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Tyndale University College and Seminary

Identifying and Addressing Barriers to the Discipleship  
of Believers from Muslim Background in the Arabian Peninsula

A Thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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by

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Toronto, Canada

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## ABSTRACT

One of the most pressing issues facing the rapidly emerging church in the Arabian Peninsula (AP) area is how to overcome barriers hampering the spiritual development of believers from Muslim backgrounds (BMBs). This research identifies the barriers that work against BMBs' growth and discipleship in the Christian faith and recommends culturally-relevant remedies. The study focuses firstly on the cultural origin of barriers and the cost of following Jesus that work against BMBs. The theological grounding of this research is then provided and the inherent tensions between the doctrines of Islam and Christianity are explored. This theological exploration is paired with an examination of discipleship groups and the commitment to gathering in the early New Testament church.

Using qualitative research, external and internal contextual barriers were identified through a written survey, followed by individual interviews. External barriers include cultural barriers, lack of opportunity to fellowship with other believers, unqualified leaders/teachers, Islamic culture embedded in the community, and the absence of leadership. Internal barriers include fear, lack of trust, lack of spiritual maturity, lack of time and vision, Islamic culture embedded in characteristics, and an oral learning preference.

These findings were used to develop a pilot project offering contextually sustainable solutions to counteract key barriers. In this thesis, possible benefits are suggested in regard to applying such changes to the practices of those ministering among BMBs in the AP and beyond.

## DEDICATION

To You, my faithful God and Father, I present this work on the altar as a complete sacrifice for Your glory. You, Lord, must increase and I must decrease.

With full recognition of the price you pay to follow Christ faithfully, I dedicate this work to you, my Brothers and Sisters from the Muslim background, in the Arabian Peninsula and beyond.

To the National Leaders in ministry, I humbly offer this work to encourage adhesion among the church members in the Arabian Peninsula.

To the faithful workers who live side by side with our national Brothers and Sisters in the Arabian Peninsula. I bestow this research onto you and affirm that your labour for Christ is not in vain.

To all Bible Schools across the globe, with a hope that one day through your efforts, the first Arabian Peninsula theological seminary will be acknowledged by the local authorities.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>AP</b>	Arabian Peninsula
<b>AW</b>	Arab World
<b>AWM</b>	Arab World Ministries
<b>BMB(s)</b>	Believer(s) from Muslim Background
<b>BCB(s)</b>	Believers(s) from Christian Background
<b>L1</b>	Progressing Together Level 1 Courses
<b>L2</b>	Progressing Together Level 2 Courses
<b>NA</b>	North Africa
<b>NKJV</b>	New King James Version Bible Translation
<b>PALM</b>	Preparing Arab-World Leaders for Ministry
<b>PI</b>	Pioneers International
<b>PT</b>	Progressing Together
<b>TE</b>	Theological Education

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

This study aims to advance the commitment of Believers from Muslim Backgrounds (BMBs) to meet in discipleship groups across the Arab world, with a special focus on those who live in the Arabian Peninsula (AP). In the AP, a lack of commitment by BMBs within discipleship groups has hampered efforts to disciple converts from Islam, resulting in a stunted growth in their new faith that can be easily noticed in the lack of spiritual growth and maturity that is demonstrated in their daily lives.

For Christian ministries serving in the area, such as Preparing Arab-world Leaders for Ministry (PALM), the challenge remains how to overcome barriers that hinder BMBs from assembly for discipleship and smother their spiritual development. In the AP, the focus has been on church planting and particularly evangelism, while cultivating spiritual growth through committed gatherings for discipleship has been widely neglected. James Engel and William Dyrness in their book *Changing the Mind of Mission: Where Have We Gone Wrong?* support this claim when they state,

But is evangelism the outcome Christ intended when he said, “Go and make disciples...”? Making disciples involves much more than

encouraging people to accept certain truths about God and to begin attending church. It involves a total transformation of the heart and life that involves a righteousness that impacts not only individuals but families, communities and nations. (Engel and Dyrness 2000, 22)

This research focuses on identifying barriers to the development of discipleship groups in the AP. To detect such barriers, a written survey was developed and distributed to the people involved in the discipleship process, both disciplers and BMB disciples. Using the results of the survey, barriers were identified and categorized before individual interviews took place. From the data collected, two main categories of hindrances were identified: external barriers and internal barriers. While the external barriers are beyond the BMBs' control, it became clear through the research that culturally-appropriate responses and innovations can either minimize the negative impact of controllable internal barriers or help BMBs develop strategies to cope effectively with such barriers.

In the contextualized setting that formed the basis for a pilot project, remedies were proposed to address these barriers. Three days were spent with a working group composed of local BMBs residing in the AP area, discussing their contextualized worldview before sharing the study findings with them. As a result of the discussion, clear guidelines were outlined for a three-month curriculum to overcome the main barriers revealed by the research. The working group was then assigned the responsibility of creating a contextualized curriculum and was split into three different sub-groups to complete tasks that collectively formed the pilot project. The effectiveness of this pilot project was evaluated, and the project then

underwent additional development that continued to the time of writing this thesis.

The following sections introduce the reader to the context and the types of external and internal barriers that hinder BMBs in the AP from ongoing commitment to discipleship groups. The pilot project focused on dealing with barriers that are controllable by the BMBs, i.e., lack of spiritual maturity, lack of trust, and fear, all of which are internal. The project also targeted one identified external barrier, namely the lack of opportunity to fellowship with other believers.

### **The Institutional Context of the Researcher's Ministry**

In 1881, a group of workers arrived in Djemma Sahridj, Algeria, to set up the country's first mission station. This undertaking marked the beginning of what was first called The Mission to the Kabyles and other Berber Races, later known as North Africa Mission. In 1987, North Africa Mission changed its name to Arab World Ministries (AWM) to reflect its augmented mission beyond North Africa (NA) to all Arab people regardless of their geographic location (Arab World Media of Pioneers 2013).

In 2011, after two years of discussions, AWM International finalized its merger with Pioneers International (Arab World Media of Pioneers 2013). The Pioneer International (PI) Annual Statistics Report, circulated on August 1, 2014, revealed that as of June 30, 2014, PI totaled more than 2,985 members serving on 289 teams in 103 countries, reaching 205 Unreached People Groups (UPGs). They are sent from numerous mobilization bases and offices worldwide to

minister in 137 languages (Eric Peters, August 1, 2014, e-mail message to PI members).

This history of AWM and PI establishes the institutional context of my research dealing with barriers hindering the adherence of BMBs living in the Arab world.

### **The Researcher's Roles in the Institution**

Currently, I serve with PI as a missionary supported by Pioneers Canada. I joined AWM in June 2008 as the National Director for the Canadian Office. In 2010, after the merger of AWM with PI, I chose to maintain the core focus on serving the Arab world by partnering with Preparing Arab-World Leaders for Ministry (PALM). Appendix 1 provides a detailed description of PALM, including its history and its objectives. Originally a ministry of AWM, PALM is now the branch of PI that focuses on discipleship and theological education (TE) targeting BMBs (Appendix 1). With PI, I hold dual roles as Dean of Ministry Training for PALM and also as Area Leader for the AP Area. Among other areas of service, my work has involved discipling new converts from a Muslim background and training leaders among them to serve the emerging church in Arab Muslim countries.

As the Lord has entrusted me with these roles, I look back and see His faithfulness in preparing me for such a ministry. Born and raised in Egypt (1954-1991), I also lived and worked in Saudi Arabia for three years (1991-1994) and studied Arabic and Islam before immigrating to Canada in 1994. My mother

tongue is Arabic; however, I speak fluent English as well as conversational Italian and Khalijs dialects. These linguistic skills equipped me for interview-based research in this field.

In addition to being immersed in Islamic culture on a daily basis while living in Egypt for forty years, I attended special lectures about Islam, presented by Muslim and Christian scholars, which enabled me to gain knowledge and a deep understanding of the mission of Islam. I also have access to Islamic literature in both the Arabic and English languages. Furthermore, I have had the opportunity of first-hand observation of local and underground churches and mission development in the Arab world, particularly in the AP area, which provides me with particular insight into this context. Finally, a background in business development and management, a Master's Degree in Theological Studies at Tyndale University (2007) and a two-year certificate in leadership development from CREST Leadership Canada in 2010 have been instrumental in my rigorous preparation for this study.

As mentioned above, apart from my role as the Pioneers Area Leader for the AP, I serve as Dean of Training for PALM and as a field trainer in the AP. In addition to being a trainer of trainers throughout the Arab World (AW) region, another aspect of the Dean of Training role is networking and building partnerships with other "schools" or training approaches. Two core aspects of PALM's vision lie at the heart of my calling: (a) nurturing discipleship and (b) encouraging leadership development among BMBs. As PALM's mission is to

fortify churches and nurture and grow leaders, my task as Dean of Training is to establish relationships of confidence with educational service providers and local church leaders, to facilitate the formation of self-reproducing discipleship groups in the AP.

The PALM discipleship program, which comes under the name, “Progressing Together” (PT), is promoted among local believers through the PT website. As stated on the PT website, “Progressing Together is a program of Bible study courses and training resources for all stages of Christian maturity from initial discipleship onwards. It is designed for Churches and Christians where they live and minister in the Arab world” (Progressing Together 2014). According to its printed marketing materials, PT offers inductive Bible study discipleship courses for new Christians, particularly those in isolated areas of the world that lack resources (such as specialized libraries and Bible colleges) for Bible study.

This study is directly related to my current role in ministry and closely interwoven with the vision and mission of PALM. To nurture discipleship in the AP, and to prepare national leaders for ministry, any barrier that hinders BMBs from assembling and growing in their faith should be identified and addressed.

### **Description of the Problem**

In 2004, the Middle East Association of Theological Education (MEATE) conducted a study of theological provision and training in the AW (Habash 2004). The study revealed that the vast majority of Theological Education (TE) providers are found in the area of the Middle East where there is a long established historic

church, whereas in predominantly Muslim contexts where the BMB church is growing most rapidly, there is a lack of local TE. This is notable in North Africa (NA) where the BMB church is growing fastest, particularly in Algeria.

Through field visits and interaction with other colleagues from sister mission agencies, it is evident that the AP area is lacking in mature national believers. Workers there concluded that though the growth of the church is even slower in the AP compared with NA, the lack of participation of new believers in discipleship groups, continues to hamper the qualitative growth of the national church.

### **Research Goals**

My research aims to assist in the development of contextually sustainable approaches to overcoming barriers hindering national believers in the AP and other Muslim contexts from participating in discipleship groups. The long-term benefit of this study is to mitigate the internal barriers facing the BMBs in their context and to build up their inner formation to be able to stand against external barriers. Such spiritual development will enable them to fully commit to a discipleship group.

### **Response or Innovation**

The central goal of this project is to identify the barriers that discourage BMBs in the AP context from participating in and committing to discipleship groups, and to mitigate or eliminate such barriers. This will be tested through a

pilot test. The argument of this thesis, and the assumption of overcoming barriers, is that while the identified external barriers may be uncontrollable, managing controllable internal barriers can strengthen BMBs, enabling them to commit to and follow through with the discipleship process in discipleship groups.

As mentioned above, the barriers were identified as external and internal. A pedagogical strategy was then developed and implemented to lessen the impact of certain barriers or to eliminate them. Evaluation of the learning outcome of the pilot project indicated that the ensuing spiritual development of the working group encouraged them to overcome fear and lack of trust, and led to an increased level of commitment. Ongoing evaluation of the project's success ensured its effectiveness in dealing with barriers stunting the spiritual maturity of BMBs.

### **Terminology**

#### Arab World (AW)

The online Oxford dictionary defines culture as “The arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively” (*Oxford Dictionaries*, s.v. “culture” [accessed August 15, 2015, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/culture>]).

The Arab World or Arab League refers to the 22 Arab countries who share Islam as their official religion. Concerning the Arab League, David Garrison, in his book *A Wind in the House of Islam*, states, “The Arab League counts 22 member nations stretched over five million square miles with a population of

more than 400 million citizens. Some 237 million of these citizens speak a dialect of Arabic as a first language” (Garrison 2014, 208).

Garrison declares that “Though many Westerners still view ‘Arabs’ as synonymous with ‘Muslims,’ more than five percent of the population of the Middle East are Christians” (Garrison 2014, 208). Islamic teachings outline the lifestyle of the majority of people who live in the AW, serving as a mental roadmap that shapes their mindset. However, when a person converts to Christianity from Islam, this mindset starts to change. The term ‘Islamic Culture’ refers to the culture that is the focus of this research.

#### Believers from Muslim Backgrounds (BMBs)

BMBs are ex-Muslim men and women who have converted to Christianity. This term is not exclusive to local believers in the AP but extends to any believer across the globe who has converted to Christianity from Islam.

#### Discipleship Groups

George Housney, in his book *Engaging Islam*, says, “it is your responsibility to see that the people you lead to Christ are nurtured and not just left alone for their new faith to wither and die” (Housney 2010, 166). This advice leads us to the Great Commission in Matthew 28 that instructs all believers to go and to make disciples. As I expand my reflection on this passage in the following chapter, the discipleship meaning is emphasized as another facet of the process of making such disciples. The first aspect of this process, baptism, occurs after

evangelization, i.e., after one confesses faith in Christ, baptism makes his or her faith known to others. The second aspect of the discipling process is teaching new converts the Word of God to nurture their growth in their new faith. The process is likened to a journey: “The Biblical teaching of discipleship offers the bridge from Jesus’ world to our own” (Wilkins 2010, ch. 1). The discipleship process of BMBs in the AP takes different shapes, from distant discipleship on an individual basis due to specific circumstances, to face-to-face group gatherings that take place in houses due to contextual challenges.

In this study the term *discipleship group* refers to BMBs that are committed to meet in groups of two or more somewhere in the AP to pray, study the Bible, break bread and have fellowship (Acts 2:42). In other words, a discipleship group is the meeting together of believers in homes. David A. Servant states in his book *The Disciple-Making Minister* that “the house church model is a very valid biblical alternative that can be quite effective in accomplishing the goal of making disciples” (Servant 2013, 37). This study sheds light on barriers facing the discipleship process in the AP and the hindrances that prevent BMBs from assembling in discipleship groups.

#### High-Security Countries of the AP

This term refers to the numerically based coding system used in this research to avoid naming countries for security and ethical purposes. Each AP country is referred to as High-Security Country # 1, High-Security Country # 2, and so on.

## Orality

The term Orality and its derivatives refer to the learning preference where people learn primarily through interaction, telling stories and hands-on experience rather than through traditional book or textual learning. In discipleship groups, storytelling and other oral approaches are used in an informal educational context for discipleship and leadership development. In this thesis, the term Orality addresses the learning preference of people living in the AW in general, and of those in the working group who participated in the action research.

## Spiritual Maturity

The term Spiritual Maturity used here refers to the growth the BMBs aimed to achieve in their knowledge and spiritual discernment. Such growth or maturity will be seen in their transformed lives:

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God (Philippians 1:9-11).

## The Hadith

The Hadith is the books of tradition that contain the recorded sayings of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam. Muhammad's sayings and his conduct constitute the Sunnah. The Hadith or *Al Sunnah Al Nabawia* is traced back through trustworthy witnesses—according to Quran 23:8, 23:10-11—who faithfully memorized the sayings and the conduct of Muhammad throughout the

years, reciting his sayings and narrating his practices to the early Muslim people.

Ibn Warraq, in his book *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad*, comments,

There are said to be six correct or authentic collections of traditions accepted by Sunni Muslims, namely, the compilations of al-Bukhari (d. 870), Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj (d. 875), Ibn Maja (d. 887), Abu Dawud (d. 889), al-Tirmidhi (d. 892), and al-Nisai (d. 915). One usually adds to this list the name of Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855), whose great encyclopedia of traditions called the Musnad contains nearly 29,000 traditions and has “been the subject of pious reading.” (Warraq 2000, 37)

The Qur’an relies on the Hadith to verify its meaning and to act as a source of Islamic religious law. Tom Holland in his book, *In the Shadow of the Sword*, states,

It was hardly surprising that the great labour of fashioning the *Sunna* took Muslim scholars so long. Such was the compendious quantity of sayings attributed to the Prophet that only in the eleventh Christian century, some four hundred years after his death, could jurists plausibly claim to have bagged the lot. (Holland 2012, 30)

According to Holland, it was even more of a challenge “to define precisely what it was that God, through His Prophet, had bestowed upon the Muslim people”; however, Muslim scholars were not the first theologians “to wrestle with [such] implications.” He further comments that it took “six hundred long years of bitter and occasionally murderous argument before scholars of the *Sunna* could finally be brought to agree on the nature of the Qur’an” (Holland 2012, 30-31).

### The Islamic Sharia

The Islamic Sharia (Arabic: شريعة) corresponds to the Torah in the Old Testament. While the Five Scrolls of Torah (the Pentateuch) transmit the Divine instructions and law based on the Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mount

Sinai, the Islamic Sharia Law is seen by devout Muslims as the enforced legal framework consisting of the rules and regulations by which every Muslim should abide. Sharia Law is rooted in both the Qur'an and the Hadith. In the Diaspora, the majority of Muslim immigrants tend to elevate Sharia over the law of the land in which they reside and constantly push for the governance of Muslims by Sharia Law.

### Ummah

Ummah (Arabic: أمة) means people or nation. Muslims across the globe believe they belong to the Islamic Ummah that includes Muslims from all people, tongues, tribes and nations. Shaban, in his book *Islamic History: A New Interpretation*, states the following in reference to the origin of the Islamic Ummah:

The Madinans must have appreciated these qualities (of Muhammad) and must have arranged with Muhammad that he should have enough authority in Madina to organize a Madinan commonwealth....finally culminated in the so-called "constitution of Madina" laid the foundation of the new commonwealth known to us as *umma*. (Shaban 1994, 11)

The Qur'an elevates the Islamic Ummah above any other nations (Qur'an 3:110). That Arab Muslims view their Ummah history with pride, linking it with God's miraculous hand, is supported by the following statement by Garrison: "A band of semi-nomadic religious warriors emerging from the scorching sands of the Arabian Peninsula to challenge, defeat and conquer the greatest military powers in history lend weight to such a lofty interpretation" (Garrison 2014, 208).

While the Islamic Ummah started within the Arab empire, it lasted and conquered as the Islamic faith not as an ethnic empire. Garrison explains, “Over the centuries, the great Arab empire has been conquered and subjugated by Persians, Mongols, and Ottoman Turks, but in each case it was the Islamic faith that ended up conquering its conquerors” (Garrison 2014, 209).

Muslims across the globe share the experience of Ummah based on the pillars of Islam. Phil Parshall in his book *Beyond the Mosque* reflects on the foundation of the Islamic community and how Muslims enhance their experience of being part of it. He states, “The experience of Islamic community is enhanced through the rituals of prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and almsgiving” (Parshall 1985, 39).

The Islamic Ummah is the global body of all Muslims who are united under the banner of Islam. It is believed through Qur’an and Hadith that one day all people should be forced to come under this political system of the Islamic Ummah where Islam will reign and the Sharia laws will govern. The above mentioned facts about the Islamic Ummah pave the way to understanding the context in which the BMBs are engaged.

### **Summary**

The focus of this study is to identify the reasons hindering the development of discipleship groups among BMBs in the AP. The outcome of this study identified two main streams of barriers: external and internal. Lessening the impact of controllable “internal” barriers will help BMBs toward spiritual

maturity and aid in their development of a constant and unwavering discipline, enabling commitment to a discipleship group and engagement in the discipleship process.

The spiritual growth experienced by the BMBs within the working group in this study helped them to build trust, fight their internal fear and promote the practice of continuous gathering and fellowship with other BMBs. Participating in the pilot project, members of the working group helped each other to search the Word of God for teachings on how to fight fear in their lives. They also shared in discussion and exchanging experiences to deal with the lack of trust in others compared with the full trust they put in God. The end result of the three-month pilot project was manifested in noticeable spiritual growth that confirmed the increased inner strength of the working group members. They were better able to overcome their internal barriers and commit to meeting regularly for fellowship. While external barriers continued to exist, the BMBs, when strengthened from within, persevered and continued to grow and be nurtured.

The study focused on collecting data through a survey, followed by individual interviews, culminating in a working group action that laboured for three months to produce a contextualized oral curriculum that fostered spiritual growth. The working group studied three main topics related to the barriers they and other BMBs experience. They dealt with how to overcome fear and lack of trust, and learned the importance of fellowship with other believers by studying the Word of God and engaging in the discipline of prayer.

Having derived spiritual strength and encouragement themselves from the Word of God, it was from that same source that the working group extracted the fundamentals of the piloted curriculum, the aim of which was to help others find strength and encouragement. They also dealt with their lack of trust in others while focusing their trust in the Lord, who gave them the wisdom needed to overcome this and other barriers. Through the practice of studying the Word and composing lessons for the curriculum as a team during the three-month pilot project, they developed healthier fellowship and spiritual maturity, as was measured through the evaluation survey. This maturity enabled them to overcome the internal barriers of fear and lack of trust, and led them to gather more frequently and consistently for fellowship.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION**

This chapter provides the theological framework to which this thesis and its findings relate. This research is designed to help BMBs and those who minister to them identify and understand the barriers that hinder their gathering in discipleship groups and impede their spiritual development. This discussion is intended to help the reader understand the BMBs' theology prior to their conversion to Christianity.

To build up this theological foundation, a brief history of Christianity in the AP before the advent of Islam is presented. Secondly, an overview of Islam is provided to show how it contrasts with Christianity. Thirdly, to connect the barriers with the discipleship process that takes place through consistent interaction with other believers within the house fellowships, the latter part of this chapter expounds the theological understanding of biblical discipleship within discipleship groups. Finally, I give biblical examples of barriers against the disciples' gatherings and the process of discipleship within those fellowships, followed by an overview of the cost of discipleship and the spiritual warfare being waged by the enemy.

### **Religious History in the AP in Muhammad's Time**

Paganism, Judaism and Christianity were beliefs and religions that spread all over the AP before the advent of Islam. In spite of the claims of Muslim historians that paganism and depravity dominated the AP before Islam, scholars provide accurate proof that Judaism and Christianity were the dominant religions in much of Arabia. Large numbers of people in Yathrib (later called "Medina") and in the south region of AP at Najran and Yemen were Jews who converted to Christianity: "Judaism had been in Arabia from ancient times, with several Arab tribes having converted. This had been followed by a wave of conversions that made Christianity the dominant religion in much of Arabia" (Reisacher et al. 2012, 151).

In his book, *Islam, Muhammad and the Koran*, Labib Mikhail points out that during Muhammad's time, Judaism and Christianity were present in the midst of the largely paganistic Arabia. Mikhail notes the following concerning the presence of some Christian heresies in the AP at the time of the Prophet of Islam:

There were also many Christian cults in Arabia: the Ebionites, who denied the deity of Christ; the Docetic Gnostics, who emphasized His deity but denied His humanity; the Arians, who attributed to Him a subordinate deity; and the Nestorians, who denied the proper union of His two natures. (Mikhail 2002, 27)

Muhammad was exposed to conflicting views about Jesus and Christianity which appear in both the Qur'an and the Hadith. Jonathan Berkey, in his book *The Formation of Islam*, describes Arabia as follows:

In eastern Arabia, Christianity was a presence, for example in the oasis of al-Yamama from which Muhammad's prophetic rival Musaylima emerged

and among tribes such as Banus Hanifa. Christianity came to this region largely through al-Hira, the important Arab settlement on the borders of Sasanian Iraq, and so was Nestorian in orientation. (Berkey 2003, 45)

Referring to Arabs who may have been Christianized only partially or imperfectly, Berkey explains the reasons behind the Arabs' misconception of Christianity. He proceeds to point out that such misconception may originate from the Qur'an itself, as some Arabs understood the Christian trinity to consist of God, Jesus, and Mary (Qur'an 5:116). Berkey affirms that "whether or not Muhammad himself understood the Christian idea of the trinity in this sense, the Qur'anic verse suggests that some Arabs had at best a very attenuated notion of what constituted Christian doctrine" (Berkey 2003, 46). Furthermore, Mikhail mentions two influential persons in Muhammad's life: the Ebionites Bishop Waraka [Waraqah] Ibn Nofal and a Nestorian monk Buhaira who both shaped the prophethood of Muhammad (Mikhail 2002, 27-31).

Besides being influenced by Christian heresies, other religions and beliefs played a role in shaping Islam's monotheistic origin. John Esposito in his book *Islam the Straight Path* states,

Islam was not an isolated, totally new monotheistic religion...Monotheism had been flourishing in Semitic and Iranian cultures for centuries preceding Muhammad's ministry. The Scriptures and prophets of Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism had a long-established presence and roots in Irano-Semitic societies. (Esposito 2011, 4)

In addition, Rafat Amari, in his book *Islam in Light of History*, adds that Zoroastrians and Sabian Mandaeans influenced Muhammed's views with their star worship and with the Arabian Jinn religion (Amari 2004, 273, 446-450). For

example, Amari explains that the Islamic name of Allah originated from the god of the moon in Arabia. Quoting Qur'an 29:61, he writes, "The big star Athtar—Venus—replaces the moon for the title of Allah.... Over time, Venus stole the title of "Allah" from the moon. Both the moon and the sun became subjects to Allah, the biggest star" (Amari 2004, 273-274).

Also, Qur'an 53:19-20 refer to three famous goddesses that the Arab tribesmen of the region worshipped: Al-Lat, the sun goddess, Al-Uzza, the goddess of the morning star and was worshipped by Quraysh tribe, the tribe of Muhammad; and Menat, the goddess of fate and time. The three were daughters of the chief deity associated with the planet Venus, known as Al-Ilah (Allah) as mentioned earlier (Berry 2007, 15).

Both Esposito and Amari identify the origin of monotheism in Islam and link it to previous sources "Forms of monotheism did exist in Arabia alongside pre-Islamic tribal polytheism" (Esposito 2011, 4), and "Arabian Monotheism, which is based on Star Venus Athtar is the root of Mohammed's Monotheism" (Amari 2004, 276).

The above summary reflects the multi-religious context of Arabia and its influence on Muhammad and on Islam as it took shape in the midst of that culture.

### **The Birth of Islam**

History and tradition reveal that Mecca, a central city in the AP, was a place for pagan worship. The Arab community in the AP was influenced by the multi-religious practices and occult traditions, as mentioned earlier. Outside

Mecca, there was continuous conflict between the clans. M.A. Shaban, in his book *Islamic History*, quoted W. Montgomery Watt in his statement that “The causes of many wars like the Wicked War can be traced to the attempts of some of the clans along the trade routes to increase their own control over territories belonging to other clans” (Watt 1953, 14). They lacked moral values and social reform.

Muhammad rejected the malicious reality around him and sought after change. At the age of forty, he escaped Mecca to a desert cave called “Hira” (Berry 2007, 21; Mikhail 2002, 30), where Islamic tradition claims that he experienced a series of spiritual visions and revelations. Those revelations were claimed by Muhammad only in the year 610 AD; no other witness shared such claims. “It was Waraka [Waraqqa] Ibn Nofal, the Ebionite Bishop who declared that Muhammad was a prophet” (Mikhail 2002, 31). After asserting that the visions and revelations had come directly to him from Allah through the angel Gabriel, Muhammad headed a spiritual mission to transform the pagan society around him to Islam, a new monotheistic faith (for more historical details, refer to Amari, 2004 and Shaban, 1994).

Islam is not merely a monotheistic faith; it is a political system as well. Hence, Muhammad held a dual role in his lifetime: a religious leader and a political leader. Bernard Lewis compares Muhammad’s career with the career of his predecessors, Moses and Jesus, stating,

Moses was not permitted to enter the promised land... Jesus was crucified...Muhammad conquered his promised land, and during his lifetime achieved victory and power in this world, exercising political as well as prophetic authority. As the Apostle of God [god], he brought and taught a religious revelation. But at the same time, as the head of the Muslim *Umma*, he promulgated laws, dispensed justice, collected taxes, conducted diplomacy, made war, and made peace. The *Umma*, which began as a community, had become a state. It would soon become an empire. (Lewis 1995, 53)

### The Pillars of Islam

According to Muhammad, Islam was built on five corner stones or pillars.

Sue Penney, in her book *Islam Foundation Edition*, introduces those pillars. She writes,

The five pillars of Islam are not real pillars. They are things that Muslims believe. A pillar is something solid which supports a building. The five pillars of Islam are called pillars because they are following what they say 'supports' Islam. Keeping the five pillars helps Muslims follow their religion properly. (Penney 1999, 14)

The pillars of Islam are well known to Muslims and to non-Muslims who are closely exposed to the teachings of Islam, or to those involved in ministry to Muslims. Those pillars are fully explained in Suzanne Haneef's book, *What Everyone Should Know About Islam and Muslims*. They are summarized as,

Declaration of Faith (Shahadah),  
Prayer (Salah),  
Fasting (Sawm),  
Poor-Due (Zakah) [Alms], and  
Pilgrimage (Hajj). (Haneef 1996, 51-70)

Jihad, a fundamental principle of Islam, could potentially become an additional pillar for Islamists: "Islamists, as moderate Muslims call the extremists, want to add a sixth pillar—jihad" (Orr 2003, 9).

In later sections of this chapter the term Jihad is highlighted; however, in the following few sentences a glimpse of this Islamic Jihad is provided. The literal meaning of the word *Jihad* is holy struggle. Jihad with its broader meaning of struggle or strive is sometimes referred to as the sixth pillar of Islam, although it has no such official status. Esposito comments,

In its most general meaning, [jihad] refers to the obligation incumbent on all Muslims, as individuals and as a community, to exert themselves to realize God's will, to lead virtuous lives, and to extend the Islamic community through preaching, education, and so on...a related meaning is the struggle for or defence of Islam, holy war. Despite the fact that jihad is not supposed to include aggressive warfare, this has occurred, as exemplified by early extremists like the Kharijites and contemporary groups like Egypt's Jihad Organization...as well as Jihad organizations in Lebanon, the Gulf states, and Indonesia. (Esposito 1998, 93)

The struggle in Islam is not limited to the struggle of the inner being, but it takes other forms, including the external fight, military actions and war following Muhammad's example of waging holy wars and revenge. Concerning this example set before Muslims by their prophet, Mark Gabriel, in his book *Islam and Terrorism*, says,

“Muhammad spent his first years in Medina building up his military strength. The goal of his first jihad, or holy war, was to take revenge on Quraysh [Quraish], the tribe that had persecuted him” (Gabriel 2002, 72).

Islam divides the world into two sects: believers and unbelievers. The beliefs here are related to Islam. Thus, the world of Muslim believers is called the World of Peace (dhar al-Islam). And the world of the unbelievers is called the World of War (dhar al-Harb) (Esposito 2004, 62). They are also called “the house of Islam...and the house of war” (Garrison 2014, 45, 227). The external struggle

against the non-Islamic world appeared in the seventh century Islamic Sharia law codes under the term “Jihad.” Concerning this Islamic doctrine, Bernard Lewis comments “The Muslim jihad...was perceived as unlimited, as a religious obligation that would continue until the world had either adopted the Muslim faith or submitted to Muslim rule” (Lewis 1995, 233).

The pillars of Islam including jihad shape the mindset of devout Muslims; however, some nominal Muslims have different views as they practice only a few of the Islamic rituals periodically. Those nominal Muslims usually are more moderate and view Islam as a peaceful religion.

#### Fajr and Doha Al-Islam

In this section, I continue to present the historical facts about Islam as they constitute the underlying foundation of the context of this research. The Islamic culture of the AP is rooted in such historical facts. *Fajr* in Arabic means dawn while *Doha* means noon time. In his concise article titled “Rise of Islam,” Ken Spiro briefs the dawn of Islam in the midst of Jewish Arabia, pointing to Muhammad’s vision and referring to the tension between Muhammad and the Jews living in Mecca (Spiro 2007). Spiro also refers to Jihad in history as Muslims moved with a fearsome power against the Byzantine and Persian empires, and he highlights the beginning of Muhammad’s prophetic work in Mecca, stating,

Initially, Muhammad attracted very few followers with barely forty converts after three years. However, filled with a passion that has been the characteristic of the truly great visionaries of the world, Muhammad

would not give up. Over time, he gradually built a steady following of committed loyalists. (Spiro 2007)

Muhammad's few followers increased in number to the extent that they drew the attention of the people of Mecca.

Al Quraish, the tribe where Muhammad originated, refused Muhammad's calling to his new religion. The Qur'an states that his fellow tribesmen in Mecca mocked him, labelling him a forger (Quran 16:101), mad (Qur'an 15:6, 68:51), bewitched (Qur'an 25:7, 8) and a possessed poet (Qur'an 37:36). They imposed hostilities on him and his followers.

When Muhammad and his followers were forced to escape the persecution in Mecca in 622 A.D., they went to another city called Yathrib, also known as Medina (Denny 2006, 61). This journey to Yathrib is called *Hijra*, which means immigration. The Islamic calendar holds this event as its starting point, Mikhail writes,

Islamic history does not begin with the birth of Muhammad or the year of his alleged call to be a prophet, but by the *Hijra*. (Mikhail 2002, 85)

While in Yathrib; Muhammad gradually developed his leadership, not only as a religious leader but also as a political and military leader. Lewis illustrated this by the following statement:

The people of Yathrib welcomed Muhammad and his followers to their town and offered to make him arbitrator in their disputes and to defend him and those converts who would accompany him from Mecca as they would defend their own people...In Medina, he [Muhammad] himself became ruler, wielding political and military as well as religious authority. (Lewis 1995, 52-53)

On this fact, Cragg in his book *The Call of the Minaret* states, “The Qur’an, in this middle Meccan period, lays increasing stress on the historical parallels of earlier prophets, all of whom are pictured as manifestly victorious over their foes” (Cragg 1985, 72). On the other hand, reflecting on the history of Islam, its conquering of Arabs in the AP and, thereafter, of the peoples of other countries by the sword as well as by the power and authority of the state, Mikhail notes,

This is because it was at Al-Madina [*sic*] that Muhammad established a government, organized an army, and Islam first became a state religion. It is of great importance to notice that without the power and authority of the state, Islam cannot survive. (Mikhail 2002, 85)

It was in Yathrib that Islam dawned and gained its strength and its political foundations. Ayoub states that “the Quran honors the people of Madinah [Yathrib] by calling them *ansar* (“Helpers” or “Supporters”), that is to say the first supporters of Islam and its Prophet” (Ayoub 2004, 23).

The new horizon appeared, and the dawn turned to noon. The Islamic teaching grew and expanded, and history claimed that Medina became the first stronghold for Muhammad and his followers. Andrew Rippin in his book *The Qur’an* states,

In Mecca, Muhammad and his small number of followers had little influence politically and there was no possibility of establishing a Muslim “state” there; in Media however, the prophet and his followers from both Mecca and Medina formed the first Muslim “state”, in which Muhammad functioned as both judge and political and military leader. (Rippin 2006, 47)

In the year 630 A.D., Muhammad led an army of followers and invaded Mecca. “He led several raids: the raid of Uhud, the greater raid of Badr (Denny 2006, 64), the raid of Hunain, and the raid of Tabuk....He was from the Quraish tribe and from now on his tribe would reign over a united Arabian Peninsula” (Mikhail 2002, 96).

The Muslim community and Islamic State continued to grow after Muhammad’s death. Esposito states,

Within centuries after his death, Muhammad’s local Arabian polity became a vast empire, extending from North Africa to Southeast Asia. The development of Islam and state institutions (the caliphate, law, education, the military, social services) were intertwined..... Within a decade, Arab forces overran the Byzantine and Persian armies, exhausted by years of warfare, and conquered Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Persia, and Egypt. (Esposito 1998, 32-33)

In their critique response to Reza Aslan, James Beverley and Craig Evans refuted a few claims listed in his book, *No god but God*. In one of those claims, Aslan states that “perhaps the most important innovation in the doctrine of jihad was its outright prohibition of all but strictly defensive wars” (Aslan 2006, 84). Beverley and Evans respond,

First, the conquests immediately after Muhammad’s death were anything but defensive. These are known as the ridda wars and took place from 632–634. During this time Muslim soldiers subdued all of Arabia under the banner of Islam. Second, after the subjection of all of Arabia to Muslim rule, the Islamic armies swept across the Middle East, through North Africa, into Spain, into southern Europe, and conquered territory as far east as modern-day Pakistan. Large areas of the Byzantine Empire came under Islamic control, and the Sasanian Empire was basically crushed. While most Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians were allowed to practice their religion, they became subject to the laws of dhimmitude.

While dhimmi status is not slavery, it was certainly, with rare exception, second-class citizenry. (Beverley and Evans 2015, location 3511)

Concerning the spread of Islam, Mahmoud M. Ayoub in his book *Islam Faith and History*, comments, “Islam grew and spread not simply as a collection of beliefs and rituals, but as a political and military power and a religious legal system” (Ayoub 2004, 91). Thus, Islam embarked on its quest to grow as an Umma with its calling and dominating ideology which will be explained in the next section.

### The Calling (Dawah) and Mission of Islam

Before exploring the meaning of the mission of Islam, the reader is encouraged to pay heed to the sources of Islamic religious law: the Qur’an and Hadith. While the Qur’an is considered the holy book of Islam, the Hadith is the record of the sayings and conduct of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam. Between both texts, the Islamic mission is interwoven.

My research focuses on BMBs within the AP where the calling and the mission of Islam are widely spread in the minds of the people in their communities, giving rise to the barriers that hinder BMBs from committing to gathering in discipleship groups.

From the Hadith and Qur’an the mission of Islam could be summarized as follows:

1. All the Earth belongs to Allah and should be united under Islam: “Know that the earth is for Allah and I want to exile you from this land, so whoever

among you has property he should sell it; otherwise, know that the land is for Allah and His Apostle” (Hadith, Sahih Bukhari, Volume 9, Book 92: Abu Huraira 447). According to Islamic scholars such as Al-Baghawi, this Hadith means that if all land and property actually belong to Allah, then Muslims should seek to consolidate the whole earth under the banner and control of Islam.

2. All Muslims should continue working until only Allah is worshiped: “Our Prophet, the Messenger of our Lord, has ordered us to fight you until you worship Allah alone or give Jizya (tribute)” (Jubair bin Haiya 4:255; 53.21.386). This practice of giving tribute was applied and the colonized were given a choice to convert or pay a tax and become a second class citizen.

Islamic teaching actively seeks to elevate Islam above any other religion.

The Muslim community opposes BMBs and considers them infidels and apostates, and they try hard to impose challenges and build barriers for them against their new faith in Christ. Throughout history, Islam has sought to destroy the essential message of the Gospel.

In the meantime, Muslims are thirsty for the truth. Pointing to the spiritual vacuum that they are experiencing, Parshall states,

Islam, as a theological system, is rigid and unyielding. It not only offers its positive message for obtaining salvation, but also attacks some of the basic tenets of Christianity (e.g., “Christ is not the Son of God”; “Jesus did not die on the cross”; “The Bible has been changed and corrupted in transmission down through the centuries”). However, as millions of Muslims move beyond cold, dead orthodoxy, we see them desiring that felt needs be met. (Parshall 1983, 17-18)

To confirm Parshall's statement above, following are some of the Qur'anic suras that attack Christianity and Biblical teachings:

1. Islam denies the Triune God (Bennett 2008, 126). Muslims falsely accuse Christians with polytheism as they quote the Qur'an and say: God is not three; He is One. No Father, Son, and Spirit (Qur'an 4:171-173).
2. Islam denies the deity of Christ (Bennett 2008, 127): Muslims mistakenly understand the sonship of Christ to God the father as a biological sonship. God does not have a Son, and He is not the Father (Qur'an 112:1-4).
3. Islam denies the atonement of Christ: No one can die for the sins of another. No atonement is possible (Qur'an, 6:164; 17:15; 29:7; 35:18; 39:7; 53:38).
4. Islam denies the intercession and the Priesthood of Christ: There is no intercession (Qur'an 2:48, 123, 254; 6:51; 12:106).
5. Islam denies incarnation and deity of Christ: God could not come to earth in the form of a man (Qur'an 3:59; 19:29-36, 88-93).
6. Islam denies the crucifixion (Bennett 2008, 169): Jesus did not die on the cross: someone else died who looked like him. Jesus was taken to heaven while still alive (Qur'an 4:157; 5:75).
7. Islam denies the authenticity of the Written Word of God (Bennett 2008, 171): Based on their traditions, Muslims also attack the Word of God. They claim that the Word given to Moses, David, and Jesus has been changed and corrupted. Therefore, the Christian Bible was abrogated and

replaced by the Qur'an (Qur'an 2:75; 4:46; 5:13, 41). This doctrine of Abrogation is explored in more detail under the Islamic ideology subtitle.

These Islamic teachings that oppose Christian teachings are drawn from the previously mentioned cultic origin of Islam, the Ebionites, the Nestorians and others.

Many Muslims still have the same mindset today. They continue to apply the same opposition to BMBs to make their lives difficult, if not unbearable. The Bible reminds us,

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. <sup>2</sup> This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, <sup>3</sup> but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. <sup>4</sup> You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. <sup>5</sup> They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. <sup>6</sup> We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood. (1 John 4:1-6)

My conviction is that the Islamic spirit is the spirit of falsehood because Islam denies the deity of Christ. In the AP, the spirit of Islam that does not acknowledge Jesus is seen waging war against BMBs. Islam continues to speak from the viewpoint of the world (verse 5), and Muslims are blinded by their religion as they close their ears to the truths of the Bible. Christopher Catherwood in his book *Christians Muslims and Islamic Rage* states, "Islam is perhaps an *especially* satanic deception, because it so closely mirrors the claims of Jesus

Christ to be Saviour not just of the Jewish race but of the whole world” (Catherwood 2003, 149). However, as the enemy of the souls has clearly blinded the minds of the unbelievers (2 Corinthians 4:4), it is necessary for the rest of us to differentiate between Muslims as people, for whom Jesus died and rose again, and Islam as an ideology that works against Christ.

### **The Nature of Islamic Theology and Muslim Ideology**

The following section is an overview of Islamic theology as stated and practiced by Muhammad. Such theology was reflected in Muslim ideology with its ruling laws. Aspects of the Islamic community are then explained with a reference to its different contexts, the community among non-Muslims and the community among Muslims, and how Muslims see Islam as a universal system.

Islam like Christianity is a universal religion.... Muslims are members of a specifically *global* religion, one that is in direct spiritual conflict, therefore, with Christianity, which is also a universally applicable faith (Catherwood 2003, 149).

The focus here remains on the barriers facing the BMBs’ discipleship process, but the issue of Abrogation in the Qur’an is expanded on as this principle drives many challenges against non-Muslims, including BMBs. Finally, the Islamic Jihad issue is addressed, as most BMBs are subject to persecution caused by Muslims who correctly understand their Islamic doctrine. At the end of this section is a summary of Islamic theology compared to Christian theology.

## The Ideological Nature of Islam

Based on the Qur'an and Hadith, the Ideal of Islam, toward which every Muslim should work, is that the entire community should live in submission to Islamic Law. Muhammad's mission, as he saw it, was not only to call people to worship one true god (Allah), but also to establish a social order based on the law of Allah (The Qur'an).

Both the Qur'an and Hadith comprise a system of thoughts that reflect the Islamic world-view and its application as revealed in the actions of Muslims.

Following is one example seen in Hadith, Sahih Bukhari, Volume 9, Book 92:

While we were in the mosque, Allah's Apostle came out and said, "Let us proceed to the Jews." So we went out with him till we came to Bait-al-Midras. The Prophet stood up there and called them, saying, "O assembly of Jews! Surrender to Allah (embrace Islam) and you will be safe!" They said, "You have conveyed Allah's message, O Aba-al-Qasim" Allah's Apostle then said to them, "That is what I want; embrace Islam and you will be safe." They said, "You have conveyed the message, O Aba-al-Qasim." Allah's Apostle then said to them, "That is what I want," and repeated his words for the third time and added, "Know that the earth is for Allah and I want to exile you from this land, so whoever among you has property he should sell it, otherwise, know that the land is for Allah and His Apostle." (Hadith 447 narrated by Abu Huraira)

The first Islamic State at Medina, as mentioned earlier, represented a political model which, according to extremist Muslims, should be valid for all time. Islamic ideology, which is based on the fundamental principle that one's life must be aimed at attaining nearness to the Divine, is derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. Today ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria), also called ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and Levant), is following in the footsteps of their prophet and the

example of that first Islamic state at Medina. Graeme Wood, in his article in the Atlantic titled “What ISIS Really Wants,” states,

The reality is that the Islamic State is Islamic. *Very* Islamic. Yes, it has attracted psychopaths and adventure seekers, drawn largely from the disaffected populations of the Middle East and Europe. But the religion preached by its most ardent followers derives from coherent and even learned interpretations of Islam... Virtually every major decision and law promulgated by the Islamic State adheres to what it calls, in its press and pronouncements, and on its billboards, license plates, stationery, and coins, “the Prophetic methodology,” which means following the prophecy and example of Muhammad, in punctilious detail. Muslims can reject the Islamic State; nearly all do. But pretending that it isn’t actually a religious, millenarian group, with theology that must be understood to be combated, has already led the United States to underestimate it and back foolish schemes to counter it. We’ll need to get acquainted with the Islamic State’s intellectual genealogy if we are to react in a way that will not strengthen it, but instead help it self-immolate in its own excessive zeal. (Wood 2015)

Wood links the actions of Islamic militants to their origin in history:

Muhammad and Islam. Ira Lapidus, in his book *A History of Islamic Societies*, explains the root assumption sought after by the early Muslims:

From the very beginning of the Islamic era, the Arab-Muslim elite assumed that they would form a dual society in which the conquerors would constitute an aristocracy and the conquered peoples a subject population, the former Muslims, the latter not. (Lapidus 1988, 51)

Lapidus proceeds to state that after a century, this attitude was reversed and Arabs had to accept non-Arabs in Islam, “leading the Caliphate to put the empire on a Muslim, rather than a strictly Arab, basis” (Lapidus 1988, 52).

Currently, Militant Muslims, driven by their convictions, are striving to apply Allah’s laws in an effort to force the global community to live in submission to the Islamic Law.

## The Islamic Ideal of Community

All Muslims see themselves as one nation (*Ummah*) tied together by the religion, belief, worship and moral principles of Islam. In his book, *Militant Islam Reaches America*, Daniel Pipes comments as he reflects on the nation of Islam, “Militant Islam—and to a lesser degree, the Nation of Islam—presents a great challenge to the United States. It turns significant numbers of Americans, plus potentially their progeny, against their country” (Pipes 2003, 131). While Pipes differentiates between Islam the religion and militant Islam, I disagree with his distinction, since both the Qur’an and Hadith claim and promote the practice of the Islamic Ummah and Jihad as presented in the following sections. I agree that there might be a difference between nominal Muslims and Islamism, but below I will make the argument that a military understanding of Jihad was the original understanding of the term and remains widely held today simply because the militant Jihad is taught in both the Qur’an and Hadith, as I will present in later sections. Reuven Firestone states,

The Qur’an presents a variety of positions on relations with the opponents of the emerging Muslim community, ranging from calls to ignore those who deny the truth of God and his prophet (Q 6:106) to preaching to them (Q 16:125), to killing them (Q 2:191). The many disparate verses are found in dozens of chapters and in a variety of topical and stylistic contexts. As can be observed from the tenor of the verse just cited, many appear to be in conflict with one another and both traditional Muslims and Western scholars have found their range of meanings and the policies commanded by them worthy of study and comment. (Firestone 2006, 314)

My opinion is in alignment with an Arabic saying which states, “La umam fi-l Islam” (There are no nations in Islam). The mission of every Muslim

nationalist is to see the more than “1.6 billion Muslims” (Pew Research Center 2012) around the world united into one nation of Islam, regardless of their nationality, belonging or ethnic background. Islamists are often seen opposing their governments if the latter decide to ease the pressure applied to non-Muslim residents and allow them some religious freedom. This ideology, when adopted, creates tension between the extremists and their governments. Extremists fuel animosity against non-Muslims, including BMBs, violating their basic human rights.

Thus, the Islamic ideal of community is not limited to the local community but expands beyond its boundaries to the larger community. Muslims do not see the truth of the Qur’an and the teachings of Islam as limited to those who are already Muslims. The whole world rightfully belongs to Allah; therefore, Islam is for the entire world. Many Muslims believe that things will not be right until the whole world unites into one community of faith to practice Islam because, by its own evaluation, Islam is the true universal faith (Catherwood 2003, 149).

#### The Doctrine of Abrogation

The importance of this doctrine lies in that the latest verses are elevated over the earlier verses. While earlier verses of the Qur’an speak peace to followers of other faiths, the later ones are hostile toward non-Muslims. Abrogation in the Qur’an means that Allah has the absolute freedom to change his previous inspiration revealed to Muhammad and replace it with something new

and improved. Ziauddin Sardar, in his book *Reading the Qur'an*, explains the roots of this doctrine: "The principle of abrogation, or *naskh*, is allegedly taken from the Qur'an itself" (Sardar 2011, 225).

Based on Sardar's and other Islamic scholars' definition of abrogation, I will rely solely on the Qur'an to address this section. My goal is to clarify the misconceptions that Islam is a peaceful religion and that the Qur'an contains teachings to accept other faith followers, when it is evident that earlier verses contradict later verses. I will not examine in depth the abrogated verses, but clarify the context specific to BMBs in the AP and defend their fear that is generated as a result.

The Qur'an declares, "And if We willed, We could surely do away with that which We revealed to you. Then you would not find for yourself concerning it an advocate against Us" (Qur'an 17:86). Thus, the Qur'an proclaims that the responsibility for verses being erased from Muhammad's memory lies with Allah himself. Qur'an 13:39 adds, "Allah eliminates what He wills or confirms, and with Him is the Mother of the Book." According to this well-known doctrine in Islam, abrogation is when God replaces a verse with an improved version which may even contradict the former. The Qur'an says, "We do not abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten except that We bring forth [one] better than it or similar to it. Do you not know that Allah is over all things competent?" (Qur'an 2:106). Also, the Qur'an declares, "And when We substitute a verse in place of a verse - and Allah is most knowing of what He sends down - they say, 'You, [O

Muhammad], are but an inventor [of lies]’ But most of them do not know”  
(Qur’an 16:101). Based on this doctrine of abrogation, the later verses that direct hostility toward non-Muslims now supersede the earlier verses that spoke peace.

As mentioned earlier, Muslims deny the authenticity of the written Word of God; thus, the doctrine of abrogation is extended to dismiss all previous revelations of the Old and the New Testament. Questioning the whole notion of abrogation, Sardar says,

A Meccan verse cannot logically talk about abrogating something that will happen in the future in Medina [refers to Qur’an 16:101]..... They do not, in my opinion, refer to the passages of the Qur’an, but earlier revelations such as the Torah and the Bible. (Sardar 2011, 226)

I do not agree with Sardar’s opinion, as the principle of Abrogation is solely limited to the Qur’anic verses according to Muslim scholars such as Imam Jalaluddin al-Suyuti. As was also mentioned earlier under the religious history of the AP and under the birth of Islam, Waraqa Ibn Nofal and Bishop Buhaira helped Muhammad to memorize cultic teachings and distort biblical stories. Therefore, the Qur’an has rewritten biblical history with stories and accounts that contradict the Bible.

One of the contradictions between the teaching of the Qur’an about the Bible and the Muslim exegetical understanding of such teaching is the authenticity of the Bible. From one side, the Qur’an upholds the inspiration and revelation of The Book of the Jews and of the Christians (Qur’an 2:40-42, 126, 136, 285; 3:3, 71, 93; 4:47, 136; 5:47-51, 69, 71-72; 6:91; 10:37, 94; 21:7; 29:45,

46; 35:31; 46:11). And from the opposite side, due to the obvious contradictions between the Bible and the Qur'an, Muslims have claimed that the Jews and Christians have corrupted their Bible, and accordingly God failed (from their point of view) to preserve The Book.

Mikhail, in his discussion of 'the Bible and the Qur'an' addressed the misconception that the Qur'an abrogated the Bible because the Jews and Christians had corrupted it. Under "The Bible was Never Corrupted," Mikhail wrote the following:

Because of the many contradictions between the Bible and the Koran [sic], and because the Bible does not mention any prophecies concerning Muhammad, Muslim scholars claim that the Bible has been altered and corrupted. Such a claim is in opposition to several clear verses of the Koran [sic]. (Mikhail 2002, 199)

John Kaltner in his book, *Islam: What Non-Muslims Should Know*, further comments on this crucial issue:

The Islamic view of the previous scriptures, however, is not an entirely positive one. Muslims believe prior texts like the Bible were corrupted because errors and inaccuracies were introduced into them. These distortions were not the work of Moses and Jesus, the prophets who received the revelations. Rather, they are the fault of their followers who did not faithfully preserve the message in its original form. This necessitated the sending of another text, the Qur'an, that accurately records Allah's will for humanity and sets the record straight (Kaltner 2003, 59)

In order to review the historical origin for such a false claim of the corruption of the Bible, it is fitting to recall the story of the first Muslim scholar in the eleventh century A.D., Ibn Hazm, and review his claim concerning *tahrif* (distortion) of the Bible, that was based on his own personal faith and feeling, not

on any other evidence or a historical fact. Ibn Taymiyyah, an influential scholar, especially amongst salafist Muslims, came three centuries after Ibn Hazm and published his treatise on Christianity to refute the writings of Paul of Antioch in 1320 (Bennett 2008, 117-126). Under the title “Why do Muslims believe the text of the Bible has been corrupted?” the Answering Islam.org website gives the historical root for such a claim and answers the question of why Muslims believe the Bible is corrupted:

In 1064, Ibn-Khazem [*sic*], FIRST charged that the Bible had been corrupted and the Bible falsified. This charge was to defend Islam against Christianity because Ibn-Khazem comes upon differences and contradiction between the Bible and the Quran. Believing, by faith that the Quran was true, the Bible must then be false. He said, “Since the Quran must be true it must be the conflicting Gospel texts that are false. But Muhammad tells us to respect the Gospel. Therefore, the present text must have been falsified by the Christians after the time of Muhammad.” His argument was not based on any evidence or historical facts but only on his personal faith, reasoning and desire to safeguard the Quran. This led him to teach that, “The Christians lost the revealed Gospel except for a few traces which God has left intact as argument against them” (Answering Islam 2015).

The early verses of the Qur’an that came to Muhammad while he was weak in Mecca speak goodwill and peace to non-Muslims such as Jewish and Christian people. In stark contrast, the verses which came later, while he was in Medina and strengthened in number, power and authority, speak of executing anyone who is not Muslim (Qur’an 2:191-193; 3:56, 151; 8:12, 59-60; 9:29). According to the doctrine of abrogation, the latter verses supersede the former. This is the reality of Islam for those Muslims who understand profoundly and hold strongly to the ideological teachings concluded from the Qur’an and Hadith.

Accordingly, Islam has a mission from Allah to create a new world order and to stimulate zeal to bring this about. Donohue and Esposito, in their book *Islam in Transition*, state, “The law of God (the *Shari'a*) has always aimed at bringing together mankind into one moral and spiritual framework and make them mutually assistant to one another on a universal scale” (Donohue and Esposito 2007, 75).

To achieve this ultimate goal of establishing the Islamic State (Ummah), it is the religious, social and political duty of every Muslim living in a non-Islamic state to work toward gaining political power in order to oppose the reigning government and to bring in an Islamic state. The majority of contemporary followers of Islam are nominal, and either they are not aware of the true face of Islam, or they choose to ignore and deny this obligation, or they might disagree with this interpretation.

It is unacceptable in Islam for a Muslim to convert to any other religion, which explains the persecution directed toward BMBs. Simon Cottee, in his book *The Apostates*, explains, “For some Islamic jurists, apostasy is at least as grave an offence as murder, since it threatens the very unity of the Muslim community-the *Ummah*- from within” (Cottee 2015, 11).

Before discussing the Jihad in Islam, it is fitting to refer to the crusades of the medieval era of Christendom and clarify the difference between both. Misguided extremist Christians, known as crusaders, waged their medieval wars under the banner of the cross; however, there is no supporting biblical teaching to

justify their acts. On the contrary, Islamic extremists are supported by sound exegesis to both Qur'an and Hadith to what they call Jihad in the name of Allah.

An understanding of Islamic ideology and what Islam teaches its followers about Jihad provides perspective to the subsequent discussion regarding the barriers hindering BMBs from fully committing to a discipleship group to worship and pursue biblical discipleship.

### The Three Stages of Jihad (Holy War) in the Qur'an

In his book *Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrine and Practice*, Michael Bonner defines the term jihad as follows:

The Arabic word 'jihad' does not mean "holy war" or "just war." It literally means "striving." When followed by the modifying phrase *fi sabil Allah*, "in the path of God," or when—as often—this phrase is absent but assumed to be in force, *jihad* has the specific sense of fighting for the sake of God. (Bonner 2008, 2)

Based on the Islamic theology taught in the Qur'an, Mark A. Gabriel defines the stages of Jihad in his book, *Islam and Terrorism: What the Quran Really Teaches about Christianity, Violence and the Goals of the Islamic Jihad*. He states, "if you look at Muslim countries around the world, you will see that they are in one of... three stages of jihad" (Gabriel 2002, 85). Jihad stages according to the Qur'an are summarized as the following:

1. Striving in the way of Allah

According to the article, "What is Islamic Jihad?", posted by Arab World Ministries (AWM) on the Christian Broadcasting Network website, "Some thirty times in the Qur'an the faithful are exhorted to 'strive in the way of Allah...The

basic meaning is to exert oneself or to fight” (Arab World Ministries 2015). This inner striving refers to self-improvement and the fulfillment of one’s obligations. The individual Muslim is to strive to live up to the law fulfilling Islamic ideals. Striving also refers to the calling of others to the way of Allah or evangelism of non-Muslims.

This stage, also known as the Weakened Stage, applies to

Muslims when they are a weak, small minority, living in a non-Islamic society. They submit to the law of the land and work to increase their numbers. At this stage they follow the word given to Muhammad in Mecca, ‘There is no compulsion in religion’ Qur’an 2:256. Muhammad showed no animosity towards his enemies while living in Mecca. (Gabriel 2002, 85)

## 2. Defensive Military Actions (Early Qur’anic Verses)

The earliest verses from Muhammad’s ministry were conciliatory towards Christians and Jews. The Jihad verses from this period refer to defensive and limited military actions. The following are Qur’anic sources that support this claim. The Qur’an states,

Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for God loveth not transgressors. And slay them wherever you catch them and turn them out from where they have turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; but fight them not at the sacred Mosque, unless they first fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith. (Qur’an 2:190 and 191)

Also, the Qur’an states, “Those that make war against Allah and his apostle and spread disorders in the land shall be put to death or crucified or have their hands and feet cut off on alternate sides, or be banished from the country” (Qur’an 5:33).

Gabriel calls this the Preparation Stage, when Muslims have become an influential minority. Preparations are made for an eventual confrontation “in every possible area—financial, physical, military, mental and any other area” (Gabriel 2002, 86). Muhammad, preparing his army after migrating to Medina, urged his troops, “Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies... to threaten the enemy of Allah” (Qur’an 8:60).

### 3. Offensive Military Actions (Later Qur’anic Verses)

As discussed earlier under the Doctrine of Abrogation, the later verses that came to Muhammad while he was in Medina brought a different tone than the former Meccan verses such as those in Qur’an 2:62; 2:256, which were more merciful to Christians and Jews. Some of those later verses are as follows: “It is not for any prophet to have prisoners until he has made wide slaughter in the land” (Qur’an 8:67); “If anyone desires a religion other than Islam, never will it be accepted of him; and in the hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost” (Qur’an 3:85); and “O Prophet! Strive hard against the unbelievers and the hypocrites, and be firm against them” (Qur’an 9:73; 66:9).

This third stage, also known as the Jihad Stage, occurs when “Muslims are a minority with strength, influence, and power. At this stage, the duty of every Muslim is to actively fight the enemy, overturning the system of the non-Muslim country and establishing Islamic authority” (Gabriel 2002, 87).

Muhammad returned to Mecca to fight, completely conquering it and bringing it under his authority (Berry 2007, 29-32). Qur'an 9:5, known as the verse of the sword, declares, "Fight and slay the pagans wherever you find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem" (Qur'an 9:5). On this verse, Gabriel comments, "Muslims are commanded to kill anyone who chooses not to convert to Islam. The verse says 'wherever you find them.' There are no geographical limits" (Gabriel 2002, 87).

To put into perspective the events currently taking place in many regions across the globe, including Europe and North America, they must be seen through the lens of the Islamic Jihad and Qur'anic teaching. Before mentioning a few incidents of the applied Jihads, I would like to mention a few jihadist groups that are seen by the world as terrorist groups due to their unjustified military activities. They are the Taliban in Afghanistan, Al Qaeda and The Muslim Brotherhood in many Arab countries, Boko Haram in Nigeria, ISIS in Iraq and Syria, Al Shabaab in Somalia, The Jemaah Islamiyah in several Southeast Asian countries with a focus on Indonesia, Hamas in Palestine, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and many others. Those groups are the continuation of the Islamic ideology demonstrated across the ages as stated by Catherwood,

For hundreds of years, effectively from 711 to 1689, Christians lived in an era in which militant Islam posed a major threat to the very survival of Christian Europe. Once again, Muslims of similar persuasion attacked what they perceive to be the Christian West, or the Christian Jewish Crusaders coalition, as they call it. (Catherwood 2003, 237)

All of these groups are striving to establish the Islamic Ummah through terrorist attacks and military forces.

While there are other Islamic voices that interpret differently the same Qur'anic verses and Hadith practices mentioned earlier, promoting Islam as a religion of peace, no one seems able to deny that recent attacks within Western countries were inspired by the Islamic ideology examined prior. To mention a few, the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks in the U.S., the military base massacre in the U.S., the attacks against the military and police personnel in Egypt, the attack on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Canada, the savage and excessive killing of staff of the French News magazine "Charlie Hebdo" and Jewish shoppers in Paris. The current threats and danger perpetrated by those Islamic groups confirm this point.

All of the above leads me to concur with Dr. David Jeremiah's conclusion in his book, *What in the World is Going On?*, in the chapter titled "Islamic Terrorism" where he states,

If this diatribe does not give you reason enough to believe that Islam is the enemy of Christianity, consider that today, as I write these words, there is not a single one of the fifty-five predominately Muslim nations on earth today where Christians are not persecuted. (Jeremiah 2010, 81)

BMBs are subject to persecution wherever they reside in the AP.

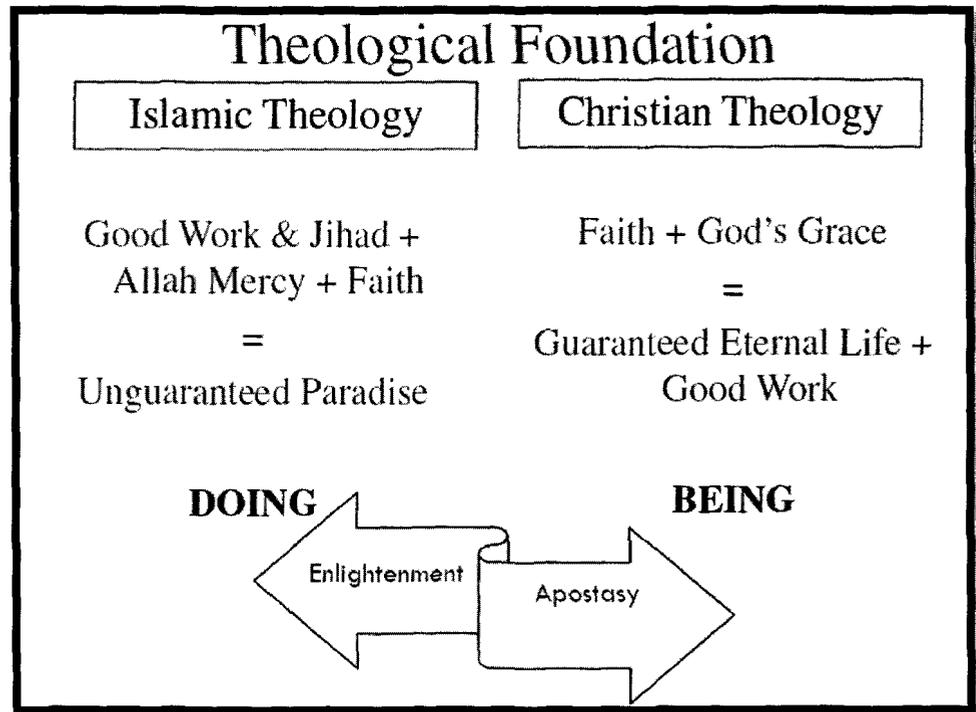
Persecution is one of the biggest challenges that face Muslim background believers, threatening their lives and hindering them from gathering together and pursuing biblical discipleship with other Christians. Such a threat pushes BMBs to remain in hiding out of fear. Also, because they do not know whom they can trust

and cannot predict what will happen to them if they are exposed, they choose not to share with others their new identity in Christ. Fear and lack of trust make it difficult to pursue and commit to fellowship with other believers in their community.

Because Islam focuses on good deeds, and Jihad is considered one of those good deeds for the sake of Allah, it is fitting to compare the two theologies that BMBs are exposed to before and after their conversion. Figure 1 summarizes the major comparison between Islamic theology and Christian theology. While Islam focuses on the “doing”, including Jihad, in order for Muslims to gain paradise, Christianity is rooted in the complete work of God and His redemption that guarantees a personal relationship between the Christian believer and God. Christianity focuses on the “being” related, connected and redeemed, as Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant (Hebrews 7:22).

When a Christian converts to Islam, Muslims see this conversion as “enlightenment”, while if the opposite happens and Muslims convert to Christianity, Islam sees them as apostates who rejected their affiliation and loyalty to their beliefs. Those converts will be subject to the Islamic laws of condemnation (Figure 1). BMBs understand the concept of Jihad through the Islamic lens, and they expect to be challenged by the Jihadist if their conversion is made known. Commenting on the impact of disclosure of the BMBs to their new faith, Cottee says,

There is a hierarchy of difficulty as regards disclosing apostasy. For ex-Muslims, disclosing to non-Muslim friends is relatively easy, if often mildly frustrating, because they neither fully understand nor particularly care. Disclosing to trusted Muslim friends is more difficult. But the most challenging task is that of telling the immediate family, especially parents. (Cottee 2015, 98).



**Figure 1: Comparison between the Islamic and the Christian Theologies**

(modified by the Researcher from the Original presented by Martindale 2009)

The culmination of the above mentioned history and facts about Christianity and Islam are intended to provide a contextual understanding of BMBs. To various degrees, new believers come ingrained with Islamic theology, and there is a crucial need for them to understand Christian theology and to be

shaped by the Word of God through consistent discipleship. This leads to the examination of Biblical discipleship through the lens of the life and ministry of Jesus and His disciples.

### **The Biblical View of Discipleship Groups**

In His intercessory prayer in John 17, Jesus asked for the believers' sanctification. Jesus taught that to have spiritual growth, believers should grow in biblical knowledge through this process of sanctification and that God Himself will perform such an act: "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (verse 17). After their confession of faith and baptismal, believers still need biblical teaching that will provide them with the spiritual nourishment that leads to growth and maturity.

This sanctification process is to be performed within the corporate body. Interrelation with the body of believers is one of the biblical principles shown throughout the Scripture. From the beginning, it was not good for Adam to remain alone (Genesis 2:18). The man was created to socialize and to interact with others in a community for mutual help and support. In the New Testament, the various analogies that describe the People of God (His Church) are plentiful. Analogies such as the body (Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12), the vine branches (John 15:1-10), and the building construction (Matthew 16:18) refer to the Church. Ephesians 4:4-16 confirms that members of the body of believers must seek to achieve a sense of cohesion if they are to experience spiritual growth. Klyne Snodgrass commenting on this section states, "Christianity is a shared faith. No separate or

merely individual faith exists, nor is there a different salvation” (Snodgrass 1996, 198).

For BMBs to experience spiritual growth, they must seek to engage in committed fellowship with other believers. This is one of the practical implications of the great vision of the role of the Church in the world. In his Bible commentary, Neil adds, “Christians must set an example of humility, patience, tolerance and charity. God has made us one great fellowship...” (Neil 1962, 475).

Gathering for fellowship is fitting with the local culture of the AP; however, the major challenge is that the fear experienced by BMBs prevents them from committing to gathering regularly for fellowship and, consequently, affects their spiritual growth.

As stated in the *Word Biblical Commentary*, “...the corporate dimension of believers’ existence is made foundational to their living in the world...Christian ethics is first of all a call to participate in a distinctive community, the Church” (Lincoln 1990, 269). William Hendriksen, in his *New Testament Commentary*, further comments,

Just as the human body, when properly supported and held together, experiences normal growth, so also the church, when each of its members supports and maintains loving contact with the others and above all with Christ, will, under the sustaining care of [Christ]..., proceed from grace to grace and from glory to glory (cf. 1 Cor. 12). (Hendriksen 1996, 203-204)

The “one another” commands from John 13:14 to 1 Peter 5:5 confirm this biblical principle of the believers’ community. While the sanctification process is solely dependent on God, the Sanctifier, it is the responsibility of believers to

obey and to follow biblical teachings; and in the biblical view, the unity that is achieved through consistent fellowship is a vital factor in spiritual growth.

### Jesus' Model of Discipleship through Believers' Gatherings

The call to commit to the body of believers is to follow Jesus, and the call to follow Jesus is the call to commit to discipleship. When Jesus launched His public ministry, the first twelve men He chose to follow Him were known as His disciples. To them, He gave the call, "Follow Me," and each of them left what he was doing and followed Him. Bill Hull, in his book *The Disciple-Making Church: Leading a Body of Believers on the Journey of Faith*, discusses Jesus as a model disciple maker, stating,

When Jesus told the disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, they knew what he meant: he had taught them by his example, and they understood the principles and priorities they had seen in his behavior. They were to win others to the faith and make more of what they were. (Hull 2010, 28)

Throughout His three-year relationship with the disciples, Jesus set the example and demonstrated the discipleship model. "He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach" (Mark 3:14). The call to follow Jesus meant a call to devout discipleship that required his disciples to come consistently under His leadership. They would submit to Him with the commitment of regular meetings face-to-face.

The two steps in the process of making disciples, "baptizing and teaching", are evident in the discipleship ministry of Jesus. However, Yeager, in

his commentary *The Renaissance New Testament*, categorizes the Great

Commission into three stages:

The divine order of the Great Commission is (1) regeneration (make disciples); (2) immersion, and (3) Christian education. The latter two are to begin as soon as, but not before the first has been completed. No one should be immersed or enrolled in Christian education until he has become a disciple. The immersion does not require a long time. The teaching function is endless since the curriculum includes all that our Lord had ever taught us. This is a large order. It includes the entire teaching ministry of Jesus. (Yeager 1976, 626)

In this research, the term discipleship group refers to teaching of Christian education, the second aspect of the Great Commission, considered by Yeager to be the third in order. The term is meant to refer to the gathering of believers to worship, fellowship, and receive Christian education. In John 3:22; 4:1–2, Jesus and His disciples are seen performing the first step of making disciples: baptizing. In Matthew 4:23-25, Jesus is seen fulfilling the second aspect of discipleship: teaching. As He was “going about,” He was “teaching” and “great multitudes followed Him.” Jesus’ disciples followed His example after His death, resurrection and ascension in discipling others and preparing them for ministry through baptizing and teaching.

In Acts 9:26, we read that Saul (Apostle Paul), after his conversion, was seeking opportunities for fellowship with other believers “and when he had come to Jerusalem, tried to join the disciples” (NKJV). Through Jesus’ modelled example and that of the Apostles, the Bible highlights the value of joining together by meeting face-to-face and gathering in groups. The meeting of

believers is not only for the purpose of teaching, but it extends to sharing life experiences, mentoring and practicing the Christian lifestyle. This model elevates meeting face-to-face or in groups for discipleship over fellowship at a distance.

With regard to the local culture of Arab people, meeting with other believers to share in spiritual worship and enjoy social interaction fits the context. Community plays a key role in this culture. Henry Holloman, in his article “Basic biblical principles of Christian nurture and some considerations for their contextualization,” states,

The Christian must interrelate with other believers individually and corporately to fully experience and express spiritual growth. Before treating the believer’s relationship with other humans, we must remember that spiritual growth is ultimately grounded in the Christian’s relationship to God, through Christ (John 14:6; Romans 5:1; 1 Timothy 2:5). (Holloman 1990, 13)

While it is helpful to monitor and evaluate the outcome of such gatherings, workers who are involved in ministry to BMBs in the AP are encouraged to promote group meetings for discipleship rather than individual discipleship. Most BMBs in the AP are accustomed to learning in groups in schools and mosques. Discipling in community fits the local AP context and will result in a maturing and growing community according to this basic biblical principle: “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend” (Proverbs 27:17) (Snodgrass 1996, 198; Neil 1962, 475).

The ultimate outcome for the gathering of BMBs is to develop spiritual growth. In community discipleship, within the context of the AP culture, the inner

transformation that exceeds the intellectual knowledge of the Bible, together with Christian living, are what BMBs will look to. About this fundamental principle, Holloman concludes:

As in the biblical record of early Christianity, so now, God wants His people to develop spiritually (2 Pet. 3:18). In Christian homes, churches, schools and organizations it is simply not enough to fill minds with information, make people feel good through entertainment or even help people have “spiritual experiences.” What really matters are changed lives for Christ through God’s Spirit and God’s Word. This supernatural spiritual transformation will happen only as we apply the unchanging biblical principles of Christian nurture effectively within the context of our culture. (Holloman 1990, 18)

The above mentioned principles of biblical meeting and commitment to discipleship, extracted from Jesus’ life and ministry, are widely applicable to the contemporary church. Sanctification by God’s Word is seen applied in believers’ lives. Nurturing and spiritual maturity are achieved through community discipleship where believers interact and meet to study God’s Word intellectually and to see Jesus’ life manifested in attitudes and behaviours practically. This process of discipleship must be practiced within the context of the local culture; however, in the context of the AP culture, getting together for discipleship is challenged by barriers that are examined in this research.

#### Discipleship Groups in the New Testament and the AP

When they come to faith, new believers need to be nourished in the same way a little child needs pure milk that is rich in nutrients (1 Corinthians 3:2; Hebrews 5:12, 13; 1 Peter 2:2). For this reason, they need nurturing, ideally

through assembling with other believers to study the Word of God. Not only do new believers need simple food, but the older ones require solid food (Hebrews 5:14). Obeying God's Word is a biblical commandment that must be followed in order for the body of believers to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

BMBs, likewise, need spiritual nourishment for growth; however, they have limited options as to meeting places where they can receive such help and care from mature Brothers and Sisters. In countries such as those of the AP where following Christianity is banned for national and local people, and church meetings are discouraged, the only way to receive spiritual nurturing is through connecting with the underground church.

According to *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, the Church is a community gathered by God through Christ. The nature of this community is therefore continually qualified by the One who summons or gather it. This accent is made explicit in many cases: the ecclesia (or ecclesiai) of God (Acts 20:28, I Cor. 1:2; 10:32; 11:16, 22; 15:9; II Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:13; I Thess. 2:14; II Thess.1:4; I Tim. 3:5, 15) (Buttrick 1962, 608)

In countries where church buildings exist, access to those buildings is exclusive to expat Christians, while the presence of any national citizen in their vicinity is regarded with suspicion from neighbours as well as local authorities. BMBs are forced directly and indirectly to refrain from attending services inside church buildings and are at serious risk if they are found there. An effective way

for BMBs to be nurtured and to grow in their faith is to join one of the discipleship groups they are typically introduced to through other trustworthy believers.

The inception of the AP national churches is similar to that of the early church. As the early church was formed mainly from Jews who accepted Christ, the AP national churches are formed mainly from local believers who crossed from Islam to the Christian faith. Like members of the early church, BMBs face opposition from their former religious leaders. The book of Acts describes the Sanhedrin authority's opposition to the new believers (Acts 4:5-7, 17; 5:26-28; 6:9-14; 7:54, 57-58). Persecution empowered the Jewish leaders and was carried out by Saul, for example, who became notorious for "entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison" (Acts 8:3). In the same manner, contemporary religious Muslim leaders and the Muslim communities wage opposition against BMBs who make their faith publicly known (Middle East Concern, July 4-December 2, 2013, e-mail to MEC mailing list). For this reason, BMBs are forced to worship secretly and in local hiding places, including discipleship groups that meet in homes.

Meetings in discipleship groups were common among the early church congregations as they used to meet in the temple and from house to house (Acts 2:42-47). They met in Mary's (John Mark's mother) house (Acts 12:12), in Priscilla and Aquila's house (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19), in Nymphas' house (Colossians 4:15), and in Archippus' house (Philemon 2). William

MacDonald, in his commentary on the book of Acts, refers to the early church and to their meeting in houses, stating:

The church in the Book of Acts and in the rest of the NT was what is often called a house church. The early Christians met in houses rather than in special ecclesiastical buildings. It has been said that religion was loosed from specially sacred places and centered in that universal place of living, the home. (MacDonald 1995, 1590)

In countries such as those in the AP, the national Christians meet in homes, and discipleship gatherings take place away from an official church building because there are none. Across the entire area, church buildings are either rare or even forbidden, such as in Saudi Arabia and Yemen. The biblical discipleship model is fitting and being practiced in those countries in believers' homes in spite of the risk these meetings bring. In their essay, "The Gathering of Reproducing Fellowships," Eric and Laura Adams state,

The church of Acts is not a historical oddity that merely existed for a brief while after Jesus' death. It is living and growing across the Muslim world today! Hearts are being brought to life; lives are being transformed by the Word-become-Flesh. Divine power is breaking in to heal, satisfy needs, and restore relationships. Believers are taking courageous stands in hostile communities—and winning the hearts of their neighbors by their acts of faith! (Adams and Adams 2011, 115-116)

The above quote connects the church of Acts with the contemporary church across the Muslim world including the church in the AP where BMBs meet together in homes (Acts 2: 46b) rather than in church buildings, risking their lives with unpredictable consequences.

As history repeats itself, it is clear that the current AP church is following in the early church's steps. The contemporary AP church faces challenges similar to those faced by the early church in Jerusalem, such as persecution (Acts 8:1)

### **The Four Generation Concept of Discipleship**

Generally, little attention is paid to how the discipling process can and should take place in different contexts. This research investigated written surveys and individual interviews with people residing in the AP, the aim of which was to learn more about the contextual approach of the discipling process in the AP in order to diagnose barriers that hinder BMBs from participating regularly and consistently in an existing discipleship group, or from initiating one.

Biblical discipleship derives its foundation from Jesus' teaching and His modeling in preparing and equipping His disciples, who followed His example by setting up a system of continuous teaching such as the one depicted in 2 Timothy 2:2. This system exhibits aspects of faithfulness and commitment of both the discipler and the disciple and promotes generation to generation discipleship. In 2 Timothy 2:2, the Apostle Paul, the discipler, advises his disciple Timothy to pay attention to the cycle of discipleship. Just as Timothy had been disciplined by Paul, he should in turn encourage faithful men to be disciplined, and equip them to disciple others to prepare them for ministry.

Identifying barriers to believers' gatherings and to the discipleship process is essential to determining means of alleviating their impact on BMBs so that the discipleship-making cycle is maintained. Hence, this research also addresses the

barriers hindering BMBs in the AP from regular, consistent assembly in a discipleship group for the purpose of growing in faith, spiritual development and being discipled. The burning questions are how to carry out this process of discipleship amongst Muslim converts of the AP since they do not regularly meet in discipleship groups, and should this process be any different from anywhere else.

Meeting in discipleship groups to train generations of disciples who will be able to disciple others leads to another theological aspect of discipleship in that it bears a high cost. It is the cost of bearing the cross and following Jesus as a disciple.

#### Bearing the Cross and Following Jesus to be a Disciple

The aspects of persecution and suffering and their effect on the discipleship of BMBs living in the AP is one of the factors given attention in this research; hence, the theology of suffering and its biblical foundations are discussed in this section.

As a missionary called to serve BMBs in the AP, I am commissioned to strengthen them using the Word of God. Through Bible study, I guide them to focus on the cross that they should carry to follow Jesus and be His disciple (Matthew 10:38; 16:24; Mark 8:13; Luke 9:23). The PALM team's conviction is to remind themselves and those BMBs whom they serve that, as Jesus suffered ridicule and persecution, they may expect to experience no less.

In one's daily life as followers of Christ, one has to face the world and be prepared for the worst. John MacArthur, in his book *The Power of Suffering*, pointing to John 15:18–19 and Matthew 5:10–12, explains, “Jesus saw animosity toward believers from the unbelieving world, along with whatever pain and suffering that might accompany it, as normal and expected” (MacArthur 1995, 17).

Because the world hates believers, they are subject to persecution; therefore, BMBs should expect hatred and opposition. One of the courses of PT Level 1 is titled “Persecution” and can be found on the Progressing Together website (Appendix 2). In this course, five lessons are articulated to help the BMBs understand the theological foundation of persecution and to expect suffering for Christ's sake. They are

- 1) Our God is great; nothing can separate us from His love
- 2) Jesus' disciples will be persecuted
- 3) Jesus taught what our priorities should be
- 4) The apostles applied Jesus' teaching, and
- 5) Jesus is our example in suffering

According to the syllabus, one of the PT course objectives is the communal understanding of the biblical teaching about persecution and of counting the cost to follow Jesus. Reflecting on the verse, “For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost” (Luke 14:28), John MacArthur writes,

You can pay nothing to earn salvation; yet living for Christ is a serious matter of discipleship. To be a Christian means to rely on Christ's power rather than your own and to be willing to forsake your way for His. Being a Christian can mean facing persecution, ridicule, and tribulation. Jesus forewarned the disciples, 'If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you' (John 15:20). (MacArthur 1988, 219-26)

Jesus taught His disciples to expect persecution. He instituted this teaching so His followers across the ages would be ready when faced with this world resistance that they encounter in different forms and at various levels of severity. In John 15:18-21 and Matthew 5:10-12, Jesus told His followers that the main reason to expect the world's opposition was that their forerunners had experienced the same.

BMBs are alienated in Muslim-dominant societies and hated in the same way the world despises Jesus. When they study the Word of God, BMBs should expect that their world, which is represented by their families, neighbours, community and government, will turn against them. In order for them to maintain healthy relationships and be genuine disciples, BMBs are encouraged to stay alert, expecting persecution, and ready to carry their cross every day and follow Jesus.

### **Suffering Reflects a Deeper Relationship to Jesus**

Excommunication from the community and suffering are displayed during the journey of discipleship as a result of following Jesus. In many passages, Jesus taught His disciples about the cost of discipleship, such as in Matthew 10:24-33 and John 15:20. In these passages, Jesus warned the Twelve and pointed out the

consequences of being His disciples. In his article, “The Making of a Disciple,”

Bing reflects on those passages, stating,

Being Jesus’ disciples, they should expect excommunication and suffering that befell their Teacher. The nature of these commitments and the fact that they were directed primarily to those who were already His close followers denote that they are conditions not of salvation, but of a deeper relationship to Jesus as Lord and Master. They represent a progression in the revelation of God’s will which must be accepted if a believer would continue on the path of discipleship. By these conditions, discipleship becomes something which is very costly to the Christian. (Bing 1992, 44-45)

When people seek to have a deep relationship with Christ, that relationship necessarily leads to challenges imposed by the world that are similar to the challenges faced by Jesus (John 15:18-21).

Persecution is one of the marks of a disciple, and there are many cases of persecution among faithful BMBs that we bear witness to. Cases include those who were jailed for their belief, suffered the loss of their jobs or experienced a breakdown in their marriages. Others were forced to leave their families behind, experienced severe persecution from family members, friends and communities or experienced oppression and persecution at the hands of their governments. In my personal interaction with those who suffer, I always encourage them with my analogy of the black carbon that turns into a precious diamond under severe pressure and high temperature. Likewise, persecution can turn any believer into a genuine disciple. However, persecution produces fear, one of the barriers hindering BMBs from committing to gathering regularly and consistently for spiritual growth and fellowship.

The Bible reveals that Christ's call to discipleship is demanding. Nevertheless, the call to discipleship and making disciples is clearly embedded in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). If they are to "make disciples of all the nations," BMBs should be taught to obey all Christ has commanded, even though such acts of obedience may spark opposition against them. In the meantime, they must trust Jesus' promise that He will be with them to the end of the ages. Obedience and trust are necessary for ongoing adherence and discipleship. Through them, life transformation is generated with deep, durable, and noticeable changes. For both BMBs and workers who face persecution, difficulties and pressures eventually lead to maturity and growth for themselves and those whom they serve.

### **Counting the Cost**

Counting the cost is stressed upon in Matthew 16:25. Jesus wanted to encourage His disciples to continue in discipleship and to persevere. Persecution is a key factor in the process of discipleship/discipling and theological education (TE) that takes place in the Arab World context, especially in the AP area. In the first few chapters of his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer suggests that the powerful doctrine of grace has been "cheapened" in many Western churches, because we (in the West) have minimized the "cost" (suffering) that is inherent in Jesus' call to discipleship (Bonhoeffer 1995, 53-54).

The theology of suffering and persecution is essential teaching for BMBs in the Muslim Arab World. Ajith Fernando in his book *Jesus Driven Ministry*

illustrates the spiritual warfare as facing wild animals. In the meantime, he links the presence of the wild animals (in the form of crisis or temptation) with the presence of the angels, as seen in what happened with Jesus in Mark 1:13 (Fernando 2002, 107). On the reality of the spiritual warfare, Fernando states, “Satan has not yet been defeated once and for all. He will come back later to assault Jesus and Christians. But if these animals represent a hostile presence, in the midst of the hostility the angels minister to Jesus” (Fernando 2002, 107-108).

The ethos of suffering is found in Philippians 1:29: “For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” If this aspect of suffering and persecution is not fully understood in the light of the Scripture, it will have a negative impact on the discipleship process and its dynamics. It could become one of the main barriers that hinder BMBs from consistency in their journey of discipleship due to the fear that is generated from such acts of persecution.

The same expectation applies to believers in general. The more we imitate Christ and become like Him, the more the world will treat us as it treated Him. If we are not suffering much for His sake, then perhaps it is time to examine our lives (2 Corinthians 13:5). Fernando goes on to reflect on the role of the spiritual wild animals that attack Christians, stating, “Many of God’s choice servants have had to live with or suddenly face situations of extreme crisis” (Fernando 2002, 110). If we want to be Christ’s followers in every way, we need to be prepared to pay the price. In fact, Matthew 10:25 says, “It is enough for a disciple that he be

like his teacher and a servant like his master.” That means we have to pursue Christ-likeness (Philippians 3:13-14). In this pursuit, we should guard our hearts and not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think but to think soberly as genuine followers of Him (Romans 12:3).

Concerning this principle, under the heading of “Suffering Comes with Discipleship,” MacArthur discusses the preparation for suffering and points to the biblical way to victory. He states, “We do not overstep our bounds in an effort to have greater privileges than Jesus had, nor do we look for ways to escape the demands and adversities He faced. When conformity to Him is as it should be, it becomes possible to triumph in suffering” (MacArthur 1995, 106).

I concur with MacArthur that we suffer with Christ (Romans 8:17), and His sufferings abound in us (2 Corinthians 1:5) so that we may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death (Philippians 3:10). The fellowship of His suffering comes with knowing Jesus and His power of resurrection. In other words, the fellowship of Jesus’ suffering is paired with the knowledge of His sovereignty.

### **God’s Sovereignty**

The Bible teaches us that genuine disciples are confident in God’s dominion and sovereignty. This teaching is encouraging as we continue our journey throughout this wilderness. Jesus’ warning about the cost of discipleship and the difficulties we will expect from the world comes with His promise that our hearts would rejoice. He promised: “and your joy no one will take from you”

(John 16:22). He also told His followers to “be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). MacArthur affirms that we will not escape the difficulties of discipleship, but Jesus will enable us and our fellow BMBs to cope with them (MacArthur 2001, 245).

Understanding God’s sovereignty and His providence helps BMBs to face persecution and suffering in their lives and ministries. They see that God’s providence incorporates all things for good for those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

MacArthur, again reflecting on the word *providence*, explains, “It is related to the idea that God provides and orchestrates everything through ordinary means and natural processes to accomplish His purpose. “Providence is the most frequent way that God operates in the world and controls the daily course of events to affect His purpose” (MacArthur 1995, 115). In Genesis 50:19-21, we see Joseph obtaining similar assurance through his experiences in Egypt. He witnessed to his brothers with his faith in God’s providence. In Philippians 4:11, we see Paul’s trust in God’s providence, whether things were tough or trouble-free: “Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.”

From the preceding references and many more we will be much better prepared to deal with whatever sufferings and hardship we may face if we know that God’s will is always good, perfect and acceptable (Romans 12:2). And in His

will He may choose those sufferings to come our way and to work in our lives so the charcoal in our lives will eventually be turned into diamonds.

When it comes to counting the cost, BMBs are especially challenged due to a lack of spiritual maturity. While previous biblical verses reveal the divine purpose of suffering, BMBs should grow beyond just knowing these verses. That is, it is not their intellectual knowledge that empowers them, but it is their personal relationship with the Lord and lives transformed by His Word.

### **Spiritual Warfare and Discipleship Process**

In the midst of this wilderness where disciples face suffering and persecution, spiritual warfare is experienced daily. It is another biblical and theological aspect relating to the inner life of the believers and the process of their discipleship. Edward Murphy in his *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare* writes,

All of human history and all human-divine encounters have taken place in the context of spiritual warfare. The entire biblical account, from Genesis 3, where spiritual warfare began for humanity, to Revelation 20, where it ends even for Satan and his evil kingdom, expresses ongoing conflict between good and evil. (Murphy 1996, 521)

In this section, Satan's role in causing suffering in believers' lives is examined. There is a wide-ranging spectrum of worldviews concerning the role of our adversary in causing suffering. On one end of the spectrum, atheists and secularists deny the existence of a personal devil and demons, while on the opposite end, some believers perceive Satan to be involved with and directly to blame for every single trouble a Christian experiences.

The Bible teaches us that believers across the ages are at war with sin (Romans 7:8-25), with the world (1 John 2:15-17), and with the devil (Ephesians 6:12). BMBs in the AP are no different from other believers in the universal Church. They are faced with the same challenges as they struggle with the trinity of sin, the world and Satan. In their spiritual warfare, where Satan initiates spiritual attacks against them, they sway between the two extremes of the teaching spectrum mentioned above.

Most BMBs come to the Christian faith with the worldview of Qur'anic teaching about Satan, and with the influence of the "folk Islam" worldview, summarized by Phil Parshall in his book *Bridges to Islam*:

Folk Muslims enjoy the ambivalence and vagaries of Islam. It allows them to be at times mildly heretical and at other times grossly inconsistent. Some mystics believe in assimilation, others in being filled with God, and still others claim a more external spiritual influence. (Parshall 1983, 110)

Parshall concludes his summary with a call to the body of Christian believers to recognize that folk Muslims must be brought to a point where they see that their legitimate spiritual needs can only be met in Christ, rather than in a psychological exercise based on false teaching.

In his essay titled "Power Encounter and Folk Islam" Paul Hiebert writes,

In folk Islam...people in everyday life are believed to be at the mercy of evil powers: spirits, ghosts, demons, evil eyes, curses and sorcery. Their only protection is to seek the aid of Allah, angels, saints, charms, good magic and other powers. (Hiebert 1989, 45)

As noted in Arabic on the fatwa.islamweb.net website, one of the charms that is highly valued among Muslims is called "Khamsa & Khomaisa", the literal

meaning of which is “Five & Fivelet”, where Fivelet means the miniature of the number Five. The symbol is available in silver, plated copper or ivory, and more recently, in plastic. Traditionally, it is placed at the entrances of homes, in cars and in businesses to protect people from the evil eye (evil influence). When Muslims slaughter an animal, they soak the palm of their hands with blood and leave a print on the outer walls of their homes for protection from evil. In Islamic traditions, the symbol is believed to resemble the Five Pillars of Islam and the five verses of Surah 113 of Qur’an, used to fight the Jin and the evil eye (fatwa.islamweb 2014, #237913). Because of its familiarity in everyday life and its widespread use among Muslims, I use the symbol of Khamsa & Khomaisa twice in later chapters to facilitate remembrance of the identified barriers against BMBs and the model to overcome such barriers.

It is the mandate of those who minister and disciple BMBs to override such teachings with the sound theology of biblical teaching. In the first epistle of Peter, the Word of God instructs a direct approach to being alert when it comes to facing the enemy: “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world” (1 Peter 5:8-9).

Being alert means carefully watching our surroundings and our relationships and being aware of potential temptations and security threats. In the AP context, Satan’s attacks are not limited to disciples from the BMB population;

they are extended to Western expatriates, the disciples, who are the subject of targeted killings or kidnappings (Appendix 3).

In exercising caution, we also must realize that believers do not face Satan by themselves but with Christ standing beside and behind them. Satan has already been defeated by Christ on the cross, and Christ won the whole war. In our daily battles we, as believers, can see Satan defeated in our lives with the defence of our Lord who is in us and who is greater than the enemy (1 John 4:4).

Not only do believers have to be sober in spirit and on the alert, they must also “resist him [the devil], firm in [their] faith” (1 Peter 5:9). In another citation, the Bible warns believers to “Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). “Resist” simply means “to stand up against.” We do that by standing firm in the objective truth of our Christian faith and our trust in God. While believers stand up to the “liar and the father of [lies]” (John 8:44) with true biblical teachings, Satan does not stand in the truth. However, he never gives up but persists in launching his attacks anew throughout our spiritual journey. As John MacArthur says,

Scripture does confirm that Satan can have a role in suffering and persecution (Job 1:1-2: 8; Matt 4:1-11; Mark 1:21-27; 5:1-20). But in all those accounts God is in control. If any binding is to be done, Christ will send an angel to do it (see Rev 20: 1-3). Therefore, our duty now is to heed the instruction of Peter and James and remember that our vigilance against Satan is not accomplished in our own strength or by clever mental and verbal strategies. (MacArthur 1995, 118)

The key to real alertness to and awareness of Satan’s role in suffering is to have our hearts and minds fixed on the cross and be sanctified in the truth

revealed in the Word of God (John 17:17). That is how BMBs will be equipped to benefit from the persecution and suffering when God permits them to face spiritual warfare. In our daily warfare and as members in the body of Christ we should not slumber (Romans 13:11). We are to wear the uniform of the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:13-18). And we are to equip ourselves with the divine weapons of our Almighty (2 Corinthians 10:3-6) in order to live a victorious life and to conquer the enemy.

### **Conclusion**

Through the discussion of historical and theological foundations, this chapter provided a context for the AP. The faith and culture of the AP, which shaped the mindset of BMBs, and continue to shape and influence the local community, form the context where this research was conducted. An overview of the pillars of Islam was presented with a focus on their mission. The teachings of Islam, which stand in opposition to the Christian faith, were explained. The challenges facing BMBs were highlighted. Because the AP church is no different from the universal Church, the AP church is collectively built through adding new BMBs (Acts 2:47). The context of the growing church in the AP area is rooted in the importance of meeting for discipleship for national BMBs, who come to faith from the local community. The role of the enemy, whose aim is to deceive believers and stunt their growth by preventing regular meetings for worship and discipleship, was also explored. The focus on the theological background revealed

how the newly emerged church in the AP could defeat the devil and continue to grow and to expand through consistent meetings and continuous discipleship.

Presented in the next chapter are precedent-setting cases related to the same issue of discipling BMBs and the importance of this process to the growing church inside the AP area.

**CHAPTER THREE:**  
**PRECEDENT-SETTING CASES AND**  
**CONTEXTUAL LITERATURE**

The previous chapter highlighted both Islamic and Christian theological rationales with a focus on the biblical aspect of discipleship groups and believers' gatherings. This chapter presents the contextual literature and case studies that reflect a practical view of the challenges that prevent BMBs from regularly participating in discipleship groups. There are three main issues requiring critical research to identify barriers that hinder BMBs in the AP from committing to discipleship groups and determine means of overcoming those barriers. Those issues are: first, gathering in discipleship groups in the context of high-risk areas; second, oral learning preference for the BMBs living in the area; and third, digital gathering in the cyber church and online discipleship using the media in the teaching and learning process.

**Gathering in Discipleship Groups in High-Risk Areas**

The first issue is the gathering of BMBs in high-risk areas for discipleship. The focus of this study was to identify and address barriers and obstacles that hinder BMBs from consistently gathering in discipleship groups.

Presented in this chapter are the precedent-setting cases for the PALM model of BMBs gathering for discipleship in North Africa (NA), and its effort to remove the barriers faced the Algerian BMBs. Also presented are additional contextual challenges of known barriers such as suffering and persecution, as well as cultural cases such as shame and honour and lack of trust that directly influence the participation rate in discipleship groups, and the role of the PALM discipleship groups' model in addressing those barriers.

While PALM groups modeled in NA represent a precedent case in this research, the PALM curriculum and PALM groups in the AP are critically evaluated as part of this study. In this chapter, I present the NA PALM groups as a precedent case that helped to identify and address a few challenges that face the BMBs and hinder them from gathering in groups for discipleship. And, in Chapter Five, I present the AP PALM groups and Curriculum evaluation findings with a purpose to exclude both the curriculum and the current PALM group dynamics from being counted as barriers that hinder discipleship in the AP.

#### PALM Discipleship Group Modeled in North Africa

As mentioned earlier, the PALM curriculum is also known as Progressing Together. It is a program of Bible study courses and training resources for all stages of Christian maturity from initial discipleship onwards. It is designed for churches and BMBs in the context of the Arab World (AW) (detailed information about the PALM program can be found on the Progressing Together website

listed in Appendix 1). The PALM teaching and training faculty is a multicultural team. Its courses are developed in cooperation with BMBs so that the materials are appropriate to their specific needs and context.

PALM's vision is to see BMBs mature in Christ and become fruitful ministers of the gospel, as well as emergent leaders prepared to be the future church leaders in the Muslim world. Thus, PALM offered the Progressing Together (PT) discipleship program for use in this context. The PALM team develops, promotes and teaches courses on the scriptures and practical Christian living. These courses are designed specifically for BMBs to help them understand Christian theology and to guide them to grow in their new faith.

The North Africa (NA) case study reflects the importance of such teaching as it took place under hostile circumstances that are similar to those of the AP where this research was conducted. The PALM groups' model in NA is a precedent case that reflects many common barriers affecting discipleship group formations in the Muslim world, and demonstrates how BMBs overcome such barriers.

In North Africa's case, PALM succeeded, and BMBs regularly attended the course in spite of challenges that faced them. The PALM Program, which includes the Progressing Together (PT) courses such as PT Level 1 (PT L1), is used among BMBs in North Africa (NA) with noticeable participation from new believers.

As part of the approved proposal, I requested to interview PALM's Senior Trainer and NA Training consultant, Jay Haines (pseudonym), using a face-to-face interview as an approved research instrument. Mr. Haines consented to participate provided that he be permitted to use a pseudonym. I used the English script listed in Appendix 5 to get Mr. Haines consent. Mr. Haines resides in Europe and frequently visits the churches in NA, especially those in Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. The purpose of the interview was to look at the factors that helped BMBs in NA to overcome the barriers to participating in PALM discipleship groups, with a focus on Algeria.

On May 9, 2013, the interview was conducted. Mr. Haines, reflecting on the mission history among the North African people stated, "Until the 1960s more experienced workers were given missionary visas. Those workers were well trained and had their full time focused on ministry. After the local government had ceased to give missionaries residency visas, mission agencies started to rely on tentmakers instead" (Haines 2013). Tentmakers in North Africa come with variable qualifications, and in many cases it was difficult to find qualified teachers/workers in theology and in linguistics. Thus, workers were overwhelmed with tasks between their tent-making jobs, families and keeping the church going. They could not pass on to the new generation the proper training according to 2 Timothy 2:2. Mr. Haines added that leadership styles played a critical role in decelerating missions work because everyone had their own way of approaching ministry.

At the beginning of 1980 in Algeria, when the missions partnership rented a facility called “the good news,” there were enough workers in the country. After 1980, workers started to be expelled from the country, and civil war broke out in 1990. Mr. Haines mentioned that some cultic [heretical] teaching invaded the country in 2000 (Haines 2013). This drop in the quality of teaching was due to several zealous foreigners who connected the national believers to their cultic churches abroad. Along with television programs with erroneous teaching, this plunge had a divisive effect on the local church. However, Mr. Haines reflected that the local church was a church of prayer, and when they started to see the Holy Spirit working in the national believers, their faith was restored. During those tough times, PALM offered a summer Bible school to fill the gap in teaching and invited the Algerian nationals to attend two weeks of Bible school and then return to their country (Haines 2013).

After the civil war, the believers started to emerge from hiding and come gradually above ground until the government recognized them. They went through persecution and death threats by Muslim fundamentalists. Haines witnessed that some BMBs left the country; however, God protected His church. Believers learned to pray for God’s protection against the fundamentalists (Haines 2013).

In the midst of this tribulation, God gave the national church, which used to gather in homes, the discernment to realize their spiritual needs. The realization of the national church leaders for the need to study the Word of God was a key to

success. Barriers that faced the church included limited means of communication and inadequate reading ability to understand scripture. Such miscommunications represented a hindrance for the sustainment of the ministry. Lack of trust led to difficulties in gathering people together. Discipleship groups were started through Bible correspondence courses and as a result of keen interest in PALM materials (Haines 2013).

One of the local converts started to form a few small groups of individuals in the vicinity. Then, he began to train leaders for those groups to be facilitators to teach others. He found believers in four cities between Algiers and Oran. In one of those cities, the believers became very visible, and persecution escalated against the church there. The majority of court battles in that city involved converts to Christianity. Mr. Haines noted that this man was from a Kabyle background (a Berber ethnic group) but spoke Arabic and loved the Arabs in that area of Western Algeria. He had a vision for ministry in Algeria, and the BMBs responded positively to his vision. The PALM program was a tool he used to disciple the people there (Haines 2013).

Following the steps of training facilitators was another factor in reproducing successful discipleship groups. In the Tizi-Ouzou area, a city in North Central Algeria, PALM is known to the entire church and has been used since the early 2000s. It started with 10-20 people, and many took the courses and started to teach them to their own churches. Concluding that success was achieved

through believers with vision who persisted in training and teaching others, Mr.

Haines stated,

In Mauritania, we know a similar case to the Yemeni church where a Senegal person joined a fellowship and leaked personal information to the media and subsequently terrorist groups. This is considered another barrier that faces BMBs...On the other hand, the perseverance of the faithful encouraged everyone to be steadfast in their faith in spite of the repeated trials and accusation. Nowadays we see whole families coming to Christ. We feel we are obliged to commit to visit those churches (30 known community groups inside Algeria) on a quarterly basis to encourage and train and follow up with them. (Haines 2013)

The barriers highlighted above could be summarized as: the difficulty in finding qualified teachers/workers in theology education and/or in linguistics; lack of time as workers are overwhelmed with responsibilities between their tent-making jobs, families and ministry; different leadership styles and the critical role in slowing down work with others; communication issues and low literacy skills; fear of persecution; and lack of trust leading to difficulties to assembly among people for worship, Bible study and fellowship. In spite of these challenges, however, the Progressing Together curriculum is being used successfully across the North African area. PALM helped the Algerian leaders to have a clear vision for ministry; and for decades, the PALM discipleship groups addressed those identified barriers and helped the national church to overcome them through training and equipping the Algerian BMBs to grow spiritually and maturing in leadership.

## Discipleship Groups in the Arabian Peninsula (AP)

This section presents the formation of contextual discipleship groups in the AP in comparison to the PALM discipleship groups in North Africa (NA) mentioned above. It helps the reader to understand the context where current discipleship groups in the AP, represented in PALM discipleship groups, face the same barriers as those in the NA gatherings.

In my capacity of service as AP Area Leader and Dean of Training for PALM, I report periodically on discipleship group formation. In 2013, we experienced the sovereign control of the Lord of the harvest and His ability to turn evil into good. When tragedies such as the murder of an expatriate worker took place, the entire ministry team mourned the loss of a dear colleague while praying for local believers to be strengthened and for an increase in spiritual fruit. In the AP during the spring of 2013, God answered those prayers. At the end of that second quarter, the ministry team was thrilled to report a network of twenty discipleship groups across the AP (PALM 2<sup>nd</sup> QTR Report 2013).

Most of the small groups meet in twos and threes, although in one location, larger groups exist. The majority of these groups are under the leadership of local believers, trained by expatriate workers who live in-country (Interview notes). Although those workers had to leave due to security threats, they continued to mentor the local believers at a distance. PALM ministry data estimated that perhaps half of these groups follow the Progressing Together (PT) discipleship curriculum; others are influenced by it (PALM data). This emerging

Christian community is the collective fruit of the sacrificial labour of many workers who have invested their lives in this region, some even giving their lives as mentioned above.

A fellow worker provided relevant evidence that there is both qualitative and quantitative growth in discipleship groups in the AP nations that are predominantly Islamic. He reported that, currently, known believers scattered across one AP country where he resides are estimated at fifty to sixty followers; fifteen of them are considered mature and act as mentors. The challenge here was the difficulty in gathering regularly, which resulted in an insufficient number of known BMBs to participate in the discipleship groups (Interview notes).

### Challenging Barriers Facing Discipleship groups

While new believers continue to come to the saving faith in Jesus Christ across the AW, there are obstacles that hinder them from participating regularly and consistently in discipleship groups. Some of those obstacles are clear and known, and some are not. The following sections highlight precedent-setting cases that illuminate these known barriers and challenges.

### **Suffering and Persecution Encountered by Christians and BMBs in High-Risk Areas**

In periodic e-mails sent to Christian agencies and individuals advocating for the human rights of Christian communities in the Middle East, AP and North Africa, the anonymous editor of the Middle East Concern (MEC) communicated the latest known news about persecution cases in the area (Middle East Concern,

July 4-December 2, 2013, e-mail to MEC mailing list). Within a five-month period (July 4-December 2, 2013) MEC statistics revealed thirty-three known persecution cases which speak to the unique challenges of ministry in the Arab World (AW). Those cases took different forms of persecution including but not limited to excommunication, imprisonment and execution.

The BMBs who underwent this turmoil pleaded with the international church community for prayers. Some of them persevered, recognizing that suffering for Jesus' sake is an equal gift to grace and faith (1 Peter 3:14): “the testimony of believers living in the midst of persecution challenges the church in the West, and its emissaries, to recapture a biblical missiology—a missiology that is mature enough to embrace suffering, persecution, and even martyrdom” (Ripken 2011, 357).

### **Threat and Risk Assessment for Workers Living Inside the AP**

The people of the AP are subject to the culture, the tradition, the ideology and the teaching of Islam as presented earlier. In addition, they are subject to the bipolarity of poverty and riches. The poverty is localized in the southwest countries of the AP, and the wealth is in the rest of the Gulf countries. “Poverty is considered fertile soil for crime and terrorism” (Stavridis 2010, 239).

In Yemen, where the tribal system drives society, Islamic militants exercise terrorism against foreigners. They target Westerners because they consider them Christians. Threats of terrorist attacks were escalated even before

Arab Spring started early in 2010 from Tunisia, then Egypt and sparked rapidly in Yemen a few months later. With Arab Spring evolving, the local government in Yemen was weakened, and the intensity of the terrorist attacks kept escalating. Gabriel states, “Christians are a target in the goal of world conquest because they resist conversion [to Islam]. This perspective is not just implied. It is explicitly stated” (Gabriel 2002, 83).

In early 2012, I witnessed an incident where members of the Al Qaeda Group murdered a Western tent-maker who shared with other missionaries the same vision to reach out to the unreached across the region. He was assassinated near his home, on his way to work.

The Global Security Advisor of PI visited Yemen and wrote the Threat Risk Assessment for workers living in the AP (Appendix 3). Interviews and research were conducted and were limited to the western portions of the country including Sana’a, Taieez, Hudaydah, and Aden. The summary of findings indicated that on the scale of low to very high there was a very high risk that Western expatriates would be the subject of targeted killings or kidnappings (Appendix 3).

The assessment pointed to the threats of targeted killing by militant Islamic groups. Those groups, including Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and its affiliates, have claimed responsibility for the targeted killings of Westerners in Yemen. They have publicly stated their intention to continue such attacks. These are intended as revenge for the sacrifice of their members, to make political statements, and to defend Islam in Yemen from Western Christians.

AQAP launches their attacks while Yemeni officials practice weak governance in an atmosphere of chaos and unpredictability (Appendix 3). In fact, the terror attacks against the Yemeni military base during the first quarter of 2014 confirmed the weakness of the current government in the wake of the growing aggression from Islamic militants.

Those threats and risks are not limited to Westerners only; they also extend to target BMBs on an even greater scale due to other dimensions of Islamic fundamentalism such as apostasy and shame and honour. Accordingly, some mission organizations have had to limit the formation of new teams, engage in daily monitoring to assess evolving threats, and consult with colleagues on an ongoing basis to gauge the ministry situation at hand. All of these actions are taken with complete submission to the sovereignty of God and bathed in prayer and supplication.

### **Shame and Honour and Lack of Trust**

The above-mentioned threats to workers and BMBs in the AP are best understood through the cultural lens of shame and honour. Shame and honour behaviour drives ordinary Muslims in the AP to defend Islam. It is shameful not to be Muslim. In *Honor and Shame: Unlocking the Door*, Roland Müller writes,

There are many types of shame in an Arab society. For the Arab, failure to conform is damning and leads to a place of shame in the community... We in the west value our individualism, but Arabs value conformity. The very meaning of Islam is to conform to the point of submission... If one fails to conform, he is initially criticized, and if he refuses to conform is put in a place of shame by the community. (Müller 2000, 81)

Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, in her book *Islamic Society in Practice*, states, “Honour is understood in a complex way as the absence of shame, for honour and shame are bound to one another as complementary yet contradictory ideas” (Fluehr-Lobban 2004, 68). The common understanding of shame and honour extends to the practice of Jihad. It is honourable to act in Jihad, and it is shameful not to.

Müller says, “the other side of shame is honor, and every Arab desires and strives to be and become more honorable” (Müller 2000, 88).

Müller observes that there are three different emotional states of being that all cultures deal with in a variety of ways based on fear, shame and guilt:

Many western nations (Northern Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand) have cultures that contain mostly guilt-based cultural characteristics. On the other hand, much of the [Middle East and Asia] is made up of shame-based cultures. Most of the primal religions and cultures of the world (such as tribes in the jungles of Africa, Asia and South America) are structured around fear-based principles (Müller 2000, 20).

According to Müller, the major difference between the East and the West is not the honour and shame concept but the difference between group mentality and individualism. As Müller notes, “Eastern Shame is the more powerful because it rests on the group and not the individual” (Müller 2000, 53).

When one’s honour is damaged, shame will overflow and the reaction of will be unpredictable. This same ethos is applicable to BMBs when they decide to follow Jesus. If their decision is publicly known, BMBs bring shame to their family, clan and tribe, and risk subjecting themselves to honour killing. In the

course of my ministry among BMBs, a murder case took place in the area and found its way to the media. A father convicted of honour killing motivation had killed his daughter because of her conversion to Christianity.

When BMBs come to the Christian faith in the AP, they are put in a hard situation as they try to cover up the new faith that is seen as shameful in the eyes of their communities. If the community discovers their new faith, BMBs will be put to shame and experience rejection by their own people. Müller states, “Shame is not only an act against the accepted system of values but it can also include the discovery by outsiders that the act has been committed” (Müller 2000, 81). Müller concludes, “In Arab 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” (Müller 2000, 85).

In Islam, shame can be resolved by revenge and retaliation. This is sanctioned by the Qur’an in many places such as: “Believers, retaliation is decreed for you in bloodshed” (Qur’an 2:178); “Let evil be rewarded with evil” (42:4); “If anyone attacks you, attack him as he attacked you” (2:194); “And We ordained for them therein a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth” (5:45). As mentioned earlier, Waraqa Ibn Nofal and Buhaira influenced the writing of the Qur’an, and these quotes reflect the Old Testament knowledge that influenced Muhammad’s mind. Also, these verses provide the rationale for honour killings rooted in the tribal context and followed through traditions. Honour killing is also sanctioned in the Hadith in Sahih

Bukhari: Volume 7, Book 63, Number 195-196; Sahih Bukhari: 8:6814; Sahih Muslim No. 4206; Sahih Al-Bukhari Vol 2, 1009; and Sahih Muslim Vol 2, 65.

The above Qur'anic verses and authentic sahih hadiths clearly indicate that Muhammad, under Allah's direction, stoned adulterers to death and flogged fornicators. Allah's decrees of death for fornicators (Qur'an: 4:15) and flogging for adulteresses—100 times with no mercy (Qur'an: 24:2)—which also could lead to certain death, have evidently sanctioned punishment for sexual intercourse outside marriage. We see parallel biblical passages such as the one in Deuteronomy 22:13-21, reflecting similarities in ancient cultures and suggesting the Jewish and Christian influence on Muhammad and the Qur'an, which was mentioned earlier.

In the above section, I examined the cultural shame and honour as seen through the lens of Arab culture and the Muslim worldview. Supported by Qur'anic teachings, Muslims seek revenge promptly and threaten directly those who turn away from Islam toward any other faith, in order to keep Islam honoured. BMBs are subject to persecution and suffering, facing threats from their families, community and government as they are seen as apostates. In this situation, fear of persecution and suffering constitute one of the barriers that BMBs face in terms of gathering in discipleship groups for discipleship and spiritual growth.

Before examining other literature, the issue of apostasy should be discussed as it is closely related to Islamic teachings and the AP culture of shame

and honour. Apostasy works directly against the BMBs, bringing them under the force of the law of the land as described in the following section. In defining apostasy, Cottee states, “Apostasy is an exit from a group or collective and is informed by a self-conscious renunciation of the group’s foundational beliefs and values...Apostasy is thus by definition a confrontational act, whereby the exiter disavows the very epistemological and moral tenets of the group” (Cottee 2015, 14).

### **Apostasy in the Arabian Peninsula**

Apostasy in Islam (Arabic: *ردة* riddah or *ارتداد* irtidād) is commonly defined as turning away from Islam and renouncing one’s faith. Such ‘irtidad’ includes the conversion to another faith by a person who was born into a Muslim family or who had previously recited the Islamic creed and accepted Islam as his or her religion. Cottee, concluding his writing on ‘The Apostates’, says,

Apostasy, to be sure, is a fundamental human rights problem in Muslim-majority countries, where in some states the punishment for apostasy is death and violent vigilantism against apostates and religious minorities goes unpunished. (Cottee 2015, 211)

The Islamic reaction toward BMBs continues in the same manner I referred to in the earlier chapters of theological rationale, and the precedent-setting cases under suffering and persecution titles. When their conversion is made known to their Islamic community, BMBs are considered as apostates, and according to the Islamic law they are subject to death penalty. In an overview of apostasy, Ibn Warraq writes, “It is...quite clear that under Islamic law an apostate

must be put to death. There is no dispute on this ruling among classical Muslim or modern scholars” (Warraq 2005, 429). Under the heading “Apostasy from Islam,” *The Dictionary of Islam, a Cyclopaedia of the Doctrines, Rites, Ceremonies Etc. of the Islamic Religion* states, “According to Muslim law, a male apostate, or *Murtadd*, is liable to be put to death if he continue obstinate in his error” (Hughes 1982, s.v. Apostasy from Islam). To be more specific,

Ikrimah relates that some apostates were brought to the Khalifah Ali, and he burnt them alive; but Ibn Abbas heard of it, and said that the Khalifah had not acted rightly, for the Prophet had said, “Punish not with God’s punishment (i.e. fire), but whoever changes his religion, kill him with the sword.” (Hughes 1982, s.v. Apostasy from Islam)

The fact that punishment for decisively leaving Islam is death has been a settled and traditionally practiced matter from the beginning of Islam to the present time in those Islamic countries that follows the sanctions of Qur’an and Hadith. Under Sharia Law, one who openly leaves Islam is given three days to repent and re-embrace Islam, or face execution (Zwemer 2004, 40).

The Law Library of Congress publishes details about the laws that criminalize apostasy within the AP. In Kuwait, for example,

According to Law 51 of 1984 on Personal Status, which is based on Islamic Sharia...under article 294 of this law, an apostate is not able to inherit from his Muslim relatives or marital spouse. (The Law Library of Congress 2015, “Laws Criminalizing Apostasy”, Kuwait)

Kuwaiti BMBs are subject to such penalization if they are known to the public or to the authorities. While in Kuwait the punishment is limited to the inability to inherit, the death penalty rules in other countries in the AP.

In Qatar, the local laws equate apostasy with theft, stealing by force, adultery, insulting, and alcohol consumption. According to those bylaws, Qatari BMBs could face the death penalty for no other reason but their conversion to Christianity because it is outlawed in the penal codes:

Qatar's Law 11 of 2004 incorporates the traditional punishments of Islamic law for various offenses, including apostasy. Article 1 of the Law states that the provisions of Islamic law for the following offenses are applied if the defendant or victim is a Muslim: 1. The hudud offenses related to theft, banditry, adultery, defamation, alcohol consumption, and apostasy. 2. The offenses of retaliation (qisas) and blood money (diyah)... Qatar also criminalizes proselytizing. Under article 257, any individual who establishes an organization to proselytize may be punished with a term of imprisonment of up to seven years. (The Law Library of Congress 2015, "Laws Criminalizing Apostasy", Qatar)

In Saudi Arabia, where Islamic Sharia is the law of the land, the death penalty through beheading the apostates is the consequence of renouncing Islam. As mentioned before, Islamic Sharia law are taken from both the Qur'an and Hadith. The Hadith states clearly that any Muslim who reverts from Islam will be subject to the death penalty.

One of the main sources of Islamic law is the *Hadith* or ascribed sayings of the Prophet Mohamed. Islamic law imposes the death penalty on apostates based on the following statements attributed to the Prophet Mohamed in some *Hadith* collections: (1) "If somebody (a Muslim) discards his religion, kill him"(*Hadith Volume 4, Book 52, Number 260: Narrated' Ikrima*) and (2) "The blood of a Muslim who confesses that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that I am His Apostle, cannot be shed except in three cases: In Qisas for murder, a married person who commits illegal sexual intercourse and the one who reverts from Islam (apostate) and leaves the Muslims (*Hadith Volume 9, Book 83, Number 17: Narrated' Abdullah*). (The Law Library of Congress 2015, "Laws Criminalizing Apostasy", Saudi Arabia)

In the United Arab Emirates (UAE) apostasy is outlawed in the country and grouped under the Hudud crimes. The literal meaning of ‘Hudud’ is boundaries, limits and restrictions that define the relationship between the human being and the Divine. Hudud determines when man crosses the line against Allah, and the punishment he or she should expect to receive for his or her acts. Apostasy in the UAE is viewed as a criminal offence comparable to violations such as adultery, murder, theft and robbery. Such acts deserve punishment with the death penalty:

The United Arab Emirates criminalizes apostasy through the incorporation of the concept of *hudud* crimes under Islamic Sharia into its Penal Code. Those crimes include adultery, apostasy, murder, theft, highway robbery that involves killing, and a false accusation of committing adultery. Article 1 of the Penal Code provides that Islamic law applies to *hudud* crimes, the acceptance of blood money, and homicide. In addition, article 66 states that among the “original punishments” under the law are the punishments of *hudud* crimes, including by imposing the death penalty. However, there have been no known prosecutions or legal punishments for apostasy in court. (The Law Library of Congress 2015, “Laws Criminalizing Apostasy”, United Arab Emirates)

In Yemen, according to the provision of Islamic Sharia, the death penalty is applied for those who leave Islam. If such a person decides to return to Islam and renounce his or her new faith, the death penalty may be revoked. Although the death penalty is not recorded, the anti-apostasy laws are enforced.

The crime of apostasy may be subject to the death penalty by virtue of article 12 of the Yemen Penal Code of 1994, as amended by Law 24 of 2006, which identifies crimes, including apostasy, that are punished according to the provisions of Islamic Sharia. Furthermore, article 259 provides that individuals committing the act of apostasy may be punished with the death penalty. It also waives the punishment for apostasy if the individual repents and returns to Islam and denounces his new faith. Anti-

apostasy laws are enforced. .. However, it has been reported that Yemen does not enforce the death penalty for apostasy. (The Law Library of Congress 2015, “Laws Criminalizing Apostasy”, Yemen)

From the above examples of apostasy laws and the various penalties that are in force across the AP, one can surmise that the fear of persecution experienced by our BMB brothers and sisters is very real, even though there has been no report of enforcement of the anti-apostasy laws. The main factor that drives such fear is that Islam itself forbids apostasy and rules the death penalty as a consequence for such an act. Currently and as mentioned earlier, the apostasy laws are in effect even though there is no report stating that those laws are applied; however, the threat of punishment is there. Such punishment is based on the Islamic teaching revealed in both the Qur’an and the Hadith. Allah of Islam declares in the Qur’an,

But if they repent and establish worship and pay the poor-due, then are they your brethren in religion. We detail our revelations for a people who have knowledge. And if they break their pledges after their treaty (hath been made with you) and assail your religion, then fight the heads of disbelief—Lo! They have no binding oaths in order that they may desist. (Qur’an 9: 11, 12)

And in the Hadith the same concept is confirmed whereby “Whoever changed his Islamic religion, then kill him” (Bukhari 9.84.57).

Reflecting on the various Islamic human rights declarations, Ibn Warraq states,

The various Islamic human rights schemes or declaration-such as the Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights (1981) are understandably vague or evasive on the issue of the freedom to change one's religion, since Islam itself clearly forbids apostasy and punishes it with death. (Warraq 2005, 433)

Thus, fear to be known and identified as an apostate is one of the challenges facing the BMBs. Such fear hinders the BMBs in the AP from disclosing their new faith and accordingly, suppresses their freedom to commit to a discipleship group and meet with their fellow believers face-to-face.

### **Using Storytelling and Other Oral Approaches for Discipleship in a Non-Formal Education Context of Discipleship Groups**

A second critical issue for enquiry is the delivery of teaching within discipleship groups and whether it is preferable to use written or oral approaches in discipleship. An understanding of this concept of oral learning preferences will help to explain BMBs' inconsistency in attending discipleship groups.

Although official literacy rates have increased across the Arab World (AW) and in the Arabian Peninsula (AP), these contexts are predominantly oral. Even among those with a higher standard of education, many prefer to pass on core information through oral methods due to the cultural preference for oral communication. The PALM team has begun to address this challenge by commissioning their re-design of Level 1 (L1) courses to an oral format, but the outcome of this has yet to be determined. This endeavour is an effort to interpret how predominantly literate or written courses are to be used in the local oral culture, so the delivery methods for those courses can be altered to suit the needs

of BMBs. How can those courses better fit the purpose of encouraging BMBs in the AP and connecting them with discipleship groups in spite of the barriers they are facing? The following comment confirms the need for a more oral-based approach with this population:

Most Muslim societies can be classified as oral cultures. They prefer to communicate through story, song, poetry, proverbs, and dialogue. Therefore, a non-print translation is likely to speak more naturally and powerfully to the ordinary members of the community who are either non-literate or who simply prefer oral communication. (Gray and Gray 2011, 30)

Presented below are some precedent cases to address storytelling and other oral approaches such as using contextual visual aids and local arts in a non-formal education setting. Also discussed is how change and the role of storytelling and other oral approaches mentioned above could bring positive development in enriching the discipleship process.

Since the PALM team sees that Theological Education (TE) is the right of every believer, PALM's efforts to affect change in the local church leadership must be driven by TE. Thus, changes would take place from the bottom up to protect people's essential freedom and to maintain a steady continuation of leadership development (Brewin 2007, 24). As the focus is on BMBs and their role within the emerging church in the Arab World (AW) context of the oral culture, the PALM team offers such education in non-traditional class settings, using textual materials. PALM's informal education style aligns with oral preferences.

There are no seminaries in the majority of Arab Muslim countries. Dr. Linda Cannell asserts that; “TE does not mean school... TE for the whole people of God is the umbrella term, while school is simply one way to get the job done” (Cannell 2013). Using storytelling and other oral approaches in a non-formal education context of discipleship groups for discipleship is a tool to deliver such TE for those BMBs whose learning preference is orality.

In PALM’s vision, informal education (discipleship group style) is a suitable tool under the TE umbrella term to provide theological education for new believers coming from a Muslim background. In the case of this informal education, literature and text together with storytelling and oral approaches are used either separately or in a hybrid format. As it has been noted, “From creation to about the time of the Gutenberg press, communication was primarily oral in nature; writing systems took time to develop, and technology for mass printing had not yet arrived” (Chiang 2012, 7).

Walter Ong offers a useful contribution to the study of orality in his book, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, where he makes a distinction between illiterate people who are obliged to learn through the oral approach, and educated people who prefer the oral learning approach. Ong refers to “primary orality” as the learning approach where there is no written language available or where there is little appreciation for communication in writing. He presented the contrast between oral and literate cultures and used the phrase “secondary orality,” which he describes as “essentially a more deliberate and self-

conscious orality, based permanently on the use of writing and print” (Ong 1982, 136). According to Ong, secondary orality is a phenomenon of the post-literacy era, whereas oral residue is a stage in the transition from pre-literate to literate.

In the modern countries of the Gulf, my observations led me to realize that secondary orality has a special impact on well educated people whose preference is to access more popular oral art forms such as music, songs, and storytelling, whether in audio or video forms, through the electronic media.

Secondary orality also influences non-readers. Ong, explaining the term “oral preference learners”, states,

There exists a continuum of culture and learning preferences from exclusively oral to highly textual/digital; approximately 80% of the population within that continuum has a strong preference for oral methods of learning and communicating. We refer to this 80% of the world’s population as “oral preference learners.” (Ong 1982, 136)

With this preference of learning approach in mind, discipleship groups are encouraged to interact in an oral format, eliminating any communication barriers that might hinder BMBs from regular and consistent participation in discipleship groups.

In his response to the fact that the Philippines and Uganda benefit from non-formal orality education, Phillip R. Walker, author of *Institution Building and Theological Education: An Assessment of a Non-Traditional Theological Seminary in Kenya, East Africa*, refers to two papers presenting the challenge of non-formal education:

Those papers presented the challenge of non-formal education which compares the “Jesus” model of theological education on the one hand and the traditional models of formal education on the other. ...The papers written on the role of non-formal training provides a snapshot of what is happening among the vast number of people who range from non-literate to secondary oral learners. (Walker 2013)

Walker, continuing his reflection on the papers mentioned above, concludes with a focus on the outcome of teaching, not on its means. The teaching outcomes and preferable teaching means are connected to the learning preference of BMBs.

Primary, as well as secondary, oral learners are encouraged to participate regularly in discipleship groups if the oral approach is used in those fellowships. Failure to access this preferred means of learning could be one of the barriers preventing BMBs from participating regularly in house meetings.

The discussion above and reflection on oral approaches in a non-formal education context mirror Jesus’ model of training, which was non-formal within an oral context.

In the AW, people live in the midst of an Islamic culture that holds compliance with rules and regulations in higher regard than inner transformation; however, Islam and any other religion that teaches knowledge, information and deeds at the exclusion of changes in the heart are considered dead teachings according to the Bible (Matthew 15:8). If lives are not transformed, and hearts are not changed, knowledge and information are in vain. The same is true with regard to academic knowledge with limitation the non-formal education methods. In his

response paper, Walker concludes, “We should be looking at how the non-formal education and training changes lives and fulfills the call to make disciples ‘panta ta ethne’. Maybe it is time to infuse formal theological education with more informal and non-formal methods” (Walker 2013).

In ministry among the BMBs in the AP, Bible teachers and other Christian workers are encouraged to understand the cultural background of the oral learning preference for those whom they serve. One of the barriers identified through this research is the cultural gap between Western workers and local people that includes the oral learning preference compared to the textual learning preference of Westerners. Rhonda S. Zaharna, in her article, “Understanding Cultural Preferences of Arab Communication Patterns,” states,

For the Arab culture, emphasis is on form over function, affect over accuracy and image over meaning. An awareness of these cultural differences can help American practitioners deal more effectively with their Arab clients in developing written and oral communication, in public relations programming and in understanding professional ethics (Zaharna 1995, 241).

In this project, particular attention was paid to the cultural challenges and to the cultural preferences mentioned in these precedent cases. The curriculum generated with the help of the working group was contextually and dynamically designed using the oral preference approach. This curriculum acts as a model for further curricula that might be appropriate for informal theological education for adult learners beyond the AP. Also, an assessment tool was tested and has proven that verbal evaluation in that context is the way to go forward.

In the literature mentioned above, the first topic of discussion was gathering and discipling BMBs in discipleship groups in high-risk areas with its cultural challenges. Second, information was presented about the oral preference of the BMBs living in the area with its cultural preferences. Presented next is the third issue of the effect of media on the spiritual maturity of the BMBs, with particular focus on the digital gathering and cyber discipleship in which the new generation of BMBs likes to engage.

### **Digital Gathering and Cyber Discipleship**

The third area that needs critical research to diagnose barriers that hinder BMBs in the AP from participating in discipleship groups, and to find remedies to alleviate those barriers, is digital gathering and online discipleship. After discussing discipling in local home meetings and the oral learning preference of BMBs, examining available options for online discipleship enriches this research with a possible solution to overcome the identified barriers. Discussed in this section is the importance of the use of media to reach out to BMBs, especially those in remote areas. Media safely reaches those who lack the freedom to access discipleship materials due to risk factors. Media also is a useful tool for those who prefer oral learning.

### **TEACH/LEARN Project**

The TEACH/LEARN program is a cyber initiative that trains disciples through the use of media. The TEACH/LEARN program is a leadership

development program for Arab church leaders with limited access to Christian leadership training. TEACH is an acronym for Theological Education for Arab Christians at Home. Its primary delivery medium is satellite television. Its twin ministry is LEARN, which stands for the Leadership Education and Resource Network. Its primary delivery medium is the Internet. Paul Sanders describes the TEACH/LEARN program as follows:

Through media and internet, the mission of the TEACH/LEARN project is to serve the communities of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) by developing and nurturing faithful followers of Jesus Christ through widely accessible and culturally appropriate learning opportunities. Its [Teach/Learn] vision is to see a growing church in the MENA, confident in the Christian faith and witness, serving the community and contributing to the good of society and culture. (Paul Sanders, February 15, 2011, e-mail to stakeholders of Middle East Theological Education mailing list)

This project is beneficial to the leadership development institutions of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. It reaches learners who cannot come to theological colleges, as it brings Theological Education (TE) to their doorsteps wherever they reside within the region. Arab World (AW) theological schools are able to use this contextually appropriate Arabic material to extend their reach. The project facilitates the institutional planning and management of the schools and supplements the course offerings of the smaller training programs among them.

Other people who benefit from the project are Arab believers from both non-Christian and Christian backgrounds, who live in contexts where leadership training resources are not readily accessible. Through TEACH/LEARN, non-

Christians living in Arab countries are exposed to quality Christian teaching via satellite TV and have the opportunity for follow-up via the Internet.

Dr. Sanders explains that “TEACH was originally a SAT7 initiative called Seminary of the Air (SOTA) during the early 2000s” (Sanders 2011). When SAT7 contacted Middle Eastern theological colleges for the purpose of broadcasting theological content, these colleges suggested the LEARN companion project for mutual benefit and synergy. This strategy was mutually adopted in 2008, and the initial stage of the project, involving the production of over 40 courses, was programmed over a five-year period. Such a medium serves BMBs in helping them to learn the Bible and grow spiritually. While home church gathering is encouraged for fellowship, satellite Christian TV and Internet cyber fellowship act as a subsidiary tool to overcome barriers that are out of BMBs’ control and that hinder them from corporate face-to-face fellowship.

Both media extend beyond borders and long-established access restrictions. They impact the AW for Christ by involving Arab Christian leaders, whose natural grasp of the culture/context and ability to use the language enable them to exceed the capacity of any expatriate worker residing within the area. Because Arab Christian leaders have the linguistic advantage of speaking the local language, in addition to their cultural affinity with the local community, their involvement in such a project is vital, especially for the online interaction ministries. Merry Merryfield, in her article “Like a Veil: Cross-Cultural Experiential Learning Online,” states,

Multicultural and global educators agree that teachers need face to face experiential learning with people different from themselves if they are to develop cross-cultural skills, knowledge, and competence...During the 1970s and 1980s many universities and other organizations developed opportunities for students and teachers to study abroad or work in culturally diverse settings with American minorities, immigrants, refugees, or international students. And then came the Internet, email, and the possibility for online interaction with people around the globe. (Merryfield 2003, 146)

In ministry, online learning has already started through digital correspondence for BMBs who have access to digital devices and services and prefer to interact while in hiding. It is expected that this approach will grow and flourish with time and with the advancement of the information technology in the AP.

Merryfield defends the positive effects of online technology on learning. In a few sections, she briefs that the online technology facilitates immediate and detailed feedback (Merryfield 2003, 163); in other sections, Merryfield asserts that online technology extends discussion of ideas and resources, and online technology has the potential to create communities of diverse learners and connections to a larger world (Merryfield 2003, 163-166). This method is distinct from others in that BMBs can start learning immediately after coming to the Christian faith, and it allows them to be disciplined in secret for security purposes. I concur with Merryfield conclusion that online learning can act like a protective veil for those involved (Merryfield 2003, 171).

Following the discussion above concerning precedent-setting cases of face-to-face discipleship, oral learning preference approaches and digital

gathering and online discipleship, I conclude by identifying a few barriers that hinder BMBs in the AP from assembling together in high risk areas. Fear is a clear barrier that leads BMBs to cover up their affiliation with any Christian organization or group, including discipleship groups. Trust issues among BMBs and sometimes between them and other Christian workers underlie some of the barriers. Oral learning preference is another factor that bears consideration in the discipleship process. This leads to the following section, which examines the research project with its methodology.

**CHAPTER FOUR:**  
**PROJECT, METHODOLOGY, AND**  
**METHODS**

The goal of this project was to identify the barriers hindering BMBs in the AP from meeting for discipleship in discipleship groups. The project framework also extends to suggest remedies to help BMBs overcome the identified obstacles. In the AP area, where Islam dominates and rules theologically and culturally, Muslim converts are viewed as apostates who have committed an illegal act, specifically disloyalty to and betrayal of their original religion, as mentioned earlier in Chapter Three, under Apostasy in the Arabian Peninsula. Such a view creates obstacles that prevent BMBs from attending discipleship group meetings lest their new faith be publicly known and their new identity as Christ followers be exposed, subjecting them to threats and persecution, as presented in previous chapters.

While Islamic teachings create barriers for BMBs, shame and honour issues further compound their situation. Because the AP and the entire Arab world embrace a culture of shame and honour as previously mentioned, new followers of Christ are rejected not only by their community and government but also by

their families, once their new faith is publicly known. Thus, “new believers find it difficult to meet to worship together on a regular basis, and their leaders cannot easily disciple them” (Interview notes).

To come up with practical steps toward a consistent discipleship process and spiritual growth, I first identified the barriers that hinder BMBs from assembling and regularly participating in a home discipleship group. In the following sections, I present the methodology used to perform my research. The scope of the study together with the ethics in research is mentioned in this chapter.

### **Methodology**

Within the PALM context, the problem of lack of participation of new BMBs in discipleship groups was observed mainly in the areas where Islam dominates and Islamic culture is rooted in the community. There was recognition of the presence of some barriers that hindered BMBs from gathering together for worship and studying the Bible, but it was unknown exactly what those barriers were. To identify the obstacles, I chose to use the Qualitative Research approach. Because the BMBs and their spiritual leaders in the AP experience barriers that hinder them from gathering in discipleship groups for fellowship, I selected the phenomenological study approach for this qualitative action research. I chose to collect data from the people who experience barriers; thus, disciples and facilitators were involved in my research. I collected data in two forms: written surveys and oral interviews. From the scripts gathered, descriptive codes

emerged, and themes arose. Descriptive codes included identification of the barriers as well as recommendations to overcome them. The more frequently mentioned descriptive codes, receiving primary attention from the individual respondents, were determined to display agreement in representing special weight in identifying and addressing the phenomenological approach due to their selection frequency.

### **Scope**

This research focused mainly on identifying the barriers to discipleship group gatherings among BMBs within the AP area. In addition to identifying such barriers, the research explored contextual remedies and suggested a pilot project to overcome the identified barriers. The scope of this research project coincides with the political and religious sensitivities inherent in carrying out research in the church in the predominantly Muslim context of the Arab World; thus, I received input from BMBs, Believers from Christian Background (BCBs), theological educators/trainers, key personnel of Bible seminaries/institutes, mission agencies and like-minded key leaders who are involved directly or indirectly, either as a disciple or as a facilitator in a discipleship group in the AP.

### **Method**

As mentioned earlier, I used the Qualitative Research (QR) method for this study. To identify aspects of the barriers facing the BMBs, I used the phenomenological approach with this QR procedure.

In Phase 1 of my research, the intention was to use a hybrid of tools, from surveys to interviews, to identify barriers by collecting data from individuals who have experienced such barriers. Questions used in the survey and the interview were designed to identify the barriers that prevent BMBs in the AP area from gathering and participating in discipleship groups on a consistent basis.

A written qualitative survey was created with a plan to use it in two languages: English and Arabic. From February to early June 2013, I received feedback on the proposed English survey from my peers, my advisor and from Dr. Chapman, the DMin program coordinator who approved my survey. The research started on the date that the survey was circulated to the targeted respondents, disciples and disciplers or facilitators, followed by face-to-face meetings with some of them to encourage responses. From October 20, 2013, to November 6, 2013, I acquired a professional translation service to translate the survey into Arabic which was distributed to six national disciples residing in the area and speak Arabic only. Arabic answers to that survey came to me by January 2, 2014 from all six disciples (Table 4).

The survey was my research tool to reach the targeted respondents in the area. It consisted of fourteen questions. The first question dealt with consent. Questions two to four assessed the respondents' involvement in the discipleship process and their awareness of any barriers that hinder such a process; questions five to eight sought suggestions for addressing and alleviating such barriers; and questions nine to twelve in the facilitator version of the survey focused on their

evaluation of the weaknesses and strengths of PALM curriculum. A final open-ended question gave the respondents an opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness of the discipleship process in their sphere of influence and to provide input to help improve the discipleship group dynamics and discipleship process. The fourteenth question concerned demographics (Appendix 4).

The total number of respondents reached sixty-five (Table 1). They were a mix of BMBs and BCBs who included theological educators/trainers, Bible seminary/institute key personnel, and mission agencies. Thirty-four unanimous respondents replied in writing to the initial survey. Also, I interviewed eighteen respondents face-to-face, recording their interviews digitally and storing them securely on my encrypted hard drive. Thirteen other respondents formed the working group that piloted my Applied Plan for remedies. The BMBs in the working group shared their worldview and created a contextualized model for a curriculum that was tested for three months to address the barriers identified from the research.

I recorded all findings and kept them in my secure hard drive. Qualitative data collected were processed using software called QDA Miner Lite (Qualitative Data Analysis). Audio data collected through interviews were recorded, and a professional English teacher transcribed those audio files into text. Those scripts were processed using the same QDA software for qualitative data analysis purposes.

After reviewing the data, it was grouped and categorized. Observations, findings, comments and assumptions were noted while reviewing the responses. The analysis took place through organizing, grouping, and interpretation. Descriptive coding and code words were primarily taken from the responses collected and represented emerging patterns. A total of seventeen codes emerged from 271 statements. Two major themes that resulted from grouping those descriptive codes reflected the barriers facing BMBs in the AP. A third theme dealt with the recommendations suggested by the data.

The analysis of the collected data confirmed the existence of barriers hindering BMBs in the AP area from participating regularly and consistently in discipleship groups. Those identified barriers could be categorized under two main themes: internal barriers and external barriers. Such barriers are discussed in detail in the following chapter.

In June 2014, I visited High-Security Country #2 and shared the data findings with the working group mentioned above. The group consisted of thirteen new respondents, five males and eight females, who worked together for the subsequent three months. I spent three successive days with them, discussing my research findings and working toward creating a contextual approach to overcome the identified barriers. We brainstormed solutions and discussed different approaches to contextualize the discipleship groups and discipleship process in the light of their worldview and the local context. I invited the input of Dr. Mark Overstreet, who serves with T4Global Ministries ([www.t4global.org](http://www.t4global.org)).

The research data enabled us to better appreciate the BMBs' worldview and to determine contextually appropriate solutions to overcome some of the debilitating barriers hindering BMBs from gathering for fellowship and discipleship.

In Phase 2 of this research, the working group was sub-divided into three small groups to contextually design and execute a pilot project to find solutions for dealing with the identified barriers. Each of the three sub-divided smaller group was assigned to focus on only one identified barrier.

The remedies were implemented during the months of July, August and September 2014. During the implementation period, I communicated with the leaders of the three sub-groups through secured e-mail and telephone communications in order to evaluate their ongoing progress and determine the potential for them to meet. The details of my evaluation of the pilot project are presented in the next chapter.

8. During the evaluation period, I explored the working group members' involvement and the pilot project's effectiveness, and possible avenues for improvement. This cycle of implementation, evaluation and development will be repeated continually beyond my DMin limited time and graduation until there is a system in place with as few barriers as possible to hinder BMBs from being discipled and prepared for ministry.

### **Ethics in Research**

The foundation ethics for this dissertation are derived from the Word of God and guided by Biblical truth. In addition, I complied with the academic

ethical guidelines provided by Tyndale. My completion of the Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics (PRE) and the Course on Research Ethics (CORE) based on the Tri-Council Policy Statement, as well as my review of the Tyndale guidelines for ethics, have all contributed to my due diligence to meet the terms of ethics in research. This document confirms my efforts to familiarize myself with the ethical guidelines for research and to fulfill all attendant requirements.

As a leader in the AP area, where I conducted the majority of this research, I am committed to protecting human rights and dignity in my work. As such, this research was guided by three core principles: respect for the persons included in the research, concern for the welfare of BMBs, and fairness, i.e., welcoming participation from people of all backgrounds.

Phase 1 in this research took place immediately after I sought written consent from each respondent who had agreed to respond to the survey in writing. The first question in the written survey was the consent form (Appendix 4). Because this research took place in the context of the Arab world culture where honour and shame principles prevail, contextual verbal consent in Arabic was the most appropriate venue to obtain such consents before performing the personal interviews I used same English written consent, translated it into Arabic and used them in either written or verbal formats. I also used same script with the working group to obtain their consent for what they shared, discussed and produced for this research (Appendix 5).

In my digital recording, I used acronyms and codes for the countries and cities where face-to-face interviews took place. To protect privacy and confidentiality, documentation that included place, date and time were saved in a fully encrypted hard drive, protected by a strong password known only to me. Before each interview, I fully disclosed verbally all information necessary to help the respondent to decide whether to participate or not. This shared information was not limited to the ultimate purpose of the research, but it extended to assess the current ministry of PALM (Preparing Arab-world Leaders for Ministry) in order to develop its delivery approach and maximize the learning outcome in theological training.

Respondents were aware of their right to quit and withdraw from the research at any time (Appendix 5). All communications took place via a secure email address and secure Skype calls. I used a Virtual Private Network (VPN) in all of my communication, especially with people living in high security countries in the Arab World. All information received from the area was transmitted through VPN and secure communication from their side as well. I did not use a third party to interview nationals from within the AP. The above-mentioned measures were taken to protect the privacy of those individuals and to safeguard whatever identifiable information I collected. Individual identity was protected through the use of pseudonyms—when applicable—and their locations are noted in codes that are exclusively known to me.

In order to obtain more qualitative research input, research tools were bilingual in separate documents: one was in Arabic and another was in English. Due to my fluency in Arabic and English, information was gathered in both languages through the written survey and through the individual interviews.

Recruitment took place through word of mouth. This research was executed in the Arab World countries, especially in the AP, among secret believers who were invited verbally—for their own protection—by Christian workers (colleagues) who live within the area, to meet with me to record face-to-face interviews.

### **Summary**

In this chapter I presented the methodology I followed to execute my research and highlighted the Qualitative Research I used. Through the data collected from the written survey, personal interviews and the efforts of a working group inside the area, I identified the barriers hindering BMBs from meeting together for worship and discipleship. From the data collected, I extracted the suggested remedies to overcome those barriers. In the following chapter, I present the outcomes of my research, their interpretation and the action plans taken to help BMBs in High-Security countries to come together into the fellowship of the body of Christ to worship and to be discipled.

## **CHAPTER FIVE:**

### **OUTCOMES AND INTERPRETATION**

This chapter presents and evaluates the outcome of this study as a whole. The goal for this research is to identify and address barriers facing the BMBs living in the AP and hinder them from committing to discipleship group gatherings. The challenge for PALM is a lack of participants in discipleship groups to study the curriculum. While curriculum and trainers/disciplers are available through our workers in the area, participant disciples are few. Therefore, barriers to participation in discipleship groups for discipleship need to be identified.

This chapter includes findings related to the survey and the interviews in two languages, English and Arabic, as well as the results and evaluation of the pilot project that was developed. The project first identified barriers to participation in discipleship groups, then developed and implemented strategies to address those barriers. Through the facilitator survey (Appendix 4, Questions 11, 12), current PALM curriculum in the AP was evaluated. Finally, this study evaluated short-term perceptions of the strategy's effectiveness. Sections of this chapter will include the steps toward identifying the barriers from the data

collected. After extracting the outcome from the data, an interpretation for the outcome is presented. The two main themes that emerged from the codes, external and internal barriers, are presented with their successive variations in following discourse.

Under the heading, “Process of Identifying the Barriers Facing BMBs”, mentioned below, the core of the pilot project executed by the working group is presented. Data suggested a few barriers and suggested four fundamental principles that comprise the core of the project. Those principles are: Spiritual Maturity, Improvement of Discipleship Groups Dynamics, Sharing Responsibilities, and Socializing to Build up Trust. The pilot project suggested overcoming the top identified barriers of fear, lack of trust and lack of opportunities to fellowship with other Christians through working to grow the spiritual maturity. The chapter ends with a presentation of the execution of the first cycle of the pilot project and its evaluation.

### **Field and Respondents Demographics**

Respondents included two types of people: BMBs who gather together as disciples in home fellowship meetings (disciples) and leaders who facilitate those gatherings (facilitators). In my research, I followed the data collection circle suggested by Creswell (2013, 146). I engaged in a series of activities in order to collect data, record information, resolve field issues, and store data. I chose the AP as the site of my research then targeted individuals accordingly. I chose those

individuals based on their involvement in discipleship groups in the AP in order to collect relevant data to my project.

My data collection approach was based on a phenomenological study (Creswell 2013, 114). The phenomenological study approach involves collecting data from multiple individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. In this research, the phenomenon is the lack of commitment to participate in discipleship groups. As mentioned above, the two parties of those individuals who have experienced the phenomenon are BMB disciples on one hand, and discipleship group facilitators on the other hand; both are referred to as “respondents” who responded to the survey or shared in the interviews.

To collect the needed data, I conducted a written survey, followed by individual interviews in order to identify the barriers. I used the collected data to design a pilot project to overcome those identified barriers. To obtain an overall feeling for the results collected from the written survey and the individual interviews, I reviewed the data four times. Then, I identified, highlighted and coded significant phrases that related to barriers to discipleship groups. The codes used in this project are descriptive codes (Creswell 2013, 185). From these descriptive codes, a number of themes emerged, reflecting the respondents’ input. I incorporated the data together and identified the main barriers and shared the findings with the working group. I analyzed the findings using a qualitative data analysis software tool, and created a pilot project to overcome the identified

barriers. Evaluation of the pilot project took place after three months of application, with relatively satisfying results.

Because this research is related to the AP context, a demographic question was included in the survey to better understand the demographics involved and to identify cultural issues related to women and gender mix, shame and honour, orality learning preference, faith background, and age groups, all of which were points of interest to me.

The fifty-two disciples and facilitators that responded to the written survey and participated in the interview represented five of the seven countries in the AP area. The disciples that participated in the written survey accounted for 44% of the total respondents, while facilitators represented the rest (56%). All the facilitators were either directly or indirectly involved in discipleship to BMBs in the AP area. While 66% of disciples that participated in the written format identified as AP nationals living within the AP area at the time, the remaining 34% did not specify their residency. All of the interviewed disciples were nationals living in the AP area at the time. I met with them face-to-face individually to record their interviews. Of the respondents to the written survey who identified themselves as female, we find two facilitator females out of a total of fourteen facilitator respondents with their gender identification representing 14%, and two female BMBs disciples out of a total of twelve BMBs respondents with their gender identification representing 17%. This is significant to reflect the cultural issue of gender mix and the importance of having female facilitators to

disciple the female BMBs (Table 1). Data showed that there were fourteen female respondents representing 25% of the total of fifty-seven respondents who mentioned their gender. The highest percentage was among the working group and represented 62%, which reflects a meaningful percentage if we look at it through the Islamic cultural lens that I present in the next chapter under Women and Gender Mix (Table 1).

**Table 1: Total Respondents by Gender**

<b>TOTAL RESPONDENTS BY GENDER</b>								
<b>TASK</b>	Facilitator Survey		Disciple Survey		Known Gender Total		Unknown Gender Total	Grand Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F		
	<b>Questionnaire</b>	12	2	10	2	22	4	
<b>Personal Interview</b>	13	2	3	0	16	2	0	18
<b>Working Group</b>	1	1	4	7	5	8	0	13
<b>Total</b>	26	5	17	9	43	14	8	65

The facilitators' responses represent 21% national and 79% expats. Both facilitators and disciples who responded to the survey represent different age groups (Table 2). Of the facilitators' ages, 50% lie in the range of 41 to 50 years, followed by 36% that range from 51 to 60 years old. Both groups of 18 to 20 and 31 to 40 represent 7% each. This statistic means that, on average, 86% of facilitators are in their forties and fifties, which is significant in the AP culture where adults and the elderly are viewed as key influencers in the successful discipleship of the younger generation. Table 2 reflects the trend that disciples

number higher in the younger age groups than in the older age groups, with one exception (Table 2).

**Table 2: Written Survey of Respondents' Age Groups**

<b>RESPONDENTS' AGE GROUPS</b>			
<b>Age Groups</b>	<b>Facilitator</b>	<b>Disciples</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>18-20</b>	1	1	2
<b>21-30</b>	0	4	4
<b>31-40</b>	1	1	2
<b>41-50</b>	7	3	10
<b>51-60</b>	5	1	6
<b>60+</b>	0	1	1
<b>Unknown</b>	5	4	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	19	15	34

A similar observation is noticed among disciples. The majority of the disciples who answered the age group question are in their twenties and forties (i.e., ten years younger than facilitators) and account for 64% of the total. The average age of the disciples represents 41 years while the average age of the facilitators is 51 years. Again, this age gap is significant as it fits with the local culture that honours the elderly and where younger people respect and follow the instruction of their seniors. The contextual approach for young people is more fruitful when they look to older leaders for mentorship and discipleship due to cultural commonality. The end result will be revealed in their spiritual growth.

### **Accomplishing the Purpose**

In order to execute my research, during the period from August 2013 to July 2014, I visited the AP area six times to meet with the existing discipleship groups to determine if they continue to meet in discipleship groups, and to interact with national believers and workers for pastoral care. Fourteen cities in six AP countries were visited; some of them were visited twice. Those visits helped me to apply the methodology intended for this Qualitative Research using survey methods and interview approaches. During the same period of time, I also participated in regional and international gatherings where I connected with other like-minded co-workers (in Hong Kong, China; Malta; Uckfield and Worthing, England; Marseille, France; Amman, Jordan; Chiang Mai, Thailand; Beirut, Lebanon; and Houston, Texas). Such gatherings included leadership training conferences, International Orality Network consultations, ministry forums among Muslims of North Africa, Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula, and strategic planning meetings for discipleship in the AP area. All of the above mentioned gatherings contributed to my research. Such meetings helped me to combine training, observations, interviews and strategic planning for my project. I completed this research as I pursued the following steps shown in (Table 3) below.

**Table 3: Project Tasks with Completion Dates**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>
<b>Written Surveys</b>	34	August 7, 2013	January 2, 2014
<b>Personal Interviews</b>	18	February, 2014	June, 2014
<b>Survey and Interview Analysis</b>	Researcher	January 2014	June, 2014
<b>Working Group Conference</b>	13	June 7, 2014	June 14, 2014
<b>Pilot Project</b>	Working Group	July 1, 2014	Sept. 30, 2014
<b>Evaluation Survey</b>	Researcher	October 1, 2014	November 15, 2014

Via the Internet, I distributed two surveys to my targeted audiences, one for the disciples and the other for the facilitators. The disciple survey was created in two languages: English and Arabic. Both surveys contain fourteen questions each (see copies attached in Appendix 4). The facilitator survey was typical to the disciple one with an addition of two questions to evaluate PALM strength and weakness.

The English survey opened on August 7, 2013, and closed on November 30, 2013, using the Survey Monkey tool. Due to strict security precautions, the Arabic translation was circulated later on November 6, 2013, and five disciple responses in Arabic were transmitted through secure e-mail on January 2, 2014. Later, another Arabic response came from one disciple living in High Security Country #5, to make the total number of Arabic disciples responding to the Arabic survey six respondents. I do not have an accurate number of the distributed survey

as it was cascaded through secure networking. The total number of responses received was thirty-four in written format (see Table 4 below).

**Table 4: Responses Received**

<b>Respondents</b>				
<b>TASK</b>	Facilitator	Disciple		Total
	English	English	Arabic	
<b>Written Survey</b>	19	9	6	34
<b>Personal Interview</b>	15	0	3	18
<b>Working Group</b>	0	0	13	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	34	9	22	65

I analyzed all the responses using the Provalis Software research tool. It is software for qualitative data analysis with a commercial brand name called QDA Miner Lite v1.3. Descriptive codes were generated from the data and themes emerged as a result of clustering such codes into groups (Appendix 6).

From February 2014, through to June 2014, I selected and approached eighteen people for personal interviews. None declined. They are key leaders of churches and training programmes and a cross-section of church members and students who had experienced the identified barriers. Fifteen of those interviews were in English and three were in Arabic.

As the AP is embedded in an oral culture that values shame and honour, I decided to explore more about oral discipleship within such a context. I attended two mini-global consultations with the International Orality Network (ION). ION's slogan as seen on their official website (<http://www.oralicity.net/>) is "To influence the body of Christ to make disciples of all oral learners." The mandate of the first gathering in Hong Kong in early 2013 was to discuss formal and non-formal theological education and discipleship in an oral format. The second

gathering that took place in Houston, Texas, in June 2014 was to highlight the shame and honour context of the AP area and the effectiveness of discipleship and theological education in such a context. The knowledge gained from these two events contributed to my project in two different aspects: first, I learned about the informal theological education provided to the local believers in an oral format; second, I saw BMB gatherings from the lens of the shame and honour culture of the AP area and the challenges that come with such a culture, as discussed earlier in Chapters Two and Three.

In June, I launched the Pilot Project with a working group that consisted of thirteen disciples; ten believers from Muslim backgrounds (BMBs) and three believers from Christian backgrounds (BCBs). We started with a three-day indoor conference, followed by three months of execution and piloting. The new pilot project was implemented in a smaller geographic area where the working group could meet together on a weekly basis. In October 2014, an evaluation survey was distributed to measure the project's effectiveness. Responses to the evaluation survey came back in written and oral formats with positive feedback.

### **Diagnostic Steps**

Data revealed that there are barriers facing the discipleship groups in the AP. Through this research, 84% of the 19 participating facilitators who shared in the written English survey declared their awareness of barriers acting against the BMBs in the AP, hindering them from gathering together to participate in a contextual discipleship process. Using descriptive coding, some of the barriers

were identified and classified under two main thematic categories: external and internal. The identified external barriers include: cultural barriers, lack of opportunity to fellowship with other believers, unqualified leaders/teachers, Islamic culture embedded in community, and absence of leadership. The identified internal barriers include: fear, lack of trust, lack of spiritual maturity, lack of time and vision, Islamic culture embedded in characteristics, and oral learning preference. These barriers are defined in detail in later sections.

Data provided clear direction on how to overcome the barriers impeding BMBs from meeting together for fellowship, worship and studying the Bible. Data suggested that lack of opportunity for such meetings results in poor spiritual maturity leading to deficiencies in Christian leadership among national believers. The pilot project aimed to eliminate those barriers to participation in contextualized discipleship groups.

Table 5 summarizes the data categories and coding system and presents a summary of the data analysis.

**Table 5: Data Categories and Coding**

<b>Data Categories and Descriptive Codes</b>		
<b>EXTERNAL BARRIERS</b>	<b>INTERNAL BARRIERS</b>	<b>RECOMMENDED REMEDIES</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. AP Culture               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Social Values                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Shame &amp; Honour, Family &amp; Community Values, Women &amp; Gender Mix, and Age Gaps &amp; Generational Boundaries.</li> </ul> </li> <li>B. Religious Conformity                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Islamic culture embedded in community</li> </ul> </li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Lack of opportunities to fellowship with other believers.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Lack of Known Believers Nearby</li> <li>B. Leadership Challenges                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Unqualified leaders/teachers</li> <li>•Absence of leadership</li> </ul> </li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fear               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Security Fear</li> <li>B. Family Fear</li> <li>C. Ethical Fear</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Lack of Trust</li> <li>3. Lack of Spiritual Maturity               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Personality &amp; Character                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Islamic culture embedded in character</li> </ul> </li> <li>B. Lack of time</li> <li>C. Lack of Vision</li> <li>D. Oral Learning preference</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Spiritual Maturity</li> <li>2. Improvement of Discipleship Groups Dynamics</li> <li>3. Sharing Responsibilities</li> <li>4. Socializing to Build up Trust</li> </ol>

In order to identify the core phenomenon and related categories, second cycle coding took place through examining the features and dimensions of the above mentioned codes. In this cycle, relative codes were grouped and categories were narrowed down and identified by axial coding (Table 6).

**Table 6: Barriers Identified by Axial Coding**

Category	Code
External Barriers	AP Culture
	Lack of Fellowship
Internal Barriers	Fear
	Lack of Trust
	Lack of Spiritual Maturity

The core phenomenon themes were derived from the data summary shown in Table 5. It is clear from the data that BMBs are faced with two streams of barriers that work together to hinder them from participating regularly in discipleship groups. One category fights from within and the other attacks from without. The tables in Appendix 5 give an overview of an example to responses according to category and coding with their relevant texts. Community challenges (external) as well as personal challenges (internal) were identified and became the framework to explore and describe the driving forces behind the barriers facing BMBs living in the AP. In the same manner, concepts and categories of remedies, suggested by the respondents, were extracted from the data collected. The suggested remedies acted as the foundation of the pilot project to overcome the negative forces of the barriers.

While the community challenges facing BMBs from outside are largely beyond their control, it is still possible for them to work on their own personal challenges that fight from within. This is the main concept on which the pilot project is based. The focus of the remedies suggests dealing with the BMBs' personal fear, lack of trust and lack of spiritual maturity while encouraging them to cultivate Christian fellowship with fellow BMBs. The detailed pilot project is explained later in this chapter.

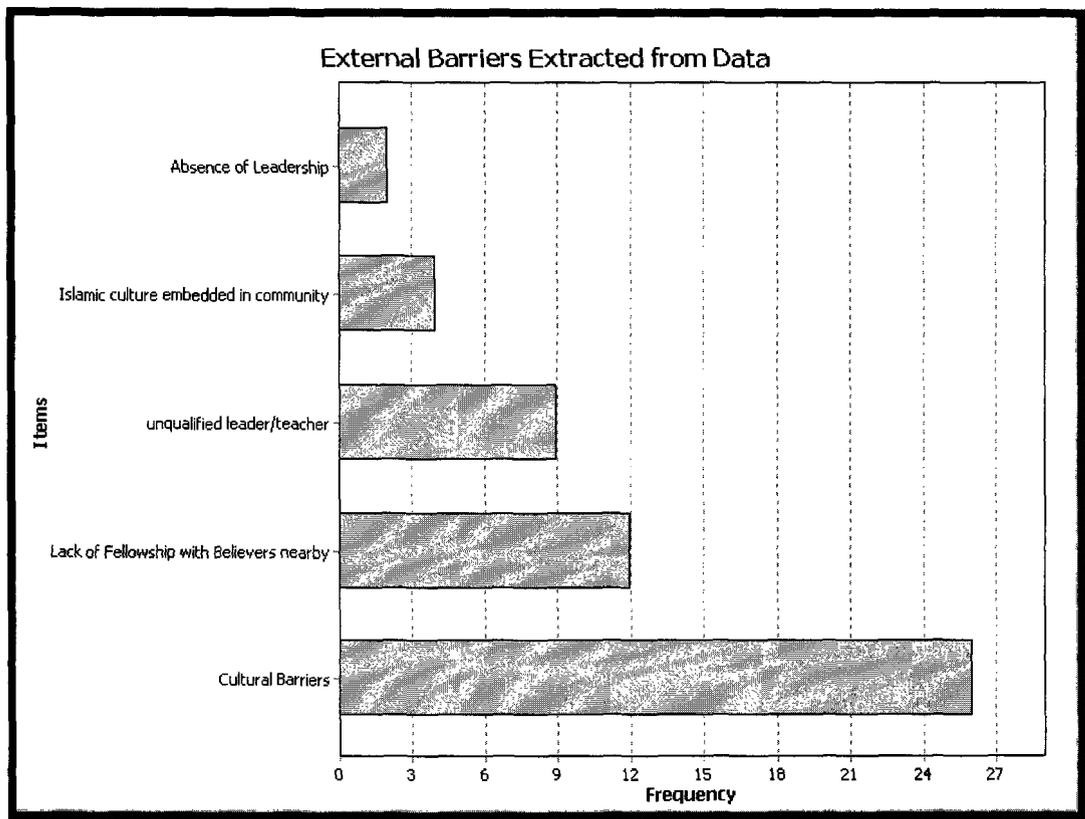
In the following section, before presenting the entire list of first cycle coding, an example of a descriptive code that was generated from the data is provided.

Example of Code Description: (Islamic Culture  
Affecting the BMBs Character)

This section presents an example of the code description that portrays “Islamic Culture” as it relates to the individual BMB and shows how all data were processed. This code of “Islamic culture embedded in character” was created as a result of clustering expressions from the data about the local BMBs such as “They continue in the Islamic mindset”; “In his previous background”; “participate in religious duties”; and “hearing messages but not changing as a person.” These statements framed certain means of describing the former religious culture of the BMBs and suggest that, despite their faith in Christ, BMBs in the AP area remain influenced by their Islamic mindset. They look to their new faith through their old lens of Islam. One example of the old mindset is the restriction of the study of sacred texts to church leaders only. Another example suggested by the data was the act of hearing and memorizing without understanding, and refraining from asking questions lest they are seen as an infidel. Because of this conditioning, new converts generally prefer to avoid arguments and follow rituals in full obedience. Data revealed that this mindset is very challenging for BMBs and results in personal discouragement from gathering in a discipleship group and seeking discipleship.

The above section outlined the procedure for developing the codes. All other codes that follow have been developed following the same steps. QDA software was of great help in this regard. The data was reviewed four times, sentence by sentence, looking for emerging codes. I treated the more frequently mentioned codes as more significant because those codes represented the wider point of view of the respondents, as they share the same concerns. Those codes represent the pressing barriers with which most of the respondents could identify. Different highlights were then assigned to each sentence to identify units of meaning. The next step was to sort those units of meanings into groups where categories and subcategories started to emerge. Related codes were identified, linked and then clustered, and were segregated under two main emerged themes: internal and external barriers.

Figure 2 shows the codes and ideas contained in the data as they relate to the category of External Barriers. External cultural barriers affecting the post-conversion mindset of believers include such issues as the role of women, family and tribal issues, prioritizing society before God, social pressure due to shame and honour issues, old formation habits from their past worldview, and an interest in Westerners for material gain and other benefits. Respondents emphasize the impact of cultural issues, including Islamic culture, on gatherings for discipleship. Verbal descriptions during the interviews—including phrases like “it is shameful,” “we grew up in this culture,” “Muslim leaders taught us,” and “women are forbidden” (Interview notes)—confirm this point.



**Figure 2: External barriers show cultural barriers dominating compared to the rest**

Figure 2 indicates that cultural barriers are the most dominant of the external barriers as compared with the rest, and further intensified by the combining of the other descriptive code of Islamic culture. Unqualified leaders and the lack of opportunity to fellowship with other believers further add to BMBs' difficulties to meet in the context of discipleship.

In the ongoing process of data analysis, connections were made between and within category variations, where different codes were amalgamated and a single category emerged. Descriptive and then Axial Codes were chosen to

ascribe to the categories as shown in Figure 2 and Table 6. Topics of relevance were found in different parts of the data collected. Sets of data and distinctions were made between relevant data fragments in order to incorporate diverse data into an emerging analysis (Stringer 2007, 106-107). The categories of “Cultural Barriers” and “Islamic Culture” indicate how negatively those barriers affect the process of discipleship as the embedded culture discourages BMBs from committing to regularly attend fellowship meetings in homes wherever possible. This happens either due to the shame and honour aspect or out of fear.

### **Evaluating PALM Curriculum**

One of the goals of this research was to determine the effectiveness of PALM’s program in discipling the BMBs in the AP to ensure that the program itself does not act as a barrier to the discipleship process. While examining the effectiveness of PALM courses in the AP setting to determine if the courses’ content and curricula act as barriers to discipleship, I referred earlier in Chapter Three to the same courses and curricula used in the North Africa (NA) setting as a precedent case. Earlier, I also discussed the challenges facing PALM discipleship groups as precedent cases that deal with non-curricula issues modeled in NA.

In the following section, an evaluation of PALM is presented with analysis of the data collected to critique its curriculum and delivery method. Data was collected from the facilitators through the written survey. In order to critique the PALM curriculum, the written survey—which was used to collect data—included an evaluation. Two direct questions, geared to those who had used the curriculum

in the AP, sought to assess the curriculum's strengths and weaknesses. (Appendix 4, Questions 11, 12). Data revealed the critical analysis to Progressing Together Level 1 (PT L1) with its strengths and weaknesses. Based on such results, and in spite of fewer critiques for its weaknesses, the PT L1 is well received as a contextual discipleship program that fits the style of discipleship groups across the AP. The purpose of such evaluation was to determine if the PALM curriculum acts as a barrier. In other words, I wanted to determine whether the content of the curriculum was one of the factors discouraging BMBs from participating in discipleship groups.

Data revealed that critical evaluation of the PALM discipleship program PT L1 in the AP helped to identify better recommendations and solutions for building national leaders through theological training, with the goal to encourage the growth of healthy churches in the midst of a pervasive Muslim context.

### PALM Strengths

Survey respondents and interviewees agreed on the strengths of the PALM program. Responses that suggest the contextual benefits and strengths of the PALM program were grouped together. They include: "It is helpful in a practical way," "It asks questions that help us to apply God's Word to our lives and to our group in a practical way," "very thorough in its involvement in (and training in) inductive Bible study designed partially by BMBs, to address issues urgent to BMBs," "very thorough in covering issues (e.g., reconciliation, spiritual warfare, ethics) that are big to BMBs," "it thoroughly exposes BMB to corrective teaching

of Scripture,” and, “Made with input from BMBs” (Survey notes). Those polled contended that the program was helpful in a practical way by posing the types of questions that help believers apply God’s Word in their lives and providing inductive Bible study and solid corrective teaching of scripture. As a result of partial BMB involvement in its design, the program addressed urgent issues germane to this population including reconciliation, spiritual warfare and ethics.

Respondents also commended the PALM field structure of inductive Bible study groups that meet in homes and use PALM study materials such as the “Persecution Course” (Appendix 2). Those statements include: “It has a great structure, clear questions and practical application that is very helpful,” “there is a wide range of topics covered” and “content is good already.” Other phrases suggested that the PALM format and accessibility are invaluable. Respondents write: “The materials are accessible online,” “I think it has proved valuable in the experience of the group we are working with,” “PALM stands out among many other possible ways, materials, etc.,” “Its format (e.g., inductive Bible study) is an accessible [*sic*] to involve all the group members,” and “Program is well thought through and having objectives” (Survey notes).

More responses reflected an appreciation for the curriculum such as: “comprehensive,” “covering ‘all’ of the very important foundations: theology and [spiritual] discipline[s]; addresses critical life areas of relationships, persecution, forgiveness/reconciliation, spiritual warfare, in addition to the more standard ‘basics’ prepared for use with former Muslims,” “so far, I have found the

questions clear and possible to get the answer from the text,” “Answer guide available,” “available in English and Arabic (and other languages), a help to expat teachers in ‘pdf’ format to print as needed on a personal printer,” “tried and tested in NA,” and “its format inductive [*sic*] is great—sometimes may seem too intellectual” (Survey notes).

### PALM Weaknesses

The purpose of defining PALM weaknesses was to identify if PALM itself acts as a barrier to discipleship or not. While a few weaknesses were mentioned, none of the respondents indicated that PALM itself was a barrier or that it led to barriers to the BMBs’ gatherings in discipleship groups in the AP context. Any weaknesses in the PALM program were related to developing the program to specifically meet the need within the AP for a contextualized curriculum.

Responses that reflect criticism include: “Un-textualized Program,” “Programs and courses given are not based on the needs,” “More single book studies. Fewer topical studies,” “we find the lessons have too many questions, so after an hour of study, some people have lost concentration, and it is difficult to finish in one session,” “the material should be reduced or split up into more lessons” (Interview notes).

Other feedback suggests a few additions or modifications to the program including supplementary courses related to Genesis 1-3 to address the distinction between the Islamic Allah and the Biblical God, social relationships, the sin issue, etc. (Survey notes). Also, feedback concerning the course structure addressed the

length of the individual lessons and the need for a revised version. Phrases like the following encourage considering such development: “we found the individual lessons too long to cover in one study, so it became a little bit disjointed when having to do half a lesson at a time,” “there is little on the ground structure here,” “Needs education and special knowledge compared to having ‘just’ the Bible,” “Seems to require a high level of literacy and analytical ability,” “presented for groups of believers...I am aware of only few who are using other ways to learn. Some lead by themselves where foreign intervention and materials are not asked for” and “Some of my ministry is with those in remote locations. It would be helpful if they were in a format where one could write answers in the blanks to send to teacher” (Interview notes).

The above evaluation of the PALM program revealed that its strengths surpass its weaknesses, thus the quality of the curriculum does not act as a barrier to BMBs who attend discipleship groups, nor does it create barriers to the discipleship groups. This means that there are other factors that act as barriers but not the PALM curriculum.

### **The Core Category of External Barriers and its Other Variations**

The core category of External Barriers represents those factors that pose challenges and obstructions to BMBs. The analyzed data revealed five main subcategories under the theme of External Barriers, namely: cultural barriers, lack of opportunity to fellowship with other believers, unqualified leader/teacher, Islamic culture embedded into the surrounding community, and absence of

leadership. In the second cycle of coding, External Barriers were regrouped and narrowed down from five identified barriers to two leading subcategories: AP Cultural Barriers and Lack of Fellowship (Table 7). In order to maximize the benefits from the detailed info collected from the original data, my interpretation will expand to all codes originally identified, leaving the narrowed down subcategories to be addressed when discussing the pilot project later in this chapter.

Table 7 below shows the different codes in the External Barriers category. In eighteen audio interviews, the coding frequency was twenty-six counts for cultural barriers, twelve for lack of opportunity to fellowship with other believers, nine for unqualified leader/teacher, four for Islamic culture embedded in community and two for absence of leadership.

**Table 7: External Barriers Coding Frequency**

Category	Sub-Category	Code	Count	Frequency %	Cases	
External Barriers	AP Culture	Social: Cultural Barriers	26	49.1%	7	
		Religious: Islamic culture embedded in community	4	7.5%	2	
	Lack of Fellowship	Lack of known believers nearby	12	22.6%	5	
		Leadership Challenges	Unqualified leader/teacher	9	17%	3
			Absence of leadership	2	3.8%	2

Table 7 shows the coding frequency in percentages to point out the external barriers and their variations. In the interviews, the respondents referred to

the cultural barriers that represented almost half (49.1%) of the identified external barriers. In the following section, the findings from such data are reported with a focus on groupings, similarities and differences, patterns and items of particular significance (Bell 2010, 211), then presented under the subcategories of the external barriers summarized above in Table 7.

#### AP Culture Acts against the BMBs

The AP culture is a tribal one that historically values a restricted and fundamental worldview. Interviewees pointed to this factor as one of the barriers hindering the discipleship process among BMBs. Data revealed that the local culture of the AP works from two fronts, social and religious, to apply pressure on BMBs, hindering them from gathering in groups.

#### **Social Values Produce Cultural Barriers**

Based on both the precedent cases mentioned above and the collected data, it is suggested that local social values such as “Shame and Honour,” “Family and Community Values,” “Women and Gender Mix,” and “Age Gap and Generational Boundaries.” work independently or together to produce the cultural barriers discussed below in detail.

#### Shame and Honour Act against the BMBs

In providing their input concerning the problem of discipleship among BMBs and the difficulties they face in regularly attending discipleship groups, interviewees referred to the shame and honour worldview of residents in the AP,

which extends to the entire Arab world. For instance, one respondent shared the example of a woman whose family continued to support her after her conversion, but pleaded with her to never reveal her conversion to others, as this would bring shame and dishonour upon them. When her uncle discovered she was a Christian, her father asked her to renounce her faith. Her refusal to do so led him to disown her (Interview notes).

Another aspect of shame and honour in the AP context involves generations of a tribal system that is deeply rooted in shame and honour among family members and their relationship with their clan and tribe. A respondent comments; “The saying is ‘me against my brother’, ‘me and my brother against my cousin’, ‘me and my cousin against the clansman’, ‘me and my clansman against the outsider’. That’s part of it; it’s very much a shame and honour culture where truth is sometimes hidden behind that barrier” (Interview notes).

A third dimension extends to the honour of belonging to the religion of the government and the national identity. It is shameful if one is seen to publicly denounce the nation’s beliefs. One respondent reflects, “There is...a strong sense of national identity and...to be of this nation is to be of this religion. While [government] would pride themselves on freedom of religion, certainly that’s not understood to be freedom to change one’s [religion]” (Interview notes).

The fourth facet of shame and honour could be seen in a fear of rejection by society, which leads to hypocrisy. Concerning community action against the new believer, a respondent commented that all his fellow believers had

experienced some form of persecution by family members. They are allowed to follow their new faith only on the condition that they do so in secret, lest they bring shame and dishonour upon their family. This makes it very difficult for them to openly share their faith with people they know (Interview notes).

A fifth aspect of shame and honour is identity and acceptance. In an interview, a female BMB shared about her identity struggle between her past belonging and present belonging. In answering the question about the identity struggle and its relationship to shame and honour, she says, “Yes, we look for acceptance. Everyone looks, wants to be accepted right? So if we are not being accepted by our community or past community, Islam, and we are accepted by our current community, which is the church, Christianity, so here we are creating a battle” (Interview notes).

From the data and quotations listed above, one can recognize the shame and honour aspects as a challenging culture. Shame and dishonour act as a stumbling block for BMBs in the AP culture and as a relational force that reflects the views of the larger community, where any individual or family who trespasses such cultural boundaries is treated with disdain. The opposition may not stop there, however. BMBs can face serious risk if they become known to the public as ex-Muslims who have renounced their Islamic faith. The honour of the religion must be redeemed through public actions against BMBs.

All the above aspects of shame and honour are interwoven with other cultural values, upon which they bear influence directly and indirectly as

concluded from these quotes: “Family and Community Values,” “Women and Gender Mix,” and “Age and Generational Boundaries.” In the context of BMBs in the AP, shameful conduct is to be avoided, as society watches out for such behaviour. Communities have their own rules of accepted behaviour, and those who deviate from those rules can expect judgment and condemnation by society. BMBs are extra cautious to avoid crossing these boundaries lest they be looked down upon and potentially become subject to rejection, excommunication and in some cases honour killing, regardless of their gender.

#### Family and Community Values Challenge BMBs

This value, closely related to the previous one, was confirmed by a few interviewees, one of whom says,

...families are the primary social interaction outside the workplace. When there's a wedding, it's usually a family member. When there's a funeral, it's a family member...a holiday, you visit your family...so I think that [BMBs] feel that if they are ostracized from their families that's who they interact with primarily so I think it's really a fear of what happens if they shun us. Will there be anybody that we can talk to other than a couple of other followers that [we] know? (Interview notes).

Family in this culture starts with parents and siblings and then extends to spouse and children. In instances where only one spouse is a believer, data collected suggests that he or she often finds it difficult to confess his or her faith for fear of unpredictable reactions and repercussions. It is often difficult to encourage the believing spouse to demonstrate God's love and grace to an unbelieving spouse who may challenge or persecute them. As one interviewee says,

One of the challenges for the worker or the person sharing is to encourage them to talk to their family even when they are investigating (in seeking phase) so that their family can become part of the journey with them. So I think that's one of the challenges is the corporate dimension. And recognize that discipleship is happening in groups. And our life as a disciple has to somehow be visible to the people who we live [with] and around. (Interview notes)

Community and family values are sometimes not given due consideration by some workers. Another interviewee shed some light on this challenge from his experience in one of the High-Security countries, saying that biblical discipleship is a communal process involving teaching and modeling. Discipleship occurs in a community context as it did in the early church, when disciples worked in teams. The challenge for workers is that often people do not want their families to know they are investigating the Christian faith. But the longer they wait to inform their family, the harder it becomes, and the more the family is likely to perceive their conversion as an offense, as one interviewee highlighted in reference to workers who advise seekers to refrain from informing their families until they fully convert.

When the value of community in the AP is explored, the identity issue that was mentioned earlier under shame and honour is raised. An interview with a female BMB revealed that, in a family-oriented culture, a person is not alone; he or she is part of the collective community. When asked if the identity struggle is related to the community or if it is an internal and personal challenge, she answered,

Definitely it has to do with their ‘community’...you know we are living in a family-oriented culture. We care about what others would say about us. So we are not living alone. We live in groups. And we look after our reputation and place in society. So it has so much to do with the community, with how the community would look at us from the outside. (Interview notes)

From the above findings, it is evident that BMBs struggle with declaring their faith publicly and participating in discipleship groups because of how their community will perceive them.

#### Women and Gender Mix Demand Shift in BMBs’ Worldview

The AP culture is a conservative one in which women are seen as second-class citizens (Sultan 2011, 14). The teaching of the Qur’an has found rich soil in this culture (Qur’an 2:228; 4:34, 129). It is common to see women’s heads and faces covered either entirely (niqab) or partially (hijab). In countries such as Yemen and Saudi Arabia, women are not allowed to drive. Women usually need to obtain permission from their husbands to visit other people.

Women are in bondage in Islam, the Prophet was abusive to women and the Qur’an contains very offensive material about women. Many non-Muslims believe that Islamic law views women as second-class citizens and that women are subject to abuse in most Muslim countries of the world. (Beverley and Evans 2015, location 3136)

Women might struggle as they have to live multiple lives due to this cultural barrier. As the following quote, among other data from this research, indicates,

*Specifically the ladies [face identity conflicts], not the men, but the ladies as they’re living not a double life but a triple life in the sense that they’ve got to be. They’ve got life one, how they are supposed to act; the second*

one is when they are just with family; how they want to act (at home). And the third one is how they want to act as believers. (Survey notes)

Comments referring to the inability of women to have freedom of movement were prevalent among the written survey responses and in the interviews. The following phrases were selected to confirm this point: “Ladies who do not have transportation,” “So barriers for ladies is transportation,” “Ladies who are not allowed to meet persons outside their family,” “He (older believer) doesn’t care that women will be saved,” “For ladies as well to come to another house they really need to get permission from their fathers.” Respondents and interviewees identified these barriers, concurring with the literature that a Muslim woman does not usually have the right to make choices about her life (Sultan 2011, 14). Sultan exposed the way men treat their women by saying, “Fear, of course, extends in the Muslim world to the way men treat their women. It is, in many ways, the vilest and most hateful treatment the Muslim world visits on others” (Sultan 2011, 71).

When we speak about women in the AP, matters become complicated by other cultural elements. One interviewee explained that tribal values determine whom you can and cannot meet with, for women as well as men (Interview notes). Another interviewee shared a story about a successful initiative that was forced to wind up because of the views of women interacting with men in this conservative culture. One young Christian, under thirty years of age, was pressured to close down an online ministry geared to meet the spiritual needs of

men and women because of allegations that he had a personal interest in the women (Interview notes).

While this project deals with barriers facing BMBs in the AP in general, this section highlights the greater challenges encountered by female BMBs, whose struggle is double portion due to their restricted freedom and limited public interaction.

#### Age Gap and Generational Boundaries Discourage the Continuity of Discipleship Groups

In the AP culture, age is regarded respectfully. Children respect and fear their parents; young people respect and look up to the elderly. But for BMBs, this results in an age barrier: older persons are not seen as peers to grow and learn with, only as figures of authority. Respondents reflected that due to a low number of believers, it is difficult to find homogenous groups within the same age cohort. My own observations confirm what the data reveals, i.e. that where BMBs are able to gather, this often results in a wide range of ages meeting together. It is not uncommon to see young adults in their early 20s meeting with men in their late 50s as ladies supervise little children playing nearby. A generational gap within the same discipleship group discourages the continuity of open discussion and interaction due to the age boundaries that work as a barrier against continual participation and attendance. It is notable, though, that the respondents who participated in the demographics survey represented a healthy balance between disciples and facilitators, with a contextually acceptable age gap.

### **Religious Conformity Produces Opposing Community: Islamic Culture Embedded in Community**

Data suggested that the behaviour of people in the AP communities is influenced by Islamic culture and teachings. For BMBs, pre-conversion religious conformity acts as the second front of the AP culture that hinders them from consistently attending a discipleship group. Data also suggested that one aspect of such behaviour involves cultural norms surrounding interaction with spiritual leaders and discussion of spiritual affairs. Another aspect is how to deal with people either coming from different ethnic or tribal backgrounds, different doctrinal beliefs, or even different genders. Data revealed that the Islamic culture that influences the community is to be blamed for the outcomes shown below.

First, interaction with spiritual leaders and questioning teachings is discouraged by the culture. Respondents reflected on this with phrases like: “Some believers do not see the need to gather regularly in a group,” “they continue in the Islamic mindset of hearing messages but not in changing as a person or influencing others for God’s kingdom,” “in his previous background, he is not encouraged to ask questions,” “asking some kinds of questions is considered heresy” (Survey notes).

Second, another Islamic influence embedded in the community is the view of different denominational sects within Islam. Interviewees highlighted the difficulties they saw in a relationship between two BMBs: one from a Sunni background and the other from a Shi’a background (Interview notes). Another

aspect is the view concerning the gender within the community and within the body of believers. Interview and survey responses indicated that BMBs find it difficult to break free from these ingrained Islamic views.

When the barriers hindering BMBs in the AP from assembling together for worship and fellowship are examined through the cultural lens, one can recognize their severity. Cultural barriers are rooted in the inner being of BMBs, in their families and in their societies, but when interwoven with the religion of the majority of the people and in the official stance of their own countries, BMBs face heightened opposition. Thus, they are forced to seek fellowship outside of their own community with likeminded BMBs. And this is another barrier that they face.

In the above section, I covered the first identified major external barrier, the AP Culture, and discussed its variances. In the following section, the second major external barrier of lack of fellowship with other believers is presented.

#### Lack of Fellowship

The essence of discipleship is modeled in the early church, where believers met regularly to study, pray, break bread and for fellowship (Acts 2:42). Following the steps of the early church in meeting regularly face-to-face has proven to be a helpful practice for all believers, as meeting face-to-face enables them to experience fellowship with their full being: spiritually, emotionally, intellectually and physically. As identified by the collected data, one of the challenges that BMBs in the AP face is the lack of opportunities to meet face-to-

face with other believers. Survey respondents and interviewees spoke of isolation, few known believers in their community, long travel times required to meet other believers in person and the preference for online modes of communication. This suggests that a lack of nearby opportunities to fellowship pushes BMBs to seek for alternative means of fellowship and discipleship. In my experience, Christian media including radio, TV, Internet, and others compensates to some degree for this much-needed fellowship (Research observation notes).

Interview data showed that one of the challenges in the AP is the geographical scattering of existing believers, which render meeting on a regular basis difficult—if not impossible—especially for women BMBs. While it may be true that some believers prefer not to have fellowship with others for various reasons, it is evident from the research that many BMBs feel lonely and disconnected. In their responses, facilitators who are engaged with more than one BMB confirmed my own observation that many are unaware of the existence of other believers in their immediate area and lack fellowship because they believe themselves to be the only believers in their neighborhoods. When they seek permission from one BMB to share his/her contact info with another BMB for the purpose of connecting the two, in most cases they are denied such consent. We who are engaged in ministry among the BMBs in the AP realize that the main reason behind such a response is either fear or lack of trust.

Since this lack of opportunity to fellowship with other believers works against the biblical principle of fellowship within the church, BMBs are

encouraged to make an effort to meet face-to-face with other believers, preferably other BMBs. Data suggested that qualified, trustworthy leaders are needed to help BMBs make such connections; however, leadership limitations represent another barrier that hampers BMBs' efforts to gather with others for fellowship and discipleship, providing that there are known believers in the vicinity.

### **Lack of Known Believers Nearby**

According to data collected from the survey and interview, the basic challenge that faces BMBs in the AP is their lack of knowledge about the existence of other believers, if any, in their vicinity. My observations convinced me that the majority of BMBs that I know, consider themselves the only believers in their community, thus they struggle to keep their faith hidden. Later in this chapter, under Internal Barriers, based on the data collected, I discuss fear and other barriers that keep BMBs unknown to one another, adding to their difficulty to discover one another, to build trust and to start their fellowship as one body.

### **Leadership Challenges**

While lack of known believers nearby works actively against forming discipleship groups, the leadership challenges work passively toward same. If a number of believers are known to one another and able to communicate, a leader or a facilitator is needed to facilitate the formation of a discipleship group and encourage their regular face-to-face meetings. Data revealed two main leadership challenges that work as barriers, both of which are grouped under this heading.

The first is a qualitative challenge dealing with the competency of the existing leaders, while the second is a quantitative challenge dealing with the availability of leaders in the vicinity of the BMBs.

#### Unqualified Leaders/Teachers

This aspect addresses a qualification issue that is represented in the quality of teaching. Because the competency of facilitators is beyond the BMBs' control, it is therefore considered one of the external barriers.

Revealed by the collected data, and grouped under the barrier of unqualified leader, are a few findings worth noting. First, with the impact of media on the BMBs' intellectual growth, as mentioned above, there is a risk of receiving false teaching. Their spiritual development is at stake unless mature believers are entrusted with the role of shepherding the flock.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, this was the experience of PALM's Senior Trainer, Jay Haines, when heresies originating from a North American church, invaded the church in Algeria in the early 90s, causing fragmentation (Haines 2013). In many of the Algerian churches, it was believed that all one needed to minister was the anointing of the Spirit. Although the church in Algeria managed to overcome the division caused by the false teaching, the challenge of unqualified leaders and teachers from fringe churches with strange doctrines continued in that country throughout the 90s (Haines 2013). Currently, such a challenge continues with the decreasing number of clergy workers in the AP versus lay people. Also, with media programs that deliver a wide spectrum of

theological teaching, there might be a risk of poor theology with its negative effect on the growing BMBs. Such a risk is elevated further in the absence of qualified leaders and Bible teachers on the ground (Interview notes).

Second, concerning under-qualification of leaders and teachers, the risk of receiving false teaching is not limited to those with faulty doctrine; it extends to others who might have sound teaching but less capacity to deliver such teaching. This aspect is discussed later in this chapter under “Absence of Leadership.”

Third, the under-qualification issue is not only due to the passive behaviour of the workers (e.g., due to lack of time and knowledge, they are unable to train and teach) but could also be attributed to a leadership style not suited to the task or a lack of theological training in this regard (Interview notes). An interviewee presented this challenge from a different perspective: the unintentional harm that the inexperienced leader may cause the disciples. He referred, for example, to a worker who had built a wall between the interviewee and others by paying too much attention to him and neglecting the rest of the group. In that context and culture, this action offended the other disciples, which discouraged them from continuing the weekly gathering.

Many other workers try to work mainly through one person, called the “Person of Peace,” to reach out to the entire network consisting of various organizations and church planting movements. However, this wrong approach leads to other people in the group feeling slighted and asking “why not me?” (Interview notes).

These incidents suggest that if a leader is ignorant of the local culture and lacks understanding of the disciples in the group, he or she might be seen by the local disciples as an unqualified leader/teacher who fails to facilitate the discipleship process and maintain a healthy fellowship.

Fourth, data underscores that spiritual apathy and sometimes immaturity play a role in producing unqualified leaders. Responses indicated that some of the current leaders are unaware of the importance of spiritual disciplines when it comes to making disciples and may not be faithful in prayer or Bible study. Comments suggested that such leaders are viewed as incompetent or unqualified to lead; hence, due to their spiritual negligence, they themselves act as barriers.

From the above, a conclusion could be extracted that unqualified/inexperienced leaders can serve as one of the barriers hindering BMBs from gathering with others for fellowship and discipleship purposes. Thus, there is a clear need to train leaders to equip and prepare others for ministry.

#### Absence of Leadership

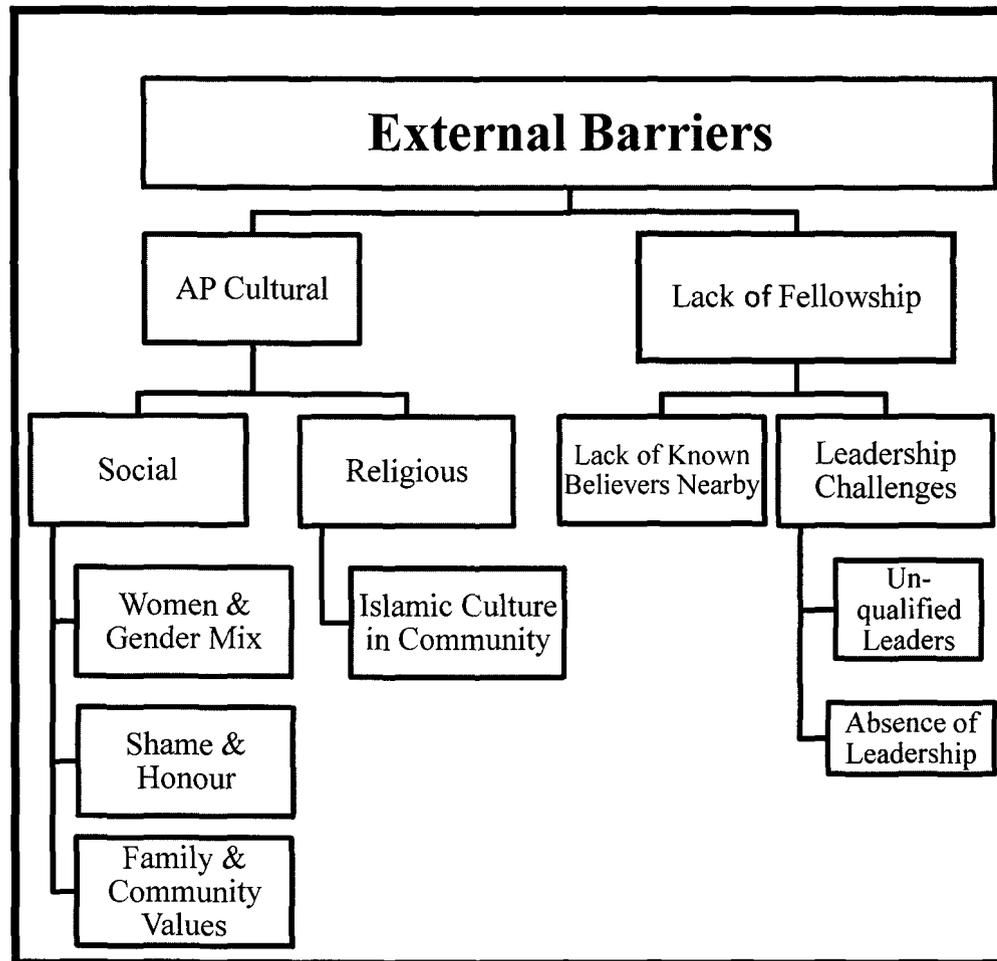
The quantitative aspect of leadership is expanded upon in this section. The leadership challenge experienced by BMBs in the AP area is not merely limited to the under-qualification of some but extends to others who might be well equipped and qualified to lead and teach but have less capacity to deliver such teaching, limiting their direct contact with BMBs. Data revealed that the challenge of leaders' availability is due to their limited time capacity. One interviewee, a local BMB who serves currently as a Bible teacher, confirmed that limited time poses a

real challenge for workers. In order for workers to have a legitimate residency, they must be employed or have their own platform of legitimate business (Interview notes). In all cases, time for those workers is crunched on three fronts: their platform and employment obligations, responsibilities toward their own families and finally ministry. Respondents spoke of leaders having little time to train others. Only a handful of nationals received training when workers had the time and ability to do so (Survey notes).

Absence of corporate leadership (plural leadership) is another challenge faced by the BMB discipleship groups. As seen earlier under the precedent-setting cases, a PALM veteran, reflecting during his interview on the positive impact of plural leadership on the early church in North Africa during the 60s, referred positively to a local assembly operated by a multi-agency group. When the workers at that location were expelled, the national leaders kept the assembly going into the 80s; however, they were left with a huge dearth of leadership and training opportunities for new converts as their tentmakers and qualified workers were expelled gradually throughout the 80s.

The situation in the AP as a whole is no different from that experienced by the NA assembly mentioned above, as there is a similar challenge in finding qualified leaders and teachers who can fully commit to teaching and training.

As can be seen from the preceding discussion about external barriers, such barriers, with their multifaceted subcategories, presented in Figure 3 below, work together to hinder BMBs from gathering regularly for worship and fellowship.



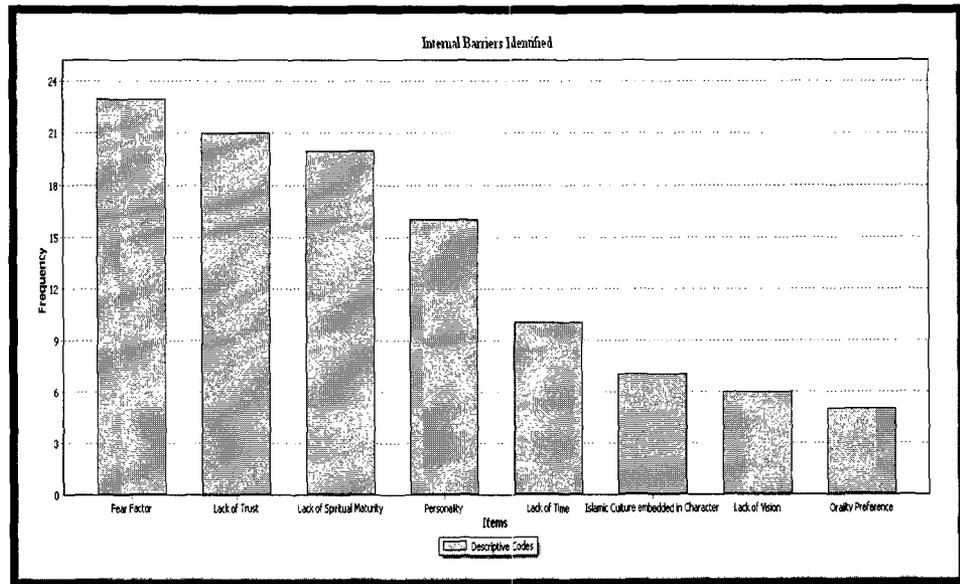
**Figure 3: Layers of analysis extracted from the database to generate the theme of External Barriers**

Having discussed the external barriers hindering BMBs from gathering for worship, study of the Word of God and discipleship, the next section addresses other barriers as they were identified from the data, specifically the descriptive codes that were collected under the second theme of Internal Barriers.

### Core Category of Internal Barriers and its Other Variations

This theme of internal barriers has been developed from the descriptive codes that emerged from the data collected. As shown in Figure 4 below, the overarching core category of internal barriers is seen through its variations of subcategories. These subcategories are fear (21.7%), lack of trust (15.1%), personality and character that included the Islamic culture embedded in characteristics together represent (24.5%), lack of spiritual maturity (18.9%), lack of time (9.4%), lack of vision (5.7%), and oral learning preference (4.7%).

Internal Barrier data revealed that the top four internal barriers, referred to most frequently by respondents and suggesting they are of primary concern, are fear, lack of trust, lack of spiritual maturity, and Islamic culture embedded in



**Figure 4: Internal barriers: sub-categories in sequence and their relative weights**

characteristics. Together, these barriers represent a collective weight of 80% of the identified internal barriers.

The other three barriers of lack of time, lack of vision and oral learning preference have lesser impact on BMBs and on their gathering for discipleship as indicated by respondents who mentioned these factors in a lesser frequency. Accordingly, after the second cycle coding using the Axial Coding, the above mentioned identified internal barriers were regrouped and narrowed down to three main sub-categories: fear, lack of trust and lack of spiritual maturity. The following sections not only outline these variations within internal barriers but also summarize the forces acting within those barriers against the BMBs and hindering them from regular participation in a discipleship group.

### Fear

Various comments by both survey respondents and interviewees suggested that fear is seen as the main internal barrier experienced by BMBs in their discipleship process. Three dimensions of fear were identified by the collected data, namely security, family and ethical fears.

#### **Security Fears**

Political, social and religious persecution of the Church dominate all aspects of fear. Data gathered from the surveys and interviews suggested that the consequence of political persecution of BMBs is fear of imprisonment and of the security forces in their country. Theologically, while security fear attacks the

BMBs, the grace of God continues to cover them and God's protection encloses their fellowship in the midst of these challenges. Data confirmed this theological statement and revealed that BMBs in the AP are sustained by the grace of God, as we can see from this incident:

There was a huge issue with Facebook as one brother put many personal details and photos of the believers as I understand it, virtually all of the believers except him. So I mean it devastates them because some people had to go into hiding, as I understand. And, yet at the same time, even with that blow, it didn't break their back. (Interview notes)

Secondly, social persecution, which is linked to shame and honour as mentioned earlier under external barriers, results in public and community fears. Analysis of the data underscored that BMBs are fearful of being found out by their neighbours or community. The data emphasized the pressure BMBs face that can lead them to practice their faith in secret.

Third, there is religious persecution, i.e., threats that arise from religious leaders and fundamentalists who understand properly their religion and Sharia Law. Respondents shared their experience and expressed their fear of being found out by fundamentalists. BMBs realize that fundamentalists in the AP know their Sharia Law and are eager to execute it, as presented earlier in the discussion on apostasy. data highlights the danger for the BMB who becomes known to officials, community or Islamic religious leaders, who treat such individuals as infidels under the apostasy bylaws. Also, data collected through the interviews highlighted the persecution threats that BMBs face from their own families that originate from the Islamic teachings in both the Qur'an and the Hadith. As

mentioned in Chapter Three under Apostasy in the Arabian Peninsula, BMBs are threatened with the penal codes of their own countries which will be exercised against them if they are known to have converted to Christianity. Although local authorities sometimes show mercy on BMBs and turn a blind eye, fundamentalists freely attack, threaten and kill them. This example phrase from the data summarizes the challenge: “most are afraid of persecution” (Survey notes). Thus, BMBs’ fear of religious leaders and fundamentalists who are well-rooted in their religious teachings is justified.

### **Family Fear**

Both survey and interviews data indicated that BMBs’ fears range from the threat of retaliation, the government, community or religious leaders and fundamentalists, to fear of rejection from their own families. There are cases where parents support their sons and daughters in pursuing their new faith but those are rare as data revealed two cases only in this particular study (Interview notes).

Data revealed that the sacrificial giving of a believer who suffers socially, having to leave his family through a divorce, is a barrier to discipleship. One facilitator comments that most of his discipleship time with one person focuses on helping him with his marital problems (Interview notes). Another interviewee confirmed that this fear of family rejection can prevent BMBs from witnessing to their families or from being baptized (Interview notes). Another facet is the mutual respect among family members and the fear of losing this respect. This

can sometimes prevent BMBs from committing to a group of believers (Interview notes). Fearing the loss of one's family or spouse is sometimes a greater fear than losing one's own life (Interview notes). One respondent indicated that such fear prevents 80% of believers from reaching out to their wider community (Interview notes). Fear could even lead to losing one's nerve and avoiding contact with other Christians (Interview notes).

From all the above data and in addition to my own experience, family ties are a priority in the AP context. Belonging and identity are vital and profound in the mindset of the BMBs. Fear of losing those ties, belonging and identity pose a real threat for the BMBs if their conversion is known and they are exposed to their family, clan or tribe as followers of another faith rather than Islam. BMBs are ready to face death but not ready to be excommunicated from their families. Such family fear discourages BMBs from participating in discipleship groups lest they face scandal.

### **Ethical Fear**

Another facet of fear that data revealed and that I saw manifested by some BMBs in the AP is "ethical" fear. I consider it as such because it is the fear of causing harm to others within the body of believers. As one interviewee shared, "I asked a sister worker if there are other barriers that hinder the BMBs from coming to the discipleship group; she answered that some women in the group hesitate to attend because of family threatening to harm the group" (Interview notes).

Another example of this fear is illustrated by a BMB who refused to attend a

discipleship group to avoid making the group uncomfortable because he was a local and was concerned that his presence among the group would attract the attention of the local authorities and potentially bring harm to the entire group (Interview notes). In another case, a BMB felt that the group would be less likely to attract the attention of government officials if he did not join it (Interview notes).

In brief, data revealed that suspicion, fear of infiltration by security forces, fear of locals or expats, fear of Arabs, and fear of those outside their existing networks were all viewed as reasons for BMBs not to gather with others.

#### Lack of Trust

Fear and lack of trust are interwoven in that fear produces mistrust and mistrust produces fear. In the last section, different facets of fear were examined. The collected data suggest that lack of trust and mistrust are considerable barriers that hinder BMBs' regular attendance in a discipleship group. As stated to Eric and Laura Adams by a fellow practitioner, "Bringing strangers together and calling them 'community' is not comprehensible in most contexts. There is always the prior question of trust" (Adams and Adams 2011, 121). Thus, a lack of trust has a negative effect on the spiritual growth of BMBs and acts as a clearly defined obstacle to the discipleship process.

It is clear from the data that mistrust is focused on fellow BMBs and that "... this mistrust leads to a lack of outreach to their own people" (Interview notes). It also prevents them from gathering together as believers. And because

they do not even want to meet other BMBs, they are not willing to talk with expat Christians about how to expand the kingdom: “Culturally it’s quite tribal. So you have to be careful. So you might be similar nationality, similar faith, but actually people are very suspicious between families, even within a tribe. Between one family and another family there can be a massive lack of trust” (Interview notes).

Interviewees further illustrated this barrier of lack of trust among the BMBs with reflections such as: “They know each other and they know the same language. But actually it may be very difficult for them to trust each other and meet together. And that’s an obstacle in their discipleship, and in their formation” (Interview notes).

In responding to the fifth question in the survey concerning whether respondents had tried to offer solutions to overcome the barriers facing the BMBs, data revealed that 77% of the 19 facilitators who participated in the written survey had tried to overcome barriers among BMBs by making it a priority to deal with the lack of trust among their disciples. Concerning such efforts, one of the facilitators commented,

One problem for us: we would like to present the bona fides [*sic*] of one such BMB to the other, but we have also earlier promised confidentially to each of them, in our own relationships and sharing with them. We can't give reassuring details about them, to the other one of the two, until each of them overcomes mistrust enough to allow us to do so. This is a dilemma for us. (Survey notes)

Some mistrust has originated from the absence of any evidence of transformed lives in other believers or certain bad habits they have not overcome.

Data also revealed that lack of trust is embedded in the culture: “The irony is that we say that these societies are very communal, but yet at the heart of the community there is a level of mistrust and suspicion” (Interview notes).

Mistrust can generate ongoing problems in a group, especially when there is personal conflict, doubt about someone’s conversion or tension based on different cultural, tribal or religious backgrounds or age gaps (Interview notes). The addition of someone to the group can also lead to lack of trust (Interview notes).

#### Lack of Spiritual Maturity

As mentioned earlier, due to cultural issues and Islamic teachings there is a lack of understanding of the need to gather for discipleship. Cultural and Islamic influence focus on daily life matters rather than studying the Word of God to seek His guidance in life issues. This influence is evidenced in one BMB’s statement to an interviewee: “ Life issues are more ‘important’/pertinent than course” (Interview notes).

In analyzing the data to figure out this subcategory, a few opinions expressed by respondents highlighted the need for spiritual maturity. Some of those expressions are as follows: “A general lack of desire to continue in faith and knowledge of the Lord Jesus,” “In my context, disciples are very slow to make a continuing commitment to meeting together so it is very difficult to have ongoing effective discipleship meetings,” “Laziness,” “wouldn’t call them barriers other than inertia,” “Some believers do not see the need to gather regularly in groups,”

“They have their ministry and fellowship through pall-talk, emails etc.,” and “The few believers in our country have a tendency to drift from one group to another and are not very spiritually mature,” “It is very difficult to be in their private lives/space in general....much less the deep and risky spiritual topics,” and “Lack of commitment to God...either they are not followers or just lack the faith to obey God even at the most base level.” From these quotes, one can conclude that lacking inner motivation affects BMBs, causing reluctance to commit to discipleship groups.

On the other hand, one respondent, pointing out some BMBs’ motive for meeting, stated,

I’ve tried talking with them directly, but it seems they still view me as a patron and have financial expectations on me. This direct communication has strained my relationships with them. They feel they are entitled to material benefits from me, and they view me as stingy. I question their motives for meeting. (Survey notes)

Another challenge some interviewees pointed out is the lack of evidence of a transformed life, as perceived by others within the discipleship group. In Islamic culture, one is expected to publicly demonstrate religiosity and self-righteousness, regardless of the degree of depravity in one’s heart. BMBs live in a society that respects certain indicators of ritual disciplines, e.g., the “mark of prayer” on one’s forehead, the long beard and the white *jelbab* (dress). Failure to prove that a genuine transformation has taken place in a BMB’s life can be a hindrance to his/her acceptance by a group, as noted by an interviewee. “If a BMB feels it is impossible to prove that he or she has changed, he or she may

hesitate to participate in a group that expects to see visible evidence of change” (Interview notes).

In my own experience, the main challenge faced when discipling BMBs is the elevation of cognitive values above changes of attitudes and behaviour. In their worldview, knowing, memorizing and reciting biblical verses supersede a transformed life as a result of conviction by the Holy Spirit. This was confirmed through statements such as; “In their mindset, growth is measured by how much they know, not how deeply they have been transformed or how deeply they love one another” (Interview notes).

Spiritual maturity is one key to overcoming barriers. An interviewee noted: “with some people, the trust, I feel that it’s grown greater simply because certain individuals have grown spiritually” (Interview notes). Based on my experience of and observations from serving among BMBs, spiritual maturity is an anchor in their lives. The more mature the BMBs are, the more they are able to face and overcome barriers. The pilot project that was carried out to help the working group to overcome barriers focused on helping them achieve an overarching goal of growing spiritually. Once they became more mature internally, they could withstand other external barriers such as fear and lack of trust. When they grew internally, they could face the external barriers with greater confidence and success.

## **Islamic Culture Embedded in Characteristics**

Natural individuality, together with the acquired conducts that are shaped by the culture, combines to mold one's characteristics. Data collected from the interviews suggested that spiritual development may vary among individuals due to variances in their natural and acquired characteristics.

Thus, while this type of barrier is linked to distinctive individuals, its effect still extends beyond the individual BMB to influence the community of believers.

Data showed that almost one fifth of responses indicated that characteristics that are heavily influenced by the Islamic culture embedded in the BMBs are considered one of the barriers that hinder them from adhering to discipleship groups in the AP. One interviewee accurately articulated this by stating,

The heart issue, the relationship with the Lord Jesus, the heart issue, the affective level. So we have cognitive, we have affective, so if you like emotions, but more than emotions, gut, values, deep values, spiritual things deep inside, things that motivate us. And then you have psychomotor. So if you are thinking about child's education we have these three levels. And all of them are important in our growth, the cognitive, the thinking skills, the affective, and the emotional; but in Christian terms or in biblical terms, most of the emphasis on teaching is about character. The qualities for leaders, its Character...Character...Character." (Interview notes)

The emphasis on both natural and acquired characteristics was repeated in interviews, pointing to differences in age, values and reliability (Interview notes).

Individuality clashes were also mentioned as a hindrance (Interview notes),

confirming the impact of individual natural and acquired characteristics on group formation.

Another aspect of characteristics is seen in family obligations. While this facet could be seen through the lens of community shame and honour, not all people deal with their families in the same way. The sense of obligation varies from one person to the next based on their level of commitment toward their family (Interview notes).

Characteristics play a key role when it comes to relationships and interaction among individuals in the same fellowship. The data revealed that relationships within a group are negatively affected when personalities clash or the generation gap is too great, especially with new and young believers (Interview notes).

Identity struggles and sensitive personalities build up a barrier that hinders some BMBs committing to a discipleship group, affecting their growth within the church community. “Some may feel unwelcomed or a lack of belonging” (Interview notes). Others mentioned that “some wrestle with their identity. They no longer know who they are; they are ambivalent, and that hinders them from committing to the group until they become mature spiritually” (Interview notes).

Another characteristic struggle is the issue of personal interaction within marriage. This issue needs a separate study to understand its deep roots within the Islamic culture as well as its tribal origins. However, it is worth mentioning it here

as a barrier that faces female BMBs, both nationals and expats, especially illegal residents. In regard to marriage issues, one respondent stated,

So that's one of the issues that is what is the right place for them? And solving some of the marriage, is figuring out what's going to happen in terms of getting them married either to the person they are in love with who they can't legally marry in this context. (Interview notes)

The above quote refers to the challenges facing the BMBs, especially females when it comes to marriage, due to cultural hindrances concerning religion affiliation, tribal belonging and personal identity. Other comments draw attention to this tip of the huge iceberg of marital challenges faced by BMBs that affect their growth and maturity.

#### Islamic Culture Continues to Shape the BMBs' Characteristics

As mentioned in the previous section, the acquired characteristics of the mental and moral conduct are influenced by the community; thus, the Islamic culture that shapes the community of the AP continues to shape the BMBs' mindset, behaviour and attitude. BMBs face the intense impact of Islam and Islamic teaching on their daily life. As they grow up, they are taught Islam at home, at school and in society. Islam is a societal lifestyle to the extent that it influences Christians who live in this culture and are considered part of the society. Both survey and interview data identified that Islamic culture shapes the character of the people and dictates an Islamic worldview to them.

One of the direct influences of Islam on the BMB mindset concerns how they receive and process knowledge. In his response to the survey, one respondent

states that “some believers see no reason to meet in person, since they can meet and learn online” (Survey notes). An interviewee states, “They continue in the Islamic mindset of hearing messages but not changing either as a person or influencing others for God’s kingdom. Such a mindset is considered one of the barriers that face BMBs and discourages them from being a part of a discipleship group where they meet face-to-face” (Interview notes).

Data also showed another aspect of Islamic culture that affects the BMBs’ characteristics, which is that they remain unaware of critical answers to critical questions concerning the Christian faith. They were taught in Islam to never question their faith lest they be seen as heretical; hence, Islamic theology can remain rooted in their mind, and their worldview can continue to be tinted with Islamic teaching long after conversion. For example, salvation by faith alone is a difficult theology to grasp, since they were taught that good deeds please God and can obliterate the evil deeds in their lives (Qur’an 2: 245; 3: 133-134; 11: 114; 33: 35). It takes a long time for Christian teaching to replace Islamic theology in BMBs’ minds and for their lives to be transformed, especially with the presence of other challenges that slow down the process of discipleship in regular meetings. One interviewee puts it this way,

Let’s say that the lack of maturity and understanding of the real meaning of discipleship is the first, the big reason. They don’t understand what we are doing exactly, they are not interested in being in a discipleship program or training, so they just come when they found it is fun to come. And they disappear when they decide to disappear. So this is the main reason. Because all of them are coming from a Muslim background, and being trained for a long time which has nothing to do with discipleship, so

for them you know, 'I become Christian, I got the salvation, so why you are asking me to be trained for a long term? (Interview notes).

As mentioned earlier, Islamic culture and the view of women not only define society; it infiltrates deeply and being interpreted in the characteristics of the people. BMBs coming to the Christian faith have their characteristics impacted by this Islamic worldview. Both male and female BMBs continue to face this barrier for a while until the grace of God begins to transform them and to renew their minds in this area (Romans 12: 2). Until this happens, BMBs will continue to struggle with such critical questions as it is demonstrated in the following phrase that was addressed to an interviewee by a fellow BMB:

Our country is very segregated, so we don't actually know yet how it will be when women and men are together. How will a future church look like because it's not normal that they would be together in one room? That's their culture, every sex type in separate room. So you could think about having a curtain in the middle for example. (Interview notes)

The data suggested that changing BMBs' worldviews concerning women, Christianity, church gathering and discipleship needs to be addressed as early as possible in the discipleship process as they have a tendency to retain the attitudes and opinions they learned in the Muslim context, and Islamic culture will continue to influence their characters.

Another aspect of character is reflected in low self-confidence. Characterised by lack of intellectual knowledge that could be linked to the Islamic teaching régime, the BMB may have the tendency to withdraw from knowledgeable communities lest he/she be shameful of their ignorance. One comment confirming this states, “[intimidation] by the others; they feel that they

know so little and are not nearly as good a man/woman as the believer who shared with him/her.”

These challenges bring spiritual maturity to the forefront and make it a priority to seek after, empowering BMBs to cope with, and overcome barriers.

### **Lack of Time**

Data revealed another internal barrier that faces believers in general and BMBs in particular—and hinders them from gathering together for worship and fellowship—is lack of time. While workers struggle to balance their job responsibilities, their family responsibilities and the ministry (as discussed earlier under Absence of Leaders), disciples, too, struggle in the same way. Interviewees addressed this barrier by mentioning differing schedules, travel time, business and job responsibilities as hindrances to meeting (Interview notes). This suggests that lack of time is a challenge facing both workers and disciples, making it difficult to meet for worship, prayers and fellowship.

Another facet of the time factor is the priorities in the disciple’s life and the value placed on the discipleship process. Earlier, I examined different aspects of this mindset under the headings of “AP Culture Acts against the BMBs Character,” and “From the data collected shown in (Table 5) above, together with the respondents’ suggestions, I used the descriptive codes to identify the remedies to overcome the barriers, as shown in Figure 6 below. Data together with my personal observation and experience suggested the following remedies: “Spiritual

Maturity,” “Improvement of Discipleship Group Dynamics,” “Sharing Responsibilities,” and “Socializing to Build up Trust.”

Spiritual Maturity.” Here, I focus on the time devoted to the discipleship process. Respondents to the survey and the interviews suggest that BMBs consider discipleship as a secondary choice and not one of their top priorities, something to do if they have spare time or little to do. Sometimes lack of time is used as an excuse.

Data also revealed that some BMBs are not willing to make an effort to commit to a discipleship group. Some of them use denominational differences as an excuse; others refer to their geographical locations, conflicting schedules or family commitments to justify not attending a gathering due to lack of time (Interview notes).

Survey respondents suggested lack of time as a barrier, citing many of the same reasons: geographical distance, lack of transportation, conflicting schedules, other commitments, and they lack the time needed to attend the gathering. (Survey notes). Little sincere effort seemed to be made to reprioritize meeting with other believers.

### **Lack of Vision**

In this section, ‘vision’ refers to the bigger picture of ministry in the AP and whether it is seen by BMBs. The bigger picture of ministry is not limited to the opportunities of church planting or growing believers toward spiritual maturity through the secret study of the Word of God, but it extends to achieving

the freedom of religion and beliefs that will lead to a recognizable body of believers known as the church that is endorsed by the local authorities. Closely connected to spiritual maturity is clarity of vision. Many issues were raised during the research that questioned the collective vision of BMBs across the AP. Some of these were brought up by interviewees, such as: “Yes, so this leader, we want to get together and say how is church planting going to happen in this country?”, “How can we assist our sister who is somewhere behind a computer?”, “How does male/female work?”, and “How do we arrange families; can we have marriages under the Islam flag?” (Interview notes). The context of these quotes according to the verbal feedback and the comments noted gave evidence that some local BMBs are lacking a collective vision and are distracted toward the details of the unknown. They have plenty of individual dreams but they lack the vision of the big picture. An interviewee commented,

All these type of discussions you want to have mature people. And maturity here also means that they are not ashamed for their faith.... We have seen those types of discussions. I mentioned one time about a year ago in these cyber meetings that were not successful because they were just talking about their dreams. Here we have people behind a computer making big dreams about media, and letters to the king, and all these big visions. But did you talk with your sister? No. Did you talk with your father? No. (Interview notes)

A second interviewee reflected on the same point that some BMBs are still viewing Christianity from the Islamic lens of “doing” rather than “being” when their need is to study the Word of God to get His guidance and vision. He says,

It wasn't that much emphasis on the Word. Some people say well it was more sharing dreams. We are going to conquer this country by doing these

and these activities. It was more sharing of dreams and hoping and dreaming, rather than just, okay well let's open, here are the Scriptures for today, and having a series of Bible studies. (Interview notes)

In other words, BMBs need to reach a level of maturity that will help them to go beyond dreaming to living out their faith in practical ways. Once they come closer to the Lord, grow and mature, they will have the mind and the heart of Christ. Only then will they be able to see a clearer vision and be equipped to eventually achieve such a vision. We saw earlier the precedent case of the North Africa church where collective vision originated from zealous believers who have hearts to reach out to their own people and disciple them. Believers with a vision need to be disciplined in order to grow and mature and achieve that vision by God's grace. In an interview, a worker states that he knows of only two persons with vision. "The others have chosen to have no contact with other believers, let alone talk about how to expand the kingdom. There is a need for people who are called, who are convinced they need to reach their own nation" (Interview notes).

An examination of the precedent-setting case of the Algerian church that experienced difficulties in the late 60s to early 70s, demonstrates what can happen when people have a collective vision. God used such people to build His church in North Africa. One leader provided a firsthand account by stating,

This first generation of Algerian leaders had strength in that they were unstoppable. They were the kind of people that were ready to face any kind of opposition. Like persecution? Persecution, they were ready to stand for their faith. They were ready to... to pay the cost. Yeah. That was not a problem. (Interview notes)

The evidence points resoundingly to the fact that BMBs who do not see the need of their own family to believe in Jesus may lack in such vision, the collective vision of God's kingdom in their own context: personally, locally and nationally. Furthermore, lack of vision to reach out to their own families leads to delayed spiritual growth and development. This conclusion is derived from all of the above mentioned data and further confirmed by statements like, "He didn't see it as something that should somehow influence his own family. And he stopped growing as a believer. He is still a believer today. But he is not in regular fellowship. I do think this is somehow linked to not finding ways to share this with his family" (Interview notes).

### **Oral Learning Preference**

Chapter 3 highlighted the use of storytelling and other oral approaches in a non-formal education context for leadership development. The development of the local church leadership in the AP is experiencing progress as leaders grow spiritually. Discipleship curricula such as Progressing Together (PT) of PALM aim to transform lives, especially the lives of leaders. Transformation in the leaders' lives should be seen as proof of deeper change during the process of discipleship. When we review Brewin's model of organizational change and apply it to the discipleship process in the AP in the light of the data collected, we see that the disciple and discipler prefer to achieve transformation through contextual education that will result in bottom-up transformation (Brewin 2007, 24).

The collected data pointed out that the learning preference for the disciples' leans toward contextual oral and audio/visual formats (Table 8). Only 9% of those who answered the Learning Preference question prefer to learn through reading and writing while 91% prefer other means that include various forms of mixed oral preference. This latter category can be broken down to 33% of the disciples preferring to learn through oral forms and pictures, e.g., visual aids consisting of overhead slides, diagrams, handouts, etc. An equal percentage of 33% prefer the "hybrid" format of learning, which is a combination of textual and oral learning. Another oral preference is that of auditory learners who prefer to listen to lectures, discussions, tapes and storytelling, represented by 17% of the disciple respondents, and an equivalent 17% who claim to prefer to learn through experience by moving, touching and doing.

**Table 8: Survey of Respondents' Learning Preferences**

<b>RESPONDENTS' LEARNING PREFERENCES</b>			
<b>Preference</b>	<b>Facilitator</b>	<b>Disciple</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Literacy (Reading &amp; Writing)</b>	2	0	2
<b>Visual Learners</b>	4	2	6
<b>Auditory Learners</b>	1	1	2
<b>Learning Through Experience</b>	0	1	1
<b>Hybrid (Mixed Preference)</b>	7	2	9
<b>Unknown</b>	5	9	14
<b>Total</b>	19	15	34

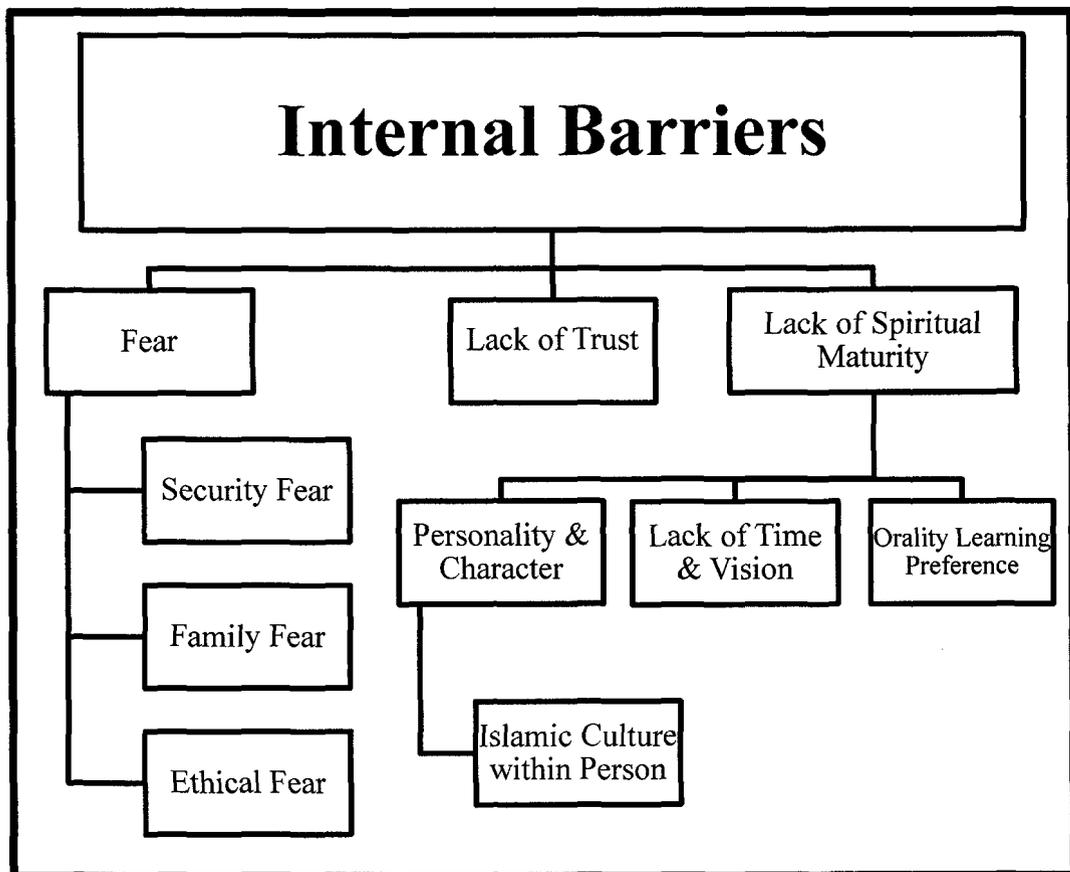
In the PALM program, non-formal education is used as a tool to provide theological education for new BMBs who still reside within the AW. In the case of this non-formal education, literature and text, together with storytelling and oral approaches are all used either separately or conjointly. Collected data indicated that BMBs have trouble following the traditional approach of Western education that mainly based on literature and texts. This is demonstrated in statements like, “Most Arabs like stories and poems more than information,” “Most Arab Christians are used to a lighter [less commitment] way of Christianity,” “Discipleship is a challenge for them and some items became as a barrier,” “Also, they are not the kind of people who study in the way we do in the West,” “As a young believer myself twenty years ago, I was hungry for teaching and actively sought to be discipled. I haven’t heard of anyone with that amount of interest here with the exception of one lady who likes to study academically and is not in close fellowship with anyone,” and “Personal unwillingness to read or study the Book—I’ve observed a few who will not read the Book either with you or alone. Some of this is spiritual laziness. Some of this may be not truly a follower” (Interview notes).

The quotes mentioned above communicate judgmental messages that indicate an underestimation of the influence of the oral culture on those believers. The following phrases confirm that workers sometimes do not realize the importance of the oral learning preference of those whom they are sent to serve

until much later: “We realized it is almost more important to share your life with them than to necessarily work through a structured series,” “seems to require a high level of literacy and analytical ability,” “It seems, from observation, they learn better by watching and having someone to copy and ‘hangout with’ [*sic*] than by analyzing a passage of Scripture on a weekly basis... This isn’t ideal of course,” “Oral preference learners in this part of the world need more stories and lessons organized based on single passages. Proof texting does not make sense to most in the region,” and “he didn’t like the paper orientation” (Interview notes).

In addition to the above statements that illustrate the importance of the oral learning preference of BMBs, being able to communicate in the local spoken language, rather than in a foreign language is an added value to their learning preference style. Local language skills are a vital criterion for workers who are called to serve in the area. As one interviewee comments, “Yes. The expat people speak Arabic very well, they are very well educated and they relate to the culture extremely well and so I know that, they put a high emphasis on language. So if they were to do it in English it would kind of devalue everything” (Interview notes). In an interview to a facilitator of a discipleship group, the interviewee described the local BMBs’ preference for interactive studies, stating, “They didn’t really respond very well to sermon-like studies either because they wanted to have their say or they wanted to discuss it. They prefer interactive study where they engage, but it was all just according to their whims and fancies because they hadn’t studied” (Interview notes).

To overcome this barrier of oral learning preference, data suggested that oral courses may help to connect BMBs with the Word of God orally through audio/video and other media materials. As such, oral preference has been a theme of this action research. The underlying goal to present every person complete in Christ with full knowledge of the Old and New Testament renders it necessary to embrace the oral culture approach.



**Figure 5: Internal Barriers Extracted from Data**

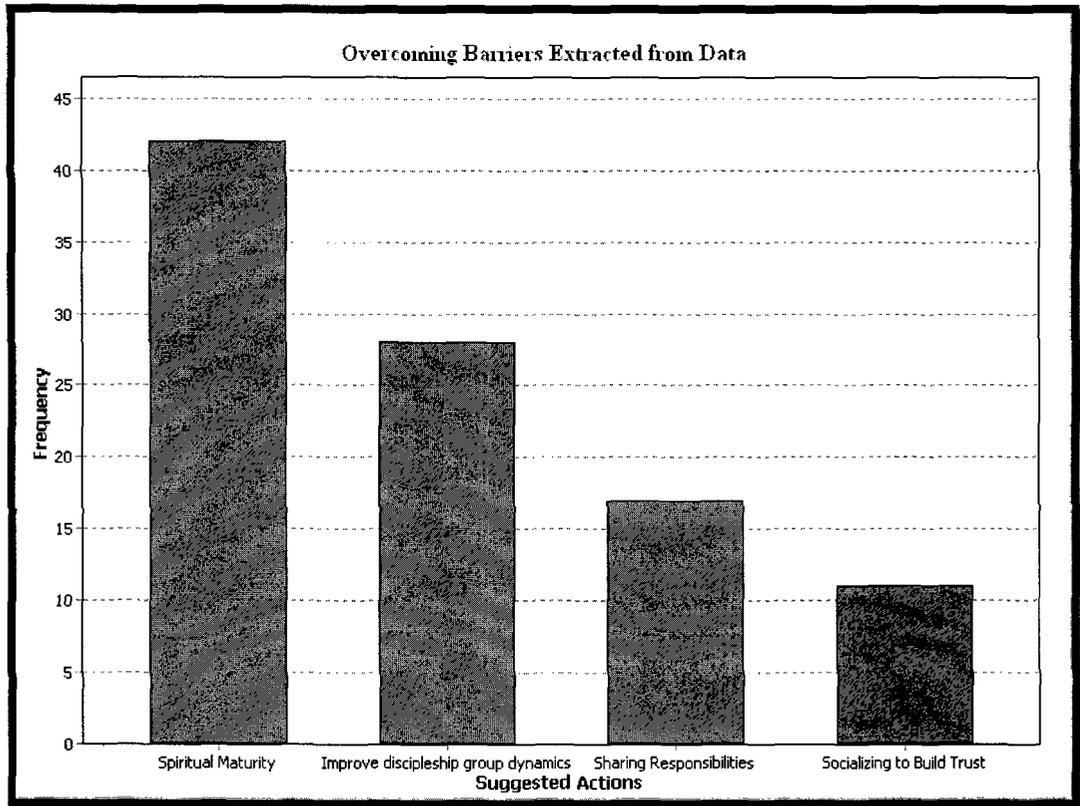
The above section presented the internal barriers identified by this research. While external barriers act against the BMBs from outside, internal barriers work inwardly to hinder them from meeting together and discourage the group worship and fellowship. There are three main clustered categories revealing the internal barriers: fear, lack of trust, and lack of spiritual maturity (Figure 5). As the barriers hindering BMBs from gathering regularly and consistently with other believers for discipleship and spiritual growth are now clearly identified, the next section presents Phase 2 of this action research, which consists of a pilot project.

### **The Process of Identifying the Barriers Facing BMBs and Suggested Remedies**

This project not only refers to Phase 1 of the written survey and to the outcome of several interviews, but also includes Phase 2, which involves development of a change management tool and entails brainstorming recommendations for overcoming the identified barriers as described in the Pilot Project section below. The process of identifying barriers is the first step toward recommending responses to the challenges described by respondents (Table 5). Such responses are characterized by a Biblical and contextual approach.

In light of my understanding, the theology in 2 Timothy 2:2, the four-generation model of continuous discipleship to prepare BMB leaders for ministry, is interrupted in any stage of those generations by a few barriers. While there are a few faithful followers, many current workers, like Timothy, are unable to pass the

biblical teachings to the BMBs because the latter face barriers that hinder them from meeting with workers in discipleship groups. One can conclude that the identified barriers work together to hinder the commitment of BMBs in the AP to attend and participate in discipleship groups.



**Figure 6: The Four Fundamental Recommendations to Overcoming Barriers**

From the data collected shown in (Table 5) above, together with the respondents' suggestions, I used the descriptive codes to identify the remedies to overcome the barriers, as shown in Figure 6 below. Data together with my personal observation and experience suggested the following remedies: "Spiritual

Maturity,” “Improvement of Discipleship Group Dynamics,” “Sharing Responsibilities,” and “Socializing to Build up Trust.”

Spiritual MaturityLack of Spiritual Maturity” is considered one of the internal barriers to the discipleship process. Building the spiritual maturity of BMBs through biblical education and biblical disciplines will help to foster a natural inclination for them to seek meetings with fellow brothers and sisters. As seen in the Algerian precedent case earlier, mature BMBs realize the presence of God in their lives as they share in suffering. Respondents shared the transformations that occurred when believers saw the amazing protection of God as they stepped out to share their faith. In same precedent case of North Africa church in Algeria, they saw God preserve them from death in many different ways, sometimes miraculously. They faced persecution and rejection from their families, but encouraged one another. One interviewee notes, “They had paid the price and they saw God’s hand on them, and they, from that point on, they became unstoppable” (Haines 2013). Such testimonies suggest that BMBs’ maturity hinges on their realization of God’s presence and of His protection over them.

Data suggested that mature BMBs pray, study the Word of God and seek fellowship with their brethren. They pray together when they are able to meet, which greatly encourages them. They feel the presence of the Spirit and learn that God answers prayer. Growth in their prayer life also helps them to overcome any lack of trust or animosity hindering their relationships with one another. Data in

this study included many testimonies to confirm this claim. One respondent spoke of “two BMBs, threatened by fundamentalists, who chose to respond to those threats by praying that God would protect their homes. The fundamentalists never attacked, and this led to other Muslims asking them why this was the case, when they attacked others who are not BMBs. Those BMBs met very often for prayer and Bible study” (Interview notes). Although rare, such gatherings do happen. When nationals realize their need to read and understand the Scriptures, to be connected to other believers, to love them and meet with them for worship and prayer, they are greatly encouraged in their growth. Sharing such testimonies with BMBs in the AP, together with Bible study focusing on the importance of prayer in their lives, will enhance their trust in a faithful God who protects His people. Such an act will result in weakening the barrier of fear within and encourage them to participate in discipleship groups.

Data also suggests that mature BMBs need support groups. This is evidenced by statements such as: “You need to have a mature and established support group behind a teacher in any location. Who is going to encourage them and support them in their work?” “[M]y brother is really the one who helped me to follow my Saviour, to follow my Master. That’s one of the strongest parts of growing,” and “In other places if you don’t have the pastoral leadership supporting those who are doing the teaching, or a worker, or someone who’s undergirding them and encouraging them, when the trials come they might last for a while, but it will be hard for them to go for the duration” (Interview notes).

Interpretations of data revealed another characteristic of mature BMBs: their determination to nurture one another in a church community. Quotes such as “They grow together by choosing to meet consistently either online or in person to read the Bible and grow in their relationship with God and one another,” “walking along the same path,” “for the same purpose: worshipping God, knowing Him more,” and “being real Disciples of Christ” support such an interpretation (Interview notes). In order for the BMBs in the AP to grow spiritually and to overcome the barriers facing their fellowship, practicing the Biblical principle of assembling periodically must be encouraged. Gathering in fellowship groups will strengthen them and nurture their spiritual growth as they keep praying and studying the Word of God in community.

In the absence of believers in the vicinity to meet together, BMBs may use media to grow. “Watching Christian TV channels, the very popular “Canat el Hayat” (LIFE TV Channel), using social media such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook groups and Internet chat are popular means of cyber fellowship among BMBs in the AP. Some sought the help of a foreign Arab pastor to guide them in the process of developing an online ministry which is now quite successful (Interview notes).

Spiritually mature BMBs also invest in the younger generation, as supported by phrases like: “taking some of...the youth, apart for a time to have a couple of days of intensive study and prayer.”

I felt that was one of the key elements: getting the youth out of the house for an extended time. Maybe a full day, or maybe a couple of days, where they are out of the house, out of the fighting, or whatever they are doing with their brothers or sisters, and the distractions that are there, and so they are with say several of the elders who then take it upon themselves to do worship or teaching with the younger people. (Interview notes)

Respondents suggest that mature BMBs arrange opportunities for younger BMBs to sit under the teaching and the leadership of the elders. During such a formation stage, the new BMB will be taught and molded by the example of other believers; in the meantime, s/he will be protected from the negative impact of non-believers. Thus, consistent participation in fellowship groups helps young believers to grow and mature.

Respondents added that mature BMBs live transformed lives among their families and communities: “They were ready to present the Gospel whatever the cost,” “they were willing to witness in their families and hold firm and continue to keep the door open to their families, not shut the door, keep trying, coming back,” “They might get kicked out, refused, but come back a few years later, a few months later, try again. And eventually the families took them back and they say something’s changed about this son or daughter, and by now...no longer opposing, on the fence, and then some whole families came to Christ.” (Interview notes). As I witnessed the growth of a few BMBs in the AP and noticed their spiritual maturity, I came to the conclusion that perseverance comes with maturity. The above mentioned quotes confirm such a conclusion.

Data also referred to the impact of spiritual warfare. Mature BMBs recognize spiritual warfare and the work of the Holy Spirit within them to stand such attacks. During the interviews, phrases like the following confirm this fact: “It’s spiritual warfare. And I thank God for all the people praying for this area of the world,” “And I think that will bring long-term fruit. As far as what’s on the ground I think those of us who are ministering locally still need to open ourselves before the Lord and really be willing to model sacrificial lives ourselves and be open to the Holy Spirit’s guidance about what we could do for encouragement,” “when the Holy Spirit comes in power and gives the spirit not of fear and timidity but of power and love and a sound mind; that’s when we’ll see the breakthrough again,” and “continue prayer and entrusting that God knows what He’s doing” (Survey and Interviews notes).

In addition, it is also noted from the data that spiritual warfare is not limited to BMBs, but it extends to the workers who minister to them, who are also under attack. The AP area, where Islam originated and arose, is like the lion’s den into which Daniel of the Old Testament was cast. As I mentioned earlier in Chapters 2 and 3 under spiritual warfare and suffering and persecutions, AP countries are considered High-Security countries, and the BMBs and other believers residing there are under intense spiritual warfare. In order for those believers to stand firm, spiritual maturity is a must. I witnessed how the study of the Progressing Together (PT) Level 1 (L1) course titled “The Persecution,”

helped a few BMBs to engage effectively in spiritual warfare and could persevere and stood still (Appendix 2).

In addition to the above mentioned identified signs of mature BMBs in the AP, mature BMBs realize their own true identity in Christ. I have observed that when BMBs of the AP understand faith, not only on an emotional base but also a cognitive level, when the heart and the head agree, and when they set aside their Muslim identity and fully embrace their new identity in Christ, they demonstrate their maturity. They might experience an internal struggle, but it no longer hinders them from obeying God. BMBs grow in their faith step by step: one step is accepting Christ, another is to meet with other Christians to grow together, and another is being willing to witness, and so on. They progress in their maturity like any other believer along their own journey of life.

The above section demonstrates the necessity for the BMBs to practice biblical disciplines that foster spiritual growth. Those teachings are prayer, studying the Word of God, and the fellowship of the body of believers (Acts 2: 42). Beside those essential means for spiritual maturity, BMBs need to grow spiritually through other secondary practices and disciplines as mentioned above. From my observation of the lives of a few BMBs in the AP, their victory over sin is hinged on their realization-through-faith of their identity in Christ. The more mature they are, the more sober they will be able to face spiritual warfare in forms of trials and temptations, even to the point of persecution. One of my interviewees commented, “Once they reach to spiritual maturity, so they can handle even the

pressure, the persecution and all of that” (Interview notes). When they are mature enough, they will be transformed and their lives will be a living witness. Spiritual maturity was one of the fundamental recommendations of the pilot project that was executed in the AP area.

### Improve Discipleship Group Dynamics

Data showed that the second fundamental recommendation of the suggested remedies to overcome barriers to the discipleship process in the AP was to improve the discipleship group dynamics, interactions and moral forces among the participants. This approach was incorporated into the pilot project and focused on a few initiatives that aimed to develop the gathering components for discipleship groups and the interactions among the BMBs within those fellowships. In order to achieve this goal, several approaches were considered. The following quote is an example from the data to reflect on how change in the group dynamics with regard to building up relationships among the BMBs regardless of the cultural restrictions is seen by them:

Solutions, for how people come together. So yes, what you mentioned should everyone have a relation and should we kind of adopt, a kind of CPM [Church Planting Movement] style, aggregate style, where we bring people together from different generations and different styles, and different sexes, male, female, etc.? So there is definitely in our country a difficulty in doing that because of the tribal differences, the Sunni Shia barriers, the male female barriers, the age gaps between the generations. So that seems to be very attractive. (Interview notes)

The ultimate goal of improving the discipleship group dynamics is to build up the trust needed among the BMBs so they are encouraged to meet regularly

without fear or conservation. This goal of building up trust is closely related to the fourth fundamental recommendation of socializing to build trust as I will present later.

Besides this overarching approach of improving of the discipleship group dynamics to build up the trust among the participating BMBs, there are seven other approaches that were suggested by both survey respondents and interviewees.

First, start as a cyber-church, as technology could be used to help overcome fear factors and lack of trust, thereby improving group dynamics. Respondents shared that technology such as Skype allows for meeting safely regardless of distance. Cyber-churches allow BMBs to all come together, to grow in their trust of one another, to worship together and study the Bible together. Chat rooms also allow for private conversations for those who need more nurturing and can facilitate women and men to meet separately until they are willing to meet together in person (Interview notes).

Second, seizing opportunities is another aspect to take into consideration. Data collected through the interviews suggested the improvement of group dynamics could be achieved by seeking to live life situations together, meeting informally to share how BMBs respond to different life situations, to ask and answer questions that come up, to watch videos, and to meet socially as an intergenerational group (Interview notes).

The third action extracted from the data is to avoid individualism when discipling local BMBs. This approach is essential; especially when visiting and residing workers are trained to contextualize the discipleship concept within the AP. Interviewees expressed this in different phrases such as the following:

So individualism is in the approach often coming from Western missionaries of saying it's about your relationship with God and separating that somehow from the other interactions that that person has with their family and everything else. And in their discipleship, it keeps it as something that's private. And that stops them from growing in Christ because actually discipleship is always something which is going to happen in community. Community in the church, but it's also going to be lived out in the community in which you are living. (Interview notes)

Fourth, Socializing and encouraging shared activities among the congregants such as day retreats is another suggested solution. I will expand in more detail on this aspect of socializing to build up trust when I present the fourth fundamental recommendation of the pilot project below.

Fifth, emphasize interaction within the group, without neglecting the role of women. Interaction within the group lies upon the shoulders of the leader and facilitator. This topic is discussed in detail later under "Sharing Responsibilities," but the following are a few phrases extracted from the data that reflect the importance of developing healthier interaction in general within the group: "The participants may be asked to prepare very small assignments to share with the group," "By encouraging everyone to realize that they have something of spiritual value to contribute to the group," "By gently correcting those who contribute something that is not accurate, so that next time we meet, they will

want to know more clearly from God's word, and apply it in a practical way," and "What is the role of the women going to be here?" (Interview notes). As BMBs come from a conservative culture immersed in Islamic teachings that look differently upon women in their society, they are exposed to the Christian teaching of equality between women and men. There is a need for the BMBs to be transformed in their interaction with women within the fellowship of believers. As stated, "When churches bless and encourage women in their roles, listen to them, and utilize them and their roles, these churches will thrive" (Eenigenburg 2011, 59).

The sixth approach toward improving the discipleship group dynamics is to localize events and gathering without extraction. Extraction is a hidden challenge that workers impose on the local community of BMBs. One respondent suggested an innovative approach to improve the group dynamics. He suggested not organizing events in another country. Rather, rent a rest house in the desert that everyone can go to, and do it in a different place each time for security reasons. He says, "If you do it outside, there is this whole foreign idea; you know it has been done in the past, and this whole topic of extraction comes in place" (Interview notes).

The seventh approach involves dealing with financial issues in a healthy manner. Again, the former mindset of a few BMBs and their point of view of Christians through the Islamic lens may still influence their thinking, causing them to expect financial aid from Christians, especially foreign workers

(Interview notes). Such individuals may remind the reader of those reckless believers in the Thessalonian church, regarding whom it was said, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly ...” (1 Thessalonians 5:14), and “we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread” (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12).

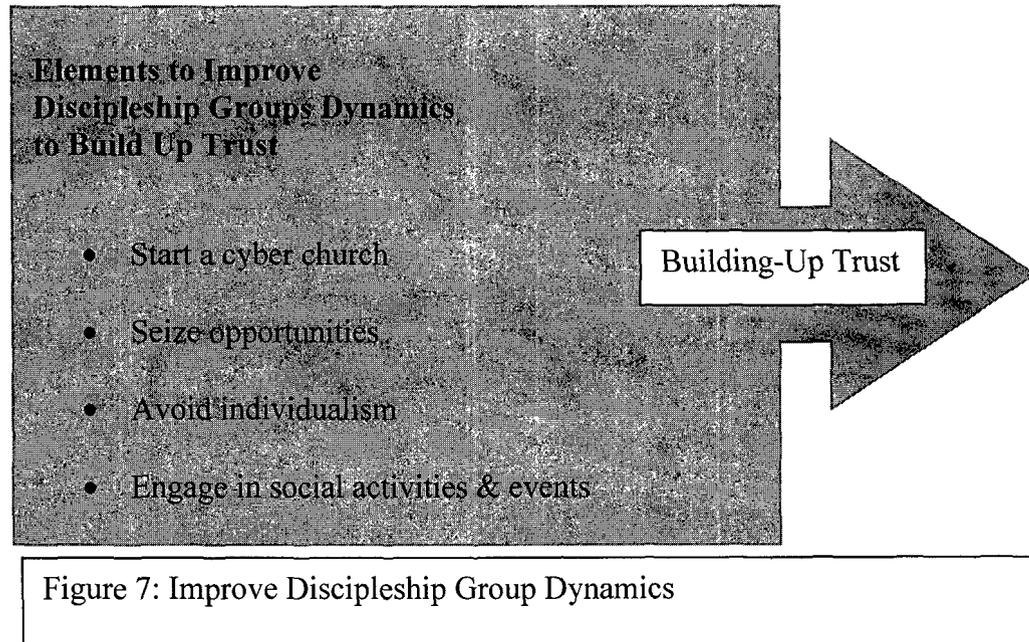
The following ideas derived from the collected data offer good counsel for improving group dynamics through dealing transparently with finances, avoiding unforeseen problems within the discipleship groups: “Don’t feel sorry for them because often, sometimes Middle Easterners would come in, and they would feel so anxious for them because of their economic poverty that they want to do something to help, when actually it probably would be better not to help them in that sense” (Interview notes). To impose healthy dynamics within discipleship groups, believers within the group must work together transparently when it comes to handling financial issues. This will improve the level of trust among the BMBs.

Data included practical suggestions from the respondents who are engaged with church planting and discipleship groups, and have experience dealing with the local people and the contextual issues facing the BMBs:

One of the things that helped to build trust was that they had decided as we mentioned to have a safe for funds to give as the group agreed to send them out. And I think that helped with the trust. So then there were people willing to work together on giving money. It was a small committee that decided on how to give the money, or if there was a need if they would give money or not, or how much they would give. And I think that helped with the trust. Also as they were contributing to this I think that helped with their trust. (Interview notes)

The written survey and the interviews with the facilitators generated practical suggestions out of the respondents' experience and not based on their personal opinion. My proof of this is that those suggestions coincide with my experience as well.

From the above mentioned aspects, the ultimate goal of improving the fellowship dynamics is to build up trust among BMBs belonging to a given discipleship group. Improving discipleship group interactions and moral forces to build up the trust needed among the BMBs were summarized in the above mentioned seven elements: establishing cyber churches, seizing opportunities, avoiding individualism, engaging in social activities, encouraging healthy, gender-inclusive interaction, avoiding extraction, and managing finances transparently (Figure 7). Perseverance, patience and love are needed in order to achieve the goal of healthy discipleship group dynamics.



### Sharing Responsibilities with the Local BMBs

Following the 'Spiritual Maturity' and 'Improve Discipleship Group Dynamics', the third fundamental recommendation of the suggested remedies to overcome barriers to the discipleship process in the AP is to share responsibilities with local and mature BMBs. Sharing responsibilities will give the local believers the sense of belonging. While they continue to grow and train to take over leadership responsibilities within the discipleship group's context, they also will continue to mature spiritually. The following facets represent examples extracted from the collected data where the local BMBs are encouraged to share the responsibility with other workers.

### **First, Sharing the Vision of Evangelism**

When BMBs become mature, they adopt the Great Commission and are encouraged to join hands in God's vision. Some groups want to reach out and tell their families and others and follow up with those who are interested, even if they live a distance away. Others start inviting their families to meet together, which is a positive step. Piper et al. in their book *Finish the Mission: Bringing the Gospel to the Unreached and Unengaged* state, "Someone was invited to share with eighty people gathered in a room in response to his housemates hearing him singing joyful songs glorifying Jesus. People asked questions and became curious" (Piper et al. 2012). Responses from the research included suggestions for teaching BMBs to follow the Holy Spirit's leading such as, "[Being] grounded in the Scripture and led by the Holy Spirit to see God do something amazing with their relatives and their friends, their communities and forward" (Interview notes).

In the precedent case of one of the NA churches mentioned in Chapter Three, a BMB shared about the critical need for gathering together, stating, "That's just three, four Christians from my same village...we just knew that we need...to worship God together, we need to read the Bible and to grow" (Interview notes). Others also highlighted the importance of serving together. They spoke of wanting to see nationals invite people and lead groups themselves. "Now I do not read the Book with just one person. I ask them to bring a trusted relative with them there by creating a group from the beginning," "The latest research from Disciple-Making Movements (DMM) and others is that the fastest

and deepest growth is among those who share bits of the truth within their family, clan or workplace to see who is interested in knowing more. And to form study groups from those networks” (Survey and interview notes). Such data confirms that when BMBs share the vision of evangelism and reach out to their own people, it will reflect positively on their own spiritual growth, eventually enabling them to overcome the barrier presented by a lack of vision as discussed earlier in this chapter.

### **Second, Sharing the Responsibilities of Pastoral Care**

This approach starts with sharing the responsibility for gathering people together. It was suggested that BMBs organize “a kind of Church Planting Movement (CPM) style, aggregate style, where we bring people together from different generations and different styles, and different sexes, male, female, etc.”. “Are there BMBs leaders who are ready now to lead this coming and emerging congregation?” “So they are doing some of the follow-up that needs to be done,” “I think that they will learn these leadership skills. I think they need to continue to be encouraged and built up in the Word and the Holy Spirit,” “You need to have a mature and established support group behind a teacher in any location,” “Encourage local believers with a vision to gather believers, to visit other brothers and contact them through phone and email,” “So our program (PT) was just a tool that enabled him to go from the step of following-up with people who are now

Christians and enabling them to gather together and have a discipleship tool, early discipleship tool” (Interview notes).

Those quotes, as well as my own observations, concluded the essential need to share pastoral care responsibilities and to entrust the local BMBs to carry out those tasks. In my repeated visits to the area, once I encountered an obstacle where the local authority of High-Security Country #4 denied my entry and deported me. The only believer known to me in that entire country was waiting for me to continue the discipleship program that he had started during my previous visit to that country. In order not to leave him without any pastoral care, I communicated with another BMB who lived in another High-Security Country but had a tribal connection with the country I was denied entry to. We shared the responsibility of pastoral care for that lonely BMB. The other believer was able to easily and securely visit him and disciple him in my absence, and I was very encouraged to know that since then, both BMBs have been meeting on a regular basis through technology as well as face-to-face for discipleship and pastoral care.

### **Third, Sharing the Responsibilities of Leadership Training**

The responsibility of forming and leading discipleship groups, if shared with the local BMBs, will be contextualized in a positive way, adapted to the local culture. Equipping those leaders spiritually will enhance their competency and develop their leadership skills.

Survey respondents shared different ideas in this regard, but what resonated the most was sharing the leadership responsibilities by the example of laying down one's life for others. Responsibilities of leadership extend toward understanding and experiencing the theology of suffering, as described by a believer:

I think you need a certain level of boldness to take the risk of, knowing that the person who is in front of me could turn me in. Could tell on me. But being willing to do that, it just means being ready to lay their life down. And someone has to go first. And then the other person can meet them. But if neither one of them is willing to make that step and say okay, I'm going to go ahead, at whatever cost. Unless you can do that....Then you can't begin to form the group. Someone has to take that risk.  
(Interview notes)

Data, history, my own observations and experience united together to reassure BMBs who were ready to lay down their lives for the sake of the gospel, and they emerged to be local leaders who lead in boldness. One, who once led a group of BMBs in one of the high risk countries in the AP (High-Security Country #7), worked with a team to distribute many Arabic Bibles and copies of the Jesus Film to demonstrators during the latest Arab Spring demonstrations. The PALM program encourages those leaders to apply the four-generation discipleship format shown in 2 Timothy 2:2.

#### **Fourth, Sharing the Resources Such as PALM Program**

Respondents reported the benefits reaped from using PALM courses in Algeria and recommended the same courses for the AP discipleship groups. This material has been used throughout the church, not only for small group studies,

but also in sermons or in other teaching contexts (Haines 2013). Churches with no contact with PALM workers had somehow learned of the program and were using it in many different ways. My experience in ministry in the AP witnessed sharing resources among discipleship groups across the AP is not limited to PALM materials but it extends to include electronic materials and other literature resources.

From the above, it is evident that preparing the local BMBs for ministry is essential to securing continuity and growth for the national church across the AP. Shared responsibilities may start with a vision and progress from a strategy to plans. Evangelism and follow-up ensure the quantitative growth of the church. This means through evangelism and follow-up, more believers are added to discipleship groups. Pastoral care, leadership development and sharing training resources among existing leaders will guarantee qualitative growth for the local body of believers. And this means that the congregants will grow spiritually.

#### Socializing to Build Up Trust

This fourth element of the suggested remedies to overcome barriers to the discipleship process in the AP entails building trust through social activities. Building trust is necessary to overcome the internal barrier of lack of trust so as to encourage consistent gathering in discipleship groups for worship and fellowship. To build up the trust, respondents put forward suggestions such as the following: “They need to feel and understand that there is a bigger family who is here and willing to help” (Survey notes). They shared that BMBs feel loneliness as some

Christian churches refuse them. Nominal Christians do not always accept them, and even true believers do not always welcome them. These phrases confirm my point; “So they need to feel that they are a part of the church,” that “they have friends, they have families, they have people who are praying for them,” “not just because they are Muslims and they come to Christ and they have challenges, but because they are persons, like everyone else” (Interviews notes). It was also suggested that trust could be built by having “regular visits, quarterly visits with those who are teaching on the ground to encourage them, gather them together, get them to share their stories and give them further training so that they’re continually growing” (Interviews notes). Respondents also suggested the approach of building up the trust through social connection and interactions, echoing one who states, “They get to know you as a person and then the message you are sharing is shared with the whole family and they are all interacting with it” (Interview notes). Some authors share the same approach:

In many Muslim cultures, hospitality and sharing a meal are a sacred trust, a bond that cannot be betrayed. This tradition resonates powerfully with the Lord’s Supper as a place of bonding, blessing, peace, and reconciliation within the community, and even with a universal church across cultures and history. (Adams and Adams 2011, 145)

These phrases highlight the value of understanding the person in community, as well as the value of the community itself. In my pilot project, I emphasized this aspect of socializing. Food played a key role in binding the group together. Sharing one’s story with others broke the ice. Laughing, singing and

dancing brought the group closer, and trust was built and the group met on a weekly basis for three months at the same location.

Because community is highly valued, various interviewees suggested strengthening social ties among the BMBs. Collected data identified the need to build a sense of community and suggested that through hospitality, trust will grow organically. Respondents recommended inviting members of their group to a gathering without revealing to each guest who else would be present, putting believers or seekers in situations where they could meet others informally; encouraging local believers to meet each other socially, for coffee or a meal; leading discussions and offering teaching about how trust is built and preserved; helping members work through their conflicts as a group; organizing large group socials; visiting people two by two rather than alone (Interview notes).

Not only hospitality, but as mentioned earlier under improving the discipleship group dynamics, day retreats and outings bring people together and help in building up the trust needed. This practice is supported by these phrases: “They had some day retreats and that was helpful,” “One of the things was that there were some day retreats where there were some people who actually took the step of being baptized,” “And of course that pulled people together as well”, “But I feel that those are positive and it’s helping families and the mothers who are often shut out to bring them into the fellowship” (Interview notes).

From Phase 1 of this action research, the barriers facing BMBs were identified, and remedies were recommended from the collected data and discussed

above. Those remedies are “Spiritual Maturity,” “Improve Discipleship Group Dynamics,” “Sharing Responsibilities,” and “Socializing to Build up Trust.”

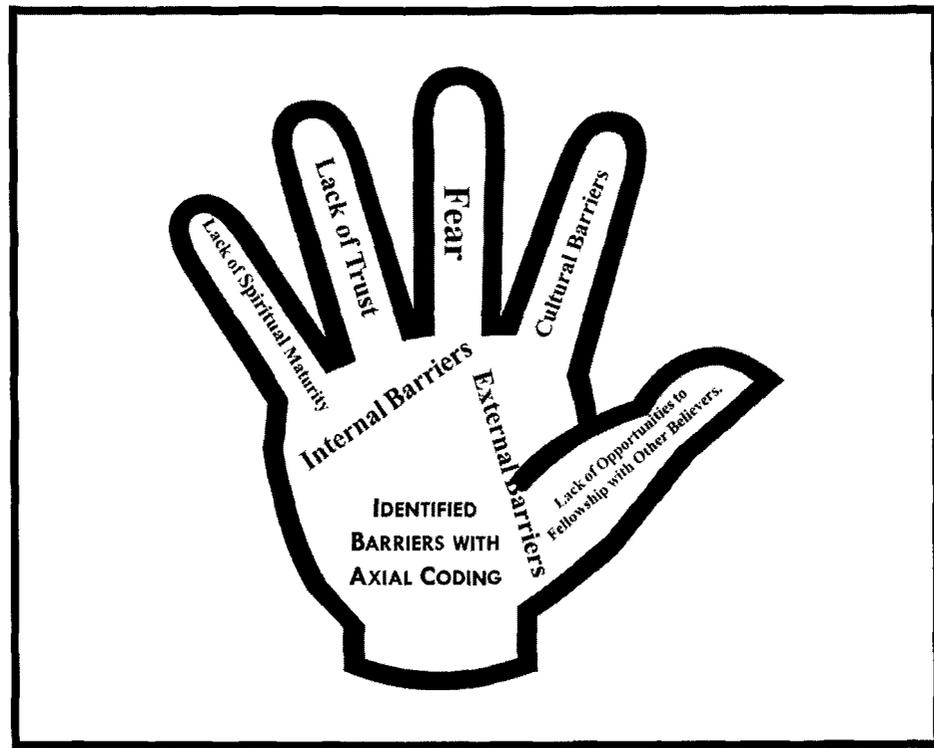
These four fundamental recommendations comprise the core of the pilot project that was executed in Phase 2 of this research. The following section summarizes the action steps of the pilot project that was carried out by the working group. In addition, evaluation of the pilot project is presented at the end of this section.

### **Pilot Project to Overcome Barriers**

Figure 8 below summarizes the identified barriers using the Axial coding narrowed down from the collected data. For illustration, I chose the contextualized design of the palm hand as a teaching tool. This teaching tool refers to a charm known to folk Islam as “Khamsa & Khomaisa” that was mentioned in Chapter Two (Figure 8). It is part of the local folklore and is believed to offer protection from the evil eye. I also chose this symbol later in the following section to refer to the contextual solutions that the pilot project produced (Figure 9).

After examination and analysis of the data, I chose to address the connected barriers over which BMBs have control. Although both the Cultural Barriers and the Lack of Opportunity to Fellowship with Other Believers barrier come under the category of uncontrollable external barriers, I chose to include the latter barrier in the pilot project because in my opinion it was necessary to encourage BMBs to intentionally seek opportunities to fellowship with other

believers. BMBs have no control over either the local culture or the existence of known believers in their vicinity. The other three barriers—Fear, Lack of Trust, and Lack of Spiritual Maturity—are internal barriers that can be managed and controlled (Figure 8). As internal barriers are addressed, the expected outcome is that BMBs will be strengthened to persevere and overcome the external barriers of culture.



**Figure 8: “Khamisa & Khomaisa”—Summary of Barriers narrowed down by Axial Coding**

To achieve the goal of enabling victory over barriers hindering BMBs from spiritual growth and discipleship, the collected data suggested that the pilot project should focus on equipping them to cope effectively with the top barriers of

fear, lack of trust, lack of spiritual maturity, and lack of opportunity to fellowship with other believers.

A pilot project was designed to increase and improve discipleship groups among the BMBs in the AP. Equipping BMBs to overcome the identified barriers that hinder such gatherings was a critical step in achieving this strategic goal. The approach for this pilot project focused on those four fundamental recommendations suggested by the respondents and identified through the qualitative analysis: Spiritual Maturity, Improvement of Discipleship Group Dynamics, Sharing Responsibilities, and Socializing to Build up Trust, as explained above (Figure 6). BMBs who participated in the survey and interview explicitly voiced their desire to have their opinion heard with regard to remedies to discipleship group challenges and the use of discipleship curriculum in the AP area. They expressed their concerns regarding the use of Western materials by some mission agencies discipling local BMBs.

Armed with this information, I then formed a working group comprised of 11 BMBs plus 2 BCBs (Believers from Christian Background) and a local leader. I chose them through a local connection with a church leader who resides in the AP. They were selected because of their involvement in discipleship groups and their proximity to each other. I launched the pilot project with a three-day conference, during which I did the following, guided by the data collected:

1. Listened to the working group in order to determine their worldview;

2. Shared with them the barriers identified through the collected data and recorded their input;
3. Following the suggestion of T4Global, I assigned clear tasks for them to produce contextually appropriate materials e.g., that could be used by discipleship groups to foster spiritual growth and encourage adherence.
4. In other words, the working group was given the responsibility and the ownership of discipling under supervision. In addition to the verbal consent that was granted to me to use these data in my thesis in our first meeting with the working group, a written consensus was e-mailed to me on December 22, 2014, from their leader on behalf of the group to mention their work.

#### Execution of First Cycle of the Pilot Project

I mentioned earlier that from the data collected and from my personal observation and experience, together with the respondents' suggestions, I incorporated a remedy to overcome the identified controllable barriers. As shown in Figure 6, four fundamental recommendations comprise the core of the pilot project: Spiritual Maturity, Improve Discipleship Group Dynamics, Sharing Responsibilities, and Socializing to Build up Trust. In order to achieve the goal of overcoming the identified barriers, I plan to use the collected data to equip BMBs toward spiritual maturity and to improve discipleship group dynamics by initiating a self-producing Discipleship Program developed by the national BMBs in the area, where the elements of the pilot project could be practiced and tested.

To create such a program in a contextually accepted format, the initial data collected led me to conclude that an orality approach should be chosen (see using oral approach in Chapter 3 and orality preference in Chapter 5). I connected with T4Global Ministries to seek their professional help and expertise as their ministry focuses on ministering to “oral cultures that cannot, do not or will not read” (as indicated on T4Global website). We came to a mutual agreement to execute my pilot project aimed at overcoming barriers extracted from this research. T4Global appointed Dr. Mark Overstreet to join me in the field. I also connected with my network in the AP area to pilot my project through the working group.

To facilitate our discussion with the working group, I chose to address a few questions to explore the group’s worldview. The main purpose of this action was to pinpoint worldview, contextualization and orality issues as they relate to the targeted BMBs in the area. From June 7 to 11, 2014, I travelled to the AP to meet the working group face-to-face. As collected data had identified the oral learning preference of BMBs in the AP, a series of individual meetings and group discussions were organized with the working group based on the following guidelines:

**Purpose:** To provide an oral-based program for BMBs as a model and means to overcome the major barriers hindering the believers’ adherence among BMBs in the AP area.

**Vision:** Incarnational, contextual oral-based platform to share with BMBs who are growing in biblical knowledge the responsibilities within their discipleship groups to help them face barriers and encourage adherence.

**Strategy:** For BMB training to be implemented successfully in an oral culture, the following orality concepts must be incorporated into the program strategy:

- Experiential, contextual and concrete, not abstract or academic.
- Group learning (community), not individual.
- Circular and redundant discussion, not linear lectures.
- Biblical, theological content transmitted in a culture-sensitive, context-driven manner, not as separate units.
- Applied learning, not head knowledge.

(Modified from an original document written by MMO, T4Global)

While the above listed guidelines were developed for the larger concept of Orality Education, I chose to tailor the strategy to my pilot project, the first round of which consisted of a number of steps that involved application of the above mentioned strategy. Several sessions were spent grappling with the experiential worldview, contextualization and orality issues as they relate to BMBs in the AP area. Listening to the local BMBs represented in the working group, and then sharing with them the findings of this research were the first two steps in my pilot project. Circular and redundant discussion took place during those initial meetings, which were followed by an intense conference in June. The working group was then divided into three sub-groups to work on the top barriers extracted from the data collected. Each sub-group was assigned to work on a different barrier, i.e., fear, lack of trust and lack of opportunity to fellowship with other believers, in light of the underlying theme of developing spiritual maturity. It was the third step taken in my pilot project to assign clear task to each sub-group. Their mandate was to create a curriculum of biblical, theological content to be transmitted in a culture-sensitive, context-driven manner, addressing the barriers. The content consisted of poetry, local proverbs and Arabic songs suited to the local culture of the AP. Because the identified cultural barriers are external and it

is so difficult to control their influence, I chose to focus the pilot project on identified controllable barriers, while contextualizing the material as mentioned above. On June 12, 2014, an outline of the second phase of the pilot project was sent to the working group (Appendix 7).

In addition to the first three steps mentioned above, i.e., listening, sharing, and assigning tasks, there were two more steps to complete the model, namely follow-up and evaluation (Figure 9).

### Follow-Up

Each sub-group within the working group spent several weeks identifying contextual Bible stories related to their assigned barrier (Colgate 2011, 205-214). Adding extra dimension to the project were contextual elements such as current life folklore, dramas, songs and indigenous proverbs/stories used to address community issues and introduce God's Word and His directions for living as followers of Jesus (Gray and Gray 2011, 30-35). From the beginning of July to the end of September 2014 (12 weeks), the sub-groups composed, recorded, and edited audio content to serve as a pioneering contextualized Khaliji curriculum, to be refined and reproduced for future use in Mobile Schools (audio playback devices). Collectively, the working group recorded the following:

- 40 Bible stories in Arabic: (15 stories to address the fear factor, 14 to deal with lack of trust, and 11 related to Christian community fellowship);
- 30 Arabic songs;

- 14 poetry quotations; and
- 52 proverbs.

### Evaluation

By the end of September 2014 data collection ceased, and shortly after, a newly designed survey was sent out via Survey Monkey to evaluate the effect, behaviour and cognition of those who shared the responsibility for and participated in this pilot project (Appendix 8). I sent out the survey in a textual format to the 13 respondents in the working group. The working group leader informed me that because of the orality communication preference, only three respondents completed the written responses to the survey. The other ten individuals preferred to reply verbally to their leader. The working group leader updated me with their responses when we met again face-to-face in November 2014 in Europe.

The data were analyzed with a focus on the learning outcome to evaluate working group execution to the pilot project. The ABC evaluation (Affect, Behaviour and Cognitive) showed encouraging signs toward spiritual maturity that enabled them to face their own personal barriers. Comments included the following: “I became a more positive person and my love increased to others,” and “When I studied ‘fellowship,’ my emotions and thoughts were changed, and I went forward in my faith and found the others as my support and help as one body in Christ” confirm positive “Affect” of this pilot project on the working group.

Also phrases like: “I have confidence more in God and in others as I look positively to the collective work together,” and “I was high tempered person maybe out of fear and lack of trust in others, but now my behaviour has changed. I was aggressive in my discussions with the others to prove that I am always right, but my way of talking has changed. I learned to attend regularly to our group and gained self-confidence as we shared together the responsibility to achieve the task together” (Survey notes). These statements confirm that the “Behaviour” aspect of the pilot project was achieved by the respondents.

The third aspect of measuring the learning outcome of the pilot project after the Affect and Behaviour mentioned above is related to the “Cognitive” part concerning overcoming the barriers. The following comments suggest that knowing the Word of God is imperative for BMBs, especially for those who are newly born in faith: “I had some fear of talking about my faith, but a conceptual change has taken place after the conference .... My recognition and knowledge in the many stories of the Bible created in me more love toward God and those around me,” and “Confidence: As the conference was in the beginning of my faith, I had a lack of confidence in the people, and this of course because of fear and lack of love...” (Survey note).

The result extracted from the evaluation survey was that the pilot project was designed and executed to help the BMBs to overcome barriers that hinder them from regularly assembling in discipleship groups for worship and

fellowship. This pilot project helped them to recognize those barriers and to deal with them biblically and successfully.

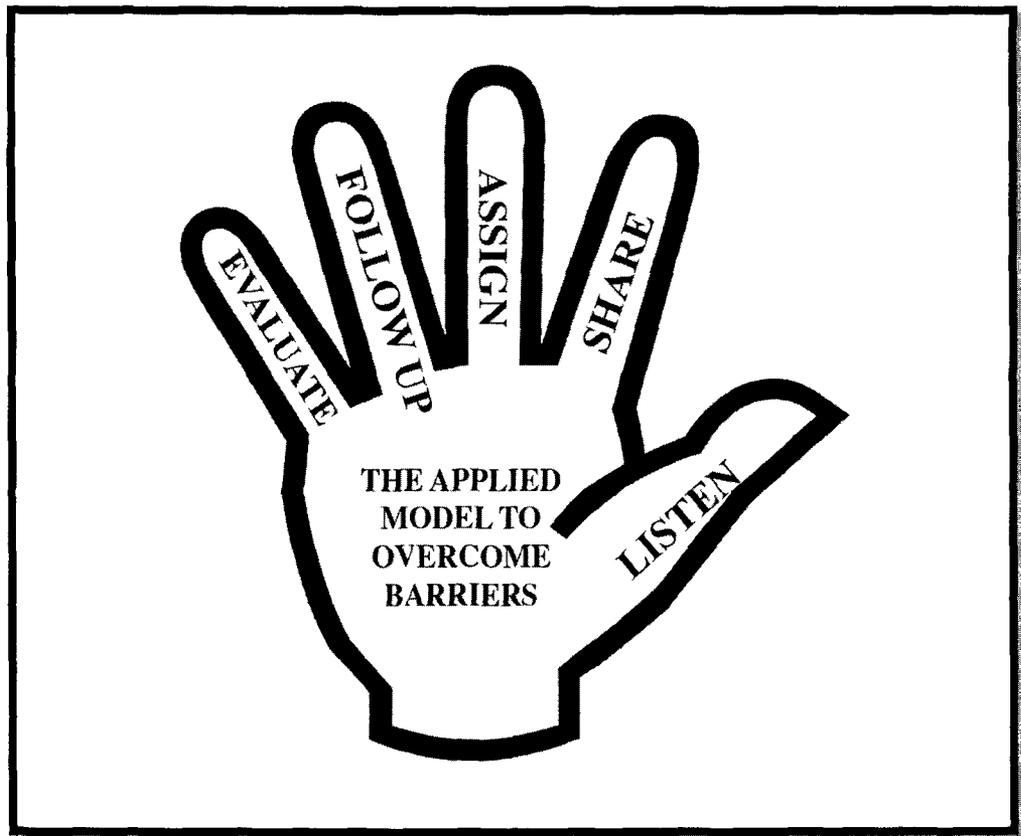
In his verbal reporting on evaluation of the pilot project, the working group leader testified that this pilot project helped three sibling BMBs from within the group to overcome their fear as they shared their faith with their parents;

While they were actively involved in the pilot project, they [three siblings among the working group] overcame the fear factor within and decided to share their new faith with their parents. In the beginning, the parents were shocked and expressed their disapproval. However, in a few days later, they calmed down and accepted the decision of their son and two daughters. The parents eventually supported them, and the three BMBs were encouraged and became an inspiration to the others in their group. (Evaluation notes)

The data collected from this evaluation survey revealed that the model of listening through asking good questions, sharing responsibilities, assigning a specific task for locals to work out (a curriculum in this case), follow-up, and evaluation can be successfully applied in the context of BMBs living inside the AP (Figure 9).

I chose to use the same teaching tool of the contextual symbol “Khamsa & Khomaisa”, used earlier in Figure 8, to help BMBs visualize the model so that it will be easy to remember, especially for those who are oral preference learners.

Evaluation will continue and the next cycles of the project will be carried out. The ultimate goal is to develop and equip BMBs in the AP area to face the barriers that hinder them from gathering for worship and fellowship, to be disciplined and equipped to disciple others.



**Figure 9: “Khamisa & Khomaisa”—The Applied Model to Overcome Barriers**

## Summary

The outcome of this research could be summarized in obtaining data that helped me to identify barriers that face BMBs in the AP and hinder them from committing to discipleship groups in their area. Also, the collected data brought fundamental recommendations on how to overcome such barriers. Through the written survey and the individual interviews, barriers could be identified and classified under two main categories: external and internal. Using the teaching tool of Khamsa & Khomaisa, those barriers were presented as external ones which included cultural barriers and lack of opportunities to fellowship with other BMBs, as well as internal barriers, revealed by data as fear, lack of trust and lack of spiritual maturity.

As a result of the feedback through the collected data, the pilot project was designed based on four fundamental recommendations: spiritual maturity, improving discipleship group dynamics, sharing responsibilities, and socializing to build up the trust. The pilot project was executed and, using the teaching tool of Khamsa & Khomaisa again, I summarized the applied model of remedies for dealing with the barriers as the following: to listen to the local believers, to share the responsibility with the national body of believers, to assign to the local BMBs clear tasks toward their personal growth and ministry to others, to follow up on the achievement of those tasks and to evaluate the outcomes.

## **CHAPTER SIX:**

### **CONCLUSION**

This research deals with barriers hindering BMBs in the AP from attending discipleship groups. Data collected through a qualitative written survey and individual interviews identified two types of barriers: external and internal.

In carrying out my analysis, I grouped the collective data of both the disciples and facilitators together; however, in retrospect, a more effective approach would have been to first analyze the two sets of data separately and then make comparisons between the two groups.

The collected data suggested a few approaches to overcoming the identified barriers. Through the collective work of a group of BMBs residing in the AP, a pilot project was executed and then evaluated.

#### **Summary of Findings**

The identified external barriers were cultural barriers, a lack of opportunity to fellowship with other believers, unqualified leaders/teachers, Islamic culture embedded in the community, and absence of leadership. Internal barriers, on the other hand, were characterized by fear, lack of trust, personality

and Islamic culture embedded in characteristics, lack of spiritual maturity, lack of time, lack of vision and an oral learning preference.

A pilot project was initiated to design tools to help BMBs overcome the top identified barriers using the second cycle of Axial Coding. Manageable or controllable barriers were narrowed down to include three main internal ones, including fear, lack of trust, and lack of spiritual maturity plus one external barrier: lack of opportunities for Christian fellowship (Figure 8). The pilot project applied the fundamental recommendations revealed by the data to overcome the barriers. Those recommendations were improving discipleship group dynamics, sharing responsibilities, socializing to build trust and spiritual growth toward maturity.

As much as themes were driven to form the framework to identify the barriers facing BMBs in the discipleship process, in the same manner, other themes and categories of remedies were extracted and acted as the foundation of the pilot project, to overcome the negative forces of the barriers.

### **Issues on Which to Focus**

There are a few issues to consider in any study related to BMBs and their context. The study demonstrated that while the culture of BMBs emphasizes learning in communities and groups, Western culture tends to encourage individualism instead. The data suggested that this issue exists due to a lack of trust in other fellow BMBs and the fear that results in return. Furthermore, BMBs face identity issues. Since their original identity is based in Islam (Ummah), they

lose their sense of belonging when they convert to Christ and start their search for a new identity. Also, apart from experiencing a lack of community or loss of identity, one of the challenging issues currently facing BMBs is culturally based in the family, i.e., how to deal with circumstances like rejection in light of the overarching issue of shame and honour. Finally, the need for more orally based ministry clearly exists among the BMBs in the AP.

### **Overcoming Barriers through the Pilot Project**

This research demonstrated that the challenge facing the discipleship process of BMBs is not the lack of discipleship materials or the quality of materials, as seen in the PALM program and its critical evaluation in this study. PALM and its PT curricula were commended for their contextual viability in the AP. However, the real challenge is the obstacles hindering BMBs from accessing those materials and their inability to form or consistently attend a discipleship group. Barriers are mainly caused by control issues, both external and internal. The study suggested the approach of fortifying the inner being toward spiritual maturity in order to help BMBs overcome their fear and lack of trust and to be able to resist the external barriers while continuing to nurture each other and mature in healthy fellowship gatherings.

### **The Role of Spiritual Maturity**

As discussed in Chapter Five under Lack of Spiritual Maturity, it was clear that the lack of such maturity is considered one of the internal barriers that

can be overcome through biblical education and biblical discipline, which can stir up within BMBs a genuine desire to seek opportunities to engage with fellow brothers and sisters. Spiritual maturity may not be seen as the most effective solution to the external barriers of cultural nature, lack of or unqualified leadership, Islamic culture embedded in community, and lack of opportunities to fellowship with other believers. However, it still has the power to strengthen BMBs internally, enabling them to overcome their fear, lack of trust and other barriers. This dynamic of strengthening the inner being helps BMBs to persevere and thrive in their faith while growing in the midst of challenges and difficulties, and to navigate the discipleship process successfully.

The study generated insight that spiritual maturity is the underpinning that supports BMBs and equips them to confront the barriers that hinder their discipleship process. On such a foundation, BMBs can build their trust in one another, cast away their fear, and be filled with love that brings them together in Christian fellowship, giving them the singular mindset needed for teamwork and sharing responsibilities.

#### The Role of Improving Discipleship Group Dynamics

Strong group dynamics are vital to ensure that BMBs consistently maintain their attendance at gatherings with other believers, as data identified the social needs of BMBs to belong to a community. Improving group dynamics is essential to developing a sense of that community for BMBs. This study

suggested building up trust within the group through elevating the new family of faith over any other cultural ties in order to fortify the sense of belonging and the honour of acceptance. Making use of technology, seizing opportunities, focusing on community while avoiding individualism, giving special attention to women and youth, and being transparent when dealing with finances are the tools toward innovation and improvement of such dynamics. Introducing new learning approaches, such as orality, is another way to encourage discipleship.

#### The Role of Sharing Responsibilities

Sharing responsibilities starts with sharing of the vision toward a growing church. This study suggested that the vision to reach out to the community be followed by sharing the responsibility of evangelism and of the pastoral care for those who come to faith, while nurturing emergent leaders as servants.

#### The Role of Socializing to Build up Trust

Building trust organically is the approach suggested by this study. Valuing people as persons is encouraged to overcome lack of trust. This research has indicated that through social activities, the sense of belonging grows, loyalty is cultivated and trust is built.

#### The Role of Continuous Training Servants for Ministry

Through this action research and its outcome, there was evidence of growth in spiritual maturity, improvement in group dynamics and increased

sharing of responsibilities as well as sharing the participants' views toward ministry and service.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

This research concluded that persecution is a result of the shame and honour culture that is embedded in the Islamic culture of the AP. On the other hand, this study pointed to the theology of suffering as a biblical teaching, and any believer is given the gift of suffering equal to the gift of faith. An examination of contextualization in the Muslim contexts might bring to light new insights to deal with this salient issue, e.g., the persecution of BMBs who confess their faith, or the avoidance of persecution for those who continue to identify themselves as Muslims.

As mentioned in Chapter Five under Cultural Barriers and Fear Factor, cultural and Islamic barriers are seen to supersede the freedom of belief and basic human rights in the midst of a tribal system and Islamic bylaws that deal with apostasy. How does the international community look at the AP countries and governments through the lens of human rights? The relevance of cross-cultural issues and international laws offers wide scenarios for further research.

Another suggested study is related to the issue of the BMBs' future families and their personal interaction within marriage. This study should focus on the deep roots within the Islamic culture as well as its tribal origins. It is considered for female BMBs as they face multiple cultural challenges that need to be addressed if they are to raise healthy Christian families in the AP.

One study worth investigating is also linked to the above mentioned freedom of belief and human rights. It is the role of the governments and leaders of Muslim countries to respect the minorities in their countries and the right of their Christian citizens to have their own places of worship. Such a study may focus on research of the outlawing of building church structures within countries in the AP, and to investigate the role of those countries leaders to encourage church buildings or if not, to publicly outlaw to prohibit them so the international community become aware of such practices. The study may also focus on the efforts being done by Muslim countries leaders to support the spread of construction of mosques in the Western countries, while they may be passive to support same for church buildings in their own countries. Fear of government is one of the issues that discourage BMBs from publicly confessing their faith. The relevance of this issue and its link to the freedom of worship within those countries suggests possibilities for further research.

### **Summary**

The church in the Arab world, especially in the Arabian Peninsula (AP) area, is emerging, but not without challenges. One of the most pressing issues affecting her growth is the ability to gather regularly in home-based discipleship groups. The purpose for this research was to identify those challenges and determine remedies to overcome the barriers which impede gatherings for discipleship purposes. This research into identifying such barriers and recommending remedies to manage them was first placed in the context of the

barriers caused by the demanding cultural issues that are influenced by Islam. The theological grounding of this research was outlined and the inherent tensions between the doctrines of Islam and Christianity were discussed, with an examination of discipleship groups and discipleship in the New Testament and the cost of carrying the cross and following Jesus.

The Qualitative Action Research approach was used to collect data through a written survey followed by individual interviews to identify those barriers. The findings were analyzed and two categories of contextual barriers were concluded: external and internal. The identified external barriers included: cultural barriers, lack of opportunity to fellowship with other believers, unqualified leaders/teachers, Islamic culture embedded in community, and absence of leadership. The internal barriers included: fear, lack of trust, lack of spiritual maturity, lack of time and vision, Islamic culture embedded in characteristics, and oral learning preference. A consolidated list of barriers was narrowed down and grouped in a list of five that were highlighted in a pilot project. That list included Islamic and contextual culture, lack of opportunities to fellowship with other believers, fear, lack of trust and lack of spiritual maturity.

In the fifth chapter, based on the fundamental recommendations gathered through the data, I drew my conclusions of the pilot project that offered contextually sustainable solutions focused on counteracting those identified barriers listed above. I came up with the five-aspect model of listening to the indigenous people, sharing information and responsibilities, assigning tasks with

hands-on trainings, follow-up, and evaluation. In the final chapter, I suggested some possible benefits of implementing changes to the practices of those ministering among BMBs in the AP and beyond.

## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix 1:

### PALM



#### **(PREPARING ARAB-WORLD LEADERS FOR MINISTRY)**

PALM (Preparing Arab world Leaders for Ministry) grew out of the need to disciple young believers from a Muslim background (BMBs). In the mid-nineties, a team of Arab World Ministries (AWM) workers and nationals set forth what they felt were the essential discipleship needs of a BMB and put together 10 courses, consisting of five short lessons each. In the year 2000, as the need for more advanced studies grew, AWM embarked on the formation of a full program of studies in four levels, designed specifically for BMBs. PALM program is currently a ministry of Pioneers International after Pioneers merged with AWM in 2010.

A broad range of topics are covered in the program. These include the doctrine of the Trinity, salvation, the inspiration of Scripture, persecution, the gifts of the Spirit, Christian ethics, family life, evangelism, and a host of other subjects. The courses mainly use the inductive study method with questions to be answered about passages of Scripture.

The courses are being used in at least seven countries across the Arab world, with over 80 study groups in operation. Because the program is made available free online and on CDs, there are probably many other study groups using it which the PALM team is unaware of.

PALM, also known as Progressing Together, currently has a curriculum for two complete levels. The first level uses the original 10 courses, plus one on "Forgiveness and Reconciliation," to meet basic discipleship needs. The second level, designed to help well established believers keep growing in their faith and knowledge of Scripture, consists of 14 foundational courses and five optional courses. PALM is now developing the third level which is intended for training leaders within the national churches in North Africa, the Middle East, and the Gulf.

The courses are available in five languages in Level One (French, Arabic, English, Spanish, and Kabyle). Most of the Level Two courses are available in English, French, and Arabic. The majority of the courses also have a group leader's version with the answers to the questions supplied.

The Level Two program was developed in cooperation with a large number of Christian organizations and national believers. PALM places no restrictions on the broadest and most flexible use of the courses, other than that they should not be changed without permission. Some of the organizations using the first two levels include Charstar, Brethren Churches, Frontiers, C&MA, GBU (InterVarsity), OM, and AWEMA, to name a few. All are invited to access and use the courses freely. They can be found at ([www.takwin-masihi.org](http://www.takwin-masihi.org)) or ([www.progressingtogether.org](http://www.progressingtogether.org)) on the Internet.

PT

### Progressing Together

‘Progressing Together’ is PALM curriculum of Bible study courses and training resources for all stages of Christian maturity from initial discipleship onwards. It is designed for Churches and Christians where they live and minister in the Arab world. All courses are available in Arabic, English and French; some are available also in Spanish and Kabeel languages.

L1

### Progressing Together Level One

courses

This level contains 11 discipleship courses for the young believer, written by experienced workers. They are also known as the ‘Growth’ courses. Each course has 5 lessons; the total time needed is around 15 hrs. Ideally they should be used in group study: each participant prepares the lesson - taking 1 to 2 hours - and the group meets together with a leader to discuss their answers and pray together. These courses may also be studied by correspondence. Courses are available in Arabic, English, French, Spanish and Kabeel languages.

L2

### Progressing Together Level Two

Courses

This series of 15 courses (14 core required courses + 1 elective) is for all Christians who have completed Level 1 or a similar basic discipleship program and who want to grow in their knowledge of Christ and service to His Church. The courses are divided into four sections: Biblical, Doctrinal, Practical and Church. There are generally 9 lessons in each course; the total study time needed is around 30 hours with the exam. The program is equivalent to a year of study at a Bible college or institute, and a certificate of study is offered upon completion.

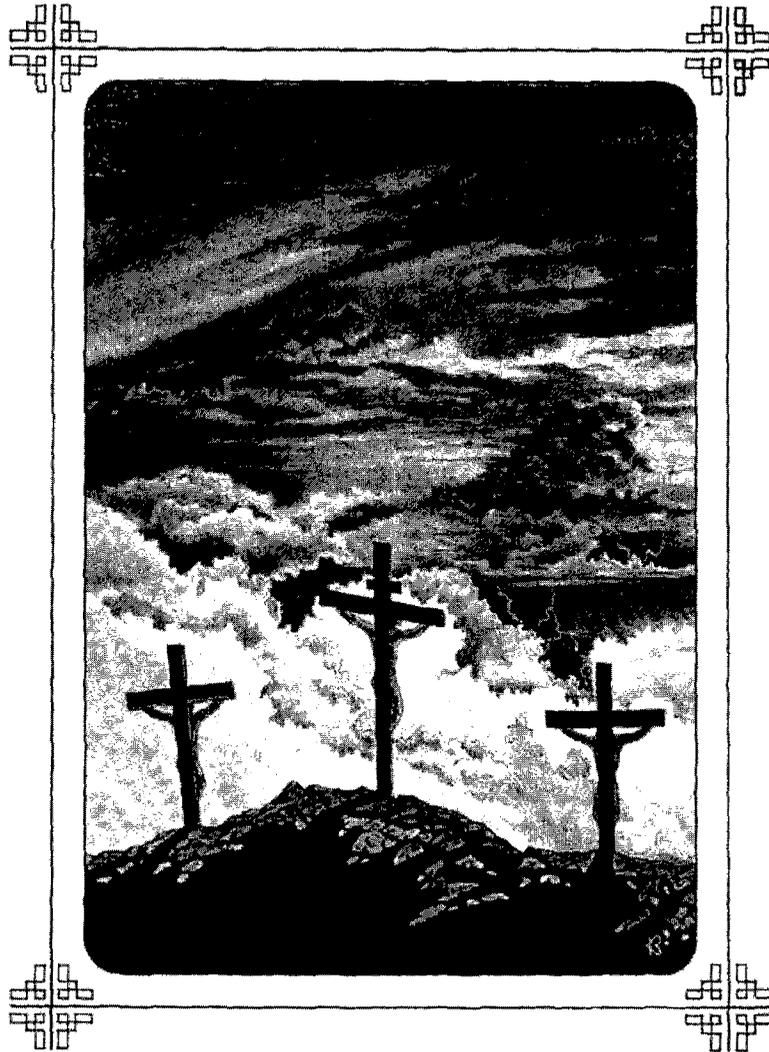
This program can be completed through part-time study over 3 years. The courses are designed for use in group study: each participant prepares a lesson - taking 1½ to 2 hours - before the group meets together with a leader to discuss their answers and pray together. Some of these courses may also be studied by correspondence if there is no other alternative to meetings face-to-face in fellowship groups. Courses are available in Arabic, English and French languages.

(Source: PALM Brochures and Marketing materials)

**Appendix 2:**  
**PALM Course: PT Level 1 Lesson 105: Suffering & Persecution**

PROGRESSING TOGETHER

105  
PERSECUTION



1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10

Remember the word that I says to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.'

If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.  
(John 15:20)

[www.takwin-masihi.org](http://www.takwin-masihi.org)

## Persecution

### Introduction

Jesus tells us: "... *I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you*" (John 15:19b). For those who follow the Lord Jesus, persecution comes in many forms, but all have their source in the hatred that this world has for the Lord Jesus and those who love Him.

This course is intended to help us understand why believers in Jesus Christ are persecuted, what our attitude should be toward persecution, and how the Lord wants us to live when we are persecuted.

This course consists of five lessons:

Lessons:

- ❶ Our God is great: Nothing can separate us from His love!
- ❷ Jesus taught that His disciples would be persecuted.
- ❸ Jesus taught about where our priorities should be.
- ❹ The apostles themselves and the New Testament Church applied this teaching of Jesus.
- ❺ Jesus, Himself, is our example in suffering.

[www.takwin-masihi.org](http://www.takwin-masihi.org)  
March 2007

1

Our God is great: Nothing can separate us from His love!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Read Romans 8:16-39 carefully.



In verses 35-39 Paul lists several things that some people might think capable of separating us from the love of Christ.



Explain each one in your own words.

Which ones have you experienced in your own life? Describe briefly what happened.



2 What future blessings does God have for us?

Why do you think the Apostle Paul used the word "*glorious*" to describe these blessings? (verses 17 to 23)

③  For whom does God work all things together for good?

Do you belong to this group of people? If you say “yes”, how does that happen according to verses 28-30?

④  To what has God predestined us? (verse 29)

How does this verse (8.29) help us to understand the fact that “all things work together for the good” of the elect in verse 28?

⑤  What assurance or comfort does this passage personally give you when confronted by the difficulties of this world?

⑥  The life of Joseph, the son of Jacob, is a real-life example of Romans 8:28 from the Old Testament. It is given to us in the Old Testament. You can read the parallel verse: Genesis 50:20. These words of Joseph, based on his own experience of injustice and suffering, amplify Romans 8:28 by telling us that God even uses

 \_\_\_\_\_ for  
\_\_\_\_\_ for those who love Him. (fill in the blanks).

  
Genesis chapters 37 and 39-50.

You can read the story of Joseph in

**2** Persecution  
Jesus taught that his disciples would be persecuted

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Matthew 5:10-12, and 43-45 carefully.

Read John 15:18 to 16:4 and

① ✍ Give three reasons why this world hates those who follow Jesus. Base your answer on what Jesus says in John 15:18-21.

② ✍ In John 15:21, who is the One who sent Jesus? (Tick the right answer)

<input type="checkbox"/>	God the Father
<input type="checkbox"/>	the Holy Spirit
<input type="checkbox"/>	the angel Gabriel

Jesus says, *"They will treat you this way because of my name."* Explain how this is true in your personal experience.

③ ✍ How is it possible that people can kill followers of Jesus and in so doing think that they are offering a service to God? Base your answer on John 16:1-4.

④  In the midst of what kinds of persecution does God promise blessing? Tick the correct answers based on Matthew 5:10-12.

<input type="checkbox"/>	persecution because the person is virtuous and righteous,
<input type="checkbox"/>	persecution because the person is a follower of Jesus,
<input type="checkbox"/>	persecution because the person believes in God,
<input type="checkbox"/>	persecution because the person prays.

⑤  According to Matthew 5:44-45, what should we do to those who persecute us?

Why?

**3** Persecution  
Jesus taught what our priorities should be

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



10:16-39 carefully.

Read Mark 8:31-38 and Matthew



In Mark 8:34-38, Jesus says that we must take up our cross and follow Him. According to the context, this means (choose the best answer)

<input type="checkbox"/>	that I must die as a martyr crucified like Jesus was
<input type="checkbox"/>	that I must die to my own interests and plans and live for Jesus and the gospel.
<input type="checkbox"/>	that I must carry a wooden cross around with me in life or wear a cross round my neck.

② ✎ What does it mean to be “*ashamed of Jesus and His words*” (Mark 8:38)?

Give a practical example.

③ ✎ Explain Matthew 10:16 in your own words.

According to Matthew 10:17-20, for what reason does God allow us to be brought before government officials?

About what are we not to worry?

④  Read Matthew 10:28-39.

 According to verses 28 to 31, whom are we not to be afraid of and why?

According to verses 28 to 31, whom

Give an example of how we can “acknowledge” Jesus before men (verse 32):

and an example of how we can disown Jesus before men (verse 33).

⑤  Matthew 10:37-39 is the key to understanding the preceding verses 34-36. We are to love Jesus more than anything else, including our own family and even our own life. This doesn't mean that we stop loving them, but we are to love Jesus more.

 result be? (verse 36)

If we live this way, what might the

**4** The apostles themselves and the New Testament Church applied this teaching of Jesus.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Read Acts 5:12-42 carefully.

①  Why did the religious leaders arrest the apostles and put them in prison? (verse 17)



The High Priest and his associates had given the apostles strict orders not to teach in Jesus' name. (4:18). But they did anyway and were arrested and put in prison. That night the Lord sent an angel to release them from prison.



What did the apostles do immediately the next morning? (verse 21)

Why? (5:20 and 4:19-20)

③  What does: "We must obey God rather than men" mean? (verse 29)

Give a possible real life situation for which a believer in your country would have to follow this principle.

④ ✎ When men fight against us because we teach about Jesus, who are they really fighting against? (verse 39)

⑤ ✎ Why did the apostles rejoice after leaving the presence of the Sanhedrin?

What did they continue doing? (verse 42)

5

Jesus, Himself, is our example in suffering.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



11 carefully.

Read 1 Peter 2:19-25, 4:12-19, 5:5-



God.

Not all suffering is commendable to



Explain what this means according

to 1 Peter 2:19-21.



follow in Christ's footsteps regarding unjust suffering.

In 2:21, Peter says that we are to



respond to suffering? (2:20b-23)

From the context how did Christ



Using verses 4:12-19, tick the correct answers. A person who suffers for being a believer in Jesus-Christ...

<input type="checkbox"/>	should be surprised,
<input type="checkbox"/>	can rejoice,
<input type="checkbox"/>	is blessed by the Spirit of God,
<input type="checkbox"/>	should praise God for the privilege of bearing the name of Jesus Christ,
<input type="checkbox"/>	should not be ashamed
<input type="checkbox"/>	should stop doing good,
<input type="checkbox"/>	cannot be suffering according to God's will.

③ ✍️ What should we do with all our anxieties? (5:7) How is this possible? Take time right now and put this verse into practice!!!

④ ✍️ According to 5.9, choose the correct statements from among the following:

	I am the only one who is going through this kind of suffering for Christ.
	There are many other brothers in Christ throughout the whole world who suffer just as I am for Christ.
	While I am suffering for Christ, I am to resist the devil and stand firm in the faith

⑤ ✍️ The suffering that we endure is for a “*little while*”. What things will the Lord do for us after we have suffered? (5:10)

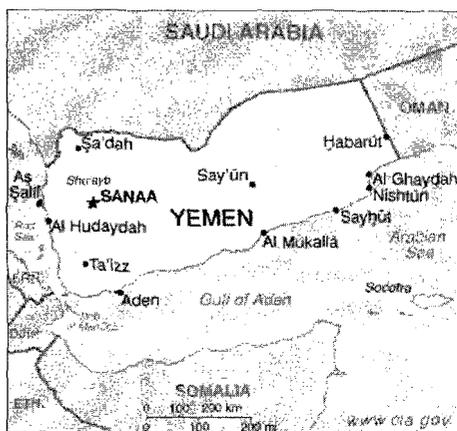
⑥ ✍️ Note what you have learned in the 5 Lessons of this course on persecution and principally what you want to retain when you go through some tests for your faith in Christ.

📖 In his first epistle, Peter has a lot to say about suffering as a believer in Christ. If you have time, read the whole epistle and note the passages that teach directly about suffering.

### Appendix 3: Threat and Risk Assessment

(Used with permission from PI Global Security Advisor)

**Date:** June 18, 2012  
**By:** Global Security Advisor (Name was removed for security concerns)  
**Location:** Yemen. Assessment limited to western portions including Sana'a, Taiez, Hudaydah, Aden, etc.  
**Sources:** Findings presented are based on interviews conducted in Sana'a, Yemen from May 20, 2012 to May 23, 2012 and follow-up correspondence/research.  
**Summary:** On the scale of Low to Very High (see Matrix below) there is a Very High risk that western expatriates will be the subject of targeted killings or kidnappings.



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#### THREATS

##### Targeted Killings:

Militant Islamic groups including Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and its affiliates have claimed responsibility for the targeted killings of westerners in Yemen. They have publically states their intention to continue such attacks. These are intended as reprisals for the killing of their own members, to make political

statements, and to defend Islam in Yemen from western Christians who share their faith. It should be noted that the tactic of using shooters from a moving motorcycle may increase due to its effectiveness in Yemen and elsewhere. This tactic has proven to be low cost, involves little specialized training or equipment, has a high success rate, and decreases chances that the perpetrators will be killed or captured at the scene.

#### Kidnappings:

Militant Islamic groups including Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and its affiliates have claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of westerners in Yemen. These acts are undertaken in an effort to gain the release of their own members being held by governments, to pressure authorities into changing certain policies, or to help finance their operations.

## RISKS

#### Impact:

As shown in the Matrix below, risk involves both the impact a given threat would have as well as the likelihood (or probability) of its taking place. Whereas probability will be dealt with next, there is little question that continued kidnappings or targeted killings of expatriates in Yemen would have a Critical impact on those involved and a Severe impact on other western expatriates who wish to remain in Yemen for the near term.

#### Probability:

On the scale of Very Unlikely to Very Likely (see Matrix below) the probability (or likelihood) of another targeted killing or kidnapping of a westerner is judged to be Very Likely. The factors impacting probability are highlighted below.

#### The Ability to Strike at Will:

Recent efforts by AQAP to conquer and hold territory in Yemen have had mixed results. This fact notwithstanding, AQAP and its affiliates have clearly demonstrated their ability to plan and execute high-profile attacks against local, national, and international targets. Recent attacks, including the May 21, 2012 suicide bombing in Sana'a and the June 18, 2012 assassination of the General who led troops against Al Qaeda in South Yemen, demonstrate AQAP's tactical capabilities. Similarly, the March 2012 targeted killing of an American teacher in Taiz and kidnapping of a Swiss woman in Hudaydah highlight the fact that militant groups have the ability to carefully select targets and successfully attack individuals whom they consider to be a threat, whose death would send a powerful political message, or who represent significant bargaining power.

This target selection process and the inability of Yemeni forces to stop attacks, even with prior warning, indicates that AQAP and possibly others have the resources and internal relationships necessary to strike targets within Yemen almost at will.

#### Further Western Involvement:

The United States and other western nations continue to provide arms, training, and intelligence to the government of Yemen. All indications are that this cooperation will increase in the near term. As direct and indirect involvement of western nations continues, it is likely that AQAP and others will increase efforts to hit any targets judged to represent western interests in Yemen.

This likelihood is further enhanced by the success of U.S. led drone attacks against senior AQAP leadership. As is true in other areas in which Islamic militants operate, indications are that senior Al Qaeda leaders well connected internationally and who have access to major funding tend to favor higher-profile international targets. As these leaders are killed through drone attacks second tier militant leaders find themselves having to make targeting decisions. The trend is for second tier leaders to focus on softer local targets judged to represent western interests or who are says to constitute a threat against Islam. In this environment western expatriates, especially Christians, working in Yemen represent almost irresistible targets. Arranging for the killing of a western expatriate Christian in one's local vicinity demonstrates the militant credentials of lower-level leaders and enhances their reputation and standing. It also often results in the evacuation of other westerners. Popular support for such killings is enhanced to the degree it can be demonstrated that the victim was involved in proselytization.

#### Political Instability and Elections:

It should be noted that Yemen has undergone dramatic social and political upheaval over the last year. As the 2013/2014 elections draw closer, the likelihood is that an atmosphere of chaos and unpredictability will result.

Depending on how the winds of political change blow, western expatriates resident in Yemen may find themselves in a quickly deteriorating security environment.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the likelihood of continued western military involvement in Yemen, the approaching 2013/2014 elections, the ability of AQAP to strike at will, and the

resulting Very High risk of continued targeted killings or kidnappings involving expatriate westerners, the following steps are recommended:

1. No new teams, language students, or short-term visitors should be sent to the western portions of Yemen until the risk level for significant security threats is reduced
2. Expatriate westerners not deeply involved in work in Yemen, or who could easily replicate similar work or training in a neighboring country, should consider leaving the western portions of Yemen until the risk level for significant security threats is reduced. This would include language students and short-term visitors.
3. Expatriate westerners resident in the western portions of Yemen outside of Sana'a should consider relocating to the capital until the risk level for significant security threats is reduced. The relatively few numbers of expatriates located in towns such as Taiz, Hudaydah, Aden, etc. significantly increases the likelihood that they will be targeted for attack.
4. Expatriate westerners who remain in the western portions of Yemen should only do so with the full knowledge and recognition of the significant security threats and risks involved. Organizations and support networks should be made aware of the threats and risks so that a fully informed decision regarding one's continued presence can be made.
5. Expatriate westerners who remain in the western portions of Yemen should only do so after receiving advanced field security training from Crisis Consulting International (CCI), Fort Sherman Academy (FSA), or related professional security training sources focused on members serving faith-based and/or NGO organizations. It is recommended that training in hostile surveillance detection and strategic intercultural relations be included along with more traditional topics common to advanced field security training.
6. Expatriate westerners who remain in the western portions of Yemen should only do so after implementing significant security protocols aimed at mitigating risks. It should be recognized that such measures may dramatically alter what would otherwise represent standard operating procedures when lower risk levels are present. These protocols should include practicing a high degree of situational awareness, a familiarity with the militant attack cycle, practicing hostile surveillance detection techniques, and establishing strategic intercultural relations. Please see the "Supplemental Assessment: Threat in Yemen - May 3, 2012" from Crisis Consulting International for further recommendations.
7. Expatriate westerners who remain in the western portions of Yemen should only do so with the realization that a quick exit from the country may be necessary at any moment. Provision should be made for a 'Go Bag' to include cash for tickets, updated travel documents,

communications equipment with extra batteries, a small supply of food and water, etc. Provision should also be made for the possibility of an extended period of 'lock down' in case evacuation is not possible. Plans for how sensitive documents and/or digital files can be quickly destroyed/deleted should be in place. Individuals should discuss in advance with local partners the possibility that an evacuation or a lock down may be called for with little notice.

8. Finally, it is recommended that risk assessments be updated on a quarterly basis or as necessary following significant changes or incidents. This is of particular importance given the changing degree of western involvement and the upcoming national elections. A simple risk assessment form and instructions are available upon request.

Risk Assessment Matrix					
Impact	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Severe	Critical
Likelihood					
Very Likely	Low	Medium	High	High	High
Likely	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High
Moderately Likely	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	High
Unlikely	Very Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium
Very Unlikely	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	Low	Low

**Appendix 4:**  
**Barriers to Participate in Discipleship Groups-Disciple/Facilitator Version**  
**(Survey)**

Page 1

**Barriers to Participate in Discipleship Groups-Disciple Version**

Dear Participant;

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my research. Please allow me to brief you about it.

My name is Amal Gendi and I am a candidate for a Doctor of Ministry degree from Tyndale University College & Seminary 25 Ballyconnor Court, Toronto Ontario M2M 4B3 Canada.

My Phone: 1.416.226.6620

My Tyndale email address is: [gendiamal@mytyndale.ca](mailto:gendiamal@mytyndale.ca)

I am trying to research and diagnose the reasons behind lack of participation of believers from M\*\*\*\*m background (BMBs) in discipleship groups in the Arab world especially in the Arabian Peninsula. The title of my research is:

“Barriers to Participation in Discipleship Groups in the Context of the Arab M\*\*\*\*m World. A Focus on those Barriers that Hinder the Arab World Believers from M\*\*\*\*m Backgrounds to Participate in Discipleship Groups in the Arabian Peninsula”

This research will be used in partial fulfillment of requirements for my degree of Doctor of Ministry. I will take all necessary precautions when I publish my work and when I use the info you and other participants will share in this project. To protect privacy and confidentiality, I will use coding system to protect the identity of the participants in addition to keeping all info in an encrypted hard drive. All communications will take place via secure email or secure Skype calls between the Researcher and the participants either directly or through a third party who will meet face-to-face with the participants in secure places. The ultimate goal is to maximize the benefit of such a research to the global church while prioritizing the safety and protection of all participants.

This research has been reviewed and received ethics approval at Tyndale University College & Seminary. I anticipate starting this study on June 1st, 2013 and finishing it by end of August 2014.

My Project Thesis Coordinator is Dr. Mark Chapman, Acting Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program.

You are invited to participate in this project through answering questions to a written survey as well as to participate in an interview (if needed). I choose to get your verbal consent rather than a written one lest a signed written consent might expose you to an unnecessary risk.

I am expected to diagnose the reasons that hinder BMBs from participating in discipleship groups. Through your and others' participation in this research, I will be able by God's grace to recommend some actions that expected to overcome those barriers. The end result will be reflected on more BMBs to enroll consistently into discipleship groups and their lives be transformed. Through those transformed lives, leaders could emerge and equipped to lead and disciple others (2 Tim 2:2)

Your data may be used also in secondary use of data studies if needed.

By accepting to participate in this written survey and/or personal interview with the main researcher or any of his designates, you give us your consent to proceed with the info you will share and use them for this research project. If you have any question, please feel free to contact the Research Ethics Officer (office of the Provost at provost@tyndale.ca

Please note that participation in this project is absolutely voluntary and if you chose not to participate, rest assured that no consequences will happen as a result of your decision. Also, you have the full right to discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If published, this study will be anonymous and I will have it available subject to security measures for any participant who is interested to have an access to.

Sincerely Yours for His glory,

Amal Gendi

**Barriers to Participate in Discipleship Groups-Disciple/Facilitator Version**

Informed Consent

1. Declaration

Respondents verbally agreed on the above in the presence of a witness. He/she was given the opportunity to ask questions and confirmed his/her full understanding.

He/she has the full right to ask future questions. Respondents gave his/her consent accordingly through answering this question.

I accept and give my full consent

-----

Accept

-----

Decline

**Barriers to Participate in Discipleship Groups-Disciple/Facilitator Version**

2. A discipleship group is where more than one person meets together on a regular basis to study the Bible directly or by using course material. Do you participate in any discipleship group?

-----

Yes

-----

No

3. Do you know of any barriers that hinder believers from participating in a discipleship group?

-----

Yes

-----

No

**Barriers to Participate in Discipleship Groups-Disciple/Facilitator Version**

4. If you know, what are those barriers? Please describe in detail as many of those barriers as you can.

-----  
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5. If you are faced with barriers that hinder you from participating in discipleship group, did you try to overcome those barriers?

----	Yes
----	No
----	N/A

**Barriers to Participate in Discipleship Groups-Disciple/Facilitator Version**

6. If it is applicable, what have you tried to do in order to overcome those barriers? Please explain.

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**Barriers to Participate in Discipleship Groups-Disciple/Facilitator Version**

7. In your opinion, how could you overcome those barriers?

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8. What could be done to encourage participation in discipleship groups?

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**Barriers to Participate in Discipleship Groups-Disciple/Facilitator Version**

9. PALM Progressing Together Level 1 is a discipleship program designed to serve growing and maturing new believers. If you are familiar with it, Please answer the following:

- I attended at least one lesson

-----  
-----

Yes  
No

- Currently I am enrolled in Discipleship Group with this program

-----

Yes

-----  
No

10. Courses I completed with this program:

-----  
-----  
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-----  
-----  
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OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE  
WALKING IN THE LIGHT  
THE CHRISTIAN'S RESOURCES  
THE CHURCH  
PERSECUTION  
CHRISTIAN ETHICS  
CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIPS

FAITH

-----

OCCULTISM

-----

-----

RECONCILIATION

-----

-----  
THE FOUNDATION OF OUR  
  
SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND  
  
CHRISTIAN SERVICE  
FORGIVENESS &

None

**Barriers to Participate in Discipleship Groups- *Facilitator Version Only***

11. Please list below the Strengths of PALM Progressing Together Program:

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12. What are the Weaknesses of PALM Progressing Together Program?

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13. Please comment on the effectiveness of discipleship in your area; please explain if there are discipleship groups running, and if the disciples are regularly attending those groups. Please comment on how to improve the success of those discipleship groups?

-----  
-----  
-----  
-----

**Barriers to Participate in Discipleship Groups-Disciple/Facilitator Version**

14. Demographics: I am

- Gender:

----- Male

----- Female

- Age Group:

(18-20) (21-30) (31-40) (41-50) (51-60) (60+)

- Education:

(None)

(Primary)

(Secondary)

(University)

(Higher)

- My Learning Preference:

----- Reading/Writing Preference

----- Visual learner (Orality and seeing pictures; visual aids such as overhead slides, diagrams, handouts, etc.)

----- Auditory learner (Orality through listening to lectures, discussions, tapes, storytelling, etc.)

----- Learning through experience (moving, touching, and doing)

----- Hybrid (Mixed preference

----- Other (Please specify below

-----  
-----

- Background

----- Believer from Muslim Background

----- Believer from Non-Muslim background excluding Christianity.

----- Believer from Christian Background

----- Other (Please specify below) ;

-----  
-----  
-----

Barriers to Participate in Discipleship Groups-Disciple/Facilitator Version

- Residence

----- National living outside the AP

----- National living inside the AP

----- Expat living in the AP

----- Other (Please specify below)

-----  
-----  
-----

- Other (please specify)

-----  
-----  
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION  
END OF SURVEY

## Appendix 5: Informed Consent Script

Following is the informed consent used in my research. I used same English written consent, translated it into Arabic and used them in either written or verbal formats. Same consent form was used with the working group to obtain their verbal consent for what they shared, discussed and produced for this research

### Arabic Consent (Verbal or Written)

المعطلات للمشاركة في مجموعات التلمذة- اصدار للتلاميذ

عزيزي المشارك:

شكرا لك لقبولك الأشتراك في بحثي. دعني أخبرك قليلا عنه.  
أنا اسمي أمال جندي وأنا مرشح لشهادة الدكتوراه في الخدمة المسيحية من جامعة تينديل ومعهد اللاهوت في تورونتو كندا. تلفوني هو 1-416-300-2625 وعنواني الإلكتروني gendiamal@mytyndale.ca

انا اريد أن أبحث وأكشف الأسباب التي من وراء عدم مشاركة المؤمنين العابرين في مجموعات التلمذة في العالم العربي وخاصة في الجزيرة العربية. ان عنوان بحثي هو الموانع التي تسبب في عدم المشاركة في مجموعات التلمذة في بلاد العالم العربي. هذه الدراسة تهدف الى التركيز على المعطلات التي تمنع العابرين من مؤمني العالم العربي من المشاركة في مجموعات التلمذة في الجزيرة العربية.  
هذا البحث سيستخدم ليحقق جزءا من متطلبات شهادتي في دكتوراه الخدمة المسيحية. وسأخذ كل الاجراءات اللازمة عندما انشر عملي والمعلومات الذين انتم والآخرين تشاركون بها في هذا المشروع. ولكي أحمي الخصوصية والسرية، سوف استعمل نظام تشفير لحماية هويات المشاركين وبالإضافة الى ذلك حفظ كل المعلومات في قرص مدمج مشفر. وسيتم التواصل عبر بريد الكتروني محمي أو مكالمات السكايب المحمية بين الباحث والمشاركين بصورة مباشرة او عن طريق جهة ثالثة تتقابل مع المشاركين وجها لوجه في أماكن آمنة. الهدف النهائي هو ان تستفيد الكنيسة في كل العالم بشكل كبير من هذا البحث مع أولوية سلامة وامن المشاركين .

لقد تم الاطلاع على البحث ونال الموافقة المهنية من جامعة ومعهد تينديل للاهوت. انني متوقع أن أبدأ الدراسة في الاول من يونيو 2013 وان انتهي منها في أغسطس 2014. ان المشرف على مشروع بحثي هو الدكتور مارك شابمان المدير بالنيابة لبرنامج الدكتوراه في الخدمة المسيحية. انتم مدعون للمشاركة في هذا المشروع بالاجابة على الأسئلة المكتوبة في الأحصائية أو المشاركة في مقابلة شخصية اذا احتاج الأمر. وسأكون قادرا بنعمة الرب ان أوصي ببعض الأشياء العملية التي نتوقع منها أن تساعدنا على التغلب على هذه المعطلات. والنتيجة النهائية ستكون انضمام الاخوة المؤمنين العابرين في مجموعات التلمذة بصورة مستمرة وحياتهم ستتغير. ومن هؤلاء الذين حياتهم قد تغيرت سيخرج قادة مؤهلين لقيادة و تلمذة الآخرين 2:2 تيموثاوس

وسنستعمل معلوماتكم اذا احتاج الأمر استعمالا ثانويا في معلومات هذه الدراسة. وبموافقتك على المشاركة في هذه الاحصائية او المقابلة الشخصية مع الباحث الرئيسي أو أحد ممثليه، فانك تعطينا الموافقة على استعمال المعلومات التي توفرها لنا لأستخدامها في مشروع البحث هذا.  
اذا كان لديك أي أسئلة فرجاء الاتصال ب مسؤول البحوث المهنية عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني provost@tyndale.ca

رجاء الملاحظة ان المشاركة في هذا المشروع تطوعية واذا احترت ان لا تشارك، فكن مطمئنا أن ليست هناك أي عواقب من قرارك هذا. ولك كل الحق ان تتوقف عن المشاركة في اي وقت بدون أي عقوبة. إذا تم نشر للدراسة هذه، فستكون مجهولة الهوية وسأوفرها اعتمادا على الإجراءات الامنية لكل من يطلبها. المخلص معا لمجده

أمال جندي

English Translation

Dear Participant;

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my research. Please allow me to brief you about it.

My name is Amal Gendi and I am a candidate for a Doctor of Ministry degree from Tyndale University College & Seminary 25 Ballyconnor Court, Toronto Ontario M2M 4B3 Canada.

My Phone 1.416.226.6620

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By accepting to participate in this written survey and/or personal interview with the main researcher or any of his designates, you give us your consent to proceed with the info you will share and use them for this research project.

If you have any question, please feel free to contact the Research Ethics Officer (office of the Provost at [provost@tyndale.ca](mailto:provost@tyndale.ca))

Please note that participation in this project is absolutely voluntary and if you chose not to participate, rest assured that no consequences will happen as a result of your decision. Also, you have the full right to discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If published, this study will be anonymous and I will have it available subject to security measures for any participant who is interested to have an access to.

Sincerely Yours for His glory,  
Amal Gendi

## **Appendix 6: Code Retrieval All categories**

Using the Qualitative Action Research approach necessitated qualitative data analysis procedures as explained in Chapter 4. Descriptive codes were generated from the data and themes emerged as a result of clustering such codes into groups. The following example shows the categories that surfaced from the corresponding descriptive codes. Each descriptive code was assigned to the matching text from the raw data. The software used for this qualitative data analysis showed the number of words in each text that matched the descriptive code. Such an operation reflected the weight of the descriptive code that helped me to conclude the main axial codes in the second cycle of data analysis.

Code Retrieval- All Categories			
Category	Code	Text	Words
External Barrier	Islamic Culture	In his previous background, he is not encouraged to ask questions, Asking some kind of questions is considered heresy.	97
External Barrier	Islamic Culture	Some believers do not see the need to gather regular in groups. They have their ministry and fellowship through pall-talk, emails, etc. Some driven by fear decrease the value of meeting as they reason with themselves that the internet and satellite have equal options of receiving knowledge and participate in religious duties (They continue in the Islamic mindset of hearing messages but not in changing as a person or influencing others for Gods Kingdom)	375
External Barrier	Unqualified leader/teacher	He used more to dictating teaching.	29
External Barrier	Unqualified leader/teacher	The facilitators does not understand group dynamics.	45
External Barrier	Unqualified leader/teacher	Lack of educated people and theologians who will contextualize the theology given.	70
External Barrier	Unqualified leader/teacher	The leader should know how to lead discussion groups. It is could to have a cup of Tea and a biscuit.	79
External Barrier	Unqualified leader/teacher	Training & Equipping Leaders the limitations are in the personnel, rather than the material of the course	87
External Barrier	Unqualified leader/teacher	Actually, I wonder if the barrier is n't spiritual and greater than we think. I honestly wonder how much time most of us spend in prayer for these brothers and sisters and personally feel very challenged when I read biographies like those of Adoniram Judson or Anthony Norris Groves, particularly relating to regular prayer	584

		r and fasting. I think there may be a tendency to blame their poor education system (of course it's a factor) but perhaps there is also a lack on our part and we are expecting it to be a straightforward step to go from believing to a weekly Bible study with others - perhaps I am speaking for myself and it's always a truism to say we need more prayer, but do we really know how to pray for these believers?	
External Barrier	Unqualified leader/teacher	there is at least one known local group. need internal leadership	54
External Barrier	Unqualified leader/teacher	I was not responsible for arranging the meetings. The person I was involved with was the spouse of an attendee.	90
External Barrier	Unqualified leader/teacher	Honestly, my contacts are not yet believers. I will pray more for open doors to ask if they'd like to study. However, unless they are from the same family, a group study is a long way off.	145
External Barrier	Cultural Barriers	Ladies who do not have transportation	32
External Barrier	Cultural Barriers	Ladies who are not allowed to meet persons outside their family	53
External Barrier	Cultural Barriers	Firstly, multiple believers from the AP. Currently I am only working with one.	63
External Barrier	Cultural Barriers	Thirdly, locals make up only 5-10% of the population of this city. It is very difficult to be in their private lives/space in general (unlike the home-based social interaction we experienced in Jordan and among Iraqi and Lebanese believers in Michigan) much less the deep and risky spiritual topics.	242
External Barrier	Cultural Barriers	understand if there are family or "tribal" issues	40

External Barrier	Cultural Barriers	the BMBs are not really that interested in spiritual things, they're really only interested in meeting with expatriates because it will, in their perception, increase opportunities for employment or in procuring loans they don't believe will need to be paid back.	217
External Barrier	Cultural Barriers	Social pressure	14
External Barrier	Cultural Barriers	Lack of cultural sensitivity from the Disciples	42
External Barrier	Cultural Barriers	Patronizing material Western developed material An innate feeling they have of being 'objects' rather than 'family members' Old formation habits from their past world views. it takes time to change	163
External Barrier	Cultural Barriers	shyness - being intimidated by the others - they feel that they know so little and are not nearly as good a man/woman as the believer who shared with him/her	124
External Barrier	Cultural Barriers	Messy lives - some with estranged wives, parents, siblings, poor decisions in life (eg money, work situations). They feel that it can't fit in their hectic, dysfunctional lives.	139
External Barrier	Cultural Barriers	Unwillingness to put relationship with God before relationship with family. Family connectivity is critical to identity. If one is put outside the family they become personless. Many do not realize that their relationship with God should be their top priority. They are happy to receive blessing from God, but some, not so quick to return obedience to God & His Word.	299
External Barrier	Cultural Barriers	Fear of loss of family relationship - see above	38
External Barrier	Lack of Believers nearby	Persons want to meet but there is no other believers near them	51

External Barrier	Lack of Believers nearby	Distance. Believers live hours driving far from each other	49
External Barrier	Lack of Believers nearby	Very limited numbers.	18
External Barrier	Lack of Believers nearby	loose networks.	13
External Barrier	Lack of Believers nearby	Thirdly, locals make up only 5-10% of the population of this city. It is very difficult to be in their private lives/space in general (unlike the home-based social interaction we experienced in Jordan and among Iraqi and Lebanese believers in Michigan) much less the deep and risky spiritual topics.	242
Internal Barrier	Lack of Spiritual Maturity	A general lack of desire to continue in faith and knowledge of the Lord Jesus.	63
Internal Barrier	Lack of Spiritual Maturity	In my context, disciples are very slow to make a continuing commitment to meeting together so it is very difficult to have ongoing effective discipleship meetings.	137
Internal Barrier	Lack of Spiritual Maturity	Laziness	8
Internal Barrier	Lack of Spiritual Maturity	Some believers do not see the need to gather regularly in groups. They have their ministry and fellowship through pall-talk, emails etc.	109
Internal Barrier	Lack of Spiritual Maturity	The few believers in our country have a tendency to drift from one group to another and are not very spiritually mature	98
Internal Barrier	Lack of Spiritual Maturity	Thirdly, locals make up only 5-10% of the population of this city. It is very difficult to be in their private lives/space in general (unlike the home-based social interaction we experienced in Jordan and among Iraqi and Lebanese believers in Michigan)	242

		n) much less the deep and risky spiritual topics.	
Internal Barrier	Lack of Spiritual Maturity	I've tried talking with them directly, but it seems they still view me as a patron and have financial expectations on me. This direct communication has strained my relationships with them. They feel they are entitled to material benefits from me, and they view me as stingy. I question their motives for meeting.	253
Internal Barrier	Lack of Spiritual Maturity	Life issues more "important"/pertinent than course	42
Internal Barrier	Lack of Spiritual Maturity	shyness - being intimidated by the others - they feel that they know so little and are not nearly as good a man/woman as the believer who shared with him/her	124
Internal Barrier	Lack of Spiritual Maturity	Lack of commitment to God--either they are not really followers or just lack the faith to obey God even at the most base levels	102
Internal Barrier	Fear Factors	a fear of the authorities. In our country	33
Internal Barrier	Fear Factors	Fear, mistrust of other Arabs, mistrust of foreigners, fear of observation by neighbours and police	81
Internal Barrier	Fear Factors	Fear and mistrust of both Arabs and foreigners	39
Internal Barrier	Fear Factors	Fear is the number one barrier	25
Internal Barrier	Fear Factors	Security issues about meeting regularly	35
Internal Barrier	Fear Factors	secret believers, Do not want any contact with other locals out of fear and lack of trust.	72

Internal Barrier	Fear Factors	Secondly, I know of a group of locals in our city, and they are very close to a brother who comes from the Levant (he led each of the men to the Lord and has disciplined them), and meets with them as a group, has reconciled relationships with their parents when the latter sought to turn them over to the jail; come to bail them out of jail (an even this last week). They only trust this visitor (though I have given them a recorded greeting via a flash drive, introducing myself and others and our desire to help them and be helped by them). This is due to general fear of being 'found out', as well, I believe of distrust of either expats or those they do not know.	516
Internal Barrier	Fear Factors	security	8
Internal Barrier	Fear Factors	Fear	4
Internal Barrier	Fear Factors	fear if the other person - they new believer knows that his faith is unstable so the other persons must be too - the cost of being discovered is great	119
Internal Barrier	Fear Factors	Fear of persecution-few are persecuted but most are afraid of persecution.	62
Internal Barrier	Fear Factors	Reports of other groups being used to expose some of the BMBs to their family or govt	69
Internal Barrier	Lack of time	commitment 2. Transport 3. Time	25
Internal Barrier	Lack of time	It is difficult to get regular attendance at these meetings, so it takes a long time for us to complete each module.	93
Internal Barrier	Lack of time	Time is a huge factor with the pace of life here.	38

Internal Barrier	Lack of time	ourth, when I invited my local friend (he has roots in Iran but considers himself socially local) to join me and a Syrian disciple (Bob) and the new believer Bob just led to the Lord (also from Syria), in starting PALM, he just never showed up (in spite of several weeks of meeting with me multiple times per week). He has some distrust of expat Arabs (though has met Bob twice), but is also very busy with work, and family commitments at present. Busyness and distrust are a challenge.	380
Internal Barrier	Lack of time	time	4
Internal Barrier	Lack of time	Schedule conflicts	17
Internal Barrier	Lack of Trust	Suspecting others who are in the group.	32
Internal Barrier	Lack of Trust	A lack of trust between fellow brothers in Christ.	41
Internal Barrier	Lack of Trust	a level of racism between believers from an Arab or Berber background.	58
Internal Barrier	Lack of Trust	Fear, mistrust of other Arabs, mistrust of foreigners, fear of observation by neighbours and police	82
Internal Barrier	Lack of Trust	Mainly a trust issue.	17
Internal Barrier	Lack of Trust	Mainly a trust issue. The one BMB I am co-discipling, when presented the opportunity to fellowship with another BMB who moved into our area, resisted that opportunity. So did the other BMB. Both expressed concern, "Who is that other person?", said in the tone of "But how do I know that I can trust him?" Both were concerned about the other one possibly reporting to the host country's security service.	318
Internal Barrier	Lack of Trust	Fear and mistrust of both Arabs and foreigners	39

Internal Barrier	Lack of Trust	Trust issues, especially with outsiders.	34
Internal Barrier	Lack of Trust	secret believers, Do not want any contact with other locals out of fear and lack of trust.	72
Internal Barrier	Lack of Trust	Personal differences. Age, background, personalities	45
Internal Barrier	Lack of Trust	Secondly, I know of a group of locals in our city, and they are very close to a brother who comes from the Levant (he led each of the men to the Lord and has disciplined them), and meets with them as a group, has reconciled relationships with their parents when the latter sought to turn them over to the jail; come to bail them out of jail (an even this last week). They only trust this visitor (though I have given them a recorded greeting via a flash drive, introducing myself and others and our desire to help them and be helped by them). This is due to general fear of being 'found out', as well, I believe of distrust of either expats or those they do not know.	516
Internal Barrier	Lack of Trust	Fourth, when I invited my local friend (he has roots in Iran but considers himself socially local) to join me and a Syrian disciple (Bob) and the new believer Bob just led to the Lord (also from Syria), in starting PALM, he just never showed up (in spite of several weeks of meeting with me multiple times per week). He has some distrust of expat Arabs (though has met Bob twice), but is also very busy with work, and family commitments at present. Business and distrust are a challenge.	381
Internal Barrier	Lack of Trust	Lack of trust	11
Internal Barrier	Lack of Trust	Lack of trust regarding other BMBs	29

Internal Barrier	Lack of Trust	Mistrust for other BMBs Arabs, by culture do not trust Arabs, sometimes even in their family	74
Internal Barrier	Lack of Trust	Lack of trust with those outside their pre-existing networks (oikos)	56
Internal Barrier	Lack of Trust	In my younger days, I have participated in at least 10+ emerging fellowships. All but 2 fell apart due to mistrust. The 2 groups I was deeply involved with that are still meeting after 10 years are those that are based around an oikos	187
Internal Barrier	Orality Preference	Lack of Discipline Most Arabs they like stories and poems more than information Most Arab Christians used to a light way of Christianity. Discipleship is challenge for them and some times became as a barrier	172
Internal Barrier	Orality Preference	Also they are not the kinds of people who study in the way we do in the West. As a young believer myself 20 years ago I was hungry for teaching and actively sought to be disciplined - I haven't heard of anyone with that amount of interest here with the exception of one lady who likes to study academically and is not in close fellowship with anyone.	277
Internal Barrier	Orality Preference	Being extremely flexible with time - also from the experience of others we realised it is almost more important to share your life with them than to necessarily work through a structured series. It seems, from observation, they learn better by watching and having someone to copy and "hang out with" than by analysing a passage of scripture on a weekly basis. This isn't ideal, of course.	312
Internal Barrier	Orality Preference	Seems to require a high level of literacy and analytical ability.	54
Internal Barrier	Orality Preference	personal unwillingness to read or study the Book-I've observed a few who will not read the Book either with	158

		h you or alone. Some of this is spir itual laziness. Some of this may be not truly a follower	
Internal Barrier	Orality Preference	Oral Preference Learners in this par t of the world need more stories and lessons organized based on single passages. Proof texting does not ma ke sense to most in the region.	142
Overco ming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	Participants in the group should be encouraged to ask questions, and e xpress their emotions.	77
Overco ming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	Facilitator should receive each ques tion without negative comment.	58
Overco ming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	Facilitators should be familiar with group dynamics.	45
Overco ming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	At first you should start whatever t he conditions are. 2. Time, transpor t, courses based on the needs can b e overcome.	94
Overco ming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	Good place Good material. Good sty le of presentation Giving them term s to share opinions and thoughts ab out lesson and be a good learner fro m them before you are their teacher . Guide them in the lesson as you ar e one of them not above them. Do n ot let discipleship become a class keep it as a life sty le.	244
Overco ming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	courses based on the needs. 2. separ ation of social groups: youth from c hildren or women. 3. give everybod y a responsibility to do and do mak e them just spectators.	131
Overco ming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	The atmosphere should be pleasant.	29
Overco ming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	The leader should know how to lead discussion groups. It is could to ha ve a cup of Tea and a biscuit.	79

Overcoming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	I think a lot has to do with how we portray the Bible and the path of Jesus. Do we talk about it secretly with them, or do we model for them as we talk with others that the Bible is nothing to be ashamed of. For me, this is key.	173
Overcoming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	ry to facilitate and guide the group so that it is an enjoyable experience that they will want to repeat; we have seen some long gaps in between studies	123
Overcoming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	Keep email contact with those isolated ladies.	39
Overcoming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	Encourage local believers with a vision to gather believers to visit other brothers and contact them through phone en email.	104
Overcoming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	Efforts to reach out to the scattered believers that make them self known by pall-talk, contact with media etc.	90
Overcoming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	The group has only two believers one illiterate the other with a high education degree	72
Overcoming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	Possibly, early on, putting a condition on continuing the relationship or 1/1 study, of involving others.	85
Overcoming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	While this survey is about groups, some of my ministry is with those in remote locations. It would be helpful if they were in a format where one could write answers in the blanks to send to teacher.	158
Overcoming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	allow format for inputting answers in blanks and saving them in pdf.	56

Overcoming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	<p>"Paul" is teaching a group of locals and their wives, coming every 4-8 weeks (they meet on their own weekly when he is not here). I do not think they are using a 'course'. Of our wider team, presently I am the only one involved in discipleship. Several new believers (3 Iranians, 2 other Syrians) have been here only for long enough to complete an evangelistic study (2 Iranians were disciplined by another team mate for 6 months). I am discipling 2 Christian background Eritreans (to be better equipped for their ministry among locals); 1 Syrian mbb (just started PALM with another syrian who just left, the latter wants to continue with PALM via skype); 1 local mbb (just finished the 10 lesson initial disciple study in the CAMEL book); 1 Iraqi mbb (via email/phone and on visit [over his 4 day visit we had 2 groups meet, including the local and the Syrian]; this is sporadic). The 2 people in our city: Syrian and local are soooo different from each other. My prayer is to see the local's influence expand among his family and include them.</p>	817
Overcoming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	meet at their convenience on their terms	34
Overcoming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	meeting regularly . The Discipleship group has been developed strictly as a Western/Evangelical discipline - we need to get away from that format and capitalize on the community which is so radical in the A.P	170
Overcoming	Improve the Group	Stop thinking of them as discipleship groups. Programs are scary. Mater	85

Barriers	Dynamics	ials are restrictive. Live life.	
Overcoming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	Content just objectives stated	27
Overcoming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	I know of a couple groups. scheduling is an issue, especially for mothers. for the men, some members have left the area. However, discipleship is still happening one on one, but less formally.	152
Overcoming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	When we read I have the people read and I simply ask questions.	50
Overcoming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	The quicker family gets involved with the BMB the more quickly 'group' may come.	64
Overcoming Barriers	Improve the Group Dynamics	have been many years in the region, speak the language well and have discussed common issues with those in other countries around the AP. Both expats and many BMBs. The common thread of groups that survive the 5 year mark are that the main participants knew each other before coming to belief. So I no longer encourage strangers who are believers to gather together. The latest research from DMM and others is that the fastest and deepest growth is among those who share bits of the truth within their family, clan or workplace to see who is interested in knowing more. And to form study groups from those networks	499
Overcoming Barriers	Sharing Responsibilities	to overcome the barrier of time I tried to make a program and find a time for everything. We tried to make everyone responsible in our group to take his turn and prepare a cha	284

		<p>pter of two in the gospel of Mathe w and invite other believers to his house. If someone is absent he should not stop the discipleship course but others should carry on the study.</p>	
Overcoming Barriers	Sharing Responsibilities	<p>The participants may be asked to prepare very small assignments and share it during the group</p>	78
Overcoming Barriers	Sharing Responsibilities	<p>By encouraging everyone to realise that they have something of spiritual value to contribute to the group. By gently correcting those who contribute something that is not accurate, so that next time we meet, they will want to know more clearly from God's word, and apply it in a practical way.</p>	237
Overcoming Barriers	Sharing Responsibilities	<p>Issues of a suitable location; it is difficult to get the locals to hold the meetings in their own homes; if we invite people to our house, they come every time; but we want to see them taking on the running and leadership of this for themselves more and more</p>	206
Overcoming Barriers	Sharing Responsibilities	<p>Encourage local believers with a vision to gather believers to visit other brothers and contact them through phone or email.</p>	104
Overcoming Barriers	Sharing Responsibilities	<p>for the local group, encouraging the brother from the Levant in helping the brothers here see the need for regular study (though one is now an elder and leading the others); and by recording an introduction and greeting from me to them in local dialect, offering our service (including our wives to relate to and encourage theirs), and expressing our need for their input to help us be more effective in their culture.</p>	338

Overcoming Barriers	Sharing Responsibilities	Involving others early on in evangelism and discipleship, to prevent a very tight 'coupling' between teacher/disciple. This involves bringing another team mate, church member, or even brother along, with or without the other's prior approval, to model fellowship, and remove ungrounded fears (or bring them to the surface).	262
Overcoming Barriers	Sharing Responsibilities	Invite them to read the Book with me or to help them with a plan & accountability to read the Book regularly.	86
Overcoming Barriers	Sharing Responsibilities	Now I do not 'read' the Book with just one person. I ask them to bring a trusted relative with them thereby creating group from the beginning.	112
Overcoming Barriers	Sharing Responsibilities	have been many years in the region, speak the language well and have discussed common issues with those in other countries around the AP. Both expats and many BMBs. The common thread of groups that survive the 5 year mark are that the main participants knew each other before coming to belief. So I no longer encourage strangers who are believers to gather together. The latest research from DMM and others is that the fastest and deepest growth is among those who share bits of the truth within their family, clan or workplace to see who is interested in knowing more. And to form study groups from those networks.	499
Overcoming Barriers	Socializing to Build Trust	did it in attractive way	20
Overcoming Barriers	Socializing to Build Trust	Try to build up trust between the members of the group. Encourage visits between them. The facilitator himself should visit them, and develop	181

		p social relations with them and use this knowledge to build trust between them.	
Overcoming Barriers	Socializing to Build Trust	Participants in the group should be encouraged to ask questions, and express their emotions.	77
Overcoming Barriers	Socializing to Build Trust	Participants in the group should be encouraged to ask questions, and express their emotions. Facilitators should receive each question without negative comment.	135
Overcoming Barriers	Socializing to Build Trust	At first you should start whatever the conditions are. 2. Time, transport, courses based on the needs can be overcome.	94
Overcoming Barriers	Socializing to Build Trust	Trust in God, that He will protect you to the degree that He deems necessary Trust that others in the same position as you will protect your privacy in the same way that you will protect theirs	156
Overcoming Barriers	Socializing to Build Trust	Teach trust	10
Overcoming Barriers	Socializing to Build Trust	Indirectly, have meeting-together infrastructure such as al-Massirah or PALM available, but they still individually have to come to the point of wanting to meet together. That decision point involves a sovereign work of God.) (Indirectly, having large-group socials in which they might both be present, this preparing the soil.)	267
Overcoming Barriers	Socializing to Build Trust	Help them to work through personality differences that have prevented some from attending	77
Overcoming Barriers	Socializing to Build Trust	Motivate those who have no desire to meet during personal encounters. If they do not want to meet with locals offer a contact with a foreigner as discipler	126
Overcoming Barriers	Socializing to Build Trust	Visit two by two workers to believe... building relationship inviting f	126

Barriers	Trust	or regular studies, hoping they will at some time come to step to meet other locals	
Overcoming Barriers	Socializing to Build Trust	help them see the importance of fellowship (when Mike was visiting from Basra, I used his visit to bring him together with the local, Bob, and other brothers, for times of reading, singing, and prayer)	159
Overcoming Barriers	Socializing to Build Trust	discuss trust issues	18
Overcoming Barriers	Socializing to Build Trust	for the local group, encouraging the brother from the Levant in helping the brothers here see the need for regular study (though one is now and elder and leading the others); and by recording an introduction and greeting from me to them in local dialect, offering our service (including our wives to relate to and encourage theirs), and expressing our need for their input to help us be more effective in their culture.	338
Overcoming Barriers	Socializing to Build Trust	take time, build trust.	18
Overcoming Barriers	Socializing to Build Trust	We are still at the pioneering stage	30
Overcoming Barriers	Socializing to Build Trust	Use social events to draw them together - volleyball, dinners, desert outings	63
Overcoming Barriers	Socializing to Build Trust	I am currently involved in another mixed group. I encourage them to continue meeting and studying together, but am more up front in telling them that the future success will be based on them reachign out to their pre-existing networks. And in fact this aggregate group has had recent problems over trust.	248
Overcoming	Spiritual Maturity	try to promote and encourage a love among fellow believers. I confront r	100

Barriers		acism and those who practice it, when appropriate.	
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	Passages of the Bible should be used to encourage them to ask questions such as Psalm 73. Facilitators should be familiar with group dynamics.	117
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	Trust in God, that He will protect you to the degree that He deems necessary Trust that others in the same position as you will protect your privacy in the same way that you will protect theirs	156
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	Good place Good material. Good style of presentation Giving them terms to share opinions and thoughts about lesson and be a good learner from them before you are their teacher. Guide them in the lesson as you are one of them not above them. Do not let discipleship become a class keep it as a life style.	244
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	By encouraging everyone to realise that they have something of spiritual value to contribute to the group . By gently correcting those who contribute something that is not accurate, so that next time we meet, they will want to know more clearly from God's word, and apply it in a practical way.	237
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	each trust	9
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	Help them grow in maturity in Christ.	30
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	Pray for a spirit of boldness in the m.	30
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	And wait on the Lord, praying against spiritual-warfare barriers.	55

Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	Hard to specify. So much is directly dependent upon the sovereignty of God. Overcoming the fear/trust issue. Everything else (e.g., having people available to host meetings) is already in place.	155
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	Teach believers to trust God to protect them as they move ahead in knowing Him more.	68
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	I think a lot has to do with how we portray the Bible and the path of Jesus. Do we talk about it secretly with them, or do we model for them as we talk with others that the Bible is nothing to be ashamed of. For me, this is key.	173
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	I think the best thing to do is to pray with those isolated believers that the Holy Spirit will break the Satanic spirit of fear that can be so incapacitating.	129
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	It is in the beginning seeker phase for us in our location. We are just trying to get people to interact in the word and see the value of Bible	113
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	Motivate and encourage from scripture to seek growth.	45
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	Prayer for a renewal of desire to meet regularly	40
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	Encourage local believers with a vision to gather believers to visit other brothers and contact them through phone or email.	104
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	Clear teaching through the popular sites watched by secret believers	59
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	If there is not a desire for material, it is a challenge to motivate persons to engage in learning	79
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	Improving success... they are growing towards Christ. One group needs to concentrate on applying the scri	134

		apture and accountability rather than gaining knowledge.	
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	Actually, I wonder if the barrier isn't spiritual and greater than we think. I honestly wonder how much time most of us spend in prayer for these brothers and sisters and personally feel very challenged when I read biographies like those of Adoniram Judson or Anthony Norris Groves, particularly relating to regular prayer and fasting. I think there may be a tendency to blame their poor education system (of course it's a factor) but perhaps there is also a lack on our part and we are expecting it to be a straightforward step to go from believing to a weekly Bible study with others - perhaps I am speaking for myself and it's always a truism to say we need more prayer, but do we really know how to pray for these believers?	584
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	1) help them see the importance of Bible Study (we are always referring to the Bible in prayer, discussion and study)	93
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	Early teaching on 'the church' and communal nature of our faith and spiritual growth	69
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	Focused on the relational element. Contextualized the material, even better, not using much beyond scripture. avoiding platitudes. Walking beside them, giving more importance to their daily life and struggles than to the program of	192
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	Fear - help them know the other feels the same way, but God is not the god of fear, but of love, truth and freedom from fear.	94
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	All Massira could be a good way forward - it is well done, the guy in the movie is asking the questions and	169

		it is less threatening. Anything workers can do to ally their fears and feeling of spiritual inferiority	
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	those discipleship groups? There are discipleship groups running in our country (AP). Some are using a post-Discovery program, some are using Al Massira as discipleship tool to help get BMB into the word.	165
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	Accept	6
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	Live by example as much as is possible as a non-Arab a life of prayer & faith.	59
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	Spend lots of time 'living life' with brothers to model life of faith-in good time & bad for both of us.	79
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	Pray for them to embrace faith fully and ask God to show them whom of their family may be a 'Person of Peace'	85
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	Implore others to pray for our BMB 'family' to grow in depth & breadth	54
Overcoming Barriers	Spiritual Maturity	I am currently involved in another mixed group. I encourage them to continue meeting and studying together, but am more up front in telling them that the future success will be based on them reachign out to their pre-existing networks. And in fact this aggregate group has had recent problems over trust.	248
Palm Evaluation	Strength	It is helpful in a practical way. It asks questions that help us to apply God's word to our lives, and our group, in a practical way.	102
Palm Evaluation	Strength	very thorough, in its involvement in (and training in) inductive bible study	62
Palm Evaluation	Strength	designed partly by BMBs, to address issues urgent to BMBs	47

Palm Evaluation	Strength	very thorough in covering issues (e.g., reconciliation, spiritual warfare, ethics) that are big to BMBs. It thoroughly exposes the BMB to corrective-teaching scripture, in these areas.	149
Palm Evaluation	Strength	It has a great structure, clear questions, and a practical application that is very helpful. There is a wide range of topics covered	107
Palm Evaluation	Strength	Content it is good already	22
Palm Evaluation	Strength	Delivery the materials are accessible online, so not an issue	51
Palm Evaluation	Strength	Learning Outcome i think it has proved valuable in the experience of the group we are working with	81
Palm Evaluation	Strength	Its Format (Inductive Bible Study) is an accessible to involve all the group members	69
Palm Evaluation	Strength	history	7
Palm Evaluation	Strength	Made with input from bmb's	21
Palm Evaluation	Strength	Program well thought through and having objectives	44
Palm Evaluation	Strength	Comprehensive: covering 'all' of the very important foundations; theology and discipline; addresses critical life areas of relationships, persecution, forgiveness/reconciliation, spiritual warfare, in addition to the more standard 'basics'.	200
Palm Evaluation	Strength	Prepared for use with former Muslims	31
Palm Evaluation	Strength	so far, I have found the questions clear and possible to get the answer	88

on		from the text. Answer guide available.	
Palm Evaluation	Strength	Available in English and Arabic (and other languages), a help to expat teachers In pdf format to print as needed on a personal printer.	108
Palm Evaluation	Strength	It is written in both English and Arabic making it easier for the facilitator perhaps.	71
Palm Evaluation	Strength	Tried and tested in NA	18
Palm Evaluation	Strength	Content OK Field Structure in AP just getting familiar Delivery OK Learning Outcome OK - too many?? Training & Equipping Leaders very transferable Its Format (Inductive Bible Study) Inductive is great - so metimes may seem too intellectual	195
Quality of Teaching	Untextualized program	Programs and courses given are not based on the needs.	44
Quality of Teaching	Untextualized program	Content More single book studies. Fewer topical studies.	47
Quality of Teaching	Untextualized program	Many of the questions seem to be answering western questions. And answering in a western style.	78

## **Appendix 7: Action Plan for the Working Group**

Following communication was emailed to the Working Group through a secure email network. Immediately after I spent three days with them sharing the findings of my study and checking their worldview, they all received this communication. The purpose of this follow up email was to assign to each sub-group clear tasks that I expect them to achieve.

[High Security Country #6], on Thursday June 12, 2014

Dear Working Group,

Trust you are thriving in God's grace and under His wings.

I would like to thank you so much for your dedicated time and efforts that you have shown. Your commitment in attendance and participation in vital discussion and feedback helped me to weave the pilot project of this Action Research to go forward with the first cycle of implementation.

After discussing the worldview and context of the local culture, we agreed together that a major obstacle to fruitful discipleship is the delivery approach. We want to deliver the Word of God using the natural preference of the local people. For this program, we want to build and communicate using orality methods. We want to record and discuss each week using oral learner discipleship methods. Together we came up with clear understanding that the major obstacles facing the BMBs to participate regularly in discipleship groups could be summarized in the following:

1. Lack of Trust
2. Fear
3. Lack of Community

As we agreed, we formed three focus groups to come up with Orality contents for the first three topics mentioned above. The Orality Contents will include:

- Bible Story
- Local cultural song/music
- Local Proverb
- Any other beneficial tool/resource

You will meet in groups during the coming two weeks in order to finalize the theme of each study. We aim to conclude twelve to thirteen studies under the

above mentioned topics. Each group leader will be responsible to record the material in an innovative and yet natural ways for his group to listen and study the way we presented to you during our conference. You will start studying those lessons during July-August and September and to record or fill an evaluation form for each episode.

You are requested to achieve the following learning outcome from those topics:

- Smart Trust
- Smart Fear
- Smart Community

Following is a template that I designed to help you achieving these goals:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Bible Story with (ref.)</b>	<b>Song</b>	<b>Proverb/Poet</b>	<b>Recorded by</b>
<b>Example: July 2</b>	Trust	Adam/Eve (Gen 1-3)	(Kaddab...+Liar)	“Who trusts in men, trusts the water in sieve”	R*** & A***
<b>July 9</b>					
<b>July 16</b>					
<b>July 23</b>					
<b>July 30</b>					

Please email me by June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014 with what you have done and with your meetings plan for the three months ahead, July, August and September.

Thank you so much for participating in this research that designed to help existing groups and new groups to persevere and flourish in studying the Word of God and to Progress Together.

Yours in Christ,

Amal Gendi

Researcher

## Appendix 8:

### Pilot Project Evaluation Survey

Following survey was created through 'Survey Monkey' in late September. It was sent to the Working Group in order to evaluate the Pilot Project they were assigned to perform.

Dear Working Group Members;

You have been chosen to participate in the Action Research presented to you in June, 2014. As agreed, you suppose to share in implementing of this Action Research during the months of July, August & September, 2014. Please take some time to respond to the following questions that will help me to evaluate such an Action Research and to continue to improve it as needed. Thank you for your willingness to help me in my D Min studies and in such an evaluation to benefit the body of Christ across the Arab world.

Grace to You  
Amal Gendi

Q1. During July, August and September 2014 I attended the meetings with my Group...

- All of them
- Most of them
- Some of them
- A few of them
- None of them

2. In the last three month, your involvement within the group to produce materials for the suggested course was...

- Exclusively
- Majority
- Equally
- Partially None

3. My participation in the course preparation helped me to attend the group meetings regularly.

[ ] Agree

[ ] Disagree

4. Following three topics summarize the barriers to the discipleship process in the Arabian Peninsula. They are considered to be the core of the materials to be produced. Chose at least one of these three topics, and answer accordingly. You may choose them all. You can use extra sheets if you need to, but please write the topic title before each answer.

1. Lack of Trust in other People in the Group
2. Fear factor (from Government, Society or Family)
3. Lack of believers nearby

A. Attitude: What is your Attitude toward the new knowledge you gain through this process? Please reflect on your heart change.

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5. B. Behavior. Based on your answers above what new practice or change in action you will anticipate? Please share honestly what you desire to do in order to improve BMBs discipleship in your area.

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6. C. Cognitive & Knowledge: What were your beliefs Before working on the course materials & what are your beliefs after you finalized with your group the materials? Please list your beliefs, knowledge and thoughts Before & After.

7. During your participation, we desired to see your attitude, behavior change through listening to the word of God dealing with these aspects, would you:

- a. Participate in similar program in the future?
- b. Recommend this program to others?
- a. Participate in similar program in the future?

- Definitely
- Most Likely
- Likely
- Unlikely
- Never

b. Recommend this program to others?

- Definitely  Most Likely  Likely  Unlikely  Never

8. We spoke about Orality and its importance in the context of the Arabian Peninsula. Please evaluate the Orality version of the materials you recorded in your group and answer this question.

I believe that Orality discipleship is important when it comes to disciple new converts and to prepare them for ministry.

- Strongly Agree
- Somehow Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Do not know

Comments,

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\*9. Demographics:

I am: -----

Thank you for participating in this evaluation. Grace to You

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