Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

كليّة اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

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Be Thou My Vision: Stories from Some of Our New Students

A comfort zone is a nice place to be, but nothing grows there. At some point, God begins to stretch our hearts to the extent where we are indifferent to our stability, and we relinquish control. This has been the story of our students over the years in their response to Christ's "Follow me." On their way, they stop at our seminary seeking the needed transformation into Arab Church leaders for their lifelong visions. Here, we present you with some of our new students' stories and their visions.

Youssef
Sudan

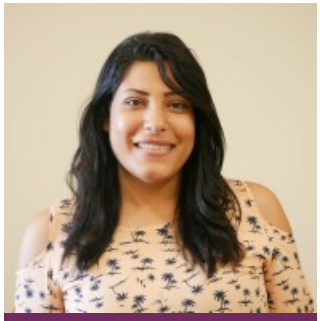
Vision: I aim to form a center that works in various ways to minister to the people of Sudan. Aside from the ministry center, I aim to plant churches in Sudan.

Testimony: One day in 1996, a Bible exhibition (the first to be held in our state) had an evening ministry. They spoke about judgement in the last days and about God's justice. The words moved me, so I gave my life to Christ crowning Him King over my life. My outlook on God's dealings changed. I no longer attempted to work my way up to Him because I realized the extent of free salvation that was offered to all humans by God. I only had to believe, and my life journey with Christ began.

Elissar
Lebanon

Vision: My vision is to deliver the Gospel to every woman of my community who is oblivious to God's love and her value in Him. I also long to see the children of my community being transformed into the image of Christ, becoming a light within their homes.

Testimony: I did not grow up in a Christian home. Christ came to me while I was at the bottom of a deep pit. I was caught in drug addiction and immoral sin, but I refused to view myself as a sinner. I was better than the rest, I thought. It wasn't my fault. It was the result of what others had done to me. Despite my stubbornness, the God of the Impossible came into my heart right after I heard the Gospel. I asked Him to reign over my heart, and He changed me. He made me a new creation, and I experienced His great love that surpasses understanding. Even now, I still cannot comprehend its vastness.



Demiana
Egypt

Vision: My vision is to serve the young adults of my local church. I also aim to serve children through the Sunday school ministry. I hope to see the biggest number of children coming to Christ and accepting him as a personal Savior.

Testimony: I grew up in a Christ-following family. I believed in Christ and accepted Him as Savior very early in my childhood, and I consider that a privilege. Almost twenty years ago, the first evangelical church was established in my area. The meetings started in one of my relative's houses. I would regularly attend before the first church building appeared in the area. I continued to attend regularly after that, and I soon began serving there.

"To deliver the Gospel to every woman of my community"

Save the date!

Middle East Consultation 2019 titled
'Thinking Biblically about Muslims, Muhammad, and the Qur'an: Practical Implications for the Church Today'
will be held from 17 to 21 June.
To learn more, click here.

Amin
Sudan

Vision: My vision is to spread the Gospel in Sudan in all ways attainable. I would like to start an office for this purpose, that many provinces in Sudan may know Christ.

Testimony: I only accepted Christ after I felt a Power drawing me towards Him. I heard Him whisper to my heart, but I was stubborn and disobedient despite getting into painful accidents such as almost drowning in the sea and my room being set on fire while I slept. God's providence always sustained me and preserved me, yet I continued in my disobedient ways. The inexplicable accidents continued as I lived my life away from God. In 2012, I saw in a vision that a man threatened to kill me. The next morning, I got into a deadly accident, yet God's providence saved my life once more. During one church celebration, God spoke to my heart in a still, small voice asking me to come to Him. That moment, I took the Lord Jesus as a personal Lord and Savior of my life. I then took discipleship lessons and got baptized on December 25, 2012. Since then, I have been witnessing God's miraculous workings.

"In 2012, I saw in a vision that a man threatened to kill me. The next morning, I got into a deadly accident, yet God's providence saved my life once more."

Zeinab
Sudan

Vision: My vision is to serve God through Sunday school and to develop family-focused ministries in Sudan.

Testimony: In 2016, the Lord spoke to me at a church service. The preacher talked about how we should be at peace with God and ourselves through God's Word, which says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind." It meant so much to me; I gave my life to Christ fully on that day. It was then that I realized what was lacking. My relationship with God was incomplete, and that was why I had felt the lack of peace before. Since then, I love the Lord with all my heart, and that is why I feel joy and peace.

Niyazi
Sudan

Vision: My vision is to see the Sudanese church growing, not only on the spiritual level, but also on the academic and technological levels. I want to see all denominations in Sudan walking in unity towards fulfilling God's purposes for the Church in the country.

Testimony: One day in 2012, I heard my mother tell my siblings, "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." The Lord had shown me a vision in my sleep the night before. After I heard my mother's words, I came in and declared that the Lord Jesus is my Savior. My mom was so overjoyed she even told the neighbors that her son had been lost and he was found. The next Sunday, I stood before the whole assembly, and I professed my faith in Jesus. In Him, I found fulfillment. I know I would not have gained salvation without His grace and His work on the cross.

Safia
Egypt

Vision: My vision is to reach out to the biggest number of people and help them to know Christ. I aim to share the Good News of Christ.

Testimony: I wasn't born to a Christ following family. All I knew about God was through my grandmother whom I dearly loved. When she died, my faith died too. I soon found myself going down a dark path, and I became a Satanist. For a long time, I enjoyed the power it gave me over others, and my desire to hurt them was unquenchable. Then Christ appeared to me just as I was about to execute a plan I had devised against one of His children. He said that no one could take His child away from Him, and He said that I, too, would become His. Shortly after, I heard His voice while I was in the metro. He led me to a church where I was offered a Bible. I started out on a five-year-long quest that ended with a visit to church. After an ongoing, hour-long prayer, I was liberated, with loud cries and tears in my eyes, in the presence of all the assembly. A few days later, I got baptized, and I then joined the church.

"When she died, my faith died too. I soon found myself going down a dark path, and I became a Satanist."

Saleem
Jordan

Vision: My vision for my future ministry is to teach God's Word and to create educational videos about the Christian faith.

Testimony: I accepted Christ when I was 12 through the Hosn (Fortress) Baptist Church. I heard about the love of Christ and that He died for my sins at Sunday school. However, my friends at school would tell me that Christianity was a lie. The inner struggle grew, and I started to compare religions at age 15. At 18, I began to examine the accuracy of the Bible. All this searching grounded my Christian faith. I became more interested in Christian apologetics; I carried out more than one research on the interrogations and allegations that Christianity faces. Today, my faith is not only built on the words that my parents passed on to me. It is built on hardcore evidence.

Certainly, our students' walk with Christ only began at the point of experiencing His saving grace. They then exhibited growth and maturity as they actively began to serve in their local churches. That is one of our main requirements during the admissions process. Lift our new students up in prayer as their lives continue to testify of God's greatness.

A Heart of Compassion: This Year's Student Retreat

As the weather got colder with winter coming near, our students gathered for the annual student retreat, which took place on November 2 and 3. Amid the forest of Dhour El Shweir, students had a time of rest and of fellowship away from the hustle of daily life. Most importantly, they received training that is beneficial for both their ministry in Lebanon and later in their home countries. Karen Shaw, Assistant Professor of Cross-Cultural Ministry at ABTS, gave a session on how we can show love to the ones we serve based on Gary Chapman's *Five Love Languages*. Students spent a fun time doing group work activities for each of the five love languages.

Charlie Costa, Pastor of the Ras Beirut Baptist Church, led two sessions on our zeal and calling for ministry. During the first session, he spoke from John 4, the story of the Samaritan woman. Christ had compassion, and because of that, he overcame four barriers that usually impede our attempts in reaching out to others. They are the barriers of ethnicity, religion, culture and gender. In order to exhibit zeal towards God's work and to reflect his compassion to others, sometimes we must be willing to cross those barriers. During the second session, Pastor Charlie gave Timothy as an example of a servant who was willing to cross any barrier that may interrupt fulfilling God's will.

Students also had group discussions on acts of compassion and how we should sometimes go out of our way in order to help those in need. The students gained insights that will enrich their various ministries; the Compassionate Care Ministry is one example.

Third-year student Makki from Sudan says,

"I enjoyed the creative way in which Karen Shaw taught us about the five love languages. I will certainly use her methods in my own ministry later on. The Saturday sessions encouraged me to be zealous for the Lord's work and to hold on to my calling whatever may come. I thought of my ministry among young men and women. I often hear them say that they had to drop out of school when life got tough. I was reminded to persuade these young people to persevere and to continue their education."

Second-year student Awney from Egypt says,

"The sessions with Pastor Charlie reminded me to test the motives behind my ministry. If my motives are selfless and from God, my ministry will make a difference."

First-year student Mariam from Egypt says,

"Karen Shaw's session taught me that expressing love in practical ways makes a difference in my relationships and in my ministry. It helps us, as a church, to work as one body towards fulfilling the goal. We were actively involved during the entire session, and there was a lot of interaction."

Pray with US: Prayer Requests from First-Year Students

Susanna | Sudan

Please pray for me as I study that I may be fully focused in order to receive all I can from my time here. I would like to work on my concentration level. Also, pray for my brother in Sudan who is really ill and suffering from psychological issues. May the Lord extend His hand of mercy and heal him.

Youssef | Sudan

Please pray for all the Sunday school ministries in the Karima State, Sudan. Pray that the kids' faith be built on a firm foundation starting from their early years.

Safiya | Egypt

It is so difficult to tell my family members about Christ, but I pray with all my heart that they might know Him. How wonderful it would be to find out that they accepted Him when I visit Egypt in the summer! Please pray for them, and pray for my parents who are growing old and tired.

Demiana | Egypt

Please pray for my new married life with Awney [ABTS student]. This is our first year together, and we have left our country to study theology. Pray for my study period here, as this is still a very new experience to me.

First-Year Student | Morocco

Please lift my wife and me up in prayer that we may be able to overcome the pressures that will come along our education. Pray also for our impending ministry both here in Lebanon and in our home country.

Amin | Sudan

I ask you to pray for Sudan and the difficult situation of its existing churches. Also, pray for the people of Sudan. They are facing tough living conditions as the prices continue to shoot up. Moreover, the state of Kasala has lost so many lives because of an epidemic that hit the area. Please pray for Kasala and all the families who lost loved ones. Finally, I ask you to pray for my siblings; I long to see them come to Christ.

Al Sadeg | Sudan

The academic system at the seminary is so new to me. Please pray that I might be able to overcome the challenge of adapting. May my time in Lebanon bear much fruit for His glory. I also ask you to pray for my family members, as most of them still do not know Christ.

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