



Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

www.abtslebanon.org

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Will 2021 be any better?

What will ensure that the changes we made will inaugurate a true new beginning at ABTS?

What will ensure the success of all our plans and strategies?

Read this year's [Word from the President](#) on our website



And So, the Journey Continues

An Update on Some of Our Students

Previously enrolled in our traditional residential program, these students are now continuing their training through our hybrid [Integrated Theology Program](#). One of the benefits of our new strategic direction is that while they study, our students are able to continue serving their churches. Read on to see how God is using them in each of their communities! There is so much strife in the Arab world today, but our hearts find much joy in God's amazing work through His people here. We pray that you, too, will have found encouragement by the time you finish reading this newsletter.

Balgis from Sudan

Aside from my responsibilities as a priest in my local Episcopal church, I also serve the young women and mothers. I encourage them to stay strong in the faith. I sometimes preach in Arabic on Sundays as well. However, my main plan for after graduation is to translate the Bible into my mother tongue through the help of a translation agency here in Sudan. [There are several indigenous languages in Sudan other than Arabic.] I also want to serve my tribe in the Nuba Mountains.

Both my practical and my spiritual life changed a lot after I enrolled at ABTS. Studying theology made me put down the walls I had built. I used to judge, and hence avoid, people based on how they treated me. After I started studying at seminary, I began to understand the human psychology better, and I understood that every person has a unique temperament to which they are inclined to resort under pressure. This is leading me on a journey towards inner healing.

I currently work as the secretary for the archbishop's office from 9am till 2pm, and I spend three to four hours on the road daily. I find more time to study on Fridays and Sundays, but the fact that I do not have internet at home remains a problem. That is why I stay in my office after work hours so I can study and submit my assignments.



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El Sadig from Sudan

I used to focus on the unjustified crimes that extremists committed in the name of religion. I saw it in my own country and in other Arab countries, and that affected the way I perceived my Sudanese neighbors. Due to the shift in my perception of others caused by studying at the seminary, I saw that extremists are the exception and not the norm. Hence, I now interact with my neighbors in Sudan in a more loving way, and this is transforming my reach to my people.



Doing ministry in Sudan again made me see how I have changed in practical terms and how much more effort I now put into preparing sermons to ensure proper biblical exegesis. I am mainly serving through the Sunday school ministry of my local church. For the future, I would like to see transformation in the Sunday school ministry across Sudanese churches. I would like to see more Sudanese children glorifying God. The Bible says in Psalm 8, verse 2, “Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger (NIV).” For this purpose, I aim to write Sunday school curricula that are specifically tailored for Sudanese children.

Youssef from Egypt

The first module of this academic year, the *Nature and Character of God* module, took me on a quest to find out about God’s being, both in the Bible and throughout history. Understanding God better changed the way I worship Him. The module helped me to conduct constructive dialogue with Muslims as we study the attributes of God together, both in Islam and in Christianity, and try to find a common ground.

I am currently writing material for a talk show that helps youth grow in self-awareness. I am also hosting a series of short episodes on Facebook that highlight some traditions in our Arab culture while offering a message of change in a comic way.

Moreover, I am currently invested in creative writing. My academic journey refined my writing skills and enlarged my intellectual reservoir, therefore preparing me to start writing my first novel. Through it, I hope that readers will be able to understand complex theological concepts through literature and narration, hence inspiring a change in them.

Susanna and Yousif from Sudan

Susanna and her husband Yousif are actively serving God through their local church in Sudan while they continue their theological studies through our Integrated Theology Program. Recently, Susanna described how studying theology had changed her, saying,

Much of what I received at seminary led me to a place of action. For instance, I have been making a conscious effort to set priorities and use my time wisely. I have become more accepting of others having decided that I would look upon them through the eyes of Divine Grace. I have been training myself to carry out respectful dialogue with those who don’t share my faith, steering away from unnecessary strife, barren quarreling, and a competitive spirit.



Susanna is currently serving as a Sunday school teacher at her local church due to the need for Sunday school volunteers. She also helps in revival events and conferences across different Baptist churches. Susanna desires to focus on women’s ministry and family counselling, but she awaits God’s direction.

Yousif described his ministry as follows:

In addition to helping my local church in various ministries, both pastoral and social, I am working with the Baptist convention as well. I have also been working on planting a new church in the past three months, and last month we got to celebrate its birth. Furthermore, I am working on mobilizing my local church’s ministry team and following up with the believers who left the church for reasons beyond them.

I am also helping with the reshaping of ministry among Christian college students and overseeing a conference on church

planting. The load of ministry is getting bigger. All I know is I will be serving God till my last breath!

Yousif and Susanna are also working with their local church on a comprehensive ministry plan for this new year.

Yaser from Syria

The farther I have come in my journey towards graduation, the more I see the change in me. I have learned to desire for others what I would desire for myself. I learned to discuss rather than argue. I learned to listen carefully before I speak. I am so thankful that I can directly apply what I learn in seminary in my life and ministry.

I am currently serving Syrian refugees through my local Baptist church in Shouf, Lebanon. I do that through relief work, sharing the gospel, preparing home Bible studies and discipling newcomers to the faith. I also manage our church's social media accounts and the photography, and I preach on Sundays. I love what I do!



For the future, I would like to write Christian material that simplifies theological concepts to newcomers from other faiths. I have begun to write such a book as I continue to write Christian songs that will soon be out among believers.

I long to serve the people in Syria, but a huge security threat hinders my return for now. The Lord holds the future. When He makes a way, I will go where He sends me.

Dani from Lebanon

Education, especially theological education, brings about deep change and growth in a person. It helps us to know God more and to know our communities so that we serve them in a relevant, Christ-like manner. Studying at seminary helped answer many of my questions and made me more accepting of others. I came to understand how God wants us to treat others based on how He dealt with humanity.

I found pleasure and benefit in many courses such as *God and My Relationship with Him*, *Church Leadership*, *Hebrew*, *Greek*, *Discipleship*, *Holy Spirit in the Church*, and *Church History*.



Yet, learning should never be a piling on of information. Naturally, a cognitive change should lead to a behavioral change in ministry, for instance, in the way we deal with difficulties or the way we reach out to others.

Ministry should go outside church walls; it should be among the people, helping the poor, visiting the sick, caring for widows. The Lord stressed the value of such a ministry in various biblical passages. This ministry is closest to my heart; I feel it is my gift in the Lord. I always pray that the Lord uses me more and opens a door for ministry according to His will.

Female student from Egypt

I am glad to be back thanks to the seminary's distance learning program. This year, I am learning to seek effective worship that brings me nearer to God and to seek His will for me. This in turn has made my interactions with others wiser and more rational. I have become more cautious and careful with my actions.

The pandemic has limited my usual ministry (Alpha courses at my local church). On the other hand, it drove many ministries to go outside of church walls through online platforms. The internet has become a huge gateway for outreach to people from all walks of life. It made us focus our creative energies on revisiting existing ministries and reshaping them to reach others more effectively.

Consequently, at my local church, we still work with the groups who joined the Alpha program online. Aside from that, I join my Muslim and atheist friends in healthy theological discussions through social media platforms. I am also part of an online "home" group in which we study the Bible and share our lives together.

Having finished the *Nature and Character of God* module by the end of last month, our continuing students have been taking electives since January 4. Keep them in your prayers and pray for the new students who will be joining our Integrated Theology Program this coming February!

Pray with Us: Prayer Requests from Some of Our Continuing Students



Haroun from Sudan

I now live relatively far from my family in search for good internet, but I visit them whenever I can and regularly call them. Internet costs are high in Sudan, so I am working at construction projects while I seek a stable job. I am resolved to continue my academic journey until the end, and God is able to fill all my needs. Pray that God grants me energy and strength to continue pursuing my education. Pray also for the ministry and for my future vision. Pray that I may find a good job.

Dani from Lebanon

Sometimes the pressures from my work, family and studies clash, and I find it hard to balance between these responsibilities. It can lead to burn out. I do not want to fail in any of these responsibilities that God has given me, so I am working on managing my time well. Pray that I may overcome the pressures at work and that I may be able to balance between my work, studies and family.

Yousif from Sudan

Please pray for my current ministry and the ministry that is to come. Pray that the Lord's work extends, and that His light reaches many. Pray for my wife Susanna who is pregnant with our first child and for my father's recovery from a recent surgery. Pray also for the situation in Sudan in light of the

current events.

Susanna from Sudan

Please pray for us as we look to God, trying not to complain because of the current living conditions and the unstable conditions of Sudan, which directly affect our ministry. We believe that this cannot hinder God's work, but we ask you to pray for our beloved country and its people who suffer from hunger and sickness, especially now with the pandemic.

El Sadig from Sudan

Please pray that God helps me overcome all challenges so I may finish my studies well. Pray that peace and stability prevail in Sudan and that the Sudanese Church experiences a great spiritual revival. Pray that God helps me fulfil the vision to which He has called me, for the extension of His Kingdom in my country.

Yaser from Syria

Please pray for the people of Lebanon and Syria who are going through a lot. Pray for the persecuted persons around the world, and pray for coronavirus patients, that they may experience God's healing touch. Pray also for protection over my wife and kids, and for our extended families, from the virus.