Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

كليّة اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

January 2018

Together We Walk this Road: ABTS Couples Share Their Stories

In this month's newsletter, we would like to highlight the stories of some of our married students, their life on campus, what they enjoy and what they find challenging. You will also find their prayer requests as a family.

Nason (female) and Makki (male), Sudanese couple, Diploma and Bachelor of Theology (respectively)

According to Nason, "We have been married for four years, and we have one little boy called Nelson. Nelson is two years old. We met back at my local church in Sudan. He used to teach me at Sunday school, and he was a close friend to the family." According to Makki, "One of my church leaders encouraged me to finish my higher education, get married and pursue a degree in theology. After Nason and I got married, I heard of ABTS through a Sudanese ABTS graduate."

The good thing about studying together, Nason says, "is that both of us benefit academically and spiritually. Now that we are both receiving academic training, we can help each other more in our future ministry. We have also acquired better ways to raise Nelson. We took a course about child rearing, and we learned about the different rearing methods we would use at each child development stage. The best part is we are together in everything." She then adds, "One challenge is being away from our extended family in Sudan. At first, it was hard; we have never been this far away from home as a married couple. It was hard to get accustomed to our new surroundings. Sometimes there are challenges in time management – how to find time for both, family and studying, but we are glad for the opportunity to be here at ABTS."

Makki and Nason with their son, Nelson

Nason finally asks, "Pray that the Lord would help us in studying and in ministry. May the Lord also be with my husband Makki who is on his way to Sudan to renew his passport during the Christmas break."

Makki arrived safely from Khartoum after successfully renewing his passport. Although Makki could not spend the Christmas vacation with his family, he seized the opportunity to put up a Christmas event for the children of his local church in Sudan.

Rafed (male) and Hiba (female), Syrian couple, Certificate in Theology (both)

According to Rafed, "We have been married for 16 years and a half. We have a daughter called Milia (twelve years old) and a son called Shadi (nine years old). I have known Hiba since we were children. I had been away from my hometown for ten years. When I came back for a visit, I found out that she had suddenly grown up into a young lady."

Rafed and Hiba

He moves on to say, "Our decision to come to ABTS was based on a calling. For a long while, I had a latent desire to study at ABTS. One day, Hiba and I were having a conversation after having given up on our plan to immigrate to Canada, and I suggested theological training. We then prayed about it, and the Lord gave us peace." Hiba adds, "It is very good that our ministry will be together. People feel more comfortable during home visits when you visit them as a couple or as a family."

Rafed then talks about his family, "There is something that sets us apart as a family; we got used to undergoing extraordinary circumstances – especially back in Syria. Back then, Hiba and I both had jobs, so our kids learned to be independent. This helped us a lot at ABTS." Hiba adds, "Milia is now the first in her class!"

Rafed recommends one thing to couples who would like to come to ABTS, "If they cannot help one another as a couple,

then it is better that they do not come to ABTS. When you are studying, you shouldn't be a man and a woman; you should really live as one. There aren't certain roles we should stick to depending on our genders." Hiba lightheartedly adds, "Whoever is free will cook – Sometimes single female students tell me 'I am alone, and I can barely finish my studies. How can you manage with all of the other responsibilities that you have?' The Lord has given us grace; it isn't everywhere in the Middle East that you find a husband ready to help his wife around the house."

Finally, Rafed asks, "Whenever I pray, I like to pray for peace. All families are in need of peace. People may need food, a job, money or health, but if all these are present without peace, it doesn't mean anything. Join us in prayer for peace in our families; pray for peace at ABTS; pray for peace in the midst of cultural diversity."

H (male) and N (female), Sudanese couple, Master of Divinity (both)

N recounts her journey with H, "We have been married for eight years now, and we have two beautiful daughters aged three and five. We first met in Sudan ten years ago. We fell in love and decided to walk this journey of life together. Ever since, we have been serving in our local church in Sudan teaching the word of God to our congregation (youth, women, and children). As we got more involved in ministry, we felt a deep need to get more equipped and qualified, to be able to teach the word of God in a proper way. Then a relative of ours, who is an ABTS graduate, suggested that we study theology, and he introduced us to ABTS."

H describes the good things about studying as a family, "I think studying together as a couple has helped us to focus on our education more. Because we are together, we encourage one another to move forward in our studies. It is a chance for both of us to be shaped mentally and communally. Moreover, the seminary takes care of our kids' school costs; this has been an immense help."

As to the challenges, N says, "We faced language and cultural difficulties. It took us a while to get used to the weather, Lebanese food and life style, but the good thing is that none of us had to do it alone. On the other hand, studying has also been a big challenge with two little children, especially that we are both doing the MDiv program (Master of Divinity). Many times, it seemed impossible to finish what we started. When the kids got sick and stayed home, we had to miss classes or delay work to help them get through that experience. It crossed our minds several times to quit and go back to our country, but the calling of God was so clear and urged us to finish."

Finally, H and N would like you to pray for the period after their graduation this June. H asks, "Please pray that we would find a good place to stay, good schools for our kids and that the Lord would open doors for ministry in which we can help the local church to do its missional work in society." N also adds, "We would like you to join us in prayer that we may fulfill all academic requirements. Also, pray that we may have a clearer vision for our ministry back home, despite all that is happening in North Sudan."

Would you consider sponsoring a student's child? $6,000 per child per year will provide room and board, and age-appropriate schooling. For more information, contact us on information@abtslebanon.org

Christmas for Our Students

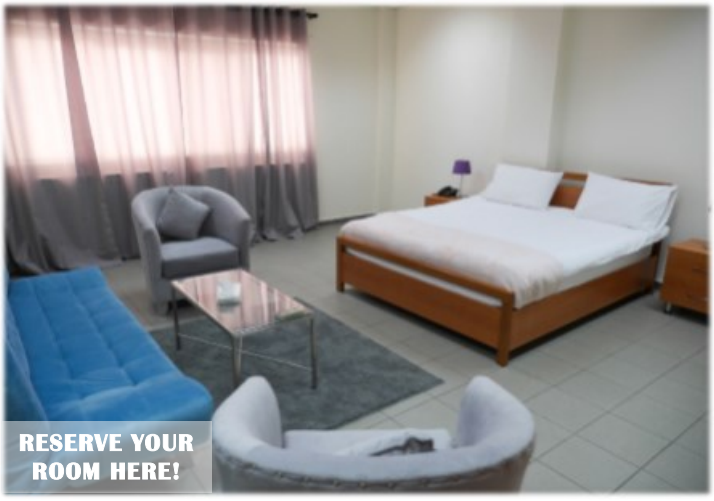
This Christmas was an eventful time for ABTS students. On Friday, December 22, our residential students prepared a special program in which ABTS staff and faculty took part. The program included fun games, Christmas songs led by the student worship and praise team, a gift exchange, and finally, lunch. During the Christmas vacation (which lasted from December 23, 2017 until January 7, 2018), members of ABTS Faculty invited the students over to their houses on separate occasions. It was a great opportunity to spend time with the students, to make them feel loved and less homesick. Last but not least, ABTS children also had their share in the festivities. During the Christmas break, each child received a pair of shoes, an item of clothing and a toy for a gift. All in all, despite the winter cold, this period was filled with joy and warmth as we celebrated the time our Savior came to earth.

What's New at Moore Conference Center & Guesthouse

Yaacoub, Jubran, Melissa, Fadi and Miko – members of our amazing MCC team, led by our Facilities Manager, Fadi Salamoun

Our modern conference and meeting facilities were built in 2008. Two years ago, ABTS moved its offices and classrooms in order to create more space for our Moore Conference Center (MCC) and to add more accommodation facilities. The main purpose was to generate additional income that will increase our proceeds to support our educational programs to train leaders for the Arab world.

Today, along with helping our mission, MCC offers excellent service and typical Lebanese hospitality for our guests. We also aim to serve different church conferences and events, where people come to a location on the hills overlooking Beirut and the Mediterranean Sea to take time and enjoy fellowship with God and one another. Moreover, the new renovation has given us the opportunity to host larger groups such as MEC (Middle East Consultation) attendees who come from Lebanon and abroad to be equipped to respond in prophetic and Christ-like ways to the many challenges facing Christians and Muslims in and beyond the Middle East. Other groups that MCC is serving include groups from World Vision, The Bible Society, Near East Organization and many more.



Did you know that we launched our new website last month?
Visit us at abtslebanon.org

For more information on our guesthouse capacities and group rates call us on +961 04 400250 or email us on information@abtslebanon.org