

Discipling in Muslim Communities: Scripture, History and Seasoned Practices by Don Little. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic. 2015. ISBN 9780830824700. \$23.02

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Little (D. Min., Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2008) is also the author of *The Way to Follow the Way: Jesus Said, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No One Comes to the Father Except through Me* (Westbow Press, 2012¹). He is committed to “discipling people to be all that they can be in God, and mobilizing, training, and mentoring men and women to a life of loving Muslims.”² Little leads the Lilius Trotter Center as director and as an Islamic Missiologist.³

Little writes with a key audience in mind: the minister seeking to establish new churches in countries where the Islamic faith maintains a heavy influence. He contends that a key element to establishing and growing these churches depends upon one’s understanding of discipleship – as it has been biblically defined and historically developed – as well as a cognizance of discipleship methods specific to new Christians who have converted from Islam, which he calls “BMBs” or “believers from a Muslim background.”

This book helps to highlight the need for a study on discipling new believers from a Muslim background. Little establishes this necessity in the introductory pages by recounting a question posed by researcher David Smith: “Could it be, therefore, that alongside the analysis of the testimonies of those who have come to faith there needs to be a more rigorous and honest study of the reasons why many do not continue in their Christian faith?” Therefore, he sought to write a doctoral thesis that did the type of research needed, and expanded the thesis into a book for publication for a greater audience.⁴

Effective Discipling in Muslim Communities divides into two parts, the first of which concerns the biblical, historical, and missiological foundations for discipling BMBs. Within the first section, one can find an insightful study of specific passages that form a biblical paradigm for discipleship (from Luke, Acts, Galatians, and Philippians), as well as Little’s soteriological beliefs. One can also identify his perception and critique of contemporary, as well as historical, attempts at spiritual formation and discipleship. The second half of the book presents a narrative of helpful practices for discipling BMBs, covering topics such as persecution, demonic oppression, money, and familial relationships among Muslims.

One element of concern for this reviewer proceeds from the first chapter in which Little expresses his soteriological views. The chapter is entitled “Genuine Conversion to Christ Forms the Basis for Lifelong Discipleship.” One assumes that most evangelical readers would heartily agree with such a title. However, the discussion on genuine conversion centers mainly upon water baptism. Throughout the section “Repentance, Baptism and Conversion in the New Testament,” Little apparently believes in baptismal regeneration. He devotes most of the narrative to a discussion of Acts 2:38 and “what needs to happen for someone to be saved.”⁵ The main thrust of his argument does not first concern the need for regeneration, but rather obedience to the command to repent and be baptized. He further concludes that “in baptism a believer appropriates the forgiveness of sins” and that Jesus “promise(d) we would be filled with the Holy Spirit . . . in our water baptism.”⁶ Ephesians 1:13-14, however, teaches that Christians receive the Holy Spirit as seal upon believing in Christ. Consequently, a clear articulation of salvation by grace through faith would lay a better foundation for the topic of discipleship.

A helpful element of the book is Little's analysis of contemporary discipleship methods, found in chapter four. He observes that current (within the last 30 years) models have not adequately discerned the wisdom found in the discourses of the previous generations regarding discipleship. He, therefore, offers an overview of spiritual disciplines in chapter five which cover Augustine, Benedictine practices, and the *Book of Common Prayer*. He applies this survey of orthodox spiritual disciplines to discipling BMBs by listing three valuable insights: 1) consideration of the "relational reality" of the Trinity; 2) the imperative nature of "transformation (within the context of) . . . the corporate life of a local body;" and 3) a liturgical emphasis of "a structured rhythm of daily prayer and work"⁷ His historical and contemporary analyses lead to the identification of "five processes to ensure spiritual growth" in BMBs (p.143).

Aside from the aforementioned discussion on salvation, *Effective Discipling in Muslim Communities* is a recommended resource for the person longing to minister to Muslim neighbors, locally, nationally, and world-wide. It provides greater insight to the struggles that one may encounter when seeking to disciple Muslim background brothers and sisters, especially on topics like demonic oppression, which many Western evangelicals may find difficult to understand. A key strength of this book is its ability to convey the experiences and stories of persons who have devoted their life to discipling BMBs, helping to prevent the book's key question of why many converted BMBs do not continue in the Christian faith.

¹ <https://my.gordonconwell.edu/alumniauthors>

² <http://www.houghton.edu/calendar-events/chapel-dr-don-little/2311/>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Little, Don. 2015. *Effective Discipling in Muslim Communities*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 15.

⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁶ Ibid., 31.

⁷ Ibid., 134.