Arab Baptist Theological Seminary
كليّة اللاهوت المعمدانيّة العربيّة
April 2025 | www.abtslebanon.org

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AT ABTS

By Elie Haddad, ABTS President

In a recent ABTS blog post, I highlighted our approach to succession planning, which extends beyond senior leadership to critical roles throughout the seminary. Effective faculty succession and development are vital for ABTS's long-term sustainability and growth.

Globally, institutions typically fill faculty roles by advertising positions and hiring from a large pool of qualified candidates, focusing their faculty development strategy mainly on retention through ongoing academic growth.

Our context in Lebanon is distinctly different. The pool of qualified faculty in theology or education is very limited and often already connected to us. Therefore, recruiting faculty involves proactively mentoring individuals over many years, from vocational degrees through master's and doctoral studies.

Given this unique situation, ABTS's faculty development strategy emphasizes anticipating future needs and strategically identifying promising young leaders to invest in long-term.

This strategy addresses three key challenges:

First, anticipating faculty gaps years in advance, particularly considering ABTS's continuous growth and evolving program offerings under God's leading. Second, identifying individuals with the necessary potential, including spiritual maturity, commitment to God's mission in the region, academic excellence, and alignment with ABTS's ethos and ministry approach. Third, ensuring the success and longevity of these investments.

Our primary approach, as always, is collective discernment. Rather than rigid planning, ABTS leadership prioritizes discerning God's activity in the region and preparing to respond faithfully. Recognizing we cannot fully predict the future; our focus remains on adaptability and readiness to follow God's guidance.

Practically, we implement a funnel approach. Initially, we broaden the training through our foundational vocational programs, encouraging key church and ministry leaders to start their training journey with us. These programs instill love for God, Scripture, the Church, and God's mission, alongside essential skills in research, critical thinking, and language proficiency in Arabic and theological English.

Students excelling in vocational programs and

demonstrating strong academic potential are encouraged to pursue a research-based master's degree in Bible and theology. At this stage, we begin aligning ABTS's anticipated needs with individual interests and strengths.

Those who excel at the master's level receive further encouragement and support in doctoral studies. During their doctoral journey, these individuals actively engage in ABTS faculty responsibilities, immersing themselves in our educational culture, contributing to curriculum development, and shaping the seminary's academic environment. Pursuing part-time, non-residential doctoral studies ensures their sustained alignment with ABTS's identity and mission.

Finally, formal faculty appointments are made by the ABTS Board of Trustees, ensuring strategic alignment with the seminary's ongoing mission.

Through proactive mentorship, strategic discernment, and careful planning, ABTS effectively nurtures future faculty leaders, safeguarding the seminary's mission and strengthening our impact for generations to come.

The Road to Becoming Faculty

An Interview with our Head Librarian

As part of our mission at ABTS to serve the Arab Church, we believe that investing in and developing faculty members is essential. One such investment is George Sleiman, who is our head librarian and on the faculty track at ABTS. Walid, our academic dean, shared about why George was selected to be on this track:

> *George's journey at ABTS is a testament to God's calling and the seminary's commitment to investing in emerging theologians. With a background in education and a deep passion for theology, George brings a unique blend of academic expertise and spiritual devotion to his role. His pursuit of a PhD in theology further reflects his dedication to advancing theological scholarship in the MENA region. ABTS is privileged to have George on board, embodying its mission to equip faithful men and women for effective ministry and in support of the local church. His love for learning and commitment to the transformative power of theological education make him an invaluable asset to the faculty and the broader ABTS community.*

We had the opportunity to sit down with George to hear about his journey of faith and how God has been molding him for ministry.

Tell us about who you are.

Interview with George

I was born in Beirut into a Christian family, where my parents shaped my faith and ignited in me a passion for serving others. Growing up around their work, I developed a love for ministry. My earliest memories include living at an orphanage where my parents served. My parents instilled in me a strong love for the Bible, and I regularly prayed with my mother.

At the age of nine, I had a defining realization: I will not be saved simply because of my parents' faith. Salvation is a gift from God, but I had to personally respond to it. I told my parents that I was mature enough to surrender my life to Christ, and I did so

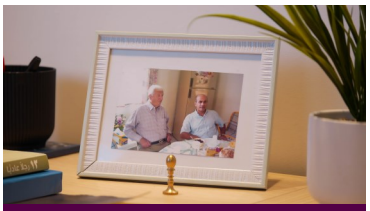
with them. God continued to bless my journey, and in 2012, when I felt that I fully understood my faith and commitment, I got baptized.

Who are the men and women who have influenced your walk with God and shepherded you along the way?

The greatest impact on my life came from my father. His transformation to a faithful servant of God inspired me. My mother, on the other hand, taught me the importance of gentleness, kindness, and how to speak to people with grace.

Another major influence in my life was Brother Maziad. He was a church planter and pastor who influenced many in Lebanon at the time and played a crucial role in my parents' journey. He discipled my mother, preached to my father, and officiated their wedding. He was my best friend, even when he was 90 years old, and I spent a great deal of time with him and his wife. He modeled Christ's love and taught me theology. His legacy continues to shape my life even after his passing. One time, he wrote me a birthday card that I still have with me. Words I cherish and often return to:

The future is before you, ministry calls, souls are perishing, and few care. Can you say with Paul: But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of God's grace?



On George's desk: a photo of his dad and Brother Maziad

What is your current church ministry?

I truly live to serve Him. Career-wise, I am not driven by ambition for a title or recognition. My only desire is to give God my very best, as Colossians 3:23 says: Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.

I serve in two churches. My primary ministry is at Grace Baptist Church, which currently meets on the ABTS campus. I teach, preach, disciple, and assist in church administration alongside other dedicated servants. My calling as a preacher has always been close to my heart, and I continue to grow in this role. Additionally, I serve with my parents at the church in the mountains of Lebanon. Every other Sunday, I visit to preach and support their ministry. Despite the challenges, I see God's hand at work in both churches, and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve Him in these capacities.

Can you share your educational background? What are you currently studying?

I hold a bachelor's degree in Linguistics with a focus on the English language, along with a Teaching Diploma and a master's in educational administration. I taught English in different schools and served as the coordinator for a while before I worked in training teachers at the university I graduated from.

In addition, I was always engaged in theological studies. Currently, I am studying toward a PhD in Theology with a focus on education at IBTS (International Baptist Theological Seminary) in partnership with the Free University of Amsterdam. This journey has reaffirmed to me that God has placed me exactly where He wants me to be.

How were you recruited as faculty and head librarian?

While teaching English, I felt something was missing—my passion for ministry. At a crossroads between a career opportunity abroad and serving in Lebanon, I prayed for guidance. Then, Elie Haddad, the President of ABTS, called me for a meeting, which led to a partnership in ministry and the chance to pursue my PhD. This aligned with my desire for excellence and clarified my path. As I left Elie's office that day, overwhelmed by how perfectly God had orchestrated everything, I couldn't help but say, "Lord, when You rain, you pour!" A month later, I received a call from Brother Maziad's children offering me his house, which is located near ABTS, which confirmed God's provision and reaffirmed my calling to stay and serve in Lebanon.

Tell us about your role as head librarian.

Currently, I manage the library, ensuring it supports research and theological studies. I'm organizing the books for better accessibility and overseeing the growing eLibrary. My role includes assisting students, pastors, and others seeking knowledge, often engaging in deep discussions with visitors. I envision the library as more than a study space, aiming to make it a place for meaningful conversations and theological reflection.

What pieces of advice would you share with our students?

Do everything with excellence, as the Bible teaches. Strive for perfection, remain teachable, and be seekers of truth. Our role as servants of God is to provide new knowledge that adds value to the community. Constant learning is key—without reading, we cannot give. As Acts 17:11 shows, we should approach reading with eagerness and inquiry. My advice to students: read with enthusiasm, seek knowledge, and study the Scriptures diligently.

What is a prayer that you would like our readers to lift you with?

Lord, please give me a heart that longs for those who are lost. I don't want to share the Gospel with people just because I know how to; I want to do it out of genuine love. I desire for them to know You and experience Your grace. Just like someone once reached out to my father, who was living far from you, and told him about Your love; Jesus, that message changed his life. I want to be that kind of person to others.

Our latest blog posts:

Passing the Baton: Theological Reflections on Leadership Succession

Walking in Faith Through Adversity: The Role of Theological Education in the Middle East

Pray with Us!

Hamed | Graduate serving in North Africa

We ask for prayers for the local church and the home groups, especially for the local members. Please pray that the discipleship class, which is held regularly, may continue to bear fruit. We also ask for guidance in finding a new building for our meetings, as our lease has ended and the landlord has refused to renew the contract. May God provide and lead us in this new chapter.

Sandy | Librarian

Please pray for the library and its staff. Pray against the challenges we face with both the physical library and the eLibrary. Pray that we remain ready to serve and that God continues to guide us in our work. I also ask for prayers for peace and protection over my family.

Lilaf | Student

Please pray for the well-being of our home. We are facing many challenges, and my 5-year-old daughter has been sick for a month with a persistent cough and inflammation. My husband, our other two daughters, and I are all exhausted. Please pray for healing, strength, and protection over our family.

Hussein | Student

Lord, may there be peace in Lebanon. Please bless ABTS—protect its leadership and staff, and be with the leaders so they may continue the mission faithfully. I also ask for prayers over my legal papers, that the process will go smoothly.

Mohamed | Graduate

Please pray for me as I continue to navigate the security challenges I have been facing over the past few years. I trust deeply in God's wisdom and look to the future with hope and faith. Please also pray for the small groups and new believers we serve—that they may be granted wisdom to live safely and peacefully within our context.