

A Closer Look

# Fruitful Practices: A Descriptive List

*Edited by Don Allen, Rebecca Harrison, Eric and Laura Adams,  
Bob Fish and E. J. Martin (with contributions from many others)*

## *Preface*

**H**ave you ever faced a challenge and felt in your heart that “someone must have faced this before”—but ended up solving it alone? In our common calling, we often discover that we have “reinvented the wheel” and repeated mistakes that others already have made before—and learned from. Have you ever wondered why fellow workers seem reluctant to learn from others and share what they know?

We speak often of being good stewards of time, money, people and resources. Rarely, however, do we talk about being good stewards of our experience, especially insight and knowledge gained from watching the Father work in, through and around us. Practicing good stewardship of knowledge would actually allow us to use our precious time, resources, and energy more effectively. We presently spend much of our time and resources re-learning key lessons which have already been learned somewhere else.

More significantly, we can learn habits of equipping one another by sharing the best of our experience. Intentionally learning from, and sharing from, our experience increases fruitfulness across our common calling. It is our responsibility and privilege to be good stewards of the experience and knowledge that has been entrusted to us.

The Fruitful Practices List below is the result of an inductive multi-year, multi agency study. It was distilled from the experience of hundreds of practitioners working among Muslim peoples. In this context, “Fruitful Practice” means an activity that promotes the emergence, vitality, and multiplication of fellowships of Jesus followers in a Muslim context (though, of course, this kind of study is not limited to Muslim peoples). We studied field efforts across the Muslim world and identified factors that practitioners recognize as contributing to the formation of communities among Muslims. This document offers short descriptions of those practices.

---

*The editors are members of the Fruitful Practices Taskforce. This is a collaborative, multi-agency network of missiologists who are studying effective field practitioners and how God is working through them. Through this they identify and publicize practices that are demonstrably “fruitful” in facilitating faith movements among Muslim peoples. They can be contacted at [FruitfulPractices@gmail.com](mailto:FruitfulPractices@gmail.com).*

*This is not a set of formulas to follow. Instead, we offer descriptions of significant principles. You must always apply your own knowledge of local conditions as you prayerfully adapt these practices to work in your own context.*

We present this list as a starting point for the ongoing and important discussion of what indeed contributes to fruitfulness based on the realities of experience and the foundation of Scripture.

Read these carefully. Many of the principles listed here may be common sense but are not always common practice. Reflect on what is relevant in your context from this rich harvest of wisdom, then share what you've learned.

### **Background**

*Research and Analysis.* We initially surveyed and interviewed teams from 13 organizations representing over 5800 workers in the Muslim world. Then, in 2007, we conducted 100 recorded interviews and collected notes from 25 discussion groups that met daily throughout a five-day consultation. Together, this produced over 300 responses from individuals experienced in planting fellowships and representing over 30 organizations, two-thirds of which have witnessed the emergence of at least one Christ-centred community in the Muslim world.

*Benchmarking.* This approach seeks to develop a benchmark using inductive methods, discovering what God is currently inspiring and blessing as He establishes his Kingdom communities among Muslims. We do this so that all of us may better partner with him in sowing and reaping. After research and analysis, a multi-agency team combed through results in order to clarify this list.

*Cooperating with God.* This process is our imperfect attempt to understand the mystery of ministry. All true ministry involves God's part and our part. We cannot transform the heart. 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 a vivid description of that dynamic.)

Fruitful Practices enlighten us as we endeavour to do our part to invite Muslims to follow Jesus. They show how God has repeatedly worked through certain principles and practices to accomplish his purposes. They point us in a direction that has great potential to bear fruit for his glory. When our faces are turned to him and his good work, the rest is up to him!

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

- *Descriptive, not prescriptive.* This not a set of formulas to follow. Instead, we offer descriptions of significant principles. You must always apply your own knowledge of local conditions as you

prayerfully adapt these practices to work in your own context.

- *Evolving.* This list represents what we have currently learned. We are still in the process of discovery about what is fruitful. It is by no means exhaustive. Certainly, there are gaps. Over time, as we learn more, we will add new practices and even new categories and we will revise the current set. You play a crucial part in this process: Sharing practical knowledge is essential in this work.
- *Holistic.* These practices are mutually reinforcing. They live in relationship with each other; this is especially true of practices within a particular category. You will not be effective or particularly fruitful if you simply select practices here and there while ignoring or neglecting the other ones in the list.
- *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 God.

### **Categorization**

For ease of understanding, the practices are grouped into eight basic categories and each practice is labelled for ease of reference. Note that the order does not imply precedence or importance.

Category	Label
Relating to Society	Society
Relating to Believers	Believers
Relating to God	God
Fruitful Teams	Team
Relating to Seekers	Seekers
Relating to Leaders	Leaders
Communication Methods	Communication
Characteristics of Fruitful	Faith Communities

## Practices Relating to Society

Gene Daniels (lead section editor)

*1 Peter 2:12—Live such good lives among the Gentiles that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. (NIV)*

---

### Society 1

*Fruitful workers communicate respect by behaving in culturally appropriate ways.*

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.

---

### Society 2

*Fruitful workers address tangible needs in their community as an expression of the gospel.*

Good deeds often help workers gain a good reputation in the host 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.

---

### Society 3

*Fruitful workers relate to people in ways that respect gender roles in the local culture.*

Gender roles, and the taboos associated with them, are potent 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.

---

### Society 4

*Fruitful workers mobilize extensive, intentional, and focused prayer.*

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 host culture.

---

### Society 5

*Fruitful workers pursue language proficiency.*

Workers who are able to freely and clearly communicate in their host language(s) are much more likely to be fruitful. Fruitful workers carefully consider questions concerning language choice, such as whether to use heart or trade language, sacred or secular language. By learning language, they also gain a deeper understanding of culture, making language proficiency fruitful across a number of different dimensions.

---

### Society 6

*Fruitful workers take advantage of pre-field and on-field research to shape their ministry.*

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.

---

### 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 host community. Those who are intentional about choosing their relationships with local leaders are more likely to be fruitful.

---

*Society 6: 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.*

## Practices Relating to Seekers

David Greenlee (lead section editor)

*Romans 10:11-13—As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (NIV)*

---

### Seekers 1

*Fruitful workers are bold in witness.*

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.

---

### Seekers 4

*Fruitful workers share the gospel through existing social networks.*

Group disapproval can be a significant barrier to any kind of social change. Group affirmation can be a significant catalyst that helps many people come to faith. In situations where many are coming to faith, often the x and spread of the workers’ initial witness has been multiplied as new believers share their faith with their family and community.

---

*Seekers 3: 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 illustrates that God is concerned for daily needs and that he is the source of blessing and wholeness.*

---

### Seekers 2

*Fruitful workers pray for God’s supernatural intervention as a sign that confirms the gospel.*

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.

---

### Seekers 5

*Fruitful workers begin discipling seekers as part of the process of coming to faith.*

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.

---

### Seekers 3

*Fruitful workers pray for the needs of their friends in their presence.*

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 illustrates that God is concerned for daily needs and that he is the source of blessing and wholeness.

---

### Seekers 6

*Fruitful workers encourage seekers to share what God is doing in their lives.*

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 . . . .”

## Practices Relating to Believers

Don Allen (lead section editor)

*John 15:12—This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. (NKJV)*

### 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. Disciple-making does not occur by accident. Fruitful workers provide intentional guidance, encouragement, and exhortation so that disciples will grow in maturity and obedience.

### 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 imposing their own preferences.*

Fruitful workers actively help seekers and believers to consider ways to establish their identity in their community by asking them questions that help them consider their alternatives. They avoid presuming or predetermining this identity for followers of Jesus.

### Believers 5

---

*Fruitful workers help believers find ways to remain within their social network.*

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 incorporate new seekers and believers into fellowships within those networks.

### Believers 6

---

*Fruitful workers encourage believers to develop healthy relationships with other believers.*

Seekers and believers need to know that 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 such as "love one another," "serve one another," "honour one another," and "stop passing judgment on one another" (Romans 12:10, 16; 13:8; 14:13; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 4:32 and others). Fruitful workers help believers to overcome divisive practices and attitudes such as revenge, jealousy, and gossip.

### Believers 7

---

*Fruitful workers model following Jesus in intentional relationships with believers.*

Fruitful workers recognize that discipleship is a relational process. 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 the seeker and believer to do the same.

**Believers 8**

---

*Fruitful workers encourage believers to follow the Holy Spirit's leading in applying the Bible to their context.*

Rather than imposing their own application and interpretation on biblical passages, fruitful workers help seekers and believers to ask for God's help as they reflect on biblical truth and apply it to their situation. They encourage seekers and believers to trust that God will answer them when they ask for his help.

**Believers 9**

---

*Fruitful workers encourage believers to share their faith.*

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.

**Believers 10**

---

*Fruitful workers prepare believers to explain why they believe.*

While sharing their faith with others in their social webs, seekers and believers often hear scepticism or arguments that raise doubt in their hearts. Fruitful workers strengthen their growing faith by helping them to explain their reasons for believing in Jesus. By anticipating 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.

**Believers 11**

---

*Fruitful workers model service to others and teach believers to serve others as well.*

In the everyday activities of life, fruitful workers intentionally serve others in every circumstance, explaining that this is how to live as a disciple of Jesus. They encourage seekers and believers to do the same, explaining that faith and good deeds go together. By integrating teaching and practice, they help the disciple to live authentically before a watching community so that the community experiences the goodness of Jesus.

**Believers 12**

---

*Fruitful workers use various approaches in discipling.*

Fruitful workers employ a variety of means 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. Fruitful workers develop a toolbox of approaches and resources to use.

**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.

## Practices Relating to Leaders

Debora Viveza (lead section editor)

*2 Timothy 2:2—And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. (NIV)*

### Leaders 1

*Fruitful workers acknowledge emerging leaders early in the process of building a community of faith.*

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 culturally developed understanding of leadership.

### Leaders 4

*Fruitful workers are intentional about leadership development.*

Leadership development should be intentional, but its format is often non-formal. Fruitful workers provide personalized leadership development in one-on-one, natural settings, rather than in classrooms.

---

*Leaders 6: Fruitful workers prefer to develop leaders as locally as possible. If it is not possible to train leaders geographically locally, 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.*

### Leaders 2

*Fruitful workers mentor leaders who in turn mentor others.*

A mentor passes on skills, character, and wisdom to a developing leader. Fruitful workers also guide the mentored leader to mentor others in the same way, as described in 2 Timothy 2:2.

### Leaders 3

*Fruitful workers encourage leadership based on godly character.*

Leaders in fruitful, expanding communities meet the criteria that focus on godly character described in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. While such communities select their own leaders, fruitful workers support and encourage the community by looking for emerging leaders with godly character.

### Leaders 5

*Fruitful workers use the Bible as the primary source for leadership development.*

Fruitful workers do not depend on outside resources to develop leaders, as these rarely apply to the local context, they are not easily transferrable, 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.

### Leaders 6

*Fruitful workers prefer to develop leaders locally.*

Fruitful workers prefer to develop leaders as locally as possible. If it is not possible to train leaders geographically locally, 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.

## Practices Relating to **God**

Laura Adams (lead section editor)

*Matthew 22:37-38—Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. (NIV)*

### **God 1**

---

*Fruitful workers practice an intimate walk with God.*

Fruitful workers value and cultivate their responsiveness to God. Intimacy implies heart level, two-way communication in the midst of busyness and stress. 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 host people, enduring through suffering and difficulties.

## Practices Relating to **Communication Methods**

L. R. Burke (lead section editor)

*Acts 2:7-8—Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, “Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?” (NKJV)*

### **Communication 1**

---

*Fruitful workers use culturally appropriate Bible passages to communicate God’s message.*

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 address the issues 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.

### **Communication 2**

---

*Fruitful workers communicate the gospel using the heart language, except in situations where it is not appropriate.*

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, established patterns often dictate when one language should be used as opposed to another. Fruitful workers seek to understand local patterns of language use and plan their communication strategies accordingly.

### **Communication 3**

---

*Fruitful workers use a variety of approaches in sharing the gospel.*

No one method of gospel communication covers every need and will always be the most effective. Often the best approach to sharing the gospel depends on the audience and the situation in question. Fruitful workers learn to use a variety of different approaches and apply them as appropriate to the setting.

### **Communication 4**

---

*Fruitful workers share the gospel using tools or methods that can be locally reproduced.*

In order for faith communities to grow without hindrance, the members of the communities must have access to all the tools they need in their local context. For this reason, fruitful workers focus on methods for sharing the gospel that require only tools and resources that are readily available in the local community.

### Communication 5

---

#### *Fruitful workers sow broadly.*

It is not possible to know in advance which ground will bear the most fruit. Fruitful workers sow broadly and pray for wisdom to know where to invest time in personal relationships. They maintain an ongoing balance between the broad sowing of God's word and the time spent developing individual relationships.

### Communication 6

---

#### *Fruitful workers use Bible study as a means of sharing the gospel.*

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 as they arise. In other instances, they may tell Bible stories and ask questions to help seekers discover how to apply the stories to their lives.

### Communication 7

---

#### *Fruitful workers share the gospel in ways that fit the learning preferences of their audience.*

Although people from a western countries rely heavily on written media, people in many other parts of the world are accustomed to oral forms of communication. Good communicators understand the learning preferences of their audience and plan their communication strategies accordingly.

### Communication 8

---

#### *Fruitful workers use the Quran as a bridge to sharing the biblical gospel.*

Certain passages from the Quran can be used effectively in sharing the gospel. Discretion is needed, as inappropriate references to the Quran may validate a seeker's belief in the divine origin of the book. In general, the use of the Quran as a bridge is most advisable when relating to seekers who already know the Quran well. Fruitful workers do not dwell unnecessarily on the Quran, but use various passages as a bridge in order to share the biblical gospel.

## Practices Relating to Fruitful Teams

Laura Adams (lead section editor)

*Ephesians 4:15-16—Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (NIV)*

### Teams 1

---

#### *Fruitful teams are united by a common vision.*

Fruitful teams are comprised of members who share a common goal and strategy. This contrasts with teams on which many members are pursuing different goals—focusing on different people groups or different outcomes.

### Teams 2

---

#### *Fruitful teams build one another up in love.*

The members of fruitful teams develop life-giving 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.

### Teams 3

---

#### *Fruitful teams have effective leadership.*

Teams with healthy leadership dynamics are teams on which the leaders catalyze the varied gifts of the members so that they are able to work together toward the team's goals.

### Teams 4

---

#### *Fruitful teams employ the various gifts of their members to serve the task.*

Fruitful teams affirm the varied gifts of the members and encourage them to blossom. Team members are more fruitful when their gifts are deployed in roles and functions that best serve their vision for mission rather than on other projects.

**Teams 5**

*Fruitful teams adapt their methods based on reflective evaluation and new information.*

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.

**Teams 6**

*Fruitful teams have at least one person with high language proficiency in the heart language.*

Fruitful teams prioritize learning the heart language of their host people. 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.

**Teams 7**

*Fruitful teams engage in corporate prayer and fasting.*

Fruitful teams value and prioritize seeking God's ways through prayer and fasting together.

**Teams 8**

*Fruitful teams expect every team member to be involved in sharing the gospel.*

Within fruitful teams, all team members view themselves as a means for God to communicate his truth and love to the host people. The members will have different personalities, gifting and daily job descriptions—from the mother of young children to the businessperson. But their interactions with host people are characterized by their availability 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.

**Teams 9**

*Fruitful teams value their female members as essential partners in ministry, facilitating their active involvement.*

Fruitful teams recognize the necessity for women to reach women with the gospel message. They help the 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.

## Practices Relating to Characteristics of Fruitful Faith Communities

Rebecca Harrison (lead section editor)

*1 Peter 2:9-10—But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (NIV)*

**Faith Communities 1**

*Fruitful faith communities use the Bible as the central source for life, growth and mission.*

In a culture where many books are viewed as holy, a fruitful faith community views and uses the Bible as the central source for their understanding of God and how to live their life as followers of Jesus.

**Faith Communities 2**

*Fruitful faith communities worship using indigenous forms of expression.*

Fruitful faith communities 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.

### **Faith Communities 3**

---

#### *Fruitful faith communities 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 faith community.

### **Faith Communities 4**

---

#### *Fruitful faith communities value networking together.*

Understanding that their community is part of the larger body of Christ, fruitful communities place a value on building trust and support with other faith communities. The circumstances of each community vary, but fruitful communities find ways to do things like fellowship together, train leaders together, or pray for one another.

### **Faith Communities 5**

---

#### *Fruitful faith communities are committed to one another as extended family, practicing the biblical "one another" commands.*

Jesus commandment to "love one another as I have loved you" challenges faith communities to reach beyond their families and come to understand other followers of Jesus as brothers and sisters in Christ. Fruitful faith communities embrace this command and put it into practice as they build relationships within their community.

### **Faith Communities 6**

---

#### *Fruitful faith communities redeem traditional festivals and ceremonies.*

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 faith communities seek ways to redeem them as an expression of their faith in Jesus.

### **Faith Communities 7**

---

#### *Fruitful faith communities share meals and practice hospitality.*

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 faith communities seek to bless others and provide a witness to Jesus' love through their fellowship and generous hospitality.

### **Faith Communities 8**

---

#### *Fruitful faith communities share the Lord's Supper in culturally appropriate ways.*

Fruitful faith communities 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.

### **Faith Communities 9**

---

#### *Fruitful faith communities seek to bless their wider community.*

One way to provide a witness to the truth of the gospel and build trust is to find ways to bless a community. Fruitful faith communities consider the needs in the community and seek to bless those who are outside their own faith community, whether through building a well, providing childcare, conducting a medical clinic, or some other means.

### **Faith Communities 10**

---

#### *Fruitful faith communities involve women in culturally appropriate forms of ministry.*

Understanding that the Lord calls both men and women to participate in ministry, fruitful faith communities 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.

### **Faith Communities 11**

---

*Fruitful faith communities involve their children in worship and ministry.*

Children are not only the future of a faith community; they are its present as well. Fruitful faith communities actively involve their children, teaching them by example and giving them opportunities to grow in discipleship through worship and ministry.

### **Faith Communities 14**

---

*Fruitful faith communities have local accountability structures for the use of funds.*

Whether the funds come from foreign or national sources, fruitful faith communities demonstrate direct responsibility and accountability for the use of funds.

---

***Faith Communities 12:** Believers share their faith in many ways. What is effective in some cultural settings may be counterproductive in others. Fruitful faith communities encourage their members to share their faith and equip them to do so in ways that are appropriate for the situation.*

### **Faith Communities 12**

---

*Fruitful faith communities equip their members to share their faith in effective and culturally appropriate ways.*

Believers share their faith in many ways. What is effective in some cultural settings may be counterproductive in others. Fruitful faith communities encourage their members to share their faith and equip them to do so in ways that are appropriate for the situation.

### **Faith Communities 15**

---

*Fruitful faith communities generally meet in homes or other informal settings.*

One of the primary marks of a fruitful faith community 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 communities commonly encourage meetings in informal settings.

### **Faith Communities 13**

---

*Fruitful faith communities govern themselves.*

Fruitful faith communities make their own decisions about direction, leadership, priorities, and practices. They take responsibility to build and rule their 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 to take the lead.

## **More Information**

For more information about Fruitful Practices, contact Knowledge Stewardship at [fruitfulpractices@KnowledgeStewardship.org](mailto:fruitfulpractices@KnowledgeStewardship.org). A booklet with an expanded explanation of the Fruitful Practices will be published in late 2009. If you would like a copy, please send a request to the address above.

For more information about the background and source of these fruitful practices and for a fuller explanation of each of the practices, see *From Seed to Fruit: Global Trends, Fruitful Practices, and Emerging Issues Among Muslims*, Dudley Woodberry, ed. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2008. **IJFM**