

**Third International Training Consultation**  
**Emmaus Bible College**  
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**Workshop 4.2**

**Hermeneutical issues - The Gospel and the Insider Movement in Islam**  
**Facilitators: Peter Calvin and Suhail Rubin**

**Remit:** How to train people for effective witness to Muslims, and what role does the “Insider” movement principles have for effective Biblical outreach and church planting. This workshop is an application of the morning plenary sessions on how we interpret the Bible regarding the Gospel and its demands on us as applied to different cultural contexts.

**Introduction**

In the past, in reference to the significant mission activities and their outcome, we have often heard mainly about *People Movements* and *Church Planting Movements*. Over the last three decades missionaries/mission organizations have employed certain new strategies, which are now called Insiders Movements (also called Jesus Movements by some).

People Movements: “PM are mass movements in which whole communities decide as a group to leave their former religious affiliation in order to become Christian. People Movements keep the community intact, but the community’s religious affiliation and identity are changed” (J. Waskom Pickett, 1933). The *Churah* Movement in Indian Sub-continent is one example of PM.

Church Planting Movements: In this movement people “make a clean break with their former religion and redefine themselves with a distinctly Christian identity” (David Garrison, “Church Planting Movements vs. Insider Movements,” *Internal Journal of Frontier Missiology*, 2004). Various church planting movements in countries like Philippines, India, Pakistan etc. are examples of CPM.

**Insider Movements:**

“Popular movements to Christ that bypass both formal and explicit expressions of Christian religion” and “movements to Jesus that remain varying degrees inside the social fabrics of Islam, Buddhist, Hindu or other people groups” (Kevin Higgins, “The Key to Insider Movements,” *Internal Journal of Frontier Missiology*, Winter 2004)

In any insider movement there are two distinct elements:

1. The gospel takes root within *pre-existing communities* or social networks, which *become* the main expression of "church" in that context. Believers are not gathered from diverse social networks to create a "church." New parallel social structures are not invented or introduced.
2. Believers *retain their identity* as members of their socio-religious community while living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Bible. (Rebecca Lewis, “Insider Movements: Honoring God-Given Identity and Community,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, Spring 2009)

## Rationale of IM

There are places where Christianity has historically encountered harsh opposition. At such places, the word *Christian* is misunderstood among Muslims. For some it is synonymous with the West and what the West represents, including the Crusades. For others it simply means Roman Catholic. In other words, for Muslims to become "Christians" means that they have abandoned not only their religion, but also their culture and family. They may need to leave their city or country, preventing them from testifying to Christ before their people.

The gospel is not about practicing religion but entering God's kingdom.  
So they try to remove the cultural baggage often attributed to Christendom.

## What do they do?

For evangelism they try to use language that is less offensive and more culturally sensitive to particular groups (particularly Muslim). {e.g. non-familial or social familial terms}

They encourage believers (converts to Christianity) to

1. Remain in existing cultural, social, familial, and religious networks and
2. Retain their unique religious identity and practices. Asserting that much of what Westerners discern as *church* are truly "man-made ecclesiastical structures,"
3. They even counsel people to remain Muslim rather than confess Christ openly.

## Salient Features of IM

1. They have vision of worldwide evangelism.
2. They refuse to accept humanly constructed boundaries for Kingdom work.
3. They claim full commitment to Scripture.
4. They talk about unchanging content ("must not distort the gospel") and unchanging scope (universality of the good news for all people).
5. They are diverse, non-western and non-traditional in their mission approach.
6. They strive to communicate the gospel and remove as many obstacles as possible. In the process they have helped the wider church body take contextualization seriously.
7. They are criticized for not having identifiable theological parameters and even clarifying application.
8. They have too much cultural anthropological orientation.
9. They are guilty of syncretism—any method that blends the Lord Jesus into unbelieving religious practice is not biblical mission; it is syncretism.

## Concerns of Evangelicals

"Indeed, to change or substitute non-familial or social familial terms with the common biological terms in Scripture is to move in a direction contrary to Scriptural intent. Therefore, if a translator seeks to find a more "culturally responsible" or "culturally sensitive" form because the word in the target language arguably contains primary or secondary nuances that differ from the original language (Greek), this aim does not warrant the translator's selecting a less than explicit term for the Son of God. The biological sonship term may need to be explained, but it cannot be substituted

without compromising the revelation of Christ's person. Translation decisions that violate these parameters functionally eclipse the perspicuous verbal authority of Scripture regarding the Son of God. By truncating the identity of Christ in the minds of the reader, replacement terms can even distort the gospel."

1. Insiders make the unbiblical assumption that such biblical passages teach that true believers can have a purely inward faith that can be manifested inside any faith system, including that of other non-Christian religions.
2. Practitioners and Insider missiologists (or scholars of the theology of missions) ignore the fact that the Bible is loaded with texts, even entire books, devoted to distinguishing truth from error and true religion from false religion. In other words, doctrine matters and has to be central in our theology of missions. Unfortunately, doctrine is surprisingly absent from much Insider literature, and rarely do their proponents address the twin topics of idolatry and false religion. Instead, Insiders suppose that religions are relatively harmless cultural creations, that they are man-made and therefore disposable. Even Christian articles of faith, such as the church and the sacraments, can be said to be cultural creations that can simply be replaced with other things in Muslim cultures.

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. What do you know about IM? Do you have any experience with IM or contact with any group?
2. How much should cultural outsiders tell seekers and new believers "the right answer for belief and how much should we expect the Spirit of God to guide them to the best answers through direct group interaction with the Scripture?"
3. What parts of a person's beliefs and practices must change when they begin to follow Jesus and as they mature in him?
4. What approaches are most likely to catalyze church planting movements rather than just reaching a few scattered individuals?
5. How can we plant churches that are truly indigenous: led, supported, growing, and multiplying with local resources, rather than dependent on outsiders?