

Reflections on disciple-making

Background: Chad

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The cry goes up, “Jesus called us to make disciples, not just converts”. In the West we do not have many people speaking and writing about discipleship, but we do have some. One thing they have in common is that they claim to show how to make disciples the way Jesus did. It is not surprising that such a claim should be made; if it is the way Jesus did it, it must be good. And who is going to trust an author that says he has developed a method better than that of Jesus?

However, in reality, they do not advocate copying Jesus, nor is that necessarily a problem. What can be a problem is that people from the West take such books at face value, they believe the spin, and then they import them into places like Chad. It is my contention that Chadians already know more about discipleship than we do. Before we can help them, we need to learn from the Chadians themselves.

I freely admit that this paper is not based on a rich experience of effective work. Rather, it comes from mature reflections on what might have been and observations made after I ceased to be a resident in Chad.

First of all, what did Jesus actually do? If we take a thorough, objective look at the practices of Jesus we may find some surprises. Let’s start with an easy question. How many disciples did Jesus have? The popular answer is 12. But he also sent out 72 on mission, and these too are called disciples. And in Acts ch. 1 it mentions a group of 120. And elsewhere it speaks of “many disciples”, and even of “many that stopped following him”. Maybe that is not such an easy question.

Let’s start again. How did people become disciples? The popular answer is that he chose and called them. However, John chapter 1 tells us that John the Baptist directed two of his disciples to follow Jesus and so they did. One of these was Andrew who then recruited his brother Simon. The disciples recruited disciples. Nevertheless, we also find that Jesus called these same individuals on other occasions. It seems that many people followed Jesus to one degree or another of their own volition. This crowd of followers are called disciples. There were also people Jesus specifically called to follow him – who may or may not have already been sympathizers. In addition, Jesus took a night of prayer before selecting 12 of them who he designated apostles (Lu 6v13). Most of what we know about the practices of Jesus concern this group of 12, and so we shall look primarily at what he did with them, but to grasp the full picture we must not forget the 72 and the wider following who are all part of the context within which the 12 were discipled. The gap between the 12 and the rest was not as wide as is often imagined. In Acts when they sought a replacement for Judas they looked for someone from among those who had been with Jesus from the baptism of John through to the resurrection. They narrowed it down to two, but there were doubtless others, and, in the view of the other apostles, these two were as well fitted for the task as they themselves were.

Before we move on, we should note that Jesus invited people to follow who did not. This may be the case in Matthew 8 v 19-22 and was certainly the case in Matthew 19 v 16-22, the rich young ruler. So there was more to being a disciple than being called or chosen and not all who were called became disciples.

Who were the 12? If we are being fully objective, we must start by affirming that they were all adult males. And Jesus himself did not even start until he was 30 even though he was competent to teach from the age of 12. There were women who were followers, but they were not included in the core group. It is generally understood that they were all Galilean Jews. Galilee was a fairly mixed kind of

place and this finds some reflection in their names. Two of them had Greek names, Philip and Andrew. Some of them worked in a family businesses and one was a tax official. The suggestion is that the Simon the Zealot was at least associated in some way with the radical nationalists. We find that John son of Zebedee was known to the High Priest's family (John 18v15). It has been known for commentators to sniff at that sort of detail, but living in Chad, where extended families are the norm, one can see how people of high social status can have a wide circle of acquaintances, relatives, retainers and clients from every level of society.

Now let us get practical. What did this involve? Let us start with the finances. He required them to leave their jobs, to give up their livelihoods. We read of four who quit the family fishing business. They were told to leave off catching fish. Their new activity was an alternative, not a supplement. We read of a tax collector who walked away from his post. Jesus did not recruit part-timers. They lived as a community with a common purse. They had a treasurer, Judas by name. How did the common purse operate? We find a clue in John 13. After Jesus had washed the feet of Judas, he told him to do what he was going to do quickly. The others did not understand, but they supposed that he was going off on his regular business. That included buying things they would need for the feast and distributing alms to the poor. When Mary 'wasted' the perfume on Jesus, the suggestion was that it could have been donated for resale. This at least suggests that the band of disciples received gifts and had a discipline of giving.

When Peter was confronted by the collectors of temple tax he was embarrassed. Not only was he not sure whether they should pay or not, but he did not have the money on him. Jesus arranged a miracle to show that citizens of the Kingdom should still meet earthly obligations and to make Peter able to pay. It seems that the disciples did not have pocket money. When Jesus sent them out as pairs, he explicitly told them to take nothing with them – no money, no spare clothing, not even a walking stick. He obviously did not know much about modern missionary practice, but let's leave that to one side for the moment. He taught them to function out of simplicity and dependence. It is not that they were supposed to fast for the duration of their mission, but rather they were to trust God to supply their needs through the people they met and ministered to. Jesus enabled them to perform signs and wonders, but specifically forbade them for charging for their services. Freely you have received, freely give. (Mat 10v8-10). There is no reason to suppose Jesus himself operated any differently himself. He had a clear set of values and practices when it came to money.

What income did they have? They must have had income, or else they could not have bought things for the feast or have given alms to the poor. It is interesting that when Jesus asked them to feed the 5000, their first response was not that it could not be done, but rather that it would take much more money than they had. We are not told explicitly what income they had, but we do have hints. Luke refers to women who followed and supported the group from their means (Luke 8 v 1-3). The pairs sent out on mission were told in effect to trust God to provide through worthy individuals (Mat 10 v9-12).

They went almost everywhere on foot or by boat. There were other options. Horses, camels and donkeys were available, and chariots were not unknown. He could have got so much more done if they were more mobile and could have covered much more territory. Surely Jesus' choices regarding travel were an expression of his values regarding time and material simplicity.

How democratic was the group? The simple answer is that it was not. Jesus was in charge. He told them where to go and when. Sometimes he put them in a boat and told them to push off. Sometimes he sent them on errands. He taught them as one who had authority and directed them at the practical level likewise. They called him master and teacher. We might say that the disciples were his students, but we would have to add that they had the status of servants. Modern students do not usually associate themselves with servitude. These did what he asked. At times he rebuked them in strong

terms. He never tried to argue anyone into following him, nor did he change direction to accommodate anyone. Famously, Jesus called them his friends. The modern (post-modern?) reader misses the point. He said I *no longer* call you servants but friends. This was a departure from the norm. It was a privilege, not the default option.

Jesus did not treat them equally. He gave special treatment to Peter, James and John, and it is clear that Peter was designated as leader in waiting. Outside the 12 there were others who followed closely, including Matthias and Joseph Barsabbas, but the 12 got more attention than the wider group.

Here is another practical issue. Where did he do his teaching and training? A brief survey of the Gospel shows that Jesus took them with him when he was preaching in the open air to the crowds, and also in the synagogues. He took them into peoples homes. He even took them to wedding parties. He did teach them in private, but he also taught them in public. He taught them on the road, round the table, on trips abroad, and indeed just about everywhere. Several times we find him engaged in discussion with his opponents in the presence of his disciples. He does not seem to have worked from any recognized headquarters but rather they operated as a roving community.

Discipling means teaching and training. So what methods do we see him using? They listened while he taught the public and then he explained the details in private. He often taught by example, the foot washing being perhaps the most dramatic case. But the way he dealt with people and handled power was full of teaching content too. He taught them lifestyle. They were supposed to learn to do things as he did them. He wove teaching in and around the miracles. A disciple, he said, becomes like his master. In saying this, he was not bringing a new revelation, it was common knowledge. The very idea of discipleship is to become like the master.

He gave them assignments. He asked them to feed the crowd. He sent them off on mission for a time. He did evaluation with them on their return. He answered their questions. He put questions to them. He gave them things to do they could not quite manage. They experienced failure, such as the boy from whom they could not drive out the demon.

He taught very little theory or theology. Almost everything was practical and had immediate application. Even when he was responding to their curiosity about the end times, he spoke as much about what they should do as what was going to happen.

What about scripture? Did he use scripture? The answers “yes, all the time,” and “no, hardly ever”, are both correct. If we ask how many times we find reference to Jesus actually reading scripture, the only reference is to a formal setting in a synagogue. There is no suggestion that he either conducted bible studies nor that he gave any systematic exposition, except possibly after the resurrection. People at that time just did not wander the countryside or take to the water in fishing boats with precious scrolls in their hands. Nor do we find him conducting anything approaching scripture memorization classes.

One thing this shows is that modern books advocating discipleship teach methods and practices different from those of Jesus, and, as we have already said that is not necessarily a problem. It just means that we must treat their claim to be following the example of Jesus with great caution.

Before we go on to how he did use scripture, a few thoughts on why he did not do more of the sort of bible teaching we might do. In general, he seemed to expect his audience, both disciples and opponents to know the scriptures. They learnt their scripture as children at the synagogue. Scripture was woven into their everyday lives. He was working with those who had a good deal of head knowledge. It could be argued that for this reason he did not need to teach systematically from the scriptures, but in itself it does not show what we or any one else ought to do.

So what use did he make of scripture? He quoted things that he expected them to know. We know from studies made of rabbinic writings that people would quote part of a passage and expect the listeners to know its context and associated texts. The two phrases "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations" and "You have made it a den of robbers" both alluded to powerful indictments on the people. On the cross he quoted just one line of Ps 22, but the suggestion is that the listeners knew the text and filled in the following lines for themselves. Quite often when we find Jesus quoting scripture he is actually answering opponents in the presence of his disciples. In such cases, he was asking for a right understanding of and application of the scriptures.

In the Sermon on the Mount we see Jesus teaching "not as the scribes", who were careful to base their interpretations on rigorous study. Jesus plucked out well known and fundamental commandments and told people on his own authority how they were to be understood and applied. This was part of his way of teaching, an aspect it is not appropriate to imitate, though he surely wanted to impart boldness and confidence to his followers.

Famously, he taught in parables. These used simple everyday language and spoke of familiar things. They were easy to remember. But the gospel writers insist that maximizing communicative effectiveness was not his aim. Not everyone was going to understand. Indeed the list of people who did not understand things Jesus said he is impressive and long. Are we already so good at miscommunicating that we need no training in this side of Jesus work?

If we are thinking about practicalities, we must eventually come to the time component. And it is frightening. Jesus was on the job 24 hours a day for three years. He ate and slept with the disciples. So far as we can tell, he never ran sessions on time management. This is only of interest because so many modern manuals of discipleship regard such as indispensable. Jesus taught life style by living it and his priorities were not always the same as ours would be today.

What did he teach? Some would imagine that we could not hope to outline his teaching in a mere subsection of a brief paper, but they would be wrong. He really did not teach on a great range of subjects, rather he addressed the same themes from many angles. Bible teachers have a professional interest in making it complicated. If you ever come across anything that Jesus seems to have only addressed once, you have probably misunderstood him.

I will summarise the teaching content he gave his disciples under four headings, but must stress that these are not four separate things. The order I place them in is for our convenience. They do not express an order of priority. They overlap and are interdependent. He really was not a westerner.

Firstly, he taught about the Kingdom of God. This was a familiar term that they already had some understanding of. We make much of what they misunderstood, but we should not neglect the fact they did have some understanding. The key passage is Daniel 2 especially verse 44. They understood that God had a plan to establish a different kind of kingdom on earth men which would be greater than and would replace the great empires of this world. Once it started there would be no stopping it. It would be a new and final age. They knew already that this kingdom would be headed by a man designated the anointed one, the Christ. The people of Jesus' time were waiting for it to start. The modern ideas of it being either an internal state of the heart or an expression of eternal reality were absent from their thinking. The Pharisees in particular based a lot of their teaching on the coming kingdom age. Jesus was correcting false beliefs about how the kingdom would come about, what it would be like and who would be in it. His teaching about the kingdom included its values, his own centrality, having a kingdom outlook and something of the end-time scenario.

Second he taught about himself as the Son of Man. Daniel 7v14 refers to one like a son of man given great power and glory. There was not a clear consensus who this personage was, while there were very clear ideas about the role of the Messiah (the Christ). To have proclaimed himself as the Christ would be understood as declaring himself the only legitimate political authority in the world. He explained himself as the son of man, who when you look at Daniel 7v14 is an immense personage. He taught that he himself had authority to determine the will of God and to judge people. He called for unwavering obedience to himself. If we have difficulty in understanding why the authorities were so angry with him, we need to put ourselves in their place. Here was a nobody calling people to treat him like the supreme messenger of God.

Thirdly, he taught about true righteousness: the actions that proceed from heart attitude controlled by a love for both God and man especially as expressed in forgiveness. He expounded the goodness of God as a father.

He taught, in both word and deed, about faith. Faith in himself as Lord, and in God as father. Forgiveness (Mat 9v2, Lu 7v50), cleanliness (Lu 8v48, 17v19), restoration, deliverance, blessing, provision, all come by faith.

Now, a question for reflection. Today, in the West, if someone decided to slavishly follow the example of Jesus, doing everything as Jesus did, how would he get on? Could it be done? Could he call a tax official from his office and expect him to leave immediately? Could he bring 12 extra guests to a wedding? (I guess he might be forgiven if he also provided 600 liters of top quality wine ...) Could he walk everywhere? Could he produce a miracle as an object lesson? Would he require his followers to accept poverty? How would he pay his taxes? Would he wash the feet of people who had never had their feet washed by anyone before? Could he quote scripture confident that the listeners knew what he was talking about?

It is not difficult to see that literally copying Jesus is problematic, and no one seriously advocates it in the western world. At this point, they back pedal, and say they are following the basic principles and applying them in a different culture.

Is that legitimate? Let us put the question another way. Did Jesus invent discipling? No, he did not. The prophets of old founded groups called the sons of the prophets who were essentially bands of disciples (e.g. 1 Sam 19v20, 1 K 20v35, 2 K 3v3). Moses trained up Joshua in a master-servant type relationship. Elijah took on Elisha as his servant-apprentice and Elisha took on Jahazi. The Pharisees had disciples. John the Baptist had disciples. We know from archeology that the Essenes had disciples. Saul of Tarsus had sat at the feet of Gamaliel, a famous Pharisee who appears in Acts. "Sitting at the feet of" means being a disciple of. Gamaliel ran a city-based school. John the Baptist operated in the wilderness and people had to come looking for him. It seems most unlikely that his disciples enjoyed an easy time of it. He had a reputation for the ascetic lifestyle such that it made Jesus look like a boozier and a glutton.

It is clear that concept of discipleship was well-known in that culture and that there was considerable variation in how it was conducted. Did Jesus lay down a set of guidelines to be relentlessly followed? His apostles did not think so, because they started their new careers in Acts 2 as city based teachers. And when persecution scattered the flock they stayed put (Acts 8v1). A little later on we find Paul building his team workers. Like Jesus he was their master. He sent them on errands and mission trips. Unlike Jesus, at times, he earned his daily bread and made that a point of his teaching (Acts 20v33-35, 2 Thess 3v7-10). What he had in common with Jesus is that he expected his disciples to do as he did. Also like Jesus, he advocated the practice of giving (Acts 20v35).

May I suggest that we can draw some conclusions? Jesus adopted and adapted practices known within the culture. Disciple making in the 21st Century western world is bound to be different because the cultural setting is radically different. The fact that ‘the lost art of disciple making’ could be used as a title at all is evidence enough that our culture is vastly different from that of Jesus. Therefore, here in Chad, we must look into the culture to see what form disciple making might have and not assume that the attempts to rediscover discipleship in the Western context have much to say to us.

There are at least three models of discipleship that already exist amongst Chadian Muslims. Before we go any further, we need to de-Christianize the word disciple. The word is so heavily associated with stained glass windows that we lose the basic meaning. In English we have another word that means essentially the same thing and that word is apprentice.

Apprenticeship is about learning by doing under the direction of a master. It implies a relationship, a commitment and a goal. It is an approach to training that is dying in several technologically advanced countries and is being replaced with classroom based approaches that carry with them a different set of relationships.

The skilled tradesmen in Chad practice apprenticeship/disciple making. In a traditional carpenter’s shop you will find a team of young men of various ages. They are *talaamiiz*, singular *tilmiiz*. They work for their *usta*, their master. They are there to learn how to do carpentry with the aim of becoming like their master and one day running their own shop complete with trainees. It is a self-replicating process, the church planter’s dream. The *tilmiiz* learns through obedience to his master. He does what he is told. He becomes a *tilmiiz* when his family ask the *usta* to take him on and the *usta* consents. From that point on, the *usta* becomes like a part-time parent. The boy spends the day with him, eats his meals with him but returns to his own home at night. Initially the boy receives little or no money, but as time goes on he gets more pocket money. He learns by doing and is under the supervision of either the *usta* or more likely the senior *talaamiiz*. Over a period of ten years or more he learns progressively more skills and is given more difficult tasks.

The *usta* also models lifestyle to some extent. He has to set standards of integrity, managing money and dealing with both good and bad customers. A good carpenter works to keep a good reputation and to instill good habits in his *talaamiiz*.

This methodology is also used by other skilled workers – tailors, builders, mechanics and so on. It resembles the teaching methods of Jesus in several respects.

1. The relationship between teacher and learner is akin to that of master and servant.
2. The teaching is practical and involves doing not just listening.
3. The training goes on in a public environment.
4. The trainee is aiming to become like his trainer.
5. Income is earned by the group and the *usta* controls the disposal of the money.

This methodology differs from that of Jesus in certain respects.

1. The apprentices do not fully adopt a community lifestyle.
2. The trainees are all a generation younger than the teacher.

The second model takes us into the religious domain. It is that of the *faqiib*. The traditional *faqiib* has a band of *muhaajiriin*. They live as a community. The *muhaajiriin* address their *faqiib* as “*sayyidna*”, our master. He has authority akin to that of a parent to the boys. He directs and disciplines them. They do whatever tasks he gives them to do. He teaches them to recite, to read and to write. He teaches them the Qur'an and how to use it. He trains the more advanced *muhaajiriin* to teach others. A boy becomes a *muhaajir* by being given to the *faqiib* by the family. He maybe an orphan in need of a home,

or the family may just want their son to be trained in the respected profession of the *faqiih*. They can become *mubaajir* as young as 5. The *faqiih* sends them out to beg. He has them washing his clothes and running his errands. They operate a common purse, controlled by the *faqiih*. By both word and example he teaches them the *faqiih* lifestyle. Traditionally many *fuquba* (plural of *faqiih*) traveled with their apprentices. I have spoken to old men who were raised by *fuquba* who traveled all over Sudan and Nigeria as well as Chad on foot. As the *mubaajir* gains knowledge and maturity, the *faqiih* teaches him the secrets of their trade. Folk remedies, rites and rituals for dealing problems. The *faqiih* serves the public at special events and in personal crises. He charges for his services. These things are all passed on to the apprentices. The understood goal of the whole system is to produce more *fuquba* who will, in turn, train others. The system has successfully generated *fuquba* for generations.

There are modern developments that modify this model. In recent times, the demand for Qur'anic lessons has grown enormously fast, first to include most Muslim boys and now to include many Muslim girls. The street-side Qur'anic school is a very common feature of the towns. The people who teach in these informal schools are also called *faqiih*. Some are traditional *fuquba*, others are *mubaajiriin*, still others have been taught by *fuquba* without becoming full blown *mubaajiriin*. The teaching methods are those of the *faqiih*, but the model is closer to that of a school. The learners do not live in community. They disperse to their homes and schools. Lifestyle is not taught nor are the children expected to go on to earn their living from the Qur'an. Unlike Sunday schools, no one expects an hour a week to be sufficient.

Similarly, the new practice of women's training groups is spreading. Women do not fit in the traditional system. In this culture, neither daughters nor wives can easily come under a master or mistress other than their father/husband. Their lives are busy enough without being the servant-students of *faqiih*. The new groups operate much more as a school class, and from my limited experience, are attended by women who are sent there by their husbands or with their husbands blessing, as opposed to being attended by the independent widows and divorcees who make their living through trade.

Going back to the traditional model, there are similarities with the ways of Jesus.

1. The *mubaajiriin* are being trained to become like their master.
2. They live as a community.
3. The teacher is master.
4. The goal is ministry and lifestyle.
5. The activities include use of spiritual power.
6. Traditionally, they travel.

There are important differences.

1. The *mubaajiriin* begin with minimal knowledge and the *faqiih* starts teaching from zero.
2. The *mubaajiriin* are minors and the *faqiih* is in *loco parentis*.
3. They use a variety of strategies to raise money.
4. There is much rote learning. (Jesus disciples probably learnt by rote as children, but not under his teaching.)

There is inevitably a fundamental difference of spirit, but we must be careful to distinguish the methodology from the spirit in which it is carried out. In principle, there is no reason why a godly *faqiih* could not operate the system in a worthy manner. Flogging is not fundamental to the system.

The third model is still more interesting. When I first lived in Abéché, I noticed that there was a group of middle aged men who passed my house first thing in the morning. I was told they were

going to their *sayyid*. They were adult disciples of a religious teacher and were referred to as *talaamiiż*. They call their teacher *sayyidna*.

Chad has sufi brotherhoods. The main one is the Tidjaaniyya. Men who have gained a level of piety and learning may be asked to take on disciples. Such people may or may not accept those that want to follow them. If they accept, then the relationship is one requiring commitment. The disciples have their own lives to lead and so they do not live as a community, but they meet at times fixed by the master. These may include early morning and siesta time. They meet to be taught, to recite together and to do *zikir*. *Zikir* involves reciting as a group with a view to gaining *baraka* and seeing manifestations. I am told that the Tidjaaniyya have books of secret wisdom which are jealously guarded and you gain access through long apprenticeship. The Tidjaanis use and advocate many folk practices. For example, their teaching would include knowing Qur'anic passages to recite or to put into a charm for different type of situations.

The Wahaabis are also a brotherhood that has arisen from the Sufi movement, but it is reformist and protestant. That is, it specifically rejects the folk practices. It is about getting Muslims back on to the right path of simple Islam. The focus of their teaching is the *sunna*, the example of the prophet himself. They are continually looking at how it has been wrongly taught and how it should be taught. When there are debates between leading Ws and leading Ts their disciples are always there. I am told that sometimes a W leader will take his disciples to a mosque so that at prayer time they can refuse to pray behind an imam who they regard as apostate. This stirs up discussion not to say debate. It is a group activity. The followers learn by both word and example.

The sufi system has similarities with the method of Jesus:

1. The disciples are adults.
2. The focus is on rightly interpreting the known word.
3. There is a difference of status between teacher and disciple.
4. They learn, worship and confront opponents as a group.
5. The disciples aspire to take disciples of their own in due course.
6. The disciples already know the basics of their faith.
7. They are concerned with the use and/or abuse of spiritual power.

There are differences too.

1. They do not live as a community.
2. It is not a full time activity.

From these three models we can see that discipleship methods are well-known and understood in the Chadian culture. Disciple-making is no lost art. It is alive and adapting to face new challenges.

It strikes me that when AJ became a believer, he spontaneously took on three disciples. He taught one of them to read from scratch. He shared his life with them. They met daily, they ate together and they became a little band. As it turned out, they did not become as like their teacher as he had hoped, but nevertheless we see an example of the model that exists in the culture being put to Christian use without any outside prompt. To a lesser extent we can see something similar with Abakar and Jim'e, and perhaps even Halime and Khamiisa. These people do not need us to tell them from books what disciple making entails.

If we are to help Chadians make disciples we need to understand and appreciate the models that already exist within the culture. Their culture is an asset not a hindrance. Our competence to teach the practice of discipleship can not be based solely on either the reading of books about our own culture nor from experience of our own culture.

Further reflection.

1. Lifestyle.

As others have remarked, there are significant differences between how Westerners manage their time and space and how Africans do it. Discipleship in the West has to operate with different parameters to those of Jesus' day. Since 21st Century Chad has significant resemblances to the culture of Jesus' day that begs the question of how much we can adapt. Some have said it can not be done, or at least not 100%, that the aim should be to make key converts who themselves can do the real work. Others might say that it can be done up to a point. We are working with the grace of God, not relentlessly following some sociological rule, so that even if we can't become fully Chadian, we can adapt enough to be accessible and fruitful.

I know that for myself I tried to keep my family life separate from my ministry, and my time was managed in a largely western way, though less so than it had been in the West. My day still had too many fixed points in it and I found it difficult when those fixed points were under pressure. I tried to create as it were, 'Chadian space' in my home, which worked up to a point. But I rarely even attempted to see anyone more than twice a week. And some of my contacts really did not want to be seen around me too often either.

What should we be aiming for? There is clearly a spectrum from the full blown Jesus model on the one hand, through to the fixed times and spaces model that Westerners tend to prefer.

2. Qualification.

This presentation also asks questions about our qualifications. There would be a case for saying that what we need is a group of men who have a solid grasp of classical Arabic, Chadian Arabic, Islamic teaching, pastoral experience and the scriptures. A good track record in deliverance ministry would also be most welcome. Such people could teach with confidence and debate in public with the *fuqaha* if need be. However, that is not what we have now, have ever had, or are likely to have anytime soon.

Starting from where we find ourselves, we can still explore as individuals the questions of how God can use us as we are and how we can enhance our degree of 'qualification'. Since we aim to operate as a team, we do not all need the same abilities or qualifications. As teams, maybe we should be praying for specialists that we have not previously sought.

3. Women.

When it comes to discipling women, we do not have much to go on neither in terms of traditional practice nor in terms of Christian successes. The recent development of Islamic classes for women is interesting, but hard to evaluate. Do such classes succeed? What indeed do they aim to achieve? They do show that the idea of regular classes is acceptable to at least some in the culture. They stop short of the full discipleship seen elsewhere in the community. That may give us some hope that a similar method can be used by ourselves or our contacts. It would be helpful if we could find out more about these classes perhaps from those who once attended. It would be helpful to know whether they are universally approved of and whether they are more appreciated by men or by women.

Whether the class model is one we can use, we should still ask the question of how women might be discipled. The only types of women MBB teaching going on at the moment which I know of consist of private meetings, one to one, for prayer and study. In one case the 'disciple' has been passed from one teacher to the next as missionaries have moved on. In both cases that I know a little of, the woman is married and has children. Sessions are all but conducted in secret. The practice began as a

way to supply teaching to a new believer in need, not as a thought out strategy. It was a response to an unplanned eventuality. One element that has probably been lacking is the understanding that the 'disciple' is being taught in order to one day teach others. Instead the expectation is one of on-going spiritual dependency. The fact is that if the woman does not have the approval of her husband and wider family, she can not relate to the wider fellowship of believers even if she wanted to and the closed sessions are meeting the need for fellowship. The visiting missionary is being church for her, not just a discipler. It is also true that the disciple would not appreciate the missionary greatly increasing her visits to make it more of a discipleship model. The more frequent the visits, the more attention is drawn to the disciple. So long as the MBB is hiding her allegiance, we are very limited in the input we, or anyone else, can give.

One way forward would be as a team to focus on the wider family both in prayer and attention. The men of the family should be visited, without reference to the wife. If there is a group of women, then it would be good if they could be visited as a group in addition to the private sessions. Neither of these strategies is guaranteed success. In both cases we may meet with rejection, but we should at least try.

3. What about Christians of the South? The EET pastor and elders structure (which other churches also use) could in principle be used to express the sort of discipleship Jesus practiced. The pastor has an inner circle of followers who share the ministry with him. Outside that wider circle he has a larger group of identifiable followers, and beyond that there is the general public. However, whatever models may or may not exist in the various cultures of the South, the discipleship thinking does not seem very evident in the Southern church, especially as it operates in the North. My impression is that in many cases the relationship between pastor and elders is often not a happy or even co-operative one. I do know of some exceptions, but they strike me as being just that, exceptions. If we start to make any progress on how discipleship can be done, we will need to share it with our potential co-workers from the South. This may be more difficult than it sounds. I have heard it said that though Africans take the sharing of property as normative, knowledge is jealously guarded, the opposite of the western habit.

4. There is a big issue which I should have raised earlier, but have deliberately saved to the end. Who will follow? Why should anyone want to follow? Discipleship is not about a process that can be picked up and applied to people, it is very relational. Becoming more Chadian is not in itself the answer to anything. After all, there are plenty of Chadians who do not have followers. People become disciples/apprentices of those that they believe can do something they also want to do or are something they also want to be. It is not about knowledge in the sense of information. Now, if we fail to adapt sufficiently we may make it impossible for someone to be discipled by us and similarly our light may be so hidden by our cultural baggage that people do not know we have anything to offer. But the fundamental question is still there. What do we have to offer?

Maybe that is not a helpful question, for the optimist says "plenty" and the pessimist says "nothing", and it is likely that they are both wrong. The more interesting question is "What do people think we have?" That is easier to answer, because we can answer it from experience. Some see us as having money. Some see as sources of English language and modernity. Those who seek secularism are attracted to us. That is not necessarily a problem, in that those who seek a more secular life may be willing to think outside of the box, but is that what we want to be?