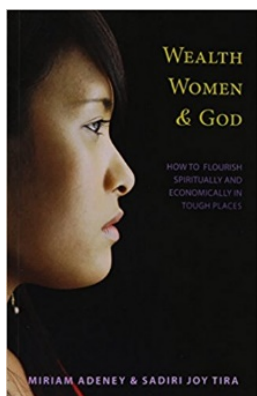


Wealth, Women & God: How to Flourish Spiritually and Economically in Tough Places

By Miriam Adeney and Sadiri Joy Tira

William Carey Library, 2016. 214 pages. ISBN: 978-0878086238.



At a conference that I attended recently someone said that there is no such thing as a voiceless person; there are only people whose voices are simply not being heard. In *Wealth, Women & God*, Miriam Adeney and Sadiri Joy Tira give migrant women who work in the Arabian Gulf a microphone and we are blessed to hear their voices. The book brings to life the lives of women interviewed as part of a project with the Global Diaspora Network of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. The authors and the stories they tell illuminate God's hand in migration movements and the powerful impact this 'human tsunami' is having on the Kingdom of God in the Arabian Gulf.

They are also well aware of the *power* of these stories—but they caution us not to read about these women for mere titillation 'nor even compassion that will burn out, but rather understanding that results in action'. To that end, a helpful aspect of the book is the Bible study discussion guide at the end of each chapter as well as a 'Where do we go from here?' discussion at the end of the book.

Once you start it, this book is hard to put down. (While I know it was a team effort, it's not hard not to spot Miriam Adeney's beautiful, lyrical prose bringing their stories to life.) The reader is drawn from the opening pages into the lives of these strong, compassionate, smart, vulnerable and determined women, many of whom come from the Philippines. Some arrived in the Gulf already Christians while others became believers during their time there. Up to 80% of the jobs in the wealthy Gulf states are filled by migrants who work in hospitals or hotels, on construction sites, or in private homes as maids and nannies. Many of these workers face harrowing circumstances: unscrupulous labour contractors, horrid living conditions, inhumane working hours and unjust and often abusive employers. Though the challenges these women face are great and the opposition fierce, this book affirms that God is building his Kingdom in the Arabian Gulf. And, in God's characteristic style, he is using the most unlikely people!

Take, for instance, Charis. She came to the Gulf as a Christian with no ministry skills or experience. Now she co-leads a network of thousands of Christians and has deeply discipled dozens. She met and married a man who was also serving in the

region and together they now focus on training Christian leaders. Their ministry, investing in the lives of Filipino, Vietnamese, Bangladeshi, Sierra Leonean and Nepali Christians is, in turn, impacting many others.

Then there's Auntie Faith, who grew up in church in the Philippines but came to know Jesus personally in the Gulf through a group of housemaids. For 35 years she has 'exercised her gifts in giving, serving, advocating, and networking to help many' (85). She shares her faith freely with everyone and takes the time to care for those most marginalized in this difficult region.

In reading the book we learn some of the history of the Gulf states and the impact of oil on the region's economy and social structures. One of my favourite lines from the book: 'While oil lights the world, lasting light streams from the glory of God', 37. We learn, too, about Islam and the religious dynamics impacting daily life. In addition, this book also serves as a 'how-to' manual of sorts for others interested in earning a living in the Gulf. Chelsea (not her real name) left the Philippines to work as a maid. Along the way she came to faith in Jesus. In living out her faith she's earned the respect of her employer and over the course of time she has become a trusted manager overseeing her employer's affairs. Chelsea encourages women to first of all prepare themselves physically and spiritually. Life is usually very difficult and the working hours extremely long. She says it's helpful to learn about Arab culture and lifestyle, learn a little Arabic, gain experience in household work, and find a mentor to disciple you while in the Gulf. Finally, she counsels, be prepared to take action if you find yourself, like many women do, in a physically or sexually abusive situation.

A particularly revealing aspect of women's lives in the region, which I had not been aware of, is that hundreds who have escaped intolerable situations take up residence in their countries' embassies, sometimes for months on end. These Filipinas, Ghanaians, Ethiopians and others have nowhere else to go. Somehow, they make it work as they spend their days and nights in buildings meant to be offices, not living quarters.

This book is so impactful that I believe it should be read by every Christian involved with, or interested in, ministry in the Arabian Gulf. *I especially encourage men to read this book* for its insight and inspiration. No matter who you are or where you are, you will be glad you did.

Reviewed by Gail Schlosser

Gail serves as the Assistant Director of The Lilius Trotter Center and an associate editor of SEEDBED. She has worked in cross-cultural ministry among Muslims for over 30 years in Los Angeles, London and Beirut as well as in other cities in the US.