Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

كليّة اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

December 2017

Welcoming New Students in the 2017-2018 Academic Year

At the beginning of the 2017-2018 academic year, we welcomed 18 new students coming from Sudan, South Sudan, Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Algeria and Mauritania. We invite you to read about the stories of some of our new students.

Waheed, male from Sudan, Bachelor of Theology

I was born into a Christ-following family that held a family altar time weekly. My grandfather was a pastor, and my father received the same servant heart as he. As for my mother, she was a deacon at church. One day, she told my siblings and me what Christ had done for us on the cross, and then she asked if we would like Him to be our Savior. We all accepted Him that day. Before I came to Lebanon, I used to serve in the worship and praise team; I sang and played the piano. I also served with young adults.

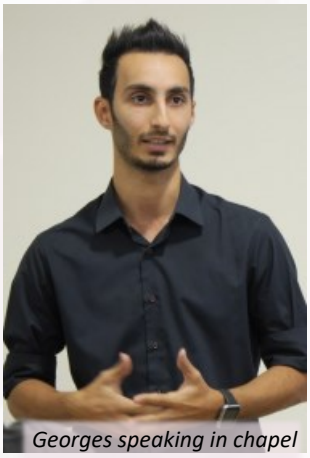
When my brother Fouad returned home in 2016 after his graduation from ABTS, I noticed the passion and the zeal for ministry that he had brought along. I noticed the tools that he had acquired for that very reason. Seeing the notable transformation in my brother drove me to wish the same thing for myself, knowing that there is a great need for ministry leaders in Sudan. I have decided to study theology mainly because, through it, I will gain a deeper understanding of the Word. I will also be able to teach sound doctrine, and I will be more informed about other religions.

My vision is to serve the people in Sudan where there is a great need for ministry leaders. I wish to be active in the ministry of home visits.

Georges, male student, Palestinian refugee in Lebanon, Bachelor of Theology

Although I grew up with a believing family, the older I got, the farther I distanced myself from my parents' faith without knowing. Then I met Satanists who gave me answers to many of my questions. I got more drawn into their group, and I joined their band; I was a lead guitarist. I later began to smoke and drink a lot; I taught my brother to do the same. At some point, I had to pause and question everything I was doing.

One night, I cried out to God, and He spoke to me in the mystery of the silence: "Go to church". I said I would go on condition that no one there would judge me for being different. When I went there, I remember pastor Andrew embracing me and telling me how he constantly prayed for me and my brother. I began to attend Bible studies, and I heard of God's strength in the Psalms. I thought I was the strong one and Christians were afraid of people like me who were on the dark side. I was wrong.



Georges speaking in chapel

After I had been responsible for destroying the lives of many young men and women, the Lord called me to build up the lives of young women and men instead. I now lead the youth meeting, which is very active. At first, we had two youths, and within a year, the number has reached more than 40 youths. One of the ways I serve in the youth meeting is using my love of music to worship the Lord in a way youth would understand.

George got enrolled in the second year of the Bachelor of Theology program after graduating with an ABTS online Certificate in Ministry in June 2017.

Abeer, female from Sudan, Bachelor of Theology

My family and I used to go to a Sudanese church in Shendi. Later, I started attending a Presbyterian church that focused more on children's ministry. I was almost 15 right then, and I began to sense a change in my life. When I became a young woman, they began to train me to teach children at church. When I am with children, I feel so happy and at ease. It is a joy

Do you feel called to sponsor the theological education and leadership formation of a student?

Contact us at information@abtslebanon.org

Abeer during chapel

to watch their faces light up with delight as I tell them a story or play a game.

My vision is to train Sunday school teachers to serve children in Sudanese churches. I also aim to train Christian education teachers to teach in the schools of Sudan. There is a deficit in the leaders who focus on children in the Sudanese churches, and it is very important that this begins to change.

Rafed, male from Syria, Certificate in Theology

As a nominal Christian, I always felt there was a chasm between me and God that I could never cross. Later on in life, the war broke; our town fell under attack, and nothing remained of our house but stones and rubble [Rafed is married with two children; his wife Hiba is also an ABTS student]. We ran away and took shelter in Wadi Al Nasara. There, we went in search for food aid packages at a church and found food for our longing hearts instead.

Rafed in class

We spent four years serving the refugees in Wadi Al Nasara as part of a relief team. After that, we came to Lebanon and found the Jesus Prince of Peace church, pastored by Fouad Kahwaji. Through this church, we have been leading a home group for two years. We also offer help to Assyrian Syrian refugees in Lebanon. We have learned to trust the Lord one day at a time as we watch His plan for our lives unveil.

In the past, I had an impulsive attitude toward evangelizing. I would just go out on the streets and speak to people. Now I know that I need theological education to organize my thinking and to gain tools to reach out for people coming from different backgrounds.

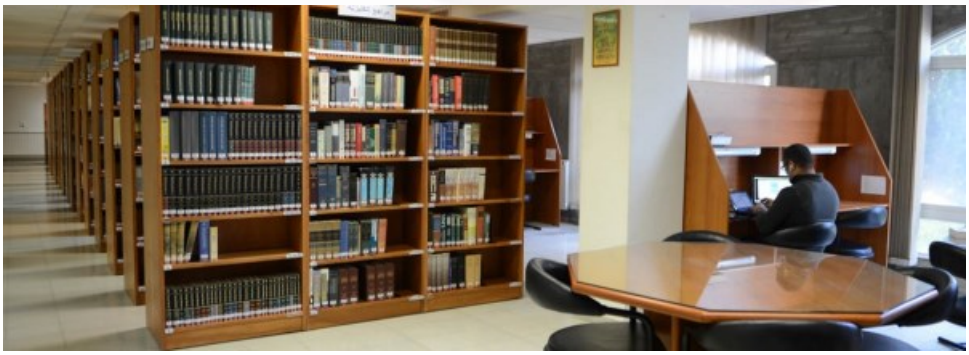
ABTS Library Receives New Books

We are very grateful to have received a shipment of books from the Theological Book Network (TBN) last month. ABTS is partnering with TBN on this project. The project aims to equip our library with a special collection that consists of advanced academic resources on Christianity and Islam from theological, historical, and multi-disciplinary perspectives, seminal works by Islamic theologians and philosophers, and texts engaging the topic of science and religion in Christianity and Islam. In return, ABTS faculty will be writing scholarly responses to these resources, such as papers, articles and book reviews. In addition they will be sponsoring lectures and seminars, and finding other ways to model academic engagements.

The shipment also includes general books donated by TBN (including commentaries), creation care books (books on ecology from a theological perspective), Culture and Worship books, and Orthodox collection books (a collection on the Eastern Orthodox church).

Alongside our collection, the TBN shipment included collections for other theological schools in Lebanon, arranged by MEATE (Middle East Association for Theological Education).

Growing our library is vital for the equipping of church leaders for the region. We are grateful for TBN and other partners who continue to invest with us in this effort.



A New Season for ABTS' Development and Partner Relations Department (DPR)

Every institution goes through different seasons. At the start of 2018, ABTS's DPR Department is going through a change in season. Wissam al-Saliby, who has built the DPR team and led it for the past five years, is following God's call to serve Him in a different capacity. It is always sad to lose a key family member. However, we always maintain that our staff's loyalty should never be to ABTS. Our loyalty is to the Supreme. And when He calls one of us to a different assignment, we all stand with them and support them. So, in this spirit, we are thrilled for what God has called Wissam to do in this next season. We are very grateful for his crucial contributions to ABTS, and we wish him well in his new assignment as he obeys God's call on his life.

Succeeding Wissam in leading DPR will be Loulwa, whom God has sent us for this new season. Loulwa is a gifted individual who is a perfect match for this challenging assignment. I want to take this opportunity to welcome Loulwa to our team. You will enjoy meeting her and corresponding with her. Loulwa will be serving alongside our highly competent DPR team. In the section below, we would like to share with you about Wissam's new role, and we want to introduce to you our DPR team. Please keep Wissam and the DPR team in your prayers during this transition time.

Elie Haddad, ABTS President

Wissam al-Saliby

Wissam joined ABTS in February 2013 as Development and Partner Relations (DPR) Manager. In this role, Wissam sought to communicate God's amazing work in the Middle East and North Africa, the equipping of future church leaders at ABTS, and the ministries and calling of students and graduates.

Wissam shares: "The five years or so at ABTS have been very formative at the professional and spiritual levels. I am grateful for how ABTS, under the leadership of Elie Haddad, has shaped who I am in Christ and how I view my role in His Kingdom. The most important takeaway is the relationship with the students – now graduates – whom God called to serve Him, bring Him glory, and reconcile people with Him. It's amazing to see God at work through the people He called to serve Him. Another 'major takeaway' from ABTS is meeting my wife, Ashley, in March 2014 when she visited with her church during their vision trip to Lebanon. Today, Ashley and I are blessed with a baby girl, Nour."

In 2006, Wissam had graduated with a Master's in International Law. Prior to joining ABTS, he was working on a project promoting the protection of civilians in armed conflict. In January 2018, Wissam and his family will move to Geneva, Switzerland, where Wissam will become the Advocacy Officer of the World Evangelical Alliance. In this newly created position, Wissam will be using his human rights education to strengthen the voice of national evangelical alliances and local denominations at the United Nations. Moreover, he will help them to engage with human rights mechanisms and institutions in Geneva, especially on issues of freedom of belief and the protection of minorities.

Loulwa El Maalouf

Born and raised in a Christian family that daily gathered to read the Bible, Loulwa grew up aware of God's presence and the need for a savior. Consequently, she asked Jesus to reign in her life at a young age. In 2013, Loulwa graduated with a Master of Science in Pure Mathematics. Flash forward to 2017! Loulwa shares:

"I always wanted to serve God on a big scale. I currently lead a life group at my church. In 2015, I left my job at the Port of Beirut because I wanted more time to serve Him. I took on a teaching job and tried helping as much as I could at my church. In September 2017, when the time came to renew my contract, I decided to wait and see if God has a different plan. That's when my friend told me about the job opening at ABTS. And I applied. I would like to see God glorified in everything I do. Specifically, I am looking forward to helping ABTS train a multiple of leaders for the Arab Church. I am enjoying learning so many new things on so many different levels. Furthermore, I am glad to be in a place with professional staff who have high ethics and are all working for the same goal." At home, Loulwa enjoys cooking, especially pumpkin kibbeh, stuffed vine leaves and anything her grandmother makes.

Christina Khamis

Born in 1993 and raised by Christian godly parents, Christina discovered at the age of thirteen that she had to accept Jesus as her own savior and start a personal relationship with him. Since then, "it has not been a full-force uphill ride," she says, but by God's grace, "I have been able to grow, to know Him better and to seek and obey Him day by day."

Christina majored in advertising and public relations. She graduated in the summer of 2014 and saw a post on Facebook that ABTS needed a 'Marketing and Events Coordinator', so she applied for the job thinking that it would be a great experience. "And it was!" she says, "Working at ABTS is a privilege. The work environment is challenging, exciting, collaborative and feels like family. It is also a chance to witness closely how God is working in our Middle East and the entire Arab world."

In June 2017, Christina moved to the Development and Partner Relations department as the Media and Partner Relations Officer. She enjoys photography, travel, singing as well as watching series.

Teresa Sfeir

Teresa heard about Christ all throughout her school years at the College of the Constant Light House. She surrendered her life to Him in ninth grade. Later in life, she worked for five years as a textbook editor at a publishing house. She shares:

> "Although I loved my job, there was a constant longing to serve the Lord more directly. One day, after I had prayed fervently, I stumbled upon a Facebook post that described a job vacancy at ABTS; there, I could serve the Lord while using my love of writing. Although it first felt like venturing into the unknown, I trusted the Lord's hand to lead me where I should be. I began working at ABTS on May 16, 2016, and I am grateful for all the wonderful people I have met and the many things I have learnt. Moreover, it is an honor to know and to write about God's work in the Arab world and ABTS's vital role in making it happen. It is always a joy when students share stories of God's faithfulness and kindness, stories of His direct and indirect provision, stories of the fruit they bear as they take on their roles as leaders of the church."

Teresa submitted her master's thesis a while ago, and she will soon get her Master's degree in English Literature. Aside from writing, she enjoys drawing and working with children.

Finally, the DPR team is aided by **Roula El Azzi**, the President's Executive Assistant, who helps maintain our donor database. Roula joined ABTS in March 2016, after working many years in a human resources development project in the Lebanese public sector.

Please pray that we may have a smooth transition over the next few months, that we may continue to tell about God's amazing work in the region and that we may be faithful servants to our Lord.

Wishing you and your families a Merry Christmas and joyful celebrations of our King's birth!