



Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

www.abtslebanon.org

November 2019

Dear friends and partners,

As you read this newsletter, Lebanon continues to make the news with protests and a (mostly) non-violent uprising. People are fed up with the colossal corruption that has plagued Lebanon for many years and that is bringing down the economy in its wake. For the first time in Lebanon, people across sectarian lines, religious lines, and political-party lines, are demonstrating in massive numbers. This is a leaderless revolution where people are spontaneously revolting against the current state of affairs. We have experienced a lot of turmoil in Lebanon's recent history, but we now find ourselves in a new space, a space where we have never been before. The outcome of this uprising is uncertain. It could lead to major reform, even possibly transforming Lebanon from a sectarian state to a secular state, or, God forbids, it could lead to more civil unrest and possibly bloodshed. Alternatively, if the politicians succeed in extinguishing the uprising then that will set Lebanon back several decades, driving large numbers of young people to give up and emigrate. No matter which way it goes, things will not be the same anymore. There is no going back.

It is at a time like this that the Church needs to have a clear and prophetic voice. As the country is wrestling with many political, social, and economic issues, there needs to be a clear Kingdom voice within the mix, a good moral compass for the way forward. As there is much division and exclusion, there needs to be a loving and embracing community that brings unity and acceptance to the diverse voices. As there is fear and anxiety, there needs to be agents of hope with a godly vision for the nation. The Church cannot sit this one out.

What can we do as church? I invite you to follow our blog at imes.blog and journey with us as we discover God's calling for us at this time. And when you have a minute, pray for us.

Elie Haddad, President

Out of Darkness into His Marvelous Light Some of our new students share their stories

His Spirit moves across the Arab world drawing hearts to Himself. He then calls His people to do His will and to further His Kingdom in the region. Eleven men and women have displayed readiness to answer that call and have joined us for their first year of theological training. Here, you can read some of their stories: how they decided to follow Jesus even when the road seemed narrow and perilous, how they discerned their part in God's work and joined Him, and how they chose to put their lives on hold to get the needed theological training.

Male student from Egypt

My mother died three days after I was born, so my earliest childhood memories revolve around my stepmother who was fond of her Christian friends. You see, I was brought up in a non-Christian home; my father's uncle adopted me when I was eight, but I returned to my father's house at fourteen and remained there for ten difficult years. Only God saw my plight as He looked detachedly from His sky – or so I thought. After having distanced myself from God for so long, the need for something



more weighed me down. I tried to turn to religion, but it soon failed me. Then, one day, I found out that two of my atheist friends had come to Christ. After accepting their invitation to church, I had a private conversation with the preacher and soon came to Christ too.

I aim to reach my people through a loving approach that is far from conflict and harsh criticism, seeking to understand their standpoint instead. I aim to train other ministry workers to use this approach too. I know that my time at seminary will build me

PARTNER WITH US



SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER

up and reshape me, so I win many to Christ.

Maha from Sudan

As a kid, I went to all the children’s events at church, but only because I had no other choice. Some of the kids there were bullies, and I didn’t want to put up with them. I tried to stall as I got ready to go to these events. I tried to hide. I tried to fight. Sometimes I got away with it, but for the most part, my mother won. At sixteen, I went to a youth conference that changed my life. I heeded the preacher’s call and accepted Christ. Since then, I have experienced God’s work in all the areas of my life, and I can track His answers to my prayers. As to my ministry, I mostly serve with children and youth at my local church.

During a difficult phase, I had many questions, so I decided to take a few theology courses at an uncertified school run by ABTS graduates. My desire to study theology increased when my pastor showed me a brochure of the seminary here. I aim to offer Sudanese kids and youth effective Christian education. I want to offer biblical counselling to youth who feel neglected and unheard. Studying theology will equip me for such a task.

“I became an outcast among my people, and I lost my husband. I could not turn back despite the persecution, for there was an unquenchable fire inside me.”



Balgis from Sudan

I am originally a non-Christian from the Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan. I have six children, but I no longer live with my husband because of my faith. At the end of 1990, my husband and I left with our children to Dalang because of the war in the Nuba Mountains. My husband befriended a pastor in Dalang, and every time we tried to visit him and his family, we

would find them praying at the church next door. I began to ask our friend about Jesus, and my curiosity drove me to seek harder until it soon turned into genuine faith in Him. I declared my faith before the congregation on May 21, 1995. Consequently, I became an outcast among my people, and I lost my husband. I could not turn back despite the persecution, for there was an unquenchable fire inside me.

Back in my local episcopal church, I was asked to be a deacon in 2012 after I finished my theology courses at an uncertified school. I would like to teach kids about the Christian faith in both public schools and Sunday school. I would also like to use my theological education here to teach other Sudanese Christ followers.

Ibrahim from Sudan

I heard about Jesus through my uncle, who was the only Christ follower in my family, and through a few visits to church. My parents then divorced when I turned fourteen, so I went to live with my grandmother. There, the rest of my uncles beat me because of my faith, but I continued to worship Christ in secret. In 2017, I was baptized at the Sudanese Church of Christ. A difficult time then followed; my family no longer supported me when they found out. I had to put school on hold to earn a living, but through it all, I found my joy in Christ. As I began a journey of service to God, and my family members saw the change in me, they somewhat changed their mind about faith in Christ.



I had been serving at my local church with youth before I came here, and I led the worship services. Because of my own experience, I want to help believers who are still living in non-Christian homes to be a light in spite of their circumstances. I want to receive academic and theological training to show my family members and others that Jesus is Lord. I also want to be an effective youth leader.



Noha from Sudan

My dad decided to move to Yemen when we were quite young. Then at fifteen, we moved back to Sudan. There, I attended my first youth conference and came to Christ. I would then spend hours praying and delighting in God’s Word. After college, I became a student at the discipleship and follow up ministry of our local church. A year later, the

ministry leader had to leave for Lebanon to study at ABTS, so I took over. God used this phase to refine my character and turn me into a better servant.

God gave me the responsibility of leading the discipleship ministry at my local church. It is very challenging for a woman in Sudan to be in a leadership position, even at church. I had to prove to others that I am able to perform my role very well. I want to study theology, so I am fully equipped to carry out this responsibility. I want to be an example to the women at church. I also want to study theology to show my students that discipleship is a continuous process.



Since October 17, Lebanon has been witnessing mass protests and demonstrations in response to the deep-rooted corruption that has been plaguing the country since the end of the Lebanese Civil war in 1990. On Saturday, November 9, in collaboration with Youth for Christ in Lebanon, we invited teens aged 15 to 19 to join us for an evening of theologically-grounded conversation where youth could have a place to share their opinions, be heard, and think about their role in the country's current events.

After an overview of recent Lebanese history, the youths discussed their opinions in groups and then shared them with those present. The event concluded with [Nabil Habiby](#) giving the youth three pieces of biblically-based advice on what to do during this period. In one of them, Nabil cautioned the youth not to allow what is happening to generate hatred of the other. Nabil reminded them that whether we are with or against the protests, whether we are with or against the current government, we want to first and foremost live and love as Christ taught us.

While this conversation is only the beginning, it was uplifting to hear the youths speak out their thoughts in regard to the relation between faith and the current situation in the country.

Nizar shared, "God did not create us to only pray and worship him; otherwise, he would have kept us alone on earth without a community. But he placed us within a community to be impactful and influence people around us".

Walid shared, "My faith does not teach me to curse and burn. I like participating in the protests, but I steer away from bad words and riots. If the protests look like my faith, I will be part of them; otherwise, I won't."

Tina shared, "I believe God has a role, and He can change things through our protests, but not when we use the protests to silence others."

Jasmina shared, "Faith is not what compelled me to protest. My citizenship compels me to do that, but my faith is what gives me values and ethics to protest in a peaceful way".

Finally, Nabil ended by reminding the youth not to despair if protests do not in fact cause change, because we believe that Jesus will come again and will ultimately remove all injustice. "Remember," he said, "God is wise, and He is in control."

We rejoice at the sight of a passionate young generation of Lebanese Christ followers who are actively engaged in their country's affairs and are hungry for change. This carries an emanating flame of hope that the future leaders of the Lebanese Church have already begun to seek involvement and Christ-like influence within their community.

**Names of youths have been changed.*



Pray with Us: Prayer Requests from First-year Students

Suliman | Sudan

Please pray that I develop my research skills during my time here. Pray for the ministry team at our local church who organizes mission trips and conferences. I ask you to pray that God provides the resources and opens doors for their ministry. Pray also that my family members in Sudan come to Christ.

Martha | Egypt

I ask you to pray for my mother; she is not doing well physically. Three years ago, she had an unsuccessful surgery for her knee joints, and she hasn't been able to walk properly since then. Please also pray for the underprivileged in Egypt. May the believers in Egypt show them that there is hope in Christ.

Male Student | Egypt

Pray that the Lord gives me wisdom when managing my time as the academic pressure increases. Pray that He gives me comfort whenever I long for home, so I adjust to the new environment quickly. I want to focus fully on my studies so that I am well prepared when I return to serve my people.

Maha | Sudan

Please pray for my father, who has a hard time walking. He has been suffering from leg pain for the past three months because of diabetes.

Noha | Sudan

Please pray that I have the right attitude as the academic load increases, and that I joyfully press on without complaining. Pray also for the discipleship ministry at my local church in Sudan. A new cohort started their discipleship courses at the beginning of this month, so pray that they hear God's voice through the ministry.

Ibrahim | Sudan

My family and I haven't fully reconciled because of my faith. Though they have come to terms with it, they still give me a hard time. Please pray for me regarding this matter. Pray for my local church, as they still haven't received the official papers stating their ownership of the land, but we hope that things will be different with the current changes in the country. Please also pray for unity and peace in my local church and the Sudanese Church.

Pray for Lebanon

- ◆ Pray that the current ruling political class gains sensitivity to the people's needs in this critical situation, addressing them wisely with a readiness to sacrifice their own interests for the sake of the country's deliverance.
- ◆ Pray for protection over those in the Lebanese judicial system. May they be given boldness and impartiality so that corruption does not go unpunished and justice runs its course paving the way for fiscal and governmental reform.
- ◆ Pray for the people of Lebanon not to be driven by fear during this economic situation. Many gas stations are temporarily closing across the country due to limited access to foreign currencies and the country's ability to import essential goods (such as food, medicine, and fuel) is declining.
- ◆ Pray for God's Kingdom to expand at all times and during all circumstances in Lebanon. Pray for God to give His Church a spirit of generosity to reflect His love to the community during this time.