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Discipling Muslim Insiders: A Working Framework

Introduction

The Christian church struggles with the discipleship of believers in Christ from a Muslim background. Muslims, who turn to Jesus Christ as their Savior, also find it hard to become part of a church community. In spite of these challenges, the command to disciple people of all nations and cultures is still valid. This paper focuses on *Insider Discipleship of Muslims* practiced within the evangelical mission enterprise. The practice of discipling Muslims within their own cultural contexts elicits mixed reactions from theologians and missiologists. However, regardless of how this debate plays out, the Holy Spirit is working in the Muslim community, moving hearts of men and women to Christ. It is no secret today in mission circles that there is a movement of Muslims towards the biblical Jesus Christ (Trousdale 2012; Doyle and Webster 2012; Qureshi and Strobel 2016) Therefore, the spiritual nurture and discipleship of Muslims that come to faith in Jesus is a work that urgently needs to be done.

This article argues that discipling Insiders is a valid part of ministry to Muslims today. I will present case studies of real situations and draw questions from these incidents to guide my thinking in this paper. I begin with a background discussion of Insider Movements by missiologists and practitioners across the evangelical fraternity. This helps to understand where the debate is at and the key issues raised. This paper provides a three-level progression from three locations as a way to respond to questions raised against Insider work. I draw from Warrick Farah (2015) to explain my three locations in response to issues raised against Insider discipleship. My response is informed by the lived reality of believers from a Muslim background (BMB). Finally, I made suggestions on a way forward in discipling Insider BMB based on lessons I and other practitioners

learned from our failures and successes and what we currently learn from the field.

Over the years I have witnessed the baggage Muslims carry when they join the church. A good number are displaced, disinherited, or have their lives threatened. Don Little in his book, *Discipling in Muslim Communities* (2005) and Joseph Fabelle's *Price to Pay* (2010) describe the pain and suffering that Muslims endure as they embrace our Savior Jesus Christ. Some former Muslims have written of their experiences such as Bilquis Sheikh (2003), *I Dared to Call Him Father*. This is an extraordinary story of a Muslim woman's journey as she embraced Christ and the struggle to disengage from Islam. All those who work for Muslims are confronted with this struggle. I shall cite the story of Yahya Hussein and Sayyid who embraced Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and the end result of our uninformed discipleship process.

Case Studies

In the 1980s Sheikh Yahya Hussein accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and was subsequently baptized. His conversion took place about 2,000 km away from his original home town. Yahya Hussein came from a region that is 100% Muslim, where no faith expression other than Sunni Islam is tolerated. Yahya's conversion was not the result of some missionary effort but resulted from his own encounter with Jesus Christ. So Yahya set out on a journey to find a community of believers that followed Jesus. It was exciting to have an *imam* (Muslim leader) join the church, especially one who seemed passionate to share his newfound faith. We discipled Yahya in the way that we knew best, trained him on how to do door-to-door witnessing and public campaigns. Evangelist Yahya was ready to go back and engage his Muslim people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Yahya arrived in his home town and headed straight to the Mosque entrance and proclaimed Christ. No sooner had he started than he was beaten and beheaded. May God forgive us for the way that we discipled the late Yahya Hussein, a way that led to the sudden loss of his life even before he could enjoy or witness to his new Christian life. We as a Church were not ready for the likes of Yahya at the time. The question still remains: Is the Church ready to receive BMB and nurture them appropriately? This is an urgent need because, in spite of whether we plan to reach out to Muslims or not, the Holy Spirit is moving Muslims to Jesus Christ.

Another sad incident took place in the mid 1990s when Sayyid, a man of Arab descent on the East African Coast, embraced Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and was gladly baptized in a regular church. News of Sayyid's conversion spread in the Muslim community and that day his

marriage dissolved automatically. It is against Islamic law for a Muslim woman to be married to a non-Muslim man. Within a few days, Sayyid's wife was married off to another man who lived on the same street. Sayyid's two daughters aged 4 and 6 went with their mother since a non-Muslim person is not allowed to parent Muslim children. Sayyid's property, that he had inherited from his late father as an only son, was taken away and shared among other close relatives, because in Islamic law, a non-Muslim cannot inherit the property of a Muslim. Sayyid became penniless and his pain increased each day as he saw his wife and two daughters in the company of another man. This desperate life overwhelmed Sayyid and within a few months, frustration and heartbreak killed him.

As much as martyrdom may be part of a believer's journey of faith in Jesus Christ, it should not be as result of inappropriate discipling methods. We asked ourselves, whether there was another way to nurture and disciple such believers. Is our message one that breaks up families, renders convert poor, makes them outcasts, and brings death? Is our goal to allow converts to suffer while we celebrate baptismal numbers without regard to their welfare and safety?

Yahya and Sayyid: The Big Question

So why did Yahya and Sayyid pay with their lives? Was that the way that Christians should do mission? Why is it that each time a convert came from a majority Muslim population they were rendered useless or died? The question we asked ourselves was why did those two Muslim converts die? It dawned on us over time that Yahya and Sayyid were rejected because they became Christians and NOT because they followed Jesus. We realized that the label "Christianity" has a negative meaning in Islam, different than what it means to us. According to the Muslim community, to be a Christian means that one has denied his people and joined himself to an infidel community. To be Christian is to deny the One God, legalize prostitution, alcohol, gambling and pork eating, things that are considered offensive in Islam. The convert's family and to an extent the whole community is shamed by the apostate and thus the urgent need to annihilate that object of shame. Sarah Yoon's *Identity Crisis: Standing between Two Identities of Women Believers from Muslim Backgrounds in Jordan* (2015), brings to our attention the struggle of Jordanian Muslim women who attempt to come to faith in Jesus: many fall back into Islam due to numerous difficulties. And so I ask, are there ways in which Muslims could come to faith in Jesus and be disciplined into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ without being tagged Christian? This would allow for the possibility that even if they had to suffer persecution it should be for the right reason.

Many times I have heard Muslims say that they believed in the Bible message and wished to order their lives in harmony with Jesus Christ, but they did not want to be a Christian. From time to time I am confronted with real people in real situations who need an environment where they can be nurtured and disciplined. The issue that remains is what to do with BMB. It is in response to situations like Yahya's and Sayyid's that workers among Muslims continue to discuss how best to disciple BMB. One way of discipleship is the Insider model which allows BMB to retain aspects of their Muslim identity and to grow in Christ within their Muslim culture.

Consideration of Insider Space for Discipleship

Rebecca Lewis (2009:16) says that the "gospel takes root within pre-existing communities or social networks which become the main expressions of 'church' in that context. Believers are not gathered from diverse social networks to create a 'church.' New parallel social structures are not invented or introduced." She goes on to say, "believers *retain their identity* as members of their socio-religious community while living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Bible." She suggests that an Insider Movement is a Church implant where families become the Church while a Church plant is a composition of new believers who are unknown to each other that is formed into a new social entity, a church. An Insider Movement is a deliberate act of the Christian church to grow a community of believers in a non-Christian community. As much as discipling Muslims on the inside seems a viable option to correct the way we disciplined Yahya Hussein and Sayyid, Morton (2012) and many others argue against it. To expand our understanding of the extent of the discussion going on I will describe the C-Spectrum of Muslim ministry. The C5 on this spectrum is usually considered synonymous with the term, Insider. This spectrum was created by John Travis (1998), "The C1 to C6 Spectrum: A Practical Tool for Defining Six Types of 'Christ-Centered Communities ('C') Found in the Muslim Context" presents a descriptive tool for a community of believers in the Muslim world. The six types are summarized by Bill Nikides (2006:1):

- C1—Traditional church using non-indigenous language. Christian churches in Muslim countries entirely removed from the culture. Christians exist as an ethnic/religious minority.
- C2—Traditional church using indigenous language. The cultural forms are still far removed from the broader Islamic culture.
- C3—Contextualized Christ-Centered communities using Muslims' language and non-religiously indigenous cultural forms. Style of worship, dress, etc., are loosely from the indigenous culture. Local rituals

and traditions, if used are purged of religious elements. May meet in a church or a more religiously neutral location. The majority of the congregation is of Muslim background and call themselves Christians.

C4—Contextualized Christ-Centered communities using Muslims' language and biblically permissible cultural and Islamic forms. Similar to C3 except the believers' worship looks like Muslim worship, they keep the fast; avoid pork and alcohol, use Islamic terms and dress. Community is almost entirely of Muslim background. Though highly contextualized, believers are not seen as Muslims by the Muslim community. Believers call themselves "followers of Isa Al-Masih, Jesus the Messiah.

C5—Christ-Centered Communities of "Messianic Muslims" who have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior. Believers remain legally and socially within the Islamic community. Aspects of Islam incompatible with the Bible are rejected or if possible, reinterpreted. Believers may remain active in the mosque. Unsaved Muslims may view C5 believers as deviant and may expel them from the Islamic community. If sufficient numbers permit, a C5 mosque may be established.

C6—Small Christ-Centered communities of secret/underground believers. These can be individuals or small groups isolated by extreme hostility. Openly sharing faith is typically not attempted.

The C-Spectrum is not a method of reaching Muslims, but a description of what already existed in Muslim areas of the world. Travis observed various ways the Christian Church expressed itself in Muslim contexts. It is the C5 descriptor in the C1-C6 spectrum that has generated the most heated debate in mission circles. Therefore, I shall outline issues raised by those opposed to C5 which is synonymous with Insider believers.

From the onset Travis has insisted, saying, "We will not be contending that C5 is the best or only thing God is doing in the Muslim world today; indeed, God is bringing Muslims to Himself in a great diversity of ways, some of which we may only understand in eternity" (Travis and Travis 2005:12). Many evangelical Islamic missiologists and practitioners have written in support and commented on Insider work for Muslim just to give a few examples, Joshua Massey (1999) writing in the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*: "His Ways Are Not Our Ways: God's Amazing Unpredictability in Drawing Muslims to Jesus." An entire issue of the *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* (January-March, 2000) was devoted to contextualization among Muslims and another issue in 2015 dealt with *debating insiderness*. Jerald Whitehouse (1993 and 2005) highlighted Muslim worldview values that required a different approach to Islam and the need for contextualization in contrast to how Adventists approach those who are already Christians. Since C5 is identified as Insiders on Travis C-Spectrum I shall use both terms interchangeably.

Questions on the Validity of Discipling Insiders

Samuel Adefemi in his PhD dissertation (2007:170, 171) is concerned with Insider secrecy (because of security reasons) which he claims is a way to evade theological, ecclesiastical, and ethical accountability. Jay Smith (2013) doubts the validity of Insider work and raises questions that seem to dismiss insider work. Others who raise objections to the C5 model include Basil Grafas (2007) in his article, "Evaluation of Scriptural Support for Insider Movements: Critique of John Ridgeway's 'The Movement of the Gospel in New Testament Times with Special Reference to Insider Movements,'" L. D. Waterman's article (2007), "Do the Roots affect the Fruit?" and Marc Coleman in his MA thesis where he raises a thoughtful question to members of his denomination, "Are C5 contextualization and Seventh-day Adventist self-identity consistent?" (2004:30). The introduction of the C-Spectrum seems to have accelerated the debate.

Timothy Tennent (2006:101) also asks, "How do these followers of Jesus relate to the rest of the global church? Can someone say 'yes' to Jesus and 'no' to the visible church? Are the biblical and theological arguments made in support of this movement valid?" Tennent argues that believers in Christ must identify with the visible Church. It is of great concern to him that a good number of C5 believers hold onto the Qur'an as the holiest book and do not believe in a triune God (2006:109). Tennent concludes, "The retaining of one's *religious* identity within Islam after becoming a follower of Christ is, in my view, unethical" (112). Iskander Tee raises even more questions:

How big and biblical is our picture of the body of Christ? What do we believe God can answer in Jesus' prayer in John 17, about unity within the church? Field workers and strategists must ask, "Will Jesus share his glory with another religion?" Should we plan a part of the body of Christ where Christ shares his glory with another world view? Would Christ set up part of His body as a sect within another world religion, as some pro-Insiders hope to see? Would that bring His greatest glory? Can't Jesus do any better in a Muslim context?" (2007:3)

Tee seems to be quite unhappy with the whole concept and practice of Insider Movements (4). Jeff Morton, who pulled together all the reasons for opposing the Insider Movement, argues that this approach lacks biblical support and he believes that this approach should be stopped (2012:102, 103).

Those against C5 see it as an endeavor by Western missionaries with their missiology and money to promote Insider Movements (Nikides 2006:5). Bill Nikides doubts how far a C5 believer would be able to go in

following Christ when the mosque has no room for a fully realized Christ (11). After being so negative toward C5ers, Nikides concludes that “Messianic Islam might in fact best be seen as a seeker movement. Classified as such, we can see C5 communities as an excellent springboard for biblical C3-C4 movements” (14). This seems positive.

Tennent after he expressed his displeasure with C5 and argued that there should be only one Christian identity, goes on and concedes, “Nevertheless, no one can deny that, descriptively speaking, there are Muslims coming to Christ in some dramatic ways today. How should we respond to the genuine movement to Christ among these Muslims, many of whom have encountered Christ in dreams and visions?” (2006:113). Views such as these leave room for the germination and growth of authentic Jesus movements in Islam outside of any missionary endeavor to encourage or spur on the development of C5 believers.

An example of a C5 community in Bangladesh (Higgins 2006:117-223) indicates that a good proportion of the Insiders believe that their sins are forgiven in Allah through Jesus who died for their sins. A Muslim observer cautions his fellow Muslims, “The missionaries who pose the greatest threat to the Muslim community here and abroad are those who use C4 - C6 methods” (Zaid 2004). This seems to suggest that the Insider approach is the one approach that retains Muslims in the fold of Jesus Christ.

Summary of Points of Contention

Critics tend to assume that since Insiders remain legally Muslims they must pray five times a day in a Mosque, they must fast, go on Hajj, may marry multiple wives, deny the Lordship of Jesus Christ, value the Qur’an over the Bible, and pay allegiance to Muhammad since this is what all Muslims do. Based on these assumptions then critics proceed to pour vitriol on Insider discipleship. All the issues raised in this discussion by those who fault insider work can be summarized as falling into three main areas.

1. Insider work is deceptive, therefore unethical. It is shrouded in secrecy under the guise of security concerns, but it is a way evading accountability. Jay Smith goes so far as to say that it is hard to pin down C5 missionaries on anything, in other words they are slippery and evasive (2013).

2. The mosque is incompatible with the church, thus it is impossible for a true believer to practice his faith in a mosque community since he has to pay allegiance to Muhammad, celebrate Muslim feasts, and observe all the Islamic rituals. This is syncretism. It is even worse for a Christian to take on a Muslim identity, an act which Parshall terms as crossing the line and wandering in uncharted waters (1998).

3. The fullness of Jesus Christ cannot be realized in a mosque because the Qur'an denies Christ's divinity and atoning death. Without this fullness of Jesus, Christian faith has no foundation upon which to stand. Believing in Jesus Christ as Muslims do without accepting his divinity, Sonship, and death avails nothing.

Critics of Insider work seem to agree on two things, first, that this work is a danger to the integrity of gospel ministry and to the existence of the Church itself. This view is taken by Phil Parshal, Borge Schantz, Jay Smith, and Jeff Morton among others. Second, that if it was necessary for Insider work to be done, then there must be a clear way to grow these BMB towards full church fellowship. Carlos Martin argues that BMB must be made fully aware at baptism that they are joining a worldwide body of Christians (2005). However, in my view the critics seem to be frozen in the time period (1998) when Travis first introduced his definition of C5 and indicated that BMB remain in a Mosque community culturally and continue to be legally Muslims. If the critics had followed recent developments taking place on the field, they would not be asking the same questions and repeating themselves. They would raise new questions to help practitioners find best practices to disciple BMB on the inside. Jerald Whitehouse published a point by point response to Martin titled, "A Response to Questions on C5" in the *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* in which he pointed out that Insider work is not frozen in time, but is progressive and that practitioners learn new ways to improve on what they do (2005:49). In other words, Martin and others needed to keep abreast of what is evolving with insider movements.

Critics of Insider discipling of Muslims want to see BMB come out of their Muslim context and confess Christ as a public demonstration that they have left Islam and joined the Church. This might feel good, and it is what we did with Yahya Hussein and Sayyid and, as a result, they never lived long enough to be witnesses in their respective communities. The question remains, what do we do with Muslim converts, particularly those from one hundred percent Muslim societies? Proponents of Insider Movements are attempting to answer this question while those opposed seem not to be in the business of solving this problem. Rather, their role has been to attack those who attempt to do something. How much better it would be if they would offer an alternative working model. The debate on C-5 has gone on for more than 15 years with Travis and others offering many clarifications in areas of misconception.

Travis' article, "C1-C6 Spectrum after 15 years," addressed common misunderstandings and misuses. He reminded those who argue against the spectrum that it is a description of how Muslims express faith in Jesus and not how the Christian missionary expresses theirs. Travis says

that the C-Spectrum describes how groups of believers, not individuals, express their faith. He refutes those who distort his original meaning to include beliefs and practices of Islam which they assume that Muslims who follow Jesus must adhere to. Travis clarifies that C5 groups engage with and judge Muslim beliefs and practices by the Word of God. And based on the Word of God, C5 believers reject those Muslim practices that are in conflict with the Bible, reinterpret redeemable ones, and make decisions on what to keep. C5 believers develop their faith, keeping in mind the overarching framework which is allegiance to the Lordship of Jesus and the Bible as the guide as to what they reject or retain from Islam (2015:348-365).

A Response to Insider Critics and a Way Forward

It is evident that the majority of critics are not practitioners, have not been out in the field, and have never personally met an insider. Whitehouse suggests that some critics do not even examine discipleship materials, instructional manuals, or the baptismal vows used in order to know where Insiders are at, so they criticize from a point of insufficient understanding (2005:49). As I have already demonstrated, critics of Insider work have created a high theological, ecclesiastical, and ethical pedestal from which they attack Insider work. Jay Smith did attend a Common Ground meeting in Atlanta attended by about 300 American Christian supporters of Insider ministries. However, in reality he has never interacted with an Insider nor visited the field. Samuel Adefemi visited an Insider field to collect doctoral dissertation data and so indeed interacted with insiders for a few days; however, he never visited them in their natural setting, instead he interviewed several of them at their annual convention where there were security agents present forcing the Insiders respondents to Adefemi's questions to reply with political correctness and in some cases not exactly what they would have said if they were in a secure context. Borge Schantz believed in only working for neglected Christians in Muslim majority populations and not reaching Muslims. Muslim ministry was not at the core of his evangelistic endeavors yet he criticized Insider work.

In reality, a deliberate interaction with C5 believers answers some of these questions. I had questions about C5 until I spent one month with C5 believers in their villages, ate with them, and studied the Word of God together. I looked into the eyes of these people who did all they could to be faithful to Jesus Christ and his Word in view of the sociopolitical context in which they lived. In other words, questions that I had from the comfort of my office changed into another set of questions as the pharisaic scales fell off my eyes. I saw real people, in real situations, with real spiritual

struggles doing their best to follow Jesus. I sensed the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives. I did not visit to assess for the purposes of academic research or to play to some gallery, but to simply interact and be immersed in this world of Insiders. I noticed areas that needed to be improved upon and the idea of beginning a new ministry at a second location dawned on me as a way to refine this noble work. How could I judge these people to be unbelievers when they are on a journey to find a fully-realized Christ?

My life in a country where I was free to openly hold public debates with Muslims and where I saw Muslims come to faith, gave me the false notion that the rest of the world was the same. I am a debater and still confrontational in contexts where that works and serves a purpose, but at this point in my life I opened my heart to God's leading. I purposed to stand side-by-side with those on a journey towards a fuller faith in the Bible and appropriation of God's saving grace in Jesus Christ. My journey in the ministry of discipling Insiders had started. I followed the promptings of the Holy Spirit and came to believe that, so long as C5 believers had the inclination to follow Jesus, they would arrive at the full identity of Jesus Christ. My presentations on insider discipleship in three different locations demonstrated that C5 is but the beginning of a spiritual journey.

It is imperative to ask ourselves where converts come from. At the same time, we who disciple BMB must understand that we also come from different backgrounds informed by our own theology of religions. A careful consideration of who these converts are, and who we are, forms the basis of a sound discipleship process for the BMB. I can confidently say that we are God's community of believers in these last days to proclaim the everlasting gospel to all nations, tribes, tongues, and peoples as a preparation for the soon return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Global evangelization requires that we understand different cultures, manners, customs, and religions.

Who Are They and Where Are They From?

Muslims come from different economic backgrounds. Their age, education, cross-cultural exposure, gender, and marital status are things to consider. They also vary in their perception of other religions. Equally important is how these converts have come to Jesus. We have observed that Muslims come to faith in three ways.

1. There are internal triggers that prompt new Jesus-oriented movements and communities. Islamic terrorism and violence has increased the number of Muslims disillusioned with Islam and caused many to search for something better. Some Muslims question their own religious traditions, such as the Qur'an and *hadith* as being out of step with present

realities. There is a renewed quest for interfaith dialogue such as Common Word Call and the annual Doha Interfaith Conference. And there are many other triggers within Muslim communities that cause Muslims to move towards a new understanding of Jesus Christ. That was the case with Yahya Hussein who travelled many miles from his town in search for Christians who followed the Bible and that is how he arrived at the door of our Church.

2. There are also movements towards Jesus that are not a result of any Christian mission activity, caused by Jesus appearing to Muslims in dreams and visions. There are numerous stories of Muslims who see a man in white who then receive directions to follow and obey him. Tom Doyle and Greg Webster (2012) record amazing testimonies in their book, *Dreams and Visions: Is Jesus Awakening the Muslim World?* Arab Muslims who trace their lineage to Christian ancestors in pre-Islamic Arabia have also triggered movements towards their spiritual roots. Is the Church ready to receive and disciple such groups? Several years ago such a man confronted me and demanded to be baptized. He would not hear any of my explanation that he wait for one week to be prepared. He demanded that I give him Scripture to support the idea that if an individual wanted baptism and there was water that they should wait for several days. So I went to my house grabbed my copy of the baptismal vows, clothes to change into, called one of my deacons and we baptized Ayub, a lecturer at a local Muslim seminary.

3. Finally, there are Muslim converts as a result of the Church's strategy to reach Muslims such as printed materials, digital materials on the Web, and social and mass media ministries. Personal evangelism and even public campaigns have also been effective in some places. This is where Christians have spent the majority of their resources and efforts. Training seminars have outlined steps on how to witness and how to bring converts into the church. Unfortunately many are oblivious of the first two ways in which God brings Muslims to faith. Therefore, regardless of how Muslims are coming to faith in Jesus Christ, we must be ready to disciple and nurture them.

Understanding the background of each Muslim seeker helps the church to place them at an appropriate starting point on their nurture and discipleship journey. When a Muslim inquirer states that they are inclined to accept Jesus as their personal Savior, except that they do not wish to take on a Christian identity, we must know how to encourage them on their journey rather than insisting that they must first take on a Christian identity. Jay Smith (2013) noted when he visited the Common Ground Conference that there was confusion among Insider ministries because there were many versions and even different approaches used by

practitioners of C5 with many disagreements. This reality is explained by Warrick Farah (2015) in his article “The Complexity of Insideriness” who sees five layers of Insiders.

Farah has made a good attempt to demonstrate why there are different types of Insiders and the areas where there may be challenges and differences. He also shows how the concept of an Insider can mean different things to different people, because a change of faith in strict Muslim contexts comes with its own challenges. Farah borrowed the concept of insider/outsider from an interview with Abu Jaz (2015:61-67), who identified himself as a Cultural Insider, but a Theological Outsider (CITO). Farah expanded on this concept and created five possible expressions on a continuum between cultural concepts and theological concepts which in the table below resembles a staircase. I refer to it as Farah’s staircase of insideriness expressions.

Table 1. Warrick Farah’s five expressions of insideriness

Five Expressions of Insideriness	Cultural	Social	Communal	Ritual	Theological
0. Exile or Refugee	o	o	o	o	o
1. Cultural Insider	i	o	o	o	o
2. Sociocultural Insider	i	i	o	o/?	o
3. Dual Belonging Insider	i	i	i	?/o	o
4. Reinterpreting Insider	i	i	i	i	o
5. Syncretistic Insider	i	i	i/?	?	i
i = “insider; o = outsider; ? = occasional exception or ambiguous					

Cultural Insider: A cultural insider identifies with his own culture and does not necessarily suffer cultural shock. This person is a cultural insider, but a theological outsider, social outsider, a communal outsider, and a ritual outsider. This is a person who joins a community of worshippers from his own culture wherever he finds them to be.

Sociocultural Insider: A sociocultural insider is one who is a social and cultural Insider, but the larger Muslim society does not perceive them as Muslims. These may fast but only for spiritual reasons or in solidarity with Muslims. Their self-identity is Christian and not Muslim. They create their own spaces within their social networks that allow them to live without stigmatization. They are theological, ritual, and communal outsiders.

Dual Belonging Insider: Dual belonging insiders are not to be confused with dual allegiance. They have a clear identity “in Christ” at the core level of their personal identity. Socially they belong to the Muslim community

while at the same time this multiple belonging is problematic in many ways. They obey the Bible, they do not believe in the prophethood of Muhammad, and do not believe in the inspiration of the Qur'an. They may never perform communal prayers at the mosque and so seem nominal, they are communal insiders, but theological and ritual outsiders.

Reinterpreting Insider: Reinterpreting insiders are Muslim followers of Christ, theological outsiders, but ritual insiders who endeavor to give new meaning to Islamic rituals. Muhammad is given another title of honor, for example, statesman. They read the Bible and the Qur'an side by side and find truth in both of them. They do perform the *salat* and repeat the *shahada* as a cultural marker for they care less about Christian and Muslim labels because Islam is a religion of orthopraxy so they survive.

Syncretistic Insider: Syncretistic insiders retain beliefs that could block their movement towards orthodox faith such as having a theology that more closely "matches a Unitarian understanding of God. . . . This would make them closer to theological insiders, since they may also implicitly affirm the Islamic doctrine of *tawheed* which teaches that God is a singular monad" (Farah 2015:88). This group is not theologically outside enough and is very unlikely to transition into a biblical movement. Discipling this category requires help with their hermeneutics and doctrine.

Farah has done a good job identifying different expressions of insiders in an attempt to create order in the understanding of what constitutes insiderness. You can see why Jay Smith reported disagreements between the speakers at the Insider Conference he attended in Atlanta. It is because of these diverse expressions. As shown above Muslims come to faith through three ways. They start their spiritual journey at different points conditioned by the nature of their sociopolitical context. Farah does not mention whether these five types of insiders are connected or whether there has been a deliberate effort to grow them from position 5 to 4, 3, 2, and finally to 1. As Farah described them, these expressions of insiders seem to be locked in to the point they were at when they first moved away from orthodox Islam. This indicates a lack of dynamism and growth and a lack of continued movement towards orthodox biblical beliefs.

I identified three things that trigger movements of Muslims towards Jesus Christ. Two of those are not a result of any missionary activity on the part of believers. Therefore, whether we like it or not Muslims are coming to faith in Jesus. Depending on which Muslim sociopolitical context they are in, a good number will choose to follow Jesus from the inside. In view of this reality, I disagree with those who insist that Insider discipling *must* stop. How can it stop when Muslims are seeing visions of Jesus and being commanded to follow him? Whether there is a Christian who can disciple them or not, they will still follow Jesus as an insider in the way that the

Holy Spirit guides them. I would rather take a cue from some critics who demand that there be a clear plan to lead insiders to a fuller knowledge of Christ and eventual membership in the visible church. Therefore, I wish to present a model that started in one location but then was further developed in three main stages in three different geographical locations. That journey was a practical response to the many issues raised against Insiders.

These Insider models span three geographical locations that I simply call Location 1, 2, and 3. The work started in Location 1 as an experiment and, as with any pioneer work, there were mistakes made in the learning process. It was not easy to correct those mistakes and so similar ministries were started elsewhere to build on the strengths of that model while correcting the weaknesses experienced in location 1. Location 2 was an improvement over Location 1 and Location 3 also benefitted and built on the strengths and corrected the weaknesses of the previous models. These three locations are not in competition with each other, but are practical demonstrations of what can happen as practitioners, missiologists, and administrators work together to better disciple BMB. Each location has numerous sites with variations that I do not wish to discuss in detail. The purpose is for each location to learn from the improvements made in other locations. Even as I write I am waiting on the Holy Spirit to direct where Location 4 will be established so further improvements can be realized. At this point Location 3 looks good and meets the criteria for an authentic Christian faith, church unity, and doctrinal faithfulness. Worship structures and other minor areas still need to be improved. These locations also describe the state and stages that this work went through up to the present

Model Improvement through Subsequent Locations

Description of Location 1

Location 1 started among rural Muslims with a lower economic status. Location 1 resembles Syncretistic Insiders and Reinterpreting Insiders on Farah's staircase. Those at this location have a personal identity as a Muslim. The ministry is an *open* work and growth is by multiplication. Its organizational structure is not connected to the Church in any way, but is administered by outsiders who live outside the territory. The overall leader is the president, secretary, and treasurer of the organization. The leader holds all executive power and from time to time he assigns duties to his cell leaders across the region. Funds from donors and supporting ministries go directly to the leader who in turn solely determines how they are disbursed. Lack of connection with the Church deprives location 1 Insiders of the wealth of nurture and discipleship opportunities and materials

that are available. A lot of financial resources are required to sustain this model because members are not mature enough to return tithes and offerings. In Islam only the rich give zakat while those who are poor are on the receiving end, so this group is different from the biblical model where all are obliged to tithe. Believers and change agents bicker constantly about money. Also the strong Muslim influence in the area has slowed down their spiritual growth.

BMB at Location 1 are social, cultural, communal and ritual insiders. Some are theological insiders and others are theological outsiders. These insiders hold a full Muslim identity, culturally, socially and religiously with a substantial awareness of theological affiliation to Jesus Christ. This level of theological outsidership by some of the believers presents a path that could lead to transformation but a lot needs to be done in the way of doctrinal and hermeneutical efforts to move this group along.

In order to remain legally Muslim, this group continues to attend the Mosque, honor Muhammad, and participate in Muslim activities so that the believers do not raise suspicion within their communities that they are no longer traditional Muslims. The core issue with this group is the matter of identity—is this insider group truly Christians or not—with the main accusation against them being the obvious syncretism.

Description of Location 2

At Location 2, the movement was located in both rural areas and in towns and cities. Discipleship at Location 2 shares some commonalities with dual belonging Insiders and reinterpreting Insiders on Farah's staircase. Location 2 is *secret* work and growth is by addition. The organizational structure is linked to the Church and is led by church-sponsored leaders through an arrangement that factors in both security of the believers and the workers. The national leadership at Location 2 are answerable to national Church leadership and the two constantly dialogue without leaving a paper trail. This work is dependent on funds that come through the Church, but is not as expensive as at Location 1. A sizeable minority return tithes. There is an attempt to use both the Qur'an and the Bible as if they are on par. They even attempt to locate fundamental Christian beliefs in the Qur'an.

Location 2 Insiders are cultural, social, and communal insiders, split on ritual but theological outsiders. Muhammad is assigned a special status such that he is not fully a true prophet neither is he fully false, but somewhere in between. Accusations leveled against Location 2 Insiders are in what they believe about Muhammad, the Qur'an, and sometimes on ritual practices such as prayers and fasting. The main accusation is that they seem to dilute the gospel for the sake of numbers.

Description of Location 3

Location 3 is a movement of mainly young people that operates in colleges and universities and of late among young professionals. They have started to bring their parents along in the last three years (since 2013). The primary focus in Location 3 is to stress the identity of the BMB as members of a worldwide body of believers. At baptism the believer is well aware of who they are and have zero allegiance to Islam, Muhammad, or the Qur'an. Therefore, believers are baptized in a local church in the presence of regular church members. From this point their identity is very clear even as they live and witness for Christ. However, they live in their communities as secret Christians. Jesus is their Savior and is incomparable to any prophet. He is their only hope of life. Their place of worship and nurture is the home. Location 3 provides Insider discipleship that is acceptable to a section of critics who propose that Insider believers must be made aware at baptism that they are joining a worldwide body of Jesus Christ—the Christian Church.

Insiders at Location 3 share some commonalities with Insider 3 dual belongings and insider 2 social and cultural Insider on Farah staircase. This work is jointly led by outsiders and Insiders because its organizational structure is linked to the Adventist Church. It is *secret* work that grows by multiplication. The change agent is an BMB who is approved and well-spoken of, grounded in biblical teachings, and who demonstrates a Christ-like life. The Muslim inquirer is moved from the Qur'an to the Bible until God's Word becomes the basis of his faith. The Qur'an is then taken off the table except in reference to beginning points for new inquirers. The Qur'an remains just a tool in the witnessing kit. The believer is now moved to a new understanding of Jesus Christ. This process can take several months until Jesus Christ replaces Muhammad and Jesus becomes Lord and Savior of this inquirer. At this stage the inquirer has moved away from the Qur'an and Muhammad, the two pillars of Islamic belief and practices. Once a person has moved away from Muhammad it is much easier for them to accept all the other Bible teachings.

At this point believers are taught in clear Christian terms and become aware of the church. The believers see how they will live under the Lordship of Christ in their strict Muslim community. On the day of their baptism, candidates are transported to a local church far away from their homes for worship and baptism. Insiders at Location 3 do not keep Islamic feasts nor pay allegiance to Muhammad and the Qur'an due to their clear knowledge of who they are. They process how best to practice their faith within their strict Muslim community. Little outside funding is invested in this model, a factor that aids healthy growth in numbers and quality at Location 3.

More money is invested at Location 1 in order to grow the numbers, but without much corresponding growth in faith, whereas slightly less money is invested in Location 2, but numerical growth and growth in faith is largely stifled. It seems that the more money put into Insider work the fewer results received, and the less the funding the better for the ministry both in numbers and faith quality. In Location 3 BMB are cultural and social insiders, ritual and theological outsiders, but divided on participation in communal activities such as funeral rituals and baby naming. Critics have yet to level accusations against Location 3, maybe because they are not even aware that this work has moved this far.

The Future at Location 4

At the prompting of the Holy Spirit and at the right time, Location 4 ministry will be started to complete the process of Insider discipleship for Muslims coming to faith. At Location 4 believers would be Insiders with no allegiance to the Qur'an or Muhammad and who do not participate in rituals that are contrary to the purity of the gospel. Would this type of Insider still be considered to be on the inside or would they have moved into a full Christian identity? Only God knows how Location 4 Insiders will look like, but nevertheless that is where this model is headed. Moving up Farah's staircase, Location 4 believers would be a combination of cultural Insider and exile or refugee. At Location 4 some believers would be cultural insider and others cultural outsiders, and all would be social, communal, ritual, and theological outsiders.

I have drawn from Farah's staircase to present my three locations, however let me say that there are two major differences between my three Locations and the five Insider expressions. First, Farah's staircase steps of five Insider expressions are not connected to each other, but list five separate steps as settled or finished products. Realistically speaking, the steps should be connected to each other in order to result in progression. Farah does not tell us where his Insiders come from or what circumstances cause these Muslims to come to faith and be where they are. On the other hand, the Location model is one ministry that grows and where leaders know each other. These models learn from each other. Second, the Location models are eschatological movements in spite of ecclesiastical and theological shortfalls in Location 1 and 2. They have one thing in common which is to prepare a people for the return of Jesus Christ. This reality is not emphasized or mentioned in Farah's five expressions.

Objection to What?

Many practitioners, myself included, have had and still have questions about insider movements but, rather than spend our energies pinpointing the evil in Insider work, we are prompted by the authenticity of Muslim men and women, who earnestly seek for a fuller understanding of Jesus Christ, to go along with them in looking for answers from the Lord of the harvest. We are practitioners, without comfortable armchairs in cozy offices, from where we can throw salvos at poor Muslim souls who struggle to see the light of Christ.

The ongoing debate on Insider discipleship continues, but one may ask which model or expression, either on Farah staircase or on my three locations, is being objected to? It is obvious that objections are directed towards syncretistic insiders or Location 1 insiders because of the use of the Qur'an as if it is inspired, Muhammad as if he is on a par with biblical prophets, the participation in Islamic rituals, and regular mosque prayers. One other accusation is that a community of believers that does not openly identify with the Savior Jesus Christ is disunity in the body of Christ. But which unity do they mean? Is it liturgical uniformity or ecclesiastical or doctrinal unity? In my opinion doctrinal unity on core Christian beliefs is foundational. It does not matter whether a believer worships on the floor or in pews, wears a suit and tie or a long flowing robe, or whether two or three are gathered in the name of Jesus or whether hundreds worship in a church. Church is more than just a building or even a denominational structure, for it includes both the visible and invisible church. Some Christian scholars continue to spend their energy in criticism of C5 believers, but they are unaware that Insider work may have started as C5 work, but it has moved on and is becoming more and more biblical with each passing day.

This work is growing and believers are coming to faith desiring to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ inside their cultural setting. This work is unstoppable. So long as it is illegal to do evangelism in certain countries or communities of the world, and so long as there is movement to Jesus without human activity, the insider space will continue to be filled with seekers after Christ. If Muslims could only come to faith through missionary activity then it might make sense to close down this work, but since many more Muslims experience divine miracles that draws them to Jesus, the church must make provisions for discipleship. Discipleship must *not* be one size fits all, but must take into consideration where Muslims come from and which sociopolitical context they live in, otherwise the end result will be more unfortunate cases like those of Yahya Hussein and Sayyid.

Summary

This article has stressed that believers come from three strands. First, from Islam's internal triggers that cause them to want to leave and become Christians. Second, they have visions and dreams of Jesus Christ commanding them to leave Islam and follow him. And third, Muslims believers can come to faith through traditional evangelistic strategies. Muslims understand their contexts much better than outsiders do so they will know which identity will enable them to live under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Those who wish not to be part of the open, visible church can be disciplined in homes or even within a Mosque community. While the latter sounds impossible, it is doable. The objective of discipleship is to help believers realize the fullness of Christ in their lives and to anchor their faith in the Bible. When an BMB embraces these two things, the rest can easily follow. This is how Location 3 worked through the theological, doctrinal, and ecclesiastical issues that are still part of Location 1 and 2.

Discipling Muslims on the inside is valid because not everyone who comes to Christ can be disciplined in an open church. In John 3 is the well-known story of Nicodemus who came to Jesus at night. Why did he go to Jesus at night? Because Nicodemus was a Jewish leader who could not come openly without being persecuted. Nicodemus came into Jesus' private space away from the open places of meeting. They discussed. Jesus taught him. The gospel does not tell us whether Nicodemus became a believer or not at that point. Only at the end of Jesus' life on earth does Nicodemus appear again with Joseph of Arimathea and boldly ask to be given the body of Christ for a decent burial. It seems that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were Insiders who Jesus had nurtured secretly. They followed him closely but the open believers were not even aware of them. At the end they had the courage to come out and identify with Jesus Christ when those who constituted Jesus' open believers had abandoned him.

I strongly suggest that any ministry to Muslims needs to create space like the space that Nicodemus initially needed. This is similar to the space needed by Insiders or secret believers. Not everyone can have space in an open church. However, Insiders are on a journey that can lead to a fuller understanding of Christ and his church, as it was with Nicodemus. We may make mistakes in our discipling process, but that does not invalidate the concept of Insider discipleship. We must at all times realign our discipleship process with Jesus Christ and his teachings.

It would be best for those with questions to visit the field and to personally experience, and if possible assist practitioners and missiologists as they continue working on the best practice to disciple insiders. Insider missiologists need to speak up and help the church realize the issues be-

cause silence elicits unnecessary questions. For example, in 2007, Schantz wrote a 19-page letter and circulated it via e-mail to hundreds of those connected with reaching Muslims. After four months he wrote another short e-mail wondering why there was no response from practitioners and church leaders. The Evangelical practitioners and missiologists do write to describe what they are doing with Insiders; however, those actually working with the Locations 1, 2, and 3 models say little about what they are doing, yet they are working with thousands of Insider believers. There is need for the Insider work in these locations to constantly dialogue and interact with each other. The last time key leaders of Location 1 and 2 met was in 2004. At the time Location 3 had not yet come into existence. It was only after that 2004 conference attended by 22 leaders from Muslim ministries that the move towards Location 3 started. Ground preparation for Location 3 took about six years. The Holy Spirit prepared individuals to do this work. God also prepared recipients for that ministry and revealed the field where this work could best be started. We await to see God's plans for Location 4, where that will be, and which people group God will call for this much anticipated work.

Conclusion

Without doubt the Christian initiative known as Insider Movements has generated heated debates within mission circles. Yet, when everything is said and done, the bottom line is that Christians have been given the Great Commission to preach the gospel to all nations. Islam presents a unique challenge for Christian mission initiatives. Indeed, Muslim believers in Christ must be so committed that they will give their lives if necessary. To die because they are "Christian" when "Christian" is misunderstood by their persecutors to mean infidel, polytheist, pork eater, alcohol consumer, immoral and filthy lifestyles—everything that goes against God ideal for his people is to die a death for wrong reasons. Therefore the need to seek the best discipleship and nurture practices both in the open church and among Insiders.

Our message is good news and it is not always meant to disfranchise families, harm individuals, or even cause death. Converts should not suffer while we celebrate baptismal numbers in disregard to the welfare and safety of new converts from Islam. How can it be that if you are born in the West you can follow Jesus without threat to your life and property, but if someone from the East follows Jesus they must be banished from their countries, have their families broken up, lose their property, their cultural identity, and in some cases their lives?

The mission path to Islam is littered with struggles for the souls of the

Muslim, but the Good News is that the Holy Spirit is working ahead of us and leading Muslim men and women to belief in Jesus Christ. God has equipped his people with diverse skills to nurture and disciple BMB. Let us do it. The work in the three different locations is a living demonstration of the progression in the spiritual quality of believers and the discipling methodologies needed for the growth of Insider work.

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