

Patronage and Reciprocity: Leveraging aspects of shame and honour in discipling women followers of Jesus from Islam

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An invitation to explore

Relationship is at the heart of discipleship for women followers of Jesus from Islam. “[The] [e]xperience of many practitioners and researchers, as well as the testimony of ex-Muslim believers themselves, shows consistently that the growth of a new follower of Jesus depends more on his/her warm personal relationship with a mentor and with fellow believers than on the particular teaching content of a discipleship programme.”(Evans 2009, p 160) Kathryn Kraft affirms this, asserting that relationships and social networks were of more importance in women’s conversion stories than those of men. (2012, p 8-9) This is consistent with the research of Sarah Yoon among women who follow Jesus from a Muslim background in Jordan. She states that a personal relationship with a mentor is critical for their spiritual growth. (2015, p 171) This is further confirmed by Fran Love in her reflections on interviews conducted with fifteen Algerian women followers of Jesus from a Muslim background. She says that they were more concerned with the social relationships of their new community than the doctrinal pillars of their new faith. (2006, p 6)

Understanding the dynamics of relationships in the cultural realities of these women followers of Jesus seems essential, therefore, in order to build appropriate contextual relationships that serve their discipleship journey.

Many of the societies where Islam is the dominant religion are primarily collectivist. This means that members of the community, from birth onwards, are integrated into strong cohesive in-groups. These are formed around the extended family, the tribe, the community and the nation, where unquestioning loyalty is given in exchange for protection and provision. Social harmony among the in-group is maintained by members subscribing to the established social norms, with shame and honour being the currency of exchange. Belonging and acceptance in the community is set against indifference or even hostility toward those who don’t belong or who break the accepted social norms. Hierarchy and harmony are emphasised within the community.

The cultural language of these societies is shame and honour. Shame and honour are about a person’s place of belonging, their acceptance and their relationships in the community. External sanctions moderate behaviour, creating moral boundaries that are enforced by the community. Everything is connected in a shame and honour culture. An individual’s identity is mediated by who they are connected to, requiring a secure network of relationships. Ethics are defined by relationships; it is a person’s moral duty to maintain relational connections with people. Maintaining social order is the moral thing to do.

Overlaying this moral framework for social relationships is the gendered nature of shame and honour. Socially legitimated constructs of gender, of what it means to be a woman, are informed by shame and honour. (Sen 2005, p 48) David deSilva speaks of the women being “embedded in the identity and honour of some male (her father, if she is unmarried, her

husband after she marries).” (1999, p 34) Moyra Dale, in a series of blogs posted on the When Women Speak... website, explores this gendered nature of shame, describing how shame is ‘ascribed proportionally more to women’ (2017a), how women experience shame that is associated with their bodies (2017b), and drawing links between notions of purity and ritual uncleanness and shame. (2017c) Females are most often seen as symbols of shame, men as symbols of honour, and according to Bruce Malina this finds practical expression as “... feelings of ‘shame’ to reveal nakedness, modesty, shyness, blushing, timidity, restraint, sexual exclusiveness - all this is positive shame (sic) for the female and makes her honourable”. (2001, p 49) Moroccan sociologist, Fatima Mernissi, argues that there is a strong link between money and female sexuality on one hand, and the social construction of honour and purity on the other. She makes the point that although honour is linked to material wealth, it is firmly located in the bodies of women. (1987)

Hierarchy orders relationships in shame and honour cultures, is often gendered, and has particular importance in shaping the way women negotiate their daily lives. Directions are taken from above, behaviour is deemed appropriate according to role and is enforced through the limits set by the boundary makers, decisions are taken by those with power and authority, and complied with by others. Connectedness is hierarchical, with status, value and rank providing the framework for negotiating life and its relationships. The leader is “someone representing me and someone with whom I am linked. His victory is my joy. His shame is my shame.” (Edwards 2013, p 81) Identity is tied in with the leader.

Core to this relational paradigm is patronage. DeSilva talks of patronage as a ‘bond of society’ in shame and honour cultures, a basic model for structuring society. (1999, p 96) Patronage is an adaptive response to inherent inequality that is embedded in hierarchical systems, emphasising vertical lines that connect unequal relations in an exchange of mutual benefit. Under patronage, roles correlate to a person’s ascribed social status. Social relations across the spectrum of daily living are enacted through the patronage structure. Patronage then is the relational context in which women who follow Jesus from Islam have learned to operate, and so it shapes the ways they engage with others, including the new community of faith where they are seeking to understand their transformed identity and place of belonging.

This paper is an invitation to explore how this particular dynamic of shame and honour societies might help women followers of Jesus from Islam in the transitions that they make as part of their discipleship journey. I want to examine how patronage, understood particularly through reciprocity could be leveraged as part of the relational dynamics of discipleship. The exploration will traverse questions about what it is like to be a follower of Jesus for a woman whose identity, belonging and community has been defined within a culture of shame and honour and the religion of Islam; questions that examine the dynamic of patronage, recognising the strengths and challenges of this structuring of relationships and asking whether this social structuring of relationships could be leveraged in disciple-making; questions about what it means to ‘make disciples’, asking what a contextual understanding of the Bible looks like for these women followers of Jesus; and questions about being a disciple-maker and how patronage could be one contextual model for this relationship.

The thesis of this paper is that patronage, expressed in reciprocity, provides aspects that inform a model for discipling relationships with women followers of Jesus from Islam, and that this is a dynamic developing relationship that will be reflective of the growth of the community

and the individuals sense of identity and place of belonging within that community. So let's explore. Does this thesis stand up to examination?

What will it be like to be a follower of Jesus?

Women from within Islam have very practical concerns as they journey toward a relationship with Jesus the Messiah. They want to know what it will be like to be a follower of Jesus. They are concerned for the practical impact on their lives of a new allegiance. Evelyne Reisacher, in her research among North African women who became followers of Jesus, identified the following areas as marking out their move toward faith, particularly noting that many of these were areas of significant difference in the discipleship journey when compared to men: fear of being rejected by the family, some of which is because girls do not have the same freedom as males; women are more resilient than men because as women they often pay a higher cost to convert. Men have more freedom related to their choices and so do not have the same cost when they choose to follow Jesus; women are attracted to Jesus because of the way he treated women, they find their real identity in Jesus; women find it more difficult to define their identity as women who follow Jesus in a Muslim context, because they are seen as the representatives of Islam, embodying family, and symbolising the private sphere; shame, and the way women's decisions bring 'shame' on the family; the male guardian who protects/prevents women from independence in life and its choices; married women's role as guardians of Islam and those who pass it on to their children; women's emotional sensitivity helps them connect with Jesus; limited mobility which means women cannot freely go out or access the public square. (2005, p 50) The faith journey for women from Islam has been described by Fran Love as a 'process of discipleship' where women find answers to real life questions and issues, (2006, p 5) questions that are much more often practical than theological.

Within the shame and honour context of their collectivist societies, there are two particular issues that shape the discipleship of women following Jesus from Islam: identity and belonging.

The question who am I, when it is answered from within the structure of relationships, becomes fraught for women who have done the unthinkable and made an individual, independent choice that journeys them toward Jesus. Identity is a function of their membership of the group, of their social and religious community. In her book *Identity Crisis: Standing between two identities of women believers from Muslim backgrounds in Jordan*, Sarah Yoon contends that identity confusion is a primary reason why many women who become followers of Jesus from within Islam do not continue in their new faith. (2015) This resonates with the earlier work of Kathryn Kraft that explores conversion in the context of a definitive "break with one's former identity such that the past and the present are antithetical in some important aspects." (Citing Baker and Currie 2012, p 4) There is a deep fracture that occurs in an individual's rootedness within their heritage, family and community when they pursue new allegiances.

Group membership is an essential building block of identity in collectivist societies. Two African sayings capture the essence of this understanding: 'you are therefore I am' and 'we are, therefore I am'. (Cited in Edwards 2013, 80) Reflecting on feminist theory, Kraft points to the way relationships and 'affective ties' are core to the way women define themselves. (2015, p 1)

Suad Joseph identifies the place of connectivity as important in understanding self: "... connectivity as a notion of self in which a person's boundaries are relatively fluid so that persons feel they are a part of significant others. Connective persons do not experience boundary, autonomy, separateness, as their primary defining features. Rather, they focus on relatedness... ". She speaks of identity being defined in familial terms, with kin idioms and relationships making up the warp and woof of society's connective relationships, and goes on to assert that in Middle Eastern countries relationships are essential for successful social existence. (2000, p 24) In societies that are animated by patriarchy, women construct their notions identity within these gendered power structures, with both hierarchy and relatedness defining the self.

Kraft's research demonstrates that relationships and social networks are central to women's conversion stories. (2012, p 8-9) Discipleship must recognise the inherent links between relationships, connectedness and community in the way women construct identity. While it is easy to point to scriptures that speak of the new identity that a follower of Jesus is given as part of his family, and this is an important foundation for women followers of Jesus from within Islam, they need to experience that in the connective relationships of that family. They must reconstruct their personal narrative so as to create a new identity, (Kraft 2012, p 66), and this needs to be done in conversation with the new community of belonging. It must happen in the context of conversation and dialogue in community because women need to create new building blocks with which to construct a new identity. There is discombobulation when they seek to redefine self with its new allegiances using the old building blocks of identity construction. Affective ties that provide essential building blocks for identity need to be reformed in the context of belonging in the community.

Identity and belonging represent the two axis that hold women true in shame and honour cultures. Brene Brown speaks of shame as the 'fear disconnection'. (Cited in Mischke 2015) Not belonging, the loneliness brought about by disconnection, animates women's choice to give allegiance to Jesus. Again, Kraft shows that belonging and attachment are important aspects of women's discipleship. (2012, p 8) Belonging in collectivist societies means thinking the same, believing the same principles, values, ethos, acting according to same rules and laws, respecting the same hereditary leadership, living together, migrating together, defending each other, fighting and dying together. It is a foundational shaping principle in shame and honour communities where the collective is of greater importance than the individual.

In the Muslim *ummah* belonging is important with that deep sense of belonging nurtured by the concept of *tawhid*, of oneness and unity. Even though women's place in the *ummah* is defined by an array of rules and obligations that they must navigate, they feel deeply their belonging. When they choose to follow Jesus those same rules and obligations tell them that they no longer belong, and so they look to their new community for connective relationships that enliven their sense of, and need for, belonging. For many there is a deep sense of disappointment that the oneness and unity that comes from belonging to the Muslim *ummah* does not seem to be replicated in their new community. Kraft suggests that they are seeking for reciprocal relationships in their new *ummah*. (2012, p 57) This means there is a need for significant others who provide fellowship and access into the new community because they help both to create a new sense of belonging and to create and maintain stability in these women's changing subjective realities.

What do those relationships with significant others look like for women whose worldview is framed through the lenses of shame and honour? We will continue our exploration through a consideration of patronage.

How can social structures of relationship inform discipleship?

Patronage is a way of structuring society that is particularly evident in shame and honour cultures. It is a dyadic alliance marked by inequalities in status and in access to power and resources. Dr Callum Johnson's study, *Patronage and Salvation in South Asia for Islam and MBBs: A socio-anthropological approach*, offers useful insights for understanding patronage. He says: "Patronage is an etic model that is usually set in a political or economic framework...". Drawing on the work of Eisenstadt and Roniger, he notes that inequality and power difference, solidarity in relations, personal honour and obligations, spiritual attachment, limited resources premised on the idea of limited good, simultaneous exchange of resources and binding long-term relationships are marks of patronage. (n.d., p 3) The patron-client way of organising social relationships operates in collectivist societies through strong hierarchical structures that mediate relationships.

Reciprocity is a key to understanding of patronage. Developing his work from the thesis of limited good, Bruce Malina suggests that "... the most significant form of social interaction in the limited-good world of the first century is an informal principle of reciprocity...". He explains this as a form of non-legal contractual obligation that is effected through the patronage in relationships of unequal status. (2001, p 94) This is also the conclusion of David deSilva. He notes that in the world of the New Testament people relied on patrons to help them access goods and resources that were not available to them through exchange at the market. (2000, p 96-99) Both the patron and the client have need of each other, which helps to establish longevity in these relationships. The client needs access to resources, relationships and other necessities of life, while the patron is able to display his honour and earn social capital through his generosity and benefaction.

For many people patronage is a negative concept, an inherently negative social structure because it embeds inequalities and power imbalances into social relations. Patronage is often linked to ideas of corruption, dependency, favouritism, exploitation and nepotism. If this relational construct is to be considered as one possible model for disciplining relationships with women who follow Jesus from Islam, then its negative aspects, weaknesses and potential abuses must be acknowledged, and intentionally mitigated against. The disciplining relationship must be enacted so as to address the way patronage can sometimes consolidate power imbalances and social inequalities. This may be effected through the teachings of scripture that we are all one in Christ, that difference does not mean inequality, that in Christ we have equal access to Almighty God and all of his resources, that the Kingdom of God will culminate with those from every tribe, tongue and nation together in worship around the throne, that there is only one mediator between God and man. Disciples do not need a patron to gain access to God, but there may be other ways such a relationship will enable them to develop important connective relationships. Patrons will need great humility, radical generosity, and a deep concern for the well-being of the other in order to prevent the exploitation and manipulation both of and by those they journey with in faith.

Reading the Bible through a shame and honour lens animates an understanding of patronage in scripture. The works of scholars that include David deSilva (2000), Bruce Malina (2001) and Lynn Cohick (2009) are informative in this area. Their work is informative on a number of levels. They show how patronage illuminates an understanding of grace. DeSilva argues that grace was not primarily a religious word, as it is today, but that it referred to the willingness of a patron to grant a benefit to another person or group, highlighting the generosity and disposition of the patron or benefactor. It gives attention to the gift, but also describes the gratitude of the one who has received the benefit. His point is that grace had specific meanings for the writers and readers of the New Testament that were formed in the context of social order. (1999, p 38-39) Grace, therefore, is understood in God showing radically generous favour or benefaction, even to his enemies, taking the initiative to the point of Jesus dying in a demonstration of his character and virtue, his righteousness. God's people must respond to this extravagant, radical generosity with a passion to increase the recognition of his honour and generosity. Grace must answer grace, says deSilva, the receiving of favour must lead to the return of gratitude. (2000, p 70) Cohick argues that grace and favour were descriptive of reciprocity and patronage (2009, p 286).

Cohick's work is of additional interest because of its focus on the benefits accrued by women through patronage and benefaction. Women were able to blur lines that separated the public and private spheres of their lives. When they acted as benefactors or patrons they were able to make significant contribution to the development and growth of the church. Cohick argues that patronage gave women access to halls of power and influence. She says that "For all its faults ... the institution of patronage was in many respects gender blind. As such, it allowed a freedom of movement at most social levels for women to participate in the social, economic, and political environment without any cultural condemnation... With the practice of public and private benefaction, women gained access to centres of influence and persons of power." (2009, p 320-323) Patronage was instrumental in enabling boundaries of status, the public/private divide and ethnicity to be crossed.

Conversion in the context of shame and honour is about transferring allegiance to Jesus. It is more than a personal religious experience, it is a fundamental relational shift of allegiance. Jayson Georges and Mark Baker argue that this means that loyalty to the new benefactor, Jesus, must then be demonstrated publicly. Drawing on the covenantal nature of the patronage relationship they argue that followers of Jesus pledge to remain faithful to him and to honour him by being obedient to his authority. (2016, p 198)

The organisation of relationships in shame and honour cultures, and in contexts where ideas of limited good mediate relationship connections, means patronage, reciprocity and benefaction provide a way of accessing resources. Through patronage honour is built. Patronage become a tool for blurring the lines of boundaries, and opening opportunities and entry into places of power and influence. How then could patronage be leveraged then in disciple-making?

What does it mean to 'make disciples'?

A disciple of Jesus is someone who has given their allegiance to him, pledges to remain

loyal and faithful to him, honours him, is obedient to his authority and speaks of him to others; a worshiper, a servant and a witness. Being a disciple of Jesus is about being in a relationship with him, and this relationship defining the person.

Making disciples, therefore, can be seen as inherently relational. In the research that is available on women followers of Jesus from within Islam, relationships figure significantly in many of their stories. (Kraft 2012, Yoon 2015) (see also Strong and Page 2006) As a caveat, it should be noted that there are women becoming followers of Jesus who do so outside of relational contexts. The stories of those who have encountered Jesus and follow him without making it known to anyone, either because of choice as a result of their context or lack of opportunity to tell someone, are largely unknown. However, our exploration here focuses on women who are seeking community in their new allegiance, and the stories of these women point to the role of relationships in the discipleship journey.

Most approaches to discipleship prioritise the message, the hearing of information that the person is then expected to process, but it is deep personal connection with Jesus that opens women from within Islam to a new faith journey. *Allah* is experienced as distant, within orthodox understandings of Islam, something that profoundly affects women. Matters of purity, and the limitations this sets on their practices of faith, profoundly shape the way they experience God. Women within Islam pursue a range of activities in order to find a connection with God that will address their real needs in negotiating a life that is often precarious physically, spiritually and socially. Experiential knowledge of, and personal encounter with Jesus and his people are important for women to become disciples of Jesus from within Islam. They need that relationship and encounter with Jesus to be made concrete in community that embodies connective relationships

As has been noted earlier as well, women are concerned about the relationships in their new community of allegiance. Because women's identity is negotiated in the context of relationships, their discipleship must include strong relational connections. Women grow in their allegiance to God when they are able to explore their social identity, and their roles and functions, in the context of relationships, their relationship with God and that relationship experienced in their new community. "...[S]ocial relationships play an essential role in helping them develop their new lives as religious changers." (Kraft 2012, p 79) Identity formation is not so much a matter of a paradigm shift as it is a person's continuing story developed through observing, learning and copying others as part of a relational community. Deep connective relationships with Jesus and with the community of his people need attention in disciple-making among women who follow Jesus from within Islam. This means making disciples is not a task but rather worked out in the nurture of relationships.

Making disciples must also be wholistic. Mary McVickers has shown in her work on South Asia that focusing on a cognitive approach alone does not help women on their faith-journey because they want to experience their felt needs being met. (2005) Many who trying to reach out to women living under Islam struggle with an apparent disinterest in conversations and studies about God, describing how women seem to only want to talk about life-issues and practical matters. However, it is a combination of Jesus actively touching their lives and the reality of what truth means for practical living and future security, physical, spiritual and social, that draws women on their discipleship journey. (Love 1996, p 126)

A range of practical family and social issues that concern women from within Islam have

been identified. Marriage, childlessness, children, financial struggles, family conflicts, feelings of powerlessness, social pressures, and fear and insecurity are just some of them. Women want to know that their Jesus, the one to whom they have given allegiance, will provide for them, care for and protect them, as they negotiate life's challenges. These are very concrete issues that require more than a theory or teaching in discipleship. They require a wholistic transformational encounter, one that is modelled in relational community.

The nurture of community should also be a key part of making disciples among women who follow Jesus from Islam. Community is essential for nurturing belonging in shame and honour cultures, and that community must embrace and nurture each of its members as with deep bonds of kinship. Belonging is important in the Muslim *ummah*, so new followers of Jesus want, and need, a place to belong. (Kraft 2012, p 57) The struggle for many women who become followers of Jesus from Islam is that there are a range of barriers that prevent their access to such a community. They must cross boundaries that limit their access to the public sphere. Whereas their place in the community has previously been mediated through their relationships to the father, brothers, uncles and/or husband, they now need new mediators of their access. The strains in relationships between Christian and Muslim communities mean they are often not trusted when they do try to enter a new community. Making disciples therefore includes not just creating communities but also mediating access for women who need to be given access to and nurtured in a place of belonging.

Within a guilt and innocence worldview, a series of propositional truths forms the core of declaring the changed relationship that has occurred for a follower of Jesus. In a shame and honour worldview, the relationships of affirmation that create belonging and enable the negotiation of identity, form the core of declaring a person's new allegiance. Making disciples, while having the same purpose, will be articulated differently. For women from Islam who declare their allegiance to Jesus, this will be a relational, experiential journey of transformation. The perilous nature of life means this needs to be firmly tethered in friendship and relationships.

What role does the disciple-maker play?

Intentional, relational and reproducible. Teaches, instructs, models, motivates, confronts, warns, comforts, forgives, restores, sends. Mentor for exponential growth, invest in a few, work relationally. These are some of the ways the plethora of books, articles, materials and websites describe the role and work of a disciple-maker. Exploring descriptions for disciple-makers among people living under Islam things like resilience, language learning, initiator of Bible Studies, relationship builder, pray, rely on the Holy Spirit, find a person of peace, engage families, baptise, teach to obey scripture are among the areas talked about. There is, rightly, a focus on seeking to understand the things that Jesus modelled and taught about being a disciple-maker. It is the more recently work of Georges and Baker (2016), the honour shame network at <http://honorshame.com/>, as well as Jackson Wu (2017, 2016), that has stimulated fresh understanding of some of the culturally nuanced expectations of that role within shame and honour cultures. What is the imperative upon disciple-makers in shame and honour cultures?

Disciple-makers can utilise the social networks and capital of relationships in making

disciples. As Georges and Baker assert: “[p]atronage offers a framework for transmitting values to disciples in many non-Western societies. It is the ‘indigenous style of discipleship practiced naturally by many national leaders.’” (2016, p 152) Patronage is a moral obligation on relationships in many shame and honour cultures. When we fail to understand the relational economics of the patron-client mode of ordering society, we fail to leverage critical aspects of relational capital in responding to the identified need of women followers of Jesus from Islam for connective relationships and community.

In a 2011 article in *Mission Frontiers*, Jean Johnson suggested that much of the mission enterprise is actually built on a patron-client model, because the mission worker often works by establishing a role of being needed in the community, and then brings the resource, power and authority to meet that need. (2011) This asymmetry in power and resources has been identified by others also. Vinay Samuel points it out as an unacknowledged fact of mission relationships. (2015) Robert Oh has also explored this in his research on the relationship between Korean missionaries and Cambodian Pastors. (2015a, b) Whereas most Western mission workers engaging in making disciples want to emphasise unity in diversity through an egalitarian formula in structuring relationships, it is a disingenuous failure to recognise that already they are recognised as people of power, resource and authority. An asymmetry in relationships already exists in mission, the question is how that is used to shape making disciples.

Kraft’s work goes further, citing the way followers of Jesus from within Islam view the way missionaries work out their egalitarianism in shame and honour cultures. “In my research among converts, one of the most common critiques against missionaries cited by believers from a Muslim background was that they thought it disingenuous to attempt to separate the message from their lifestyles, which many evangelical missionaries were perceived as doing. Those who lived in nice homes and who sent their children to expensive schools, but who did not show generosity to their Muslim neighbours who were less well-off, were seen as hypocrites, as were those who made an effort to avoid providing material support to converts claiming they wanted to avoid accusations that they were bribing people to convert. (2015, p 10) In shame and honour communities the person who has the goods to share brings shame on themselves if they fail to live up to the expected practices of the community. There are expectations associated with the work and role of the disciple-maker in communities where shame and honour frame worldview that the disciple-maker must negotiate.

There are dangers: dangers from abusing power, from manipulating relationships, from putting oneself in the place of Christ, of building ‘rice-Christians’, from acting as gatekeepers to the community of God’s people, of creating dependency, of lack of accountability, from ministry from superiority rather than humility, from historic links to colonialism. These dangers are real and require honest, humble, ongoing reflection in the context of a community of faithful followers of Jesus to be avoided. Equally, there are dangers in failing to acknowledge the social structures that mediate relationships and connectivity, formation of identity and belonging. Georges and Baker suggest that the disciple-maker can subvert the system while honouring the dynamics of shame and honour associated with it. They assert that “Jesus called his followers to go beyond patron-client reciprocity. One way to do this is to transform the aim of patronage. ... Christians should creatively use patronage for authentic relationships and kingdom purposes.” (2016, p 150) The gospel subverts the way the world uses patronage to

build an individual's own social capital and power base. Patronage may be enacted through radical sacrifice, the sharing of resources to meet needs that cultivate relationships for God's glory, displaying the interdependence of belonging to the community of God's people. Paul models a way of subverting the system in his response to the Philippians by bringing God into the centre of the relationship, so that the Philippians can no longer hold him to account to repay their generosity as their client. He trains them to look to Jesus. (See Philippians Chapter 4 Georges 2016, p 150) Patronage is sensitive to the honour and those it acts on behalf of and calls them friends. This is the model of Jesus.

Patronage creates access to people's lives through the established social structures. Expectations are understood, roles have definition and relationships have tracks on which to move. In a world where the individual is known through their belonging and participation in the collective, disciple-makers must let this structuring of society structure the developmental relationships of discipleship as part of God's greater community. Relationships are intentional, structured, have expectations and obligations. Several writers describe a process in establishing a relationship modelled on patronage. (Chinchen 1995) The system requires the patron to be needy and empathetic, requires exchange visits and requires an exchange of gifts. The point is that the relationship is never assumed and drifted into. It requires active, intentional engagement from both persons. The patron has specific goals to support the person with a relationship that is strong and reliable in order to be in a position to help in crisis, and to influence the person they have the relationship with as a spiritual child. (Chinchen 1995)

The relationship is personal and enduring. It is voluntary, and above all else reciprocal. Disciple-makers must learn to need as much as to be needed, and for missionaries this has been identified as one of their great challenges. They come with the answers and stand aloof from those they minister among. Reciprocity, generosity and exchange describe the operation of relationships modelled on patronage. The disciple-maker among women followers of Jesus from Islam has a model for structuring their relationships that is known and understood by these women, aspects of which can be leveraged in making disciples.

What have we learned?

Shame and honour values and social structures prioritise identity formation and belonging within the context of community. While these values and social structures are often seen as unethical to those whose cultural constructs are not premised on shame and honour, they have dynamic relational aspects that can be leveraged in developing models for making disciples among women who follow Jesus from Islam. Patronage is one of those social structures. The patron-client relationship does not need to be paternalistic because it requires reciprocity. It requires the disciple-maker to be a person of humility who understands that they too are a recipient of God's grace and can live that humility out in relationships modelled on a patronage structure.

Patronage does have a dark side, but the gospel is good news that subverts the brokenness of social structures while transforming and redeeming them for the Kingdom of God. The gospel moves hierarchical social structures from the logic of superiority to the logic of identification. We see this demonstrated in the incarnation when Jesus situated "divine power in a human person but removed from earthly power." (Samuel 2015, p 8) Using the positive

aspects of patronage as a model for making disciples must, therefore, include disciple-makers who are themselves being disciplined in intentional, accountable relationships of mutual submission.

Patronage, or sponsorship or benefaction, provides connections that are intentional, have associated expectations, and provide a logic to the mentor/disciple-maker role. It is a model for discipleship practiced by many indigenous leaders. Missionaries are often considered or assumed to be patrons because of their status, wealth and age. Whereas Western Christians are uncomfortable with the model, women from Islam, understand the social structure and how they negotiate life within it. The disciple-maker can create confusion and hurt when they 'rebel' against this means of social operations. Yoon quotes in her study the way a local disciple-maker understands their role: "... Taking care of her was the most important thing as her new Christian family. In this relationship, making her feel at peace was very important. We are the new people and the new society. Even though she goes through many things, she has to feel welcomed by the new community. She knows that we take care of her. Even before teaching the Bible, this welcome and feeling of belonging in the new community is very important for her. This will make her fear slowly decrease. She will feel that she has another family and can overcome the persecution. We have to accept BMBs¹ and help them feel at home. We have to spend more time with them and let them be assured they have a close relationship with us. They need to understand we love them and are not just making them believe in Jesus or teaching them the Bible." (2015, p 172) The social context of women followers of Jesus from Islam means they have high expectations on what it means to belong to the family of God.

There are some very practical areas where leveraging the role of patron could play an important role in assisting women followers of Jesus from Islam. They need a community in which to renegotiate their identity, to learn to live as a child who belongs to God and has joined his family. There is often great distrust between Christians and Muslims so that these women need someone to advocate their acceptance and participation, their belonging in their new community. They also need help to access the resources of provision and protection that come with belonging in a community. Their collectivist society has taught them that loyalty to the community is reciprocated with provision and protection. A disciple-maker can play a significant role in creating avenues of access resources, and in providing for these women across the range of their practical, spiritual and emotional needs. They have often paid a great price to follow Jesus and been left bereft of community networks of belonging and the provision and protection that comes with belonging.

Women followers of Jesus from Islam are looking for someone they can trust, who will not let them down, who will care for them, protect and provide for them. They are looking for a patron. While this is found firstly in Jesus, they need a context in which that is worked out in their every day experiences of life. They also need models, those who will show them how to live with the freedom that they enjoy as a child of God. Their shame and honour culture has given them a strong sense of community and belonging that needs to find a new rootedness in the community of God, and it is in that community that they learn how to live truly transformed lives, and what that life looks like. The patron is a gatekeeper who can give access to what the

¹ Believers from a Muslim Background.

women do not have, and the disciple-maker can be that source of access to the community of God's people. Patronage allows these women to cross boundaries and enter spaces that they would otherwise be excluded from.

When we are seen as vessels of God's glory, ambassadors of God's righteousness, brokers of his benefactions to the nations then people encounter and experience God's salvation through us. Christopher Wright writes of the great honour of being an ambassador of the living God: "The person who is sent embodies the presence and authority of the person who sends. This was true of even ordinary human sending. To treat messengers with respect or with humiliation was effectively to honour or shame the person who sent them. The way you responded to messengers was taken as your response to their sender and treated accordingly." (2010, p 209) The disciple-maker has a privileged role, and when aspects of patronage form a model for the discipling relationship it is also a huge responsibility.

As noted previously from Cohick, patronage is in many ways gender blind and so allows freedoms that mean boundaries that would normally be barriers to be crossed. It gives allows women to participate in roles and places that would otherwise have been closed to them, without 'cultural condemnation'. (2009, p 320) Cohick's insights illuminate the potential of using aspects of patronage as a model for discipleship among women who follow Jesus from Islam. Our study has demonstrated the centrality of relationships and the social structures that mediate those relationships in shame and honour cultures, and the particular import of those for women. This paper demonstrates the veracity of our thesis, that patronage, expressed in reciprocity, informs a model for discipling relationships with women followers of Jesus from Islam, and that this is a dynamic developing relationship that will be reflective of the growth of the community and the individuals sense of identity and place of belonging within that community. It recognises the inherent dangers while suggesting that the gospel subverts and transforms these through the mutuality of interdependence and reciprocity. Leveraging patronage as an aspect for relationships in disciple-making is about identifying, understanding and utilising social patterns for the good of the kingdom.

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