"The child was hungry, and did only what it needed to do." Zay'id shrugged. "We do not use the word 'guilt' in this case?"

"What do you use?" David asked.

"Nothing, the child was hungry."

"What if he does bad things?"

"Then he is acting in a shameful way. His actions will bring shame of the family. Not guilt."

David was really puzzled. "So what would I have to do to be guilty?"

Zay'id smiled. "You would have to murder me, or Mr. Li."

"What if I lied to you?" David protested. "Wouldn't I be guilty of lying?"

"We would never use guilt and lying together."

"But lying is wrong."

"That depends why you lied" Zay'id argued. "If a lie leads to a good result, then it is not wrong. If I defend the honor of my family by lying, then it is perfectly OK."

"No" David argued. "A lie is a lie. It is always wrong. You must always tell the truth."

"Even when it is harmful to you and to others?"

“Yes, I always tell the truth, even if it hurts.”

“You are very strange David.”

“No, it’s in the Bible. The Bible says *Let your yes be yes, and your no be no.*”

Zay’id turned to Mr. Li. “What is your response to this?” he asked.

“I’m need to think about this before I answer” Mr. Li said. “This is a very interesting topic, and it may help us understand one another better.”

Lesson (A)

None of us lives in exactly the same culture. Culture varies from town to town, family to family and sometimes even from individual to individual. All of us are different. We are all formed by the different experiences that come into our lives on a day to day basis. Even those who try to define the wider concept of *worldview* struggle to know what makes up any particular worldview. ‘American’ or ‘western’ worldview can only be addressed in vague generalizations. Americans come from all kinds of ethnic backgrounds, and have all kinds of values. Some live in middle class housing, some in cardboard boxes on the street, and some in large impressive mansions. It’s hard to place categorizations and descriptions on people who are so diverse.

Despite this, there are some general characteristics that fit the majority of people in the Western world. Certain basic fundamental beliefs have molded Western civilization. These beliefs have laid the foundations upon which these nations are built, and from which the fabric of their society has been formed.

One of these basic foundations is the west’s belief in right versus wrong. The importance of right and wrong are so deeply ingrained in Western culture that Westerners analyze almost everything from this perspective. Most Western forms of entertainment are built upon “the good guys versus the bad guys.” It is so familiar to most Westerners that few question its validity. It is such an integral part of religion and society that they cannot imagine a world where ‘right versus wrong’ isn’t the accepted basic underlying principle.

“Right versus wrong” is the yardstick used in western worldview to measure everything else. Westerners talk about the rightness and wrongness of someone else’s actions. They talk about things being “right for me.” They are obsessed with knowing their rights and exercising them. Many Western societies spend countless hours and billions of dollars debating the wrongs of society. Is homosexuality right or wrong? Is spending billions on the military right or wrong? Is possession of drugs like marijuana right or wrong? How about possession of nuclear bombs, or weapons of mass destruction?

Almost every major issue the West struggles with involves an aspect of deciding whether something is right or wrong. They arrive at this basic tension in life because almost everything in Western culture is plotted on a guilt-innocence continuum (innocence being something defined as being right or righteousness).

Guilt ←-----□-----→ Innocence

The pulls and demands of these two diametrically opposed forces dictate much of Western human behavior. Guilt can plague and haunt people, bringing fear and condemnation upon them. Many Westerners do everything they can to avoid being or feeling guilty. Psychologists spend a great deal of their time helping people deal with all sorts of guilt complexes.

Evangelicals, in particular, often live in circles that are governed by guilt principles based on the authority of the Bible. Outside of these circles, guilt is defined in many other ways. It can be a sense of public disapproval, being in trouble with the authorities, or not being politically correct. However guilt is defined, and to what extent it influences a culture varies widely from location to location. However, the understanding of right and wrong has been instrumental in forming much of Western society.

On the other end of the spectrum is righteousness, or innocence. This is the unspoken goal of much of Western society. Many Westerners express their innocence with the statement that “they are as good as the next person.” If this is true, then they can get on with the business of pursuing happiness and pleasure within the bounds of being OK and not feeling guilty.

Most Westerners do what they can to avoid feeling guilty and at the same time exercise their rights. This guilt-innocence thinking is so ingrained in our Western society that few people think in terms of shame, especially bringing shame onto the family. Rather, things are either right or wrong for the individual.

When someone in the Western world does something wrong, like unintentionally running a red light, they may feel guilty for hours. This is also not necessarily true in the Muslim world. In the Western world, something as simple as beeping your car horn sends messages of guilt to others. In the Muslim world, guilt is seldom attached to the beeping of car horns.

Or, how about this scenario? Imagine a classroom full of grade school kids. Suddenly Johnny is called to the principal’s office. What is the immediate reaction of the other children? In the West the immediate reaction would almost always be: “What did you do wrong?” Even Western children almost always immediately assume guilt. In other cultures they may react different. The students may realize that the school principal would never publicly shame an individual, so their conclusion is that the principle was handing out rewards. Given the same situation, people from different cultures respond differently. Much of Western society conditions people to expect the worst, and they feel the pangs of guilt.

When Westerners try to share the Gospel with people from their Western culture, they usually start from the premise of guilt as taught in Romans 3. All are guilty of breaking God’s law. Western people usually respond with statements such as: “Well, I think I’m as

good as the next person” or “I’ll take my chances.” Even people on the street immediately associate the Christian religion with guilt. A sign outside a mosque in the west once displayed a sign: “We accept everyone, and tell no one that he is a sinner.”

So much of Western thinking is wrapped up in guilt. Wars are justified on the basis of establishing guilt. During the opening days of the Gulf War, the American government spent many hours and millions of dollars determining if Saddam Hussein was guilty. Once they thought they had established that he was guilty of having weapons of mass-destruction and committing atrocities, they then had the right to take military action against him. Throughout the war, they continued to make statements about Mr. Hussein’s deranged mental state and irrational actions. All of this helped to justify the war. In fact, all during the history of Western civilizations, wars have had to be justified, and each side identifies the other as being the ‘bad guys.’ Wars have many triggers, but in almost every case right and wrong are invoked in order to justify action. This is not the case in the east, when loss of shame and restoration of shame are often invoked in order to justify action. We will address this topic more fully in a later lesson.

In the West, people struggle with their obsession to plot everything on the guilt-innocence continuum. Some things are not easy to chart between right and wrong. Is a hungry child who steals food guilty? Should he be punished despite his hunger? These questions disturb westerners because they feel that everything in life must fit somewhere between guilt and innocence.

In fact, Western association with guilt has gone so far as to provide an avenue for people to develop guilt complexes. They feel guilty for what they have done and also guilty for what they have not done. They even feel guilty for what others have done. People who struggle with a guilt complex can be overcome with embarrassment and feelings of guilt from the actions of others.

The flip side of guilt is innocence, righteousness, and exercising rights. In order not to point a finger at people, Western society continues to expand the limits of what is acceptable activity. By making homosexuality acceptable, they help thousands of people avoid feeling guilty. This alone is enough to convince many people in Western society that it’s OK for people to be homosexual. In fact, almost anything is tolerated as long as it doesn’t hurt another person. There are many westerners who believe that all worldviews should be based on right and wrong and that this is Christian and therefore correct.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion (A)

1. What are some things that would make you feel guilty if you did them? Why? Would your guilt be based on the Bible, man made laws, or culture?
2. If a hungry child steals an apple and eats it, is this wrong? Is the child guilty? How does your society deal with these ethics issues?
3. Can you imagine a world where right and wrong are the only basis on which decisions were made? How easily could you fit into such a world?

4. Read Joshua 2:4-6, Hebrews 11:31, & James 2:23-25 What do these passages tell us about lying? How do westerners deal with lying in a guilt-based culture? Do you think that there might be other interpretations in other cultures? What might these be?

Story B

A few days later the three men met in the hospital courtyard. Once again they discussed the topic of guilt. "I've been doing some thinking and questioning on this topic" Mr. Li began. "Zay'id, if I murder someone and hide the body, and no one every finds the body, am I guilty of murder."

"Of course not" Zay'id answered.

David's eyes got big. "But you did it."

"No one knows. No shame had been brought onto the family."

"What would happen if a man kills his daughter to protect the honor of the family?" Mr. Li asked. "Is this murder?"

"Of course not" Zay'id answered again.

This was too much for David. "What do you mean?" he protested. "Killing is murder!"

Zay'id looked surprised. "No it is not. If a man kills to protect the honor of his family, it is an honor-killing. It is perfectly acceptable."

"Murder is wrong" David protested. "It is wrong to take someone's life, anytime."

"What about war?"

"War is evil. Killing in war is a necessary evil."

"Does it make you guilty? Zay'id asked.

"I think many soldiers feel guilty after the war is over. My grandfather struggled with guilt the rest of his life."

"What is this feeling of guilt?" Zay'id asked. "I don't understand it."

"You know, you do something wrong, and you feel guilty."

"Ashamed?"

"No, you may also feel ashamed, especially if you are caught, but when you do something you know is wrong, then you feel guilty."

"I see" said Zay'id slowly. "To eat port or drink wine is forbidden. But if I've never eaten pork or drank alcohol, then I will never feel guilty."

"What if you went over to that gif tree over there and take a fig from it. Wouldn't you feel guilty?"

"Of course not"

"Why, it's not your tree."

"God made the tree, and the fruit is for everyone."

"Isn't taking a fig from someone else's tree wrong?"

"He has lots of figs. I only want one. To be a glutton and take many would be to act shamefully."

David shook his head, bent over and placed it in his hands. "I'm so confused. In my world, everything is either right or wrong. It's better that way. Then we know where we are."

"Who says what is right or wrong?"

"The law does. That's why we have the law."

"Who made the law?"

"I don't know. I guess the founding fathers did."

"So you live your life according to man made laws. The whims of society. And you feel guilty when you break the laws."

David nodded in agreement.

"I think I read somewhere that the speed limit used to be 90 km an hours across the whole of the USA."

"That's right" David answered.

"But now it is faster?" Zay'id asked.

"Yes, now we can go 120 on the main roads."

"Don't you feel guilty" Zay'id said with a smile.

"No, the law has changed."

Zay'id smiled larger. "Society makes laws. They change laws. You shouldn't feel guilty about breaking those laws. They are man made."

"This is an absurd conversation" David protested. "The law is the law. I am a law abiding citizen. That is the Christian thing to do."

Zay'id looked at Mr. Li. "I think our cultures are very different from each other."

"But mine is built on Christian principles. Yours is built on Islam. That is the difference."

Mr. Li frowned. "I think there is more here than that. This is going to take a lot more thought. We need to pray and ask God to show us more about culture, and what his will in this matter is."

Although the three men realized that their cultures were different, they agreed to put these things aside until God showed them more about the topic.

Lesson (B)

In order to understand western guilt-based worldview we must go back to Roman times, examine the origin of this pattern of thinking, and discover how this has had an impact on the western church and on western understanding of the Scriptures.

Roman law introduced the concept that the law was above everyone, even the lawmakers. Greek politicians had developed idea with their 'city states' much earlier, but the Romans perfected the system, and put it into widespread use. The Romans developed a type of democracy known as the republic. They put in place a complex legal system that required lawmakers, lawyers, and judges. This Roman system of law left a tremendous impact on Western society. Even to this day, much of the Western legal system is still built around the basic Roman code of law.

Western civilization today is filled with references to the Roman Empire. For example, Roman law assumed that the individual's rights were granted by the state (by government) and that lawmakers could make up laws. Under Roman law, the state was supreme, and rights were granted or revoked whenever rulers decided. These rulers, however, were subject to the same laws as the rest of the people.

This was very different from ancient kings and rulers who were above everyone, even the laws, and could act as they felt fit. The word of the ruler was always law, but that law

might change. The Babylonians tried to deal with this problem by writing down a code of laws, but in the end, the particular ruler at the time had the power to make and create laws. With the Republic, the Romans elevated law so that it was above the ruler. Now everyone, even the emperor of Rome, had to obey the law. The law, not the ruler, determined if people were innocent or guilty.

Because the law was above all, a system of justice had to be developed that interpreted and enforced the law. Policemen, judges, courts, and lawyers were all developed under the Roman system. The science of ‘rhetoric’ or arguing a case was highly developed under the Roman Empire.

It is interesting to note that as the early church developed and grew, Roman law also had an impact on Christian theology. Since Roman law interpreted everything in terms of right versus wrong, early Christians were deeply influenced by this thinking.

Early Church Theologians

A large number of leaders in the early church were influenced by the Roman approach to right and wrong. Tertullian, the early church father who first developed systematic theology, was a lawyer steeped in Roman law. Using his understanding of law and the need for justice, guilt, and redemption, he laid the basis for western Christian systematic theology.

Basil the Great was born in 329 AD, and after completing his education in Athens he went on to practice law and teach rhetoric (the science of arguing the law). In 370 AD, Basil the lawyer became Basil the Bishop when he was elected Bishop of Caesarea. During his time as Bishop he wrote many books in defense of the deity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. Basil’s training in law and rhetoric gave him the tools he needed to speak out in defense of the church.

Next comes Augustine who was born in 354 AD into the home of a Roman official in North Africa. He received his early education in the local school where he learned Latin to the accompaniment of many beatings. He hated studying the Greek language so much that he never learned to use it proficiently. He was sent to school in nearby Madaura and from there went to Carthage to study law. He then taught legal rhetoric until he was converted. Augustine became a leader in the church, a prolific writer and later a bishop. No other Christian after Paul has had such a wide and deep impact on the western Christian world through his writings as Augustine has.

Ambrose was born around 340 AD in France. Ambrose was educated for the legal profession and became governor over Milan. Upon the death of the Bishop of Milan in 374, the people unanimously wanted him to take that position. Believing this to be the call of God, he gave up his high political position, distributed his money to the poor, and became a bishop. In 374, Ambrose demonstrated his ability in the fields of church administration, preaching, and theology. But as always, his training in Roman law enforced his views of guilt and righteousness.

Have you noticed the impact that law and lawyers had on the development of the early church? There are many more that we cannot mention here. This trend did not stop with the early church but continued later.

Reformation Theologians

John Calvin was born in 1505 in north Eastern France where his father was a respected citizen. He studied Humanistic Studies at the University of Paris, and then law at the University of Orleans. Around 1533 he converted and adopted the ideas of the Reformation. The writings of John Calvin, lawyer and theologian, have had a tremendous impact on western protestant theology.

Calvin was not alone. Arnauld Antoine, the French theologian studied law and then theology. He spoke out against the Jesuits, and his writings added to the impact of the reformation.

There are many more examples of theologians who were also lawyers, or who studied law (such as Martin Luther), but those listed here will have to suffice to point out that legal thought and expression had much to do with the development of the theology of the early Western Church and the Reformation. Each of these church leaders continued to develop the relationship between Christianity, as it was known in the West, and the legal understanding of guilt, justice, and righteousness. These lawyers were concerned with establishing guilt or innocence, and they brought this emphasis with them into their theology. As a result, the Western church adopted and used this theological approach.

In the ensuing years, new nations in the New World would be founded on the theological basis developed by these church leaders. The United States of America was founded on these principles. The American founders attempted to establish a nation built on the Roman principle of a republic, and on the early church's understanding of right and wrong.

Today, many Muslims link guilt-based culture with Christianity. An article in a Muslim newspaper pointed out that *"guilt-based culture is due largely to Christianity. Shame-based culture is one in which individuals are kept from transgressing the social order by fear of public disgrace. On the other hand, in a guilt culture, one's own moral attitudes and fear of retribution in the distant future are what enforce the ethical behavior of a member of that society."*

From this perspective, guilt-based cultures are linked to Christian theology. This is an unfortunate misrepresentation, as the Bible speaks to all cultures and worldviews. On the other hand, western Christians must recognize the incredible impact that guilt-based worldview has had on their understanding and interpretation of the Bible.

The Eastern Scene

Christianity in the Middle East, however, developed differently. Eastern theologians did not use Roman law as a vehicle for interpreting the Gospel. Rather, the Eastern world was caught up in the **shame-honor relationship** that was prevalent in societies scattered

from the Middle East to the Far East. Eastern Orthodox theology didn't deal directly with sin, guilt, and redemption. It dealt more with the issue of us being able to stand in the presence of God and a person's relationship with God and with others.

Irenaeus, born around 130 AD, lived during a time of expansion and inner tensions in the church. He mediated between various contending factions that were arising between the Eastern and Western arms of the church. Although he was born in Turkey he spent a great deal of his life as a missionary among the French which provided him with a background in both the Western and Eastern parts of the church. In his writings, Irenaeus never speaks about the Gospel in legal terms.

Origen, 俄里根 was born around 165 AD, and lived during many of the Roman persecutions. He spoke out against heretics and wrote several works, where he emphasized that man was continually moving forward, drawn by God's love. Salvation to Origen was more than attaining heaven, it was the restoration of all under God.

Athanasius, was born in Alexandria in 297 AD. As the bishop of Alexandria he spoke out in defense of the deity of Christ and in support of the view that faith is seen in its practical results, not just a declaration of faith.

Ephraim of Syria was born in 306 AD in Syria, and is considered as the Prophet of the Syrians by the Syriac Church today. His preaching on judgment helped to evangelize Syria but his writings and homilies emphasized God's mercy and desire to raise his people up.

Chrysostom, the early church theologian for the Eastern Church, was born about 345 AD into a wealthy family in Antioch. He was a student of rhetoric and had excellent speaking ability. After his baptism in 368, he became an outstanding preacher in the Eastern churches even winning the acclaim of the emperor. Today we have a record of around 680 of Chrysostom's sermons. However, he never once preached on justification. In the end, he was banished from the western church because he spoke out so sharply against the views of the Western theologians.

John Wesley was born in England in 1703, and became an Anglican priest in 1728. His contact with Moravian missionaries started him searching for truth outside of the Church of England. He read many of the Eastern Fathers, including Irenaeus, Clement, Athanasius, and Ephraim of Syria. These Eastern writers influenced Wesley's theology and preaching, causing him to express his faith in terms wider than the legalistic terms used in the West. In many ways he attempted to harmonize Western and Eastern thought into a synthesis of Christian thought.

Islam

Islam, which rose to prominence around 700 AD, was founded and developed on the shame-based worldview of the Arabian desert. Muhammad's message to the Arabs was saturated with concepts drawn from a shame-honor based society. Principle to this was

the teaching that God remains over all, and that law is in His hands, not the hands of lawmakers. This is why Islam presents both a religious and a cultural pattern for people to live by. For Muslims, God dictates both moral and civil laws.

It is interesting to notice that both Islam and Christianity have roots in Middle Eastern shame-based worldviews. Islam, however, struggles to relate to the guilt-based cultures of the world, whereas Christianity has eventually become almost solely identified with guilt-based cultures.

Biblical Perspective

It is important to realize that as Christians we must carefully examine our biblical perspectives. Certain passages of Scripture are very meaningful to us because they speak to our own worldview, but they may not be as meaningful to people from other worldviews. Sometimes we assume that because we are Christians, we have a “Christian worldview” rather than realizing that the Bible is speaking to us in whatever worldview we have. It is possible to be an American, hold an American worldview and be a Christian. It is also possible to be an Arab, hold an Arab worldview, and also be a Christian.

When we read our Bibles we should realize that certain parts of the Bible speak to different people because they hold a particular worldview. When explaining the Gospel, Westerners often find Paul’s letter to the Romans most useful. However, we must think carefully about Paul’s intended recipients of the letter. Paul was writing to people living in Rome under Roman law. If Paul contextualized his message to the Greeks at Mars Hill as recorded in Acts 17:16-34, there is no reason to think that he is not contextualizing his message to the Romans who lived under Roman law.

Living in a culture that has been greatly influenced by a guilt-based worldview, people in the West usually find the best biblical explanation of the Gospel in Paul’s letter to the Romans. Perhaps this is because the book appeals to their guilt-based mindset. Reading the book of Romans with a shame-honor mindset might lead to a different understanding. There is nothing wrong with this. Having lived in the West, westerners have come under governments patterned after the Roman form of government. Their thinking and theology is very Roman in nature, and it is only natural that they will be drawn to Paul’s letter to the Romans to find an explanation of the Gospel that is meaningful to them.

The danger comes when Westerners take their Roman understanding of the Gospel and apply it to those who do not have a Roman-based culture. They fruitlessly spend untold hours and incalculable amounts of energy explaining to someone that he is guilty of sin, and needs to be justified before God. The poor person, on the other hand, may not even have a proper word for sin in his language, and he may even be struggling with the concept of what sin is. He may also struggle to understand guilt and wonder why a person needs justification. This is not simply a blind-shot that people from another culture might have. It is a completely different way of looking at things. If a person regards guilt as something that happens when you are found out, and something that brings shame on his

people, then he may happily say he is not guilty. I.e. he has not been found out, and his family name is still honorable. He may also regard declaring one's guilt as unthinkable, because it affects the honor of others.

When their listeners don't respond, Westerners usually label them as resistant. They might even feel good about having done the right thing and presented the Gospel, even though it wasn't well received. Their listeners must be resistant.

The answer to this dilemma is quite simple. Either we must change our listener's worldview to be more like our own, or we must find a way to communicate the Gospel so that it speaks to the listener's worldview. There are a good number of Christian organizations that encourage their missionaries to spend hundreds of hours teaching their listeners so that they can correctly understand the Gospel as they understand it. This works fine if the listeners are prepared to sit for long lengths of time under the missionary's teaching. This often happens in situations where the people consider the missionary's culture to be superior. It seldom happens in situations where the listeners consider their culture to be better than the missionaries.

In the Muslim world, Muslims consider their culture to be superior to everyone else's. Missionaries are fortunate to get a couple of hours with a listener. As a result, they must share the Gospel in ways that are immediately relevant to their listeners. Westerners must put their Roman, guilt-based understanding of the Gospel aside and strive to understand other worldviews and ways of thinking. Then they need to return to the Bible and discover ways of communicating the Gospel to a mindset that is not pre-occupied with right and wrong or guilt and innocence. God's grace is equally applicable to every society and every worldview. It is the duty of the cross-cultural communicator to discover exactly how he or she can best communicate the Gospel. This is so that others can understand God's grace offered to mankind in their own culture and worldview.

The Legal Model of Salvation

Westerners have perfected a legal view of salvation. They talk about the Gospel message only in legal thought and terminology: guilt and the need for redemption, breaking God's laws and being under condemnation. These are all legal (and biblical) concepts.

Expressing salvation in legal terminology is okay. It is perfectly acceptable to draw out of Scripture the legal references to salvation and to express God's plan of salvation through them. Not only is it acceptable, it is probably preferred for those who live in a world that functions within legal paradigms.

Western church historians, from Tertullian to today, have worked hard at expressing theological concepts in ways that relate to Western culture. This is important, but the legal view of salvation isn't the only view of salvation.

These explanations of the Gospel seem to work in the West because most people understand that there are higher laws and something called sin. Secondly, most people in

Western society live with a certain measure of guilt, and these two methods of expressing the Gospel help people deal with their felt sense of guilt.

Many Western believers, when following the legal model of salvation, become content with having salvation, and seldom move onto deeper spiritual things. Once they have obtained salvation, they are content to live their lives in comfort, as their view of salvation demands little else beyond confession of sin and acceptance of a Savior.

Legal Issues

It is interesting to notice that the legal view of salvation spawns legal problems. Many of the issues that Western Christians face today stem from their legal perspective of the Gospel. These issues are then studied and debated in what amounts to be “religious courts.” These debates require the services of spiritual lawyers and judges to argue the different sides. We often call these spiritual lawyers theologians, but in reality many of them function as lawyers who carefully debate the legal problems that arise from the legal model of salvation.

For instance, if a judge has pardoned you, are you pardoned for the past only or also for the present or even for the future? This legal question, often classified as eternal security, is primarily a legal question that besets those who follow the legal model of salvation. Another question that is often asked is: Is it possible to reach a place where you do not continue to break God’s law and where you become a “law abiding citizen” in the Kingdom of God (sanctification)? This question requires that spiritual lawyers define sin and what it means to digress from God’s law. Even the keeping of the Jewish law comes into question. Were the laws in the Old Testament God’s eternal laws? If they are God’s laws, why don’t we follow them today? Did Jesus fulfill all the laws, including the health laws about eating pork meat? Did God’s law change?

This is just a sampling of the legal issues that spiritual lawyers spend countless hours and finances on. This action is not necessarily wrong; it is simply the natural outcome of our legal understanding of salvation.

What the Muslim world needs, is Christian missionaries who can share the gospel from non-western perspectives. Shame-based cultures and fear-based cultures need other models for understanding salvation than the legal ones that have developed in the west.

Conclusion

Just as an artist mixes colors of paints, cultures are made up of a mixture of elements. Very few worldviews are made up of purely guilt-based thinking, and many of the classic guilt-based worldviews in existence today are rapidly moving away from the influences of guilt and innocence. Some sociologists describe these Western worldviews as being post-guilt or post-modern.

In the next lesson we want to explore the second primary building block, that of fear. Once again there are few purely fear-based cultures in existence today. As the world becomes more global, the purely fear-based cultures are giving way to a more mixed

variety. Nevertheless, by looking briefly at fear-based worldviews, we can begin to recognize them when they are mixed in with guilt or shame.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. Before reading this chapter, had you ever considered the impact that worldview had on the writers of early church theology?
2. Do you think that guilt-based cultures have come into being because of Christianity, or has Christianity only penetrated guilt-based cultures?
3. What do you think is the meaning of the term “resistant people?” How might they be resistant? What would cause this resistance?
4. Think through a simple gospel presentation as is typically given in the west. What terms and concepts do western missionaries use that may not be clearly found in scripture? Is there a better way to express salvation?
5. What is the difference between sin and guilt? Can you express a salvation message without using the terms guilt, redemption and justification? These are all legal terms that may not be understood by your target people. How might you express the gospel in other ways?

Lesson Eleven

Fear based Worldviews

Technical Notes (28 minute lesson)

Story: 2293 words = 14 minutes

Lesson: 2351 words = 14 minutes

Questions: 7 questions = 30 minutes

Story

David was excited when he visited Mr. Li later that week. “Guess what?” he asked excitedly. “You’ll never guess what is going to happen.”

“No, I have no idea” Mr. Li smiled. “What is going on?”

“Mahmood wants to get married. He is going to ask for a girl’s hand in marriage.

“That’s interesting” Mr. Li commented. “I know nothing about Muslim marriages.”

“Well you had better. They have invited you to come to their house tonight.”

“Really, what are they going to do?”

“I don’t know, but Mahmood’s father has asked specifically for you.”

“Are you also invited?”

“He didn’t mention me. He just said that he wants you to come to his house tonight, right after the afternoon prayer time.”

“OK, I will arrange some time off. I am supposed to do rounds in the hospital this evening to make sure that everything is done. I will ask Ahmed. He is now taking more and more responsibility.”

That evening Mr. Li dressed in his best clothes, and took the bus across town to Mahmood’s house. When he arrived a crowd of men was gathering. All of them looked very somber, and all of them were very well dressed. Mahmood’s father took Mr. Li around the circle, and introduced him to some of the guests. Many of them recognized Mr. Li from the welcome back party several weeks before.

“To night we are going to go and ask for a bride for Mahmood” someone told Mr. Li. “Most of us will just be there to represent the family. The leaders of the tribe will do all the discussing.” Mr. Li suddenly felt better. At least he would not be called upon. But he was excited to be a part of this event. There were many different people there. Several mullahs from the mosque were there, as were a couple of doctors, some lawyers and a

politician. Others were businessmen or important members of the larger family. Mr. Li was the only foreigner. David was not present.

After they had all gathered, the men got into cars. Mr. Li found himself in the back of a German Mercedes Benz car. It was a very nice car, nicer than anything he had ever been in before. Every seat was packed with people, and they headed off all driving in a convoy. The drive took them about fifteen minutes. The cars pulled up before an apartment block and the men piled out. With Mahmood's father and some of the tribal elders leading them the men made their way into the apartment building. Mr. Li noticed people looking out their windows, and looking to see what was happening.

The group crowded into the stairwell and the leading men knocked on an apartment door. They could hear people rushing around inside. Obviously they had been spotted coming. The door opened, and a man inside welcomed them. They filed into the house, as the family rushed to provide enough chairs. Someone dashed out to borrow some chairs from the neighbors. Soon all the men were sitting on the chairs and coffee was served. The men visited together, drank sweet tea, then more coffee. Mahmood's father introduced everyone in the group, mentioning who they were and what their job was. Mr. Li was introduced as friend of the family, from China, working at the hospital.

After the second cup of coffee was served, the men's discussion moved to politics and world news. The evening wore on, and nothing special was happening. Finally the third cup of coffee arrived, and the men prepared to go. They rose, said goodbye to their hosts and started for the door. At the door, Mahmood's father shook the hand of their host. "Thank you for your hospitality."

"You have honored us with your visit." The man replied.

"May God bless you and your house" Mahmood's father replied.

"And your house" the man replied.

"There was one other thing" Mahmood's father replied. "We would like to ask for your daughter's hand in marriage for our son."

The man smiled. "You are honoring our family with your request. Please, let us discuss this."

All of the men returned to their seats. "Which one is Mahmood?" the man asked. "When Mahmood was identified, he was carefully looked over."

"Have you finished school?"

"He has finished his secondary school, and one year of university" Mahmood's father replied proudly.

"Have you prepared a house?"

"We have a wonderful apartment prepared. It has a bedroom, sitting room and kitchen. Our family has furnished everything." All of the men nodded in agreement.

"What about work. Does Mahmood have work?"

"Yes, he works with Abdullah over there. He is an engineer. Mahmood will continue his studies next year, and his employment with Abdullah."

"I would like my daughter to decide if she will marry this man" the girl's father continued. He nodded to one of the young men standing in a doorway. A few minutes later a very pale, and nervous girl entered the room. She was strikingly beautiful, well

dressed, and looked only to her father. He indicated Mahmood. "This young man is asking for you. Are you prepared to marry?"

"Her eyes dropped to the floor and then rose to look into Mahmood's eyes. Obviously they knew one another. She smiled shyly, then dropped her eyes and raised them only to her father. "Yes, I am ready to marry."

"And to this man?"

"As you choose father."

"You may go" he motioned for her to leave.

"What about the dowry?" Mahmood's father asked.

"What would you like?"

"The family is asking four thousand dollars, plus clothing and gold for the bride." At this the men turned to each other in amazement. "Four thousand?" they whispered. This was apparently a lot of money. "You are an honorable family," the man continued. "You have many well placed men, I'm sure four thousand is nothing to a family such as yourself." Several of the men muttered under their breaths; if every bride cost four thousand, then the family would soon be broke.

After some negotiations the tribal leaders settled on two thousand dollars dowry, a new wardrobe for the girl, and a half kilogram of gold. The latter surprised Mr. Li, for it the gold would be quite expensive. Eventually everyone shook hands with everyone, and they prepared to go.

"Before you leave, we must drink coffee to seal the agreement." The girl's father insisted. Small coffee cups were circulated and the men each downed the 1/3 cup before passing the cups back to their host who refilled them and passed them on to others.

It was several months before the wedding took place. Mr. Li visited Mahmood's family several times, and was present when the engagement party took place. It was a great celebration, as the girl was not from the immediate tribe, but a related one. The event signaled stronger relations between the two tribes.

On the day of the wedding, Mahmood's father invited Mr. Li to be present during the preparations. He arrived early in the morning as the men were preparing to slaughter several sheep. The sheep arrived in the back seat of someone's car, and were taken up onto the flat roof of the building. The four men ate a little bread and drank tea while they decided what they should do. Then Mr. Li accompanied the men upstairs where the sheep were kept, and brought them down to the side of the street to be killed. One man produced a knife, and looked around to see which way he should face. Once they had determined which direction Mecca was, the sheep were faced in that direction, and one by one their throats were slit, while the man said "In the name of Allah, the compassionate and merciful."

The second man took the dead sheep and made a small hole in the skin. Then he started blowing air into the hole. Slowly the sheet started to expand. Mr. Li watched in amazement as the sheep grew larger and large. Eventually the man stopped and went to the next sheep and started doing the same. Suddenly Mr. Li understood. The air had forced the sheep's skin to come off of the body. The men now skinned the sheep and hung them up to drain. Then they opened the body cavity and took out all of the innards.

They looked around with worried looks and hurriedly placed them in a plastic bag. Once all of the guts were in the bag, they rushed to one of the cars. Mr. Li jumped in with two of the men and they sped off. One man remained to continue working with the sheep.

Mr. Li wondered where they were going. They drove out of the city and along a narrow road into the desert. Finally they turned off the road onto a dirt track. "There's a good place." One of them suggested. "Too close to the road" the other one answered. They continued driving another ten minutes. "How about over that small embankment?" one of them asked. They stopped the car and removed a shovel from the trunk. After a shallow whole had been dug, they dropped the large plastic bag into it and covered it with dirt.

"Why didn't we just throw the bag into the big garbage dumpster in town?" Mr. Li asked. "Why did you bring it all the way out here?"

The men exchanged glances. "Well, it's because of the women." One answered. Mr. Li waited for an explanation. He looked from one to the other. "The women do stuff" the other man explained. They take the insides of the sheep and make spells, or medicine to affect people."

Mr. Li looked puzzled. "Isn't medicine good?"

"Not in this case. They can put a spell on you, or make you sick. There are many things they can do if they have animal parts. So we get rid of the parts as fast as possible, where no women will find them."

As they drove back to the house Mr. Li sat in the back seat. He wondered about what had taken place. "If a woman makes a spell, is there anything that will protect you?"

"This" one of the men said, picking up a small Qur'an from off of the car dashboard. "This will protect you. You carry it in your pocket."

"Or" the other man added "on the dash of your car. It protects us from accidents."

Mr. Li was surprised. He had seen many Qur'ans lying around but he had never realized that people thought of them as protection.

"Is there anything else?" He asked.

"There are lots of things that can protect you. But you have to go to someone who has the power. See that car over there?" Mr. Li nodded. "See underneath the car. There is a small child's shoe hanging down?" Mr. Li had seen this several times but wasn't sure what it meant. "The person with power had made the shoe powerful, so it will protect the driver from hitting a small child."

"Really?"

"Yes, that is why the sign of a hand is used. The hand with an eye drawn in the middle."

"I've seen that. What does that mean?"

"It protects you from the evil eye."

"The evil eye! What is that?"

"If someone looks at you with jealousy in their eye, a curse can be put upon you. Or perhaps the spirits become jealous of you if you have something nice."

"That's why we like the color green" the other man explained. "It helps keep the evil eye away."

Mr. Li was surprised at how superstitious these men were. He hadn't realized it until this day. "You mentioned spirits. Do spirits harm you?"

"Yes, spirits can do many things to you. They can trip you and throw you to the ground while you are walking."

"Or" the other man added "They can sit on you at night and choke you."

"Sometimes" the first man added "They make you very nervous."

"Have you seen this?"

"Yes, my sister was attacked by demons!"

"Really" Mr. Li said. "What happened?"

"She threw out the water."

Mr. Li was very puzzled. "What does that mean?"

"You know, she threw out water."

"So? I don't understand."

The first man looked exasperated. "Before water hits the ground you must say 'In the name of Allah' or the demons will jump up from the ground and attack you. Everyone knows this."

"I've never heard of this" Mr. Li responded.

"Don't the demons attack you in China?" The man asked. "What do you say when you urinate on the ground? How do you keep from being attacked?"

"We don't have this problem."

The two men exchanged puzzled glances. "Perhaps it is because your country is a desert country. Perhaps it is only desert spirits who do this."

By this time they had arrived back at the house, and preparations were being made for the wedding. A large tent was erected, and a truck load of plastic chairs were arranged around the tent. The men then went inside to change into their best clothing. By this time a large group of men from the tribe gathered. With Mahmood and his closest cousins leading the way, the men began got into cars and the back of pickup trucks. They drove to near the girl's house. Once they had assembled, they began to walk together towards the house. The men broke out into singing. It was a happy occasion. They were coming to get the bride and take her back to their home. She would become part of their tribe now, and her children would be the children of their tribe.

Lesson (A)

There are many people in the world today whose lives revolve around their interaction with the spirit world. They believe that gods and spirits exist in the universe, and they must live in peace with these unseen powers either by living quietly, or by appeasing these powers.

A great deal of missionary effort during this last century has been directed at reaching people who live in areas of the world where elements of fear-based worldviews are strong. In the past, missionaries entering the jungles of Africa, South America, and other isolated places were faced with people whose worldview had strong elements of fear. While their beliefs varied from place to place and culture to culture, the underlying principles were the same.

Based on their worldview, these people viewed the universe as a place filled with gods, demons, spirits, ghosts, and ancestors. Since man needs to live at peace with the powers around him, he often lives in fear of disrupting that peace and bringing the wrath of some power against him.

This fear can be based on a number of different things. For some it may be a fear of other men. In the jungle, tribal wars are endemic, with captives becoming slaves or, sometimes, a meal for cannibals. Whenever tribes encounter people from outside of their own group, they approach them with suspicion and fear. This fear of man can also be found in what we consider more advanced societies. It may be based on a fear of a dictator, a ruling class of people, or a government.

A second factor is fear of the supernatural. All around us events are taking place that might be seen as if the supernatural world is interacting with ours. If crops fail, then specific gods, demons or other forces are seen as responsible. If sickness comes, then other gods, demons or other forces are responsible. If a tribe fails in battle, it is because of the activity of a god or demon. Sickness is often viewed as a god reaping revenge. Everything in life, even romance, is somehow attributed to the activities of gods, demons or other forces.

In the western world with their worldview being made up of guilt and innocence, there is no room for the supernatural. Most secular westerners view nature as having natural laws that must be followed. Everything is predictable, scientific, and logical. Miracles do not exist. If something happens that seems to be a miracle, then western secular people assume it is because of some element that we don't really understand.

Some western Christians bring this view into Christianity, and try and explain everything in life based on immutable laws. Thus they struggle to understand people who live in an open universe not controlled by comprehensible laws. But many people living in fear-based cultures have no clear distinction between the natural and supernatural. While westerners think in terms of science and psychology, the animist thinks in terms of the forces that affect their lives.

The struggle that animists face is simply one of needing power. Using their voodoo, charms, and other methods they seek to gain control over other people and over the controlling powers of the universe. The paradigm that these people live in is one of fear versus power. Everything is expressed in these terms, including moral issues which are expressed and enforced in terms of power.

At the end of the 19th century, Dr. Tylor attempted to understand the difference in thinking between Europeans and peoples living in Africa and South America. In his writings he coined the word 'animism' from the Latin word *anima* for 'soul.' He saw the animistic worldview as interpreting everything from a spiritual philosophy rather than a materialistic philosophy. Many sociologists of Tylor's era saw mankind moving from an ancient worldview based on the supernatural to a modern worldview based on science

and reality. Thus they viewed the western guilt/innocence worldview as being more 'advanced' than the animistic fear/power worldview.

While many westerners think this way, the Bible demonstrates that monotheism or the belief in one God predated primary religions. (Romans 1:18-23, and Genesis 3-6)

As the answer to fear is power over the things that bring fear, most people living with a strong fear/power worldview are striving to find way to overpower the things that bring fear.

This power can be understood in many ways: physical, political, economic, social, and religious. The secular western worldviews tends to regard all power as originating from within the material world ... in contrast, animistic worldviews see such powers not only as being real within the physical world but as having their primary origin outside the visible world."

In this way, those whose lives operate in the fear-power paradigm often see themselves living in a physical world that co-exists and is influenced by unseen powers. These powers may be present in people or animals, or even in inanimate objects like trees or hills. In some cultures, powers may be perceived in personal terms such as we would use for living beings. These powers are often regarded as having their own particular character, feeling, and ability to relate to others, and often even have a will of their own. Like people, they may be angered, placated, or turned to in time of need.

Power is an important concept in fear-based cultures. In the Pacific Islands it is often called 'mana,' while the Iroquois of North America call it 'orenda,' which particularly refers to the mystic power derived from a chant. The Inuit (Eskimos) have the notion of 'sila,' a force watching and controlling everything. The Chinese have the concept of 'fung shui,' or the powers within the earth and sea. In folk Islam the term 'baraka' (blessing) sometimes embraces some of these concepts.

In most fear-power worldviews the main way of dealing with a power is to establish rules to protect the unwary from harm and procedures to appease those powers that are offended. These rules and procedures are generally referred to as *taboos*. Taboos come in the form of things like special people, forbidden or unclean foods, sacred objects, special acts or rituals, and special names. Appeasements are usually made in the form of sacrifice or dedication to the invisible powers.

In order to deal with these powers, rituals are established which people believe will affect the powers around them. Rituals are performed on certain calendar dates, at certain times in someone's life (rites of passage) such as birth, puberty, marriage or death, or in a time of crisis.

In order to appease the powers of the universe, systems of appeasement are worked out. They vary from place to place. Some civilizations offer incense while some offer a

chicken or even their children as sacrifices. However it is done, a system of appeasement based on fear is the norm for their worldview.

Wherever this system of appeasement comes into being, religious persons come to the forefront to control these systems. In some cases they are known as priests. In other cases they are known as witch doctors, or shamans. Whatever their title, their role is the same. They are the ones who hold power. Often they are the only ones who understand the needs of the gods or demons, and they are the ones through whom the demons or gods communicate.

In every fear-based worldview, the pattern is much the same. The witch doctor, priest, or shaman controls people through the use of fear. They are very effective in their roles, and as a result, whole cultures and people groups are held in their iron grip.

As missionaries have entered these areas, they have often found themselves involved in a power struggle. Shamans, priests, and witch doctors hold considerable spiritual power. It is real power, backed by the satanic world. Satan and his hosts are determined to keep fear-based cultures in their grip. In almost every case, a power struggle develops when missionaries confront fear-based worldviews.

In the past, many missionary have avoided power confrontations and have opted to preach a guilt-based Gospel message. In many of these worldviews, there is some understanding of guilt, and people have responded to the Gospel. Often that response also includes an invitation to a better economic lifestyle, better education, or healthcare. In many African nations, there is only a small mix of guilt-based worldview, and thus Christianity has impacted only part of the lives of those who follow Christ. One missionary described it this way: he said. "Christianity was widespread, but only a centimeter deep." This is a typical situation that arises when people respond to only one aspect of the Gospel, in this case the guilt aspect of the Gospel.

Today many Christian missionaries are learning to share the Gospel in such a way that it makes sense to those living in a fear-based worldview. Missionaries are sharing stories from the Bible and are bringing people to the conclusion that the power that is available through Christ is greater than the powers of darkness. Missionaries are sharing from God's Word, demonstrating God's power, and living out their Christian lives for all to see. As they have boldly preached and confronted the powers of the enemy, people in these cultures have begun turning from darkness to light.

As a result, today in Africa, South America, and East Asia there are large numbers of people who have come to Christ from out of a fear-based worldview. However, as many African worldviews have a strong mix of honor and shame, the Gospel is still not addressing all of the areas of people's lives.

Fear-based cultures are not limited to the animistic areas of the world. Some westerners have said that even though they were raised in a Western culture, their coming to Christ had more to do with the fear-power paradigm than guilt and innocence. In our world

today, many children grow up in an atmosphere of fear. A drunken father or an abusive parent causes them to live in great fear. One man said that as a child he went to bed every night afraid for his life. His father used power and fear to control the home and would often come home drunk and beat his wife and kids. As a result, this man found that he did not relate to the guilt-innocence message of Christians but rather to Christ's work on the cross to deal with our fear. In this way, Christians have found that they can relate to those from abusive backgrounds or even those who have lived under the fear-power paradigm of communism.

From the Garden of Eden, we see that the influence of sin brought more than guilt upon mankind. It also brought fear. This fear is very real to many people in the world today. Some worldviews can be described as being almost totally fear-based. Many other worldviews mix aspects of fear-based worldview with the other building blocks such as guilt and shame. Some elements of a fear-based worldview are even present in today's Western world where people may live in an atmosphere of fear. It may be from an abusive parent or as a result of consulting psychics and dabbling in the occult. Many Westerners are very uncomfortable with breaking a mirror or observing a black cat crossing their path. To some people these are very serious events, while others laugh them off. While it may not be unimportant to some, fear and power are fundamental to many people's worldview. Other people live in fear of terrorists or local criminals. They barricade themselves in their homes behind multiple locks, and keep guns or bats close at hand. While this may be necessary to live in their location, we as Christians have a duty to share the love and grace available through Christ in such a way that people in a fear based worldview can clearly understand them.

The following stories illustrate what you might face in some circumstances:

As the missionaries drew near to the village, the sound of drums could be heard. Drawing closer, they could see a large group of painted people dancing and writhing. A man approached the missionaries and explained that they could not go further. The village was doing a sacred rite to improve the economy and bring more trade to the area. They were escorted away and not given the opportunity to share their Gospel presentation. Later the missionaries heard that a human sacrifice had been offered to the spirits that day.

In another situation missionaries arrived in a village when a rain-making ceremony was about to begin. They were invited to watch. A black bull was led to the edge of the village where it faced the direction from where the rain would come. The animal's throat was cut and it fell over on its left side, to the delight of all. This indicated that the sacrifice was acceptable. The men then cut up the meat and cooked it. As the meat was cooking, an old man began to shout out a prayer to the spirits for rain. Soon everyone joined in. After the meat was eaten, the shouting turned into dancing. The villagers danced all afternoon until the rain came. It rained so heavily that everyone had to run for shelter. Did the rituals bring the rain? To the natives, this was the obvious conclusion, and there was no way that the missionaries could convince them otherwise.

In another situation, a young boy was walking through the village. Suddenly he was thrown to the ground. He struggled to get up, but a force was holding him down. When people saw him, some rushed to him, and others ran to the mosque to bring the Islamic mullah. A passing missionary happened onto scene. He offered to help, but the people said they had already sent someone for the Mullah, and paid him. When the Mullah arrived, he began to recite verses from the Qur'an. Eventually, after almost an hour of chanting, the demon gave up and let the boy go. The people were all impressed with the power that the Mullah held.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. Most fear-based worldviews deal with gods, demons, spirits, ghosts, and ancestors. List some ways that fear-based worldview impacts society around you.
2. Another aspect of fear-based worldviews, is fear of other people? How is this demonstrated in the culture around you?
3. Fear-based worldviews often give way to fatalism or fanaticism. If something fails it is because the spirit world or fate is against you. Is this expressed in anyway in your culture or in your target culture?
4. What do people do to gain power over the things that bring fear into their lives? Is there a way that Christ answers or fulfills this?
5. What is the difference between the "fear of the Lord" and the fear in a fear-based worldview?
6. Discuss among yourselves how you would deal with someone who is bothered with evil spirits, such as the boy in the lesson, who was being held onto the ground. How do you explain the power that the Mullah had? Think of who represented a greater power. The Mullah or the village demon?
7. How would you deal with someone who is obviously demon possessed? What is the basis for each of your actions?

Lesson Twelve

Shame-based Worldviews

Technical Notes (37 minutes lesson)

Story A	397 words = 3 minutes
Lesson A	1691 words = 10 minutes
Question Set A	5 questions = 20 minutes
Story B	1063 words = 6 minutes
Lesson B	3044 words = 18 minutes
Question Set B	5 questions = 10 minutes

Story

David's taxi screeched to a halt. Lying in the middle of the street was a teen-age girl, dying. She had been shot in the head four times. Just then her brother walked across the street with two policemen and stated, "There she is. I killed her, because she was in an immoral situation with a man." David was shocked. His face was pale and his hands shook until his taxi dropped him at the hospital. A few minutes later he was in Mr. Li's room together with Zay'id. "I cannot go on living here in this country." He complained. "These people are barbarians. How can a young man kill his sister? These people are murderers!"

Zay'id smiled. "Are you calling me a barbarian?"

"How can a boy kill his sister?"

"It was an honor killing. She had dishonored the entire family. His family asked him to do it."

David looked at him with uncomprehending eyes. "His family?" he asked. "His entire family was behind it?"

"Yes, it is the law in our country. The young man is innocent. He did not commit murder, he only preserved the honor of his family."

"This is absurd," David protested. "

"Let me tell you a story from my tribe" Zay'id said gently, sitting down on the bed. "Some years ago a cousin of mine, a beautiful young girl ran away from home. We didn't know where she was. Some weeks later our family learned she had married someone from another religion. Everyone in our family was furious. The police imprisoned the girl so that she would be protected from us. Our family met, and our grandmothers taunted her brothers and father. "How long do we need to keep our heads to the ground in shame?

Won't you do something to cleanse the shame from our tribe so we can raise our heads and live in honor once again?" Then our family agreed to pay the police a \$50,000.00 guarantee that we would not hurt her and she was released into our custody. Within hours her father and brothers shot her thirteen times. The entire family was pleased that honor had been restored.

"No" David groaned, covering his ears. "I thought you people were all nice people. I thought I liked it here."

"What has changed?" Mr. Li asked gently.

"Everything" David protested. "This is all wrong. It's wrong and evil."

"I think it has to do with culture" Mr. Li said. "Some cultures are more sensitive to shame than other cultures."

"Shame? What is this about shame?" David asked. "It was wrong."

"That's exactly what I mean. The Muslims see it as shame, you see it as wrong. But both are looking at the same thing. I believe that we are going to have to learn a lot more about shame and guilt as we seem to be disagreeing on this subject quite often."

"Is this really an important topic?" David asked.

"Yes, you explain the gospel as God dealing with their guilt. Zay'id sees it as God dealing with his shame."

"Why would God deal with his shame? Guilt is all that matters. Shame is what others think of you."

"I believe it is more than that. Let's ask God to show us more about this topic this week."

Lesson (A)

Many Western missionaries are exasperated when ministering to Muslims because they seem to have no sense of right and wrong. Murdering your own child is incomprehensible to them. The Western missionary may feel totally defeated if Muslims don't feel they have broken God's law and thus do not feel any need for salvation or a savior. Christ's death on the cross seems futile and meaningless. The Western evangelist, locked into his legal model of salvation, seems powerless to explain adequately the Gospel so that people like this will respond.

A western missionary shares the following:

"For many years, I was one of those missionaries. Guilt-innocence perspective dictated all of my thinking and actions. I grew up in a world where everything was right and wrong, black and white. I was not afraid of anything, and I was not concerned with honor in any way. I really didn't care what people thought of me or my family. We were Christians, which meant that we were right, and others were wrong. However, I soon discovered that not everyone in the world operates this way. Over the years I began to realize that Middle Easterners and Middle Eastern society were operating in an entirely different dimension. Guilt did not have the same power and influence as it did in the West. While they were aware of guilt, it didn't have the same strong connotations for them as it had for me.

If a policeman pulled me over, I would immediately feel guilty, thinking that perhaps I had done something wrong. But when my Middle Eastern friends were pulled over,

they didn't display any sign of guilt. They talked boldly to the policeman, and even argued loudly with him over the issues at hand.

It was only after many years of living in a Muslim culture that I realized that people around me were not operating on guilt versus innocence. Nor were they operating in the fear versus power paradigm of which I had heard about from missionaries living in Africa. Rather, I discovered that these Arabs were living with a worldview where the dominant pattern was shame versus honor.

When I would visit my friends, I would try to act correctly, and they would try to act honorably, not shamefully. I was busy trying to learn the rights and wrongs of their culture. But somehow my framework of right versus wrong didn't fit what was actually happening. The secret wasn't to act rightly or wrongly in their culture. It wasn't that there was a right way and a wrong way of doing things. The underlying principle was that there were honorable and dishonorable ways of doing things.

Everywhere I moved in the Middle Eastern culture there were things that pointed to honor or shame. What chair I chose to sit in, who entered the door first, the cups of coffee I drank, the way I expressed myself in Arabic, the very way I walked and held myself, all communicated to others around me 'my place' in the world. The cultures of the Middle East are filled with thousands of tiny nuances that communicate messages about shame and honor."

Shame in the west has to do with a lack of self-esteem or feelings of guilt. For us shame stems from abuse where people, especially children are violated and fail to learn trust. This is quite different from the shame-based societies of the east where shame and fear of shame are used as controlling forces in people's lives.

Western parents teach their children to act rightly. If they don't, they learn that feeling guilt is the proper response. In a shame-based culture however, children are taught to act honorably, and if they don't, feelings of shame are the proper response. But it goes farther than just feelings. Shame and honor are positions in society, just as being right and justified is a position in Western culture.

In the West, young people are free to act as spontaneously as they want, as long as they are within the framework of right and wrong. They can be loud, boisterous and happy as long as they don't break things or abuse others. The rule in the West is "As long as you don't hurt someone else or their property, you are generally ok."

Young people in a Muslim setting are different. Wherever they go, they represent their families and tribes. Young people are not free to act as they want. They must always act honorably so that the honor of their family and tribe is upheld. If they damage someone else's property, it is bad because it brings shame on their own people, not primarily because it offends the victim. If no one knows who did it, there is no shame, or feeling of guilt. They feel guilt for bringing shame on their own people, but not for offending a third party.

And so it is that if when most Muslims acted shamefully the family or tribe will react against them. Shameful deeds are covered up. If they can't be covered up, they are avenged. It is the unwritten rule of the community. The whole concept of shame controlling society can be traced back to the early pre-Islamic and Nabataean culture which existed in Arabia long before Islam arrived. This shame based code of conduct, still much in existence today, affects not only the way individuals act, but also the actions of entire nations.

The issue of shame and honor makes a great discussion topic. You might start by asking people from shame-based cultures what things they consider to be honorable or shameful, and how can you tell if someone is honorable. Many of these are similar from culture to culture. For instance, in Asia honor is sometimes demonstrated by silence or by speaking only wise and careful things. Often the speech of wise people is full of proverbs and parables. The more proverbs a person knows, the wiser he appears in the eyes of others. This is true across most shame-based cultures.

However, there are also distinct differences between cultures. For example if someone is badly shamed in an Arab culture and the shame cannot be hidden, then it is avenged, and the person responsible for the shaming is killed, or a payment of money is negotiated. In many eastern cultures, if a shame cannot be hidden, the way of escape is suicide. While there are differences, there are also similarities.

In order for shame-based cultures to work, shame and honor are usually attached to something greater than the individual. Honor is almost always centered around a group. This can be the immediate family, the extended tribe, or in some cases, as large as an entire nation, as was demonstrated by kamikaze soldiers in Japan during World War II.

In most Middle Eastern cultures, honor is wrapped up with one's tribe. Everyone grows up within a tribal concept. If someone is from the Beni Hassan tribe, he or she thinks, acts, and dresses as a Beni Hassan. Every action reflects on the honor of the Beni Hassan tribe. If tribal members act honorably, the Beni Hassan tribe is honored. If they act shamefully, the whole tribe is shamed. If the act is vile enough, such as rejecting their religion, or a girl becoming pregnant out of wedlock, the Beni Hassan tribe will react and execute the offender, even though he or she is a member of their own tribe, and perhaps even their immediate family. Thus the honor of the tribe is restored.

Many years ago an Arab soldier's gun accidentally discharged and killed his companion in the army. After serving seven years, he was released on condition that he leave the country, as the dead soldier's family threatened him, wanting revenge for their son's death. He lived for nearly twenty years in the United States but decided to return one day to see his family. When it was learned that he had returned, several young people from the dead soldier's family, (some of whom had not been born at the time of the killing) surrounded the house and riddled his body with bullets. Their family honor was restored, and the shame removed.

When someone shames a person from another tribe, tribal warfare could result, and often only the skillful intervention of a third party ends the strife. Arab lore is full of stories of how wise and skillful men have mediated in difficult situations. In fact, many national rulers gain their fame and reputation from their skills at ending tribal strife.

In the Middle East two methods are recognized. First, a skillful ruler, through diplomatic efforts and displays of great wisdom, can end disputes. Solomon's dealings with the two mothers who claimed the same baby displayed the kind of wisdom that Arabs appreciate and desire in their rulers. The second kind of ruler crushes all of the tribes and by force makes them submit to himself. Peace may then rule, but once the controlling power is removed, old animosities return. This was illustrated in the Balkans conflict where the domination of communism brought about a measure of peace. Once freedom returned, however, old conflicts and animosities flared again.

The storytellers who frequent the coffeehouses of the Middle East excel in telling stories of both kinds of rulers and heroes, especially heroes who can effectively deal with shame and restore honor. This is very different from the entertainment styles of the West where the hero is always in the right, and defeats those who promote evil. This is because in the Western worldview, people have hope that in the midst of a crooked and perverse world, right still reigns and will overcome evil.

Conclusion

While all worldviews have certain elements of shame, there are worldviews that are primarily built on the element of shame versus honor. Just as guilt, fear and shame came upon mankind in the Garden of Eden; guilt, shame, and fear exist in all worldviews today. What makes a shame-based worldview unique is that its people have a much greater mix of shame and honor in their worldview than guilt and righteousness or fear and power.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion A

1. What do you think of this statement: "It doesn't matter what people think, it only matters if it is right or wrong? Does this describe your culture? If not, how would you describe your culture in terms of honor & shame?
2. What happens in your culture when someone is badly shamed? Perhaps they fail a test, or perhaps they fail society? How do they and others respond?
3. In your culture, what does honor center around? Eg. individuals, families, tribes, religion, nation, gender, politics
4. In your target culture, if someone is in a place of dishonor, how can their shame be removed and honor restored? Give examples.
5. Assessing Worldview. Use the table of decision making issues to help determine worldview makeup. Remember that there are no right answers and no better answers. For each decision assess how much guilt, shame or fear thinking went into (or will go into) making the decision. The answers for each decision should add up to 10. For instance, a decision not to rob when money is need might be based on guilt - 7, shame - 2, fear - 1. The total must equal 10.

Guilt/Innocence: Decision made on basis of right and wrong, or what felt right or seemed good. The decision may also be made on the basis of not wanting to do the wrong thing.

Shame/Honor: Decision made on the basis of building or protecting the honor of self, family or group, or avoiding shame to self, family or group. Decision was made with others in mind, and what they would think.

Fear/Power: Decision made on the basis of fear, or finding a way to overcome things you were afraid of. For example, perhaps you pursued a specific career because of fear of financial failure.

Major Life Decision	G	S	F
Which school to go to			
What subject to major in			
What career to pursue			
Decision not to rob when money is need			
Person to marry			
What to spend on			
Where to live			
Car to drive			
How/where to educate kids			
What to do with elderly parents			
Totals			

Add up the totals in each column. They should equal 100 when combined. The totals of each column represent the percentage of guilt, shame, and fear in the worldview being assessed. The above assessment form is only an approximation and is not intended to be a professional tool for analyzing worldviews.

Story B

Every night David would drop by the post-office to collect mail for himself and other members of his missions team. They all shared the same postbox, and it was David job to get the mail, since he lived the closest to the post office. Every night he would descend the stairs from the hillside where he lived, make his way through the market and then go into the post office. Every night he would greet the soldier who was there to guard the post office and make sure that it was kept clean.

That week, however, David noticed that there was no guard. Instead, a middle-aged man in a business suit sat in the soldier's chair. David greeted him and went to his post-box. The businessman watched him closely, and leaned back in his chair to watch him take out his mail. As he was leaving it seemed to David that the businessman wanted to say something, but nothing was said as they passed each other. David thought nothing about this until the following evening when the businessman was back, sitting in the soldier's chair.

As David entered, the businessman rose, greeted David and shook his hand. David greeted him back, and then proceeded to his mailbox. The businessman followed.

“Excuse me” the man said “But do you get your mail from box 1936?”

“Yes” David asked, puzzled about what might be wrong. The door of the post box looked strong and OK. Nothing seemed to be wrong.

“Could I talk with you a few moments?” The man asked. He motioned towards the two plastic chairs by the doorway. “I’m sorry to trouble you” the man began. “I am not a soldier. I don’t work here. I asked the soldier if I could be here, because I wanted to see who gets mail from that postbox.”

David looked confused, so the man continued. “I work inside the post office. My job is to open mail and read it, to check what is going in and out of the country. I’ve been reading the mail that people get in that post box and I have some questions.”

David tried not to look alarmed. This man obviously worked for the secret police, or intelligence agency. “I will try and answer your questions” he said meekly.

“Who is Isaiah?”

“What?”

“Who is Isaiah? I’ve seen people quote him in letters, and I wondered who he was.”

“Oh!” David was surprised. “He is one of the prophets.”

“The prophets? I thought all the writings of the prophets were lost.”

“No, the writings of the prophets have been preserved. We have all the prophets from Moses to Jesus.”

The policeman looked puzzled. “All of the letters are in English. Do these writings exist in my language?”

“Yes” David brightened. “I can get you a book with the writings of the prophets, plus the Injil. (Gospels) Would you like a copy?”

David arranged to meet the policeman, who introduced himself as Mohammad, the next evening. He rushed home and prepared his present and the next day delivered it to him.

Several days later the policeman was back at the post office waiting for David. He explained that he was having trouble understanding what he was reading, so he and David arranged to meet several times a week to discuss the Bible.

One night, several weeks later, Mohammed arrived at David’s house, obviously agitated. After the traditional cup of tea, Mohammed closed the windows to David’s living room, and sat close beside him, speaking almost in a whisper. He was afraid and said “The ‘walls may have ears.’” As they huddled together he explained that he had a problem with a Bible passage. His reading of the Bible had progressed smoothly until he had arrived at I Samuel 2:8. It was Hannah’s song of praise to God for giving her baby Samuel. When Mohammed arrived at verse 8, he found something that he couldn’t cope with. Hannah said “He (God) raises the poor from the dust and lifts up the beggars from the dung hill;

He seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor.” (rendered from the Arabic Bible).

Mohammed threw the Bible down on the coffee table. “No,” he said emphatically. “This cannot be true. A beggar is a beggar, a prince is a prince. This is garbage.”

As David stared at Mohammed’s face, he suddenly saw a truth he had never seen before. This wasn’t garbage; this was the Gospel. I Samuel 2:8 described the Gospel in the terms of God taking us from the shame of sin and raising us to being joint heirs with Christ. He tried explaining it to Mohammed. “No” Muhammad protested. “You cannot move from shame to honor. If you are born the son of a thief, then you will be a thief. The daughter of a prostitute will be a prostitute. They do not become kings and queens.”

David was praying hard, asking God to provide him an answer for Muhammad’s questions.

“Do you like Australians?” David asked, startled that the words came out of his mouth.

“Yes, Australians are fine people.” Muhammad answered.

“Are they really?” David asked.

“Yes, I have an uncle who emigrated to Australia. He said that Australians are very good people.”

“What do you know about Australians?” David now knew why the Lord had put the question in his mouth.

“I don’t know much about them, why?”

“You should learn about the history of Australia. At one time it was a giant prison for England. That was where they sent all the thieves and prostitutes.”

“It cannot be” Muhammad gasped.

“But people change. Christians went there to reach the people, and today Australians are nice people. I agree. But they can change.”

This was too much for Muhammad. “I cannot believe this” he said, rising to leave. “Thank you for the tea.”

Several nights later Muhammad was back. “You were right” he said after they had sat down for another study. “I checked about the history of Australia, and you are right.” He looked amazed. “It really is possible for people to change. We Muslims always say that people cannot change.”

“Without God’s help, it really is very hard to change.” David smiled. “But with God all things are possible. Do you want to see where it tells us this in the Bible?”

Lesson (B)

Western culture has lost most of their understanding of shame and honor, but the Bible is filled with it. The Bible begins with man’s fall into shame and ends with His being anointed with glory and honor as the Bride of Christ.

All through the Bible, references are made to shame and honor in various forms. The Bible tells us to honor God, our parents, elders, Christian leaders, and government

leaders. It even talks about certain things being more honorable than others. In all, there are more than 190 references to honor in the Bible, while the various forms of the word 'guilt' are mentioned only forty times, and only seven of these are in the New Testament.

The Bible also addresses shame, mentioning it over one hundred times, but simply counting the word 'shame' is not enough. There are many underlying principles in the Bible that deal with shame and honor, and these demonstrate how God moves us from a position of shame to that of honor. The whole point of mentioning these numbers is simply to illustrate that shame and honor hold a place in the Bible alongside teachings about guilt and righteousness.

The main reason God allowed His people to fall into slavery in Egypt was to demonstrate to all the people of the world with a shame-based worldview that Jehovah God could raise his people from a position of shame in Egypt to one of honor among the nations. Leviticus 26:13 states, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt so that you would no longer be slaves to the Egyptians; I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to walk with heads held high."

This is the overall message of the Bible. It is not just the story of God redeeming His people (a legal thought), but it is also the story of God raising mankind from a position of shame to the ultimately honorable position of joint-heirs with Christ.

In his lesson we want to look at a number of places in the Scriptures that teach us how God is moving us from a position of shame to that of honor. The position of shame is described in the Bible in a series of ways: disgraced, defiled, naked, sick, poor, accursed, ignorant and so on. Each of these topics illustrates God's desire and power to move us from shame to honor.

Imagine someone who tries acting more honorable than he or she really is. People will laugh at him behind his back. One time a missionary asked about a neighbor man who stood on the street corner in a fancy suit every evening greeting people who were passing by. He was told that he wasn't as big a man as he made himself out to be. This man drove a Mercedes car, dressed in fine suit coats, and had four boys. He walked the streets very piously and in an honorable fashion, but everyone knew he was just a little man, holding a minor government position and had no special position in his tribe. He was not the big man he made himself out to be.

And so it is that we come to the message of grace in the Bible. God is the one who can elevate people from a position of shame to that of honor. No one can elevate himself. Everyone should know their place and must stay in it. The message of the Gospel is that God has the power and the desire to elevate man from his lowly position to a place of great honor. "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame." I Peter 2:6.

Each of the topics mentioned in this lesson make great conversation starters, Bible study material, or even sermon outlines. They are the kind of thing that those ministering to people from shame-based cultures should be well versed in.

God moves us from being defiled to being cleansed

Many Eastern religions have rituals of washings. Before a man can enter a Muslim mosque to pray, he must remove his shoes and wash. His shoes are symbols of the dirt that contaminates his life by living and walking in a defiled world. He removes his shoes and washes according to the age-old traditions and teachings of Islam. Then he can approach God in prayer, without shame.

In Muslim culture, shame and honor are attached to places and locations as well as to actions. Some places are more honorable than others. Some are more shameful. A man can pray at home or in the market, but it is better to pray at the local mosque as the mosque has greater honor. Holy sites have even greater honor, and the Ka'abah in Mecca is the most honorable of all.

Before picking up the Qur'an to read, a Muslim must wash his hands. Living in an evil world defiles his hands. After washing, he has removed the contamination that disqualified him from reading and hearing from God. Now he is deemed worthy.

After having relations with his wife, a Muslim man must bathe in order to be clean. If he does not, the very ground he walks on will become defiled. Once again, after ritual washing, he can approach God, but not before purification has occurred.

In most shame-based cultures the Christian can make an immediate connection between defilement and cleansing and the grace of God as revealed in the Bible. The Old Testament is full of this imagery:

In Exodus 30 we see that Aaron and his sons were to wash their hands and feet whenever they entered the tent of meeting or approached the altar; otherwise they would die. Their actions portrayed a picture of what was to come in Christ, who provided cleansing through the washing of the blood.

Leviticus 13 & 14 are about the cleansing of a leper. Remember that lepers were in a position of shame, even to the point of being isolated and having to go around crying out, "Unclean, unclean." Yet, in Leviticus 14 God provides a way of cleansing at the instigation of the priest, not of the leper. It is possible to make many comparisons between the cleansing of the leper and salvation.

Also in the Gospels, Jesus turned to the lepers to heal them, demonstrating God's desire to reach out to those in a place of shame and restore them.

In the Old Testament, blemished or defective animals were not permitted for sacrificial use. Items used for worship had to be anointed or consecrated. Unclean animals could not

be used. Jesus in Mark 7:18-23 challenged the Pharisees in their use and understanding of cleansing and dietary laws, affirming that man himself is unclean.

Man's sinful condition places in a position of defilement. The law was put in place not only to point out man's guilt and need of a Savior, but to also point out man's defilement and need for a Cleanser. Just as the Old Testament offerings drew attention to man's need for a sacrifice for sin, the acts of cleansing pointed out man's need for washing and purification from defilement.

Just as Christ's work on the cross once and for all removed our sin, it also, once for all, removed our defilement. "The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who were ceremonially unclean sanctifies them so they were outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God?" Hebrews 9:13, 14

Cleansing is fundamental to understanding grace. Mankind is unclean. It is not just that man is totally depraved; mankind is totally defiled.

If you use this paradigm, then New Testament stories about the cleansing of the lepers (Luke 5:12-14) and the Gentile woman who was defiled in the eyes of the Jews (Matthew 15:21-28) and the Jewish woman who bled for 12 years and was thus unclean for 12 years and unable to enter the temple (Mark 5:25-35) will become part of your teaching. These are the kinds of verses that speak loudly and clearly to people living in shame-based cultures, who need a Cleanser, a Savior, and a Redeemer.

From Naked to Clothed

In reinforcing our message of God's provision for shame, the illustration can be used of how God covers our nakedness and clothes us.

In the Garden of Eden, man's shame stemmed in part from man's nakedness. The New Testament tells us that our proper clothing is eternal, and that we groan and long to be clothed with it (II Corinthians 5:1-2). When Adam and Eve sinned, they lost their eternal life and immediately felt naked and exposed. Until we reach heaven and are clothed with our eternal clothing, we will be in a position of nakedness and shame. II Corinthians 5 is a very useful chapter in explaining the Gospel to those who are from a shame-based culture. Many of Paul's illustrations and the whole basis of his teaching in this chapter demonstrate to the reader how God will someday clothe us.

Nakedness and shame go together and can be a useful tool to use when sharing from the Scriptures. The story of our nakedness and shame starts in Genesis 3. Job tells us in Job 1:21 that we were born naked, and the picture can be drawn of our shame and nakedness right from birth.

The Old Testament law contains many references to nakedness and gives many rules concerning whom one could marry. From the Old Testament law it is obvious that there

can be many shameful relationships between people. Leviticus 18 is full of references to shameful relationships that were forbidden among God's redeemed people. The word used all through Leviticus 18 is "nakedness."

Isaiah also says, "I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."

In the New Testament, Jesus told the story of the prodigal son who returned home full of shame for what he had done. When his father welcomed him home, the first thing his father commanded was that a robe be brought for his son (Luke 15:22). In the same way, the first thing God does for his returning children is to raise them from a position of shame to a place of honor by covering us with the robe of righteousness.

The ultimate picture of God bearing our shame is found in Christ who was stripped of His clothing when He was hung on the cross. Roman prisoners were often hung naked on a cross, exposed for the scoffers to see and ridicule. Consequently, even in this, Christ bore not only our sin on the cross, but also our shame. Once for all, Christ died on the cross, bearing our shame so that we might be freed from shame as well as guilt.

There are many more references to nakedness and clothing, but in the final pages of the Bible, we are told how the believers will be clothed in heaven. At the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, we will come forth in our wedding garments. Right from Genesis to Revelation we see the unfolding of God's plan for man, starting with his nakedness and shame and clothing him with animal skins which represented the grace that would be provided by Christ on the cross.

From Expelled (from Eden and God) to Visited by God

In Muslim culture everyone knows how important it is to belong to a family or tribe. This is part of the 'group' mindset. Your group provides you with what you need in life. Everything from fellowship, money, opportunity, education, a spouse, and security is obtained through the group. A man without a group is in an impossible situation.

A Jordanian television series several years back dealt with the issues that arose when a man found himself in the shameful position of no longer having a family. The very act of being thrown out of your family is considered the ultimate shame. It is worsened in many countries when the expulsion story is announced in the newspaper so everyone knows that the person has been shamed.

Man was shamed when he was expelled from the Garden of Eden. The very act of expulsion added to man's shame. He was cast out of his home and away from the presence of his Father.

All through history man has lived separated from God. Even the Muslim can tell you that you cannot go into the presence of God, because God is honorable and you are in a position of shame.

The whole message of the Gospel revolves around the restoration of the relationship between God and man. Man is not in a position to elevate himself. Only God can restore the one who is ousted. Secondly, God used a Mediator. Mediators must be able to speak on equal terms with both God and us, and so Jesus became human, in order to mediate between us. It is only through the person of Jesus that a way is made so that our relationship with God can be restored. Through Jesus, man moves from being expelled to being accepted. We now have access to God's throne room. We are now called sons of God, and God will someday elevate us to the position of being a joint-heir with Jesus.

In John 17 Jesus prays to the Father and says these amazing words: *"I have given them the glory you have given me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."* He went on to explain that Jesus has bestowed on every believer the glory and honor that God the Father bestowed on his son Jesus. Our position now is that of a joint-heir. Once we are in heaven we will fully enter into our inheritance.

Some people can accept that God honored Jesus, because He was the Son of God and sinless and thus deserved honor. But the Bible says that Jesus has also glorified us and has given us the same honor. This honor is ultimately demonstrated in heaven where we are rewarded, honored, even to the place of being joint-heirs with Christ. The heir always has the ultimate honor in any tribe, and we are included in this honor.

From Weakness to Strength

The Bible makes numerous references to weakness. Man is in a weak condition, and often unable to help himself. He easily succumbs to sin and falls quickly into temptation. Many people want to be stronger, but lack the will power.

Isaiah tells us, "He gives strength to the weary, and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." Isaiah 40:29-31

Jesus, in his earthly ministry, displayed a kind of strength that is passed on to the believers. Jesus gives us strength to stand in the day of trial, strength to endure, and strength to withstand the enemy in Jesus' name.

Grace and strength are tied together in 2 Corinthians 12:9 when Paul says "But he (God) said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

Peter adds in I Peter 5:10 "And the God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast."

The message of God's grace includes the concept that God wants to move us from a place of weakness to a place of strength; not our own strength, but Christ in us, the hope of glory, who is our strength.

Conclusion

As you can see from the examples above, there are many ways of explaining the Gospel to people without using legal terminology. More topics are listed below. Perhaps you can add to them.

From dying to being raised
From sickness to being healed
From a place that is far from God to being indwelt by God's Spirit
From imprisoned in the flesh to being set free by the Spirit
From spiritually poor to having riches in God
From failure and falling short to being made complete in Christ
From being illegitimate children to being a child of God
From ignorant to being taught of God
From blind to seeing
From darkness to being enlightened by God
From stumbling to being strengthened & encouraged
From accused to being exonerated-represented
From cursed to being blessed
From tiredness to being renewed

From the Scriptures we can see that God is not in the business of shaming his followers. Rather, He is in the business of raising them to a place of honor. King David discovered this and recorded those wonderful words in Psalm 3:3, "You are the lifter of my head."

We see in Isaiah 57:15 that God "dwells in a high and holy place with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." James continues this thought with, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up." (James 4:10) God's action of lifting the humble is all part of the outpouring of His grace. Grace is far more than forgiveness. It also includes God's work of restoration and the lifting up and honoring of His followers.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. Read Leviticus 26:13. What do you think this verse tells us about shame and honor?
2. Is the concept of cleansing important in your culture? What parallels could you draw from Aaron's need to wash in Exodus 30, or the cleansing of lepers in Leviticus 13 & 14? How could you apply Hebrews 9:13, 14?
3. How important is clothing in your culture? What parallels can you draw between nakedness and shame, and fine clothing and honor? Use II Corinthians 5:1-2 and Isaiah 61:10, and the prodigal son in Luke 15.

4. Is belonging to a group or tribe an important part of your target culture? What stigma is put on people who are banished? What can you teach from this concept, using our expulsion from the presence of God? Use Genesis 3 and Ephesians 2:13,
5. Are there other ways you can think of illustrating the gospel truth that God wants to move us from a position of shame to a place of honor?

Lesson Thirteen

Clash of Worldviews

Technical Notes (22 minute lesson)

Story: 842 words = 5 minutes

Lesson: 2788 words = 17 minutes

Questions: 5 questions = 30 minutes

Story

David held a letter in his hands. Mr. Li and Zay'id sat across from him listening. "My parents are really worried about me. They have always been concerned about the Muslim country I live in."

"What is it that they are concerned about?" Mr. Li asked.

"Terrorists," David replied. "They are afraid of Muslim terrorists. They think that every Muslim is a terrorist."

"Can you not tell them that people here are like people everywhere in the world?" Zay'id asked.

"I've tried, but they are convinced that Muslims are basically bad people. I've even tried inviting them to visit me but they are too afraid."

Zay'id looked puzzled. "That is very interesting. My parents also think that Christians are bad people?"

"Really?" David looked surprised. "Why would they think that? Christians are almost all good people. There might be a few bad ones once in a while, but generally we are all pretty good people."

"That is not what Muslims believe."

"How can that be?"

“Muslims believe that America, Britain, Canada, and other countries are Christian countries.”

“I can see where they got that from. Our countries were founded on Christian principles, often by Christians, or at least nominal Christians who held good Christian principles.”

“Therefore” Zay’id continued “The problems you have in America are Christian problems.”

“Like what?”

“Alcoholism. Muslims do not drink alcohol.”

David looked puzzled.

“Pornography. This is a western problem. We don’t allow it in our countries.” Zay’id paused. “We don’t have homeless people. We don’t have prostitutes on the street. We don’t have drug addicts on our street. These are all Christian problems.”

“It’s not true” David protested.

“My people are not terrorists either.”

“You are right. But my parents think that everyone here is bad because they are Muslims.”

“And my parents think that the system in America is bad, because of the bad results it produces in society.”

David shook his head. “What a crazy world we live in.”

Zay’id was now getting excited. “When I was growing up, we heard that churches were bad places.”

“Really?” David was puzzled again. “How could that be.”

“We heard all sorts of stories about churches. We heard that Christians drowned babies in churches.”

“I can understand that. There are churches that baptize babies. Maybe it came from that.”

Zay’id eyes got big. “We heard that Christians ate human flesh and drank blood.”

“This I can understand” Mr. Li added. “They just didn’t understand the Lords Supper.”

“When I was a boy” Zay’id continued, “My friends and I heard about all kinds of sexual things that happened in churches. One night the Christians were having a party. I think it was called a New Years party. We sat outside the church, across the street and watched and listened. They were playing music, eating and drinking and having a party. Men and women were mixing together, and laughing and joking. Then around midnight they turned out the lights. We could see only a couple of candles glowing. The men and women were all together in a dark room. There were strange noises, like whisperings and groaning. It went on for twenty or thirty minutes. Later they turned the lights back on. There was no more laughter, and everyone went home without talking to their neighbors.” There was a long pause as David and Mr. Li imagined what Zay’id had seen. “Tell me that this wasn’t an orgy. I saw it with my own eyes.”

David shook his head sadly. “Zay’id, you saw a typical Christian New Years party. Christian men and women mix more freely than Muslims do. Then at midnight the pastor would have called them together to pray. They must have had a candle lit service. What you heard were men and women praying to God. It wouldn’t have been anything sexual.”

Zay’id looked from one to the other. “But what we saw...” he began. “To us it looked like bad things were happening. We told it all over the town. Everyone learned about it.”

“No wonder people throw stones at the church” David commented.

“Christians are also plotting to take over the world” Zay’id continued. “This is why America is invading countries. This is why they support the country of Israel. The Jews and the Christians are plotting to rule the world.” He looked triumphant. “We’ve heard that they have guns buried under churches, and that their young people go to special military training camps in the summer.”

David shook his head in disbelief.

“We’ve heard that Christians are training thousands of special missionaries to invade our countries and force Muslims to convert to Christianity. We’ve heard that they will first entice us with money, gifts, university scholarships, even women, if we will convert. But no true Muslim has ever left the faith. And if some weak person does, there are followers of Islam that will protect the honor of Islam and remove them.”

David held his head in his hands. “God please help us. How can we ever share the good news with these people?”

Lesson

In the last several lessons we have examined three models of worldviews. In each of these models there is a basic tension between two extremes. The three are:

Guilt <----□----> Innocence
Shame <----□----> Honor
Fear <----□----> Power

When analyzing cultures the important question is: “How are decisions arrived at?” This is a very useful tool for determining how much of each of these models are operating in any given culture.

While it is possible to find all three dynamics in most cultures usually one or two are more dominant. Some cultures, however, operate almost entirely within one major paradigm. Additionally, cultures and worldviews are constantly shifting. The shift may be slow or fast depending on the events of history.

For example, in western Canadian culture guilt and innocence played an almost exclusive role. Almost everyone makes decisions based on right and wrong. Shame and fear play a very small role. The roots of western Canadian worldview go back to the early pioneers who came to the land when it was empty. When the settlers arrived no one cared what family or tribe others came from. The desperately poor of Europe built their homes beside families from well to do European backgrounds. None of that mattered in the harsh new world. Those that worked hard, survived; those that did not, died in the cold Canadian winters. This shaped a worldview where hard work and doing things right were the most important elements. Family honor, old traditions, and fear of others were scoffed at. The harsh new world created a new man with a new worldview. But once a few generations passed, honor and shame began to grow in importance, although it still plays a very small role.

During the founding of the Roman Empire, the citizens of Rome operated almost entirely within a fear-power worldview, worshipping a pantheon of gods. As their civilization developed, they introduced the idea of law being higher than the emperor. With this one step they launched the concept of guilt and innocence as an important element in their worldview. As their civilization developed, they moved almost completely away from the fear-power worldview. However, as their empire expanded, they also slowly introduced into it, shades of the shame-honor worldview.

So worldviews are constantly changing. Older cultures, like the ones in rural China may be changing very slowly. Modern new cultures may shift more quickly, with different elements of guilt, shame, or fear rising to the prominence. In cultures that are in flux individual families and even individuals can have different worldviews.

As an example, in one family there may be an individual who is a western evangelical Christian with strong guilt-innocence thinking. A teenager in the same family may not quite see everything as so black and white and may be reluctant to accept things as being right or wrong. Rather, he or she wants to be seen as ‘cool’ and desires to act and dress in ways that make them accepted by other young people. To be anything less would be humiliating. At the same time, a third member of the family may follow the occult and consult psychics and horoscopes. He or she may see life as being influenced by the stars and occultic powers. Thus, in one family, you may have people who seem to be holding three completely different worldviews.

The mix of these in one family illustrates how this mix can exist in entire nations or people groups. Tribal people may be very aware of a shame-honor worldview, and still have a strong mix of fear and power. This is a very common mix in the world today, especially among more rural people.

Clash of Cultures

In many cases where strong guilt-innocence cultures have contacted strong shame-honor cultures, they have clashed. For example, the early settlers in North America could not understand or appreciate the North American native's perspective on life. In the end, many nomadic natives chose to die rather than face the shame of being forced to settle.

In North America in 1889, a young native prophet known as Wovoka gave a message from his home in the desert. His disciples sent it to all the native people across Western America. The message from their prophet simply urged the natives to "Dance everywhere. Keep on dancing. You must not ... do harm to anyone. You must not fight. Do right always." Soon village after village of native Sioux began to perform his "Ghost Dance" with its promise of a return to the old ways in a world from which whites would have been erased by a flood.

The dancing appalled and frightened the Americans and they asked the president in Washington for protection. Army troops fanned out to round up the Ghost dancers and to settle them land near military centers. Among the last to be caught was a group of about 350 Sioux natives under Chief Big Foot. They were led to a military camp at Wounded Knee Creek where they set up camp under a flag of truce. During a discussion a soldier was alarmed and fired his gun. More gunfire followed. When the firing ended, more than 150 native people, men, women, and children, lay dead. Others fled or crawled off wounded. Chief Red Cloud said of the incident, "We had begged for life, and the white men thought we wanted theirs."

Guilt-based cultural values dictated that the natives must obey the law and live on reservation land. Fear-based cultural values said that the Ghost Dance would change the situation. Sadly, it ended with a massacre.

In 1878 a band of nomadic natives left their reservation to return to their old lands "where their children could live." Overtaken by soldiers, the native chief said, "We do not want to fight you, but we will not go back." Clearly the shame of living on the reservation was too much for them. As they had broken the law by leaving, and now refused to return, the troops opened fire. Some natives escaped and continued their journey. They met up with soldiers at Fort Robinson where they faced an ultimatum. "Go south or go hungry." Court records tell us what happened next. "In the midst of the dreadful winter, with the thermometer 40 degrees below zero, the native peoples, including the women and children, were kept for five days and nights without food or fuel and for three days without water. At the end of that time they broke out of their camp." Troops hunted them down. They chose death over returning to the shame and humiliation of reservation life. Today many natives in America still feel the sting of shame. Many have turned to the

numbing effects of alcohol, and others have immersed themselves in their native religions as they seek answers to their problem of self-esteem.

Throughout the history of Christian outreach to Muslim people, Christians have faced tremendous struggles in knowing how to communicate the Gospel to Muslims. Most Christian's efforts have been totally ineffective. The message is proclaimed, and the hearers are completely indifferent, sometimes resistant, and occasionally hostile.

Over the years, countless misunderstandings have developed between Christians and Muslims. Muslims usually view Christians as immoral idolaters and blasphemers holding to old writings of untrustworthy heritage. Many Christians are suspicious of Muslims, viewing them as dangerous and unpredictable. Some go as far as thinking that all Muslims are violent and oppressive.

The secular world has also had its share of troubles. Political tensions and issues create misunderstandings on both sides. Many Muslims view Western countries as expansionist and threatening. Many Western nations view Muslims as terrorists and their governments as oppressive. The average Western person reacts very negatively to leaders such as Ayatollah Khomeini, Muammar al-Qaddafi and Saddam Hussein. Oil-rich Arabs are viewed as a threat to the economic stability of the West. Desperately poor and oppressed Arabs such as the Palestinians are looked upon as terrorists. On a political level, Muslim nations and Western nations have fared no better than Muslim and Christian clerics in misunderstanding one another.

As a consequence Westerner scholars have called for greater understanding and dialog between Muslims and Arabs. The religious world has reacted much the same way. Theologians from all backgrounds are now crying out for a greater effort at understanding each other's view points, and for a renewed effort in accepting one another's views.

The problem of understanding one another is not easy. When we meet a person whose system of beliefs is different than ours, we tend to interpret that system according to our own framework of understanding. It can take months and even years of living in another culture to begin to understand that culture. But not everyone reaches a point of understanding. Many Westerners living in an Arab culture simply define the worldview around them according to their own understanding and perspectives. They assume that the other person thinks in a similar pattern as they do. They then try to understand the culture from their own framework, based on their own worldview.

A western missionary relates the following relates the following:

My wife and I moved into the Arab culture when I was a twenty-two year old student. At that point I had read most of the books in print about Arab culture and thought. Our move to the Arab world was not so much a conscious decision to understand them as it was a conscious decision to become part of their culture and worldview. We initially concentrated on language learning and cultural adaptation. Then we began by living among the Arabs in the Levant (Jordan, Syria, & Lebanon). After two

years, we moved to the edge of the Empty Quarter in the United Arab Emirates. Several years later we moved to Yemen. Some years later we returned to the Levant and made our home there. Our last years in the Middle East were spent among the nomadic Bedouin tribes.

I say this only to point out that our personal experience with the Arab world has been based on a wide variety of exposures over a long period of time. Along with our personal experience, we have cultivated friendships with foreigners and nationals living in a host of other Muslim countries, stretching from North Africa to Indonesia, and have spent several years traveling and teaching seminars on shame-based cultures.

During our years in the Middle East, I was involved in various types of employment and mixed with different levels of society. I have visited rulers of countries and have sat in the marble palaces of oil-rich Arab sheiks. I have also sat in the tents of the poorest Bedouin Arabs. I worked for a number of years as a liaison officer for a Western organization, interacting with varying levels of government in the Yemen Arab Republic. In the Levant, I worked with charities reaching out to the poor and handicapped. As a rule, we have made our home in lower to middle income neighborhoods.

In whatever situation we have found ourselves, we have endeavored to understand and communicate our beliefs to those around us so that they could better understand us, our religion and the society we come from.

One of my first personal goals was to discover how the Arab mind worked. And so, with my Western training ingrained in my thinking, I started asking, "What is going on now?" That seemed to be my favorite question, and for many years I was curious to know what was going on in my neighborhood, in my city and in my nation. I even wanted to know what was going on in my neighbor's head.

During all of these years, I began to notice patterns emerging. The oil-rich Arabs of the Gulf, the mountain people of Yemen, the Bedouin of the desert, and the city dwellers of the Levant all held similar codes of conduct. While each region had its peculiarities, there was an overall pattern of similarity between the cultures.

These patterns, however, were not always clearly noticeable. Often there were many confusing and seemingly contradictory events. It was hard to work out what was happening, but in time, I moved on from trying to understand what was happening to trying to understand why what was happening was happening. I refused to believe that people acted and reacted unpredictably. In fact, the longer I lived in the Arab world, the more I recognized the predictability of the Arabs. During the Gulf War years I was able to predict certain events in the war, days and sometimes weeks before they happened. I found the Gulf War tremendously stressful. Watching Western news, I could understand the actions and re-actions of the Western nations. Having lived in the Middle East, I could understand the actions and re-actions of the

Arab nations. On one side was Western understanding, and on the other was Muslim understanding, and in the middle was the yawning chasm of misunderstanding. As a result, countless millions of people paid the price with their lives, their wounds, and tremendous economic loss.

It was during this time that I began to realize how far apart Western and Muslim thinking patterns really are. The West sees events and interprets them one way. The Arabs see events and interpret them another way. It isn't that one was right and the other was wrong. Thinking in terms of right versus wrong is a Western thought pattern. During the Gulf War, Western governments poured their resources into proving to their people that they were on the side of right, and that Saddam Hussein was on the side of wrong. Numerous instances were relayed to the Western public to prove the wrongness of the Iraqi leaders. The people of the West watched their TV's and interpreted the news according to rightness and wrongness, with the majority supporting their government's actions.

In the Middle East, the situation was less clear. Many Arab nations initially supported Saddam Hussein, and only in the face of tremendous Western pressure did they start to withdraw their support. Almost all of my Arab friends told me that Saddam Hussein acted predictably and strove manfully to protect his honor and the honor of his nation. Not one of them ever discussed the rightness or the wrongness of the war.

And so, my study of the Arab Muslim mind became more intense. What was it that made this mindset so different from my own? During this process, I also wrestled with the concept of cross-cultural communication. My role in the Middle East has always been that of a cross-cultural communicator of the Christian Gospel. I have always sought to find ways of clearly presenting the message and teachings of the Christian Church as found in the Bible.

As I wrestled with Muslim thought patterns, I began to question my own culture. How did we develop our own thought patterns? Were they right? Is my own culture "balanced" in its view of life on planet earth? During the course of history, what forces have molded my own worldview? I spent many hours studying history in order to understand how events in history molded our Western thinking and also Muslim thinking.

Eventually I arrived at conclusions that have been helpful in aiding me in communicating the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those with a Muslim mindset. As I shared this information with other missionaries in other settings, they reacted positively, and began to contribute ideas from their cultural setting. Eventually I was asked to speak in a variety of settings taking me from Asia through Europe and eventually to the native people of North America. Having said this, I also realize that worldviews are changing. As the world is impacted by globalization, people with very narrow or simplistic worldviews are being challenged. This clashing and altering of

worldviews is leaving many people uncertain and afraid because many of the foundational principles of their lives are being challenged.

Traditional Islam is being challenged. Islam in the West is struggling to find bridges between Western culture and the Muslim mindset. Muslim clerics in Britain and North America have reinterpreted verses in the Qur'an. These Muslim clerics have arrived at these new interpretations because new interpretations are necessary if Islam is to have any real impact on Western guilt-based society. But Western culture is also changing as it adapts to the pressures of globalization.

In the next two lessons we will look at Islam and shame and honor to understand how this worldview impacts the Islamic religion, and ultimately how we must share the gospel with them.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. Most people's worldview is changing, especially now that globalization has brought about massive changes in every part of the globe. Try and do a Worldview Analysis (chapter 16) for your target culture or another culture than your own. If you have time, have both a young person and an older person fill one in. What do you think is changing in the culture? What is being reduced and what is being added in terms of guilt, shame and fear?
2. Think about some of the clashes Muslims have had with others. How much of this included a clash of worldviews? Are there wounds from this that are felt in society today? How can you use this to minister to people?
3. Today Muslims are often not only misunderstood but their character is also maligned. How are Muslims portrayed in the media in your country? Are the accusations fair? How much of this is due to a clash of worldviews?
4. Does the exposure to teaching about guilt, shame and fear based cultures make it easier or harder to live in today's world? Explain your thoughts.
5. Should all Christians have the same worldview? What sort of mix of shame, guilt and fear should they have? How does this relate to the worldview we will have in heaven?

Lesson Fourteen

Islam and Shame

Technical Notes (31 minute lesson)

Story A	899 words = 5 minutes
Lesson A	526 words = 3 minutes
Question Set A	5 questions = 15 minutes
Story B	1549 words = 9 minutes
Lesson B	2225 words = 14 minutes
Questions Set B	7 questions = 20 minutes

Story A

The hospital was strangely empty and quiet one evening as Mr. Li did his rounds. No one moved in the hallways, and even the nurses were not at their desks. A few patients were in their beds, but many of the beds were empty.

“Where is everyone?” Mr. Li wondered as he walked down the halls. The place was almost deserted. Had something happened? And then he heard a noise. It sounded like a crowd of people talking. Suddenly they were quiet again. Rounding a corner, Mr. Li came to the television room. A large group of people were crowded into the room, listening to the television. Doctors, nurses and patients crowded around the TV. The program was in the local language, so it was hard to Mr. Li, standing at the back of the crowd to hear what was going on. It appeared to be a normal TV story.

A young man was talking on a cell phone. “Hello” he said in a gruff voice. “This is Mr. Tarik. I’m Muhammad’s uncle on his father’s side.” The people around him started laughing and chuckling. “I’m calling about his application for work. You did receive it didn’t you? ... Yes ... I want to encourage you to hire him. He is an excellent worker, and our whole family stands behind him.” There was more laughter. “Yes, our whole family stands in support of him. He is an exceptional worker. You will be most pleased with him. ... yes... ok, here is my phone number.” The young man gave a phone number and then hung up. He walked nervously around the room. He jumped when his phone suddenly rang. “Hello” he shouted. “Yes, you want Mr. Tarik. Just a moment.” He looked wildly around. “Dad, it’s for you” he shouted. Everyone in the room laughed. The young man stomped his feet on the ground and then raised the phone to his ear and gruffly said “Hello this is Mr. Tarik.” People in the crowded room chuckled and giggled.

“Yes, thank you for calling back. I understand. Thank you, I’m sure he will do just fine. If there are any issues, please call me and I will do whatever I can to help you. Thank you. Bye.”

The young man on the television hung up the phone and started dancing and jumping around. Music started playing and it was obvious the TV show was over. Everyone started getting up and going back to work. Mr. Li spotted Ahmed, one of his workers in the crowd.

“What is going on?” he asked. “Why was everyone watching that TV show?”

“Haven’t you heard?” Ahmed smiled. “It’s the new TV show about Muhammad, a man without a family?”

“Yes,” Mr. Li said “Why is everyone so excited?”

“Because he has no family.” Ahmed said emphatically. “He has no one to help him get a job, rent an apartment, buy a car, get a wife.”

“Yes,” Mr. Li continued. “What else?”

“What else?” Ahmed looked incredulous. “That’s it. It’s a great story. He has to do everything himself. His family has either died, or emigrated and he is all alone. He has to do everything himself. It’s a great story. Everyone is watching it.”

By now the hospital had returned to its normal state and people were working and talking. Everywhere Mr. Li went as he inspected the work his cleaning crew had done, he heard people talking about the television show. It had apparently made a great impact on everyone. The following evening, Mr. Li was out buying groceries when the streets suddenly went quiet. He waited for a long time for a taxi to come by. It seemed that there were very few cars on the road.

“Where is everyone tonight?” he asked the taxi driver. “I had to wait a long time for a taxi to come by.”

“It’s that new TV program” the taxi driver said. “Everyone is watching it.”

“Yes, it seems like the whole country shuts down for it.”

“Things will be back to normal when it is over.” The driver commented. And indeed, it was true. No sooner had Mr. Li made it back to the workers compound at the hospital, when people started moving around again, and things seemed normal. Everyone, however, was talking about the TV show. It seemed that in tonight’s program young Muhammad was having difficulties remembering who he was supposed to be on the telephone. And now he needed to pretend he was one of his aunts. Everyone was laughing about how well he could mimic a woman’s voice.

The following evening after the TV show was over, Mr. Li met with David and Ahmed in his room for tea. “This really is a popular program.” Mr. Li started.

“Yes, Ahmed answered. “This is one of the best TV programs that’s been on in a long time. Everyone will be sad when it is over tomorrow evening. I wonder how it will end.”

“It is really very strange” David commented. “I don’t really understand what the appeal is. It seems like a rather foolish program to me.”

“That is because you are not one of us” Ahmed commented. “You two live alone. Your families are far away, and you have to do everything yourselves. That would be very difficult for us. Students do it, but we rely on our families to help us.”

“This I have seen” Mr. Li commented. “The family members all support one another. It is very admirable.”

“It is our way” Ahmed said proudly. “Don’t you also have tribes?”

David shook his head. “I know who some my cousins are, but I don’t know my other relatives. Most of my relatives I’ve never met or I’ve only seen at a family reunion or wedding. My family isn’t very close. We live all over the USA.”

“This is very strange” Ahmed commented.

“No, I don’t think so” David countered. “In America, most of our family roots go back to someone who emigrated to America long ago. They usually left the old world, and we don’t have any contact with our families across the ocean. So most of us don’t really think in terms of family.”

“And if you need your family for something...?”

“We do it ourselves. Americans are individuals. We like to be independent.” David said proudly.

It was Ahmed’s time to shake his head. “Americans and Muslims are exact opposites. No wonder there is so much trouble between us.”

Lesson (A)

Arabs have always related to each other by group. The Arabs of the Arabian desert from where Islam rose, have a keen sense of tribal belonging. Their tribes are highly structured, and local clans and wider tribes meet and relate together. Each of the tribes understand how they relate to the others, and each of them knows their history and can trace their lineage back to Noah, and from there back to Adam. Knowing your place in the tribe helps individuals know of their place in the world, and in world history. Thus they tend to do everything from a group mindset. The larger extended family makes up one’s group, and the gathering of all of one’s relatives makes up the tribe.

As we mentioned earlier Arabs have defined their relationships with others in terms of near and far. Those who are related to you by blood are near, and those from other tribes are far. People can be brought into a near relationship through marriage or adoption. If a foreigner is adopted as a “son of the tribe,” a great honor has been bestowed upon him.

Arab Muslims usually demand a high degree of conformity from those who are near to them. This conformity brings honor, social prestige and a secure place in society. The individual who conforms to the group has the advantage, in that all the members of his

group are bound to demonstrate concern for his interests, and they will defend him unquestioningly against “outsiders.”

Relationships

From top to bottom, Arab Muslim society is permeated by a system of rival relationships. This is because in the Arab value system, great value and prestige are placed on the ability to dominate others. In the constant struggle to dominate and to resist domination, the rivals of a given group quickly seize on any “shame” to destroy the other group’s influence. Isolating a target and thereby destroying them often achieves this, as an individual could not survive in the desert outside of the group setting. Thus if one tribe insults the honor of another tribe, the entire tribe will respond in order to protect their place of honor. It was out of this background that Islam emerged.

Arabs fear isolation because in their view an individual or small group can only function effectively when they are identified with a larger group that can offer support and protection. This fear of isolation can be attributed to the fear that the Bedouins had of being isolated and left as individuals or small groups to fend for themselves in the harsh, hostile desert environment. Isolated individuals could easily be taken as slaves by other tribes and could spend the rest of their lives in low and mean positions. By sticking together, individuals could offer each other protection. Thus family units and firmly established relationships became paramount in knowing whom you could trust and who would stand by you if an outside force attacked you. The prophet Muhammad came from this mindset, and the Qur’an and Muslim religion support this practice. The Qur’an indicates how families and tribes should relate to one another, and how relations work between them. In this way, Islam is a religion that addresses every part of a Muslim’s life.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion A

1. Does your culture have a ‘group’ mindset? Do they make decision in groups or as individuals? Who is included in the group or in the decision making process? If you live in an individualistic culture, how would you manage in a group-based culture?
2. How important are relationships to you? On what basis are most relationships formed? Eg. Blood lines, common allegiances, religion, culture, common interests, politics, etc.
3. Are people outside of your group treated as outsiders or in some way alienated from the decisions the group makes?
4. Do individuals in the group have enemies because they are perceived as enemies to the group in general?
5. Do people in your society fear isolation? Why or why not?

Story B

Mr. Li and David were on a quest to discover more about Muslim’s opinions of honor and shame. They asked Zay’id to help them. Zay’id was at first reluctant to talk about his culture, but in the end he agreed.

“Can you tell us about shameful acts?” David asked. “What sort of things could you do that would put you in a position of shame before your family?”

“Anything that embarrasses my family would be shameful.” He responded. “But most families are lenient with young men. After all, we are just young guys messing around. They figure once we get a good Muslim wife we will settle down. Then, once we have children and play a responsible role in the tribe, we will be much better behaved. So boys will be boys.”

“So is there anything you could do that would cause your family to react with anger and perhaps kill you?”

“Well, they might throw me out of the tribe if I did something that embarrassed them all. But the only reason they might kill me is if I publicly renounced Islam. Then everyone around would put pressure on them and they would take my life.”

“Wow,” David responded. “I thought that maybe you went around afraid that anything you might do would bring dishonor on your tribe.”

“No, most men are safe.” Zay'id responded. “It is the women who must be careful. A woman can easily bring shame on her family. She must always be careful never to put herself into a position that could be interpreted negatively.”

“Like what?”

“Like being alone with a man she is not married to. People would talk. And talk would lead to shame.”

“You mean she doesn't have to commit a bad act?”

“No, she simply has to be suspected of the act.”

“That is amazing” David responded. “If a woman came over to my house and I invited her in, she would be bringing shame on her family.”

“She wouldn't even have to come into your house.” Zay'id responded.

“I don't understand”

“It is enough to walk alone on the street with no family members with her. That alone would put her into a position of shame.”

“But I've seen women alone on the street.”

“Did they have someone with them. Even a child,”:

“You are right, women always have someone with them.” David responded. “But this once I remember seeing a woman on the street. She looked right into my eyes as well.”

“That” Zay’id smiled, “is the sign of a prostitute. She walks alone, and is bold enough to look you in the eyes.”

“Wait” Mr. Li said. “Now I understand why women never talk to me, and never look at me. They always look away when they talk to me.”

“They are being proper women” Zay’id responded. “Many women are even afraid to take a job at the hospital, because it puts them in situations where there is no family member around.”

“OK,” David responded. “Tell me this. I’ve always heard about Muslim men keeping women in a harem. How does this fit?”

“Most westerners have the wrong view of the harem.” Zay’id responded. “The harem is part of the house where the women are. The word Harem comes from ‘haram’ meaning forbidden. Their side of the house is forbidden to men. They live there in complete protection with the children.”

“What happens when a boy grows up?” Mr. Li asked.

“When a boy starts to notice girls” Zay’id continued, “Then we have a special ceremony, and he joins the men’s side of the house.”

“So men never go into the harem?” David asked.

“Never. A woman is always totally safe in the harem.”

“So how does a married man ... you know...” David said, obviously embarrassed.

“What?” Zay’id teased.

“How does he have relations with his wife?”

“He may have more than one wife in the harem. All the women of the house live together. Mothers, grandmothers, wives etc. When he wants to spend time with one of his wives, he requests to see her in one of the rooms that separate the men’s side of the house with the women’s.

“This is amazing. Are all homes like this?”

“No, only the traditional ones. Now in the city, everything is different.”

“So men don’t have harem’s in the city.”

“No, if a man wants more than one wife, he usually rents an apartment for each wife and her children, and moves around between them.” Zay’id explained. “It is great honor for a man to have more than one wife. Four is even better. Islam allows us to have four wives.”

Just then Ahmed came to the door. “Does anyone want to go to the coffee house with me?” he asked. “Kaldun, the famous storyteller will be there tonight.”

“What is a story teller?” David asked.

“Story tellers go from place to place telling the famous old stories. They really are very good.” Zay’id answered. “If you want to learn about our country, you should go.”

“OK” David shrugged. “Are you going to come too?”

“Sure” Mr. Li responded. “I’ve never heard a storyteller.”

When they arrived at the coffee-house a crowd had gathered. They eventually found places at a low table and paid for their coffees. The place was noisy and smoky. Men crowded around small tables, sitting on chairs and boxes. The man behind the counter poured thick boiling sweet coffee into small cups which were set before the men. After some time it was announced that Kaldun had arrived. He was an older man, with small glasses, and a loud voice. He greeted everyone with a wave of his hand, “Peace be unto you” and all the men responded “And peace be unto you.”

Kaldun seated himself on a high stool and accepted a cup of hot sticky coffee. He waited for a few minutes, speaking to a few individuals he knew, and then he began his story. He accompanied the story with hand gestures, wide eyes, and emotion. David listened closely.

A sheik, an honorable man of his tribe was traveling across the desert. The sheik became very tired at noon day and so when he came to some trees he sought out the cool shade of a palm tree and lay down. He carefully took off his robe, a special robe that denoted his importance in the tribe, with embroidery and gold trim, folded it, and lay it carefully beside him. Then he fell asleep.

While he was sleeping, a poor man happened to come by. He saw the sheik sleep under the tree and the robe laying beside him. Very carefully, walking as gently as a cat he came up to the sheik and carefully picked up the robe. Then, walking backwards, he quietly withdrew and went on his way.

After some time, as the sun continued its way across the sky, the shadow moved, and the sheik became uncomfortably warm. He woke up and wanted to continue his journey.”

The storyteller stopped to sip his coffee. The men all leaned forward to hear what would happen next. Some were smiling. They had probably heard the story before.

“Eyyyii” the sheik cried when he realized that his robe had been stolen. His honorable robe, that demonstrated to everyone his place in the tribe had been robbed from him. Hurriedly he made his way home, afraid that people would see him in his position of disgrace. At home he sulked and complained about what had happened.

The young men of his family decided that the tribal honor must be maintained. From their home they moved out across the desert visiting village after village to see if they could find the missing robe. And sure enough, in one town they found the thief in the market, trying to sell the robe. They grabbed the man and were going to kill him, when the soldiers arrived and demanded that they all appear before the magistrate.

Someone was sent back for the sheik. When he arrived, everyone was gathered before the magistrate. He turned to the sheik and asked him to tell his part of the story.

“I was traveling across the desert” the sheik said, “and when I was tired I went to sleep under a tree. Before I slept, I folded my robe and placed it beside me. When I awoke, my robe had been stolen.”

“And is this your robe?” the magistrate asked.

“Yes, this is my robe.”

“Well” the magistrate said turning to the thief. “What do you have to say for yourself.”

“The sheik speaks the truth.” The thief said. “I was traveling across the desert, and came to the grove of trees. There I saw a man asleep under a tree. So I went over and had sex with him while he slept. I then took his robe and left.”

“Wait” the sheik cried “Let me see that robe again. No, it is not my robe. I was mistaken.” The thief went free.

The men in the restaurant howled with laughter and applauded. More coffee was served, and everyone was talking at once.

David simply shook his head in disbelief. He looked at Mr. Li who spread his hands. He didn’t know what to make of it either.

Lesson B

There are many types of shame in Arab society. For an Arab, failure to conform is damning and leads to a place of shame in the community. This is often hard for Westerners to understand for they value their individualism, but Arabs value conformity. The very meaning of Islam is to conform to the point of submission. The object of public prayers and universal fasting is to force conformity on all. There is an Arab proverb that can be translated, "Innovation is the root of all evil." If one fails to conform, he is initially criticized. If he continues to refuse to conform he is put in a place of shame by the community.

Some missionaries feel that they can call themselves Muslims, because the Arabic word 'islam; means "submitted." In a Muslim's mind, however, it means that the person has submitted to the laws, practices and forms of Islam. It means that they have accepted that Muhammad was the prophet of God and that they will follow the religion he brought, and ultimately what God demands of man. Since Islam was revealed through the prophet Muhammad, its origins are assumed to have come from God.

Islam also demonstrates how everyone should worship in unison, bowing at the same time, praying the same words, chanting the same scriptures, and fasting at the same times. The whole concept of union and conformity in Islam help people to feel that they belong and are part of something big. When someone refuses to conform, he demonstrates that he is against everyone. He is a rebel and his actions bring shame on his group.

Imagine a child who interrupts an important speech. By running up to the podium he creates trouble. Who gets punished? People immediately look for the parents and demand that they control and punish their child. In the same way, Muslim society looks to the family to control and punish those that rebel. Any family that does not control their members is placed in a position of shame, and may eventually be shunned by everyone else. Thus one individual's action can greatly affect the lives of others.

A second way that shame can be brought on is through an act. Raping one's sister is considered as a shameful act. For men, few things are considered right or wrong. A woman who is molested is usually punished for allowing herself to be in the position where she could be molested. Women therefore remove themselves from the lives of men, and always accompany each other wherever they go. By living within the protection of the family unity, and especially the other women of the family, they can better safeguard themselves.

Right and wrong in Islam are usually defined in terms of what is forbidden by the Qur'an. This is usually limited to five things:

1. Drinking alcohol
2. Eating pork
3. Equating something equal with God
4. Eating meat that hasn't been slaughtered in the Islamic method
5. Dishonoring the prophet

As far as other laws, Muslims rely on society for these. The role of society is very important in Muslim thinking. Society dictates what is acceptable and unacceptable for its members. For instance, society might say that the speed limit for driving is 50 km per hour. If you drive 100 km per hour you are not guilty, you are only going against the rules of society; no guilt is associated with this. If you act against society, you may be acting shamefully, but not necessarily wrongfully. God has only reveals a couple of things in the Qur'an that are forbidden for man. Acts like homosexuality are not thought of as wrong, but shameful.

Muslim men use this rationalization when living in what they consider an immoral Western nation. They can view pornography and partake in sexual escapades because the society they are living in doesn't define this as forbidden. Something may be shameful at home, but when in different circumstances, the Arab may react differently. There is a proverb that states, "Where you are not known, do whatever you like." As long as people at home don't know what you are doing.

So, shame not only comes through an act but it can also include the discovery by outsiders, that the act has been committed. Dr. Hamady puts it this way: "He who has done a shameful deed must conceal it, for revealing one disgrace is to commit another disgrace." There is an Arab proverb that says, "A concealed shame is two thirds forgiven."

A Syrian scholar, Kazem Daghestani, tells of an Arab husband who caught his wife in bed with another man. He drew a gun and pointed it at the couple while addressing the man. "I could kill you with one shot," he said. "But I will let you go if you swear to keep secret the relationship you have had with my wife. If you ever talk about it, I will kill you." The man took that oath and left and the husband divorced his wife without divulging the cause. He was not concerned about the loss of his wife or her punishment but about his own reputation. Public shaming and not the nature of the deed itself or the individual's feelings had determined his action.

A third thing that brings shame is failure. Often an Arab will shrink from accepting challenges or responsibilities. However, when away from his family this can change drastically. A meek Arab businessman in his home nation can become a shrewd risk taker in the middle of Africa where he is not known.

When there is failure, often outside forces are blamed. Anger, resentment, and violence are focused on outside elements in order to shift the blame to them.

In some Asian cultures, failure is often focused on the individual. For example, a Japanese businessman may take his life when faced with tremendous shame. In an Arab Muslim situation, the Muslim will assign blame to someone else and react violently towards him.

As a result, it is easy to unintentionally offend an Arab Muslim. The Arab Muslims have a very detailed code of conduct, and breaking that code can result in offense. This can be

as simple as pouring too much coffee in a cup, making your visit too short, or serving unequal amounts of cold drink in visible clear glasses.

Shame can also result when an Arab is not treated as a special case. He expects rules to be bent to suit his convenience. He expects to be the favorite, and his friends have to constantly assure him that he counts more than others.

For example, when interviewing a number of businessmen, each interview should be conducted exactly the same length of time. Once, a Muslim man accused a job interviewer of spending five more minutes with the previous man. The interviewer got out of the situation by explaining that the extra time was necessary because the previous man could not express himself as eloquently and therefore took longer.

There are lots of little things in Arab culture that matter greatly. Everything in the culture has meaning, and an action as simple as stretching the left hand towards a person's face, as a Westerner might do in casual gesticulation, could be tantamount to telling many Arabs that he has the evil eye and that your hand was used defensively against it.

It is important to realize that shame is not attached to all of the actions that a westerner would call wrong. While raping one's sister is a very shameful act, things like lying can be either shameful or honorable, depending on the circumstances.

Al Ghazali, the medieval Muslim theologian stated: *"Know that a lie is not wrong in itself, but only because of the evil conclusions to which it leads the hearer, making him believe something that is not really the case. Ignorance sometimes is an advantage, and if a lie causes this kind of ignorance it may be allowed. It is sometimes a duty to lie... if lying and truth both lead to a good result, you must tell the truth, for a lie is forbidden in this case. If a lie is the only way to reach a good result, it is allowable. A lie is lawful when it is the only path to duty... We must lie when truth leads to unpleasant results, but tell the truth when it leads to good results."*

The rule for telling the truth, or not to, is bound by honor and shame. If shame can be avoided, or honor obtained, then lying is more honorable, and therefore the thing to do. If a lie covers up shame, then it is allowed.

Shame as part of culture

In many Muslim cultures, children are repeatedly told that something is shameful, never wrong. Usually this does not applied to very young children, because it implies a degree of prior knowledge and instruction that should have been followed. Older children who have disobeyed or have behaved disrespectfully are usually given a lecture which begins and ends with "shameful."

The instruction about shame is not restricted to just relatives. Almost anyone can instruct children, telling them that what they are doing is shameful, and usually the children will respond positively, not negatively. The power of the negative use of shame enforces positive reactions in people's lives. Children learn very early on that their personal

behavior represents a part of the whole of family honor. Once this sense of honor is acquired, it remains with the person throughout life.

Sometimes when greeting an Arab Muslim and asking, "How are you?" one gets the answer "mastur al-hal" or "the condition is covered." This means, everything is all right, and my family and I are not being shamed. All shame is covered.

When Shame happens

In Arab Muslim culture, shame must be avoided at all cost. If it strikes, it must be hidden. If it is exposed, then it must be avenged. At all costs, honor must be restored, even if it means the loss of one's own life in the attempt.

The fear of shame among Muslims is powerful because the identification between the individual and the group is far closer than in the West. Because Arabs think in a group mindset, the importance of the group outweighs the importance of the individual. If an individual is in a position of shame, he loses his influence and power, and through him his entire group will similarly suffer, perhaps to the point of destruction.

Revenge

Shame can be eliminated by revenge. This is sanctioned by the Qur'an (Sura 6, 173). "Believers: retaliation is decreed for you in bloodshed."

It may also be eliminated through financial payment by fellow kinsmen in their group, or by the public treasury. In the case of a killing, the price of the blood must be settled between whatever groups are involved.

This need for revenge is as strong today as it ever was. In the small country of Jordan, the 1950's stated: "He who discovers his wife or one of his female relatives committing adultery and kills, wounds or injures one or both of them is exempt from any penalty." In the opening months of 2000, members of the royal family in Jordan joined a demonstration of young Arabs protesting the laws and attitudes about honor killings. Growing numbers of Jordanian young people are educated in the West, and Western thinking and culture is beginning to clash with traditional Muslim thinking and culture.

There are two areas of shame that cause Muslims to react very violently. The first is dishonoring the prophet. Many Muslims see themselves as the protectors of Islam. Therefore if someone speaks out against the prophet Muhammad, they are dishonoring him, and need to be silenced. If they refuse to be silenced, then they must be destroyed. If someone dishonors the prophet in a public way, mass reactions happen across the Muslim world. Some years ago, a Muslim writer from India, Sulman Rushdi wrote a novel in which he seemed to ridicule the prophet Muhammad. In the book, a man decides that he is specially chosen of God. The names of the women in his life are the same as the prophet Mohammad's wives. Muslims all over the world reacted violently. They marched

in the streets in protest, and Muslim Mullahs issued statements that Sulam Rushdi should be killed. As a result, Sulman Rushdi went into hiding.

Some time later, a magazine in Europe decided to have a contest to see who could draw the best political cartoon about Muhammad. After the magazine published the cartoon, Muslims around the world marched in the streets, attacked embassies and burned flags. Westerners reacted, stating the Muslims wanted to restrict free speech. Muslims protested that the honor of their prophet was being attacked. Europeans did not understand why this was so important.

The other area that causes Muslims to react violently, is when someone publicly leaves Islam. Leaving Islam is seen as dishonoring the religion, and placing themselves in a position where they are going to hell. If the person is already condemned to hell, why should he or she not be killed and the shame removed. For Muslims, salvation and honor exist inside of Islam not without. As a Muslim proverb states: There is honor within Islam, shame without.”

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion B

1. In what ways is shame brought upon people in your culture? Think about things such as bad acts, being different, failure, etc.
2. When people are away from their group, do they act differently? How much does the group affect how they act and react when they are with others of the group?
3. What vocabulary or proverbs does your target people have that focuses on shame and honor? How are these concepts expressed? Is there a rich vocabulary or set of proverbs?
4. What are some of the ways that you see shame being hidden in your culture?
5. If a major shame cannot be hidden, how do people react in your culture?
6. List some of the characteristics of Jesus that would demonstrate that he was an honorable person.
7. How did Jesus confront the shame and honor system of his day? What did he teach?

Lesson Fifteen

Islam and Honor

Technical Notes (29 minute lesson)

Story: 1539 words = 9 minutes

Lesson: 3326 words = 20 minutes

Questions: 8 questions = 30 minutes

Story

The crowd at the coffee house was enjoying the stories that Kaldun was telling. Business was good for the owner of the coffee shop, as people ordered tea and coffee, nuts and seeds, and cigarettes.

After a short break the story teller began again.

There once was a very poor man. When the noon meal came he had only a few piaster coins to buy something with. He was very hungry, but could only afford a piece of bread. Approaching a street café, he asked if he could buy one piece of bread. The owner of the store was not very happy with such a poorly dressed man standing in front of his restaurant. "Here" he said, "Take this piece of bread and go away."

The man paid his last coins for the bread, and moved away from the front of the restaurant, where one of the workers was cooking meat over hot coals. The poor man desperately wanted to buy some meat, but he had no money, so he stood down wind from the cooking meat, and every time he took a bite of his bread, he breathed deeply, so he could smell the meat.

The owner called for him to move, but the poor man stood his ground, and ate his bread. He was out of the way, and he was enjoying the smell of the meat. This outraged the owner and he called for the police to come and arrest the man. The police told the owner that he come with them as well, so he could state his case against the poor man.

A few moments later, the men were ushered before the magistrate, who asked the owner to state his case. At the end, the magistrate was amazed. "You brought this man here for smelling your meat cooking?" he asked.

“Yes” the owner said. “I asked him to move, and he did not.”

“And what is your story?” The magistrate asked the poor man.

“The owner is correct.” The poor man answered. “I had only enough money to buy bread. After I bought the bread the owner asked me to leave. So I went and stood in front of the neighboring store and ate my bread.”

“Did you smell the meat while you were eating?” the magistrate asked.

“Yes, your honor.”

“Then I fine you the price of a dish of meat.” the magistrate replied. “Can you pay?”

“No” replied the man. “I have no money.”

“Bring me two dinars in change” The judge called out. “Make sure they are one piaster coins.”

A few minutes later a court worker came with a small bag of coins. “Stand beside the café owner” the magistrate commanded. “Shake the bag so he can hear the coins rattle.” Turning to the café owner the magistrate stated “This is your payment for the smell of the meat cooking.”

The men in the coffee-house laughed and applauded. The story-teller turned to his own coffee and everyone began to talk. A few minutes later someone called out for another story.

There once was a great sultan who ruled over a great kingdom. He had a beautiful wife whom he loved dearly. As the sultan he could have any women in the kingdom he desired, but his wife was the love of his heart. Everything was fine, except for one thing, no children were coming from their marriage. It was a thing that saddened the royal couple, and indeed the entire nation.

One day as the Sultan’s wife was making her way through the market, she spotted a young girl with a newborn baby beside her. The sultan’s wife looked closer at the baby. It was a beautiful child. The young girl looked up and saw the richly dressed woman looking at her. “Do you want this baby?” she said. “I have no money, I cannot take care of him.”

The sultan’s wife was filled with compassion, and she nodded. Within a few minutes she was whisking the child away to the palace.

At first the Sultan was very concerned, but later he realized that his wife was completely taken up with the baby. The baby was everything that she ever wanted, except it was not her own. After a while the Sultan grew used to the idea of the child, and eventually he took a liking to the young lad. Over the years the baby

grew up in the palace. He had the best of everything. The finest clothing, the best education and the loving care of his adopted parent. All this time the sultan and his wife never inquired about who the young girl was, or the origin of the baby. If they had they would have learned that the girl had been raped by her father, who was a notorious thief and criminal.

Eventually the child grew into a strong young man. He moved around the palace freely, and everyone enjoyed him. However, when he turned 18, his mother decided to tell him his true identity. After a special meal in his honor, the Sultan and his wife revealed to him that they were not his true parents. He had been obtained from a young girl in the market, who gave him away. They assured him that they loved him and that he would have whatever he needed. He could pursue any career he chose.

That night the young man crept through the palace, stealing gold and silver. He raped a girl, a palace attendant, and then ran off into the night with his loot.

The story-teller looked at the crowd. "Who can tell me the proverb that illustrates the truth behind this story?"

"I know" one man shouted out. "The son of a thief is always a thief, and the daughter of a prostitute will be a prostitute." The men clapped their hands and turned again to their coffee. After a long break they called for another story:

"A father went to work in the field one day, and he took his two sons along with him. They sat under a large tree to play while their father worked. During the day, the sun became very hot, and the father asked the older of the two boys to get him some water. "No, I will not," the elder son replied. The father returned to his work, but a few minutes later asked his younger son. "Yes, certainly father," he replied, but he continued playing and did not get the water."

At this point the storyteller turned to his audience, "Which is the better son?"

To give the wrong answer would be shaming to the one who answered, but the storyteller knows that his listeners will give the correct answer.

"The younger son is the better of the two because he had saved his father's face by not defying him," someone in the crowd shouted out.

"Correct" the storyteller cried out, "Give that man a free coffee."

After a few minutes, Mr. Li, Ahmed, and David left the coffee shop and began walking home.

"What did you think of Kaldun, the story-teller?" Ahmed asked.

"He as good," David replied, "But I cannot figure out the last story. In my opinion both boys were equally wrong."

"That wasn't the question." Mr. Li said quietly. "The story-teller asked which son was better?"

"Neither was better."

“If you are only thinking of right and wrong, then you are right. To say no to your father’s face would be to dishonor him. To agree with him while in front of him is to honor him. He son who honored his father was better. It wasn’t a question about right and wrong.”

“Isn’t there a similar story in the Bible?” David asked.

“Yes” Mr. Li replied. “It is the gospel of Matthew, but I think it is a bit different. I have my New Testament here, let’s read it.”

They stopped for a moment and opened the Bible to Matthew 21:28-31

"What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' 'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go. "Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered. Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you."

“What was the point of Jesus’ story?” Mr. Li asked.

“I think the story is about obedience, not honor.” David replied.

“Yes, and the first son, even though he dishonored his father initially, eventually obeyed him. What is Jesus teaching here?”

“Obedience is an answer to shame.”

“Yes, I think it might be saying that. God desires obedience, even if we initially shame him. That is why the thieving tax collectors and prostitutes enter the kingdom of God. They received the good news of salvation and their lives changed.”

Ahmed listened carefully to what they were saying about thieves and prostitutes. He didn’t comment, but he was thoughtful as they walked home.

Lesson (A)

This lesson is about Islam and honor. Honor is the other side of shame, and every Arab Muslim desires and strives to become more honorable. The pursuit of honor takes many different forms.

In many cases the absence of shame conveys the idea of honor. A family that has no shame attached to itself considers itself to be honorable. They may not have money, prestige, or power, but the simple absence of shame makes them feel like they are honorable people. There is no middle ground for Muslims between shame and honor. If no one accuses them of shame, and everyone in the family submits to Islam and conforms to the demands of society, then they are honorable.

There are however, a number of things that are important when wanting to build your own honor, or demonstrate it to others. The following list of items is written specifically about the Arab Muslims of Arabia, the homeland of the prophet Muhammad and the originators of Islam. Much of their culture is found in the Qur’an and spread through the teachers of Islam.

Honoring Elders

This is a very important part of most shame-based cultures. Elders, especially family and tribal rulers are treated with greater respect than others. Elders are listened to, and their opinions carry great weight. One of the ways of showing honor to elders is to listen to, and even ask for their wisdom in matters, as well as the stories that they might relate about years gone by. A missionary entering an area can gain respect, if he mixes with the elders of the community, listens to them, and becomes part of their world. This is often an opportunity that new younger missionaries miss. It is also a good language learning opportunity, for older men and women usually have time to spend with people, and they are usually happy to share their stories and memories. Once a new missionary is accepted by the elders, he will find that same acceptance in the greater community.

Hospitality, Flattery and Gifts

In most Muslim cultures, hospitality is one of the most important ways of demonstrating honor. Hospitality honors the guest and the host alike. When you visit a Muslim home great effort is made to demonstrate hospitality. Rather than shame you, Muslims try very hard to honor you with hospitality. Everything is done to honor the guest and to present an honorable image of the Arab family. This is why visits have a set pattern: coffee, then tea and biscuits, then coffee, etc. Every part of the visit is played out as a display of hospitality.

The reverse is also true. If you don't want someone to visit you, simply talk to him or her outside your door, where everyone will see that they are not invited inside. They will immediately feel shamed and will never return to your home.

If hospitality is first, then flattery must be second way of honoring someone. Arab Muslims are quick to flatter people they suspect are more honorable than themselves. It is a way of pouring extra honor onto a person while demonstrating to others within earshot that they are honoring that person.

The third way of showing honor is gift giving. Gifts are often given to demonstrate the growing relationship between people. Additionally, if you admire something in an Arab Muslim home, they will be quick to insist that you have it as a gift. Even if you do not admire something, they will offer you gifts, demonstrating their willingness to honor someone else with a gift.

Muslims revel in stories about poor people who give their last resources to demonstrate hospitality to others.

As the above three demonstrate, a visit to an Arab home is full of expressions of honor. Where you sit in the room, how you are fed, what you are fed, the hospitality shown, the flattery expressed and the gifts that are offered all express various levels of honor.

Moreover, the reverse is true. If someone visits your home, you are obliged to be warm and hospitable. It is even expected that you will be overly hospitable to the point of demanding in your insistence that your guests eat, drink and accept your gifts. You must

insist that people eat your food. Small friendly fights break out over food, and guests must demonstrate their appreciation for the hospitality that is shown. This is a favorite part of many cultures. Two people approaching a doorway will insist that the other go through the door first.

“You go first, you are the elder.”

“No you go first, you are on the right side”

“No, you go first, your family is a great family.”

“No, I insist that you go first, you’re family has produced many fine scholars.”

And so the argument will continue until one of the two will run out of reasons. The loser will then go through the door first.

The same happens with greetings. There are hundreds of greetings, each with their appropriate answer. When two people meet they may start greeting one another, each trying to outdo the other with a greeting. The loser is the one who runs out of greetings first.

In this way, meeting, greeting, and visiting all contain ways of showing honor to others.

Family

Honor is attached to your family and your families history. Long ago a Muslim scholar wrote: *“One feels shame when one’s relatives are treated unjustly or attacked, and one wishes to intervene between them and whatever peril or destruction threatens them.”* He continues, *“The affection everybody has for his allies results from the feeling of shame that comes to a person when one of his neighbors, relatives or a blood relation in any degree is humiliated.”* In other words, Arabs are drawn together when defending the honor of the group, be it a neighbor, relative or any blood relation.

An Arab proverb states: “Learn as much of your family lineage as is necessary to establish your ties of kindred.” Another adds: “Many a trick is worth more than a tribe.”

This is the reason that Arabs strive so hard to maintain the honor of the tribe. It is the duty of the eldest son of each family to maintain the honor of the family. If someone greatly offends the tribe, he will be the one to oust them, or, in the case of irreparable damage, execute them.

Nowhere is the honorable status of family and tribe more evident than in the differences between religious beliefs. During the Yemeni War (1962-1965), two Egyptians, one a Coptic Christian and the other a Muslim, both members of well known and upper class families, had been lifelong friends. They were wounded in the same battle; the Muslim in the arm and the Copt in the leg. Disabled, they lay side by side awaiting treatment and removal from the battlefield. A half-empty truck arrived and picked up the Muslim, but left the Christian despite his desperate pleas for help. The truck crew had orders to collect the Muslim wounded before the Christian wounded. One word from the wounded Muslim friend could have saved the Copt. It was never uttered, and the Coptic Christian died on the field, probably slaughtered by rebel tribesmen. The wounded Muslim soldier

refused to acknowledge before others his friendship to the Christian, who would have been considered from a lower class.

Education

Education bestows honor. If a man gains a doctorate degree, he receives a great deal of honor in a Muslim society. It is for this reason that many Muslims strive to gain high educational standing. Many poor families sacrifice almost everything and work very hard to help an elder son make it through higher education. The elder son will work hard to honor the family. In the end, his achievements will raise the entire status of the family, and ultimately that of the tribe as well. What is valued is the awarding of the degree, not the hard work, ability or intellect involved in the process of gaining the degree. Because honor is so highly valued, cheating is often seen as dishonorable only if one is caught. Attaining the degree and its status is what is sought rather than competence gained through study.

Marriage

A young man has little status in his family until he is married. Suddenly he gains status because he is now married. Once his first son is born, his status rises even further. An Arab proverb states "A man's wife is his honor." While this sounds like a compliment, the opposite can be true. If a man's honor is injured through his wife's misbehavior, swift judgment will come upon her.

Language

Albert Hourani, one of the greatest modern Arab scholars living in the West, has said that his people are more conscious of their language than any people in the world. This consciousness is obsessive. Language is everything to the Arab. It is a divine expression and stems from the pre-Islamic era where Al-Kutbi was the god of writing. Today, classical Arabic is considered the language that God speaks, and those who speak it well are more honorable than those who do not. Language also separates those who are near and far. It separates the educated from the uneducated. It is an art form and for centuries was the sole medium of artistic expression. Sculpture and creating pictures is looked down upon by Islam, whereas language is everything. Every tribe has its poets, and their unwritten words "fly across the desert faster than arrows." In the midst of outward strife and disintegration, their poems provide a unifying principle. Poetry gives life to the idea of Muslim virtue. Where community is based on blood relations, poetry becomes an invisible bond between diverse clans and formed the basis of a larger sense of connection. It was poetry, the ultimate Arab art form, which bound Arabs together as a people rather than a collection of warring tribes. In the end, the Qur'an, and Qur'anic language becomes the unifying bond between Muslims everywhere.

When it becomes apparent that a young person is gifted as a poet, neighboring tribes gather together to wish the family joy. There are feasts and music. Men and boys congratulate one another, for a poet is a defense to the honor of the entire tribe and *"a weapon to ward off insult from their good name, and a means of perpetuating their glorious deeds and of establishing their fame forever."*

It is interesting to note that traditionally Arabs only wish one another joy, on three occasions: The birth of a boy, the coming to light of a poet, and the foaling of a noble mare.

The Arabic language is so powerful that Arabs will listen intently to someone who speaks it well, whether he speaks the truth or not. *"I lift my voice to utter lies absurd, for when I speak the truth my hushed tones scarce are heard."* Abu alAla, Syrian poet, 973-1057 AD.

Anyone wanting to understand Arab Muslim history and culture must be a student of Arab poetry. Arab poetry is full of glory. The poets glorified themselves, their brilliant feats, their courage and resolution, and their contempt for death. The Arab hero is defiant and boastful and when there is little to lose he will ride off unashamed, but he will fight to the death for his women.

An example of the ideal Arab hero is *Shanfara of Azd*. He was an outlaw, swift runner, and excellent poet. As a child, Shanfara was captured by the Bani Salman tribe and brought up among them. He did not learn of his origin until he was grown up. He then vowed vengeance against his captors and returned to his own tribe. He swore that he would slay a hundred men of the Beni Salman and he had slain ninety-eight when he was caught in an enemy ambush. In the struggle, one of his hands was hewn off by a sword stroke, but taking the weapon in the other, he flung it in the face of the Salman tribesman and killed him, making his score ninety-nine. He was then overpowered and slain. As his skull lay bleaching on the ground, a man of his enemies passed by and kicked it. A splinter of bone entered his foot; the wound festered, and he died, thus completing Shanfara's hundred. All of this is told in wonderful poetic language, skillfully blending the use of poetry with the honor of the hero.

Money

Arabs have a tremendous respect for wealth. Down through history, most honorable Arab leaders have been wealthy ones. Even Mohammed, the founder of Islam, rose to a position of great wealth. The use of this wealth to help the poor is seen as very honorable and is often portrayed in Arabic literature and stories. Wealth allows the leader to be hospitable and generous, two elements that are extremely useful in obliterating shame and restoring honor. A wealthy leader can throw money around, gaining respect and covering a multitude of sins.

Heritage

Arabs are keenly aware of their heritage. Some can trace their heritage back to Mohammed, others back to great leaders. Every tribe has stories of how individuals in their tribe achieved great honor or displayed honorable characteristics. Shameful figures in the tribal background are expelled or killed in order to preserve the tribe's honorable heritage.

Wisdom

Arabs respect age and wisdom. Elders are listened to with respect. The language elders use is often more formal and elevated than young people are capable of. Elders are looked to for their wisdom, as they know all the old stories and can often give wise and good counsel. Elders often have more money and may have demonstrated their wisdom in acquiring riches or maintaining the tribal lands and tribal honor.

Charisma

Certain individuals have charisma. They are good looking, have a confidence about them, and carry themselves with honor. Often they have accomplished something of note and have been able to capitalize on it. Many times they are good at communication and at politically finding honorable solutions to problems.

Physical Strength

Arab lore is full of heroes who display tremendous physical strength. Most Arab boys are brought up to think highly of being manly and strong. Physical strength, as well as charisma and financial strength are a winning combination in Arab culture.

Alliances

Many Arabs look to leaders who have formed strong alliances. Since strength and riches are often found in a group setting, someone with strong alliances can rely on the combined strengths of many groups. Many political leaders in the Arab world use their alliances with tribes and families to put them into political power.

Bravery

Every Arab boy knows stories of Arab heroes who faced overwhelming odds. Whether he overcame or not is not the issue. The act of bravery, in itself, is very honorable. If one sits in an Arab coffeehouse and listens to the storytellers, or if you visit your neighbors and ask, you will hear stories of brave Arab heroes.

Loyalty

All Arabs belong to a group or tribe. Loyalty to the family tribe is considered paramount to maintaining honor. One does not question the correctness of the elders or tribes in front of outsiders. It is paramount that the tribe sticks together in order to survive. Once again, Arab history and folklore are full of stories of heroes who were loyal to the end.

Violence

“Life is a fearful test, for modern Arab society. It is ruthless, stern and pitiless ... It honors strength and has no compassion for weakness.”

In Arab countries between 1948 and 1973, a mere quarter of a century, no fewer than eighty revolts occurred, most of them bloody and violent. No wonder the world has a negative view of Arabs and Islam.

Violence in Arab history has been part of demonstrating one's honor and in removing shame from the tribe. “With the sword will I wash my shame away. Let God's doom

bring on me what it may!” was written by Abu Tammam, a ninth-century poet in Hamasa.

You can see from the list of characteristics above why Arabs have a hard time recognizing Jesus as an honorable person. He did not display the usual characteristics that identify a person of honor. He was uneducated, poor, unmarried, and had few alliances. In many Muslim minds, Jesus was a failure, while the prophet Muhammad demonstrated worldly success. Followers of Jesus are seen as weak and unworthy.

Conclusion

Honor in an Arab society is understood, in a complex way, as the absence of shame. Honor and shame are diametrically opposing factors, and this fundamental issue that defines society. In most shame-honor-based societies, people accept that everyone has to deal with a measure of shame. The question is, “How is shame dealt with?” Few families or tribes can escape the birth of a handicapped child. The question then arises, what should be done with this child? Should the child be hidden away? Should it be killed? Should it be neglected in the desert, so that it eventually dies? Is it more humane to quietly give it to an institution?

In some shame-based cultures, Christians have reached out to handicapped children in crisis, attempting to assist families that are reeling from the shame of having birthed such a child. Sometimes handicaps are not so easily noticed. The child grows and becomes a part of the family fabric. Then disaster falls when it becomes increasingly obvious that the child is deaf or has some other handicap that was not immediately noticeable. The discovery of such handicaps can crush families as they lose their place of honor in the community.

One missionary encountered this in his own family situation. His eldest son was born with cerebral palsy (brain damage), and his presence in the family was of particular interest to everyone as they tried to assess what this meant in regards to their honorable status. The father comments: “Having had a handicapped child helped us realize the shame that this brings to many Muslim families. Imagine the buildup as you wait for nine months for your child to be born, and then the terrible disappointment that comes, not only for the parents, but also for the whole tribe.” Working with handicapped children provides a living example for Muslims to see the love of God demonstrated in a real way.

The Big Question

This is: “Can a person move from a position of shame to a position of honor?” Arabs have more trouble with this one. Almost all agree that someone can honor you, but you cannot honor yourself. However, people with honor seldom honor others without cause.

This is where we must be bold in proclaiming the Gospel. The Gospel that Jesus brought is simply this: God wants to lift man from a position of shame to a position of honor. When Jesus said, “I am the way,” this is what he was referring to. Jesus is the only one who can bring us into the presence of God the Father. This is why Jesus had to be God. No one else would do. Only God could reach down to mankind. Jesus Christ was God

displayed in the flesh, bringing us the message of reconciliation, a message of hope. God was providing a way to lift us from our place of shame to a place of honor.

Jesus taught us that the man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. He went on to say that “whoever serves Me must follow Me, and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.” (John 12:25-26) Jesus clearly taught that it is God who gives honor, and he gives it to those who renounce worldly honor by dying to self and following Christ.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. What acts bring about honor in Christian circles?
2. How do these differ from those of your culture or Muslim culture?
3. Does marriage bring honor or status to a young man in your culture? Why?
4. Does marriage and children bring honor or status to a young woman? Why?
5. Is there a way to tell an honorable person from an ordinary person through the use of language in your culture? Are there special ways to address honorable people? Is there special language that honorable people use?
6. Does money bring honor among your target people, even if it was gained dishonestly? How can you explain this?
7. How important are family lines, or family heroes? Does honor or shame extend along family lines, and is it passed down from generation to generation?
8. How can you express or bestow honor on others, such as the elders in your community?

Lesson Sixteen

Three Fold Message of Salvation

Technical Notes (30 minute lesson)

Story A	935 words = 6 minutes
Lesson A	1515 words = 9 minutes
Questions Set A	6 questions = 15 minutes
Lesson B	2634 words = 15 minutes
Question Set B	6 questions = 15 minutes

Story A

Night had fallen when Mr. Li's taxi made its way through the rain. Neon signs flashed in the night as they drove down the deserted main streets of the city. "There" is said to the taxi driver pointing to a large building on the right. The sign above it said "Housing Bank." He paid the driver and got out into the rain. Looking both ways up the street he stepped into the doorway where there was some shelter from the rain. The bank was locked for the night, and few people were venturing out into the night.

A few minutes later another taxi pulled up, and David soon emerged. He was carrying an umbrella. Together they crowded under it, and began walking up the street. "The Smiths live just around the corner" he said as they walked carefully between the streams of water that ran from downspouts onto the sidewalk. A few minutes later they entered an apartment block and made their way up to the fourth floor and into the Smith's apartment.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith were a nice Canadian couple. They were pleased to see David, and were particularly interested in Mr. Li. "We've heard so much about you" Mrs. Smith gushed, as soon as they were seated on a beautiful sofa. "David thinks very highly of you."

"I'm sure he has been very generous with his comments" Mr. Li smiled. "I hope I don't disappoint you."

"We're very glad you could come" said Mr. Smith somberly. "We are at a loss with what to do with Mona. Her case is quite complicated."

Mr. Li nodded, remembering the young woman who had approached him outside the hospital months before. “How is she? And Anna?”

“Anna has been meeting with Mona, and sharing the gospel with her. Mona is very close to accepting Christ. But her situation is very difficult. She told us that we could tell you her story. She is coming here in a few moments.” Mr. Smith said. He looked over at his wife. “Why don’t you tell him.” She nodded solemnly.

“Mona’s case is very complicated.” Mrs. Smith began. “She doesn’t want people to know her story. However, she is asking for help, she has said that you two can know her case, as long as you don’t tell others.” Mr. Li and David exchanged glances and nodded. “She is so afraid that you will be disgusted with her and throw her out. We have assured her that Christians will love her and care for her.”

“You had better get started dear” her husband urged, “She is going to be here any minute.”

“OK, here is the short version of her story. A year ago, Mona became pregnant. She was not married. The father of the child was her older brother.” Mrs. Smith paused and dabbed her eyes with a tissue. “When the family discovered, they were very angry with her, and took her to a doctor in another city. He performed an abortion. After she had recovered they took her to another doctor who did an operation and restored her virginity. Then the family wanted to quickly marry her off. There was a young man who was interested, but he soon suspected something was wrong because her were pushing so strong and rushing things. He backed down, and since then no one has come forward to ask for her. Since it is known that one man backed down, others may be afraid to ask for her. Now she is afraid that her chances of marriage are spoiled. Her family is very angry with her and she is upset with herself. She desperately wants help.” Mrs. Smith paused. “She heard you tell the story of the prodigal son once, and was deeply moved. So we thought you might be the person to help her, and also give us some ideas.”

Before she could finish the doorbell rang. Mrs. Smith rose and stepped to the door, looking out the small peek hole. “They are here.” She said softly and opened the door. Anna entered first, followed by Mona. Mr. Li barely recognized her. Her was much thinner, and her face drawn and taunt. She had a nervous look about her. When her eyes met Mr. Li’s she blushed and looked down, but not before Mr. Li had seen a silent cry for help in them.

After they were seated Mrs. Smith served cups of hot tea to everyone and then sat down herself. “I’ve just explained your situation to Mr. Li and David” she began. “Mona nodded, and looked down. There were tears in her eyes. “I’ve asked Mr. Li for his advice.”

Mr. Li looked calm, but on the inside his mind was in a panic. What could he do? What should he say? People were looking to him and his mind was a total blank. Carefully controlling his voice he said “I would like to begin with prayer. The Bible tells us that ‘if

we lack wisdom, let us ask of God, who gives to all men liberally, without finding fault, and it shall be given him.’ We need a lot of wisdom here. Not just our ideas, but wisdom from God.”

They bowed their heads, and Mr. Li began. The others followed. They poured out their hearts to God, asking for wisdom, thanking God for his love for Mona, and his desire to restore her.

After their prayer time, they turned to Mr. Li, who was silently claiming the promise that God would put into his mouth what he should speak. So Mr. Li opened his mouth and started.

Lesson (A)

The main question we want to answer in this chapter is:

How does one effectively communicate the Gospel to people from a Muslim worldview?

In order to answer this, we must break down this question into two:

- First, what is the Gospel message?
- Second, how is it best communicated to Muslims who live in another culture?

Review

In order to communicate the Gospel to all cultures and worldviews, we need to accept that the Bible provides us with God’s answer to sin. Sin, as we have seen, has three profound effects on mankind: guilt, shame, and fear. These three effects are dealt with all through the Scriptures. In the West Christians have taken the guilt theme and have traced it through the Bible. They have formed their understanding of the Gospel and their systematic theology around this theme. In the Garden of Eden, the Bible tells us that Adam and Eve became guilty and that all mankind after this is in a position of guilt before God. From the book of Genesis westerners trace God’s plan of salvation, to free man from guilt, right through the Bible. This is the standard Western way of explaining the Gospel.

The Bible also tells us that Adam and Eve were ashamed and hid themselves. This was the beginning of shame. The theme of God’s dealing with the shame that came on mankind runs throughout the length of the Scriptures. In many cultures, this is a major tool in explaining the gospel.

Along with this, Adam also replied to God that when he heard God’s voice in the garden, he was afraid. The theme of God dealing with our fear also runs through the entire Bible. In many cultures, dealing with fear is an important part of the gospel.

Today these three results of the sin brought on by Adam and Eve’s first act of rebellion form the basis for the various worldviews that have developed down through history. Shame and honor form the basis of the cultures that span from Morocco to Japan. It is almost exactly the same area as is covered by the 10-40 Window. (10 degrees below the equator to 40 degrees above.) As the Church in the West became more preoccupied with

guilt-based thinking, it has struggled in its ability to understand and relate the Gospel to shame-based cultures. This struggle is so pronounced that the western church has made little impact on those parts of the world.

Missionaries have worked for many years in fear-based cultures such as are found in Africa and South America and other areas. Some of these missionaries have reported their frustration that the Gospel does not seem to penetrate very deeply into the lives of the people that they work amongst. Yet these missionaries report that the worldview among these same people is made up of mostly shame and fear based thinking. The Gospel seems to have penetrated people's lives only as much as there is a mix of guilt-based thinking in their culture. On the other hand, Christians who have adopted their Gospel message to speak to those locked in fear-power worldviews have had amazing response. This should challenge us to reconsider the makeup of the Gospel message that we are preaching.

As we mentioned earlier in our lessons, when man sinned, three great conditions came upon mankind.

1. When man broke God's law, he was in a position of guilt.
2. When man broke God's relationship, he was in a position of shame.
3. When man broke God's trust, he was in a position of fear.

Guilt is simply a sense of having done something wrong. This implies a law has been broken. Fear usually implies being afraid of a consequence. You are afraid because of an action or inaction. Shame, on the other hand, is the feeling of embarrassment or a sense of unworthiness as felt in a relationship between two or more people. Salvation has to do with saving us from God's judgment, restoring our relationship with God, and rebuilding trust and putting power back into the hands of God.

The Holy Spirit

A question that all good evangelists should ask themselves is: "What is the work of the Holy Spirit, and what is the work of the evangelist?"

Jesus tells us: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." (John 16:7-11)

What does it mean to *reprove* the world of sin? The word reprove is *elegcho* in the Greek and means to admonish, convict, convince, rebuke, reprove, or expose. Those from a guilt-based worldview often think of the work of the Holy Spirit only in the light of *conviction*. Those from shame-based cultures often think of the work of the Holy Spirit in terms of *exposure*. John 3:20 (NIV) tells us: "Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed."

While all of us are affected by exposure, conviction and rebuke, those from some specific worldviews have stronger reactions to some of these aspects than others. Sometimes missionaries from one worldview expect to see a certain kind of reaction to the message of salvation, and are disappointed when it is not forthcoming. I believe that this is because we are pre-conditioned to certain sensitivities, and thus while some feel guilt, others feel shame or fear or a combination of these.

The Holy Spirit may be at work in the lives of our listeners, reproving them of sin, but they may not be feeling a conviction of the guilt of sin.

If we ask ourselves, ‘What is the role of the Holy Spirit?’ then we must also ask ourselves “What is the role of the evangelist?” Does the evangelist have to work hard to evoke certain emotional responses, or do these responses come from the working of the Holy Spirit in people’s lives? If the evangelist puts someone on a guilt-trip, shame-trip, or a fear-trip it is an emotional challenge, but not the same as happens when the Holy Spirit is poured out. Manipulation is not the work of the Holy Spirit. Conviction is, but what is conviction?

What happens if God is already revealing their sin to them in the form of feelings of shame or fear but the evangelist is looking for conviction and feelings of guilt? During the work of the Holy Spirit, guilt, shame and fear often blend in man’s mind to become something we call conviction. What that blend is made up of depends largely on the worldview of the listeners. In the book of Acts many people submitted to Jesus because they were convinced of the truth of his claim to be the Messiah, not because they realized they had a sin problem. They were already doing their best to please God through the Jewish religious system, they did not need to be convinced of their neediness before God. We must be careful to understand that sin is the key problem in systematic theology, but it is not always the key to people’s experience of salvation. Over the years we may have been conditioned to understand that salvation is a term that primarily has to do with *forgiveness* of sin, but it originally did not in either Hebrew or Greek.

Our Position

Guilt is a position before God. Now imagine a man who does something bad, is caught and then taken to court and found guilty. He is then taken to jail where he meets some inmates who are Christians. They witness to him, and he asks God for forgiveness and becomes a believer. What is this man’s position? He may be forgiven in the sight of God, and perhaps even by those he harmed, but he is still deemed guilty by society and he must serve his jail time, even though he knows he is forgiven. It is also this way with shame. Society may still consider us with disrespect, but we know that in God’s eyes we have been raised up to a position of honor. God has lifted our heads, even though we continue to suffer contempt by those around us. In the book of James, the writer points out that Christians in churches should not consider some more honorable than others. (James 2:1-9) We are all sinners, cleansed and raised by the work of God. The brotherhood of all believers should include forgiveness, honor, and empowerment, as these things not only demonstrate to the world what has happened to us when God removed our sin, but are the tangible effects that result when forgiven people get together.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion A

1. “If people do not know or experience their sin, they will not have a need or desire for Jesus” Is this true or not? Why?
2. How do people feel or experience sin in their lives? How can we show them that they have sin?
3. What is the role of the evangelist and of the Holy Spirit? Who does what?
4. How does salvation change our position before God?
5. Does salvation change our position before society? How?
6. Does salvation change our position before the church?

Lesson B

If the work of the Holy Spirit is to reveal sin to people then we can expect them to feel some combination of guilt shame and fear. All over the world people are struggling with these three elements. If this is true, are there three plans of salvation in the Bible: one each for guilt, shame and fear? No! Man’s problem is not guilt, shame or fear. The problem is sin. We must never loose sight of this. The Gospel is all about how sin can be removed from our lives. Our message is to tell people that their guilt, shame and fear come from something called ‘sin’ and that Jesus has the answer to the sin problem.

What is the Gospel?

The question that faces us is: “Are there three or more methods that we can use to explain the Gospel?” Should we adopt one method for one setting and other method for a different setting? When working among guilt-based cultures, should we stick to our legal model of salvation? Do we develop a power model of salvation for use among the fear-based cultures of the world? Is there a special shame ↔ honor model of salvation that we should use among the shame-based cultures of the world? What about cultures that demonstrate combinations of these three? Do we develop other models?

The Bible does not indicate that there is more than one message of salvation. Rather, the three themes of salvation are woven together in the Scriptures to present a complete picture of what God wants to do with mankind.

Any presentation of the Gospel given to people in any worldview should address sin, not just the three results of sin: guilt, shame, and fear. Salvation is all about sin, not guilt shame and fear.

The Bible, however, describes salvation in three different ways. These are: Propitiation, Redemption, and Reconciliation. This is what we will look at next.

Propitiation

The word ‘propitiation’ is a theological term that refers to the act whereby someone’s anger is either averted or satisfied. In the case of someone’s anger being averted, propitiation results in mercy. In the case of judgment, propitiation provides the requirements of the law, which is then satisfied. The three verses below speak to us of propitiation.

Romans 3:25 *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood...*

1John 2:2 *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

1John 4:10 *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

If propitiation has to do with the wrath or anger of God, then it could be charted this way:

Sin of Man → Wrath of God → Judgment of God
a → b → c

The verses below illustrate how the bible ties these three topics together. Follow the 'a' which leads to 'b' which leads to 'c' in the verses below.

Exodus 22:22-24 (a) You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. If you do afflict them, and they cry out to Me, I will surely hear their cry; (The sin of man) (b) and My wrath will burn (the wrath of God) (c) and I will kill you with the sword and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless. (The Judgment of God)

Deuteronomy 6:14-15 (a) You shall not go after other gods...(b) lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you (c) and He destroy you from off the face of the earth.

Ezekiel 8:17-18 (a) Is it too slight a thing for the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they commit here, that they should fill the land with violence, (b) and provoke Me further to anger?...Therefore I will deal in wrath, (c) My eye will not spare, nor will I have pity.

Zephaniah 1:17-18 I will bring distress on men... (a) because they have sinned against the Lord... (b) In the fire of His jealous wrath, (c) all the earth shall be consumed.

Ezekiel 7:3,8-9 Now the end is upon you (b) and I will let loose My anger upon you, (c) and will judge you (a) according to your ways; (c) and I will punish you (a) for all your abominations.

Numbers 16:41-46 v.41 (a) They murmured before the Lord so that ... (b) wrath has gone forth from the Lord, (c) the plague has begun. (The Israelites' murmurings kindled God's anger against them and, as a result, a plague came upon them which killed 14,700.)

John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but (a) whoever rejects the Son (c) will not see life, for God's wrath (b) remains on him. (NIV)

The anger of God rests upon all of mankind. Subsequently, the judgment of God is being poured out upon both individuals and groups of men and women whether in tribes,

cultures or nations. We need to communicate that the work of Jesus Christ satisfies the anger of God and removes His judgment from us. This topic of wrath, anger, and the fear that we should live in is an important topic for many worldviews. There are many people who feel this in their lives, and when the Gospel is preached from a fear ↔ power paradigm they understand and respond.

Sacrifice is God's answer to propitiation. God's wrath was poured out on the sacrifice. If propitiation is the removal of wrath by the offering of a sacrifice, then propitiation can be explained in terms of God's wrath being removed by Jesus' work on the cross. This concept is easily understood in most shame-based and fear-based cultures.

Redemption

In the Western mind, redemption has to do with payment for our sin and clearing our guilt. This is also true in shame-based cultures, where redemption has to do with a mediator working out payment to cover shame and to redeem the honor that was lost. In our case, God has been offended, and a payment must be made to restore the relationship between mankind and God. Most Westerners think of salvation in terms of redemption, where redemption has to do with guilt and the payment required by the law. Since we cannot pay our own debt, a mediator has worked out payment to cover the penalty of sin (our death). God has been offended and Christ is our mediator. Since we cannot pay the price, the Mediator chose to pay it for us. (his death)

Once again, sacrifice is God's answer to redemption. The laws of God have been broken. We are pronounced guilty, but God has provided a Redeemer, (someone to pay our penalty). The work of Jesus on the cross fully paid the price. We are redeemed, not through our own works, but through the blood of Jesus. We have been bought with a price. (I Corinthians 6:20)

Reconciliation

This is the act of restoring the relationship between man and God. It is more than the legal action of removing guilt. It is the act of God bringing us into a personal father-son relationship with Himself. Reconciliation is all about wholeness. Shame is removed, and honor is restored. Fear is removed, and acceptance and love replace it. In this case a Mediator has interceded on our behalf in order to reconcile us with our maker.

Once again, sacrifice is God's answer to reconciliation. We cannot restore the old relationship that was broken in the Garden of Eden. We cannot forge a new relationship. We are 'far' from God. Only the cross can bring us near.

Propitiation	– God's Wrath	→ (fear ↔ power paradigm)
Redemption	– God's Justice	→ (guilt ↔ innocence paradigm)
Reconciliation	– God's Honor	→ (shame ↔ honor paradigm)

All aspects of propitiation, redemption and reconciliation are dealt with through Christ's work on the cross as a sacrifice for sins. If God has done all this for us, then what is our part?

Repentance

This is the act of coming to God and accepting His way over our way. Repentance can be viewed in various ways. It is more than just turning from sin. It is turning from pursuing one's own honor, one's own innocence, or one's own power and accepting what God has done for us. It is also turning from a life of fear, guilt and shame to a life where one is trusting in Christ's victory on the cross to defeat the enemy.

Sacrifice

Christ's sacrifice on the cross dealt with our sin. When sin is effectively removed, our shame, guilt and fear are dealt with. The answers to all three lie in Christ's sacrifice on the cross to deal with our sin.

Where to start

When sharing the gospel, it is important to start from people's felt needs. If you are working in a guilt-based culture, there will be a felt need to deal with guilt. If you are working in a shame-based culture, there is a felt need to address shame. The same goes for a fear-based culture, needing to address fear. This will help you know where to start with people.

We who communicate the Gospel message, however, must share the full three-fold message of salvation. It is like a braided chord or rope. The three parts wrap around each other, strengthening each other. All three should be present in our Gospel presentation. Which one will be our starting point in sharing the Gospel will depend on the culture in which we minister.

In an animistic culture, it is natural to begin our message of salvation with something that focuses on fear. Man fears because man rebelled and did his own thing, and the result of this action is fear. We have a message of hope for those living in a world of animistic fear. This message of salvation would not be complete, however, without animistic people learning to understand that Christ came to remove our guilt, and also that Christ came to lift us from shame. Once someone understands all three views, they have a fuller understanding of what was involved in the removal of sin through Christ's work on the cross.

In the same way, those living in shame-based cultures need to have a complete view of salvation, but the door through which they will most easily come will probably be one that starts with man's shame in the Garden of Eden. This is the world they understand. Shame comes when people get found out. We are all exposed to the eyes of God, and thus in a position of shame. Every time we fail, we continue in a position of shame, because God's eye is upon us. Those that pursue the honor of the world have a false or shallow honor. The only honor that counts is honor before God. God call us to repent of seeking worldly honor to turn to him to have our shame removed. Even though we start with how God deals with shame, we must also go on to share the full message of salvation, explaining how God deals with our guilt and fears. All of these are accomplished through the removal of sin through the work of Christ on the cross.

Paul was fully aware of this when he wrote about making the message understood to the Jews, the Greeks, and the barbarians. Even in Paul's day, the world was split into three great worldviews. The Jews were a Semitic people who lived in a shame-based culture. The Greeks were the ones who were developing a guilt-based culture, and the barbarians were those who lived in fear-based cultures.

Paul did not preach three separate messages of salvation. He preached only one. Paul, however, used different techniques when addressing different people. In his letter to the Romans, he speaks to people who lived in a more guilt-based society. In his letter to the Romans, he addresses man's guilt as a result of man's transgression of God's law. On the other hand, when Paul was on Mars Hill he addressed the Greek's who had a pantheon of gods. He drew their attention to the unknown god and to Christ's resurrection from the dead as demonstrating that God was dealing with the human race differently. God was setting up a new order that started with the resurrection of the man who would judge all men. (Acts 17:1-34). Just as Paul used different starting points, we also should be sensitive to our audience, and start with things that are familiar to them in order to bring them to the message of the cross and the resurrection.

In Romans 1:16-17 Paul describes the Gospel message in light of these three aspects when he states: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (no discrimination or position of shame) For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The righteous shall live by faith." In this passage the Gospel is not described in terms of guilt, shame, and fear, but rather by using their counterparts, **power** (fear), **righteousness** (guilt), and **no discrimination** (shame).

Paul goes on to tell us about our new bodies that will be given to us in the resurrection from the dead (I Corinthians 15:42-43 KJV). "So also is the resurrection from the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. (from guilt to innocence). It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory (from shame to honor). It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power." (from a position of fear to a position of power). The glorious future that we look forward to is expressed to us clearly in terms of guilt, shame and innocence. Once sin is defeated, we will be raised innocent, honorable, and powerful. Our innocence will be God's innocence placed upon us. Our honor will be God's honor raising us up. Our power will be God's power living through us. The message of salvation in the Bible is clearly expressed to us in terms of God dealing with guilt, shame and fear, as He effectively frees us from the hold and bondage of sin.

Cross-cultural contextualization of the Gospel is simply knowing how to start the Gospel message from a place of common understanding with our audience. It is knowing how to relate the Gospel message in a language and form that is meaningful to its listeners. Finally, it is knowing how to bring the person to a full understanding of Christ's work on the cross.

In many cases, new believers drift away because they have not grasped a complete picture of salvation. They need a lot of teaching in order to grow because they have responded to only one of the aspects of salvation and may see the work of Christ on the cross in a very limited way.

It is the responsibility of the person sharing the Gospel to address all three aspects of guilt, shame, and fear, tracing God's message of salvation throughout the Bible. It is there. It is clearly demonstrated in the Garden of Eden. It is pictured in the various acts of worship in the Temple. It is addressed by the prophets and is clearly presented in Isaiah 53. The three-fold message of salvation is seen in the work of Christ at Calvary. It is present at Pentecost and in the daily empowering of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Finally, it will be addressed with the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. We will experience it personally at the resurrection of the dead and ultimately in our position and experience in heaven.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion B

1. Should fear be a part of our salvation message? Is God only love or can an element of fear also be involved? Deuteronomy 6:14-15, Zephaniah 1:17-18, John 3:36. How does this fit into your salvation message?
2. Can you find a local illustration where someone's anger was averted because of something that was sacrificially given by someone else?
3. Can you find a local illustration where something was redeemed or paid for through the sacrifice given by someone else?
4. Can you find a local illustration where a relationship was restored through the sacrifice given by someone else?
5. What does repentance mean? How can this be illustrated in your target culture?
6. Remember the story of Mona? If you were Mr. Li. What would you share with Mona? How would you present salvation? What might be some things that the missionaries could do to support her?

Lesson Seventeen

The Importance of Biblical Community

Technical Notes (23 minute lesson)

Story: 1302 words = 8 minutes
Lesson: 2519 words = 15 minutes
Questions: 6 questions = 30 minutes

Story

Over the next few weeks, Mr. Li thought a lot about Mona. How could they help her? At the end of the evening she had prayed a simple prayer to receive Jesus as her Savior, the one who cared for her, and wanted to restore her to wholeness. Mr. Li had carefully explained that no matter how badly we had messed up, God still wanted to draw us to himself. He pointed out the various women in Jesus' life, and how he did not condemn them, but told them to change their lives, and start living holy lives. Mona had accepted Christ's work on the cross for her sins, and she had prayed and made Jesus Lord of her life. The words came easily enough, following through with her life was going to be a real struggle.

Before they left, Mr. Li asked Mona for a list of names of the family members who were giving her the hardest time. Each of them took this list and promised to pray for these people daily, so that Mona could have some release from their bitter attitudes.

The following day, Mr. Li took a trip across the city on public transport. The small van he entered was full of people. He paid his fare to the driver, who was busy on his cell phone. During the course of her trip, Mr. Li observed the driver as he talked first on the phone and then to the passengers in the van. Someone near to him was in the hospital, needing money for an operation. The driver, along with other members of the tribe, was on the phone trying to raise the funds that were needed. During the entire journey this man telephoned his friends and acquaintances to ask them to pledge help. He collected a few dollars here and there. In between he would call back to the hospital to report his progress. No one was missed, not even the passengers. Everyone was given the opportunity to participate in this community action, and people responded. Everyone seemed to understand that if a lot of people gave a little, then the total could be reached, so people gladly dug into their pockets to help this stranger. Those who were closer to the situation gave more, but everyone felt good about working together, in the spirit of community. Even Mr. Li reached into his pocket to get some money. To his surprise, he

only had a large denomination bill. He gulped, and was about to put it back, but everyone was doing their part. So he passed it to the driver. The driver looked down at the bill, and then with a surprised look his eyes met Mr. Li's. "May God bless your hand" he responded. Then he excitedly called his friends at the hospital about how much money he had raised. Everyone in the taxi was in good spirits, and one of the passengers insisted he stop for a minute so he could ask a store keeper, who was close to him, for a donation. He returned a few minutes later with some money and passed it to the driver. Mr. Li was very thoughtful as they drove along. He was very impressed with how people cared for each other, and were helpful, even to strangers.

The following day Mr. & Mrs. Smith drove David to the hospital in their automobile. The four of them met at a small café. "I've been thinking about Mona" David began. "Perhaps we should help her by renting her an apartment. That way she will get out from her family."

"Yes" Mrs. Smith agreed. "I've wondered about the same thing." Mr. Li let them talk for a few minutes, and then he interrupted.

"I don't think it is a good idea." He said. Single women don't live in their own apartments. If they did, they would be thought of as immoral girls with no family to protect them. If Mona had her own apartment, and no visible means of income, her family would be very upset. They might even kill her.

"You are right" Mr. Smith said quietly. "She cannot live by herself." He paused. "How about we ask Anna if she could move in with her and her roommate?"

"It is a possibility" Mr. Li continued, "But I wonder what her family would think. They might still think bad things. After all, it would be single girls living together."

"What should we do?"

"I think we should support her while she lives with her family. They are her family, they need to take care of her."

"But what about her future?"

Mr. Li smiled. "We can pray that God provides her with a husband. This would be the best solution. A Christian husband, we need to ask for that."

"You are right" Mrs. Smith answered. "But those things seem so hard to ask for. But we need to exercise our faith and seek God for a solution."

"I think we should get some people together who can be Mona's friends." David said. "People who will love her and care for her. She should be at events where she can be a normal girl, and not feel badly about herself."

"What are you thinking?" Mrs. Smith asked.

"We should have a party. A fun party. She should be part of it."

"But why would we have a party? We need an excuse to invite people."

Mr. Li looked embarrassed. "What is it?" Mrs. Smith laughed. Everyone looked at Mr. Li.

"On Friday is my birthday"

"Perfect" Mrs. Jean laughed. "Let's have a birthday party at our house. Mr. Li, you invite your friends. We will prepare a party and make sure that Mona is there. I will call you when we have arranged with Mona what time she can come."

Several night later a crowd gathered at the Smith's house. Several car loads of people came from the hospital. Ahmed and the cleaners were there. Zay'id came, as did a number of others. Mrs. Smith had invited several other foreign couples, they were strangers to Mr. Li but they had met Mona. So Mr. Li was happy that they were attending "his" birthday party. Mrs. Smith had made a cake. Anna and Mona served everyone tea. There was lots of laughter, story telling, and joking. It was a good evening, and after several hours they piled back into taxi's to head for home. Back in his room, Mr. Li was preparing for bed when Zay'id came to the door.

"Mr. Li," he asked. "Can I ask you something in private? I don't want anyone else knowing that I asked this."

"Sure" Mr. Li smiled. "Whatever you say will stay between you and me."

"Can you tell me about Mona? She is a very attractive girl. Who are her family?"

Mr. Li smiled. He thought to himself 'I can tell you a lot about Mona, but I won't. Not yet. Not unless you are really interested.' Aloud he said something different. He told Zay'id that Mona came from a good family, and, he made Zay'id promise not to tell, she also was a follower of Jesus. Zay'id nodded, and didn't seem surprised at all.

"She is a new believer" Mr. Li cautioned. "She is very immature in the faith. But she does believe. She also has had a hard time. A young man asked for her, and just before the wedding broke the engagement. No one has asked for her since, and she is very concerned about her situation."

After Zay'id left, Mr. Li spent a long time lifting the whole situation up to God. He prayed that if God was in this, then the whole thing should move ahead. If not, that God would take Mona out of Zay'id thoughts.

Lesson (A)

The word "community" is commonly used to describe a group of people living in some sort of relationship with each other. The dictionary describes community as: "A group of people living in the same area and under the same government." While this is true, community is something more than this. In effect, our community is where we live, work, worship, play and educate our kids. We may commute out of our community to do some of these things, but in general terms, it is the group of people that we rely on for support in the daily activities and challenges that life brings us. Our communities provide us with certain services, and we in turn have certain obligations and bonds to our community. We pay taxes and participate in the various societies, interest groups and action groups that help form our community. While this is an accurate definition of community, it is not what many people mean by using the word today.

In the West, we often use the term "community spirit." This is where people participate together in activities for the good of the community. In the interest of "community spirit" we are encouraged to buy our goods within the community, and to participate as much as possible in the daily life of the community. We work together to keep our streets clean and safe and to provide sports and leisure facilities for our families. Community spirit is seen as good and positive, and those who refuse to cooperate are usually branded as outsiders, and even seen as selfish and self seeking.

Many western missionaries have lamented about the lack of community spirit in Muslim settings. Streets are often dirty, and people seem to be happy to throw their garbage just outside their homes. No amount of encouragement seems to work in getting people to take care of the community outside of the immediate confines of their homes.

Many of the more “modern” or “Western” nations in the third world are making great strides in the Western concept of community spirit. Efforts are being made to encourage villages and towns to have a town council, and for the council to take action concerning the issues of the community. In the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the government often refuses aid to villages and towns unless they have a functioning council that will take responsibility. Government funds are available for kindergartens, roads, garbage collection, and even mosques, if the people of the town can demonstrate that they can work together. All of this is seen as being modern and progressive, but it is not necessarily seen as building community. Community, from a Muslim point of view is quite different.

Muslims describe their religion as being a “community of faith.” By this term, they mean that Muslims living everywhere act as a community. They have common bonds through the religion of Islam which dictates how the community should live and how its members should relate to one another. Muslim communities are made up of immediate families or tribes, not necessarily people who live close to you in a physical way. Traditionally, the family or tribe has acted as a person’s community, and religion in general acts as the glue that keeps these tribal communities functioning. So in fact, despite missionary’s laments about the lack of community spirit, there is strong community spirit, it just operates differently and showed itself differently than in some other places.

Who are our Neighbors?

A missionary relates the following story:

“Years ago when studying the Arabic language I told my language teacher the story of the Good Samaritan. I then alluded to the idea that Christians and Muslims could be “neighbors.” This seemed to be a revolutionary idea to my teacher. The word neighbor in Arabic means “one who you are near to.” To the Easterner this obviously referred to blood relations first and marriage relations second. It had nothing to do with physical nearness. When I pointed out that the Bible tells us that the Jews and Samaritans were not “near” in the Eastern sense of the word, but rather were enemies and had no dealings with each other, my teacher was puzzled. As we discussed it, it became obvious that Jesus was teaching an important lesson about “nearness.” The Samaritan who took pity on the Jew was deemed ‘near’ by Jesus because of his actions and the attitude of his heart.”

This is a very important lesson for the church-planter. Nearness is a very important concept in the non-Western world. Building fellowships of believers that are ‘near’ to each other is an important concept that the church-planter must grapple with. The Bible encourages us to build communities of believers, where the “nearness” is based on faith in Christ rather than blood relations.

The Middle Eastern Community

The Middle Eastern model of community is quite different from the Western concept of community. For instance, when a young man desires to find work, he turns to his extended family or community, and expects to find work within that community, if at all possible. He will initially look to his uncles and to distant relatives to see who might employ him in one of the family businesses. In his mind, employment within the tribal community is best, for he can participate in the building of this community, as well as gaining a salary. If he cannot find work within his own community, he will then look farther a field, but usually with the idea of earning money and bringing that money back into his own tribal community. Each year, thousands of Arabs work outside their communities, some venturing to other countries. They will work hard and excel in their jobs, but they will also funnel funds back to their community, where they can build a house and eventually set up some sort of business within the security of their extended family community.

The concept of community being built around the extended family unit has been in existence for many centuries. When you ask a Palestinian refugee where he is from, he will tell you the location of his home community. He will often name a village in Palestine, even though he has never been to this place, and his father may not have been there. It is still the location of the family community, even though people from another nationality occupy their houses and farms.

Traditionally, ancient cities were made up of a collection of communities. Individual areas of a city were known as Quarters, such as the “Armenian Quarter” or the “Jewish Quarter.” (The word quarter refers to living quarters (section) rather than a fourth of something.) This is still true of many Eastern cities today. The older sections of the city are named after the place where the inhabitants came from or the ethnic makeup of the people who first settled there.

The existence of communities of families within a city is much older than Islam. It goes back to Biblical times, and has been a common element in many shame-honor based societies. For example, in the Biblical book of Nehemiah, chapter 3, we read of the various communities within Jerusalem working on different sections of the city wall. This was a very ancient tradition that is still found in some areas of the world today. While visiting the walled city of Sa’ada in Yemen, a missionary was told that the city wall was maintained by everyone in the city. Each family-community had a section of the wall that they were responsible for. If the wall fell into disrepair, the honor of the responsible family-community was at stake. So it was in Nehemiah chapter three. When the call came for the wall to be repaired, the various communities within the city each took responsibility for a section of the wall. Community spirit? Yes, this is community spirit, functioning well within the framework of an honor-shame based community.

When the religion of Islam arrived on the scene, it came as more than just a new religion. Islam not only identified Allah as the exclusive God, it also brought a whole new set of religious customs. The teaching in the Qur’an was not limited to only teaching about religious practices. The Qur’an provided teaching about how the community would

function. Islam was a total way of life, giving direction to individuals and also to family-communities. Islam's strength is that it was formed in the honor-shame part of the world, with honor-shame based communities in mind. Islam recognized family-based communities and provided guidelines of how these communities were to operate.

But Islam went one step farther. Islam saw itself as the glue that held these communities together. While cities were collections of family-based communities, Islam itself was a religion made up of family-based communities. So Islam calls itself a "community of faith." In effect, it is a community of communities, a religious community made up of family-based communities. "You are the best community that has been raised up for mankind." (Qur'an 3:110)

Islam is very specific about how people and communities should relate together. For example, the Qur'an and the Hadith (The Traditions) give very specific instructions concerning the forms that need to be followed in every setting. Detailed instructions are given about how men and women should relate. All manner of subjects are dealt with, and rules, regulations, and guidelines are given, even down to the direction one should or should not face when going to the bathroom. (Baring one's bottom towards Mecca would be to dishonor the holy place.)

While outsiders use terms like brotherhood, solidarity, equality, and unity to describe the community spirit in Islam, in actuality it runs far deeper than this. Muslims believe that it is their responsibility to care for one another. While this is sometimes overshadowed by the Western media portrayal of various forms of hatred and violence, the attitude of mutual care is genuinely fostered and felt within Islam. The whole concept of belonging is important to Muslim communities. Belonging is not just something that you opt into for a short period of time; it entails commitment to, and responsibilities for others in the community. This is why communities made up of a combination of blood ties and faith ties are very strong.

When a Muslim approaches Christianity, he considers religion as a community of communities. This thinking influences the opinions that he will form about Christianity. Thus, he is interested in Christian community with its rules, regulations, guidelines, forms, and customs. This is a normal part of what happens when another religious system is examined.

If a person is really seeking answers and exploring Christianity, he or she may well be interested in our Christian community. If the seeker has accepted the messenger as a valid messenger, and has then accepted the message as a valid message, then the seeker has one last step to make: that of accepting the Christian community as a valid community, and herein lies the problem.

For instance, a Muslim's concept of community and a Western Christian's concept of the Church are two very different things. The Muslim seeker is looking at the Church through the eyes of Islam, wanting to find a community of faith that he or she can fit into. However, the Western Christian's concept of the Church has been molded by years of

immersion in cultures based on individualism and a guilt-innocence worldview. Usually there is little room for the things that the Muslim desires to find.

In most cases, what western Christians have to offer to Muslims, as far as a community of believers is concerned, is something very unattractive. At least this is how it often appears to many Muslims who are seeking a viable Christian community of communities. Muslims, who are cautious thinkers, will explore our communities first, looking for a new home where they can live and function. If they cannot find it, they usually turn away. This is a very sad situation, especially when they have accepted the messenger as a valid messenger, and when they have listened to and accepted the message as being a valid message. That is why many Muslim seekers turn away with sadness and maybe even bitterness.

On the other hand, there are Muslims who are not so cautious and who readily accept a messenger and their message. Most of these have not thought through the issues of community. From my experience, most of them naively imagine that they will discover their place in a warm, loving, and accepting Christian community, with support structures much like they had in the community they left. Some are so disappointed that they leave the Christian faith.

Many others move from church to church, seeking their place but never finding it. Eventually they may accept a Western view of the church and community and settle somewhere, but often they have a feeling that they are missing something. Some, unfortunately, even after years of Christian living and involvement in the Church, return back to their old community. They do so, not out of a change of theology, but simply from a desire to be part of a community as they know it.

This leaves us with several burning questions. First, what are the essential elements that are needed to build a functioning Biblical Christian community of believers? Second, how does one help our existing churches become one of these functioning Biblical Christian communities of believers? And finally, how can we assist Muslims in their move from one community to another?

These questions may sound simple, but they are fraught with difficulties. For instance, when working through the Biblical basis for community, a number of important questions have to be answered. How closely does the Biblical model have to correspond with the popular models used today? If we propose an entirely new model of Christian community, how can we offer it to seekers as a viable alternative, especially if it doesn't exist anywhere else in the world? Then, if we create these unique communities, how do the members of these communities relate to the rest of Christendom? Do we view Christianity as a 'community of communities,' and do the believers in our new communities have a sense of belonging to a wider community of faith? On top of this, how closely should our new communities reflect the models found in the surrounding setting? Should our churches (or Christian communities) of believers from a Muslim background be "Christianized forms of Islamic community," or "Islamicised forms of Christian community?" As you can see, the issues are numerous and difficult.

In trying to answer these questions, we would like to propose a much simpler middle path. First, we should examine some of the Biblical principles of Christian community in order to understand some of the essential elements. Second, we should examine some of the steps that seekers take when exploring and analyzing our community. Finally, we should examine our own community and allow the believers in any given context to create or change their own community while adhering to the essentials as they adapt them to the local culture.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. How do people find and participate in ‘community’ in your cultural setting? Is there a difference between city and rural people?
2. What expression of community do you see lacking?
3. Do you think that Christianity can be described as a “community of communities?” What would this mean to you?
4. When people come to Christ, would they find the same expression of community?
5. What are the attractions of Christian community and what are the barriers?
6. How important do you think ‘community’ is to church planting? Is it something that people greatly desire? Does your church meet or exceed their expectations?

Lesson Eighteen

Biblical Principles of Community

Technical Notes (31 minute lesson)

Story: 560 words = 3 minutes
Lesson: 1278 words = 8 minutes
Questions: 3 questions = 15 minutes
Story: 482 words = 3 minutes
Lesson: 2888 words = 17 minutes
Questions: 4 questions = 15 minutes

Story

Over the following weeks there were several occasions when the group could meet. Once they went on a picnic, and several times they gathered at someone's house. Zay'id had now become a member of their small group, and even led in the short Bible study. Mr. Li was pleased with how he was progressing in his Christian life. He was also watching the slowly growing relationship between Zay'id and Mona. He was pleased that Zay'id was progressing very slowly and cautiously. He was also happy to see that Mona was now much more relaxed and confident. Her family, however, were still actively looking for a young man to marry her.

One evening Zay'id came by Mr. Li's room to talk to him about Mona. He had been praying about it and he felt that she was the one for him. He asked Mr. Li how he should proceed, since his family did not know her family. There would be lots of questions. How did they know one another, why was he picking this girl? Also, he was from a poorer family, and might not have the money.

Mr. Li asked Zay'id to sit down, and then he closed the door. "Zay'id" he said somberly, "There is something about Mona that I need to tell you." After he had finished, Zay'id sat for a few minutes looking dazed.

"I need to pray about this more" he said softly.

"Please don't tell others about her" Mr. Li cautioned. "She is one of us now, and we need to protect her."

Two days later Zay'id met Mr. Li at the hospital cafeteria. "I've been thinking about Mona" he said. "I still want to marry her."

Mr. Li nodded. He was happy to hear this, but he was aware of the problems. "How will you explain to your family that you know about her?"

"You are the common link" Zay'id said. "You know my father well. He respects you. You pointed her out to me. You met her at the Smith's house. You thought we might be a good match."

“Now you are going to get me into trouble.” Mr. Li protested, laughter filling his eyes.

“It’s true, isn’t it.”

“I didn’t recommend her to you, but I will now. We’ve seen her grow and mature in the Lord. And, she is becoming a strong believer. I can’t think of anyone better for you.”

“Will you come with me to talk to my father?”

Several weeks later Mona and Zay’id were married. Zay’id family wondered by the bride price was so cheap, but everyone said that it was Mr. Li’s clever negotiations. The wedding was a Muslim one, since both families were Muslims and unaware that the couple were both Christians. Afterward they moved into a small apartment near the hospital, close to Zay’id’s work. Mr. Li was very pleased, as this provided them with a home near to the hospital where they could hold Bible studies. Mona was especially pleased with the idea of reaching out to others.

“God has been faithful to me; he has forgiven me and has lifted me up, restoring my honor. I want to be available to help others.” She told the small group one night. Zay’id supported her in this. So a regular Bible study began in their home, and they sought for others to join them.

Lesson (A)

Most Christians are attracted to the Bible account of the early church. There is something about the early Church that we all like. It was fresh, new, and full of zeal. The book of Acts contains thrilling stories about the great exploits of the apostles and the first missionaries. While these exploits are exciting and commendable, most believers are attracted to the early church because they see “community” in action. Most western churches however, have lost a lot of this sense of community. Sadly, in some cases, churches are simply groups of individuals that meet for meetings, but never see one another during the days between the meetings. Part of the problem is that the Bible doesn’t clearly tell us in detail how to create Christian community.

When it comes to community the Muslim has an easier time of it. He simply obeys the laws and guidelines of Islam and participates in community as far as the Qur’an and his local culture dictate. Christians on the other hand, have the tough work of drawing principles out of the Scriptures that can be applied across all cultural settings. In effect, a Christian who is discipling a new believer needs to explain and demonstrate how the local Christian community operates. When community is explained and observed, confidence is imparted.

As missionaries, we must be very careful not to encourage the new Christians to develop definitive rules for everything. Sometimes we do this by describing the Bible as an instruction manual. If that is what it is supposed to be, it is the worst one ever written. Instruction manuals are systematic, logically laid out for the benefit of the ignorant with easy step by step explanations. The Bible is not like this, because it is not an instruction manual, it is record of God’s revealing himself to mankind. It is a rich source of principles and experiences, but it is not a methodically written manual.

Community is built around bonding

All of us have bonding capabilities. *(Note to translators: This English word comes from a word used in chemistry)* We can bond to all sorts of things such as people, activities, and ideologies. If we are to build a community, we need to provide things that people can bond with. There must be vision, goals, principles, friendships and other common elements that the members of the community can bond with. Bonding is an act of the soul; something within us that desires to reach out and bond.

Some people, however, resist bonding. There can be various reasons for this. Individuals with little bonding experience, or who have experienced negative bonding, may fear bonding itself. This is a common occurrence in some societies where individualism is looked upon as a strength rather than a weakness. In order to overcome this, community must be explained and then experienced. For many people, explanation is not enough. Once true community is experienced, a thirst will be awakened that only community can satisfy.

There are some people who have something pathologically different about them and they cannot seem to bond. This may be because of several things. The person may be held in strong satanic bonds, or they may have suffered psychological damage sometime in the past. They may fear bonding, or fear the hurt that one can encounter if they bond with someone or something that has the capability to wound them. However, I believe bonding is part of God's plan for man. People who describe themselves as 'loners' are really comparing themselves to the majority of people who bond with others. All of us have been hurt at one time or another by someone close to us. This happens because the bond we formed has been affected in a negative way. Once the pains have been addressed, people who have reacted negatively to bonding, learn to experience and appreciate bonding again.

What is community?

Community is simply the desire to be one with others, and it stems from a function of the soul. This bonding capacity/ability never goes away, and even when we are old, we are still reaching out to those around us. We will in fact bond to everyone we meet in some fashion (and even to many we don't meet). This bond is generally expressed in an emotion. There are two major types of bonds. Either the bond will be love, or it will be hate. The New Testament does not allow for much neutrality. Once a bond is made, there is an expression of community, even if the bond is hatred.

Community can be experienced at a number of levels. The normal pattern for this is as follows:

parents → sibling → extended family → tribe or clan → non-ethnic community → national community → international community → spiritual community.

Depending on our circumstances, we can experience community at any of these levels, but seldom do we experience community at all of these levels. In the Middle East, community is usually experienced at the following levels:

parents → sibling → extended family → tribal community

The religion of Islam tries to add the further levels of:
→ international community → spiritual community

This explains how a Muslim Arab can experience community at these levels, but still holds prejudices against certain other groups, such as rival clans, or people of a different national or ethnic background. Islam holds tribal communities together, but still allows conflict at the ethnic → international levels.

In the West, many people have not experiencing bonding at a family level. Broken homes, divided marriages, isolationism and individualism have robbed many of the 'community experience.' Today many western young people experience community only at non-family or non-ethnic levels, such as school or social groups. Powerful bonds are often formed at this level because young people have not experienced community on a family level. Many times young people try to replace the earlier missing family bonds with bonds built around their social group. For many Western Christians, “church” is simply a meeting/worship place where individuals meet. Bonding is usually very superficial, as deeper bonding takes place in other social settings.

In an eastern setting, bonding usually starts at the family level and often stops at the tribal/ethnic level. This is because when they get past the ethnic level they run into things such as different skin color, language, culture and worldview. What this results in is a juvenile mindset, (where juvenile means having refused to grow further). This is often a hurdle that the cross-cultural church planter will experience both in his own life and also in the lives of those he is ministering to.

Building Christian community can therefore be difficult. Western people can resist community because of negative or missing experiences. Eastern people can resist community past the tribal level, usually because they have never imagined that community extends that far. Yet the Bible calls us to community that is built on deeper foundations.

Image

Another function of the soul is to provide “identity.” One of the issues that we struggle with is a desire for the world to be molded in our own image. This is an expectancy that other’s must conform to our own understanding of how things should be. All of us seem to go through this phase of wanting the world to be in our own image; we want friends and family to be in our image, spouses want their partner to be in their image, pastors and leaders want the church to be in their image, Americans want the world to be in their image, and so, of course, do the Christians, and so does Islam. Hence the failure of community everywhere.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion A

1. At what levels do people in your culture generally develop strong bonds? (parental, sibling, extended family, tribe/clan), non-ethnic community, local community, national community, international community, spiritual community)
2. How does your church fit into this bonding pattern?
3. At what levels do you expect people to bond in your Christian community? What are you offering them or what could be improved?

Story B

Zay'id and Mona hosted a regular Bible study with David, Anna, and Mr. Li. The Smiths occasionally dropped in a well. They kept a list of prayer requests on a paper, and each week would review it, crossing off the ones God had answered, and adding others. After several weeks, the discussion at their Bible study focused on encouraging Christians to meet and fellowship with one another. "I think we should do a study on Christian community" Zay'id said. "I really don't understand the church. Is it just meetings, or is there more?"

"What do you mean?" David asked.

"Well, we meet here for Bible Study. This is nice, and we pray during the week, but there has to be more to it than just a meeting or two a week. Shouldn't we be doing more?"

"There is more," David said. "In my church we have music and worship. We also take up a collection of money and use it for church needs or to help the poor."

"This is good," Zay'id said. "Is there more?"

"We have classes early on Sunday Morning for children and adults. Then a worship service where there is music, worship, a collection, announcements, and then a sermon."

"So that is what church is all about?" Zay'id asked. "It's a meeting once a week?"

"No, it's more than that. We have women's meetings, men's meetings, youth meetings, minister's meetings, and so on."

"It sounds like a lot of meetings. Isn't there something else to Christianity?" Zay'id sounded disappointed. "Muslims pray five times a day. They have pilgrimages, and a whole month of fasting."

"We also have some special holidays, like Christmas and Easter." David said defensively.

"I think your idea is a good idea" Mr. Li interjected, "Why don't we study what it means to be a church?"

"OK" David said. "Who is going to lead us?"

"Well, what does the Bible teach us about churches?"

"I don't know, it's probably a complicated subject."

"Well," said Mr. Li. "I'm thinking of four names that the Bible gives to the church. Perhaps we could start there."

"What are the four names?"

"What do you think David?"

"Well, there is 'church.'"

"Yes, that is the meeting of believers. We can study that one. Is there another?"

"How about the 'kingdom?" Anna asked. "Aren't Christians referred to as a kingdom?"

"Yes that is a good one. We can study that as well."

"Aren't we also called the Body of Christ?" Zay'id asked.

“Very good, I think there is one more” Mr. Li encouraged them.

Mona looked shy. “I remember reading something about the bride of Christ.”

“I wonder why you remember that one” Zay’id joked, poking her. Mona poked back. “It just caught my attention one day.”

“Well” said Mr. Li. “Those four will make good topics for four Bible studies. Who want to take a subject and prepare it?”

Lesson B

The Bible uses four terms to describe Christian community for us. All Christian community should reflect these four principles.

1. The Kingdom

Jesus conducted his ministry in Palestine for a period of three years, and for those three years his teachings prepared the way for the formation of the first Christian community. It is important to note that from the beginning of his ministry, Jesus taught his followers about ‘The Kingdom.’ When John the Baptist arrived on the scene, his message in Matthew 3:1&2 was also about the kingdom. “In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judah, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” (ESV) This message also announced the beginning of something that was to be known as the Kingdom.

This kingdom was not some far off event, but was something that was very imminent. When Jesus started preaching, a short time later he also focused on this same message about the Kingdom of God. Even before he called his disciples, Jesus had already started his ministry of preaching the Kingdom of God. “Now when John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the Gospel God saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel.’” Mark 1:14-15 (ESV)

Jesus continued to use the concept of the kingdom right through his teaching ministry. Even in the days before his death, he was still teaching about the kingdom (Matthew 25).

The concept of the kingdom was a useful one in describing the new community's relationship with God and with each other. It was a concept that people could understand, for governments at the time were made up of kingdoms, republics, democracies and dictatorships. (Herod the Great was a king. The Romans had a republic. The Nabataeans and Greek states exercised a form of democracy, and many other nations were under dictators.) Jesus used the example of a kingdom to best represent what it was that he was coming to begin.

The King and his Subjects

The first lesson we should note is that there is a special relationship between a king and his subjects. Kings have absolute authority, and subjects are just that: subject to the king. This is a very important principle that must be present in our Christian communities. We are not democratic groups of believers. Rather, we are all subjects, and Jesus is Lord of all of us. The entire community and everyone in it is subject to the Lordship of Jesus. We live, act, worship, and function as subjects of Christ. Everyone is welcome to join the

community, but they must understand that in joining the community, they are placing themselves under fealty to a king. (Mt 7:21-22; 22:2-14; Luke 14:16-24) It is for this reason that the community must meet together for prayer and waiting on Jesus. It is for this reason that the community listens to each individual member and to what God is saying through one another as they seek to understand God's will together.

The Kingdom and Stewardship

Once the Lordship of Jesus is established, it is important to understand that the King has bestowed certain responsibilities on His subjects. These vary from individual to individual. We can see this in the story that Jesus told in which a king called his servants for an audit (Mt 18:23-35), and the story of the householder who hired people at different times during the day (Mt 20:1-16), and also in the story of the man who traveled into a far country after calling his servants and delivering his goods to them (Mt 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27) Everyone who swears fealty to the king becomes a subject, and thus a steward. Each of us is responsible for what God has given us.

Christian community will not work if we do not recognize the overall authority of God and the individual responsibilities that God has given to each and every member of the community. If members of the community shirk their duties, the community will struggle and ultimately fail. Joining the Christian community signifies that we agree to carry our portion in the community. We have agreed not to just "live off" the community, but to become active members in it.

2. The Bride

The spiritual picture of a bride and groom is first introduced to us in the Old Testament in Genesis, and later in Psalms and Ezekiel. In the book of Hosea, God relates to the Children of Israel as a husband seeking for his unfaithful bride. (Hosea 2:2). God, the husband, seeks to win his unfaithful wife (the Children of Israel) back to Himself. (Hosea 2:14)

In the New Testament, the emphasis changes slightly. John the Baptist refers to the coming Messiah as the bridegroom. (John 3:29) Jesus later referred to himself as the bridegroom (Matthew 9:15) and used the illustration of the 10 virgins waiting for the bridegroom to come, re-enforcing the concept of bridegroom and bride. The marriage relationship is used in Ephesians 5:22-32 to demonstrate both our relationship to God and how a husband and wife should relate together.

Then in the book of Revelation, the concept of the bride of Christ is taken up more fully. In Revelation 19:7-9 we are told that the wife has now been prepared and is coming to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

The Bible calls us the bride for several reasons. First, we are entering into a love relationship with the bridegroom. It is on this basis of love and mutual pleasure that we build bonds with one another, and with Jesus. Second, we enter a relationship of mutual loving service through clearly defined roles, where we will serve in joyful submission to Christ. Interestingly enough, the relationship is always that of bride and bridegroom,

never as wife and husband. The image used is one of anticipation, rather than a working relationship. Indeed it expresses a degree of separation as well.

Lastly, our whole identity is wrapped up in our relationship with Jesus. We are the bride and we will spend eternity with Christ. As brothers and sisters relating together in a Biblical community, we must relate to one another in love and mutual respect. We must recognize that all of us are at different places in our walk with Christ, each of us working on a different area of spiritual development. Without this understanding, our efforts at community will fail.

3. The Ekklesia

As early as the fifth century before Christ, the Greek word 'ekklesia' was used to refer to an assembly of people. This assembly was not necessarily religious. In Acts 19:39 the word ekklesia refers to the "lawful assembly" or group of men who settle disputes. In verse 41 the same word is used to designate the mob. Both of these are an assembly of people, and in both instances the word ekklesia is used.

Paul chooses to use this word ekklesia to describe the gathering of the believers together, and it is from this Greek word that we obtain our English word "church." However, the original word meant an assembly of people, not a building or institution. Church buildings were not constructed until later in the second and third centuries. In the early church some homes became regular venues, while at other times the people moved from house to house.

In the Bible ekklesia means a "popular meeting" especially a religious congregation such as a Jewish synagogue, or Christian community of members on earth, or even the saints in heaven. It is also translated as "assembly." The important concept behind this term is that it is an assembling of the believers together. The Bible assumes that the community of believers will have to meet together. It is interesting to note that the Bible is not specific about how this meeting should take place, what its focus should be, what forms we should use, or how often we should meet.

What should happen when we meet?

While the Bible doesn't give us a specific list of what should happen when the Body of Christ meets, it does give us a number of important principles to work from. Acts 2:42 tells us that the church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer.

Scripture Reading and Teaching Since the word ekklesia was already in use and understood by the Jewish people, we should start with their understanding of the word. The ekklesia was the meeting together of people. This started in earnest when the Jewish people were in captivity in Babylon. The temple and its rites and rituals were no longer accessible, so the Jewish people started gathering in various places, and eventually they constructed halls known as synagogues. In the synagogue, the Scriptures were read and commented on. (Luke 4:16-20, Matthew 13:54) The Bible tells us that the ekklesia is a

place where we should gather to receive spiritual nourishment (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2) It is also called a place of exhortation (Hebrews 10:25).

Fellowship & Edification Paul emphasizes that believers meeting together should strive to edify one another. (I Corinthians 14:4-13) Our focus should be on others and building them up. We don't come to get something out of our meetings but to give our part so that the Body of Christ is alive and functioning well. When emphasis is put on "spectator religion," a few highly gifted people demonstrate their ability to make music, sing, lead, teach and preach, while the others sit back and enjoy. This creates wrong attitudes and limits the ability of the body to function properly. People start attending meetings to get something from them rather than to bless someone else. If everyone is striving to bless someone else, then everyone will receive a blessing in return. While this has to do with attitude, the forms (how we pray, worship, relate) in our meetings often influence the attitudes that we have.

Breaking of Bread (I Corinthians 10:17) The Bible encourages us to break bread together as believers. This is a "community rite" or ceremony. Baptism on the other hand, was often a public event, taking place in the open at a river or pool. It was done apart from the community on several occasions. (Acts 8:3-39).

Prayer Jesus was very specific when cleansing the Temple, telling us that His house should be a house of prayer. (Matthew 21:13) The time of the physical temple came to an end. The veil was torn in two, and eventually the temple was completely destroyed. Today there is a new temple. It is the community of believer, especially when they come together. The old temple was first and foremost a dwelling place for God and his dwelling place is now in us, not in any building. If the old building was intended to be characterized by prayer, how much more should prayer characterize the new one? This was amply demonstrated in the early Church, where men and women would meet, sometimes for days at a time for prayer and seeking God. In effect, corporate prayer is an act of the believers coming together before their king. (Acts 1:14, 12:12)

4. The Body

The Apostle Paul introduces us to the concept of the body in his first letter to the Corinthians. The term "body" is very unique, and it is not a concept that is easily understood outside the Christian community. It is important to understand why Paul refers to us as the "Body of Christ." (I Corinthians 12:12, 27). We are not just a body of believers, a group that meet together. We are specifically called the Body of Christ. This term is very unique to Christians. People who work at Microsoft are not considered the Body of Bill Gates, the president of the country any more than the followers of communism are the Body of Karl Marx.

Paul, however, is very specific in coining this new term: The Body of Christ. There are two aspects to this term. First, Paul addresses the Body Parts aspect (I Corinthians 12:12-26) and points out that the body has many different members: eyes, ears, nose, hands, etc. This reinforces the concept of stewards in the kingdom. Jesus is the head of the Body. (Colossians 1:18) None of us is greater than the other. Each of us has different functions

and responsibilities that must be exercised and worked at in order for the body to function properly.

Paul then goes on to apply a second term to the concept of Body when he tells us that we are part of the Body of Christ in Corinthians 12:27. If we were simply a group of believers, we might have a president, treasurer, secretary, committee members and so on. But because we are the Body of Christ, we have different responsibilities and functions. Sometimes preachers admonish their listeners to live and act as Jesus did. While this is true in one sense, it is impossible when one considers all that Jesus did. We as individual Christians are not expected or equipped to do everything that Jesus did. Jesus did not leave behind millions of followers who are each an imitation of Jesus. Rather, Jesus left behind groups of believers known as “The Body of Christ.” If they function together, and each does his part and exercises his giftings, then Jesus is alive in their midst in a very special way. In this way the local body of believers can do everything that Jesus wants to do in that setting. Spiritual gifts are nothing less than the abilities that Jesus had, divided up among his believers. Thus, when a Christian community functions as the Body of Christ, Jesus is alive and ministering among them. (Eph 1:22-23) Groups of believers that do not function as the Body of Christ are missing something. They have fellowship, teaching, and a measure of spiritual life but they are not what God desires them to become.

Rather, God desires the world to be full of functioning communities of believers who act as the Body of Christ to those around them. Where this happens then Jesus is alive and well in that part of the world. This is why Jesus told his disciples the astonishing truth: “Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do, and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to my Father.”(John 14:12, ESV) This has a double meaning. First this means that we are to bring people to a knowledge of Christ and see people born again and filled with the Holy Spirit. This could not happen until the Holy Spirit was given to the church. However, it also implies that when Jesus was present on earth, he was only physically present in one place. Today, through the Bodies of Christ around the world, Jesus is alive and well and operating all over the world.

By working together we are to carry on Christ’s own ministry and be his physical presence on earth. As the Body of Christ we should also see ourselves as the temple of the Spirit of God. (Ephesians 2:19-22, I Peter 2:5) In the Old Testament the dwelling place of God was the temple (2 Chronicles 6:1-2). When Moses received the commands to first build the tabernacle (Exodus 27) it was known as the “tent of meeting” where God would meet with them. (Exodus 29:43) The same should be true of the Body of Christ wherever it is functioning. When it functions, the world will see Jesus alive and well, and they will discover a setting where they can meet with God.

In effect, when we gather, we are to do whatever Jesus would have done when he was on earth. He prayed, taught others, cared for others, and demonstrated the love, power, and wisdom of God. We are to enter into this ministry. I Peter 2:9 tells us that we are a holy nation and a royal priesthood. The priesthood describes our function and highlights the priesthood of all believers: everyone of us serving God together. The Greek word for

‘nation’ in this setting is *ethnos* (from where we get our English word ‘ethnic’). We are a new family, a new tribe, and a new ethnic group. Christian community is to be a gathering of believers where we can function together in a visible, demonstrable way. Galatians 3:27-28 (ESV) tells us: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Conclusion

So far we have identified four Biblical terms used to describe the Community.

- Kingdom: The Lordship of Christ and our role as stewards.
- Bride: We are loved and what we do is eternally important.
- Assembly (*ekklesia*): We should gather together in some form to exercise being the Body of Christ.
- Body: Each member has a part to do; when we function together, Christ functions in our midst.

There is still one important ingredient that we must examine. This will take a whole lesson to cover. Then we will look at the steps that Muslims take when switching from an Islamic community to a Christian community.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. Think of your local fellowship of believers. In what ways does your new community reflect the teachings of the Kingdom of God? How do people learn about lordship, stewardship and servant-hood?
2. Think of your relationship with God? Do you or others find pleasure in coming before God? Do your people worship with all their hearts?
3. How central are your church meetings and preaching to the life of the church? Is there a sense of community outside of meetings and preaching?
4. Do you think new believers are becoming excited about the role that they can play in the Body of Christ? How can you encourage them in this?

Lesson Nineteen

The Importance of Others

Technical Notes (29 minute lesson)

Story:	900 words = 5 minutes
Lesson:	1452 words = 9 minutes
Questions:	7 questions = 15 minutes
Story:	732 words = 4 minutes
Lesson:	1808 words = 11 minutes
Questions:	4 questions = 15 minutes

Story

In the months following Mona and Zay'id's marriage, Mona's sister Asma quietly observed what was happening in their marriage and home. From the beginning she had not believed that Mona would ever be happily married. Part of this stemmed from her own unhappy marriage, and part of it stemmed from the fact that she also had been abused by her brother, but no pregnancy had every resulted. She was pleased when Mona married Zay'id, for this would forever erase the possibility of shame that either of them could bring onto the family through their earlier actions. However, now that Mona was married, it seemed to her that Mona was happier than she was.

Asma's husband, Jamal, was the darling of the family when they married. He was handsome with a wonderful smile. He seemed easy going, and she was very happy with all of the attention that she received throughout the marriage event. However, they eventually settled down in a small apartment, and she spent her days looking after their two young daughters, taking them to her parents, and living much as she used to. Except that she was now married. But Jamal was never home. He would rise before the sun came up, and drive away in his taxi. He worked all day, driving around the city looking for fares. At would usually be close to midnight when he returned. Some days he did not return, as he was on the far side of the city. He would sleep in the home of another driver, and she wouldn't see him until he came home exhausted at the end of the long day. Sometimes she wondered where all the money went that Jamal earned. Sometimes she wondered if there wasn't another woman.

Mona on the other hand seemed to be very happy, and perfectly fulfilled. Asma wondered how Mona had done it. How has she trapped such a pleasant young man from a family that was better situated than their own? He had a steady job, and was home every night.

Their home wasn't plush, but there was something about it that was relaxing and pleasant. Jamal was home every evening, and they often had friends over, Americans and Orientals. Besides that Mona and her husband were poor Muslims. They didn't seem to every pray, didn't attend the mosque, and she did not think that Zay'id had every been on the pilgrimage to Mecca. They didn't have a Qur'an in their home, at least not that Asma had seen. But she had seen other religious materials. A plaque on the wall contained a saying that Asma had never heard of before. Mona had explained that it was from one of the old prophets. It was all very strange.

But then, one day something happened that started to things into perspective for Asma. She dropped by Mona's one day, and found her reading in her sitting room. Mona put the book away on another table, but when she left the room, Asma moved over to see what it was. It was a Bible. Suddenly thing became clearer in Asma's mind. Mona was playing around other religions. She waited until Mona entered the room.

"What were you reading when I came in?" Asma asked innocently, after the tea was poured.

"Oh, nothing much"

"It looks like such a thick book from here, is it from a famous author?"

"Actually there are many writers" Mona answered, and then she tried to change the subject.

"Is it a religious book?" Asma asked when it was possible to change the subject back.

"Did you look at it?"

"Yes"

"Then you know what it is."

"Yes, you were reading the Christian's books."

"I find it interesting."

"But it's been changed; corrupted."

"Yes, I've heard that, but I decided to read it myself."

"Mona," her sister looked at her sternly. "Are you a Christian?"

Mona caught her breath. Was should she answer? Everything could be ruined. But how could she deny the one who had met her need? She took a deep breath. "I've found such

beautiful things in the Gospels.” She started. “The prophet Jesus brought such a message of hope and encouragement.”

“I knew it” Asma said. “You are such a bad girl. First you get pregnant, now you are forsaking our religion.”

“That’s not fair” Mona protested. “You don’t know my situation.”

“I’m going to tell your husband” Asma said triumphantly.

Mona stopped, eyes wide. “Tell him what?”

“That you were pregnant before you were married; that you were not a virgin. He will divorce you!

“Oh that” Mona said, “He already knows that. He knew that before we were married.”

“He did?” Asma was incredulous. “I don’t understand it. He still married you.”

“Yes” Mona said gently. “He did it out of love. He did it to restore my honor. He did it to restore all off our honors. He is such a wonderful man, Asma, I’m so lucky that God brought him into my life.”

“God? What has God got to do with this?”

“The Bible tells us that God wants to restore us, and remake us into new and different people. That’s why I’m reading, Asma. I’m learning all about the messages that God sent. Right from the very beginning, he has been revealing himself and his will to the world. You should read it too.”

“Do you think it will help my marriage?”

“God can help your marriage Asma. I’ve noticed that you haven’t been very happy lately. Jamal never seems to be around. Can I pray for you, and your marriage?”

Asma didn’t know what to say. She hadn’t thought of her sister Mona as being especially religious. Now she was offering to pray. She stared at her sister, and then, a yearning started to grow in her heart for a better marriage. Slowly she nodded ‘yes.’

Mona didn’t wait, she immediately raised her hands in front of her, closed her eyes and began to pray. “Lord God, thank you so much for reaching out to me in my need. Thank you so much for restoring my honor, and making me who I am today. Thank you so much for providing me with a loving husband. Dear God, I ask that you would bless my sister’s marriage. Lord, bless Jamal, and help him to be a loving husband and father. Bless Asma, she is so dear to my heart and I love her so much. Please reach out to her and reveal yourself to her, as you have done to me.”

As Mona finished praying, tears were slipping down Asma's face. Mona reached over and gently wiped them off. Then she softly kissed her sister's forehead. "Would you like to leave your children here some times. I would be happy to watch the girls if you need to go shopping or something."

Asma was so shocked. She had been thinking evil things about her sister. The love that she was being shown melted her heart.

Several nights later, Mr. Li, David, Anna and the Smiths met at Zay'id and Mona's house for their Bible study. Their study that night was about laying up treasure in heaven not on the earth. At the end of the study, Mona shared something with the group.

"You know, when Zay'id asked my family if they could marry me, my family were so eager to get me married, that they never asked for any gold for me." Zay'id looked a bit concerned. "Gold" Mona explained to David and Anna, "is very important for the bride. It is the only thing that she will own in her married life. The house, the furniture, the children, all belong to the husband. If they every divorce, she can only take her personal gold, what she wears, with her. My family never asked for gold."

She paused. "But in marrying me to Zay'id, they gave me something more precious than gold. I have a wonderful, loving, Godly man. I'm so happy." Zay'id face was beaming.

"Today, I was reminded of that, when my sister came to my house. She has gold, a nice apartment, two beautiful girls, and a nice husband. But she is unhappy. Today she saw the Bible in our house, and asked a lot of questions about it. I loaned it to her to read. Can we pray for her? She wants us to pray that she will have as happy a marriage as I do."

"Well," said David slowly. "I think your marriage is as good as it is, because Zay'id is a follower of Jesus. Perhaps we should pray that Jamal also becomes a follower of Jesus."

"That would be a good start" Mona smiled.

Lesson (A)

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself. (Like 10:27 ESV)

When Christians think of the community demonstrated in the first chapters of the book of Acts, they generally think in terms of the love, support, and care that the believers expressed for each other. This expression of community was evident from the very first day of Pentecost when the early church was birthed. The Bible records for us this amazing narrative in Acts 2:41.

"So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and

fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:41-47 ESV)

This amazing spirit of community continued on for an extended period of time. Acts 4:32-37 tells more of the story.

“Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses, sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.” (Acts 4:32-37 ESV)

Later in Acts 6:1 & 2 we learn that there was a daily distribution of food to widows who were in need, and that the church leaders were involved in serving tables. It seems that they had really taken Jesus seriously when he taught them about servant leadership.

Community, not communism

There is a difference between commune and community that confuses many Western readers. A commune may be an expression of community, but it is not the only viable form of community. In the Biblical narrative it is obvious that people were selling some of their goods and distributing these proceeds to those who were in need. It is not clear if all of the people sold all of their goods or just some of them. Acts 4:34 - 35 notes that those who “were owners of lands or house,” (note the plural) “sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles’ feet.” Acts 4:37 seems to make a particular point about one individual, Joseph of Cyprus who sold one of his fields and brought the money to the apostles. The fact that the Scriptures mention this one particular incident seems to illustrate that this was a particularly noble gesture, somewhat uncommon, and worthy of special mention. The scriptural account also points out that he sold “a” field, not “all his fields.” If the early Christians had sold all of their houses and land, there would have been no place for them to meet together. The Bible points out that they met in homes, and even mentions some of the homes by name. (E.g. Acts 12:13, The house of Mary, the mother of John.) Obviously this woman did not sell her house. Rather, the emphasis in the Scriptural account is on the spirit of love and sharing that was evident among the early church, in which those with much, liquidated their extra assets and shared with those who had little.

The early church did not practice communism, nor did they live communally. In Acts 5:4 Paul says to Ananias, (who bragged of giving the entire proceeds of his land to God, while he secretly kept a part) “While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal?” In a commune everything belongs to the group and nothing or very little belongs to the individual. In a community the people belong to each other. In a Christian community the people and all they have, belong to the Lord. They are in a position to share what they have however, because they still have stewardship of the possessions.

The Role of the Community in Modern Society

In the West governments provide for the poor through welfare programs. As a result very few churches feel any need to help poor people. As a result, most of the church’s programs focus on themselves, providing programs for children, youth, women, men and seniors. Most of these programs focus on education, academic stimulation, and fellowship.

And so it is that when many seekers or new believers from Islam read the book of Acts, they become excited with the powerful demonstration of community in action. But when they look at the reality of the church that they want to join, their old Islamic community is often a closer picture of what is happening in the book of Acts. Is it any wonder that some go back into their old way of life? The great challenge for the church today in Muslim lands, is to provide genuine community and support for the new converts emerging from Islam.

Bible Teaching on Others

In the book of I Corinthians, the Apostle Paul contrasts three types of people: the natural man, the spiritual man, and the carnal man. These are illustrated in the chart below. Starting on the left hand side of the chart, the natural man knows little of spiritual things and the things of God. This man must pass through a cross experience in order to be born again and he then come alive to the things of the Spirit.

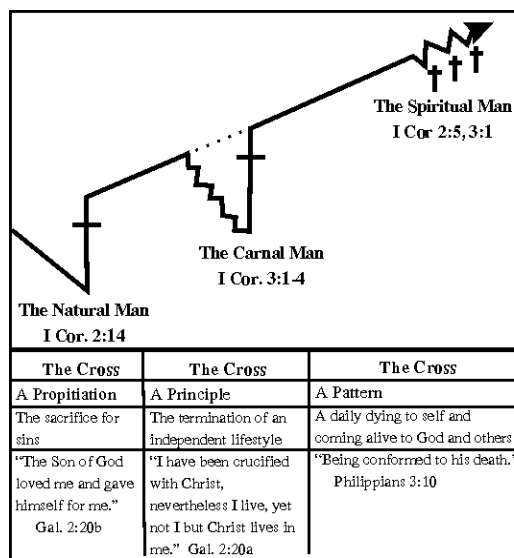
Once the natural man has come to faith through the cross of Christ, he then starts on the road to becoming a spiritual person. As long as we are on this earth, God is in the business of teaching, molding and making us into better servants and eventually into the image of his dear Son.

As we move along this path of spiritual growth, we experience a series of small cross experiences in our lives. These experiences are used by God to help us see the difference between being alive to ourselves and being alive to God and others. Philippians 3:10 tells us that this is the process of “being conformed to the image of his dear Son.”

Along the path between regeneration and becoming spiritual people, believers sometimes falter. Usually this faltering happens when they are faced with a small cross experience (something that they should die to), and they rebel. Rather than dying to whatever it is

that God has shown them in their life, they choose rather to disobey God. In this act they start down the path of becoming a carnal Christian.

While we may feel uncomfortable with the word “carnal Christian” in reality, being a carnal Christian is rather comfortable. Carnal Christians are concerned with their own welfare, security, and comfort. They have experienced regeneration through the cross, but they have refused to give up something in life that God has asked them to give up. They continue on as regenerated believers, but their focus in life moves from solely pleasing God to any number of other good things. They can become involved in their family, their church, and their community, but in reality they are alive to physical things rather than spiritual things.



(Learning about Union with Christ, Stewart Dinnen, Christian Focus Publications, 2000, Used with permission)

Have you met carnal Christians? Have you ever been a carnal Christian? As carnal Christians we are deeply in touch with our own wants and desires. When talking to a carnal believer about his dreams, they are usually a car, a house, something they would like to own, or a vacation they would like to take. These believers can spend hours discussing in great detail what they would or would not like. Whatever the topic, these carnal Christians demonstrate how focused they are on their own wishes. The crunch comes when the topic moves on to spiritual things, and we start to discuss what God wants and what He is saying. Suddenly these fine Christians, who are active in their churches and families, become quiet. Slowly questions start to come out, things like: How do you know what God wants? How do you hear his voice? How do I know what the will of God is for my life?

Can you see the difference between a carnal believer and a spiritual one as Paul describes them in I Corinthians? Carnal believers are in tune with their own wants and desires. Spiritual believers are in tune with God’s wants and desires, but there is another

important aspect here. True spiritual believers are also in tune with the needs of others. As they walk and talk with God, they begin to feel the things that burden God. Suddenly their lives become focused on others; leading others to Christ, discipling others, and serving them.

This was the experience of the early Church. They no longer cared about their own personal success and status. Extra possessions were sold, and the money was distributed to others who had little. It was not something that was organized by the disciples. It was a spontaneous act of concern for others.

This is the fundamental building block for developing community. Believers must learn to take their eyes off themselves and focus them on God and his love for others.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion A

1. Read Acts 2:41 – 47 and 4:32-37. How does this description compare with the atmosphere in your church?
2. What common bonds can you build your community around so that people will love and care for each other?
3. Use the chart in this chapter. God wants us to move from being natural people to spiritual people. Natural people are mostly in tune with this physical world. True spiritual people are also in tune with the things of God. What is the main event that everyone must pass through to start on the road of growing spiritually? What must happen daily in our lives to continue to grow spiritually?
4. If we refuse to die to something in our life, what begins to happen to us spiritually?
5. What type of things interest the carnal believer?
6. What must happen for a carnal believer to start again on the road to spiritual growth?
7. If carnal believers are in tune with their own wants and desires, what should spiritual people be in tune with?

Story B

Asma was in tears when Mona arrived at her parent's house in the late afternoon. The whole family was quickly gathering. Everyone was there, including Jamal, who looked rather sheepish. Earlier that day he had had a car accident and his taxi was badly damaged. The police were saying that it was his fault. His car would be in the repair shop for a week or more. That meant no income. And there were bills to pay. The family was devastated. It was a very bad time for this to happen. The other family members were also stretched financially.

"Please come by our house tonight" Mona said to Asma and Jamal when there was opportunity to talk to them alone. "I will talk to Zay'id, and I'm sure we can help you." Jamal nodded thankfully.

A couple of hours later, Mona and Zay'id were home. It was their Bible Study night, so everyone had gathered in their living room. They were in the middle of their study when

the doorbell rang. It was Asma, Jamal, and their two small daughters. Zay'id invited them in. They were a bit surprised at the group that was gathered, but sat down and accepted some tea.

"Tell us about the accident" Mona asked Jamal. So he explained what had happened and how he had not foreseen what would take place. His taxi was now badly damaged.

"Do you have a good mechanic who can fix it?" Mr. Smith asked, genuinely concerned.

"I know of some body shops, but I don't have any special connections."

"Well, maybe I can help. The man I work with, his brother owns a body shop. We are very close friends, and I'm sure I can get you a good price. Don't go just anywhere. First check the prices. Give me your phone number and I will arrange to bring him over to your car tomorrow so he can see it."

Jamal seemed genuinely thankful.

"So what will you do for money, now that your car is broken?" David asked.

"Jamal shrugged with open hands indicating that he didn't know.

"You have rent to pay and two little kids to feed" David continued, indicating the girls. "I would like to help you." He reached for his wallet. Anna was already reaching for her purse. "We would all like to help" Mr. Li said with a smile. "I imagine some of us can give more, and some less, but we would all like to contribute."

Mona grabbed a red plastic pitcher from the kitchen and they passed it around. Everyone put something in. Then Mona dumped it into a plastic bag. "Here, this will help."

"I will check in a couple of days" Zay'id said, "and let you know they need any more." Jamal didn't seem to notice the Bibles around the room, but Asma recognized them. She made a point to talk more to Mona the next day.

The following day Mona and Asma discussed what was happening in their lives. "You prayed that I would have a better marriage and that Jamal would be home more. Well, now he is home all the time. I'm scared of your prayers" Asma said with a bit of mocking in her voice.

"God answers in mysterious ways" Mona replied.

"Can you tell me more about Jesus?" Asma asked? "I've been reading about him, but I ready so poorly that I have a hard time getting much."

Two weeks later Jamal's car was fixed. Mr. Smith's contact had proven very helpful, and Mr. Smith had slipped him several hundred dollars. Jamal was shocked at the amount.

“I’m always happy to help someone in need. You don’t have to pay it back. Just be willing to help the next person God brings across your path, you is in need.” Jamal nodded. He then asked Mr. Smith about God. Was he a Muslim? A long conversation followed.

A few days later, Jamal made a surprising announcement to Amsa. “Tomorrow I would like to visit Mona and Zay’id.” He paused. “They are meeting with Mr. Li and others at their house to study the Bible. Mona didn’t think you would mind.” Asma was shocked. She nodded, and then stepped close to her husband and kissed him. For some reason her heart was filled with love for him. It was a new and wonderful feeling. God was certainly doing something in their lives!

Lesson B

Paul begins his letter with a prayer for the Philippian people. He tells them that he is sure that “he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” Then he adds, “It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart.” (Philippians 1:7 ESV) This was the secret of Paul’s ministry. He had others and their needs on his heart, not himself. If he wanted to serve himself, he would have stayed in Jerusalem and led a comfortable Christian life as a leader in the churches. But it was his burning desire for others which motivated him in his missionary journeys.

Paul goes on to tell them that he is a prisoner of the Romans with a very serious charge against him that could result in death. He then writes that famous phrase: “*Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*” (Philippians 1:20 ESV) Most of us are familiar with this statement, but few of us connect it with the next verses.

“If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall chose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.” (Philippians 2: 21-22 ESV)

Paul presents us with a ridiculous scenario in order to get our attention, suggesting that he himself has a choice whether he should live or die. He points out that he really would like to die and be with Christ because that would be far better for him. Then in verse 24 he points out that to remain in this world “*is more necessary on **your** account.*” In other words, while Paul would rather be with Jesus in heaven, the reason for his existence on earth is simply “others.” Paul has no secondary interests in being alive, outside of serving others.

In the opening verses of chapter two Paul instructs us “*Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*” (Philippians 2:3-4 ESV) This is the golden rule for forming Christian community. Each member of the community is to care for others first and for themselves last. The best example of this is found in the life of Jesus himself. This is why Paul writes the next verses. “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*”(KJV) What is this mind of Christ that Paul is

talking about? It is expounded in the next few verses: “*Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*” (Philippians 2:6-8 ESV)

In order for Christians to form true community, our minds must be transformed. It is not enough to only come to the cross for salvation. God wants to take us further into Himself and transform our minds and thinking so that we focus on others, not on ourselves.

A few verses later in the same chapter Paul mentions to them that he is sending one of his traveling companions, Epaphroditus, back to Philippi. Then he goes on to tell them that Epaphroditus had been so sick that he almost died. Paul points out that Epaphroditus was very concerned that the Philippians might have heard about his sickness and been burdened by it. How opposite this is to most of us! If we were so sick we almost died, we would almost certainly write letters home to tell others about our condition. But not Epaphroditus, because he had “*others in his heart.*”

In chapter three Paul points out that he had every reason to be satisfied with his Christian life in Palestine. But he counted everything as garbage in order to win Christ and follow him. Chapter four follows this thought with an address to two women who were at odds in the church. This is an example of how Paul solved problems in the community. Notice that he directs them to “*be of the same mind in the Lord.*” He entreats them to look to Jesus and imitate his action of caring for others rather than for themselves.

Later Paul admonishes them by pointing out that he knows how to both have much and to also suffer need. He is content in all things, whether rich or poor, because he could do all things through Christ which strengthened him. And he ends up challenging them at the end of the book “*my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*” If you pour out your life for others, God will in turn pour into your life all that you need.

Paul’s message is that Christians must think of others. He uses many examples including himself as a picture of those who have abandoned the pursuit of personal happiness and fulfillment, and have rather pursued helping others. However, in his pursuit to serve others, he had discovered many great truths about how God would, in return, supply his own need.

Today, many Christians are focused on supplying their own needs, and they leave the needs of others to other, the government, or to aid agencies. As churches focus on the legal aspects of salvation while members pursue the “*good things in life,*” the experience of community living has all but disappeared. The message of “others” is the forgotten message of the church today.

Community cannot function as long as we are self centered and think only of ourselves. Community is not a win-win situation. It is a giving of ourselves to others. It costs us

something. It feels like loss, but in the long run it will become a win-win situation as we learn to give and receive as a community of believers. The issue here isn't how to gain something, but rather how to lose it for Christ's sake. The goal is to give away what we have. To seek to serve others, for in doing so, we believe we are serving Jesus himself. (Matthew 25:37-40)

Many churches in the West have lost this sense of community. People often think of themselves rather than of others. They think about what they can "get out of the service." They focus on receiving a blessing from the Lord, rather than being a blessing to others. It is here that Muslims outshine Christians. Their religion insists that they give to others. It insists that they look out for those who are near to them, for those who are unfortunate, and as hospitality for anyone who is around them.

While Islamic community is not perfect, it is a functioning form of community that is often better than the community experienced in many Christian circles. This is not because Christians are not capable of doing community but stems from western emphasis on theology at the expense of community.

What we lack.

Today, the western evangelical church feels that it has "arrived." They have everything they need. They are theologically correct. They have the best teaching and preaching available. The men that fill their pulpits are the best preachers in the world. They have more excellent books and resources than the church has had all down through the centuries. Their hymn books and music machines provide them with the very best of Godly worship music. And so, just like the Pharisees of Jesus time, they feel that they have arrived. This is as good as it gets.

And yet they lack one thing.... community.

Many Christians in the west seem to have forgotten the qualifications of pastors. I Timothy 3:1-2 tells us: "The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach ..." (ESV) Today, the ability to teach is far more important than the qualification of hospitality. Western churches search for men who excel in the pulpit, but usually forget that they must first excel in hospitality. This trend towards theological and homiletical perfection at the expense of hospitality has cost the Western church dearly. While they have perfected their pulpit skills community has been neglected. Titus 1:8 tells us that our ministers should be "lovers of hospitality." Does this describe your minister or yourself? How easily can our ministers be approached today? How much do they encourage visitation, interaction, and the mutual support of believers? Fortunately, there are a growing number of evangelical ministers today who realize that one of the Western church's great weaknesses is "community" and they long to experience the freshness and the vitality of the early church as people cared for one another.

Let's be encouraged with the words of Romans 12:10-13 *"Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality."* (ESV)

While it is true that some of the evangelical churches of the world today are very "self focused" this is not true of every church and every situation. God is continually raising up new communities of believers that emulate the early church in their zeal and their dedication to serve others.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. Using Philippians 2:21-24 why do you think God kept Paul alive on his missionary journeys? Was it for his own benefit? Why do you think you are alive today?
2. Read Philippians 2:3-8. Do you feel that you have the same mind that Christ had? How is this demonstrated in your life and ministry?
3. Read Philippians 2:19-20 and 25 – 29. What did Timothy and Epaphroditus have in common?
4. Think of the pastor of your home church. Does he fit the qualifications of I Timothy 3:1-2 and Titus 1:8 that mention hospitality? Do you?

Lesson Twenty

Switching Communities

Technical Notes (34 minute lesson)

Story:	741 words = 4 minutes
Lesson:	2224 words = 13 minutes
Questions:	6 questions = 15 minutes
Story:	572 words = 3 minutes
Lesson:	2982 words = 17 minutes
Questions:	4 questions = 15 minutes

Story A

“But the Bible has been changed” Jamal insisted. “Everyone knows that.”

Mr. Smith shook his head. “Everyone saying it doesn’t make it correct. The Bible I have hear was translated from very old documents.”

“But the translations are not trustworthy” Jamal countered.

“In my country many pastors learn to read Greek and Hebrew. It is part of their training so that they can read the documents in their original language.”

“But those documents are not trustworthy.”

“I wonder” Mr. Smith said slowly “Can you tell me when the Bible was changed?” Was it before or after the prophet Muhammad?”

“I guess it was after Muhammad” Jamal said thoughtfully. “He refers to the ‘people of the book.’

“The Bible I am holding here is translated from documents that are much earlier. The Old Testament, the writings of the prophets come from documents that pre-date Muhammad by six hundred years. And every time archeologists dig up old copies, they are the same as what I am holding here.”

Jamal scowled.

“Besides,” Mr. Smith said gently “Imagine the problem that one would have trying to change the Bible. The Jewish people had the Torah for many centuries. There were thousands of copies in homes, synagogues and schools. The only way someone could have changed the Bible is to have destroyed all of the old ones; Not only them, but everything written about them. It would mean a massive destruction of all Jewish religious literature. Otherwise we would have conflicting copies today. But we don’t.”

Jamal didn’t look convinced. He tried another argument. “You Christians say that God had a son. I cannot believe this. God never took a wife and had a son. God does not beget nor is begotten. Jesus is just another of the prophets.”

Mr. Smith smiled at Jamal, trying to put him at ease. “Jamal,” he began. “Who is like Jesus? Think about him for a moment. He was sinless, he did many miracles and healings. He demonstrated his power over nature. At his birth angels appeared. The stars moved. All of these things demonstrate that God was plainly indicating to us that this was no ordinary man, nor an ordinary prophet. He is special.” He paused for a moment to think. “Tell me, who is coming again? Are any of the prophets coming again? No, only Jesus is coming again. This is God’s mark on him that he is different from the prophets.” Jamal fidgeted a bit. He didn’t look convinced.

“Look,” Mr. Smith continued. “No Christian anywhere believes that God had sex with a woman and produced a son. This is blasphemy. It is blasphemy for you and for us. Please don’t even think it. Also,” Mr. Smith paused “Christians are not trying to make a man into God. We are proclaiming that God became a man. He was made in our image so that we and he could communicate. And more than this, so that our sins could be dealt with and removed.”

“I still don’t think he was the ‘Son of God.’” Jamal protested.

Look at Luke 1: 30 – 33. The angel appears to Mary and says “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.” This is the angel Gabriel speaking. Are you going to argue with Gabriel?” Jamal looked defeated.

“Let’s look at Luke 3:23” Mr. Smith said with genuine concern in his voice. “A voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased. This is God speaking directly from heaven? Are you going to argue with God?”

Jamal was quiet as Mr. Smith went on to outline what it was the Christians believed, and how Jesus’ death on the cross provided an answer for the problem of sin. Jamal and Asma listened very closely.

As it was growing late, Mona interrupted and suggested that they meet again. Her house was available if they wanted to come again. They arranged to meet again at her house in two days time. As Asma and Jamal left with their two girls, Asma reflected on how happy she had been the last couple of days. She was now enjoying a renewed relationship with her sister Mona, she was spending some evenings with Jamal, and many of her questions about Christians were being answered.

Lesson (A)

In this lesson we will review what we have learned up until now. This will help us understand how we should move forward in church planting.

Some people think that church-planting consists only of starting a meeting, advertising, doing a bit of evangelism and gathering believers into a group. In a Western setting this

may be what happens but in a Muslim setting it is far different. Most Westerners see themselves as individuals making individual decisions.

Church-planting in a Western context usually consists of attracting individuals into the church fellowship and endeavoring to form Christian community with them. The situation is very different in the Muslim world. Usually Muslims are already part of a functioning community. As Muslim seekers explore the message that the messenger is presenting, they will also begin to explore the community that the messenger represents. They assume that when they accept Christ, they will become part of the community of Christ. This is a normal part of the process.

In effect, the messenger calls for people to accept his message and join the community he or she represents. That community may be culturally close or it may be culturally distant to the hearer's community. However it is structured, it still represents a switch in communities.

In this lesson and the following lesson we will examine some of the steps that seekers take as they proceed to move from one community of faith to another.

Recognizing our Community

Before we look at the list of steps, we need to recognize that we are all part of a community, and perhaps more than one community. No man is an island. All of us have networks of people with whom we function. Whether we like it or not, we are part of community. Some Christian workers have thought that if they moved into a Muslim country and communicated the Gospel message, they would win people to Christ and then form churches. They were surprised when those that responded to their message wanted to join their missionary organization, live on missionary support, and have the same standard of living as the western Christian worker. What they hadn't realized was that while they, as western missionaries were physically living in an Eastern setting, the community that they were relying on for their support included their church at home, their friends and their supporters in their home country, as well as the other members of their team on the field. It was natural for new believers to want to be part of the very community that the messenger is part of.

Checking out the other community

When Muslims start to respond to Christians as messengers and listen to their message, they usually want to quickly move on and explore their community. One missionary reported that several neighbor boys began asking his teenage sons about their faith. Eventually the missionary sat with them and started to explain what Christians believed. Within a couple of visits these young men were asking about the place Christians worshiped, and they wanted to come and observe Christian community in action. At first the missionary was frustrated by this interest in church rather than theology, however as he talked with others he came to realize that this was a normal part of the process of Muslim's exploring Christianity.

Now, put yourself in the place of a seeker. He becomes interested in the faith of the western missionary, and so he looks beyond the missionary at his community. Wow! The community looks great! Almost everyone in the community sends their kids to the best International Schools, drives automobiles, and flies to the West every couple of years. Everyone in the community meets together for prayer and fellowship, has each other's relatives visit them, borrows and lends things between them, and generally has a higher standard of living than the people around them. Wouldn't you want to be part of this community? Suddenly the seeker expresses real interest in accepting the message and becoming a Christian.

Everything seems to be going fine until the seekers discover that this community is closed to them. The International School and the automobiles are all paid for by people called supporters. If you want to join the community you must have supporters. And to get supporters, you needed to go to something called Bible College. After this you must join an agency. The hurdles are huge. What a disappointment it is for them to discover that the community they want to join doesn't really want them.

And then they discover something even worse. The messengers want them, a small handful of unrelated people with limited resources, to form their own community. It soon becomes evident that there really isn't a community for them to join. The missionaries have their own community, and they expect the handful of believers, drawn from different backgrounds and different families, to create community on their own. Because the new believers have only experienced community with those that were "near" to them, the task looks impossible. And so, many of them return to their old community. Not because they didn't have a messenger; not because they didn't believe the message, but because they didn't have a community to join.

In discussing these topics with Christian workers in the Middle East it appears that the initial focus should not be on "how to create the perfect community for Muslim seekers." These are topics that concern specific cultural practices. Each missionary in his specific situation will have to analyze the local culture and incorporate meaningful cultural practices into the life and worship of the local Christian community.

Today there are a number of people who were working on creating communities for believers from a Muslim background. Each of these efforts used different theologies, philosophies, and approaches. Some wanted to build a very Islamic looking community that would have few cultural hurdles for Muslim seekers to cross. Others wanted to build communities that could integrate more easily with existing Christian churches. Choosing the cultural practices which would help form the best community for people from a Muslim background is an interesting topic for discussion, but it may be a very academic one at best. The reason for this is that each of us has to recognize that we are already part of a community. When we come to Muslims, we come as part of an existing framework. The question we have to ask ourselves is: how can we make our communities more accessible to seekers from a Muslim heritage? We may naively believe that we are creating a brand-new community, but at best we usually start from the framework that we

know, and try to blend our experience of Christian community with the new convert's expectation of community.

Before we attempt to provide seekers with too many answers, we should stop and examine some of the steps that they may pass through as they enter into a Christian community, whatever that community looks like.

We want to begin with people who are simply contacts and track changes that usually happen in their lives, until they become disciples of Jesus functioning in a Christian community setting. The steps I outline are not given in absolute chronological order. They are provided as important points that usually occur in the life of the seeker. The order may vary and some things may happen simultaneously.

1. Dealing with Contacts

We start by classifying the Muslim as a contact. This is a person you have some kind of basis of relationship with, perhaps as a neighbor, classmate, or a regular business client. As messengers of the Gospel, we should desire to build personal relationships with people we meet so that we have a stronger basis from which to share the Gospel.

As you build bridges into the life of your contact, he or she will begin to trust you as a person and come to know who you are, what you stand for, and what is important to you. If you are an outsider, i.e. a foreigner, then reaching this stage may take some time. It requires a number of things to happen. The contact will have some questions about who you are. You need to know who you are as well.

There are a number of aspects to this issue. First, who are you? Are you a messenger? Are you an ambassador of the Most High? Or are you simply a businessman making money? or a lonely foreigner in need of a friend, or a foreigner that can help the contact learn more about other countries, perhaps even helping him to emigrate?

Second, what is your role in society? Are you just a neighbor or business contact? Will you become a friend? Are you active in the community around you? Do you get involved when neighbor kids are fighting on the street? Are you a leader, a follower, a learner, a passive or an active person?

And finally, what are the distinct marks of godliness that you are demonstrating? You need to be personally satisfied that you are expressing godliness, but do your neighbors also know you are expressing godliness? What are the marks of godliness that your neighbors are looking for?

For example, you might attend religious services, and thus feel that you are demonstrating to your neighbors that you are religious. You may take time for personal devotions and pray regularly. Perhaps you can even quote your holy book. Does this demonstrate that you are a religious or holy person?

What about your kids? When a foreign family moves into a foreign community the neighbors will want to know what impact the new family will have on the neighborhood. As they watch our children play and interact with their kids, will they see marks of godliness in the actions of our children?

As a missionary in a foreign setting, your role in society will also come into question. If you drive a late model car, have a great house, and have money to give to the poor, then you may fit into their concept of a wealthy person whose role is to give to the poor. In the Muslim setting everything comes from the hand of the sheik. Is this the role you are presenting? Do you hand out things? Despite our best intentions many people today still seek financial or social benefits from missionaries.

It is also important to observe and learn how the community recognizes and sees someone who is spiritual. This may have good and bad connotations, but the information is very important to know. Do spiritual people know and quote Holy books? Do spiritual people dress or act in particular ways? Will this help you in your role in the community? Do spiritual people speak about religious things in a different dialect, such as religious Muslims using classical Arabic? Will this help or hinder your message? How can you demonstrate true spirituality without being seen as uneducated and ill informed?

On one occasion while visiting a Bedouin encampment, several missionaries were waiting around for the sheik to arrive. One missionary moved off to the edge of the encampment, and began to pray. He sat on some rocks and began talking with God. After some time he moved off to another location overlooking the camp to do the same. The missionaries were all comfortable with this, but it upset the Bedouin hosts. They wondered what the person was doing. One of the Christians explained that he was praying. This created some discussion... what sort of person walked around and talked at God while strolling or squatting on the rocks? God must be approached with reverence and awe. In the end, some of the Bedouin decided that the person was not really praying. Perhaps he was casting spells on them! This misunderstanding did not help in the process of trying to build relationships with these Bedouin.

Once again, at this early stage of contact missionaries must realize that they are working hard at building relationships so that they can earn the right to be heard. The first step is to be accepted as valid messengers.

Not everyone is accepted as a messenger. In one Middle Eastern church a particular man loved to get up and share things. Whenever he stood to pray or participate in discussion, people would yawn, look the other way, or even start talking to their neighbors. They were making it as obvious as possible that they would not listen to this man, no matter how valuable his contribution. As far as they were concerned there were things in this man's life that disqualified him from being a messenger.

As foreigners entering into a cross cultural situation, missionaries must be sensitive to cultural issues, and realize that it takes time to be accepted as a valid messenger. Relationships have to be built, and lessons have to be learned.

It is at this stage of ministry that the approach known as friendship evangelism is most useful. We build relationships so that we earn the right to be heard. We work at being seen as religious people so that we earn the right to share our message.

These are the things we learned in the first lessons of this course.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion A

1. Do you feel that you have earned a hearing among the people you are trying to reach? If not, what are some things you might want to do to earn a hearing? Do you need to learn more about their lives and livelihood or what?
2. Have you had opportunities to share some parts of the gospel message with a Muslim? Do you feel that Muslims are responding to you and interacting with the message you are giving?
3. In what ways do believers have to “switch” communities when joining your church? Will this be true when you plant a church among Muslims?
4. Is your church culturally close or distant from the culture of the people you minister to?
5. Do new believers have a sense of joining a new community when they come to your church?
6. Are there benefits that believers receive when joining your community? (Perhaps a chance to spend time with the opposite sex, financial gain, or meet foreigners?) Is this helping or hindering your witness?

Story B

Mr. and Mrs. Smith were excited about their meeting with Jamal and Asma. They arrived early so that they would have time to pray and prepare themselves.

“That was so exciting” Mrs. Smith exclaimed. “They seemed so keen. I think they are very close to accepting Christ.”

“Yes,” Mr. Smith agreed. “Let’s pray that this is the night they accept Jesus as their Savior.”

After a short prayer time Jamal and Asma arrived. Jamal was full of smiles, and they started with lots of jokes. Jamal told of visiting the shop that was fixing his taxi. He was very happy with the work being done. The group talked about some of the things that were on the TV news that night. Asma and Mona were talking about shopping for children’s clothing. Mrs. and Mrs. Smith were getting anxious. The evening was slowly moving on and they had not yet spoken of spiritual things.

David arrived late, and apologized. There had been a big car accident, and the highway was closed. He described the scene as he had witnessed it, as his taxi slowly made its way past the three wrecked cars. Jamal then added several stories about car accidents that he had seen during his days driving taxi. Then Zay’id and Jamal got into an animated

discussion about car insurance, and how poor the companies were at paying out after an accident. They then asked Mr. Smith about his insurance, and what insurance cost in America. Mr. Smith cleared his throat, wondering how to answer and then quickly change the subject to something spiritual. But how does one move from car insurance to the gospel? But he didn't have to worry too long. David jumped into the conversation and answered the question about insurance. Mr. Smith groaned inside and looked helplessly at his wife. She rolled her eyes and looked the other way. Both of them were frustrated.

After endless cups of tea and coffee, biscuits and sweets, the evening started to wind down. As everyone stood to leave, Asma and Jamal thanked everyone for a wonderful visit. Asma was especially pleased. This was the first time she had seen Jamal so relaxed and enjoying himself. She had enjoyed the evening very much, and felt that it had been a great boost to their marriage relationship. She was so happy that they had friends that they could be open and free with. She felt very close to this group. That night Jamal held her hand in the taxi during their ride home. Asma was almost in tears as they arrived home. She whisked the girls to their beds so that Jamal wouldn't see how wet her eyes were, not with sadness but with joy.

The Smiths on the other hand were very frustrated.

"That was a real waste of time" Mr. Smith fumed as they drove home. "I'm really surprised that David derailed the conversation so many times."

"Yes" Mrs. Smith agreed. "We got nowhere tonight. There wasn't a single spiritual conversation in the whole evening. I'm sure sorry that Mr. Li couldn't have been there. He might have been able to salvage things."

"I sure hope that the next time we meet we can discuss spiritual things. I thought they were so close, and then this." That night Mr. and Mrs. Smith barely talked to each other. They were both very disappointed. After a short prayer together they went to sleep.

Lesson B

2. Accepting your message as valid

Once you have earned the right to be heard, you need to be able to share an understandable message. There are a number of strategic issues that you will have to face and pray through at this stage.

First, you should continue to follow your plan and continue to develop skills in language and communication in order to present adequately a valid message.

Second, your message needs to be contextualized for the person you are speaking to. If the person you are speaking to is living a life filled with fear, especially fear of demonic activity, then you should begin with a message that addresses the needs of someone in a fear ↔ power paradigm. If the person you are speaking with is focused on gaining honor, or on preserving the family from shame, then you should begin with a message that addresses the needs of someone in an honor ↔ shame paradigm.

One of the struggles that you will face at this stage is finding time to give a full and logical presentation of the Gospel. It is doubtful that you will be able to do this in one setting. Careful thought needs to go into the various aspects of the Gospel message that you want to share; and prayer needs to be focused on seeking opportunities where you can share these. Satan will do everything he can to keep you from having adequate and quality time. You need to prepare your sessions with prayer, and ask the Lord to take control of specific things when you next meet, such as: opportunities to share, who else might be present, and what interruptions will happen during the visit.

Finally, be prepared for the Lord to provide opportunity for you to share in more detail. Be bold and share. Don't be intimidated, but don't push ahead like a bulldozer. Be sensitive to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you. Take your opportunity and share the aspect of the message that the Holy Spirit has put on your heart.

On one occasion, several missionaries were visiting a very sick man, with whom they had shared before. They knew it would be a difficult visit, because there would be other visitors. They had made visits before and wanted to continue sharing various aspects of the Gospel with this man before he died. Prior to arriving, They specifically prayed that God would overrule, and that the people present at his bedside would be the ones God wanted to be there. When they arrived, there were several people gathered around. They tried to follow the correct social protocols for the visit. Then, after exchanging glances, they started to change the topic of conversation. As one of them spoke the other would quietly pray. Eventually they got to their subject. One of the visitors was keen to provide the opposing Islamic view on things. They politely asked if they could share, and then the man could have time to speak if he wanted. As the sick man concurred with this idea, the Lord provided us with a wonderful window of time. After about fifteen minutes, the other man was starting to get agitated, and they started drawing their little talk to a close, trusting God for whatever came next. Then, suddenly, a car arrived on the scene, and an important sheik got out. All attention suddenly focused on the new visitor, and the missionaries could politely excuse themselves, thanking God that they were able to share openly and clearly for a good period of time, without interruptions, and that their talk ended without any arguments.

The problem with a setting such as we have just described is that while the sick man had accepted the missionaries as a valid messenger, those around him did not hold the same view. This makes sharing particularly difficult. When working with a family situation, it is important that the husband, wife, and school age children all accept the messenger as a valid messenger. They will then listen to the message, and respect it as a message. The Holy Spirit can then do his work of convincing and convicting hearts. This work of earning acceptance takes time, love and perseverance.

Sometimes the listeners accept our message as a valid message, but may not accept the message as truth. In other words, they understand us and our message, but do not yet accept it. It may be still missing a key ingredient, the community of the messenger.

This is an important issue that many Western workers fail to recognize. Somewhere in this process, the contact will begin to investigate the community of the messenger. It may start out of curiosity, but as aspects of the message slowly take hold of the contact's heart he will start to consider the messenger's community with deeper interest.

3. Accepting the Christian community as a valid community

At this stage, the contact has usually moved from being a contact to being a friend. He has also moved from being simply a friend to being someone that you have confided in and shared your message with. He or she may not have fully accepted the message as true, but they have accepted it as a valid message and will readily listen to you when you share things.

Somewhere in this process, the contact, now your friend will start exploring your community. If this doesn't happen, you should start to encourage it, for it is a natural next step. You can encourage this exploration by being transparent about your life, your relationships, the struggles you face, and how God helps you in them through your Christian community.

Your goal as a messenger at this stage should be to move from being accepted as a messenger with a message, to being a messenger with a community. You would like the contact to accept your community as a valid community that has a message. This is very important for those from a Muslim background who are exploring alternatives to what they have traditionally believed.

Is Entering Community Important?

It is at this point that many missionaries fail. Many have not grappled with the correct concept of community and are totally unaware of how important this topic is. And thus, having brought the seeker this far, they fail to finish what has been started.

Part of this has to do with the Western view of how a person comes to Christ. In the West, most new believers come to faith outside of the church community. That is, they come to faith through a children's ministry, student ministry, a crusade, or an outreach program that may be sponsored by churches but that are generally outside of the church. The new believers are then encouraged to find church homes where they feel comfortable. In the West, many new believers never make it past this point, while some spend years moving from church to church.

Often the Western view of coming to Christ is completely separate from coming to the body of Christ, the believers. Westerners believe that you can be a Christian without being part of the body. Church is simply an add-on that will help you grow in the faith.

Many of those from shame-based cultures, on the other hand, will want to be accepted by the community of believers in Christ. They usually want to check out this aspect of following Christ before they make any rash decisions. And so they will start to check out the Christian community.

Usually Muslims will start by asking you if you pray, how do you pray, and where do you go to pray with others. They usually don't have any clue about private worship, or corporate worship, so they start with what they know... formal religious prayer. Sometimes they will ask questions about various churches and how they relate to each other. This is not a diversion from the truth, but part of the process of learning about following Christ.

How you answer these questions is crucial. If you are not happy where you worship and they catch on to this, the whole Gospel message starts to lose its appeal. If you glibly push the questions aside so that you can deal with "real issues" like sin and salvation, they will feel dissatisfied, or think that you are hiding something. Rather, take this as an opportunity to start to share about the body of Christ and how it relates together.

If you have anticipated the questions and have prepared yourself with answers, you will be much better prepared to present the full message of God's love. Not only does He save us from our sins, but He brings us into relationship with God and with our fellow believers. Most likely your inquirer is not only interested in a relationship with God; he may be keenly interested in what kind of relationship with other believers this implies.

Your Community

First, it is important for you to examine your community of believers. Everyone has a community. It is vitally important that you examine that community and decide if it will help or hinder you in your message. Can you restructure your community, or rearrange things so that your community can welcome new believers from a Muslim background? This may sound simple, but in the Middle East many missionaries have reported that believers who have come from traditional Christian backgrounds (Catholic, Orthodox, Coptic) often struggled to accept new believers who are coming out of Islam. If your community seems unsatisfactory, can you cooperate with others so that you have something to welcome the new believer into?

In many cases missionaries working together in Muslim counties have no believers from a Muslim background to include in their community when they initially start to minister. So the missionaries form community with each other, meeting and worshiping in their own language, and visiting in each other's homes. As time goes on, they begin to really enjoy the small Christian community that they have created in the midst of a Muslim setting. While this can be seen as a healthy thing for the personal needs of spouses and children, it does not create the kind of community that can readily accept new believers from a Muslim background.

It takes a great deal of effort to change your community from being exclusive (only for like minded Christians/missionaries) to being inclusive (for everyone, even non-believers from other cultures and worldviews). It is my opinion, however, that this is the only way forward. New believers from Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist backgrounds need support, friendship-discipleship, a place of refuge, and much more. If it is not apparent that these things are available in the "Body of Christ" he or she may turn away from the Gospel.

If the missionaries feel they need their own community in order for them to cope with the stress of living in a Muslim setting, how much more do seekers and converts from Islam also need a community. If there is no national community, and if the missionary community is closed to them, then how will they survive? In every case where missionaries have been involved in significant church planting among Muslims, those missionaries have opened their hearts and their homes to the new believers. Community has been inclusive, rather than exclusive.

Community Identity

At this stage you need to decide if you are going to work within your existing community, or try and create a new community. The drawback of working with your existing community is that some may resist your efforts in changing the community to be more inclusive. On the other hand, the problem with creating new community is that you have to pre-design it, and then find people to fit into it. If you are by yourself, you cannot have a community. It takes others.

New Community Questions

Is your new community going to be a sub-community of a foreign entity (evangelicalism, Protestantism, your home denomination, or whatever), or is it an entirely new kind of Christian community? If you create a new community, will it be seen as an extension of the local religion (Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, etc.), a new local community, an extension of a Western community, or some sort of international community? What sort of relationships does your community have, to surrounding churches, supporters and governments? Many missionaries now feel that it is best to build some sort of international community, where each other's cultures are respected, but not central to the fellowship and function of the community. If you are a cross-cultural communicator of the gospel, you may want your new community to look and feel more like the target community than your sending community.

In one Muslim nation, Christian workers created a multifaceted community of new believers. They met any interested people at a local restaurant (back room) on Thursday evenings to discuss religion and philosophy. Everyone was welcome, and it was a come and go affair. The believers at these meetings tried to sense when it was appropriate for them to invite people to an inner circle of believers.

In another setting, believers met on Fridays. The Friday meeting was an all day affair. The group moved from home to home of those that were able to host. The home was opened in the morning, and was open until late evening. People came when they could, as most had obligations with their families. During this Friday event, people dropped in to chat, eat, and when there was a group of them to pray, sing, and study the Word. This might occur several times during the day when there were sufficient numbers. Otherwise the teacher would visit, talk and pray with the ones and twos that dropped in. The missionaries working in this situation told me that they found this to be very satisfactory, and that they were starting a third meeting for young couples, especially those with small children. They also told me that they received their sole spiritual support from this

community. Thus, it was the kind of community where the new converts could also find their sole spiritual support.

Community culture and structure

Every community has its own internal culture. If you are working through an existing community, don't hide it, but examine it and decide if it is helpful. Will the members of your community accommodate new believers or believers from a different background? Don't assume that they will. Most church communities are built around something. Perhaps it is a family unit. Perhaps it was the founder. Perhaps it is a denominational tie. Don't assume that the members of your community will welcome new believers, especially if they are from a radically different background. This is especially true if your community represents a guilt-based culture, and you are trying to assimilate people from shame or fear-based cultures.

Structure and leadership style

It will be important for you to examine your community from the perspective of the new believers. What are these seekers seeing? What are they experiencing? They might accept that your community is a valid community for you, but can they fit in? Is this something for themselves? Is it in the realm of reasonableness from their point of view?

If your church-planting team has never discussed community, many of your contacts will reach this point and go no further, because there is not a valid community for them. Others may go further if they can envisage themselves living like you do, and being part of the various communities that you are part of. So don't be surprised when new believers want to join your mission organization, or travel and visit your friends and supporters.

From the seekers point of view, he will probably assume he is exploring the message as he works through understanding the community. The message and the community are usually one and the same to him.

Seekers from a Muslim background usually think we are bringing a completed holistic message. On the other hand, westerners often think that they are bringing the religious part of the message, and that the new believers will adapt their culture and community around it. If you are expecting your new believers to create their own unique community all on their own by reading the Bible and applying the principles they find, then you should communicate this to them, and prepare them to understand the Bible in this context. This, however, is an almost impossible task. Most new believers from a Muslim background have no experience in studying religious things. Most have never read a religious text and thought about what it means. Islam does not require this. Discussion and questioning are often frowned upon as they fly in the face of submission.

New believers from Islam generally do not easily create Christian communities wherever they go. In many cases they continue to find their best support in Muslim community and eventually slip back into Islam.

It is important that we clearly present to seekers how our communities operate, and invite them to participate with us in Christian community. Let them experience the love of Christ as it is shared among the brethren. The Bible tells us that they will know that we are Christians by our love for each other, and that they will be drawn into the faith when they see a loving Christian community in operation.

So when seekers start exploring your Christian community, share it with them. Be transparent. Allow them to come to your meetings and bask in the love of Christ. If your meetings are generally agency business meetings, separate the two... keep the business for those who are part of the agency, and offer worship, prayer, and fellowship for those who are part of the body of Christ. Worship should not be exclusive for only those who are part of a missionary team.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. When you witness, do people express an interest in knowing about who your friends are, or how you worship? How much do they play a part in your life and in the conversations you are having? Is there a way you can express your appreciation for the Christian fellowship that you have and the Christian community that you experience?
2. Do you feel that it is important for new believers to not only come into a spiritual relationship with Christ, but that they should come into relationship with his body?
3. Spend some time thinking about the Christian communities that you represent. Are these communities open or closed to the new believers? Would they be open to believers from other backgrounds or ethnic groups?
4. What sort of structure and culture does your church. Is this foreign or familiar to the new believers? Do you think they are comfortable with this? What might they want to change?

Lesson Twenty One

Steps to Changing Community

Technical Notes (36 minutes)

Story: 759 words = 4 minutes
Lesson: 1959 words = 12 minutes
Questions: 6 questions = 15 minutes
Story: 1226 words = 7 minutes
Lesson: 2257 words = 13 minutes
Questions: 5 questions = 15 minutes

STORY A

Several days later the Smiths, Mona & Zay'id and Asma & Jamal met again. Anna was also there, but offered to take the girls into another room to play with them.

"Well," Mr. Smith smiled, making sure he could direct the conversation from the first. "We started talking the other day about Christian things. Do you have questions about Christianity that you want to discuss?"

"Actually, Asma and I have been talking about the things you have been sharing with us, and we were wondering if wouldn't mind answering a few more of our questions."

"Sure" Mr. Smith smiled, "I can try, but there is no guarantee that I have all the answers. But I will try."

"We were wondering about how Christians pray."

"I don't understand?"

"Well, we were wondering if we could visit a church and observe what people are doing."

"Well, I can tell you about it." Mr. Smith started. "It's really pretty simple. We sing some songs, read the Bible, pray, and someone preaches a sermon."

"We would really like to visit a church to see this."

"I don't know" Mr. Smith looked confused. "The church that my wife and I attend is in English. It is on the other side of town."

“Do men and women pray together?” Asma asked. “In Islam only the men enter the mosque.”

“Yes, we mix together. Men and women sit together.”

“You sit when you pray? Do you sit on the floor like in a mosque?”

“No, we sit on chairs.”

“Chairs? Do you sit through the whole prayer time?”

“Actually, sometimes we sit and sometimes we stand.”

“Do you bow down?”

“No, we don’t bow down. We either sit or stand.”

“And men and women sit together?”

“Yes”

“So, do some men sometimes sit by another man’s wife.”

“Yes, but I don’t understand where this is leading. We just come and sit and worship.” Mr. Smith said, slightly exasperated.

“What do you mean by worship?”

“That includes singing, praying, and studying God’s word.” Mrs. Smith offered.

“Don’t forget the offering. That is also part of our worship. We worship God with our tithes and offerings.”

“To whom do you give your money?”

“We pass a plate around, actually more like a large bowl, and people put their money in it.”

“You must pass it through the crowd?”

“Yes, sort of.”

“Does anyone needy ever take money out?”

“No we just pass it around. We have men called ‘ushers’ who pass the plate and people place the money in it.”

“Who gets the money?”

“Well, the ushers count it and it is given to the leaders of the church to decide what to do with it.”

“Do ushers ever steal money?”

“We hope not” Mr. Smith joked. “Usually we have two or three men there when the money is counted.”

“You don’t trust one another?”

Mr. Smith was getting annoyed. “Don’t you have any more questions about Jesus?”

“Actually, we were wondering about fasting. Do Christians fast?”

At the end of the meeting, Mr. Smith was quite upset, but he managed to smile and say goodbye to everyone. A few days later he met with Mr. Li and David.

“I don’t know why we are messing around with Asma and Jamal. I don’t really think they are interested in the gospel.”

“Why do you say that?” Mr. Li asked.

“Because their questions are all about how we pray, how we hold our hands, who counts the offering money, do we fast like Muslims in the month of Ramada, and, get this” Mr. Smith snorted. “He wanted to know if we went to Jerusalem or Bethlehem for our pilgrimage.”

“Didn’t you talk about Jesus, or God?” David asked.

“No, nothing like that. All he wanted to talk about was comparing religious forms. Did we stand or sit, and when. It was all very strange.”

Mr. Li had been quiet up until this time. “Perhaps they really want to know more about Christianity, and this is there way of doing it.”

“I don’t know.” Mr. Smith said. “It sure seems strange to me. I want to talk about God, and explain about Jesus’ death on the cross: theology not religion.”

“Perhaps they have never talked about theology.” Mr. Li said. “Perhaps his experience with Islam has been all about doing religion. He may not know anything else.”

Mr. Smith looked at Mr. Li. “That’s very interesting. Very interesting. I’m going to have to think about this. I’m ready to argue theology. I really don’t know how to do anything else.”

Lesson A

4. Accepting the Forms of the Message

At this stage the seeker starts to explore your community to discover if it is a valid community for him but he is neither fully a part of it nor feels a part of it. If you invite the seeker into your community, he will start adapting the forms and processes of the community.

One of the first forms that a seeker may adopt is the prayer of salvation. If you ask him to pray at this point, he will readily pray and accept Christ as his Savior. This may not be so much an expression of his personal identification with Christ as his desire to explore and be part of the community, and to follow the forms of the community.

At this point, he will become interested in other outward forms. How do you pray? What sort of words do you use, and what are the important body positions, etc. He will become interested in what you do with your Bible. How do you hold it, when do you read it? If you put marks in it, why?

Another question that will arise is: what do you do on festive occasions, and religious observances? In many traditional settings, festive occasions are celebrated in a similar ways, with people visiting each other, eating festive foods and drinking traditional beverages. He may miss this and misunderstand Western Christian events where small family units meet together and exclude the wider community. (E.g. North American Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners)

He or she will also become very interested in how you relate to members of the opposite sex. How do you greet each other? How do you speak and relate together? He or she may have heard wild stories about how free Christians are with members of the opposite sex. Although these stories are false, they have their roots in truth. Your male Muslim contacts may want to test this freedom to know if this is the kind of community he is entering into. His own community may have very strict laws on how members of the opposite sex relate. By entering into a freer atmosphere, he may assume that there is total freedom and may act very inappropriately. Some national believers from a traditional Christian background in Muslim countries have been greatly offended by this and assume that all Muslim young men are only interested in their women, and not religion. You must be prepared for major misunderstandings.

Muslim women may have the opposite reaction. They may have heard the same stories, and may be very frightened to attend a worship service. Great care and sensitivity needs to be exercised when bringing these women into a Christian worship place. Women at the mosque usually occupy a totally separate room from the men. How will you handle this in your community?

Another issue that may arise is that of the processes of discipleship. The seeker should learn what is expected in the discipleship process. He also needs to know how to present himself properly in the new community. Does he need a shirt and tie for worship? If

everyone wears these, and he does not own these, he will feel very uncomfortable. If you provide them, he will feel they are required. If his good clothes are in the wash, he may feel that he cannot come to church.

Your community needs to have a very clear idea of what community worship is. How is it done? Will you have musical instruments? Will you sing? Will you use a drum? Will you follow a traditional Western order of worship? Does everyone need to sit on a chair and have a Bible and song book? If so, will the new believer feel that he cannot worship God without these?

Other forms and processes

How does the community handle weddings, funerals, birthdays, tithing, helping the poor, etc? What about helping the seeker if he has a material need? The seeker may ask questions, or he may even test the community in various ways to see how it reacts to him. This test is usually an investigative process to discover the forms and processes of the community. The messenger may think he is dealing with a real believer at this point, but the contact may be just testing community to see if it is trustworthy. He probably has heard that there is money in the community, and may be testing the community to see if financial help might be available to him. The messenger, on the other hand, may think the new believer is focused on money, has backslidden, or is now revealing his true motive. What is required at this point is an explanation of how the community helps others. If it is not explained to the seeker, he could reject the community and move on. This is really a learning stage, and should be handled as such.

5. Investigating the Power of the Message

The previous steps are usually taken through the initiative of the contact. He has let the messenger know he is interested in hearing the message and exploring the community. Now the messenger may have to take the initiative.

A Difficult Question

There is a lot of confusion at this point about where the seeker is at. He may have prayed a prayer of salvation long before this, and so the leadership may be considering baptizing him.

For the majority of people in the West a personal relationship with God comes first, and the relationship with the community comes second. They assume that if the seeker has said a prayer of salvation, and if he is now participating in the forms of the community, coming for worship, Bible Study and fellowship, that he is a true believer.

For a lot of evangelicals, baptism is the marker (testimony) to a personal relationship with God, and your intention to become part of the community. In the Muslim context, they may have already become part of the community, but they may not yet have a personal relationship with Christ.

So the question of baptism is a difficult one. The decision to baptize may have a lot to do with your theology. (i.e., a Presbyterian view versus a Baptist view), but it also needs to be viewed in relation to seekers exploring the community.

Important Note

Please remember that the stages I am presenting here may not be happening one after the other. They may be overlapping, or taking place at different times. I am simply presenting what has been discovered to be a very common order. So, this stage that we are discussing is probably happening parallel with some of the previous stages. However, at some point, it becomes an issue.

A Change of Focus

In actuality, if the seeker has been following the steps we have outlined, he has still only grasped the physical side of the Christian religion. This is understandable, as much of Islam is made up of physical activities. Now the focus needs to change. Spiritual issues must be dealt with, not just community. The seekers need to experience personally divine power in some form.

If the community has not been practicing this, the messenger needs to start telling stories of when God worked in his personal life. It is imperative that the seeker enters into wanting a personal experience with God. You, as a messenger want to impart a desire to enter into the deeper things of God. As you encourage this, your seekers should then take some initiative to investigate the power of the message.

The first step the messenger should take is to reveal himself and his community. This step is where the messenger is revealing the Spirit and spiritual things. (External and internal). The seeker needs to be made aware how the Holy Spirit affects the messenger's life as well as the messenger's community.

6. Seeing the Transforming Power of the Holy Spirit

Having explored the forms of the message, the seeker needs to experience personally the power of the Spirit in his or her personal life and in the Christian community. This requires dealing with core issues like transparency, repentance and forgiveness.

Muslim seekers need to discover the transforming power of God that changes them from being people who hide behind facades to those who are empowered by God to be transparent.

As the Holy Spirit is transforming, some cultural values will come into question. You need to be prepared to know how these should be dealt with. What you do with these issues is more important than what the issues actually are.

Some issues that will arise at this point:

First, the Holy Spirit will begin to bring up issues in the seekers life. They may be volunteered by the seeker, or he or she may be put into a situation where these issues

become evident. Whatever happens at this point, it should be the work of the Holy Spirit, not the accusation or prompting of the messenger or members of the Christian community.

As we have mentioned, most shame based cultures accept that shame must be covered. The teaching of the Bible is that sin needs to be confessed and dealt with. (1 John 1:9) Reconciliation with others and God needs to be sought. This is a difficult process as different cultures vary the seriousness of confessions. What may be almost routine in one setting may become trauma in another. In some instances confession can be done privately between an individual and God, in other situations Christian leaders may be involved, and in some settings the whole community may need to agree how to resolve an issue. The key is how the community feels about the issue, and not the perception of the individual seeker.

Old sins and background problems may need to be dealt with. Sins and issues that were hidden in the seeker's life should start to come out. It is not necessary to reveal totally all of these things to the entire community, but they still must be dealt with. Be prepared that you may start dealing with some shocking issues. Lying, stealing and moral sins may be revealed, and need to be handled sensitively. It is important here to deal with these issues, and not to leave them covered up.

Other issues need to be worked through. For example, what about attitudes towards the government, and other forms of authority? This can be a key issue in helping reveal deeper feelings about God and what he expects of us.

Attitudes to opposing religious views need to be dealt with. We are not at war with others; we are at war with Satan and his hosts, and are trying to rescue people from darkness. We do not lash out at individuals or religious systems, but rather at Satan. We try to reach out in love to those with opposing religious views. This is often a hard lesson for us to learn, as we may have been taught that we should lash out at evil people.

Attitudes to political leaders may need to be corrected. This is especially true if you are dealing with people from a suppressed minority background. They may need to learn about submitting to leaders and authorities as well as to God.

Another area that may need attention is business practices and attitudes. In a culture where lies and cheating are common, this may be a difficult area for the seeker to address.

These need to be dealt with by both the community and the seeker. Can you begin to see the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in someone's life? Does the messenger recognize God at work in the new believer's life, even if the issues are very different?

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion A

1. Have you experienced people wanting to explore your Christian community before they commit themselves to following Christ?

2. Is your community open enough that you could invite seekers to come and explore who and what you are?
3. How 'user friendly' is your community? Do you explain which book you are reading out of, and what page number etc? Are your services confusing for new comers? Is your location conducive to new people feeling at home and finding their way around. Try and put yourself in their place, and walk through a first time visit to your church. Start at the street and think through each of the moves the person must make, and how frightening or welcoming each are.
4. How open is your community about how they help people in need? Can seekers easily understand who and how you help people? This is an important expression of community. Think of the early church. Their reputation as a fellowship centered on how they helped one another. Can new seekers easily see this in your new church?
5. Do you think there is a time that is "too early" to baptize new believers?" Explain.
6. Does your gospel message focus on accepting and believing? Does it also contain strong elements of confession and repentance? Are there culturally sensitive ways for repentance to occur?

Story B

Mr. Smith was excited. Jamal had called him and told him he would like to meet for lunch so they could talk; just the two of them. "Now we are going to get somewhere" Mr. Smith thought. He asked his wife to pray, and he drove to the small restaurant that Jamal had suggested. As he entered he realized that he had not been to this kind of place before. The main floor was filled with tables of noisy men in rough working clothes. There were no women there. Then he noticed a balcony overlooking the restaurant. Jamal was waving for him from one of the tables that overlooked the main seating area. Mr. Smith made his way up the stairs and over to the small table where Jamal was seated.

"I'm very glad to see you" Jamal smiled.

"Thank you for inviting me. This looks like a very interesting place."

"Really" Jamal looked puzzled. "It's just one a restaurant like many others." The waiter approached them. "I'll have a small one" Jamal said, "and he will have a large one." He indicated Mr. Smith who has quite overweight.

"What would you like to drink?" The waiter asked.

"What you would like?" Jamal asked.

"What do they have?"

"Pepsi, water, tea." Jamal said looking a bit lost.

"I'll have a Pepsi" Mr. Smith said, thinking of all the germs he might pick up in a place like this. Pepsi was at least sanitary. Jamal ordered the same.

“You have a nice view out of this open window” Mr. Smith commented, looking out onto the street below, “and a nice view of the restaurant.”

“I like this place” Jamal answered. “I often come here to eat lunch; when I’m driving my taxi of course.” He was interrupted by the waiter who brought them a basket of flat bread and a dish of homus dip with lots of olive oil. Jamal passed Mr. Smith a piece of bread and ripped a piece off of his own. He dipped it into the homus and began to eat. Mr. Smith had done this before, and he followed suit.

After they had eaten the homus, the waiter arrived with two plates, one for each of them. Jamal’s was a smaller dish of rice, and Mr. Smith’s was a larger dish. Then the waiter brought a dish of meat and green beans in a thick sauce. Jamal offered the meat dish to Mr. Smith first and then he took some over his rice. They ate with a spoon.

A few minutes later the air was filled with a blast of sound. Mr. Smith suddenly realized that a mosque was located right outside the window, across the street. A loudspeaker was aimed right at their table. As the mullah gave the call for prayer, the dishes on their table rattled from the impact of the noise.

“Stupid mosque” Jamal muttered. “It’s too loud.” Mr. Smith was startled by this outburst against Islam. “Why are they permitted to make so much noise?” Jamal continued. “The prayer call is a bother. Islam is a false religion anyway.”

Mr. Smith was surprised by these comments. Jamal continued. “Muslims are such donkeys. Those mullahs are just blind people leading the blind. They should be all shut up. Don’t you agree?”

Mr. Smith didn’t know how to respond. Silently he prayed and called out to God for help. He had never been in this situation before. “Help me say the right thing” he silently prayed. Then he opened his mouth and spoke. “My book, the Bible teaches us to speak respectfully of all men, even when we disagree with them. Disrespect is a sin that God will judge us on.” Jamal grew quiet. “We must pray for them, not be angry with them. There was a time when I too was far from God. God had to draw me to himself.” He paused and took some food and then a drink. Jamal nodded, and then changed the topic. The rest of the conversation was about other topics. At the end of the meal Jamal paid, and Mr. Smith drove home.

“It was a very strange visit” he told his wife later. “I thought it was a total waste of time. We didn’t talk about anything much. But at the end of the visit, Jamal asked if he and Asma could come and visit us tonight.”

“Tonight?” Mrs. Smith protested. “But I was planning on shopping tonight There are lots of things we need.”

“I told them we would be home by 7:00.”

“Oh no, what will I serve them?”

“We still have time to go out and get something, and perhaps some shopping done.” Mr. Smith tried to console his wife as they rushed out the door.

At 7:00 pm Jamal and Asma arrived at the Smith’s door. They explained that they had left their children with Zay’id and Mona. “It will do them good” Jamal teased. “They need the practice.”

After they had sat down around a cup of tea and fancy sweets that Mrs. Smith had purchased Jamal got right to the point. “We are interested in becoming Christians.”

Mr. Smith was shocked. Mrs. Smith almost dropped her cup of tea.

Jamal looked puzzled. “What do we have to do to become Christians?”

“Well” Mr. Smith responded slowly. “You must believe in your heart that Jesus died on the cross for your sins, and you must confess him with your mouth.”

“Asma and I have been reading the Bible, and, yes, we do believe that he died on the cross. But how do we confess him?”

“Well” Mr. Smith looked startled. “In my country you need to pray the sinner’s prayer.”

“What is that?”

“Well, I start and you follow me. Just repeat after me what I say.”

“OK” Jamal seemed totally willing to do whatever the Smiths instructed. So Mr. and Mrs. Smith bowed their heads. “Dear Lord Jesus” Mr. Smith began.

“Dear Lord Jesus” Jamal and Asma repeated together”

“Thank you for dying on the cross in my place”

“Thank you for dying on the cross in my place” they repeated.

“Thank you for forgiving my sins”

Thank you for forgiving my sins” they repeated.

“Thank you for making me your child”

“Thank you for making me your child.”

“Amen”

“Amen”

Mr. Smith realized that he wasn't doing a very good job of this, but he had been so surprised that he wasn't thinking very clearly.

When they looked up, Mrs. Smith was crying. Jamal and Asma smiled shyly. Mr. Smith gave Jamal a big hug, while Mrs. Smith hugged Asma. They drank some more team, and Mr. Smith suggested they begin to meet for weekly discipleship lessons. Jamal was happy with it, and they agreed to meet every Tuesday evening.

After Jamal and Asma left, Mr. Smith grabbed his wife and danced around her.” I'm so excited” he almost shouted.” I just led my first Muslim to Christ!”

Mrs. Smith was excited too, “Just wait until we tell Zay'id and Mona.” They finally settled down and wrote out a list of topics that they would cover in their weekly discipleship times. Surprisingly Zay'id and Mona were not as excited as the Smiths. They did smile and responded to the Smiths enthusiasm, but they expressed doubts that Jamal and Asma had really accepted Christ.

Lesson B

7. Testing the Messenger and the Community

Up until now, we have been looking at some of the steps that a seeker may take as he considers adding a Christian community to the communities he relates to. After they have been challenged with the claims of Christ, they face a serious challenge. Either he or she will totally accept the message and the community, or that person will walk away. Usually when they get to this stage they will test the community, and they may test God. Will the community react as they have promised? Will God provide as he has promised? Tests come in many forms and situations. This should be seen as part of the normal process of a person coming to Christ, and not something strange.

Sometimes the seeker/new believer does something that appears really strange to the onlooker, just to create a test. Sometimes he brings a small problem he is facing and makes it a big problem to see how the community will react. Sometimes he creates a fictitious problem and acts out of character in order to create a test.

It is interesting to note that often testing comes at this stage and not earlier. Many contacts are not fully committed to the community until they pass through this stage. This is very important to realize, and not accept people as fellow believers until they have committed not only to Christ, but also to the community. It is interesting to note that there is a certain amount of tolerance in Islamic communities to allow people to be actively or passively involved. There is some room to experiment and play with other communities. Young men, until they are married, can experiment with some freedom. They may be able to participate in your community, but in the end they may not commit themselves, or may be kept from committing themselves to your community. Saying a prayer, attending

meetings, and reading other books is not necessarily seen as joining another religion. But changing communities is seen as the important issue. Once a seeker starts testing the community, you will know that he or she is starting to get serious about making a commitment to the community.

The Personal Character Test

A missionary relates the following story:

Our missionary team had gathered at the home of one of our missionaries, who were involved in gathering Muslim background believers into a Christian fellowship. Our host's living room was full of missionaries who had gathered to hear our specially invited speaker from the West. The table was covered with baked goods that various individuals had brought. We had just sung a song and were about to listen to the speaker when the doorbell rang. My heart sank. Not now! Who could it be? Sure enough, it was a young Muslim man that our missionary host was counseling. Our host slipped out of the room. His wife soon followed him. They were gone for the rest of the meeting. After our team meeting had finished and everyone was leaving, I cautiously broached the subject.

"You missed a great meeting!"

"Yeah, but Muhammad dropped in for a visit."

"Didn't you tell your group that you were busy with visitors today?"

"Yes, I did."

"So he must have had a pressing problem to bother you today."

"No, there wasn't any problem, and his visit wasn't a bother."

"But you missed hearing our speaker!"

"I know, but I'm here for Muhammad," he replied. "I think he just wanted to discover if I would leave my other friends if he came by."

Sure enough, some time later we came to realize that Muhammad had purposely come to the missionaries' home to test him. Hospitality is a basic fundamental principle in the Middle East. When my friend dropped everything to attend to his guest, he had passed the test. It wasn't long before Muhammad started to bring his friends over to listen to the missionary.

On another occasion I was rushing out the door to a meeting when a young Muslim man dropped by. I explained to him that I was in a great hurry and that people were waiting for me and so I couldn't stay. I asked him to come back the next day when I would have more time. That young man agreed but never returned to my house, and

his contact with Christians ceased. I had failed the Personal Character Test. I should have invited him into the house, offered him a drink, and then explained what was going on. By rushing out the door and down the steps, I had greatly offended him. All the neighbors would see me rush out, and the young man following a few minutes later. They all knew that I had rejected him in some way.

Many missionaries have shared how their contacts have sometimes deliberately dropped in for a visit when they knew it was inappropriate. They were not demanding attention, they were simply testing the missionary, his sincerity, and the depth of commitment that was in their friendship and demonstrated through their community. Hospitality is not the only test, but be aware that your personal integrity and your character will be tested from time to time.

The Ethnocentrism Test

There are great differences between Christian culture and Muslim culture. A seeker may try and get you into a situation to test your reaction. Do you refer back to your own culture to make decisions? They may set up a situation and personally take the stance of opposite view of what would be condoned in their own culture just to test you.

For example, in today's story, Jamal took Mr. Smith to a restaurant. He did it deliberately during prayer time. He then complained about Muslims, waiting to see if Mr. Smith would join him revealing his true feelings about Muslims.

When Mr. Smith replied that the Bible teaches us to speak respectfully of all men, Jamaal's question was answered. Mr. Smith was a man of integrity. It was at that point that Jamal decided to become a Christian. He returned home to talk to Asma who was waiting to hear if Mr. Smith had responded like they thought a typical American would respond.

The Materialism Test

We all like to surround ourselves with good things. How important are these items to us? Are they more important than the souls of the people that we are trying to reach? Sometimes these items leave our friends and neighbors convinced that we love things more than relationships. Our lives are often watched, and we are sometimes tested to discover how closely we are attached to these items.

A missionary relates the following story:

Early in our ministry our Muslim neighbors began sending over plates of food to our house. Whenever they cooked something special, they would send one of the children over with a plate for us. We usually filled the plate with Western food and sent it back. Sometime later, my wife decided to send some of our food over to the neighbors. She placed it on one of our dishes and sent it over. They sent back food on one of their dishes. Every time we sent one of our dishes, it disappeared. These dishes were very important to us, as they had been given to us as a wedding present. They were a specially made china plate that would not break, even when dropped on a

cement floor. We could bring very little with us when we flew to the Middle East, but we chose to bring those dishes in place of many other things. Eventually my wife grew alarmed, because we started with four plates, and were then down to one, shared between us. She then asked them about her plates. They apologized and said that they had given food out to another neighbor and that neighbor hadn't returned them. At first we were frustrated. As time passed we had to come to grips with the situation. What was more important: our neighbor's souls or our precious dishes? That decision was easy, and we surrendered the plates into God's keeping. We then bought different dishes in the local market that were just like everyone else's.

The Spirituality Test

Some of the people we are trying to reach are much more aware of the spirit world than we are. We talk about the spirit world, but do we really believe our own message? What are we saying when we talk about the spirit world, or the Holy Spirit? What do our listeners understand about spirits? How do you deal with the spirit world? Do you really hear the voice of God?

In one instance, a seeker invited a missionary to a very large restaurant. He asked him to meet him there at a very specific time. When the messenger arrived, the restaurant was very busy, but he found the seeker at a small table overlooking the main floor. During their visit, the issue of hearing God's voice came up. The seeker challenged the messenger, asking him directly if God really did communicate with him. The messenger replied that on many occasions God did speak to him, sometimes through the Bible, sometimes through other believers, and sometimes directly. The seeker then challenged him on the last point, laying out a test. During the previous week, the seeker had explained the Christian message to a friend of his. His friend had prayed the prayer of salvation, and that friend was now sitting somewhere on the main floor of the restaurant. Could the messenger please ask God to point out to him who this person was?

How would you have handled this? In this case, the missionary prayed "Lord, this isn't about me and my relationship with you, it's about you and a possible relationship with this young man. Can you please show me who it is? I will point out the first person that comes to my mind."

Then he looked around the restaurant and he pointed to the first person that came into his mind. The seeker nodded, and then the discussion proceeded on to other issues. After that meeting there was a profound change in the seeker's attitudes and commitment to following Jesus.

The Financial Test

This test tries to answer the question: "Will the community help me when I'm in need?" The seeker may create situations where he is in need, or he may make up a fictitious situation to see if the community will help him. In this case, he is not being untruthful since in his mind this is a fictional setting; he is simply testing what Christians have said about the community, and what he knows about how his own community would help him.

On one occasion a young male Muslim seeker asked the Christian community for some money, as his sister was getting engaged and the family needed money for the party. He would repay it as soon as he got his next paycheck. Those at the church meeting said that the elders would have to consider it. When the elders met, one of them protested that he knew the family, and the sister in question was not getting engaged. The Christian community immediately assumed that the young man only wanted money. There was a confrontation. Anger was expressed, and the young man reacted with anger. Later the missionaries found out that the young seeker was testing the community, and had planned to refuse any money that was offered. The question he was seeking an answer for was: would it be offered? The underlying issue was, if he had a need, would the community be there for him?

Conclusion

There are other tests that you might face. This testing should not be seen as weakness. Rather, it should excite the messenger that the seeker is now at a point of wanting to make a decision. The seeker needs to be absolutely sure that he or she is making the right decision. So much is at store. If the seeker whole-heartedly accepts the message, then he may lose his old community and all of his old support structures. He or she needs to be absolutely sure that they are making the right decision.

This is not something that the messenger should push. It is a point that the seeker should arrive at. He must accept that the messenger is a true messenger, and that the message is absolutely sure and trustworthy. He or she must also be moving forward with no illusions and false trust in what the community is and what it has to offer.

8. Accepting the Authority of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and becoming a disciple

Have you ever tried to cross a rope bridge? Most people carefully placed one foot on the bridge and tested it for strength and balance. That is often what new believers do with the Christian message and community. Once the seeker tests the messenger, the message, and the community, they should be at a place where they are ready for total submission to Jesus. They must accept the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. This is a humbling position to be in, and if possible it should be done in community with other believers who will accept and support the new believer.

If at all possible, the new believer should not be alone in his submission to God. He should be joining the community in their corporate coming before God's transforming and empowering work.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. Think of ways that the personal character of you or your team mates has been tested. How have you fared? What can you do to improve this?
2. Do people invite you to criticize their culture, religion or worldview? Have you joined them? Has this labeled you as an outsider? How can this improve?
3. How much does your financial status differ from the Muslims you are trying to reach? Are you seen as rich? How does your income compare with theirs? If you

- are significantly better off, do you share? Have materials or money come between you and others? How have you handled this? Could you respond better?
4. Do the people you work among have a sense of the spiritual world? Are there ideas that they will have to change in order to understand the Bible or are you introducing a whole new realm to them? Is your message based on spiritual realities, or is it limited to accepting historical facts and believing in them?
 5. Do you think you have been tested by seekers or new believers? How have you fared? Are there other tests you have faced?

Lesson Twenty Two

Community Based Evangelism

Technical Notes (28 minute lesson)

Story:	1269 words = 7 minutes
Lesson:	1333 words = 8 minutes
Questions:	4 questions = 15 minutes
Story:	741 words = 5 minutes
Lesson:	1340 words = 8 minutes
Questions:	5 questions = 15 minutes

Story

Jamal and Asma were quickly growing in the faith. Jamal was back driving his taxi, but he was also regularly reading his Bible, and listening to Christian music in his car. Asma was also faithfully reading. Besides this, whenever she visited with Mona, they almost always had a spiritual discussion. Often Mona didn't know how to answer her sister's questions, so they would note them for their next meeting with Mr. Li or the Smiths.

Several weeks had passed when the group decided to go on a picnic together. They planed to leave on Friday morning, since everyone had the day off. Jamal, Zay'id and Mr. Smith had cars. Zay'id brought along a small metal box to use as a barbeque. The ladies brought meat, vegetables and salads. The Smiths brought along cookies and several cases of Pepsi. Mr. Li and Ahmed brought fruit. David brought bread, and Anna brought sweet pastries.

Jamal led them to a deserted hillside outside of the city. They pulled off the road into a rocky area. Parked the cars and carried everything up into a grove of trees. As they were putting down a mat and setting up, Anna took Jamal's girls exploring. Soon everyone was sitting around on the ground. Ahmed and Zay'id started a small fire. They soon placed a teapot onto the hot coals.

It was a very relaxed day. They spent several hours talking and visiting. Mr. Smith enjoyed the first hour of the visiting, but speaking and thinking in the local language was hard work, and he soon grew tired, and dropped out of the conversation. Being a very busy man, he found himself being impatient. He could be at home doing several important things, and here he was, sitting under a tree wasting his time. But he stayed because he felt it was the right thing to do. The men talked and joked, sitting in a small circle around the fire. The women sat off to the side and spoke together but Mr. Smith really couldn't hear them. It seemed like hours before someone suggested that they start cooking the food. Then the barbeque was set up and Zay'id started the process of making hot coals. It was a long time before the meat was cooking. Eventually everyone was happily eating meat wrapped in flat bread.

After the meal, Zay'id girls went to sleep on a blanket, and the men continued to visit. Mr. Smith was getting desperate to leave, but he didn't know how to excuse himself without disappointing the others.

It was late afternoon when the men started discussing what they enjoyed about the group. To Mr. Smith it was just another discussion topic, but Mr. Li sensed that the conversation was moving to spiritual things.

"I really enjoy the fellowship" Zay'id commented. "My family is great, but with this group I feel much more at home."

"I enjoy Mr. Smith's cookies" Jamal smiled.

"Not my pastries?" Anna teased.

"The pastries are good." Jamal was quick to correct himself. "But the cookies are my favorite."

"Maybe you should have married an American wife" Asma teased him, poking him in the ribs.

"I can teach you how to make cookies" Mrs. Smith offered with a smile.

"Yes," Jamal quickly agreed. "Please teach her how to make cookies; especially this kind."

"The cookies are good" Zay'id said with a sly grin, "but the best thing I like about this group is that this is where I met my wife."

"That's even better than cookies" Jamal joked. "It worked for you, but David here is still single."

"Well there is another single girl here." Jamal joked. When Anna turned red with embarrassment he quickly changed the subject. "When Asma first talked about this group, I thought it sounded pretty strange. Asma was happy about attending so I let her go, but I wasn't really interested. It wasn't until God took my taxi from me in the accident, that I came to realize how wonderful this group is. Everyone offered to help me in some way. I was so amazed. Usually only family helps this way, and my family wasn't offering to do very much."

"Now you know where your real family is" Mrs. Smith interjected. "We are part of the family of God, and that makes us all brothers and sisters."

“Yes” Jamal said slowly, “That is correct, but I wasn’t part of this family. I didn’t know anything. I was even against you. But you guys all helped me.” He paused. “I was totally amazed that you would help me, a stranger. And you didn’t ask for anything back.”

Everyone was silent, listening.

“I argued with Mr. Smith about things. You know, the Bible being changed and all. And he had good answers for me. But that wasn’t enough. After several weeks I was convinced that Jesus was God’s sacrifice for sins. Asma and I talked it over many times. But I still wasn’t sure if these Americans were not out to destroy Islam. I thought that they might be just pro-America and wanting to destroy my religion.”

He paused and looked at Mr. Smith. “That’s when I decided to test Mr. Smith here.” Several eyebrows were raised. “I invited him to a restaurant beside a mosque, right when the call to prayer would happen. I then complained about Islam to see if he would join me. He refused, and said that we should honor and respect everyone. It was then that I realized that Mr. Smith was different from all my Muslim friends. God had truly changed his heart. I wanted to be like that.”

Mr. Smith was shocked. He tried to smile and say something nice, but inside he was reeling. He had not realized that Jamal was testing him. What would have happened if he had complained about the call to prayer? He certainly had felt like complaining, but God had restrained him. If he had complained, would Jamal not have accepted Christ?

“I guess I saw something in each of you that I recognized as similar. I wanted the to have the same, and be part of you guys.”

“So it wasn’t all about theology?” Mr. Smith said softly?

“Theology? No, I was attracted to who you all were.”

“I don’t know about the others” Mr. Li said softly. “There isn’t much in me that is attractive. If you see anything attractive, you must be seeing Christ in me.”

“It wasn’t so much what I saw in one person” Jamal said thoughtfully. “It was that I was seeing the same thing in all of you. You were all different. You all had different personalities. And yet, there was that something in your life that I wanted. It wasn’t until I understood that it was Jesus, that I wanted to also become a Christian.”

“That doesn’t sound like very good theology” Mr. Smith commented. “You became a Christian, so that you could be like us, not because of what Jesus did for you.”

“Well, yes and no.” Jamal protested. “I don’t know much about the Jesus that lived two thousand years ago, but I do know about what I saw in each of you. Once I recognized it as Jesus I wanted it.” He paused. “And now I am starting to understand about sin and Jesus death on the cross for sin.”

“And” Zay’id said slyly. “You are becoming like us, just like you wanted. Look, you already like cookies so much that you want your wife to start making them.”

“Cookies are great.” Jamal joked. “I wonder if the apostle Paul liked cookies.”

Lesson (A)

Should a seeker enter Christian community first, or have personal faith first? This is a question that catches most westerners by surprise. According to the steps outlined in previous lessons, the seeker spends a lot of time exploring the community rather than dealing with his own personal faith. This is the opposite of what most Westerners expect. They usually expect to only deal with the seeker on the issue of personal faith, and to leave community issues to be worked out later. The model of spiritual growth that most westerners have subconsciously accepted is:

Evangelism → Discipleship → Joining a Christian community

In many cases, however, the Muslim seeker will want the question of community to be dealt with first, or at least along side that of personal faith. In some cases the order is reversed.

Community (Belonging) → Discipleship (Exploring) → Evangelism (Accepting)

In Islam, faith is not only a personal issue; it is a family and community issue. The Muslim seeker may want to see faith dealt with on all levels (community and theology) before truly submitting to Christ.

This situation has often caused misunderstandings. Many missionaries have misunderstood what was taking place, and failed to address the issues that the seeker was facing when exploring or participating in the Christian community first, before making a commitment of personal faith. A great deal of this misunderstanding can be cleared up if the missionary recognizes what is taking place and helps the seeker deal with issues that the seeker feels are important, as well as the issues that the missionary feels are important.

Community-Based Evangelism

There is something about a properly functioning Christian community that is attractive to those outside it. Many of the “people movements” or “church-planting movements” in history have had a real sense of Christian community. As the world sees Christian community in action, they are drawn to the community. In actuality they are drawn to Jesus whom they can see in the community of believers.

In I Thessalonians 1:6-10 Paul tells the church in Thessalonica that they were examples to surrounding Macedonia and Achaia and beyond. Paul and his comrades did not need to

go around preaching because everywhere they went people were telling them how the Thessalonians had turned to God. This same principle has been an effective evangelistic tool all down through history. When God begins to work in people so that a dynamic Christian community forms, others are drawn to God through the love and actions of the community. In effect, the same principle of the transparent messenger who allows Jesus to shine through him and thus attracts non-believers (discussed in the first lesson) now applies to the community that the messenger forms. When the community is transparent and allows Jesus to shine through them as a corporate group it will attract non-believers.

Conflict of Interests and Missionary Compounds

Many years ago in the colonial era, missionaries established missionary compounds where they could form a community which represented the community they left at home. Colonial governments wanted to demonstrate to the local people the advantages of Western culture. Missionaries sent under the colonial system adopted the use of compounds as they provided many advantages. As time passed, local people joined the compounds. Many came primarily for employment, but others came because they were seeking something they saw in the missionaries. As they joined the community these seekers changed their outward form, wore Western clothes, attended churches, sang, and even prayed, but many of them had only outwardly joined the community. When their lives didn't match the expectations of the missionaries they were called backslidden, rice Christians, and other demeaning names because they had not really taken the second step of investigating the personal relationship aspect of the Gospel. On the national side of things, when the seekers found out that the community spirit they had seen expressed in the missionary's relationship with each other was actually closed to them, they became angry and bitter.

This misunderstanding of community created tremendous problems in Africa and India. The nationals wanted in, and the missionaries wanted to share spiritual things, not physical things. In their Western thinking they assumed that if someone has joined the community they already had a personal relationship with God. This is an assumption we should never make. On the other hand, if we keep our communities closed to Muslim seekers they most likely will never accept our message.

One of the most successful ministries to Muslims, in the African country of Gambia, is based on a "community" form of evangelism. The leading pastor opened their large church yard so that housing could be constructed for any new believers that needed housing. Food and clothing were shared as new believers made the transition from a Muslim community to a Christian one. This Christian community in turn attracted the attention of other seekers. If their own Muslim community reacted strongly against them, there was an alternative community for them. Suddenly Christianity was much more acceptable and possible for Muslim seekers and the numbers of new converts grew rapidly.

Acceptable Communities

It is on this subject of community that we have struggled to understand and work with converts from Islam. Historically, these people have resisted the spiritual communities

that Christians have offered to them. Most of these communities were restricted to Sunday morning worship services with an accompanying program throughout the week. These type of churches usually had little real community-commitment and as a result were not seen as attractive.

In many of our minds, the ideal church is filled with true believers. As Christians we want to get away from the world to meet with God, worship, fellowship, and receive teaching in the company of other believers. Many believers want an exclusive 'club' where they feel comfortable and where nothing threatens them.

However, successful Christian communities that are reaching out to Muslims usually have large numbers of seekers at various stages of investigating the claims of Christ and the community of Christ.

Many Westerners assume that membership in the Christian community entitles you to take part in the leadership and decision making body of the community. But the communities we are describing may include many people who are in the process of joining the community. Islam can embrace many quasi Muslim people, especially in Asia and Africa. In this way, Islam is very tolerant, and considers itself very tolerant. Our Christian communities are seen as closed and intolerant.

Many Christians think in terms of: believers in the church, and unbelievers outside the church. Those who are outside might come to Christ outside of the church's circle in such places as evangelism outreach, evangelistic crusades, ladies meetings, businessmen's breakfasts, personal witness or cell groups.

A western missionary tells this story:

Some years ago I was attending a large church service in the West. In the middle of the service a drunken lady came staggering down the aisle. It was very embarrassing for everyone, and they tried to look away. I tried to help, even if I did feel uncomfortable. She had come to the church for help, and instead of receiving help, she discovered that she didn't belong there, and no one wanted her. The ushers told her she could attend the service if she sat quietly (and forgotten or ignored) in the back of the church. She soon left. I felt that she should have been taken into a side room by one of the ladies (or couples) of the church and tended to as far as her condition would allow.

This enforces the idea that non-believers can attend church only as observers. They are restricted from participation. Some seekers, on the other hand, want to experience our communities before they commit themselves to a life-long relationship to the community. Somehow we must find a way to allow seekers to experience real Christian community, and at the same time explain to them the theological beliefs of the community and the way of becoming part of the community.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion A

1. Read I Thessalonians 1: 5 – 10. Does this illustrate evangelism → discipleship → community or does it illustrate community → evangelism → discipleship? Why do you think this?
2. What do you think of the term ‘community-based evangelism’? Does this describe what is happening in your church? Are people attracted to what they see happening in the community of believers?
3. What draws people to an active Christian community? What makes the community attractive?
4. Think for a minute about the history of missions in your country. What sort of track record have church-planters had? Are there some people groups who seem more resistant? Compare their idea of community with the Christian community that is being offered them. Is there a correlation?

Story B

Several weeks after the picnic, the Smiths were visiting Zay'id and Mona when Jamal and Asma dropped in for a visit.

“Remember that picnic?” Jamal said. “That was a great day. I will never forget it.”

“I won't either” Mr. Smith thought to himself. “It was such a long day, and I failed to accomplish anything useful that day. All we did was sit around, drink tea and talk.” But aloud he said “It was a good picnic. I recall that you liked my wife's cookies.”

“I'm learning to make them” Asma smiled. “I've made them once with your wife, and soon I will try them by myself.”

“It wasn't just the cookies” Jamal said. “I enjoyed being around good people. There were no bad stories and wrong thoughts.”

“I suppose you get those when driving the taxi” Mrs. Smith joked.

“Actually I used to get lots of questions about where to pick up girls.” Jamal answered. Asma was watching him closely. “But now that I play Christian songs, people don't ask those sorts of questions.” He paused. “The bad stories usually came from other taxi drivers. I don't know if I would believe half of them.”

“Yes” Zay'id said. “I'm enjoying being with the group more than with my family. I'm really much more relaxed, and don't feel I have to always put on a good front. I can just be me.”

“I wonder” Jamal said thoughtfully. “Can I invite some of my friends? I think they would enjoy it too.”

“Yes” Zay'id said. “We usually are just the few of us. I was wondering about inviting my friends.”

“To a Bible study?” Mrs. Smith asked incredulously. “If they are Muslims, won’t they be offended.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t bring any Muslim fanatics. But I’ve been talking to some of my friends and they want to see how we study and who we are.”

“Well” Mr. Smith said slowly. “Usually we are all Christians. I suppose we could put on a special meeting for those who are interested, a sort of ‘seeker’s meeting.’

“What is that?” Jamal asked.

“It’s a special meeting we put on to appeal to seekers. We do things especially to appeal to them.”

“We could do that.” Zay’id replied, remembering Mr. Li’s birthday party where he had first met Mona. “We could host it here. Why don’t we have a party and invite those we know are interested. I’ve talked to people, Jamal and Asma have talked to people, in fact I’m sure we all have people we might want to invite.”

“That’s a good idea” said Mr. Smith. “Lets have a party, and meet those in each other’s lives.”

“But when do we invite them to a Bible Study” Mrs. Smith asked, thinking of her neighbor lady with whom she had been having conversations.

“Why don’t we get together after the part, at our next Bible study and decide who we should invite to the Bible study. That would give us a reason to get to know everyone.” Asma answered. “I don’t want a lot of strangers asking awkward questions at our Bible study. But I do want to invite a friend of mine. I think she is ready.”

“OK” Mr. Smith said. “Let’s get this straight. First we witness to our friends and neighbors. When they get interested in meeting others, we throw a party.”

“Yes,” Zay’id said excitedly. “Then we can meet each other’s friends, and get to know them. After the party we meet and decide who we should invite to our Bible Studies.”

“I’ve been thinking of something else” Mrs. Smith said shyly. “I’ve been wondering if we shouldn’t have a breaking of bread service.”

“What is that?”

“That is when we have the Lord’s supper. I’ve really missed not breaking bread. I find it so meaningful.”

“I think that is a great idea honey” Mr. Smith smiled. “Let’s have a breaking of bread service at our next study. It might go hand in hand with our study topic.”

“What’s that?” Jamal asked.

“Baptism” Mr. Smith said with a smile, hoping not to shock or offend anyone.

“Oh good,” Mona said under her breath. “Maybe you can answer some of my questions.”

“I don’t know if I can” Mr. Smith said tenderly. “But we can look at what the Bible teaches.”

“I’m excited about the party.” Zay’id said. “I’ve been wondering how I can introduce a friend of mine to this group.”

Lesson B

The Road Into Our Community

How does your community accept new members? Is there a clear path into the community? Have we thought through how people should approach and join our community?

A western missionary relates this story:

In the 1970’s, I attended a Brethren Assembly in Ireland, where I learned much about this important aspect of community. While many considered these Brethren to be “closed” they were actually very open if you approached their community in the right way. Their Sunday morning services (called ‘Breaking of Bread’) were closed, and only open to those who had been accepted as spiritual members in the community. This service was not publicly announced. The only way you could attend was if someone invited you. If you arrived unannounced from another Brethren Assembly, you were required to bring with you a letter of reference, so that you could break bread with them. The Sunday evening service however, was the exact opposite. It was called a ‘Gospel Meeting’ and the entire purpose of the meeting was to bring people into their Christian community. The whole concept of the Gospel Meeting was that the believers were hosting this meeting for seekers. Before the meeting, members would either go door-to-door to invite people to come, or they would hold open air meetings, or hand out invitations in public places. The Gospel Meeting was warm, lively, and friendly, and open to everyone who wanted to discover what active Christian community was all about.

If someone showed deeper interest, they were invited to a home Bible Study in their area. Once they had accepted Christ, they were assigned a community member who would mentor and disciple them, usually for a year or more. During this time they continued to attend the Bible Studies and the Gospel Meetings. Then, at a certain point, the mentor would invite them to attend the Sunday morning ‘Breaking of Bread’ Service. This service was closed to everyone who had not entered into their community via the Gospel

Meetings, Bible Studies, and mentoring process, or had a letter of recommendation from another similar Christian community.

The strength of this approach was that the members all understood how their community operated, and that there was an accepted method of becoming an inner member of the community.

Now, consider your community. How do seekers experience community before they become Christians? Is this possible? For many Muslims, Christian community is what attracts them to following Christ. But if they cannot experience Christian community, how can the church reach out?

Existing Community

There is another issue that must be dealt with. How does the church-planter go about dealing with the seeker's existing community? In most settings seekers will already be experiencing some form of community. In some cases this is a very tightly woven group with particular ideas of how community operates. If the church-planter is dealing with a small unique community, then the best strategy may be to become part of that community in some way and try to win the entire community over to Christ. This is often the approach that is used in a tribal setting. However, when dealing with a larger group of people, the church-planter will probably have to deal with a small group of seekers who will end up leaving their old community. If this is the case, then this group will have to consider the type of new community they want to form. In the majority of urban church-planting situations, the new Christian community may end up drawing members from several different types of tribes and backgrounds. In this case, it is important that they form a Christian community that is viable to all of the surrounding types of people.

Example: Existing Community in Liberia (West Africa)

The following material was told by a missionary to the Bassa tribe, which has existed in Liberia, West Africa for many centuries. Before the arrival of the white man and the resulting Westernization, their community was expressed in a very particular way.

For as long as anyone can remember, everyone in a Bassa village understood that they had responsibility for each other in three specific areas:

- Everyone built buildings together
- Everyone defended the village together
- Everyone hunted together

It was understood that these were the joint responsibilities of the men, and a system of accountability was in place.

The men of the village expressed their solidarity through their daily main meal which was eaten in the evening. All of the men of the village went to the house of one man to eat from a common dish. They would usually only eat a few spoonfuls or handfuls of food. They would then start to discuss the events of the day. After a few moments they would move on to the next house, gather around the common dish there and eat a few more

spoonfuls, continue their discussion, and then move on to the next home until they had eaten in all of the houses. This was the outward expression of their community.

If a man was expelled or punished, he was ostracized. He could still live in the village but he was known as “the man who ate alone.” It was a method of publicly shaming him. Restoration was expressed in allowing the person to re-enter the community by restoring his right to share and eat the evening meal with others.

When the Gospel message entered the Bassa area, it was important that it could be introduced into this community setting. If every new believer was expelled from the community, then Christians throughout the area would be known as people who ate alone. If the Christian message could be introduced into the community, and accepted by most if not all of the men, then this ostracizing could be avoided. But more than this, the key to explaining the Gospel was found in explaining that we as humans are people who eat alone. We are separated from God, and from the fellowship at His table. It is through the mediation of Jesus that we can be invited back into fellowship with God, and into the community of believers from around the world. This is why we gather around the Lord’s Supper and eat with him.

Satanic Community

Almost everyone in the world relates to some sort of community. Most of these communities are not neutral, but already have a system of belief that needs to be addressed by the church-planter. Some community events are just common community events, others are of Satanic origin. In Liberia, every 4 to 5 years the tribal leaders would hold a school in Shamanism, known as a “bush school.” It was often 1 to 2 years in length. The teachers and students would live in a walled-in community learning witchcraft, tribal language, reading secret hieroglyphics, herbal medicine, poisons, secret symbols, and signs of treachery. Boy’s and girl’s bush schools were separate, but all attended. Girls learned about cooking, weaving, child raising and sex. Boys learned to hunt, use bow and arrows, and activities that involved sex. Most of all, the students learned submission to authority. Missionaries often noted that young people would be open to the gospel until they attended a bush school. After that they had no interest in Christian things. The teachings and activities of the bush school completely wrapped them in their own community, and isolated them from outsiders. They were now insiders, with inside knowledge and allowed to participate in their own community. This effectively isolated them, and kept them from wanting to be part of something on the outside.

The existing community is an important factor in all church-planting. We must know what people are being called out of, as well as what we are calling them into. One of the important tasks that the church-planter faces is understanding the existing community, knowing how to relate to it, and prayerfully considering what aspects, if any, of the existing community should be incorporated into the new community of believers in Jesus.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. How does your Christian community meet, accept and integrate new members? Is there a clear path into the community? List the typical steps that new believers might pass through.
2. Do the members of your Christian community understand these steps and are they playing vital roles in helping new people pass through them? Is there a sense of welcoming new people and helping them through the process?
3. Can seekers experience Christian community before they commit themselves to becoming Christians? Is this possible in your setting?
4. Are you building a model of Christian community that is unique? Is it patterned after something used somewhere else? Why did you choose that model? How well do members of your Christian community mix with members of other Christian communities?
5. Is there a sense of community among the non-believing people you are working with? What is this community built around? Has Satan created a pseudo-community? Do you need to confront it, or simply do a better job?

Lesson Twenty Three

Church Planting

Technical Notes (31 minute lesson)

Story: 1374 words = 8 minutes

Lesson: 1438 words = 9 minutes

Questions: 5 questions = 15 minutes

Story: 597 words = 5 minutes

Lesson: 1412 words = 9 minutes

Questions: 3 questions = 15 minutes

Story

Everyone started arriving on Friday. Zay'id and Mona were hosting the party. Anna arrived at their home early in the morning to help with the children. Asma showed up to help with cleaning and then cooking. By 6:00 pm the Smiths had arrived and food was placed onto tables. By 7:00 people started arriving.

David came right at 7:00 pm with his young friend, Haytham who appeared to be very shy at first. Obviously he felt quite out of place, but he soon warmed as the other men arrived and visiting began. Jamal brought his friend Kamal, another taxi driver. They had been having lunches together, and would often talk of spiritual things. Mr. Smith had a friend Assaf, a shop keeper that he had been visiting. Assaf was already reading the Bible and had many questions, not just about spiritual things, but about Christians and how they acted and behaved themselves. Assaf was especially interested in this party, to see how Christians behaved themselves. He was pleased to note that the women met in the living room and that the men were seated on plastic chairs on the cement rooftop.

Down in the living room there were several new female faces as well. Maisoon and Gada were Mona's friends from the same apartment building. They came for a few minutes and then left as they had families that didn't know about the party. They told their families that they were visiting each other, and then raced down stairs to be at Mona's party for a few minutes. They were especially interested in meeting Mrs. Smith and Anna. A new girl, Nadia was there with her husband Afif. Asma and Jamal had invited them. Naida had been talking a lot to Asma, but Afif was unfamiliar with most spiritual things. Mr. Li and Dr. Wilson arrived a bit later with Ahmed and another middle-aged man, Abdullah. Most of the evening was spent just visiting and talking about life in general. Several times spiritual conversations were started. Afif seemed lost during these conversations, but Kamal and Assaf were eager to talk.

Conversation turned to religion quite quickly. Afif was intrigued with Mr. Li. He thought that most Chinese were Muslims or atheists and was surprised to discover that Mr. Li was a Christian. Soon he and Mr. Li were comparing religions. Afif was convinced that Islam was superior to Christianity.

“Our leader was a great leader. He ruled a kingdom, commanded armies, had men and women at his command, married many wives, and heard the voice of God. He founded the greatest religion in the world. Jesus was a failure. He only preached for a couple of years, and then he was gone. His followers are divided. He never even married.”

Mr. Li smiled. “I agree with you. Compared to Muhammad, Jesus wasn’t a very successful ruler. Mohammad began a great empire.” He paused. “Do you know what Jesus said about his kingdom?”

Afif looked puzzled. “No, what did he say?”

Mr. Li took out a New Testament. “Here in the gospel of John, chapter 18 Jesus says ‘*My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.*’ What do you think he meant by this?”

“I have no idea.” Several of the other men had stopped talking to listen.

“Muhammad, and those that came after him focused on a great earthly kingdom. And in this they were successful. They built an empire from Spain to Indonesia.” Afif was nodding. “Jesus was focusing on another kingdom. One that was not of this world. In other words, it was somewhere else. Listen to what he says in John 14. ‘Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.’”

Mr. Li paused and looked at Afif. “Where is Jesus now, and what will he do in the future.”

“He is in heaven, and he will return again.” Islam teaches this.

“If he is in heaven, then where is his kingdom? The place that he is preparing for his followers.”

“It must be in heaven.” Afif said thoughtfully.

“And he is going to return and take his followers to the place he is preparing.”

“This is very interesting. I’ve never heard this.”

“A moment ago you compared Jesus’ kingdom with Muhammad’s. Muhammad was a great earthly ruler. He was a great leader. His people fought many battles, he was a success in the eyes of the world.” Mr. Li smiled. “But Jesus wasn’t interested in this kind

of kingdom. He was going to prepare a place for his followers that would be out of this world. In another place. A kingdom that would have no end.”

“This must be paradise.”

“No, it is not paradise. He didn’t promise his followers food and women. Those are earthly things. Jesus told us that in his kingdom there is no taking and giving in marriage. This is to have children, and to enjoy our earthly experience. His kingdom is very different. He promises us that he will change us.”

“Where does it say that” Afif asked.

“Here in Corinthians: *‘Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.’* What is this saying?”

Afif looked lost. “Sleep here refers to death. But when Jesus returns, the dead will be raised. Those who follow Jesus will have new bodies, so that they can enjoy the new kingdom.”

“This is all very new to me. I didn’t know that Christians believed this.”

“Let me tell you a story Afif.” Mr. Li began. The other men gathered around.

“There once was a young man who wanted to visit a sheik. The sheik lived in a tent in the desert, so he started out walking. Whenever he found a Bedouin tent he would ask the way, and they would point him.” Afif nodded. Eventually he met a man walking in the desert. “Can you show me the way to the sheik’s house?” he asked.

“Sure,” the man said. “I know the sheik.

“How do you know him?” “I am his slave.” The man answered.

“Can you introduce me to him?” the young man asked.

“Yes, I would be happy to do so.” The man replied, so the two of them walked along in the desert. Eventually they met another man walking in the desert.

The young man spoke first. “Do you know where the sheik’s tent is?”

“Yes I do” the second man replied.

“Can you take me there and introduce me?”

“I would be happy to do so.” The man replied.

“How do you know the sheik?” the young man asked.

“I am his son.”

Mr. Li looked at Afif. Which man do you think the young man chose to accompany him and introduce him to the sheik?

“The son of course” Afif answered quickly. Then he scowled as he realized the meaning of the story.

“The food is ready” Mrs. Smith called from the stairway and the men crowded down the stairs to the living room.

As everyone was enjoying the food Mr. Smith placed a box on the table. “I have copies of a movie,” he stated. “It’s a movie about Jesus. They are free, so please help yourself.” Everyone took a copy and thanked him. The men and women mixed and visited for a short while, and then different ones started to excuse themselves and leave. Mona invited anyone who was interested to come on Wednesday evening for a discussion about the Bible. Several said they might come.

Lesson (A)

Review

We have now covered 22 lessons on Ministry to Muslims. We trust that this course has been helpful in introducing some important issues when ministering to Muslim people. Let’s review a few things:

When one first starts out as a cross-cultural church-planter, it is important to learn language and culture, and to begin to learn how to be a messenger and how to share the Christian message. The new church-planter should be conscious of the community he wants to form, even before evangelism is initiated. In many cases, language learners start to plant churches. Many missionaries start a church while they are still studying the language. Never assume that church-planting will come later, some day. Everything you do now should focus on the church that will one day be in existence.

The Initial Steps for the Novice

Below is a short list of the type of basic goals that the new missionary might set as language learning goals to reach. These can be adapted according to the local situation.

1. Initial language learning
2. Shopping with ease

3. Visiting neighbors with ease
4. Telling Genesis 1-3 stories
5. Collecting and telling proverbs and parables
6. Teaching basic bible stories and lessons
7. Becoming indistinguishable from a local when speaking on the phone.
8. Evangelism
9. Learn to say provocative things
10. Learn the stories in the gospels and tell them
11. Explain to people about objections to Christianity such as: Has the Bible been changed, the Trinity, and the presence of sin in Western countries.
12. Develop your agenda and learn to use tools such as teaching the Discovery Lessons, The Shame Tract, and The Camel Method.

Church Planting Strategies and Issues

Below are a number of strategies and issues that every church planter should consider working through. These topics are only briefly mentioned here, as many books and articles have been written that address these issues.

1. Define the location of your church plant

Are you planting a church in an area of the city or in a rural area? What are the boundaries that you will set for yourself? This needs to be done prayerfully as you determine where it is that God is calling you and what indications you have that God is at work. Make sure you know what God is doing in your area and join Him rather than starting your own activities. It is very important that you don't tackle too large of an area. Start somewhere, but don't limit what God is doing. In one situation a missionary was ministering in a rural setting that covered hundreds of kilometers. As the Lord directed them to seekers, it soon became apparent that it would be impossible to gather them because they were scattered so widely. Each situation has its own unique challenges.

2. Use pre-evangelism and salt-type tools

Having defined the community that you will work in, prayerfully seek ways of influencing the community at large. If they have never met someone from your ethnic background, take time to mix with people so that you are not frightening and strange to them. Talk to people in the shops, in parks and on the street. Visit neighbors and find ways of getting to know what is happening in your community. Prayerfully consider things that you will say and do to influence the community and introduce them to Christian concepts. This is a vital step in starting your church, and in discovering which people are *somewhat interested* and *seekers*. It will also start preparing the wider community for the new believers that will someday be in their midst.

3. Use Visitation

Most missionaries insist that visitation is the best way to build a church. After many years of ministry, one veteran missionary is convinced that this is one of the "golden keys" that many church-planters miss. As you live in the community, seek ways to visit people. Most people would welcome a visit from you, but they don't know how to connect with you.

The first step in doing visitations is to clear your schedule of things that fill your day with distractions. Visiting takes time. Don't expect to fit a ten minute visit into a busy schedule. Second, mix with people, and show an interest in what they are doing. Train yourself to become interested in the activities that are taking place in your community. A missionary once dropped in at a small dirty shop looking for an electrical part. He discovered that the men in this shop were re-winding small electric motors. He chatted with the owner, and told him he had been looking for a hardware shop. He then asked if he could bring his old washing machine motor to him, as it had burned out. They struck up a conversation, and soon the missionary was seated beside him chatting about his shop and his involvement with the British army years before. Tea was offered, and the missionary soon had a new friend.

You will discover that if you are available, people will often ask you if you would like to come in for a cup of tea. Being available is the issue. One missionary who lived in a rural setting would go to the market in the morning with his old beat up car and pick up hitchhikers on the way. After market he would load people's things into his car and drive them home to their houses. Tea was always offered with friendly conversation.

In an urban setting it is important to discover when it is that people sit around and visit, and then make an effort to join them. One missionary wife noticed what time the local women were free and she made an effort to visit with them. Usually this meant that her visits and her husband's were at different times in the day, as the men were usually free for visiting in the evening, although many of them had time or made time during their work hours, especially if they were taking care of a store in the afternoon.

In many Muslim countries, women go for walks in the late afternoon. This is a good time for women to meet others, or at least to be in public. Most women are home during the morning hours, cooking. This does not mean that women cannot mix in the morning. Often women will gather in one home to prepare food together, taking it home to their husbands for cooking. This means that rice, lentils, and various kinds of vegetables and leaves are washed, dried and prepared for cooking. Women often gather for these events, and then take their food home and do the final cooking on their own stoves. Once a foreign woman is included in these events, it becomes known that she is interested in cooking local food, and she will be invited more and more often. All of this is a form of visitation.

4. Move your visits to the second stage

There are a number of steps that should be recognized when trying to move the visit from a social visit (building relationship) to a spiritual one.

- Learn about your host, their family and their culture.
- Learn about your target community.
- Introduce prayer or Bible truths into your visits
- Move towards having home Bible Studies

The most important step in the process is introducing spiritual content into your conversations. This can be done in various ways: telling parables or proverbs, offering a

prayer for a pressing need, or sharing biblical truths through telling a portion of a Bible story. These are non-threatening forms of communication that may open the door for leaving a Bible or video in the home.

5. Start Bible Studies

When you visit Muslim people, you have an interest in their friendship and building relationships because you have an interest in them as humans whom God has made and loves. It is natural to desire to share Christ with everyone, especially those who have become dear to you. Thus, once you have established visits that have spiritual content to them, you can start moving closer to starting Bible Studies in the home. Raise the issue of Bible Studies, and invite those in the home to consider having a study. If they decline, you have lost nothing. Gracefully accept this, and continue to visit regularly. When you feel the time is right you can once again invite them to study the Bible.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. Analyze your church planting location. Are you ministering in a city or a rural area? What are the boundaries that you have set for yourselves? How many different people-groups live in this area? How diverse is the income they earn? Are there cultural, historical, political or religious differences that divide people? How would you describe the community (even if it is part of a larger city) that you live in? What should you adjust or change?
2. Analyze your pre-evangelism program. How are you impacting the wider community so that people are aware that there are Christians among them? As you move through the community what are some things that could impact the lives of people?
3. How effective is your visitation program? Are there homes that you regularly visit? Are there ways that you and your team members can meet people and start to build bridges into their lives? Are there people in the community who are sitting? Women watching children, old people, guards, store keepers, unemployed, etc. These people all have time and may present an opportunity for input into their lives.
4. Are there times during the day when people are visiting, or are open to have visits? Can you make yourself available during this time?
5. Have you been able to introduce spiritual content into your visits? Are there homes where you can pray and talk about spiritual things? Is there a possibility of starting Bible studies in these homes?

Story B

Several weeks later the Smiths and David were visiting with Zay'id and Mona. While Zay'id was out of the room answering a phone call, David turned to Mr. Smith.

"I've been thinking about the Bible study. It sure is great that more people are coming, but I think that the group is getting too large."

"We were thinking the same thing" Mrs. Smith said. "I find it really uncomfortable. It's hard to open up and share with so many people."

“Perhaps we should be thinking of splitting the group into two.” Mr. Smith added. “We could choose a new leader and start another group. That way it would be more manageable.”

“Should we have one group that is more aimed at seekers?” David asked.

“I was thinking of a women’s group and a men’s group” Mrs. Smith commented.

“I’m not sure” Mr. Smith countered. “I wonder if that would be culturally better, or if it would rob the group of the family dynamic. Right now we have couples attending together which I feel is a real strength.”

“Perhaps we should ask Zay’id and Mona” David replied.

A few moments later Mona brought in the tea and sweets. Zay’id finished his phone call and joined them.

“We were talking about the Bible study” Mr. Smith began.

“Yes, isn’t it exciting” Zay’id smiled. “It’s so much better now that we have more people.”

Mr. Smith frowned. “Actually, we were thinking of splitting the group into two.”

“Why would you do that?” Mona asked, shock showing on her face.

“That way we could have more intimate studies.” Mrs. Smith offered.

“But it is so much better, now that we have more people.” Mona protested. “I’m really enjoying the group.”

“Mona” Zay’id interrupted. “Mr. Smith is one of our leaders. If he feels it would be better to have two groups, then perhaps we should consider it.” Mona looked distraught.

“Why do you think a larger group is better?” Mrs. Smith was puzzled.

“I love larger groups” Mona said. “I feel much more secure; especially if they are all my friends.”

“That’s strange” David entered the conversation. “I enjoy small groups. When there is a large group, I tend to withdraw and just watch things.”

“I noticed that” Zay’id said. “All of the foreigners seem to withdraw a bit. But we Arabs love large groups.”

“Perhaps we could do both,” Mr. Smith offered. Everyone waited to see what he was suggesting. “We could have a larger meeting every few weeks.”

“Another picnic?” Zay’id looked pleased. “I really enjoyed the last one. It was a great day.” Mr. Smith tried to look calm. He had hated the picnic. It had dragged on and on all day, and he had accomplished nothing. He remembered feeling impatient throughout the whole day.

“Yes” Zay’id said. “I can understand this. Our homes are getting too small for the larger group. So perhaps it would be better to split into two. Then we can have more picnics where everyone is present.”

“But how do we split the group?” Mona asked.

“We must choose a second leader.” Mr. Smith commented.

“Why don’t you lead both groups?”

“That might be possible, but I think it would be good to have a second leader. Perhaps he could help me lead both groups, and then if I cannot make it, he can lead.”

“This is wise” Zay’id said. “A second leader would be good. How do we choose leaders?”

“I think we should pray about it and ask God to show us who it should be” Mr. Smith said. Everyone agreed.

Lesson B

Mass Media

In the West Christian assume that mass media means technology. This is not necessarily true. If you have a small church planting team, say two couples and a single, then you can get five different visits in at one time. By doing three visits a day, your small church planting team can visit up to fifteen homes or businesses each day. If you do this for six days of the week then over 90 families can be visited in the period of a week. Since your visit may influence two or three people, over 200 individuals can be contacted in the space of a week. As you find individuals who are interested in discussing spiritual things, those individuals will require longer and more frequent visits.

Pre-Evangelism Tools

Distributing booklets, tracts, videos, and cassettes is helpful. Using these kinds of mass media tools is good for:

- Catching the attention of the public (this may be good or bad)
- Softening a resistant community, as they learn about Christians
- Introducing topics for later follow-up

In a closed country you may need to be creative. In one country, Christians visited video rental shops at night, dropping the Jesus film into the video return slots. The following

day, the Jesus film appeared in these shops for rent! In another country advertisements were taken out in the local paper where people could respond to an address outside of that country. Hundreds responded.

Sometimes mass media distribution (such as door-to-door, or stuffing mailboxes) has a negative effect. It can offend some people, especially when they feel they are the specific target of unwanted attention. On the other hand, newspaper advertisements might work, as people are used to ignoring advertisements that do not interest them. Those who are interested can respond. Sometimes, however, people who are offended also respond. I would classify these forms of distribution as “proclamation” types of evangelism. They may be very useful when the missionary does not speak the language fluently, or for attracting people to a seeker service or Gospel meeting.

Follow-Up

Mass media is usually thought of in terms of evangelism, but it may also be useful for follow-up. There may be occasions when security issues limit the number of visits you have with a new believer. In one situation a single Muslim girl responded to the Gospel. Those following her up introduced her to a radio broadcast to which she could listen to in the privacy of her own home, usually after her family had gone to sleep. She would crawl under the blankets and listen each evening. In time she shared her faith with her sister, and after that they would listen together each evening. In this way, mass media can be useful for augmenting follow-up and discipleship. It also allows the teacher more time to focus on uniting the two faces and can especially be useful for secret or persecuted believers.

The downside of the use of mass media is that if it is not handled properly, new believers or seekers are not integrated into a local church, and thus may not move further on in their Christian faith.

Church Planting Movements

In I Thessalonians 1:7-10 Paul rode the “crest of the wave” that the impact of the church in Thessalonica was making. A vibrant living community creates waves in the wider community. People get talking about it, and soon everyone has heard something, so they are curious when someone arrives with first hand knowledge of what is happening. This is often the key to church-planting movements. Churches plant churches who in turn plant churches.

Optimal Size of Groups

Sociologists tell us that there is a maximum number of people that most of us can relate to. It is often thought to be around a thousand individuals. Some of us can relate to more but others can only relate to a smaller number of people. Beyond this, we simply do not have the capacity to remember names and faces very well. This is important when planning your community. While a thousand people may seem a very large number at the beginning, it is always good to realize that when a group becomes large, it must contain smaller units, or it cannot survive.

Western sociologists also tell us that most of us relate better to smaller groups of people, usually up to 150 in number. This was originally put forward by R.I.M. Dunbar in a published study in 1993. This number of 150 has since become known as "Dunbar's Number" and has been popularized by various western business books. According to these writers, good group dynamics happen in meetings smaller than 150 individuals. If the number of individuals is greater than this, then group dynamics are often much more difficult or impossible. This doesn't mean that group dynamics work for 150 people; it simply helps us set the maximum number that should be involved in any one group. Researchers also tell us that the premium size for group interaction is 15 – 80 individuals and this has proven itself out in many cross-cultural church planting situations. To dream of planting a church of hundreds or thousands may not be practical in many settings.

On the other hand, in many Muslim cultures, group dynamics do not work well if there are less than 15 – 20 in the group, especially if newcomers do not have a natural relation with other members of the group. When a newcomer enters a small group he may feel conspicuous, and have nowhere to hide, especially if he or she is shy. If church planting is done through family relational lines, or through existing social networks, then the size of the group can be much smaller. People will not feel uncomfortable joining a smaller group, since they often meet these same individuals in smaller groups when they meet in their social networks.

However, if a seeker is exploring a new community, he may feel threatened if the group is less than fifteen individuals. Many Westerners on the other hand struggle to experience intimacy if there are more than ten or fifteen people.

These group dynamics have interesting effects on people, and the church planter should be aware that the optimum number varies from setting to setting and culture to culture. In one situation where we were involved in a church plant, we discovered that a group of eight was considered 'small and struggling.' Once we reached fifteen people, everything changed. Now we were a significant and dynamic group and everyone's attitude was much more positive.

In light of this, it is important to consider how effective small cell groups are. In some cultures cell groups should be made up of at least fifteen to twenty people to enable group dynamics to work. In other settings, smaller groups work just as well.

Along with this, it is important for the small church or cell group to feel part of the larger picture. Efforts should be made to make them feel part of what God is doing on a larger scale. Meeting every month or two with a larger group should be encouraged, or else visitors from other groups should be encouraged to stimulate and encourage the members of the smaller group.

Use Different Types of Gatherings

It is important to use both 'timed' gatherings and also "event" gatherings. The difference between timed gatherings and event gatherings should be obvious to those who are attending, and should be clearly spelled out so that they know what is happening. For

instance, Bible Studies should have a limited time frame. If they drag on for hours, people will lose interest no matter what culture they are from.

On the other hand, social events and day long events should be just that: events with no time limits. It is generally a good idea to set a starting time and a time for eating a meal but the event can go on all day. Longer if people want it! Often people want to get away from the hectic life they lead during the week, and so an all day, or one or two day event will be attractive. Missionaries have discovered that these events are usually remembered with great fondness for many years afterwards. If you are planning a community event, then you should add to it a spiritual element that will make it even more significant. A special speaker, musical element, or media element may help make the event special.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. What do you think might be the optimal group size in your culture? Why do you think this? Does everyone in your discussion group agree with this?
2. Do you think you should plant a large or small church? If people prefer larger groups, can you build your church around groups of this size?
3. Analyze your meetings. Do you have a variety of types and styles or do all your meetings follow a similar pattern? Can you plan outings for the new group that are not necessarily spiritual focused, but community-building focused? How about picnics, or outings where people just sit around and visit?

Lesson Twenty Four

Trust and Security

Technical Notes (27 minute lesson)

Story: 1057 words = 6 minutes
Lesson: 1348 words = 8 minutes
Questions: 5 questions = 15 minutes
Story: 838 words = 5 minutes
Lesson: 1471 words = 8 minutes
Questions: 5 questions = 15 minutes

Story A

The restaurant was busy when Mr. Smith arrived. He glanced up at the balcony. Jamal was seated at the corner table. It brought back a flood of memories. “I wonder what he wants this time?” Mr. Smith said to himself. “Lord give me wisdom.”

“Welcome back” Jamal smiled and motioned him to a seat. “You remember this table?”

“Yes, I was just thinking about our first meeting here.”

“Well, I’m not going to test you today.” Jamal chuckled. “I’ve already ordered our food.”

After their food arrived, Jamal finally broached the subject that was on his mind. “I would like to talk to you about Haytham, David’s friend. I don’t trust him.”

“Really” Mr. Smith looked alarmed. “Why do you say that?”

“Well, he is a young man, unemployed, but he always has some money. He is always dressed well, and he conducts himself very well. He never has problems, and he always studies for the Bible study. He is trying too hard.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Yesterday I saw him when I was driving my taxi.” Jamal lowered his voice. “He was outside of the Ministry of Intelligence building trying to flag a taxi. When he saw me he looked the other way like he didn’t see me.”

“So, what is so suspicious about that?”

“I think he is a government agent, watching us and reporting on us.”

“But I don’t have anything to hide.”

“No, but the government doesn’t approve of Muslims following Jesus. They feel that it will cause social problems, tribal strife and social unrest. If the Muslim fanatics find out, they will create huge problems.”

Mr. Smith looked concerned. “How can we know for sure? And if he is a government agent, what do we do about it?”

“If he is an agent, then he has already reported us all.” Jamal looked serious.

“Perhaps we should talk with him and get a better feeling about his situation.”

“But who will do it? I don’t really know him that well.”

“Neither do I” said Mr. Smith.

“That is just it. He is always there, but he isn’t really close to anyone except David.”

“Perhaps we should have them over to our home, and I can learn more about him.”

“That would be good.” Jamal started. “But I have another idea.”

“Oh?”

“Why don’t you get him more involved? If he is a government agent, then he is only pretending interest. Why don’t you get him to lead in prayer? Ask him to participate more. Maybe share his testimony. Maybe even lead a study one night. We can then see if he is really interested.”

“That is an interesting approach.” Mr. Smith said thoughtfully. “I’ll have David and Haytham over for supper first and get to know them better. Then we will see.”

“I’ve been wanting to ask you a question” Mr. Smith changed the subject. “I was wondering if you might consider training to become a Bible study leader.”

Jamal looked shocked. “I couldn’t do it. I don’t have any training.”

“I could meet with you the day before and go over the study with you. Then I will teach the first group, and you can attend. Then you can teach the same lesson to the second group. I think you can do it.”

“Why me?”

“I’ve been praying about it, and I feel that you have a real concern for the members of the group. You are sensitive to people’s thinking. And you are the oldest, beside myself. We can try it for a couple of weeks, and if you don’t want to continue we can try someone else.” Jamal nodded.

A few days later the first group gathered for their Bible study. Jamal was leading the meeting, and Mr. Smith was leading the Bible study. Jamal got everyone's attention, welcomed them and then turned to Haytham. "Could you lead us in prayer brother?"

Haytham looked very embarrassed. "I.. I really don't want to" he stuttered. "That's fine" Jamal smiled, and he asked someone else. Later in the study he quizzed Haytham on some questions on Jesus' death and then asked Haytham to relate to the group what Jesus' death meant to him personally. Haytham asked to pass. No one seemed to notice, but Mr. Smith caught on right away.

After the Bible study Mr. Smith had opportunity to say a few things to Jamal while the others were getting tea and cookies from the table. "I met with them, and I think you are right. His faith is very weak and I don't think he is really all that interested. But he did ask me a lot of questions about other groups in the city, where they are, who leads them, and what organization we belonged to." Jamal nodded.

As the group was dispersing, Jamal slipped up beside Haytham. "Could I have a word with you for a few minutes?" Haytham looked surprised but followed him back into the living room where Mr. and Mrs. Smith were cleaning up. "Look" Jamal started. "We know that you are reporting to the Ministry of Information." Haytham looked shocked. "We don't mind that you are doing this. Please be truthful in your reports. We are not against the government, and we are law abiding citizens. We love God, and we worship him. There is nothing political or anti-government about what we are going." Haytham nodded. "We just want you to know that we love you, and want you to be part of our group."

Haytham looked down. "I'm sorry I have been so secretive. My job is to report on your activities and find out everything about you. When I started it was just a job. But now I've become interested in what you believe." Haytham looked up. "I can show you the reports I wrote. I've said nothing negative about you."

Jamal smiled. "We don't want to see the reports. We've done nothing wrong, and we wouldn't want to be angry with you if you lied to us. Keep your reports. Just know that we love you and are concerned about you. If you need help or anything, we are here for you." Jamal stepped aside so that Haytham could leave.

Haytham nodded. He took his coat and made his way to the door. That was the last time that the group saw Haytham.

Lesson (A)

Another important issue in Muslim ministry is that of trust. Trust is instrumental in the ministry of the missionary, and in the formation of the church. There are three areas where trust plays a critical role.

1. First, trust is an important aspect in the ministry of the foreign missionary. If a Muslim person is interested in learning more about Christianity, they cannot ask

anyone in their own community, for this would cause problems. If they are going to learn about Christianity, they must speak to a foreigner. Before they will speak, they will want to discover if they can trust the missionary. Once you have established that you are trustworthy, and will not tell everything to their elders, they may open up to you. Remember, the questions they ask you may be ones that they do not want their own family members to know that they are asking.

2. Second, trust is an important part of getting new believers together. If a new believer is frightened, knowing that his decision to follow Jesus could be interpreted as dishonoring his family and tribe, he will be very reluctant for others to know of his new faith. Therefore, it will be very difficult to get new believers together. This is why it is important to work from one believer to the next. In our story, Zay'id came to Christ, and was instrumental in Mona coming to faith. Mona led her sister Asma to Christ and then Asma's husband followed. Each of these people were links into the lives of others. In this way, each of the new believers had someone in the group that they already trusted. The group carefully considered new people and they all agreed before adding them to the group. In this way trust within the group was maintained.

A number of years ago in Yemen, an older man came to Christ. Over the years he slowly led other men to faith. Each of these men was very afraid that someone else would discover them. Eventually he brought two believers together and informed them that they were both believers. Slowly he would link two and three believers together until a small group had formed.

If a group continually refuses to allow new people to join them, the missionary must investigate the reasons why. If there is some non-religious issue, such as tribal conflict that cannot be resolved, then a second group may need to be established so that new converts get fellowship. The issue will eventually have to be resolved, but the formation of a second group will allow further time to work out the problem.

3. Third, trust is important when linking converts from Islam with local Christians from a non-Muslim background. Some Muslim countries have a minority population of people from a Christian background. Countries like Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Chad and Jordan all have Catholic and/or Orthodox churches. During the last century, evangelical churches have been planted by reaching out to people from these backgrounds. If you work in a country with an evangelical church of this nature, then I believe you should consider yourself blessed indeed. While there are some who ignore these believers, many churches have opened their doors to embrace believers from Muslim backgrounds. This hasn't happened instantly. In fact many years of labor have been invested by missionaries seeking to help traditional background believers accept those from Muslim backgrounds.

While it is true that there are major difficulties between those from Muslim and Christian background communities, the largest area of concern when trying to form community, is usually that of trust and mistrust. This mistrust between Christian background believers and Muslim background believers (MBB) is usually no larger

than the lack of trust existing between any two Muslim converts, until the discipler has worked hard to bring them together. During the last decade evangelical churches in many Muslim countries have started to open their doors to MBB believers. While there have been struggles, overall the results have been very encouraging, and today many evangelical churches in Muslim countries have at least a couple of converts attending their services. In some situations churches have attempted to have special meetings for new believers from a Muslim heritage. A growing number of pastors readily baptize those who have come to Christ.

4. Fourth, trust is an important issue when choosing leaders in the church. If you find yourself in the position of choosing a leader, don't put all your efforts into one person. Practice has shown that there is a very real possibility that the first few leaders you train will not end up being satisfactory. The list below may help you in choosing a leader. It was drawn up by a number of leaders and elders from the Muslim world. Along with this list, check out the biblical lists in I Timothy 3 and in Titus I.

- Look for a person who has an "I don't know" attitude, rather than someone who is eager to teach everyone.
- Don't be dazzled by a good evangelist. Many who are good evangelists are not necessarily good teachers or good leaders.
- Watch for these undesirable attitudes: pride, self-ambition, jealousy, hatred, gossiping, big dreams, big talkers, worshipers of self, projectors of a very good image.
- If the person is not a natural leader now, have him work with someone until you can see his leadership potential developing. Most leaders are made, not born.
- Look for humility, willingness to learn, and love for God, others and the community.
- A leader must have a shepherd's heart and must learn to draw their identity and security from God. If they are easily hurt, angered, or rejected, then they will hurt, anger and reject others. Jesus' identity and worth came from the Father when He declared: "This is my beloved Son, and I am fully pleased with Him" (Matthew 3:17). Jesus' ministry had not yet begun, yet the Father was pleased with Him and loved Him. Leaders need to know God's pleasure and love without the need of being great or doing anything for God. The foundation of all ministry comes from our identity in Christ. This may be a big battle for your emerging leaders. Ministry flows out of relationship with God, not serving.
- Leaders should have a servant's heart. Jesus told His followers that whoever wanted to become great must serve. If we want to be first, we must go to the end of the line. Jesus Christ, the creator of all, became a servant to show us His way. However, many people serve only until they become leaders. Then they stop serving. If we don't serve one another, we lose the anointing, the power and the blessing. Leaders need to show and lead the way. Once this

happens, the group will learn to serve each other, carrying one another's burdens.

- Leaders should have a spirit of abundance rather than a spirit of poverty. A spirit of poverty says: "I only have a little, I can't give it away." A spirit of abundance gives things away, is open-handed, doesn't cling and doesn't protect. It says, "These things are not mine, nor ours, they're all His!" If your leaders learn to release things with open hands, then God will put more in.
- Leaders should be models to the new believers of how to pay the price, to die to self and to count the cost. Judas betrayed Jesus, but Judas may not have hurt Jesus as much as Peter did. We will have our Peter's. There will be those who are close to us in the ministry, and yet we feel betrayed by them. Leaders must be willing to give up reputation, family, friends, and face loneliness, if needed.

In the end, remember that leaders need to be broken of their own strengths and taught to walk in brokenness before God. Someone once commented "Never trust a leader who walks without a limp." You can never be too small for God to use; you can only be too big.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. Does your church providing opportunity for new leadership to develop? How do they do this?
2. In a Muslim setting, the Mullah calls people to come to prayer. How do you call people to come to church? Does everyone have to own a watch and be able to read numbers or how can they know when it is time to come to pray?
3. Is the church-planting model you are using easily reproducible by the local people? Could they plant a new church or could they carry on if your church-planting team had to evacuate?
4. Read I Timothy 3 and in Titus I. What leadership qualifications come first? Where does Paul put teaching and doctrinal issues in the list? Are you waiting for spiritually mature leaders to develop, or for good leaders to develop? Why did Paul not put doctrine, preaching and teaching at the head of the list?

Story B

Jamal's taxi arrived first. The Smith's car arrived a bit later. Soon everyone from the two Bible study groups had gathered under the trees. A small stream ran nearby fed by a small waterfall. At the foot of the waterfall was a small pool. The children were soon playing in the water and the adults brought folding chairs, blankets to sit on, and boxes of food from the cars. A small fire was started and coffee a coffee pot was put onto the coals.

Everyone was happy. This was a very special day. After an hour of preparations Mr. Smith called everyone together near the pool. Opening his Bible he read several passages of scripture and gave a small devotional about giving your all to Jesus and following him with your whole heart.

Then he called Jamal to give his testimony. Following this, Mr. Smith and Mr. Li entered the small pool where they baptized Jamal. Asma was next, then Zay'id and Mona. It was a very happy occasion. Hot tea was served afterwards, and everyone waited until the food was cooked over the fire. After they had eaten their meal Mr. Smith called them together again.

"There is a second reason for us gathering today" he said. "We want to wish Mr. Li God's blessing as he leaves us and travels home." Everyone looked at Mr. Li while Mr. Smith continued to speak. "Mr. Li came to this country five years ago now. He has been a faithful minister of Jesus Christ. As I look around this circle, many of you are here because of Mr. Li. He was your first contact with Christianity. Over the years he has served faithfully, and all of us will miss him. I thought it would be good if some of you could share with us about your relationship with Mr. Li and how he affected your lives.

Mona was first. "It seems like long ago and barely real now," she stared with tears welching up in her eyes. "I had heard a story that Mr. Li told in the hospital. Some girls were talking about it. I wondered at the story, and wanted to hear more. There was only one Mr. Li, and so I waited for a chance to meet him." Her voice became very soft. "He didn't know it, but that night I was thinking of suicide." Zay'id put his hand on his wife's arm and smiled supportively. "Mr. Li told the story of the prodigal son. I was that son. I had so much sin in my life. I was unworthy, and I desperately needed to be restored. That was the beginning of a whole new life. I met Anna and then Mrs. Smith, and then Zay'id. Everyone pointed me to Christ." She paused. "I'm so happy today. Back then I never imaged that I would be baptized as a Christian. Today I can't imagine anything else. Back then I was dead. Dead to spiritual things. Death to everything, even myself. I never imagined that I could find my way out the other side. But then I met Jesus and everything changed."

Asma sat beside Mona and handed her a tissue. Then she spoke. "I always thought that I was better than my sister. She made so many stupid choices in life. I thought I was making good choices, but my life wasn't much better. I was unhappy. My marriage was unhappy. I was shocked when Mona got married. I was jealous of her happy marriage. And I started looking for ways to make trouble for her. I caught her reading a Bible one day, but Mona only showed me love. I couldn't understand it, until I heard one of Mr. Li's stories from Jamal. Suddenly I was so confused. Islam told me to try harder, be better and pray more. Christians told me to surrender and let God change things. I'm so glad I surrendered to Jesus.

Jamal and Zay'id soon added their comments. Mr. Li started feeling embarrassed. Finally someone asked him to speak.

"You are all being too kind." He began. "When I came to this country I was very unsure how to share my faith with anyone. I made lots of mistakes. Then I met David and together we made more mistakes." David laughed and everyone smiled. "I haven't done anything special. I've only tried to live out my faith. That's all any of us should do. I'm just very normal. However, there is something special. It's all of you. Each of you are

very dear to me. I've prayed for you all, as have others. You are all my family and I'm going to miss you very much."

"But you are going to come back" Mona said.

"Yes," this is just a visit. I want to see some of my family and my church."

"And eat Chinese food again" someone commented and everyone laughed.

"Especially eat Chinese food. "And I will be back. So please, Mrs. Smith, keep some cookies for me."

Lesson (B)

Some closing comments and issues.

The Cost of Community

Years ago in the country of Spain, two missionaries stood on the street corner preaching to people who passed by. They set up an art easel and drew pictures. When a small crowd gathered they turned to the crowd and explained what the picture was about. They choose an area of town where drug addicts and alcoholics gathered. They faithfully pursued their preaching until one night a young man responded and wanted what they were teaching about. That young man was a drug addict. After they prayed with him, the missionaries suddenly realized that they had a problem. What should they do with this man? Should they send him back to the needle strewn alley to sleep? How could they take him home with them? He was dirty and still affected by drugs. The cost seemed too great. However, as they prayed and thought it through there on the street, they decided to take him home with them. That young man, a drug addict with AIDS, slept on their living room sofa. He started withdrawal symptoms in their living room, vomiting on their sofa and all over their carpets. That night they got no sleep as they prayed and helped the young man who went from violently sick to violently shaking. Their apartment was a mess and stank from vomit and sweat. After three days he was finally free from the affects of the drugs. Then there was a knock at the door. His friends came looking for him. When they discovered that he was free of drugs they too wanted to quit. Soon the living room was covered with more vomit and sweat. Rough looking young men were sleeping in every room, and more and more were helped. Eventually the apartment became the center of a new Christian community in Spain, made up of ex-drug addicts. The landlord threw them out, but God provided an old building for them to live in, and they repaired the building and put in rows of bunk beds. Drug addicts were welcomed and several small businesses were started to help them support themselves financially. After a while a group of them decided to move into another area of the city to open another center. Today, that community has grown into a network of Christian communities known as Betel. Thousands of young people have found Christ through the outreach of these Christian communities. The largest church in Madrid, Spain, is now a Betel community, and Betel communities have sprung up all over Europe and are now entering North America, Africa, India and Asia. Within ten years it had spread to fifty cities, with thousands and

thousands of drug addicts and alcoholics finding freedom from their drugs and a new life in Christ.

The entire ministry might never have been born, if the two missionaries had not been willing to pay the price and take the first drug addict home. As a missionary you will face times when you must decide if you will pay the price. It might be giving up something you have. It might be persecution. It might be taking care of someone who is rejected. We may not realize it at the time, but God might be offering us an opportunity to be involved in starting a Christian community. If the cost is too high and we decline, the ministry might never be born or it might be offered to others. But whoever takes up the call must pay the price. However, when the price is paid and community is started, God's blessing usually follows in wonderful ways.

Church Discipline

Church discipline is an act of the community, and it expresses community values. If discipline is lacking, this will have an immediate impact on the Christian community, and eventually on the surrounding community. Discipline is the flip side of stewardship. We are willing to help others, but we will not tolerate abuse of or within the community. Our Christian community is too valuable to have it or its members abused by others. If the community stands together on issues, then the community will grow in strength.

Notice that the Bible verses about discipline and shunning are nestled in between verses about church/community in Matthew 18:15-22.

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church (ekklesia). And if he refuses to listen even to the church (ekklesia), let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven... Then came Peter up and said to him “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me and I forgive him? As many as seven times? Jesus said to him “I do not say to you seven times but seventy times seven.” (ESV)

Security

Every country has different security issues that must be kept in mind. Countries with a Christian minority do not forbid Christians to meet together. But they may have laws that forbid Muslims from leaving Islam, or forbid Christians from proselytizing. Most countries have laws against teaching religious things to children. Some countries which have no Christian minority may have very strict laws about proselytizing. Missionaries have found that telling stories usually does not upset people. Talking about what you personally believe is also not forbidden. Everyone does this. Trying to convince a Muslim that he should believe in Jesus is often considered illegal. This is why it is important to gently lead people along, saying things that provoke them to ask further questions. If they ask, we are free to answer without creating problems.

Missionaries who want to stay for an extended period of time and build community should be aware of security issues. All communication by phone or Internet is monitored. Missionaries should make themselves aware of methods that are being developed and used by others to communicate prayer needs to people at home. These lessons do not address security issues, but every church-planter in Muslim areas needs to be aware that this is a real issue.

Conclusion

Planting churches in another culture is not only possible, it is the desire and plan of God. The Bible contains the Gospel message, clearly laid out for every cultural setting. We are being called to be messengers of this Gospel, and are commanded to take it to cultures other than our own. The believers in the first two millennia of its existence spread out across the world, ministering to others and establishing churches wherever it went. Today we are being called to finish the job. Most of the cultures of the world that are yet to be evangelized are labeled as resistant. But what are they resistant to? If we come with our cultural baggage and with a narrow understanding of what the Gospel message is, it will not be understood, and thus not easily accepted. But resistance, apparent or real should not hold us back. We have the tools to do the job. We have the resources to do the job. We have the knowledge to do the job. God promises to be with us and provide everything we need. The only thing we lack is the will to do it.

For most of us, tremendous courage and motivation are required to move us from what is familiar into the unknown. Few of us want to leave our own culture and venture into an alien world where we never fully feel at home. Yet, that is what Christ did for us. He left the security of heaven and came to earth in order to bring us out of darkness into light. We are called to be imitators of him as we bear his message to others. Not only that, the fellowships of believers that we gather should reflect the lives of men and women who have been set free from sin and are no longer held in the grips of guilt, shame and fear.

Leaving our own culture may seem costly, but in the end we will have to agree with the words of Dr. Helen Roseveare, a well known missionary doctor to the Congo, who stated, “There really is no cost, only the privilege of serving the King of Kings.”

We trust that God will use what is in these lessons to help encourage you in your efforts to plant viable Christian communities in Muslim countries.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. Have you found that there is a cost to creating community? How has this been hard? Is it harder for some than for others? Why is this? Does it depend on culture or upbringing?
2. Read Matthew 20:25-28. How is Jesus’ teaching on servant leadership being taught and demonstrated to your new church-plant? Is it interpreted as your culture, or are the local people starting to demonstrate this in their lives?
3. Have you had to deal with church discipline issues yet? Do you feel that the church community is strong enough to work together on these issues?