

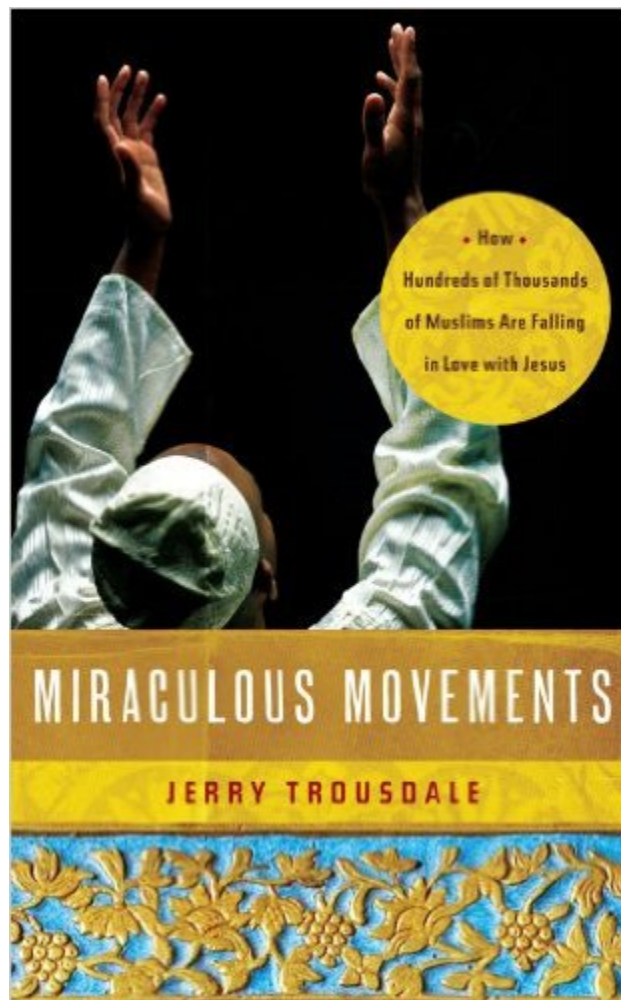
Book Review

Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims are Falling in Love with Jesus

Jerry Trousdale
Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012.

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Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims are Falling in Love with Jesus by veteran missionary strategist Dr. Jerry Trousdale is an outstanding and inspiring book. It is the first installment of a planned three-part trilogy on reaching Muslim's using Church Planting Movement (CPM) and Discovery Bible Study (DBS) methodology.

Trousdale is a Director of International Ministries of CityTeam mission and a former missionary to West Africa. He bases the book on many interviews of eyewitnesses of how Isa al Masih is drawing many Muslims to himself in dynamic church planting movements throughout the Ummah of Islam. He uses several fascinating anecdotes from MBB believers mostly from Africa. What is especially fascinating is that the majority of the stories he shares are of Muslim (and some Christian) background individuals who have come to the Lord have seen saw a vision of or dreamed about the person of Jesus/Isa. From what I have been reading of late, this seems to be a very common occurrence as the Lord is drawing thousands 10/40 Window Muslims to himself. To establish his own vision for reaching the Muslim world, Trousdale gives a simple summary of the Great Commission: "Complete the task I have given you to make obedient disciples of all the peoples of the world. I will be with you always to accomplish that task. And when you are finished, I will come back for you!" (Trousdale 2012, 38). I like this implicit movement back to the original eschatology of William Carey and the first broad wave of evangelical missionaries.

In the book, the author shares basic steps on how God is using CityTeam and the groups of ministries under its umbrella to start thousands of simple house churches based on friend and family webs (FFW's) while using Discovery Bible Studies. This, he shows, is a reproducible methododolgy based squarely upon Christ's own instructions to his disciples in Matthew 10, Luke 9-10 and illustrated by various apostolic missions in the book of Acts. The key concept the author uses throughout the book is making disciples who obey the Lord and make their own disciples. He describes this set of methods as "Jesus' Counterintuitive Disciple-Making Strategies" (Trousdale 2012, 39) These steps are:

1. Go slow at first in order to go faster.
2. Focus on a few to win many.
3. Engage an entire family or group, not just the individual.
4. Share only when people are ready to hear.
5. Start with creation, not with Christ.
6. It's about discovering and obeying, not teaching and knowledge.
7. Disciple people to conversion, not vice versa.
8. Coach people from the beginning to discover and obey biblical truth.
9. Prepare to spend a long time making strong disciples, but anticipate miraculous accelerations.
10. Expect the hardest places to yield the greatest results (Trousdale 2012, 40-45).

Trousdale further lists several "unprecedented" things the Lord is doing in the Muslim world as a result of this strategy. For example, several complete mosques have embraced the Lordship of Isa al Masih. Many Muslim people groups with no communities of Isa among them now have fifty or more such communities. Many former Muslim leaders – imams, and sheikhs – and even Islamicists make up as much as 20% of some of the movements. Thousands of ordinary Muslim background families have turned to Isa al Masih (Trousdale 2012, 24-15). I might add that these steps and results are only counterintuitive for those steeped in the western ecclesial

tradition and what John Nevius called the “Old Method” of church planting. As Trousdale writes, these steps and results are hidden in plain sight in the Gospels and Acts! Roland Allen would feel greatly akin to them as well. Even Donald McGavran would rejoice to see that CityTeam is using many of the people-group and family based strategies that he pragmatically discovered through research and later followers found in Scripture (e.g., Peter Wagner, *Our Kind of People*; Mark Kreitzer, *The Concept of Ethnicity in the Bible: A Theological Analysis*).¹

Next, the author greatly underscores the necessity of intercessory prayer among movement founders and their disciples in chapter three: “Pray the Lord of the Harvest.” Trousdale writes that leaders must model the “personal discipline of prayer” by praying for “new regions and pioneer teams,” “training new believers to pray,” and developing intercessory prayer in every community of believers (Trousdale 2012, 57-62). Chapter six introduces “Discovery Bible Studies and Obedience-based discipleship.” It begins with a quote from CPM pioneer, David Watson, now also with CityTeam: “God’s love language to us is mercy and grace. Our love language to God is loving obedience” (Trousdale 2012, 99). Discovery Bible Studies (DBS) proclaim: “Do not teach or preach; instead, facilitate discovery and obedience” (Trousdale 2012, 106). There is much of great value in this chapter because of the emphasis upon “groups” (I would rather use the term “family and friendship webs” [FFW] – but the point is very similar). Groups of related individuals remember and learn faster and retain more than mere individuals. Such groups “self-correct” and hold each other accountable and hence protect against “bad leadership and heresy” (102-103). DBS’s lead to “simple churches, dramatic transformation, [and] rapid multiplication” an observation that is proving to be dramatically true (chapter 7).

Next, Chapter 12 gives a summary of the new perspective as “Seven paradigm shifts” which these movements all stress: First, intercessory prayer must be “the highest priority.” Trousdale writes: “In the process of the engaging lostness among Muslims, we all need a God-sized vision, a thoughtfully biblical strategy, a good plan, and a willingness to work diligently to achieve the goals God in our hearts. But make intercessory prayer support a higher priority than anything else” since this is the only means to bring spiritually blinded Muslims to see who Isa al Masih really is. The second shift in strategy is to “make disciples who make disciples.” In other words, disciple-making is differs vastly from merely “making converts. Disciple making requires time and relationship.” So the paradigm shift downplays “formulas of salvation” or quick Gospel presentations and equally “quick decision[s] regarding personal destiny.” Third, instead of the Western formula method, this new perspective stresses that leaders must invest quality “time in the right people” that is those whom the Lord has prepared. These people the author calls “people of peace” following the Lord’s instructions in Luke 10:5-6. He describes them as those whom God has prepared through prayer, especially those “among the world’s most difficult people groups to bridge the gospel into their communit[ies].” The opposite is defaulting “to mass marketing” techniques. Person-to-person advertising is the best!

¹Available from Amazon: http://www.amazon.com/The-Concept-Ethnicity-Bible-Theological/dp/0779915054/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1405512734&sr=8-1&keywords=mark+r.+kreitzer .

Fourth, Trousdale and his colleagues urge that disciple-makers should not “tell people what to believe and do.” This is based on sound educational theory. Self-discovery through the Spirit of God is much more powerful than spoon-feeding through “trained professional Christians.” We don’t really “trust that the Word and the Spirit are really ‘enough’ . . . [for] every new community of faith.” This is right along the lines that Roland Allen prophetically proclaimed so many decades ago. Fifth, Trousdale writes, “Never settle for revealing just one dimension of Jesus' life” but emphasize his wholistic ministry to hurting people without neglecting the priority of disciplining people into communities of the Lord as King. A wholistic deed-ministry is often a bridge directly into the Gospel Word-ministry. The sixth paradigm shift is to “never substitute knowledge about God for an obedience based relationship with God.” The last shift, Trousdale demonstrates is that “Jesus does impossible things through the most ordinary people.” Again and again Western Protestantism disconnects what we teach about “the priesthood of all believers” and how we actually live our lives and conduct our ministries. We never “really expect ordinary people without formal ministry credentials to achieve extraordinary Kingdom outcomes” (Trousdale 2012, 180-185).

In other words, making true Christ followers – real disciples – is mandatory for every believer. (I wish that he emphasized each believer has his or her own gift to be used in the process – a definite weakness in this approach!). The results are that multitudes of “simple church[es] can be planted by ordinary believers who “regularly meet . . . to discover God's will together and obeying it.” This process, he stresses, is “often easier for ordinary Christians” than “for professional Christian workers, because they are living the Christian witness among the very people with whom they are sharing the gospel.” Certainly this is biblically accurate and written about both by Nevius and Allan. In summary, the key principle is “when ordinary Christians choose to align their thinking and actions with the Word of God ... God will bless their efforts” (Trousdale 2012, 186).

The last chapter applies the principles Dr. Trousdale shared throughout the book especially on how to run a Discovery Bible Study step by step after much prayer and finding “people of peace.” This is one of the most valuable sections of the book. I believe that this method of discipleship – with an important caveat I mention below – is very sound both biblically and missiologically because it takes the created realities of family and friendship webs, mixes in sound educational theory of discovery learning, and takes biblical lay driven ministry teaching seriously. It develops disciples and leaders who stress obedience to Isa al Masih as God the Word and last stresses that disciples must make disciples, leaders reproducing leaders and simple assemblies of the King planting other such groups. All of this I greatly appreciate.

However, I have a couple of substantial doubts about the methodology, which if not addressed and corrected, could lead to some major negative repercussions down the line. These doubts are two-fold. First, Trousdale’s emphasis upon “discipling to conversion” is outstanding in its method. The Discovery Bible Study method of reading Scripture together by starting at Creation and moving into the whole drama of God’s perspective on history (Creation—Fall—Redemption—Consummation) is excellent and necessary. Thankfully the Reformational

movement is rediscovering it in for example, M. Goheen and C. Bartholomew, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding our Place in the Biblical Story* (Baker Academic, 2004). Discipling, however, must next proceed with continual teaching a complete biblical world and life view through the mentorship method, as I will suggest below. I don't think Trousdale and his colleagues would deny this because world-and-life view teaching is generally agreed by missiologists to be a huge lacuna in Western missions as the late Professor Paul Hiebert has reminded us.² (see review here <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/10>). However, I wish that another volume, or even a second edition of this volume would add this subject using relevant anecdotes that specifically address the issue.

Having said this, I am convinced from my own life experience and from reading of the storyline of Scripture that despite Trousdale's constant emphasis upon obedience it is not the key issue after all and is not the central key to discipleship that Christ and his Apostles emphasized. I realize that CityTeam is trying to move away from bare intellectualized "faith." However, biblical faith is the surrender-of-trust-that-leads-to-love and not a merely Platonic, academic spectator-gained head knowledge that Trousdale seems correctly to be warning against. Trust vs. obedience mixed with confessional faith is, after all, the central difference between Islam (and Orthodox Judaism) and the way of the Messiah. I fear a movement that is merely obedience-based and doesn't understand and live in the truth of the Pauline Gospel of justification and sanctification through the surrender of trust and the walk of faith will lead to Pharisaism. The root of true obedience is essentially "listening to God with faith" – the actual meaning of both the Hebrew and Greek words translated as "obey." This aspect of the book's methodology and its strategy is the greatest weakness and potential danger in my opinion.

Second, therefore, is the need for DBS method to continually accentuate follow-up of the new believers without stopping or inhibiting the movement. This calls for a secondary step of training leaders to continue discipling other leaders and so forth in the model of 2 Tim 2:2. Without this Pauline follow-up teaching, these "miraculous movements" – genuine as they are – can move into schism and false teaching. It also calls for basic understanding on how to read and apply the Pentateuch – I recommend Walter Kaiser's *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Eerdmans) for leaders and trainers. Father-God's instructions in the tōranic wisdom of the Pentateuch are essential for MBB's to develop a biblical alternative to Islamic Sharia and eschatology. We cannot defeat the comprehensive world and life view that is Sunni (or even Shia) Islam with an other-worldly and escapist ethic and eschatology. Those two types of doctrines are a large reason why the ancient Christian churches in many Middle Eastern lands have been dying and culturally irrelevant for many centuries (see e.g., review here of Philip Jenkins. *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia*. <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/362/951>).

²Paul Hiebert. 2008. *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic

In conclusion, I strongly recommend this volume and its follow-up, *The Father Glorified*, to all those praying for and interested in God's work among Muslims in the contemporary world.