Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

كليّة اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

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We Will See You in the Morning, our Beloved Ghassan Khalaf

We have heard many times how God equips the called and not the other way around. We have read so many times about Jesus calling fishermen to become fishers of men. We have read how God raised David from a shepherd to a King, how He raised Joseph from a slave to the Master of all Egypt only second to Pharaoh, how He raised Esther from an exiled orphan to a queen. You see, God is always at work for the glory of His name. Whether in the Old or in the New Testament, whether in the past or in the present, whether in the East or in the West, He is working in the lives of people whose hearts are humble and ready. The Arab world is not excluded from God's work and plan, and Ghassan Khalaf was one of these men.

As we say goodbye to Dr. Khalaf, we remember how the Lord Jesus was always at the center of his life. We remember God's work in this prominent Arab Church leader who gave his life for the glory of the One who saved him.

Ghassan Khalaf was a man after God's own heart. He was a dedicated family man, a faithful and loving husband, father, and grandfather. But his first love was always for Jesus whom he never ceased adoring and worshiping. He was very passionate about the Church. He pastored, equipped pastors, mentored and cared for pastors all of his adult life. He fell in love with Scripture at a young age. He was a renowned Bible scholar. He never stopped studying the word of God and never stopped allowing it to shape him.

His name is closely connected with ABTS. He is an ABTS graduate, taught at ABTS for decades, and was ABTS President for fifteen years. Hundreds of ABTS graduates consider him their spiritual father, mentor, and a model for life and ministry. The Church in Lebanon and the Arab world lost a hero of the faith. We mourn his loss but celebrate God's work in and through his life and his impact on the ministry of ABTS and its graduates.

Both his family and ABTS were showered with messages, emails, phone calls and visits of condolences, from all around the Arab world and beyond. So many people have been touched by the life of such a faithful servant of Christ. They all spoke of how he loved the Lord and walked with Him, how humble he was and a true servant leader. Even though he reached high levels of academic competence, he always had a pastor's heart. So many shared how he empowered and encouraged them as young leaders.

We praise the Lord who allowed us the privilege of being part of Dr. Khalaf's life, and we pray that He would raise up many more Ghassan Khalafs for His glory in the Arab world!

Read "My Friend Ghassan, A Lebanese Story" , contributed by Dr. David King who served as the first Dean of Students at ABTS.

A celebration of the work of God in the life of Ghassan Khalaf will be held at ABTS in October 2018.

A Heart for the Kurdish People

Kurdish Syrian Nihad Hassan was part of the first cohort of ABTS Online graduates in 2017. His ministry has been growing noticeably within the past five years. Recently, he was ordained as a pastor during the annual conference of the Abundant Life Church in Beirut. We met up with Nihad, who was very happy to share what God is doing through the Kurdish Syrian ministry in Lebanon and the region.

> *I have been leading a Kurdish service in Burj Hammoud for five years. I was officially ordained as pastor last month. We started with 12 Kurdish people, and now we are around 300. Some saw visions and dreams. Some experienced God's miraculous healing. God revealed Himself to them in amazing ways. A considerable community of Kurdish Syrians in Lebanon cannot communicate in Arabic. We share Christ with them in their own heart language.*

> *We hold the usual church services and discipleship meetings every Monday in the Horizons International building. We have recently been placing a stronger emphasis on discipleship as many people from our assembly leave Lebanon. They either return to their country or emigrate to the West. We want to make sure they have a strong biblical foundation as they go on to serve in a different part of the world.*

One specific story that Nihad shared with us highlights how the Lord of yesterday is still the same today.

> *While leading a series on why God allows suffering – a question many Syrians have asked in anguish during the past few years – one lady asked me and my wife to pray for her nephew who was dying from brain injury. The Lord answered our prayer, and the boy was healed without the need for a surgery. Soon after, the woman accepted Christ upon experiencing His love for her. She is still learning to read and write, yet she often leads home groups with the help of her daughter who reads biblical passages aloud. She and her husband will soon get baptized!*

ABTS representatives were present during Nihad's ordination. Participants commended Nihad's fatherly heart for the Kurdish people. He aches for them and ignores the danger as he goes off to offer support. His faithfulness and commitment to the ministry tell of a man who has experienced God's unchanging love. Just like Paul, he reiterates the sentiment towards his people, "For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh (Romans 9:3 NASB)."

Nihad during his ordination

Oftentimes Nihad visited his "kinsmen" in Syria during the war. Recently, however, certain security risks have hindered his travels to Syria.

> *In the past few years, I have frequently visited Syrian towns to encourage the believers. We, a delegated mission team from the Kurdish service, visited the town of Kobane twice after the 2014 battle. Many were widowed and orphaned. Many had slept in goat sheds in search for shelter. We distributed food supplies and shared Christ. The funding was scarce, however, so our work there was limited. I remember a Russian atheistic journalist saw our team holding hands in prayer. He later wrote an article titled 'It Seems Their God Will Answer This Time.'*

Nihad lifting up Kobane and its people in prayer!

Finally, we leave you with Nihad's hopes and petitions. Let us lift Him up in prayer – with one accord – so that God's name may continue to be glorified among the Kurds.

> *We are praying that God would send the needed resources to carry out the work, both human and material. We need full-time workers who genuinely desire to support this ministry. We would then be able to reach different parts of Lebanon such as Zahle, Sidon, Tripoli, or wherever there is a population of Kurds. It is also on my heart to go to Iraqi Kurdistan along with therapists who can help those who were once held captive by ISIS.*

During a Kurdish service in Burj Hammoud

One key challenge facing Nihad and other Kurdish believers is that we live in sectarian countries where religion plays a big role in the social structure. For example, all issues of personal status (such as marriage, divorce, funerals, adoption, inheritance, etc.) are the responsibility of the respective spiritual courts. For a leader like Nihad, without changing the registration of his religion on record, he will not be able to have the legal authority to perform weddings and funerals. Changing his religion would offend the community that he wants to reach and would create more inter-community tension and alienation. These are some of the societal pressures that the Kurdish community continually faces as they want to live out their new-found faith.

A Wealth of Knowledge: Our ABTS Library

Walking towards the Moore Conference Center, you regularly meet our students going through a glass door between two Cedar trees. This is the entrance to the Finlay Graham Memorial Library, named after our founder and first president. Our library is like a heart pumping to support our curriculum and provide resources for local Church leaders. During this time of year, our residential students are off to serve their communities, so the library mainly caters to the local community and pastors. Its pulse slows down, resting, before the beginning of a new academic year. With the return of our second-and-third-year students in September, however, its pace increases once more, when the darkness of the night is pierced by a light coming from inside the glass door.

Passing through the Library, you notice two main divisions: one for English resources and the other for those in Arabic. Each of these divisions is split into two main subdivisions, *Reference* and *General*. Deeper inside the Library, you can find our mobile shelving units which help make use of our limited space, keeping books accessible to readers. In total, there are currently 28,342 books and 1,168 periodicals. Most of our books are Christian (Missiology, Christian Theology, Apologetics, Bible commentaries, dictionaries and concordances, etc.). Other topics include Islamic Studies, Philosophy, Psychology, Social Sciences, Literature, Art, Music, Languages, Geography and History. We also have online resources that are available to our residential and online students.

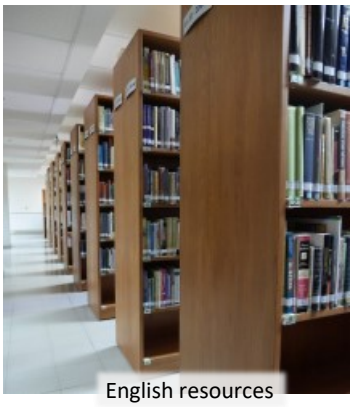
28,342 books and 1,168 periodicals are serving to equip Church leaders.

What makes our Library relevant to the Arab world is our local writing and translation projects that make resources accessible and contextualized to the Arab reader. This is much needed due to the scarcity of Arabic Christian publications. Recent translations include *Hermeneutical Spiral* by Grant Osbourne and *An Introduction to the New Testament* by David A deSilva. We are also in the process of publishing books in English that contribute to the world of Missiology from a Middle Eastern perspective. This includes *The Missiology behind the Story: A Voice from the Arab World* (working title).

We rely on research to help our students develop critical thinking and gain skills to engage their communities with the gospel. The glass door between the two Cedar trees plays a vital role in offering these research opportunities.

Students studying in the library

Our mobile shelves


English resources

Pray with Us: Prayer Requests from Our Graduates

2018 Online graduate from Yemen Please pray that the war would end in my country Yemen and peace would prevail. Pray that all Yeminis, disregarding their political or religious affiliations, would sit together on the same table to negotiate. Pray that God's church there may be a lighthouse that shines upon all Yeminis. Pray that He may use me in His Yemeni church and that He might grant me the needed strength, wisdom, love and blessing for that purpose. Pray that my family might believe in Christ; He is able to do all things.

Zineb, 2018 Online graduate from Morocco Please pray that I might apply all that I learned through the ABTS online courses throughout these two past years, and pray that I might have the opportunity to study more in the future.

Dani, 2018 Online graduate from Lebanon Please pray that God may grant me the strength and guidance to put everything I learned at ABTS Online to practice. Otherwise, my toil would be in vain.

Please pray for the paperwork and visas of our new students.

2004 Bachelor of Theology graduate from Tunis Please pray for the members of my church to be unified and rooted in the faith; praise the Lord we started with one family, and now sixteen families attend. Tunisian churches from different denominations will gather soon for an event targeting the unity of churches in Tunisia. Lift up this event in prayer.

2014 Bachelor of Theology graduate from Algeria I ask you to pray that the Lord would continue to use my ministry in Algeria. I am a local missionary, and I lead discipleship schools that are run by my local church (located in a Berber area).

Mary, 2004 Bachelor of Theology graduate from South Sudan Our prayer request is for us to reach everyone in South Sudan. Moreover, many homes lack peace; we have many divorces. Oftentimes a couple with children choose to dismantle the family for no good reason. As a group of women ministry workers, we would like to build peace within a family unit. We want to raise awareness on how a family can keep a peaceful atmosphere at home. This cannot happen if Jesus Christ is not at the center of the home.

Fouad, 2016 Bachelor of Theology graduate from Sudan Please pray that God would provide the needed resources to buy a land where we can build a place for our center in Omdurman. We have already begun to save up, but our resources are limited. Also, pray that we would be allowed to register the center as an official church. Finally, I ask you to pray for me that God would give me the wisdom to lead the people and that we would all have one Kingdom mindset.

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