

Women's Ministry Section

Discipleship Bible Studies for MBB Women

by Annette Hall

[Editor's Note: In the 2/98 issue of *Seedbed*, we announced the coming of this study booklet. We're happy to report now that it will soon be off the press. Further information as to when and how you can order will be available from *Seedbed* as soon as the book is published.]

Several years ago, I attended a conference on evangelism of Muslim women. As a part of the program, we considered the discipleship of MBB women and found that the materials currently in use didn't meet their needs. Most MBB women are oral learners. They relate to stories about life experiences. Most of the discipleship materials available were doctrinally-based Bible studies that used single verses or short passages from many different places in the Bible to teach a doctrinal point. The literate person following these guides learns to use the Bible and learns that doctrine doesn't come from one isolated passage but is found throughout the Bible. Oral learners, however, have great difficulty following or applying the truths taught in such Bible studies. One finding from the conference stated: "*discipling can be enhanced with specially developed materials that meet the literacy level of the Muslim convert, recognizing that up to 93 percent of Muslim women in some countries are illiterate.*" A large part of the discussion centered on the need for someone to develop discipleship materials for the MBB woman. No one volunteered.

Returning to Paris and my work of discipling MBB women, I realized that the course I was using didn't touch many of the important areas of their life. For example, we were learning about God but not dealing with Folk Islam. I identified several problem areas in the lives of the women I was discipling. They didn't have a working knowledge of what sin was; the idea of forgiving others was impossible to consider, etc. As I worked with these women, I developed my own Bible studies to cover the issues as they arose.

At the same time that I was discipling these MBB women, I was providing a course on Islam and how to work with Muslims to local evangelical churches. My goal was to enable evangelicals to begin to witness to their Muslims neighbors. However, I began to worry about the discipleship process. Without years of experience, how would these evangelicals know how to recognize and deal spiritually with the various areas of the MBB's life? For example, one young MBB woman thought that there was more than one way to salvation. She was taking the easy way by believing in Jesus but she was convinced that her mother could purify herself through fasting and keeping the tenets of Islam. Another woman took off her "hand of Fatima" and put on a cross. Would the evangelical recognize this as a continuation of folk religion?

God used these situations and the conference to convince me that I should write my Bible studies for sharing with others. He had some convincing to do! I don't consider myself a writer and had not written for publication. I'm not a theologian. I was encouraged to continue by two individuals: my former area director and a retired editor from Baptist Publications. Both looked at my initial work and gave really helpful suggestions. I spent a week with the editor trying to get my beginnings into a form that others could use.

The Bible studies developed around these topics: *Folk Islam, The Church, Opposition, Being a witness for Christ, Prayer, Sin, Repentance, Fasting and Forgiveness*. As I worked with my MBB women, I found that most needed more than one study of a topic. I also learned that I needed to use Bible stories as the basis for the topic. As we read or talked through the story and then worked through the questions, the women began to understand what God was telling them to do.

I concluded each study with a personal application section. The MBB was asked several questions to help her apply the truths learned to her life.

Although I developed the Bible studies for use in discipling MBB women, I found that the members of my evangelical church benefited from them also. Many of the same issues were in their lives. I shared the studies with friends from West Africa who told me that many of those from animistic backgrounds faced the same issues. After sharing them far and wide, I decided to submit them for publication. My goal is to provide a resource that women who aren't "experts in Islam" can use for discipling MBB women. Though the studies are written, they can be easily adapted for storying with illiterate women. With some adaptation, they would be suitable for use with men also.

The Bible studies are in the publication process under the title *Producing Mature Fruit*. They should be available for purchase within a couple of months.