Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

كليّة اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

October 2017

Student Summer Stories: Serving Among Their Own

Now that our second and third year students have returned after a period of three months, they tell us about their summer ministry experience, the challenges and the encouraging bits. Most of them were able to visit their home countries and serve among their people. Some, however, such as Syrian couple Rami and Rasha, had their trip impeded, but they were able to serve with the Syrian refugees in Lebanon instead. Here are a few of our students' stories. We hope that you will be encouraged, as we were, by God's work in the Arab world through them.

Eman, Egyptian, third-year female Bachelor of Theology student

This summer, I served with the same underprivileged youth I met last summer in Egypt. Because true ministry does not start from the pulpit, we have to stoop down and walk among the people. Most importantly, ministry starts from bended knees.

This year, we made an effort to pinpoint the hidden problems that the teenagers are facing. Most of these kids are distressed by evil spirits; for in Egypt, there is a lot of witchcraft. As we read God's Word, many of the kids couldn't sit still. One of them packed his things and was ready to leave. Thankfully, another kid had the grace to bring him back. We saw Satan trying to deride and belittle us in such odd ways; we had to constantly remember that God loves these kids so much.

Before me were people who hated their parents; relationships were broken. So how was I supposed to tell them that God cares for them like a father and a mother? I then heard the Lord tell me to share with these kids stories from my own life. It was hard for me, because experience has taught me that people don't always accept my vulnerability. In the end, I chose to share from my personal experiences, and the kids were touched because they related.

Prayer request: Pray for me now that I've reached my third and final year that the details of my ministry would be outlined before I leave ABTS.

Eman sharing in chapel

Rasha, Syrian, second-year female Bachelor of Theology student

My husband and I were not able to return to Syria this summer. It was saddening because we feel called to serve in our home country. Since we first came to Lebanon, we have been serving with Syrian refugee children. This summer, we had a chance to be with them at a five-day camp in Naba Al Safa. We later had another ministry with the same kids.

The good thing is that since we've known these children for a while now, we have built a good relationship with them, and they are also the children of my country. The challenge is that the children of Syria are wounded; they had fled a war and are truly in pain. How could I tell them that the Lord loves them? Whenever I sat with groups and tried to listen to their problems, the first thing they would tell me was 'If God really loved us, we wouldn't be here.' One of the girls shared her story; she said her father ended up collecting food from the garbage to support his family.

The age group I worked with (11 and 12 years) are typically school goers. In Syria, education used to be mandatory. In Lebanon, either these kids cannot enter school or the Lebanese

Staff praying for a blessed year for Second & Third-Year students, early October

schools have dropped them one or two classes. Many of these kids would whisper in my ear that they have accepted Christ but are afraid to show it.

Prayer request: Please pray for the Syrian children I am serving with that their circumstances would improve and they would be able to return to Syria within the near future. Pray for me and my family's return to Syria as well.

Sudanese, second-year male Bachelor of Theology student

When I went back to Sudan this summer, I was planning to go to Darfur by land. After I was warned about the dangers, I spent my first week in Khartoum instead. There, I met with three believers coming from Darfur. We met frequently and prayed together as I prepared them to deliver trainings in Darfur.

After that, I went to visit my family for four days in Atbara. There, three current ABTS students (including myself) organized a three-day camp for almost 120 youth. There we applied what we had learned in the youth ministry course we took with Arthur Brown.

We also conducted a two-day training workshop for the Sunday school teachers of the Catholic church of Port Sudan. In that church, we also did a camp for 350 kids and another one for 140 youth. Serving with Catholics was an enjoyable experience.

Based on a workshop we did at ABTS, we later did a Bible study/ training for youth at the Sudanese Church of Christ and the Lutheran Church of Port Sudan. There was a wonderful harmony between us and the youth, and the leaders of both churches were very happy with what we were doing.

Prayer request: I pray that the Lord would use the leaders we have appointed to send the message to the youth of Sudanese churches who are in need of solid teaching. Also, pray for my two coming years at the seminary so that I may have the strength to go on till the end.

Sudanese, third-year male Bachelor of Theology student

My summer ministry began in Atbara. Two ABTS students and I led a three-day youth camp in which we used discipleship curriculums for youth. After that, I returned to Port Sudan where I first attended the gathering of the Bible Red Sea Council, a group that organizes periodic prayers for different denominations. I gave a word about our troubled world and how local churches can have a prophetic voice through it all. I also frequently spoke on Sunday mornings at my local church and gave concentrated discipleship lessons based on the Discovery curriculum.

Moreover, I gave discipleship lessons to youth at the Lutheran Church of Port Sudan. There, I led a revival on honoring Scriptures and giving it its rightful place in our lives. The following week, I served in the "Cubs" camp for youth, which stressed the topic of having a heart like that of God. The last conference I had in Sudan was on prayer and fasting, and my last ministry was in Atbara, which was a camp for youth on the concept of justification.

Prayer request: Please pray for my ministry after graduating this summer, for I intend to start a Bible school that is connected with my local church in Sudan.

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Our residential program students use *Moodle* as the standard on-campus Learning Management System. All coursework, assignments, and electronic communication are exchanged over the Internet through *Moodle*. At the start of the year, ABTS purchases laptops and software for new students to use during their studies and in their ministries upon graduation.

In addition to your regular support to ABTS, please consider giving towards 17 laptops and software for this year's students. The total cost is almost US $12,000. Students contribute $100 each. A generous partner has already contributed $5,000 towards this cost. Would you consider donating to cover the remaining amount?

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Sudanese couple, third-year Master of Divinity students

ABTS student N. N. said of her summer ministry, "After a short period of rest, I started serving at the women and children's ministry at my local church in Sudan. I served in Sunday school, and I gave counselling sessions. Regarding the women's ministry, it was always hard to encourage women to attend the ladies meeting as they are not usually motivated to have an active presence at church. I also took part in the home visits ministry in order to make sure I communicated with my community as much as I could before I returned to Lebanon."

As for ABTS student H. N., he said, "I took part in the Bible study ministry at my church in Atbara; many came up to me saying that this is the first time they understand the biblical passages in this manner. They learned to pay attention to the hypotheses surrounding the text, its context and how it occurs in the original language. I also served in the discipleship school of my church; I trained believers to understand the concept of mission. In order to explain this, I gave an overview starting from the Law of Moses to the Great Commission in Mark 16. It is challenging because the believers we are discipling are new to the faith. However, they are experiencing the work of the Holy Spirit as they heal the sick and drive out evil spirits as in the book of Acts."

Finally, H. N. adds, "We have two small Bible Schools in Sudan that have no accreditation. They help equip men and women for ministry in their local context. These ministries have been founded and are run by ABTS graduates, and they constantly request from other ABTS graduates to teach. As such, ABTS trains the trainers in the Arab world."

Prayer requests: (N. N.) I would really appreciate it if you can pray for the completion of my theological education with excellence. Please pray that I might be able to balance between my studies and taking care of my family.

(H. N.) Please pray for me and my wife that God may give us the strength to continue our education to the end and to be a blessing among the people at ABTS and the people we serve.

Second & Third-Year Students in the classroom, early October

Students, faculty and staff during our daily devotion, mid-October