



Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

www.abtslebanon.org

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Theology in Practice: Stories from Across the Region

Morocco, Egypt, Sudan, and Lebanon are among our residential students' home countries. This summer, our returning students visited their homes and came back with remarkable stories of God's work through them. We share a few in this newsletter. Each story is unique yet bears the mark of putting theology into practice.



Sudan

The civilian-led government came to rise on August 21 and raised hopes for a new approach that is more responsive to the Sudanese people's needs. However, the economy is still crippled by debt and poor infrastructure along with the flood crisis. The flooding, which started in July, killed many and destroyed more than 100,000 homes. It is in these circumstances that our Sudanese students returned to serve their people during their summer break.



part in the prison ministry. I also helped organize a conference for the youth of North Sudan. We focused on contemporary challenges in our Christian walk such as addiction. I also organized a daylong training for leaders focusing on the church and outreach, and another conference for college students. Overall, we saw 60 people come to Christ this summer!

Yousif: My wife and I had a very busy summer. Through the Baptist convention, we served with home groups, held four trainings for church leaders coming from different states, and took

Susanna: In addition to what my husband Yousif said, we organized a five-day conference for leaders in Khartoum. I led seminars on character development and the morning devotions, and my husband led seminars on time management. We also studied the book of Jonah. I had asked the Lord to use me in Sudan this summer, and He showed me that I could use my gift of counselling and my psychology background to help others reach a change of mindset.

Hamed: The highlight of my summer was getting Sudanese youth from different faiths involved in peacebuilding and social work. I worked with a Sudanese sports nonprofit for youth. Through this Port Sudan initiative, I gave several workshops and seminars on peacebuilding and conflict resolution with a focus on the peaceful coexistence of various Sudanese tribes. Youth were mobilized to offer relief to the people of the Red Sea State after the floods. After the sessions, we had a cultural celebration and a colorful, festive procession to create a strong social bond among tribes. At my local church, I led a small Bible study group through Ephesians.

Abukanidy: Doing ministry in Sudan was not exactly easy. The gas shortage and the floods in the country had paralyzed transport from place to place. In spite of that, I spoke five times at church and made several home visits.



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I also taught Christian education at a nearby public school during the first two weeks of my stay. After that, schools shut down all over the country as conflicts on the streets had worsened. [The Sudanese school year runs from July to March.] The bread shortage was another challenge. I had to wake up at 4am daily and stand in a long queue at the bakery to get my wife and kids' daily portion of bread. As I come for my final academic year, I rest in the knowledge that God is taking care of my family during my absence.



Tathnia: When I arrived, not many could preach or lead the worship due to the floods and other obstacles. Because I lived nearby and showed readiness to serve, I was often asked to fill the need. I also led the prayer meetings and helped at our local church's program for 400 children. Because of the floods, the children's ministry had to stop for several weeks as

the ministry building, which is made of clay, was in very bad shape. In all this, I praise God because my small congregation continues to bear fruit for God beyond its size.



Egypt

Many are coming to Christ after long journeys of struggle with faith and atheism in Egypt. These believers are in need of discipleship and follow up. ABTS students are equipped for such contextual ministry.

Youssef: In 2015, I started a charity through the help of four other friends. Today, we are 70 people, and the Lord has grown us beyond our expectations, constantly providing the needed support. This summer, we sought official recognition by the government. We are currently working on literacy and awareness programs in Egyptian villages, 80% of which are in Upper Egypt. Awareness programs include gender equality and child protection. We also support students who are unable to pay for their education. Aside from that, we have five home groups of believers from a non-Christian background. As I resume my studies here, a group of faithful believers continue leading the ministry.

Male Student: Most of my summer was spent in service. I mainly served in the discipleship ministry of non-Christian background believers, as well as with two online media ministries. The first addresses young men and women, and the second answers the questions of doubting Christians, atheists

and non-Christians. Much of my work is in this area. We also have a school that offers theology classes to 70-100 Egyptian young men and women. During the summer, I taught classes on atheism, Islamic studies and philosophy.



Lebanon/ Syria

Today, Lebanon hosts more than a million and a half Syrian refugees. Despite a history of resentment and conflict between Lebanese and Syrians, many Lebanese churches have welcomed and provided care for Syrian refugees. Since the start of the war in Syria, Churches in both Lebanon and Syria have shown remarkable growth. Consequently, an increasing number of Syrian followers of Christ are coming to us seeking ministry and leadership training to better serve the emerging Syrian Church.

Yaser from Syria: My home church in Lebanon recently planted a new church that now includes 60 believers in Nabaa [an area in the suburbs of Beirut that hosts a diverse population of refugees and underprivileged residents]. Most of its church members are Kurdish Syrian, and so is their leader. I oversee the ministry progress and keep the communication between my local church in Ain Zhalta and that in Nabaa. A while ago, we sent a Syrian missionary to Aleppo with whom I follow up on a regular basis. Moreover, 16 people got baptized at my local church. Some were former members of extremist groups, and others were their captives.



Morocco

The Moroccan church is mostly made up of small home groups that are scattered in various areas. Our students go back home to serve during their summer break, to remain connected to their communities and to help strengthen the growing ministry there.

Couple from Morocco: It was a blessing to visit family and friends, and to reconnect with our home churches. We met the new people who joined our home church and visited nearby home churches. Because children's ministry isn't given much priority in Morocco due to the restricted number of believers, we decided to hold a three-day children's conference in our area. Through the conference, God used us with children who were going through rough times. As the conference building was right by the beach, we made use of the location and prepared fun activities for the kids. Other than that, we helped at the ministry center that is run by our local church.

Celebrating the Fruit of the Peacemakers' Seeds

The Institute Of Middle East Studies (IMES) team's [Khebz w Meleh](#) (Bread and Salt) peacebuilding initiative wrapped up its year of interfaith sessions with its annual Celebration Day, held on the 28th of September. The Celebration Day is a day of gathering and fellowship, where all the groups who participated in the initiative come together for the first time to break bread and share their stories and experiences of the Khebz w Meleh program. It is the culmination of a year-long effort of bridging socio-religious gaps created by the circumstances in Lebanon and reflects the success of the program throughout the year. This year's Celebration Day saw the coming together of five groups of young adults between the age of 13 and 17 from all over Lebanon at an outdoor campground.



[Read more about Kerygmatic Peacebuilding here.](#)

The day started off with the groups sharing their stories and experiences with each other. Each group gave a presentation about the social action they prepared and implemented during the last sessions, and how they were received in their communities. Through their presentations, the KwM team got to see how the youths cooperated with each other and worked towards the success of their shared effort. The youths were conversing openly about what they had learned about each other's beliefs during the program and were excited about the friendships they made. They shared how the [11 guidelines](#) for dialogue had helped them communicate and understand each other. Through open and honest communication, they were able to break down negative opinions and create genuine friendships.

Though the program ensures that all members are given the opportunity to express themselves freely and participate fully in the social action, it does not guarantee that bridges will be built between Muslims and Christians. Throughout the Celebration Day, however, KwM team members saw the youths talk, play, and eat together as friends, unaffected by difference, yet respectful of its existence.

During their free time, participants shared with KwM team members their personal experiences of the program. A Sunni Palestinian girl shared that up until she participated in the program, she had thought that all Christians were opposed to Muslims. Now, she knows that many Christians embrace their Muslim neighbors with good will and open arms. One of the facilitators who is

also a believer shared that she believed this form of peacebuilding allows for the proper proclamation of the gospel, as we are given the opportunity to live it peacefully with our communities rather than impose it antagonistically. For ABTS, reconciliation between religious groups allows for opportunities of kerygmatic proclamation of the gospel through open and peaceful dialogue.



Pray with Us: Prayer Requests from Returning Students

Abukanidy | Sudan

Please pray for my time at seminary and my studies throughout this new academic year. Moreover, the Church and the ministry in Sudan are going through trying times. Therefore, I ask you to pray for the rapid improvement of the situation and for my wife and kids, that they would be kept safe and lack nothing.

Hamed | Sudan

Pray for a fruitful academic year, and pray for my family and me as we grieve the loss of my father, who was suffering from heart problems. Pray that we find comfort during this difficult phase.

Student | Egypt

Pray that God continues to use me with believers from a non-Christian background upon graduation. I am sure of His calling for me, so pray that He shows me where to go as I walk in His will.

Tathnia | Sudan

Pray that I am sensitive to God's calling for my ministry after graduation. As the Lord had once emotionally healed me from depression, pray that I might be a tool in God's hands to bring healing to many more.

Yousif | Sudan

We praise God for starting a church gathering in Sudan through the Baptist convention of Sudan. Pray with us that the group would soon gather at a place of their own. Please pray that God continues to prepare my wife and me for the ministry that awaits us in Sudan. It is a huge responsibility, so pray that he goes before us and enables us to do the work.

Susanna | Sudan

Please pray that God moves those who are lukewarm in the Sudanese Church to repentance and restoration that they may serve Him fervently. Pray also for young Sudanese church leaders that they may be given strength and wisdom.

Yaser | Syria

I ask you to pray for my country Syria and all countries where war and insecurity abound.

Niyazi | Sudan

I will be taking on a leadership position at my local church after graduation. I am looking forward to serving God in my country, so I ask you to pray that God prepares me for that step. I also got married this summer! Please pray that my wife and I walk together in God's will.

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