

Fruitful Practices:



A guide for learning from the best practices of church planters in the Muslim world

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Introduction to Fruitful Practices



“Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them.”
(Psalm 111:2)

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful...‘I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.’”
(John 15:1-8)

Followers of Christ have been working to fulfil His command to make disciples of all nations for generations. Through trial and error, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, experimentation, study, and by accident, field workers all over the world have learned what practices bear fruit when their aim is church planting among Muslims. Too often, however, that knowledge is not shared with others, or not put into practice. We waste time and resources in the Body of Christ, learning lessons that have already been learned by others.

What if your church planting team could spend several years talking to over 1000 people from many different mission organizations who are also focused on seeing new churches emerge and thrive in Muslim communities?

What if you could ask them what they have learned by their experience? What practices they found were most effective at producing the emergence, health and growth of fellowships of new believers in Christ in a Muslim context?

This guide is the result of a study that did just that.

It will introduce you to the **68 fruitful practices** that emerged from the study and guide you and your team through them so you can consider how to apply them with success in your area of ministry.

Fruitful Practices are not a formula or program. They are a simple list that shares the experiences of a large and diverse group of field workers with a common goal – to see growing, thriving fellowships of followers of Christ in Muslim communities. Church planting teams can use the list to prompt discussion about their own practices in the different categories and use it to consider what changes they might want to make in their practices.



What is a Fruitful Practice?

“Fruitful Practices” are activities and behaviours which multiple church planters have discovered are effective at producing the spiritual fruit of new believers, healthy discipleship communities and reproducing fellowships of believers in a Muslim context.

These practices are described as “fruitful” rather than “best” or “good” because they are not just good ideas - they bear life; they produce growth and reproduction. This list is a starting point for important discussion among agencies and teams about what contributes to fruitfulness, based on the realities of experience and the foundation of scripture. How will you add to the list?

Many of the principles listed here may be common sense, but they are not always common practice. This manual will help teams understand what is relevant for their context from the rich harvest of wisdom that already exists and encourage sharing their own knowledge with others.

Cooperating with God. All true ministry involves God’s part and our part. We cannot change the heart of people. That is God’s part. But we can share the gospel and demonstrate Christ’s love. That is our part.

This list highlights practices which have been shown to bear fruit for His glory. When our faces are turned to the Father and His good work, the rest is up to Him!

“What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.” (1 Corinthians 3:5-7)

As you go through this list, please keep the following in mind:

- **Descriptive, not prescriptive.** This list is not a set of formulas to follow. Instead, it offers descriptions of important features of the practice which can be applied using your own knowledge of local conditions and prayerfully adapted to your own context.
- **Evolving.** This list represents the “learning edge” for field workers. The list is not complete. Over time, as we receive the insights of more field workers, representing a wider range of experience, we will revise the current set.
- **Holistic.** These practices support one another. They contribute to fruitfulness as they remain in relationship with each other. This is especially true of practices within a category. The evidence from the field shows that fruitfulness occurred with clusters of practices, not with any one practice in isolation from the others.
- **The “God factor.”** Think of this list as a summary of many ways we see God working through teams. These are practices that teams have found help them work with what God is doing.

Categorization

To make it easier to think about the practices, they are grouped into eight categories based on the circles of relationship that field workers might experience throughout the life of their ministry.

The labels are for reference:

Category	Label		Category	Label
Relating to Society	Society		Relating to Seekers	Seekers
Relating to Believers	Believers		Relating to Leaders	Leader
Relating to God	God		Communication Methods	Communication
Fruitful Teams	Teams		Fruitful Churches	Churches

What do we mean by “church”?

Different readers may have different ideas in mind when they read the word, “church.” The researchers for this guide used the terms “fellowship” or “fellowship of new believers” to describe local expressions of the biblical word *ekklesia*, and to mean the same as the English word, “church.”

For more information on the research and analysis of the study this manual is based on, please see the “Resources” section at the end of the guide.

Facilitator's Guide

How to Use the Fruitful Practices List

Following are 8 tables which describe the 68 fruitful practices, grouped into 8 categories. This facilitators guide will show you, step-by-step, how to lead a discussion with a team about how they are engaged in these practices. The goal of the discussion is to help teams come to a better understanding of which practices are areas of strength, and what the areas they need to grow in, so they can focus on areas for growth in order to bear more fruit, leading to thriving and reproducing communities of believers.

1. Preparation:

- **Give copies of the Fruitful Practices category descriptions to everyone** in the team before you meet and ask them to take some time to think about the exercise. Let them know they will be asked to evaluate the team on how well they are doing at each of the practices.

- OR -

- **Make copies of the lists to hand out at the meeting** but make sure everyone has time to read or listen to the descriptions and consider their response.
- **Before the meeting, decide the pace you want to go through the list.** Some teams will want to discuss one category per meeting, or you may make them all the focus of a longer team gathering. You can start with any category – they are not in any order.
- **Choose someone to take notes** of the observations and goals made. Have spare copies of the Fruitful Practices lists including ones you will use to record the team evaluation.

Who Should Facilitate?

The facilitator should be able to make sure that everyone in the team has the opportunity to share their opinions, help the team come to conclusions and be able to organize the recording of decision made by the team. In some teams, the best person for this role is not the team leader – it could be an invited facilitator from outside the teams, or another member of the team.



2. Introducing Fruitful Practices

- Begin with prayer.
- **Introduce the Fruitful Practices** list, and the study that informed it, to the team. Here's a helpful script:

Fruitful Practices is a list of practices which many thousands of church planters working among Muslims have identified as behaviours which lead to growing, thriving fellowships of new believers. They are called "fruitful practices" because they are not just good ideas but because they produce growth and the reproduction of more new believers, leading to discipleship movements in Muslim communities.

This list is the result of a multi-year, multi-agency study which involved interviews, surveys and research among experienced church planting teams doing ministry among Muslims. The research team sought to discover what practices church planting teams have found that God is currently using to grow His kingdom among Muslims, in order to help others be more effective. After research and analysis, they clarified this current list of 68 fruitful practices.

This research process is an imperfect attempt to understand the mystery of ministry. All true ministry involves God's part and our part. We cannot convert people. That is God's part. But we can share the gospel and demonstrate Christ's love. That is our part. (See 1 Corinthians 3:5-7 for Paul's description of this idea.) Learning from others which practices are bearing fruit in their ministry can help us to bear more fruit in our situation as we do our part to invite Muslims to follow Jesus.

So, in this guide, "fruitful practice" means an activity that is effective at producing the emergence, health and growth of fellowships of new believers in Christ in a Muslim faith community. The practices are grouped into categories that reflect the spheres of relationships that workers are involved in at different stages of ministry.

Our aim today is to use this list to reflect on how we as a team are engaged in these practices in our ministry and discuss how we could apply them more effectively. Today we are focusing on [the category you have chosen].

Keep in mind: This list does not compare our team with other teams. No team demonstrates all of the fruitful practices. Rather, it will help us compare our team with a set of principles that have been shown to lead to fruitful ministry. This is an opportunity for our team to examine our lives, ministry, and goals from a broader perspective. This process might expose us to ideas we have not yet considered, or it might simply affirm what we are already doing.

- Leave a few moments for any questions about this introduction.

3. Getting Initial Feedback:



If you have not already given everyone the list of Fruitful Practices in advance of the meeting, make time for them to read or listen to all of the descriptions in the category you are working on.

You may find it works better for your group to read the list together. Either way, make sure everyone understands the descriptions. Be mindful of everyone in the group and don't let anyone rush the process.

Ask for general feedback to bring any emotions and attitudes into the open and create a safe environment for honest discussion. You may want to ask, **“How did it feel to go through that list?”**

4. Each Person Evaluates:

Each team member should consider how well the team engages in each of the activities listed and determine how well they think the team is doing at it. Make time for everyone to do this on their own, so they are making their own evaluation – there will be time in the discussion to change this later, but it is important to discover what each person thinks before the discussion.

Label	Practice and Description	How well are we doing?
Society 1	<p>Fruitful workers communicate respect by behaving in culturally appropriate ways.</p> <p>A worker's attitude toward the host culture sends powerful messages. Fruitful workers behave in culturally appropriate ways in major cultural domains such as clothing and food, and especially in regards to hospitality. The key is sensitivity to the local setting, not necessarily whole-hearted adoption of local practice.</p>	4

There is space in each line to write a “grade” on a scale of 1-5. This is a way to easily identify areas of strength and weakness.

- A grade of ‘1’ indicates that the team does not engage in this practice, or that they do it poorly.
- A grade of ‘5’ indicates that the team engages regularly and well in the practice.
- A team that is sometimes engaged in the practice but needs to be more intentional about it might get a ‘3’.

This grade is to help identify if the team believes the activity is an area of strength or weakness.

Each member’s perspective matters, so encourage each one to honestly share their observations and opinions. Some team members will be reluctant to give a grade to the team. Encourage them to understand that it is only a guide to help highlight the areas they think are strengths and weaknesses of the team so you can focus on where you need to put more effort.

5. The Team Evaluates Together:

Now it's time for the team to discuss their evaluation and decide together how you are doing on each practice. This is the most important part of the process, as it will help the team really understand what your strengths and weaknesses are, compared to the list of Fruitful Practices.

- **Starting with the first practice, ask each team member to share the grade they gave the team which reflects how well the description fits the team.** At this point, you just want a short answer, not a long explanation from each person.
- Next, **give participants the opportunity to explain their opinion.** Allow those who have the minority opinion to speak first. It is important to allow time for every team member who desires the opportunity to explain their perspective, especially if it differs from the others. The greatest benefit to your team will come through the process of listening to and understanding each other's answers. The discussion is even more important than agreeing on your final answer.
- Lastly, **lead the group to make a decision about how to grade the team on that practice.** This is how you agree if the practice is a strength or a weakness. Note the grade on the list, and make sure the team has copies of the group's decisions later.
- Move on to the next practice. Keep track of the time and don't try to resolve all the issues which are brought up in the discussion. Instead, make note of them for future meetings.

Some Important Advice for the Discussion:

- If a practice causes serious disagreement among team members, circle it on the form and return to in a later discussion.
- If there appears to be an equal division of opinion (half think you are doing well, the other half think you are not doing well), you may want to average the response and move on.
- If a description doesn't apply to your team, just skip it. There is a lot of diversity in the type of teams working in Muslim contexts, so some questions may not apply to you. Others may be complicated to discuss. Use the descriptions as a tool to serve the needs of your team.
- If all team members agree, you should still allow discussion if team members want to comment.
- Some phrases or words in the description may communicate different things to different people. Be clear about how each person understands the description and discuss your different interpretations.
- As discussion progresses, some people may want to change their opinion on how well the team is doing at engaging in a particular practice. This is fine, but do not pressure anyone to agree with the majority.

6) Reflection and Setting Goals:

When you have finished discussing all the practices in a category, finish by reflecting together on the whole category.



The questions at the end of each category will help your team to make observations about your strengths and weaknesses and identify implications for your ministry.

Decide how you want to grow as a team in the Fruitful Practices. Record your decisions here:

Of the practices in which we are weak, which ones should be a priority for our team to grow in?

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

Of the practices we are stronger in, which ones should we be looking for opportunities to share our experience with other teams?

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |
-

Finally, write down some goals based on your evaluation and reflection.
 Fill in this chart for each practice you want to prioritize:

We want to grow in this Fruitful Practice:	What resources do we need to implement this practice?	When do we want to see improvement in this area?	How will we hold ourselves accountable? *

* Communicate your goals to your team overseer or coach to help keep you accountable.

A PRAYER TO CLOSE WITH...

Heavenly Father, You have called us to work with You to make disciples of all nations.
 Help us to learn from those we work with together in your harvest fields.
 We commit ourselves to practices that will bear fruit for Your kingdom.
 Help us to bear the kind of fruit that lasts,
 and produces many more disciples to share in Your salvation,
 and bring glory to Your name.
 Amen.

The Fruitful Practices List

Fruitful Practices Category: Relating to Society

Without positive and sincere relationships with Muslims in their own community, how will a worker be able to make new disciples? This category of fruitful practices, “Relating to Society,” refers to *the relationships that workers have with members of the society* they encounter regularly as they carry out their ministry. Appreciation for the local culture is at the heart of this group of practices. Workers will demonstrate this appreciation as they become learners in the society and adapt their lifestyle appropriately.

Label	Practice and Description	How well are we doing? *
Society 1	<p>Fruitful workers communicate respect by behaving in culturally appropriate ways.</p> <p>A worker’s attitude toward the local culture sends powerful messages. Fruitful workers behave in culturally appropriate ways in important cultural areas such as clothing and food, and especially in regard to hospitality. They are sensitive to the cultural expectations of the local setting, even if they do not adopt the whole of local practices.</p>	
Society 2	<p>Fruitful workers address practical needs in their community as an expression of the gospel.</p> <p>Good deeds often help workers gain a good reputation in the local community. Fruitful workers make clear that their good deeds are an expression of the gospel; otherwise, local people may assume that the worker is simply a good person or is trying to earn religious merit.</p>	
Society 3	<p>Fruitful workers relate to people in ways that respect gender roles in the local culture.</p> <p>Gender roles, and the expectations associated with them, are important issues in the Muslim world. While maintaining a biblical perspective on these issues, fruitful workers strive to understand gender roles in their local context and demonstrate respect for these social norms.</p>	
Society 4	<p>Fruitful workers mobilize extensive, intentional, and focused prayer.</p> <p>Fruitful workers invite others to join them through committed intercession for themselves and the people they are engaging. They recognize that this can be as important as inviting people to join the team that lives in the community they serve.</p>	
Society 5	<p>Fruitful workers pursue language proficiency.</p> <p>Workers who are able to freely and clearly communicate in their local language(s) are much more likely to be fruitful. Fruitful workers carefully consider what languages are important to their community – such as heart or trade language, sacred or secular language. By learning the used language, they also gain a deeper understanding of culture, making language proficiency fruitful in many ways.</p>	
Society 6	<p>Fruitful workers take advantage of pre-field and on-field research to shape their ministry.</p> <p>Fruitful ministry is shaped by many different streams of information, including ethnography, linguistics, and history. Workers who conduct research or actively reflect on the research of others are more fruitful than those who base their ministries on preconceived ideas or the patterns of ministry in their sending countries.</p>	

Society 7	Fruitful workers build positive relationships with local leaders. By sensitively and carefully relating to local authorities, including non-Christian religious figures, workers gain respect and good standing in their local community. Those who are intentional about choosing their relationships with local leaders are more likely to be fruitful.	
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** Write a grade from 1-5:*

1 means your team does not practice this or is weak at this practice.

5 means your team is practicing this description regularly and very well.

Ask yourself about relating to society:

- Which principles in God’s Word can help shape my values and goals for how I relate to this society and its leadership?
- What would describe my relationship with the local society at present? (Or, how do I hope my relationship with the local society will be described after I have lived there for a year?)
- How are the values described in the statements above shown in my attitudes and lifestyle?
- Do I have any lifestyle choices which do not reflect these values?
- What resources are available that will help me understand what this society values and how it operates?
- What specific actions do I (and my co-workers) need to take to more fully live out these fruitful practices in relationship with this society?

Fruitful Practice Category: Relating to Seekers

The fruitful practices in this category have to do with *the relationship between the workers and seekers* as they intentionally communicate the gospel in word and deed. A “seeker” is a Muslim who shows openness to the good news of Jesus. A seeker may be simply a person who hears or sees the gospel and is curious to learn more or a person who has experienced Jesus and is actively pursuing the truth.

Can seekers hear and see the gospel in your life and work? Fruitful workers live out their faith. Through personal example and words, they teach enquirers and seekers to obey whatever they already understand about God’s truth.

Label	Practice and Description	How well are we doing?*
Seekers 1	<p>Fruitful workers are bold in witness.</p> <p>Boldness means different things in different situations. Some take great risk simply to live in dangerous environments. Others require courage to speak openly about Jesus in hostile settings. Fruitful workers do not recklessly endanger themselves or others in order to be bold, but they reflect the God-enabled power to point to Jesus Christ, in word and deed, even in the face of opposition.</p>	
Seekers 2	<p>Fruitful workers pray for miracles as a sign that confirms the gospel.</p> <p>A demonstration of God’s power has been a key factor for many Muslims who have come to faith in Jesus Christ. Aware of this, many fruitful workers pray specifically for God to intervene through dreams, healing, deliverance from evil spirits, and other clear signs to confirm the truth of the gospel.</p>	
Seekers 3	<p>Fruitful workers pray for the needs of their friends in their presence.</p> <p>Fruitful workers display empathy for their friends by praying for them in their presence and not just in private. No matter how God answers, the worker who openly prays shows that God is concerned for daily needs and is the source of blessing and wholeness.</p>	
Seekers 4	<p>Fruitful workers share the gospel through existing social networks.</p> <p>Group disapproval can be a barrier to any kind of social change. Group affirmation can be a bridge that helps many people come to faith. In situations where many are coming to faith, the worker’s witness has often been multiplied by new believers sharing their faith with their family and community.</p>	
Seekers 5	<p>Fruitful workers begin discipling seekers as part of the process of coming to faith.</p> <p>Fruitful workers recognize that not all seekers will become mature disciples of Jesus. Although there is wisdom in appropriate caution, they follow Jesus’ example by helping those who express interest in Him to hear and observe what it means to follow Him.</p>	
Seekers 6	<p>Fruitful workers encourage seekers to share what God is doing in their lives.</p> <p>The woman at the well of Sychar spontaneously told her fellow villagers about Jesus (John 4). Fruitful workers encourage seekers to find natural ways to talk with others about what God is doing for them and to invite them to “come and see the man”</p>	

** Write a grade from 1-5:*

1 means your team does not practice this or is weak at this practice.

5 means your team is practicing this description regularly and very well.

Ask yourself about relating to seekers

- What does God's Word tell us about how the Father reveals himself to people?
- In what ways am I currently living out my faith among Muslims?
- How well do I live out the values shown above in my own attitudes and actions at present?
- Do I believe God will work supernaturally in the lives of my friends? In what ways can my actions show that I expect Him to divinely work in the lives of my friends?
- What does God's Word say about the point at which he considers people His followers? Which aspects of discipleship (when and how it happens) do I need to rethink?
- What can I do to learn more about what my friends already understand about God, to discover ways God is already at work in their lives?
- Do those I share God's Word with share it with others? What can I do to nurture faith in my friends in a way that spreads to their family and existing networks of friends?

Fruitful Practices Category: Relating to Believers

This category includes the second greatest number of practices. It covers the *where, when, how* and *with whom* parts of discipling believers. These practices are concerned with *the relationship between the worker and the emerging followers of Jesus from within the Muslim community*.

This category focuses on being intentional and being sensitive. Fruitful workers are intentional about things such as encouraging believers to share their faith and helping new believers build relationships with each other. They are also sensitive about considering the believer’s culture, specific needs and potential for fruitfulness.

Encouraging the believer towards obedience to the Holy Spirit and God’s word, the fruitful worker is careful not to push his or her own assumptions.

Fruitfulness in discipling is about living the Christian life together. The fruitful worker models obedience to Christ in natural relationships with believers. They demonstrate how to live in the home, at work, at school, in business, in relating to the opposite sex, in dealing with authorities, etc. This kind of discipleship recognizes that being an example by living your values is more effective than just teaching them.

Label	Practice and Description	How are we doing? *
Believers 1	Fruitful workers are intentional in their discipling. Jesus calls his followers to train disciples to obey all that He commanded. Disciples are made, not born. Fruitful workers provide intentional guidance, encouragement, and exhortation so that disciples will grow in maturity and obedience to Christ.	
Believers 2	Fruitful workers disciple in locally appropriate and reproducible ways. Disciples are more likely to share their faith and make new disciples when all needed books, tools, and resources are locally available. Fruitful workers avoid relying on discipleship manuals that must be ordered from abroad, electronic equipment that is unaffordable for disciples, or training that is only offered elsewhere.	
Believers 3	Fruitful workers disciple others in settings that fit the situation. When meeting with disciples, fruitful workers are deliberate about the location, time, and circumstance. They know that these factors have an effect on the disciple’s availability and readiness for reflection. For example, it is likely more appropriate for women to disciple women in homes during the day. Workers take advantage of every opportunity, both unplanned as well as planned (shopping at the bazaar, or meeting for Bible study). Finally, they look for ways to engage with more than one disciple at the same time.	
Believers 4	Fruitful workers help seekers and believers find appropriate ways to identify themselves to their community as followers of Jesus, without pushing their own preferences. Fruitful workers actively help seekers and believers to consider ways to establish their identity in their community by asking questions that help the seeker and believers consider the different ways they could identify. They avoid presuming or deciding this identity for followers of Jesus.	

Label	Practice and Description	How are we doing? *
Believers 5	<p>Fruitful workers help believers find ways to remain within their social network.</p> <p>Most seekers and believers live in strong webs of existing family, social and religious relationships. The gospel is more likely to spread quickly when faith travels through these existing webs. Fruitful workers encourage seekers and believers to maintain these relationships, to share their faith journey with family and friends and to welcome new seekers and believers into fellowships within those networks.</p>	
Believers 6	<p>Fruitful workers encourage healthy relationships with other believers.</p> <p>Seekers and believers need to know they are not the only ones in their society or family who follow Jesus. Fruitful workers help seekers and believers live in unity by obeying the New Testament commands to love, serve and honour one another. Fruitful workers help believers to overcome divisive practices and attitudes such as revenge, jealousy, and gossip.</p>	
Believers 7	<p>Fruitful workers model following Jesus in intentional relationships with believers.</p> <p>Fruitful workers recognize that discipleship happens through relationship. While spending many hours with seekers and believers, they reveal their own faith journey. Whether they are drinking tea at a café or praying for the sick, fruitful workers find ways to share relevant biblical stories or teachings from the life of Jesus. Their goal is to demonstrate vibrant faith as a constant follower of Jesus and to coach seekers and believer to do the same.</p>	
Believers 8	<p>Fruitful workers encourage believers to follow the Holy Spirit's leading in applying the Bible to their context.</p> <p>Rather than imposing their own understanding of biblical truths and how to apply them, fruitful workers help seekers and believers to ask for God's help as they learn and apply scripture in their situation. They encourage seekers and believers to trust that God will answer them.</p>	
Believers 9	<p>Fruitful workers encourage believers to share their faith.</p> <p>Understanding that discipleship involves witness, fruitful workers motivate seekers and believers to tell others what God is doing in their lives. Believers are more likely to make new disciples when they begin, early in their faith journey, to share what they are learning from the Bible, how God answered their prayers, and what they are learning about Jesus.</p>	
Believers 10	<p>Fruitful workers prepare believers to explain why they believe.</p> <p>While sharing their faith with others, seekers and believers often hear scepticism or arguments that raise doubt in their hearts. Fruitful workers strengthen disciples by helping them to explain their reasons for believing in Jesus. By preparing for these objections, the worker can share responses with the disciple using the Bible, scientific evidence, or the Quran. The worker's goal is the disciple's personal ownership of his or her faith.</p>	
Believers 11	<p>Fruitful workers model service to others and teach believers to serve others as well.</p> <p>In the everyday activities of life, fruitful workers intentionally serve others, explaining that this is how to live as a disciple of Jesus. They encourage disciples to do the same, explaining that faith and good deeds go together. When their lives show their beliefs, they help the disciple to demonstrate the goodness of Jesus before a watching community.</p>	

Label	Practice and Description	How are we doing? *
Believers 12	Fruitful workers use various approaches in discipling. Fruitful workers use a variety of means and resources while making disciples. For example, a group of disciples may see the Jesus film, experience prayer for healing, and participate in Bible study—all at the same time.	
Believers 13	Fruitful workers encourage baptism by other believers with a Muslim background. The most common method of baptism is an arranged event witnessed by Muslim background believers and sometimes seekers. Cross-cultural workers do not usually conduct the baptism but may be present. Fruitful workers recognise that baptism strengthens the sense of community among believers. Among emerging fellowships, the most common practice is believer's baptism by immersion.	
Believers 14	Fruitful workers deal with sin in biblical ways that are culturally appropriate. Fruitful workers understand that the biblical principles of correction of sin and restoration, as described in Matthew 18 and Galatians 6:1-2, must be applied within the local cultural context and worldview. In the process of applying biblical teaching, fruitful workers consider local cultural dynamics such as honour and shame, gender roles, community standards, family and clan status, and social standing.	

* Write a grade from 1-5:

1 means your team does not practice this or is weak at this practice.

5 means your team is practicing this description regularly and very well.

Ask yourself about relating to believers

- What does the Bible teach about God's goals for discipleship relationships?
- What best describes my discipleship efforts? Are they proactive or reactive?
- What factors or information have influenced the discipleship methods I am currently using? (For example : Ministry in other contexts? Insights from other workers? Observations in the current context?) What cultural biases might be influencing my opinions about discipleship?
- Does my current method of discipleship represent the values in these statements? Which values are am I not representing?
- How can I be more intentional?
- How can I develop greater sensitivity?
- Are those whom I disciple teaching others? What parts of my discipleship methods can believers do without my help or resources? What can they not do without my help or resources?

Fruitful Practice Category: Relating to Leaders

The practices in this category address these questions and apply to *choosing, appointing, preparing and reproducing leaders* in the emerging church. Fruitful workers closely follow the biblical text to identify and train leaders. They understand the qualities and godly character traits which the Bible describes for leaders and they ask, “What do godly leadership qualities look like in this culture?” They also encourage leaders to rise from among the believers early on. They have a plan to empower recognized leaders and take care not to appoint people based on their own cultural biases.

Following the biblical model of Paul and his training of Timothy (2 Timothy 2:2), fruitful workers expect the leaders they train to invest in others – creating an environment that empowers the ones God has gifted to impart these gifts to others.

Label	Practice and Description	How are we doing? *
Leaders 1	<p>Fruitful workers acknowledge emerging leaders early when establishing a local church.</p> <p>Fruitful workers acknowledge the leaders who emerge naturally during the formation of a faith community. They support those who are recognized by the community rather than choosing leaders based on their own cultural understanding of leadership.</p>	
Leaders 2	<p>Fruitful workers mentor leaders who in turn mentor others.</p> <p>A mentor passes on skills, character, and wisdom to a developing leader. Fruitful workers also guide the mentored leader to mentor others as described in 2 Timothy 2:2.</p>	
Leaders 3	<p>Fruitful workers encourage leadership based on godly character.</p> <p>Fruitful, expanding communities select their own leaders from those who demonstrate the godly character described in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Fruitful workers support and encourage the community by looking for emerging leaders with godly character.</p>	
Leaders 4	<p>Fruitful workers are intentional about leadership development.</p> <p>Leadership development should be intentional, but its format is often informal. Fruitful workers provide personalized leadership development in one-on-one, natural settings, rather than in classrooms.</p>	
Leaders 5	<p>Fruitful workers use the Bible as the primary source for leadership development.</p> <p>Fruitful workers do not depend on outside resources to develop leaders, as these rarely apply to the local context, they are not easily transferable, and they lack the authority of scripture. Instead, fruitful workers use scripture as the primary source for leadership development. To do so requires a thorough understanding of the local culture.</p>	

Label	Practice and Description	How are we doing? *
Leaders 6	<p>Fruitful workers prefer to develop leaders locally.</p> <p>Fruitful workers prefer to develop leaders as locally as possible. If it is not possible to train leaders who live close to the developing church, then it is more fruitful to train leaders within local culture and local social norms. When leaders are trained outside of the local setting, they can find it difficult to return. The further their training is from local life, the less likely it is that they will return and readjust well.</p>	

* Write a grade from 1-5:

1 means your team does not practice this or is weak at this practice.

5 means your team is practicing this description regularly and very well.

Ask yourself about relating to leaders

- Which scriptures teach about leadership within the faith community? Which character traits and qualities are to be found in leaders? (1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus are good places to start.)
- What are the differences in the ways that leadership is perceived and expressed in my home culture and in the community I am serving? In what ways do I need to rethink leadership considering these differences?
- Which leaders that I have been working with are also training others to lead?
- Which approaches that I am currently using are proving to be effective and can be reproduced? Which can be adapted? Which need to be discarded? How can I support resources that emerge out of the local context?
- Considering these discoveries, which leaders does God want me to encourage, train and support? What steps will I take to do this?

Fruitful Practice Category: Relating to God

This section has to do with *the workers' relationship with God*. Fruitful workers are determined to stay connected to their life source. It is an active priority. Jesus made it clear that we can only be fruitful if we abide in (remain vitally connected to) Him. He makes a wonderful promise to us – as we persist in abiding in Him, we will bear much fruit, and this fruit will last.

Label	Practice and Description	How are we doing?*
God 1	Fruitful workers practice walking closely with God. Fruitful workers value and improve their responsiveness to God. They pursue deep, two-way communication with God during busy and stressful times. Their relationship with God is based not on religious behaviour, but on daily honest interaction with him.	
God 2	Fruitful workers engage in regular, frequent prayer. Fruitful workers say that prayer, whether corporate or individual, has been of high value to them. They dedicate time and attention to prayer.	
God 3	Fruitful workers persevere through difficulty and suffering. Fruitful workers remain with their local community, enduring through suffering and difficulties.	

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Ask yourself about relating to God

- What does God in His Word say about the relationship He desires with me?
- In what ways am I living out the values described in the Word and in the statements above about relating with God?
- In what ways do I neglect my relationship with God? What factors contribute to this? (Which excuses do I find myself using?)
- How do I need to grow in my prayer life? What might help me grow in this?
- If I make changes in my relationship with God, how might that impact my ministry?
- How have I been demonstrating perseverance? What will help me to persevere in my ministry?
- If I persevere in difficulty with the community I am serving, what does that communicate to them?

Fruitful Practice Category: Communication Methods

Our desire as workers is not only that the gospel should reach the ears and eyes of Muslims, but also that it should reach their hearts. This category focuses on the *effective communication of the gospel*.

Effective communication is a two-way process - sending the right message *and* being sure that it is correctly understood by the other person. This effective communication includes a variety of activities that allow the gospel to be heard by as many ears as possible as well as one-on-one personal sharing in a way that affects family and social networks. Also, fruitful workers use methods and evangelistic tools that can be reproduced locally so that the believers and the growing faith community can use them in their own outreach efforts.

This might even include the presentation of the scriptures in ways that appeal to the Muslim audience. In doing so, fruitful workers exhibit both a command of the Bible and insight into the local culture.

Label	Practice and Description	How are we doing?*
Communication 1	<p>Fruitful workers use culturally appropriate Bible passages to communicate God’s message.</p> <p>The Bible is central in the communication of God’s message, but using it effectively requires cultural insight. Fruitful workers help seekers find the passages that are most relevant to them. The ability to effectively apply biblical truth to the issues of life requires a thorough knowledge of God’s word and an ongoing dependence on wisdom from God.</p>	
Communication 2	<p>Fruitful workers communicate the gospel using the heart language, except in situations where it is not appropriate.</p> <p>In most situations, the heart language is undoubtedly the best way to meaningfully communicate the gospel. However, in areas where more than one language is in common use fruitful workers seek to understand the local patterns of language use and use the language that will be most effective for their communications.</p>	
Communication 3	<p>Fruitful workers use a variety of approaches in sharing the gospel.</p> <p>No one method of gospel communication covers every need and is always the most effective. The best approach depends on the audience and the situation. Fruitful workers learn to use a variety of different approaches and apply them as appropriate.</p>	
Communication 4	<p>Fruitful workers share the gospel using tools or methods that can be locally reproduced.</p> <p>For faith communities to grow easily, the members must have access to all the tools they need. For this reason, fruitful workers use methods for sharing the gospel that require only tools and resources that are readily available in the local community.</p>	
Communication 5	<p>Fruitful workers sow broadly.</p> <p>It is not possible to know in advance which ground will bear the most fruit. Fruitful workers communicate the gospel broadly and pray for wisdom to know where to invest time in personal relationships. They balance time between the broad sowing of God’s word and the time spent developing individual relationships.</p>	

Label	Practice and Description	How are we doing?*
Communication 6	<p>Fruitful workers use Bible study as a means of sharing the gospel.</p> <p>Spending time in the study of God’s word allows seekers to discover God’s truths for themselves. In some instances, fruitful workers may simply read the Bible with a seeker, responding to questions relating to the text. In other instances, they may tell Bible stories and ask questions to help seekers discover how to apply the stories to their lives.</p>	
Communication 7	<p>Fruitful workers share the gospel in ways that fit the learning preferences of their audience.</p> <p>Some cultures rely heavily on written media, while others more commonly use oral forms of communication. Good communicators understand the learning preferences of their audience and plan their communication strategies accordingly.</p>	
Communication 8	<p>Fruitful workers are aware of Islamic terms and thought patterns and use them as a bridge to sharing the biblical gospel.</p> <p>Many workers find it fruitful to draw on common expressions, terminologies and patterns of thought from Muslim culture. This helps them clarify the ways biblical truth parallels, diverges from, or completely counters traditional understanding. Fruitful workers may reference passages from the Qur’an, but do not dwell unnecessarily on them.</p>	

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Ask yourself about communication methods

- What have been the methods of communication God has used to reach my heart?
- How does the community I am trying to reach prefer to communicate spiritual truths? How does this differ from my own culture?
- How might I redeem local communication practices for gospel witness?
- What are ways that I can listen more deeply to the lives of my friends, to understand the content of and ways they relate their “stories”?
- Story telling is an effective means of communication. What stories, including the one that describes my own journey of faith, might God want me to master in the language of the Muslims with whom I am sharing?
- What are the different ways I share the gospel and how are they similar?
- How widely am I sharing? Do I communicate only one-on-one or also to broader groups?

Fruitful Practice Category: Fruitful Teams

There are many ways to define “team.” One helpful definition is: *a small group of people committed to a common purpose, goals, and approach for which they hold themselves accountable.* This category expands this definition with nine practices that describe fruitful church planting teams ministering among Muslims. Operating as a team, rather than alone, can itself be seen as a fruitful practice as it is certainly a biblical one. Teams model the body of Christ. But what has proven to be fruit-bearing within teams?

The above definition highlights a key part of fruitful teams – common purpose, goal and approach. This shared “vision” is the fundamental reason for the team’s existence. Clarity about this vision allows a team to move forward, focus on essentials, strengthen one another, and by God’s grace accomplish their goals. As they move forward, fruitful teams take time to evaluate and adapt their strategy appropriately.

Label	Practice and Description	How are we doing?*
Teams 1	<p>Fruitful teams are united by a common vision.</p> <p>Fruitful teams are made up of members who share a common goal and strategy. This contrasts with teams where many members are pursuing different goals – focusing on different people groups or different outcomes.</p>	
Teams 2	<p>Fruitful teams build one another up in love.</p> <p>The members of fruitful teams develop supportive relationships with one another. Such teams learn to affirm and respect one another’s gifts and efforts, resolve conflicts honestly, and bear one another’s burdens.</p>	
Teams 3	<p>Fruitful teams have effective leadership.</p> <p>In healthy teams, effective leaders manage the different gifts of the members so that they can work together toward the team’s goals.</p>	
Teams 4	<p>Fruitful teams encourage the various gifts of their members to serve the task.</p> <p>Fruitful teams affirm the varied gifts of the members and encourage them to grow in them. Team members are more fruitful when their gifts are used in roles and functions that serve the team vision rather than on other projects.</p>	
Teams 5	<p>Fruitful teams adapt their methods based on careful evaluation and new information.</p> <p>Teams bear fruit when they intentionally evaluate their progress. They change their methods and strategies when necessary. They adapt their methods based on the experience of informed local experts and other efforts to build God’s kingdom.</p>	
Teams 6	<p>Fruitful teams have at least one person with high language proficiency in the heart language.</p> <p>Fruitful teams prioritise learning the heart language of their local community. They make sure all members are on the path toward greater involvement in the language community and value the members who attain high fluency in language and culture.</p>	

Label	Practice and Description	How are we doing?*
Teams 7	<p>Fruitful teams pray and fast together.</p> <p>Fruitful teams value and prioritise seeking God’s ways through prayer and fasting together.</p>	
Teams 8	<p>Fruitful teams expect every team member to be involved in sharing the gospel.</p> <p>Within fruitful teams, all team members view themselves as a means for God to communicate his truth and love to the people they are trying to reach. The members will have different personalities, gifting and daily job descriptions – from the mother of young children to the businessperson. But they use their interactions with the community as opportunities to respond to God and reveal Jesus Christ through their character and witness. This contrasts with teams that expect only a few members to carry out the task of evangelism.</p>	
Teams 9	<p>Fruitful teams value their female members as essential partners in ministry, facilitating their active involvement.</p> <p>Fruitful teams recognize the necessity for women to reach women in Muslim communities with the gospel message. They help women on the team to give energy and time to developing relationships and contributing their gifts. This contrasts with teams that regard their male team members as the primary workers.</p>	

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Ask yourself about your team

- What does God say in his Word about how He has designed members of Christ’s body to operate well as a team? There are several task-oriented teams in the Bible (for example, the spies in Exodus, Jonathan and his armour bearer in 1 Samuel, Paul and Barnabas and various teams in Acts). Which of their qualities and characteristics should our team try to imitate?
- What values in the description above are evident in our team? Which areas need growth?
- What vision has God given me and my co-workers? How much do we all agree and “own” this vision?
- In what ways are we using our various gifts and abilities? What could help us do better at encouraging and strengthening one another to become more effective in ministry?
- What hinders us from growing in mutual respect and effective ministry? What are ways that the enemy undermines our unity in Christ and our love for one another?
- Leaders: How might I better affirm and empower the members of my team towards greater effectiveness?
- How do we practice prayer and fasting as a team? How might we develop these important spiritual disciplines together?

Fruitful Practice Category : Fruitful Churches

Our goal is not just to proclaim the gospel or to see a few individuals enter the kingdom of God. *Our purpose is establishing naturally multiplying communities of believers who follow Jesus.* These new, faith churches will eventually transform their own society and send out messengers to other nations.

The local church demonstrates God’s transforming truth, power, character, and purposes. The most fruitful church plants have an identity firmly rooted in their own culture. They are viable, attractive witnesses to the wider Muslim society. This might seem like common sense, but it is not always intuitive or common practice. Cross-cultural workers often do not realize the subtle ways they can influence the emerging community to develop in foreign and non-reproducible ways.

This new community of believers needs to be living proof to the surrounding Muslim society that the kingdom of God has come, to powerfully transform individuals and society. This is electrifyingly good news to Muslims who spend their lives longing to please God, but often feeling that they fall short of what he wants of them.

This new community of faith is the longed-for fruit of our ministry efforts. If established well, this community will remain long after the original church planters have left. It will continue to multiply spontaneously, blessing the community and affecting other cultures as God calls out apostles and church planters to go from its midst to those yet unreached.

Label	Practice and Description	How are we doing?*
Fruitful Churches 1	Fruitful churches use the Bible as the main source for life, growth and mission. In a culture where many books are viewed as holy, a fruitful church views and uses the Bible as the central source for their understanding of God and how to live their life as followers of Jesus.	
Fruitful Churches 2	Fruitful churches worship using indigenous forms of expression. Fruitful churches design their worship using indigenous music and other forms of expression that reflect their cultural heritage, including prayer posture, seating arrangements, or the kinds of food used when sharing the Lord’s Supper.	
Fruitful Churches 3	Fruitful churches practice baptism. Baptism is practiced and understood in a variety of ways by the worldwide body of Christ. Whether it is full immersion or a sprinkling of water, at the beginning of a faith journey or as a milestone in an ongoing journey, baptism is a common practice in a fruitful church.	
Fruitful Churches 4	Fruitful churches value networking together. Understanding that their community is part of the larger body of Christ, fruitful churches place a value on building trust and support with other local churches. Fruitful churches find ways to do things like fellowship together, train leaders together, or pray for one another.	

Label	Practice and Description	How are we doing?*
Fruitful Churches 5	<p>Fruitful churches are committed to one another as extended family, practicing the biblical “one another” commands.</p> <p>Jesus commandment to “love one another as I have loved you” challenges churches to reach beyond their families and come to understand other followers of Jesus as brothers and sisters in Christ. Fruitful churches embrace this command and put it into practice as they build relationships within their community.</p>	
Fruitful Churches 6	<p>Fruitful churches redeem traditional festivals and ceremonies.</p> <p>Life cycle ceremonies (such as weddings and funerals, traditions surrounding birth and death, and festivals that mark various events in a culture’s historical identity) are important to the fabric of any society. Rather than abandon all tradition or remove themselves from all association with traditional festivals, fruitful churches seek ways to redeem them as an expression of their faith in Jesus.</p>	
Fruitful Churches 7	<p>Fruitful churches share meals and practice hospitality.</p> <p>Sharing meals and practicing hospitality are honourable traits in any culture. Jesus demonstrates that these are not only ways to gain honour but are also ways to love one another and to love neighbours. Fruitful churches seek to bless others and provide a witness to Jesus’ love through their fellowship and generous hospitality.</p>	
Fruitful Churches 8	<p>Fruitful churches share the Lord’s Supper in culturally appropriate ways.</p> <p>Fruitful churches use elements and adopt a method of sharing the Lord’s Supper that makes the most sense in their cultural context. In the West, the elements of bread and wine are commonly used. But in many cultures, bread is not available and wine is forbidden. Likewise, there are many ways to distribute the elements, either during a meal or as a separate service.</p>	
Fruitful Churches 9	<p>Fruitful churches seek to bless their wider community.</p> <p>One way to show the truth of the gospel and build trust is to find ways to bless a community. Fruitful churches consider the needs in the community and seek to bless those who are outside their own church, whether through building a well, providing childcare, conducting a medical clinic, or some other means.</p>	
Fruitful Churches 10	<p>Fruitful churches involve women in culturally appropriate forms of ministry.</p> <p>Understanding that the Lord calls both men and women to participate in ministry, fruitful churches seek to involve women in ways that are appropriate for the cultural context. In some areas, this may be limited to hospitality. In others, it may be appropriate for a woman serve the Lord’s Supper or to lead other women in studying the Bible.</p>	
Fruitful Churches 11	<p>Fruitful churches involve their children in worship and ministry.</p> <p>Children are not only the future of a church; they are its present as well. Fruitful churches actively involve their children, teaching them by example and giving them opportunities to grow in discipleship through worship and ministry.</p>	

Label	Practice and Description	How are we doing?*
Fruitful Churches 12	<p>Fruitful churches equip their members to share their faith in effective and culturally appropriate ways.</p> <p>Believers share their faith in many ways. What is effective in some cultural settings may be counterproductive in others. Fruitful churches encourage their members to share their faith and equip them to do so in ways that are appropriate for the situation.</p>	
Fruitful Churches 13	<p>Fruitful churches govern themselves.</p> <p>Fruitful churches make their own decisions about direction, leadership, priorities, and practices. They take responsibility to build and manage their own church as a community of faith. Although they may provide coaching or counsel, fruitful workers step out of direct leadership as soon as multiple local leaders are prepared take the lead.</p>	
Fruitful Churches 14	<p>Fruitful churches have local accountability structures for the use of funds.</p> <p>Whether the funds come from foreign or national sources, fruitful churches demonstrate direct responsibility and accountability for the use of funds.</p>	
Fruitful Churches 15	<p>Fruitful churches generally meet in homes or other informal settings.</p> <p>One of the primary marks of a fruitful church is its ability to reproduce. As its community is defined, the emphasis is on the presence of believers and not the place where the believers meet. Rather than requiring worship or study to take place in a specific building, fruitful churches commonly encourage meetings in informal settings.</p>	

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Ask yourself about churches:

- What examples do I see in God’s Word about the relationship between a local church and their surrounding society? What is God’s intention for the impact or influence they can have?
- What values are evident in the list of practices above?
- What would characterize the new church in the local community? (If none exist yet, what do I picture them as being like?)
- What are we doing that might be leading to the growth of these qualities in the church?
- What are we doing that might prevent the new church from having these qualities?

Additional Reading and Resources

For more information about Fruitful Practice Research, and for access our many resources, please contact: info@fruitfulpractice.org.

For more information about the background of fruitful practices and examples from field situations see:

From Seed to Fruit: Global Trends, Fruitful Practices, and Emerging Issues Among Muslims,
ed. by Dudley Woodberry (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2008).

Fruit to Harvest,
ed. by Gene Daniels, Pam Arlund, Jim Haney (William Carey Press, 2019)

The Fruitful Practices team would value your feedback on this manual.

Please tell us what you think about it, how it helped your team, or what you would change. Email feedback to: info@vision59.com