

# LIFE Scale: Exploring Eight Dimensions of Life in Christ

by L. D. Waterman

**T**he predicament of personal identity among those who turn to Christ in the Muslim world is not an abstract exercise. It often proves to be a very disorientating experience.

"I'm really confused," wrote Mahmud. "Since I started following Jesus, I've gotten different advice from different people, and I'm not sure which ones to follow. My friend, Mustafa, who first told me about your broadcasts, says it's vital to stay well connected to our community. So he advised me not to say or do anything that would shame or shock my family or the community. He continues to pray and attend the mosque just like he did before, and he says it's not a problem to be a good Muslim and also believe in Jesus. He has some other friends who also think as he does."

"At the same time, I've visited a church in the city a few times, and they were excited to hear about my dream and that I've been listening to your broadcasts and that I believe in Jesus. But they told me if I'm serious about following Jesus, I should get baptized as soon as possible and start a new life with a new (Christian) name and renounce everything that's tainted with Islam. I want to follow Jesus with all my heart and obey His commands, but I'm confused about where that puts me in relation to everyone else. I was born a [member of my tribe], and I want to truly follow Jesus as a [member of my tribe]. Is that possible? Is that what Jesus wants? And if so, how can I do that?"<sup>1</sup>

How would you respond to Mahmud? Would you tell him to follow the advice he has received from one group or the other and simply join one of those groups? What issues and factors would you want to consider and help him think through? I suspect many of us have given significant thought to the challenges of spiritual growth for someone in Mahmud's position: what transformations might the Spirit of the Lord want to bring in beliefs, practices, attitudes, and relationships? These questions loom for *every* new follower of Christ in every culture and for every group of his followers. Yet the questions loom more sharply for those who come to follow Jesus while living in the midst of their Muslim birth communities.

Some efforts have been made to describe different choices being made by communities facing these issues in a Muslim context. Notable among the tools to describe such choices is the "C Spectrum," developed by John Travis

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in 1998.<sup>2</sup> This scale has been frequently cited as a point of reference to describe different types of communities of Jesus' followers in various parts of the Muslim world (and to a lesser degree, the Hindu and Buddhist worlds). While this scale has been useful in many ways, it has also allowed, or perhaps reinforced, an ongoing assumption that a group's aggregate representation of beliefs, practices and identity can all be plotted at one and the same point on a line. It seems that much confusion has arisen when facing the reality that groups of Jesus' followers (and the religious forms they embrace) are often more complex than can be represented by a single number (i.e. "C4" rather than "C5").

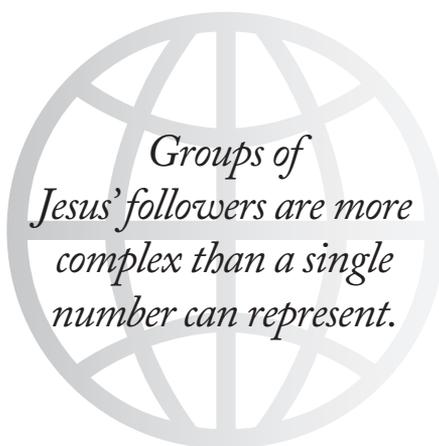
In one discussion with a fellow worker among Muslims, I realized that he and I were discussing simultaneously a number of categories that would be impossible to chart on a one-dimensional scale. Contributing to that realization was our interaction over the past few years with a wide spectrum of workers among Muslims (including some from a Muslim background) in the Bridging the Divide network ([www.btdnetwork.org](http://www.btdnetwork.org)).

One fruit of those discussions was the creation of a scale that can be used widely to describe either a group or an individual following Christ (or some other path). This multidimensional scale aims to give a more comprehensive picture than could be offered by a one-dimensional scale. By way of disclaimer, the purpose of this tool is not to judge a person or group from the outside, but to help us all better understand and discern where we ourselves and others currently stand before God and the world around us. Looking only at the "spiritual" issues is insufficient; the multifaceted and vital questions of identity call for careful consideration as well.

Admittedly, the assessment of many of the dimensions on this scale will be somewhat subjective, and any assessment

is dependent on the quality of our interaction with others. Yet the scale allows and encourages us to sharpen a process that we already tend to do intuitively and somewhat randomly. It should simply refine what we already do. It hopefully will enable us to distinguish more precisely a number of essential elements in the life and witness of a child of God or a church of God. Thus the scale can also be used as a diagnostic tool to discern areas in which the Lord might want to transform a fellowship or a person, ourselves included.

A user of the scale can offer an estimation of where a group or individual stands by assigning a value of 1 to 5 to each of eight dimensions:



1. Heart ("religious affections")
2. Beliefs (doctrine)
3. Spiritual activities
4. Lifestyle
5. Core (ego) identity
6. Social identity
7. Collective identity
8. Cultural embeddedness

Note that dimensions five through eight relate to different aspects of the identity of an individual or group, and increase our perception beyond the more typical dimensions of one to four. The labels and descriptions of three of these dimensions (core, social and collective identity) are borrowed from Tim Green,<sup>3</sup> whose recent work

along with other key mission researchers has given us a new way of viewing identity among believers in the Muslim world. He comments on his three-dimensional scale:

This framework, while over-simplified and too static to show how identity evolves over time, at least enables us to explore relationships between different layers of identity. It also sheds light on issues of 'multiple identity' within each layer which are highly relevant to believers from a Muslim background. Finally, considerations of identity may help us develop more multi-dimensional models than the 'C Spectrum' and a more nuanced discussion of insider movements.<sup>4</sup>

This article will contain just a brief look at issues of identity, utilizing some insights I have found practical and vital, on a topic very much under current consideration in sophisticated articles and books. As a simple way to summarize these eight dimensions describing a person or group, I've chosen four broader diagnostic concerns that I call the LIFE Scale:

**Lifestyle**

**Identity**

**Foundations (heart and beliefs)**

**Expression (spiritual activities)**

While for some of the eight dimensions (especially the first six) a higher number can be seen as "better" or more biblically appropriate, this is not necessarily the case with all eight dimensions. So it would be misguided to try to add all the scores and arrive at one number as a helpful descriptor.

Here is a description of the eight dimensions:

1. Heart ("religious affections"): toward Christ vs. away from Christ
  1. Enmity toward Christ and passion for false "gods"
  2. General desires away from Christ and toward other things
  3. Significantly divided loyalty

4. Real but mixed affection for Christ
5. Deep and primary love for Christ

The first and most important of the eight dimensions is the heart, or what the Puritan theologian Jonathan Edwards described as “religious affections.” Proverbs 4:23 describes the heart as foundational to everything else: “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” While the heart is the most essential of all eight dimensions, it is also the most challenging to assess, since, as the Lord reminded Samuel, “People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

Yet consideration of this dimension based on available clues is vital to a useful assessment.

This dimension addresses questions such as: What does this person or group love? What do they hate? What do they yearn for? What do they despise? Where do they look for their spiritual power? What engages their spiritual affections? To put it differently, how much do their affections and desires point *toward* Christ and his commands, and how much do their passions and longings point *away* from Him? This dimension aims to look at the foundation God laid through Moses and that Jesus reiterated as the first and greatest commandment:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. (Matt. 22:37)

## 2. Beliefs (doctrine): biblical vs. unbiblical

1. Staunchly holding to numerous unorthodox and unbiblical beliefs
2. Tentatively holding to some major unorthodox and unbiblical beliefs
3. Fuzzy and confused on some major biblical beliefs
4. Generally holding to orthodox and biblical beliefs
5. Solidly holding to orthodox and biblical beliefs

**T**he most important of the eight dimensions is the heart, or what the Puritan theologian Jonathan Edwards described as “religious affections.”

The second dimension to be considered is the person or group’s religious beliefs or doctrine. To what extent are their beliefs consistent with or contrary to biblical teaching, especially concerning the core doctrines of the Christian faith? Among those core doctrines could be listed the inspiration of the Bible, the full deity and full humanity of Christ, salvation by grace through faith, forgiveness of sin through Christ’s death, and the necessity of obedience to Christ’s commands as an expression of faith.

As the scale is applied by different individuals or groups, there could be some variation in the precise criteria used. The purpose of this dimension is not to get bogged down in specific denominational or sectarian points of doctrine, but rather to consider doctrines generally held by all believers in the Bible as God’s Word. The command Paul gave to Timothy was:

Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers. (1 Timothy 4:16)

## 3. Religious activities: to glorify Christ vs. human conformity, attempted merit or selfish gain

1. Religious activities engaged in very intentionally for conformity, merit or selfish gain
2. Religious activities generally engaged in for conformity, merit or selfish gain
3. Religious activities engaged in with little or no intentionality
4. Religious activities engaged in generally aimed at glorifying Christ
5. Religious activities engaged in consistently aimed at glorifying Christ

The third dimension to assess is religious or faith-motivated activities. What practices, expressions and

patterns of behavior does the person or group carry out for spiritual or devotional purposes such as worship? And what is the motivation behind those practices? It can be tempting to (either mentally or in print) think in terms of two lists of religious practices: one set “good” and the other “bad.” For example, one might say that praying to the true God and singing praise songs are good, while going to the mosque and reading the Qur’an are bad. However, we know from Jesus and the prophets that even the best of religious activities can be unacceptable. God warned through the prophet Amos: “I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me” (Amos 5:21). Jesus pointed out that the prayers of many Pharisees (theologically sound and addressed to the true God) were useless.

Jesus also warned:

Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven (Matthew 6:1).

Thus he made clear that the reason or motivation for a religious activity has a strong bearing on its usefulness or true value. He also taught (in this verse as well as others) that doing “religious” activities out of merely human-oriented motivation (to be seen by others or to make a positive impression on others) weighs against any true spiritual value.

The Apostle Paul applied this perspective to a variety of pastoral issues, as in Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8 through 10. The latter discourse concludes with a principle of essential motivation applicable to a wide range of activities: “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). Thus even activities such as

attending a mosque or reading the Qur'an (for the purpose of making effective connections to share the Gospel with Muslims) would be considered by many mature Christians to be useful and pleasing to God.

In this dimension, the goal is not to get muddled in dispute over whether a specific activity is right or wrong, good or bad according to the opinion of the one assessing. (This can be a separate and sometimes useful discussion.) Rather the goal is to try to discern as much as possible the *motive* behind various religious or spiritual practices. How much is the goal to glorify Christ and how much is the goal some contrary motive, whether human conformity (social habit or pressure), attempted merit, or some other selfish gain? This dimension aims to help us consider various religious activities with the kind of discerning nuance found in Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8 and 10.

#### 4. Lifestyle: increasing conformity to Christ's will vs. patterns of the world and sinful nature

1. Strongly ingrained in lifestyle patterns of the world and sinful nature
2. Tends to follow lifestyle patterns of the world and sinful nature
3. A mixture of genuine biblical and worldly/sinful lifestyle habits
4. Tends to live in conformity to Christ's will
5. Very intentionally attempts to live all of life in conformity to Christ's will

The fourth dimension to consider is an essential counterpart to the preceding three, namely lifestyle. This is the evidence of what is in the heart, the outworking of beliefs and the daily life complement of religious practice. These are the works without which faith is dead (James 2:17), the love for neighbor that evidences love for God (Matt. 22:39), and the manifestation of living as Jesus did (1 John 2:6). This is the living out of Kingdom life

patterns as described in texts such as Romans 12, Ephesians 4-6 and Matthew 5-7. This dimension seeks to measure not perfection but overriding direction. Is a person or group growing in conformity to Christ's will, or are they stuck in patterns of the attitudes, thoughts and behaviors in the world around them and their sinful nature (with the attendant ties and vulnerability to spiritual powers of darkness)?

In assessing factors of lifestyle, we need pastoral and missiological awareness of the dangers of external conformity motivated primarily by the desire to be accepted by those considered "more spiritual." This danger, known to many who grew up in conservative churches of an earlier generation,



can be lethal to new believers from a Muslim background, especially when entering into the fellowship of non-BMB (Believer from Muslim Background) churches. Tim Green notes:

The pressure to perform can be especially strong for new believers already experiencing rejection from their own community and who consequently feel their survival depends upon acceptance within the ethnic Christian community.<sup>5</sup>

The appropriate goal is not external conformity, but transformation by the renewing of the mind (Romans 12:2). The temptation to external conformity can also happen at a corporate level, where a fellowship aspires to become "a real church," as measured by factors

such as a noteworthy "church building" or a distinctive class of clergy.

#### 5. Core identity: "Who I am in my inner self" (identity privately or unconsciously experienced by the individual)

1. Identity solidly rooted in something other than following Jesus
2. Identity generally found in something other than following Jesus
3. Spiritual identity fuzzy or unclear
4. Identity generally found in personal relationship with Jesus
5. Identity solidly rooted in personal relationship with Jesus

The fifth dimension looks at Core identity:

Who I am in my inner self...[identity] privately or even unconsciously experienced by the individual.<sup>6</sup>

It addresses issues such as "Who am I (who are we), at the deepest level of my/our being?" "Who or what defines my/our existence and my/our ultimate meaning in life?" "Who or what is my/our lord?" The term "core" identity is used because this describes the deepest and most basic type of identity held by an individual or group. In a Western (individualistic) context, this identity is "a personal choice, an achieved identity."<sup>7</sup> In more collectivist contexts such as most Muslim societies, the line between core and social identity (described next) may be less clear.

#### 6. Social identity: "Who I am in relation to my group or groups"

1. No known identification with Jesus in any social group
2. Identification with Jesus in few social groups
3. Identification with Jesus in some social groups
4. Identification with Jesus in most social groups
5. Transparent identification with Jesus in all on-going social groups

The sixth dimension describes social identity: "Who I am in relation to my group or groups."<sup>8</sup> Involvement in

some social groups inherently implies a spiritual or religious dimension, with certain social assumptions (not necessarily accurate) about one's perspective toward Jesus. Other social groups carry no such attendant assumptions, so an individual may freely choose how much or little to make known their identification with Jesus in the context of that group.

Green notes: "In reality, nearly everyone today learns to juggle several social identities."<sup>9</sup> For example, a person may have a social identity as a member of their family (which in some contexts is a very strong identity marker), as a member of a local religious institution or group, as having a certain role at their work, as a member of a musical performing group, as a member of a sports fan club, and so on. In many cases, these diverse social identities are not experienced or perceived to be in significant conflict with one another. Only on occasion might the demands or expectation of one identity conflict with the expectations of another—perhaps in terms of time or effort invested. Yet when a shift in allegiance and faith commitment enters the equation, it may impact various pre-existing social identities in ways that cause tension or conflict. However, the best goal is not to escape that tension by a simple shift from one social identity to another.

In an earlier article, Green commented:

Even in terms of biblical theology, let alone sociology, it is reductionist to insist that believers must opt for only one social identity....Without believers' involvement in the world there can be no witness either. Witnessing Christians, and especially first generation witnessing Christians, inevitably have a dual social identity. They did in the early church and they do today.... Equal loyalty to both groups is not usually realistic. But to be a member of one group and simultaneously an affiliate of the other is often possible. This in fact is the solution many converts achieve: not always a comfortable solution, but survivable.<sup>10</sup>

*This highlights the challenge for those who have a core identity as a follower of Jesus yet a social identity as a Muslim.*

The tension of dual social identity is usually felt most keenly by individuals who come to faith in Christ as a lone individual (having no one else close to them at or near the same point in their faith journey). Though more mature believers may help and encourage these individuals in many ways, they have to navigate the journey of social identity adjustment somewhat alone. In cases of a group decision to follow Christ, there is usually significantly less dislocation experienced by the individuals involved, as they are bringing part of at least one of their social groups with them in following Christ.

As mentioned above, in more collectivist contexts such as most Muslim societies, the line between core and social identity is less clear than in individualistic contexts. This highlights a significant challenge faced by individuals or movements who (sometimes as relatively new followers of Christ) have a core identity as a follower of Jesus yet a social identity as a Muslim.

This social identity dimension considers the extent to which a person is known as a follower of Jesus in one or more of their social identities. It reflects the possibility that one identity or another may be dominant or that a person or group may have a hybrid or mixed social identity,<sup>11</sup> or a social identity that is unclear or inconsistent. Various contexts may give more or less space for an individual or group to function with a dual identity. The social identity dimension does not attempt to tease out all the nuances of possible mixed and hybrid identities. For our present purposes, we simply note these possible realities along with the importance of distinguishing possible differences and tensions in a person's various identities.

A score of 3 on the social identity dimension might be less than the Lord's best, or

for a certain stage in some believers' lives it might actually be the most effective posture to accomplish the Lord's purposes, allowing them growing space before they become more fully transparent with more or all of their social groups. This point may be debatable, but such a debate seems worth engaging. It seems to reflect a reality experienced by many who come to faith gradually, especially in a hostile environment. At first they reveal themselves as Christ's followers when among fellow-believers but not when they are with their Muslim relatives or neighbors, at least for a period of time. In any case, the point of this dimension is not to pass judgment on those who would best be described as a 3 (for example) but to be able to more helpfully understand and accurately describe the reality of their current situation.

#### 7. Collective identity: "My group's identity in the eyes of the world... identity as defined by the group"

1. Clearly labeled as not a group associated with Christ
2. Labeled by most as a group not associated with Christ
3. Collective identity unclear
4. Labeled by some as a group associated with Christ
5. Labeled by all as a group associated with Christ

The seventh dimension measures collective identity (group labels): "My group's identity in the eyes of the world... identity as defined by the group."<sup>12</sup> This does not address many issues of group identity, such as family, clan, club or vocational identity. Green explains:

From the moment of birth, people are labeled with a collective identity, or rather a set of collective identities. Their nationality, ethnicity, and sometimes religion are entered on their birth certificates before they make any choice for themselves. These are

ascribed identities. The more collectivist ... a culture, the more controlling are such ascribed identities, and the harder it is to change them even in adulthood.<sup>13</sup>

Collective identity is often related to, but not the same as, social identity. To distinguish collective identity from social identity, Green, quoting Kathryn Kraft, writes:

Collective identity 'is rooted in a symbolic group or a social category' and is ascribed to a person at birth as a label, while social identity is absorbed gradually by that person through actual relationships with 'significant others.'<sup>14</sup>

Kraft summarizes:

While individual (or core) identity is generally defined in terms of personality and development, and social (or relational) identity is defined in social interactions such as a person's jobs and friendships, collective identity is about the social structures and groups in which a person roots him/herself.<sup>15</sup>

Or one might rather say,

collective identity is about the social structures and groups in which a person *finds* him/ herself to be rooted (by providence or fate).

Collective identity is very difficult, or in some cases impossible, to change; it is ascribed by others, based on factors over which an individual often has no control.

In some contexts, a person's legal identity would be a part of their collective identity or their set of collective identities. For example, the Apostle Paul, when arrested by Roman soldiers, stated: "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city" (Acts 21:39). He identified himself with his ethnic identity as a Jew and his legal identity as a Roman citizen, making use of this to gain an opportunity to proclaim Christ. Later, on trial before the Sanhedrin, he used his collective identification with one Jewish sect to gain support from them over against the opposing sect. He,

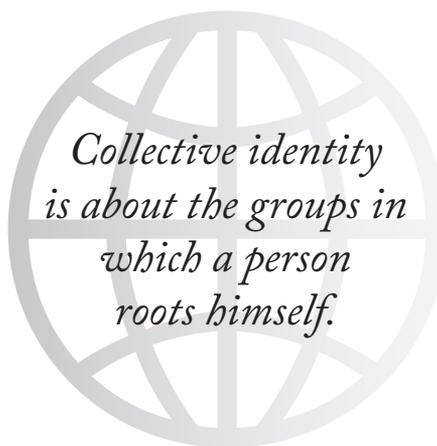
knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called

out in the Sanhedrin, 'My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead.' (Acts 23:6)

Many societies hold a shared assumption that religion and ethnicity are inseparably fused. Thus to state one's ethnicity triggers assumptions at the collective level about religious identity. For example, Bosniaks are assumed to be Muslim, Croats assumed to be Roman Catholic, and Serbs to be Serbian Orthodox. A Bosniak friend comments:

One *cannot* be a Serb and at the same time a Muslim, or a Bosniak and a Catholic. Nationality and religious affiliation are synonymous.

This can constitute a great problem for those who desire to hold religious



views different from the majority of their ethnic group. As Green observes:

Traditional societies tend to fuse collective identities of religion, ethnicity, and nationality. Therefore a person who changes one element of these is seen as betraying them all. It means 'going over to the other side' or even 'going over to the enemy's side.'<sup>16</sup>

Yet on occasion it can provide a way of avoiding unwanted conflict. Green reports:

Pathans make the same automatic linkage, and one of the tiny number of Jesus-followers among them told me how he uses this to advantage: 'If they ask me 'Are you Muslim?' I

reply, "I am Pathan," and that is sufficient.' This answer saves him from detection without having to deny Christ, perhaps the best that can be expected in a situation where 'religion' and 'ethnicity' are so strongly fused at the collective level.<sup>17</sup>

This might not be an ideal response, but it recognizes the tightrope some believers have to walk.

As already noted, a higher number on this dimension (and the next) should not be seen as "better" or more biblically appropriate. In fact, if a person or family is from a group whose collective identity is strongly Muslim (with all that that label normally entails), yet that person or family has a core identity (and perhaps social identity) as a follower of Jesus, this can be a point of interest and witness. The contrast between reality and people's assumptions can become an opportunity for God to surprise people with His amazing work of salvation. Surprised curiosity can open doors for giving a reason for the hope within: "What? You're an 'X', but you follow Jesus? How can that be?"

## 8. Cultural embeddedness (non-spiritual aspects)

1. Functioning essentially in the patterns of own birth culture
2. Functioning largely in the patterns of own birth culture
3. Evaluating many aspects of birth culture as they become aware of other cultures
4. Adopting many elements of another culture—multiple cultural functioning
5. Functioning largely in the patterns of a culture other than one's birth culture

The eighth dimension shows "cultural embeddedness," considering how much a person or group is connected with or functioning in their birth culture's patterns vs. other cultures' patterns. Some aspects of birth culture (those directly related to obedience to Christ) are considered in "Lifestyle,"

discussed above. Many other cultural factors and patterns do not inherently reflect closeness or distance from the person of Christ, yet they significantly impact a person's or group's sense of connectedness with those of their birth culture and/or some other culture(s). Jens Barnett describes one source who speaks of "cultural identity,"<sup>18</sup> and Barnett describes another person, whom he calls 'Awal,' this way:

To presuppose Awal's inner dialogue involves only Christian and Muslim voices is unhelpful. Voices associated with other cultural influences also need consideration. Firstly, from the time of his birth, Awal has internalized Arabic, tribal, and nationalist narratives as well as Islamic. Secondly, globalization has brought all manner of cultural narratives into his life and home.<sup>19</sup>

One end of the cultural embeddedness spectrum portrays life patterns commonly found in the individual's or group's birth culture. The other end describes functioning largely in the patterns of a culture *other than* one's birth culture. The middle portrays evaluating many aspects of one's birth culture as one becomes aware of other cultures and other ways of behaving and thinking. A "4" portrays simultaneous (mixed) or multiple cultural belonging, a stance commonly desired by those aiming for effective cross-cultural witness.

It would be very possible for a person or group to seriously follow Christ and remain long-term at a "1," functioning essentially in the (non-sinful) patterns of their own birth culture. Also, a person following Christ might, in some contexts, be more likely to become aware of other cultures and some positive elements of those cultures. By the same token, though, a person far from Christ could also become aware of other cultures in ways that might cause them to evaluate, change or question elements of their birth culture (a "3"). And it would be possible for both a believer and an unbeliever to come to a place of simultaneous (mixed) or

**V**oices associated with other cultural influences also need consideration ... globalization has brought all manner of cultural narratives ... (Barnett)

multiple cultural functioning, or to live more like those of a culture other than the culture of their birth. Thus a higher number on the cultural embeddedness dimension reflects greater cultural diversity, but it would not necessarily indicate greater *spiritual* maturity.

In addressing the challenge of bringing the gospel to people of diverse cultures, the Apostle Paul wrote:

To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews....To those not having the law I became like one not having the law....To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. (1 Cor. 9:20-22)

Thus cross-cultural witness will happen most effectively for those at a 4 or a 5 on the cultural embeddedness dimension. Yet very effective witness and worship could happen monoculturally for those at a 1 or 2 on this dimension.

### *Pictorial Representation: Three Examples*

These eight dimensions can be charted on a radar graph to give a picture of any given individual or group. Below are three possible examples, not in any

way intended to describe all individuals or groups which could be given the descriptor used, but showing how a specific fellowship or individual might be described.

As noted above, for the first five dimensions (heart through core identity—the top, bottom and right side of the graph), a higher number (more gray, out to the edge) is more positive (more consistent with the will of God). I consider these five to be essential indicators of spiritual health. For the three dimensions on the left side (social identity through cultural embeddedness), the different numbers are an invitation to explore and try to understand the unique situation of any given group or individual as they wrestle with the commands of Scripture and the culture(s) of their birth and current residence. Each of these categories reflects a vital issue for kingdom dynamics and growth, but each resists a simple good/bad categorization that can easily be reduced to numerical evaluation.

This believer, in Figure 1, is generally sound in doctrine, but sadly low in the other four essential indicators of spiritual health. Some would describe this person as a "carnal Christian"; others

Figure 1. A nominal Christian in the southern USA

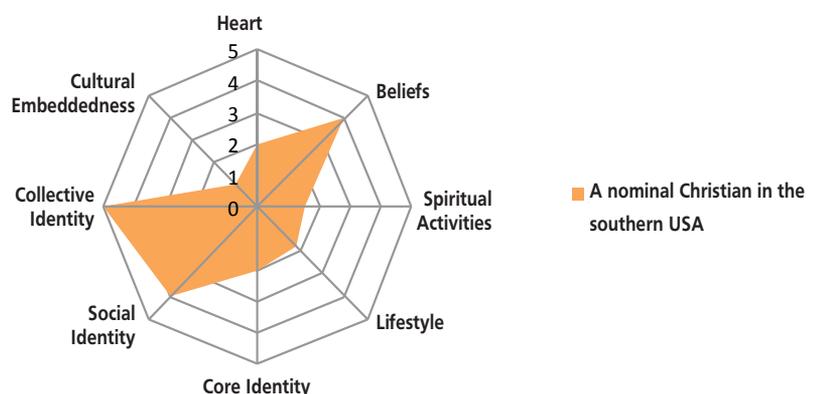
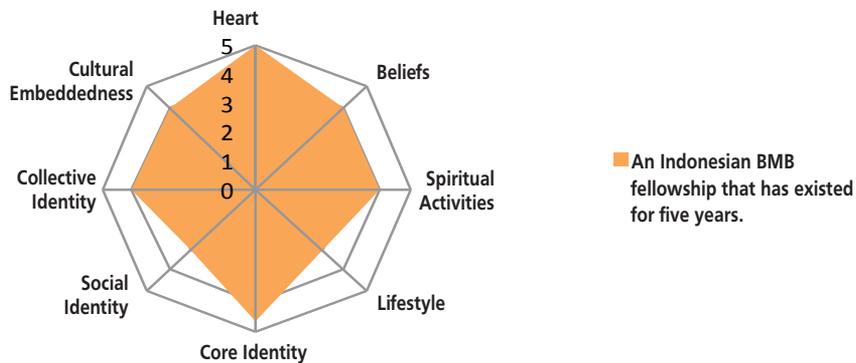


Figure 2. An Indonesian BMB fellowship that has existed for five years



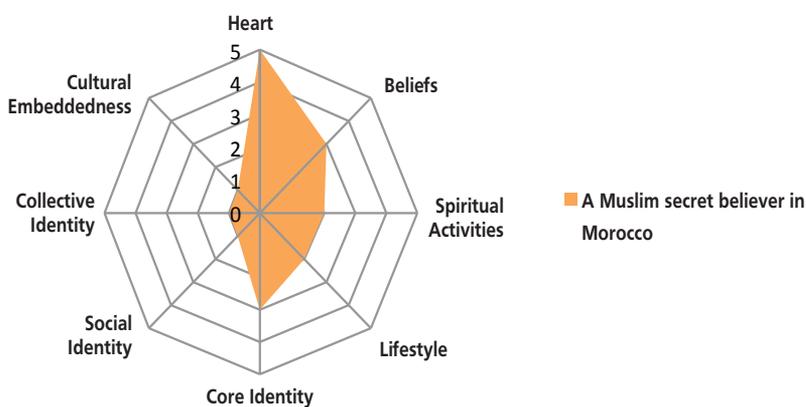
would consider it dubious that this person has true saving faith in Christ.

This fellowship of believers from a Muslim background, Figure 2, is quite strong in most of the essential indicators of spiritual health, though many members and some leaders still struggle significantly with a mixture of biblical and worldly/sinful lifestyle habits. Their fellowship (collective identity) is known by most as a group associated with Christ and they have adopted numerous elements of Indonesian church culture (a 4 on the cultural embeddedness dimension). The social identity score of 3 indicates that the

Christ is very strong, yet some major biblical doctrines are not yet clear, and many areas of life and identity are at a “low” level and in a tumultuous internal process of struggle.

From just these three examples, we can see that this model has potential to facilitate useful discussion of case studies, especially those in which followers of Christ have different evaluations of what is happening. In some cases, strong disputes have arisen among those holding differing perspectives on the cases in question. Some of the disputes have been less fruitful than they could have been, partly because of

Figure 3. A Muslim secret believer in Morocco



social identity of many members and attendees is a mixed bag.

This dear believer, Figure 3, has recently come to Christ because of a vision of Jesus. Heart affection for

misunderstandings and miscommunication. For too long, some Christians have assumed that Muslim identity (assuming collective, social and core identity to all be identical) = Islamic practice = orthodox Islamic belief. At

the same time, others have sought to describe cases where a core identity of biblical faith is paired with Islamic religious practice and social identity. Still others have encouraged greater acceptance of a mixture of Islamic and Christian beliefs, Islamic and Christian religious practices, Islamic and Christian heart attitudes, and so on. Inadequate consideration of multifaceted identity issues has undoubtedly contributed significantly to the disagreements. Hopefully the LIFE Scale proposed here can help improve on this shortcoming and increase the fruitfulness of such discussions.

### Application of the LIFE Scale to “Insider Movements”

I have intentionally chosen not to chart an example of a socio-religious “Insider Movement” of the C5 type, lest readers of one persuasion or another react emotionally (either positively or negatively) to the example. I don’t want readers to assume I’m offering an example as my verdict on all socio-religious Insider Movements. Some of my questions and concerns about Insider Movements and related concepts have been published previously.<sup>20</sup> For the purposes of this article, suffice it to say that Insider Movements and individual “insiders” could potentially have significantly different descriptions on the LIFE Scale. Also, there could be a group which one observer would describe as an “Insider Movement” while another observer might strongly reject that description. I have personally heard such discussions. Hopefully this tool can improve the quality of such interactions, at least to spotlight differences of perspective and help take the discussion to a more profitable level.

### Conclusion

The LIFE Scale will not resolve all differences or end debates about C5 and Insider Movements. Hopefully, though, it can serve as a tool to facili-

tate more fruitful discussion and help all interested parties better understand where we really disagree and where we might agree.

I hope to see more effective reaching and discipling of people from all nations come from such discussion. I hope and pray the LIFE Scale can help us move toward more biblical clarity and faithfulness, more Christlike love and acceptance, and more energy invested in the launching and encouraging of Christ-honoring lives and movements throughout the world. **IJFM**

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Mahmud is a fictitious character; this scenario is a composite of real situations and people.

<sup>2</sup> Travis, John, "The C1 to C6 Spectrum: A Practical Tool for Defining Six Types of 'Christ-centered Communities' ('C') Found in the Muslim Context," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 34/4, 1998, 407-408.

<sup>3</sup> Green, Tim, 2013, "Conversion in the Light of Identity Theories," in *Longing for Community*. David Greenlee, (ed.). Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, Kindle Locations 1288-1300.

<sup>4</sup> Green, "The Dilemma of Dual Belonging" in *Longing for Community*, Kindle Locations 1778-1781.

<sup>5</sup> Green, "Conversion," *ibid.*, Kindle Locations 1017-1019.

<sup>6</sup> Green, *ibid.*, Kindle Locations 1300, 1290-1291. I follow Green in preferring the more easily understood "core identity" over the technical term "ego-identity."

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 1348-1349.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 1300, 1289-1290.

<sup>9</sup> Green, "Dilemma," *ibid.*, Kindle Locations 1535-1537.

<sup>10</sup> Green, Tim, 2012 "Identity Issues for Ex-Muslim Christians, with Particular Reference to Marriage," *St. Francis Magazine*. August 2012, Vol 8, No 4, 471, 472.

<sup>11</sup> For more background on these terms and concepts, see the writings of Green, Barnett and Kraft, cited in the notes below.

<sup>12</sup> Green, "Conversion," in *Longing for Community*, Kindle Locations 1300, 1288-1289.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 1302-1305.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, "Dilemma," Kindle Locations 15 Kindle Locations 1326-1329, quoting Kathryn Kraft, "Community and Identity among Arabs of a Muslim Background who Choose to Follow a Christian Faith" (PhD dissertation, Bristol: University of Bristol, 2008), 156.

<sup>15</sup> Kraft, Kathryn, *Searching for Heaven in the Real World: A Sociological Discussion of Conversion in the Arab World*, Kindle Edition 98.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 1441-1443.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 1308-1311.

<sup>18</sup> Barnett, Jens, 2013, "Refusing to Choose: Multiple Belonging Among Arab Followers of Christ," in *Longing for Community*. Kindle Location 791.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 876-879.

<sup>20</sup> Waterman, L. D. 2007, "Do the Roots Affect the Fruits?" *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, Summer 2007, 24:2; Waterman, L. D., 2008, "Contextualization: A Few Basic Questions," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, April 2008; Waterman, L. D., 2011, "What is Church? From Surveying Scripture to Applying in Culture," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, October 2011.