

Book to help launch Bible classes

By Margaret Miller
staff writer

A new season of Bible classes and a new book arriving in Christian bookstores coincide this year for Margaret Hess.

The well-known teacher, wife of Dr. Bartlett Hess who is senior pastor of Ward Presbyterian Church of Livonia, probably will put her newly published volume to good use in the classes beginning Sept. 15 in Livonia and Sept. 17 in Bloomfield Hills.

"Unconventional Women" is its title, and some of its central figures will work their way into the year's Bible study, which will cover the books of Joshua to I Chronicles as well as the books of Psalms and Proverbs.

"The book is based on the idea that women today are in many kinds of households, some without children, some with single parents, and have many lifestyles," explained Mrs. Hess.

"I finds biblical characters to represent each of these. One that will get a careful look in the class sessions is the little servant girl — in I Kings — who was snatched into the home of a general and demonstrates how much influence a blue-collar worker can have."

She also noted that women described in Proverbs will be discussed in the classes.

MRS. HESS, who takes her students

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through the Bible in eight years of classes, is starting this fall on the second year of the current series.

Her classes will be held in Ward Church, Six Mile and Farmington Road in Livonia, 9:30-11 a.m. Tuesdays; and in Christ Church Cranbrook, Cranbrook and Long Lake Road, 9:30-11 a.m. Thursdays.

The first session for each class will be based on the first chapter of Joshua and will be titled "How to Succeed." Study materials will be available for 50 cents a half-hour before each of the initial sessions begin.

The class format that has evolved includes small group meetings from 9:30 to 9:45 a.m. and a lecture by Mrs. Hess for the second hour. Those registering the first week may sign up for discussion groups, or they can be assigned to a group.

Child care is provided during all class sessions.

The classes have been made up of

men and women from more than 20 denominations and more than 100 churches. Last year there were nearly 500 participants each week in the Ward sanctuary.

"In the Birmingham area, the biggest accommodations we've found is for 200 participants," the teacher said.

The objective of the study, she added, is to make the Bible come alive by a study of historical and geographical backgrounds and to learn what it has to say to modern men and women.

THAT LOOK at the Bible through modern eyes has been a hallmark of Margaret Hess's books and is to be found in the new one too.

Both "Love Knows No Barriers" and "Eather: Courage in Crisis" point up the similarities between the biblical characters and women in today's world.

And that is true too for "Unconventional Women," she said.

It was written at the suggestion of Carol Streeter of Victor Press, publisher of the paperback volume, Mrs. Hess said.

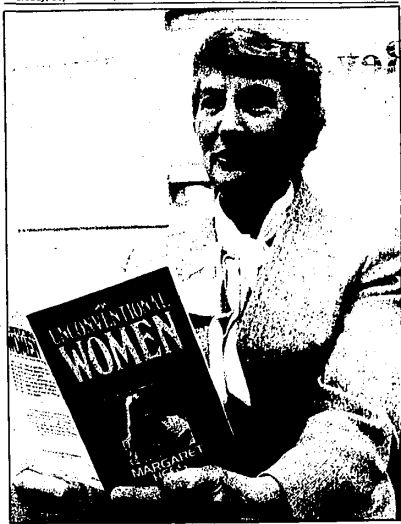
"She sent me a clipping about the different lifestyles women and families live themselves in today," she added. "We thought it would be interesting to see if this was true of biblical women too."

"And it turned out to be a very modern book, because these differing lifestyles have always been there. Each makes her own choice."

Others she includes in the new book are Deborah, "who was the leader of a nation, obviously chosen by God back when women had no status at all," and Lydia, "a single businesswoman who got a church started practically single-handed when Paul appeared."

She said she had also represented the unmarried couple lifestyle through a portrayal of the woman at the well, "whom Christ did not censure or judge."

Besides the three books on women, Mrs. Hess has co-authored with her husband two books on church organization, "How to Have a Giving Church" and "The Power of a Loving Church."



ART EMANUELE/staff photographer

Margaret Hess checks over chapters in her new book that will be used in her new series of Bible classes starting this month in Livonia and Bloomfield Hills.

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