

Summer Teams: What is the Point?

by Chris Ford

After eighteen months in Amman, Robert enlisted me to help with the summer team. We drove to Queen Alia Airport and I heard some of Robert's pilgrimage while we waited for the *jahiliin* (the innocent ones) to de-plane.

They were easy to spot.

We consolidated and drove into Amman. The taxi drivers wanted lots of money but Robert declined, so they took the scenic route even though it was 2 a.m. By now the meter on the taxi was about what the driver wanted in the first place.

During the next two weeks, we heard from Yoanna and Mansour about Palestine, took side trips to Jerash, sat through Arabic church and at night, I sat with my two temporary boarders and talked. We talked about boys, missions, missionaries, Arab culture, where to put your hands, where to put your feet, the length of your skirt and the correct response when someone hands you a *demi-tasse* of coffee. When it was all over, we hugged, promised to write and waved good-bye.

What was the point of all that?

I cannot speak for all the summer teamers I have met, but I can speak for one: me. As a student I was challenged by the needs of the Arab world and eventually found myself boarding a plane for Paris, France.

From Paris we made our way south to Marseille where the warm, humid air embraced me from Bonnie

Drudge's balcony. We car-pooled Sumene in someone's ancient Peugeot and I soaked up everything I saw and heard: prayer times with Brenda Grady, celebrating "Air Bear's" birthday and talking with Shaline about being a single missionary in the Arab world. French bread and bowls of *café au lait* in the morning, afternoon cross-cultural games, Arabic lessons from Bob Cox and someone snoring in the next bed are lasting memories—and this was just the orientation!

In Grenoble we watched TV with Algerian families, learned English/American/Canadian dialects and went swimming with the French – another eye opener. I began on the long road to learning about Arab politics with the demonstrations of the Lebanese students on campus. On to Morocco where we lived with language students, met Moroccan girls who taught us how to make bread and sat at Lois' feet while gleaning from her wisdom. We quizzed us about Morocco and told us about the troubles of the Muslim converts. Did I mention the melting staring, the 50° C heat and the smell of the Fez tannery in mid July?

Again, I ask, what was the point?

Going on a summer team to France and Morocco was a pivotal event for me in deciding whether or not I wanted to pursue work in and around the Arab world. I said, "Yes." Other summer teamers have made the same decision. And that is the point.