

Woman to Woman . . . Hispanics Reaching Out

By M.I. Torres



A group of local women from various Hispanic churches have been travelling to a foreign land for eight years to share their faith with women in an Islamic culture. Team members change with each trip.

They minister to people, including women, by conducting prayer and sharing some gifts. The predominantly Islamic country is considered a risky region and places restrictions on any missionary or believer coming into the land. Therefore, the gifts continue to share the message long after the

team leaves. The prayer focus is an essential part of ministering as well. The women pray for God's will to be done in the land and for openness to the Word; they pray for dreams and visions.

The team leader strongly supports these trips because of the intense need that she has seen since first leading a team back in 2000. She explains that it is important for Hispanics to travel to such countries "because we are similar in many ways. We identify with them in many ways." She feels a resonance with the culture of the foreign land and the Hispanic culture. The history, language and culture of most Hispanic countries tend to parallel more with foreign lands than that of the United States of America. There is an unspoken openness to Hispanics who travel abroad. Anti-American issues do not seem to arise as frequently between the Hispanics and the Arabic people as they may between Anglos and Arabics.

Even so, she states that the differences between the cultures are very vivid saying, "It is a tremendous culture shock – it's a totally different world and the enemy's oppression is felt. You always feel like they are watching you. That's what makes sharing the gifts very difficult. You have to be extremely careful."

The team leader observes, "It is sad to see women completely covered, to the point of wearing gloves, under an intense sun. Sadness shows through their eyes. They cannot speak directly to men. While walking the streets, they have to stay behind men." Such restrictions do cause barriers for the team of women on the trips. They must take these cultural laws and norms into consideration while visiting the land.

A fellow traveler on one of the trips echoes the sentiment of women's oppression saying, "Women are definitely oppressed but still very sweet and kind and willing to learn and listen when we talk with them. It is 100% their cultural religion that oppresses them and causes a lot of sadness and fear."

A team member also shared about a missionary man they had met during her trip last year. The man told them about his vision for the land and told them about a young man he was mentoring to continue the task of sharing. She says, "It impacted me, how different it is there than here, because they really have to hide certain things. They have to be so careful there when they want to do the work of God." She uses this story to stress how important it was for her to pass out the gifts saying, "Passing out the gifts, for me, was really, really

important. The blessing that it could be for those who hear the Word of God when they feel safe to do so was important to me. It was a huge blessing for me to share the gifts.”

Though restrictions have made the team more careful and aware, it has not stopped the work that is taking place. The team leader says, “I have seen God at work in many ways.” She mentions a woman that she encountered during one of her trips. “She said to us, ‘I had a dream, and in the dream were two strangers, who were going to visit me,’ and we were right there in front of her.” The work may have to be done in a careful manner, but is still rewarding. The team leader says that the most rewarding experience for her is watching the people when they get the gifts. The team continuously prays that those who take them may see the love of God when they open them. She was also encouraged by hearing the testimony of a man who accepted the gift, and the message transformed him.

The women look forward to their trips and their work in the nation. A team member says that her group is planning on opening the trip up to their members. She hopes to get more youth involved so that they can see the differences in the cultures and also be blessed by the work God is doing.

The name and location of the discussed country and the names of the travelers have been purposely omitted in order to protect the work and identities of those travelling.