Daughters of Islam

*Building Bridges with Muslim Women* | By Miriam Adeney | Reviewed by Shirley L. Barron

*Daughters of Islam: Building Bridges with Muslim Women* is a wonderfully relevant book for Christians who have little knowledge of Islam or the people who subscribe to it. This book helps readers peer into the hearts of Muslim women, to perceive what they feel and think, and to understand how they live.

The author, Miriam Adeney, is an anthropologist and missiologist who teaches global and urban ministry at Seattle Pacific University. Her purpose is to educate readers about Muslim women’s lives, to offer examples of women who have come to Christ, and to shed light on strategies for reaching Muslim women. She has a wide acquaintance with case histories (many obtained herself through interviews) and ethnological sources. She wants to make this material available to Christian witnesses who encounter Muslims, whether in the United States or abroad.

The book features four chapters of case studies about Arab, Iranian, Indonesian and African women. Each contains several stories of Muslim-background women who have accepted Jesus as Lord. Interspersed with these chapters are topics important for ministry among Muslim women, information about Islam beliefs, and sections about women’s diversity, family relations, learning styles and finances.

One theme that quickly emerged was the diversity of Muslim-background women. They vary greatly in country and background, including nomadic women, village women, educated professionals, religious fundamentalists and political activists. Not all Muslim women are sequestered, and in fact, in many countries they are fairly independent and may have leadership roles. Many women see veiling as reasserting human dignity rather than limiting freedom. They may think of themselves as staunch conservators of Islam.

The women’s paths to Christ are just as varied: reading the Gospel story, seeing Jesus in dreams or visions, deciding jointly with their family, fleeing the fear of death and hell, desiring assurance of paradise and discovering Jesus’ affirmation of women. This diversity requires variety in ministry.

The stories of the 18 women from eight countries across the Muslim world were one of the strongest elements of the book. I could see into their hearts and feel much empathy with them. One thing struck me as fairly consistent: nearly all the women fought in their hearts and minds against accepting Jesus, but their experience of Islam and Allah was so condemning, distant and loveless, that they had to seek the acceptance, nearness and love of Christ.

Equally strong were the ideas for effective ministry to Muslim-background women. For instance, Adeney reveals that stories are much more effective than bare doctrinal teaching. Songs and
ballads of biblical stories and Scripture verses are also important. Drama, skits, debate and memorizing Bible passages fit into the Muslim culture, whereas “inductive” Bible study is foreign. The comparisons and contrasts between Islamic and Christian beliefs were beneficial, especially as I understood how Muslims interpret various Christian teachings.

Adeney is a gifted storyteller with a simple narrative style, and the book is user-friendly. The author distributes the case studies through the book, alternating a group of histories with sections on culture or ministry or finances. She provides much information to help build bridges with Muslims. The book succeeds in its purpose, and should be extremely useful to all Christians who have contact with Muslims.

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