

elie haddad

ARAB BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, LEBANON

I was born and raised in Lebanon where I lived throughout the Lebanese civil war between 1975 and 1990. Towards the end of the war, I emigrated to Canada seeking a new and more stable life. I was in the business world at the time, working as an Information Systems and Management consultant. I met my wife in Toronto. She had a similar story, of being born and raised in Lebanon and coming to Canada to escape the war.

Although I was brought up in a Bible-believing home and came to faith at a young age, I had drifted away from God during my twenties. It was only when I immigrated to Canada at the age of thirty that I got serious about my faith and ministry. I was part of a new Arabic-speaking church plant in the Toronto area. I served there for my entire stay in Canada as one of the lay leaders of the church. During my time there, and as I was working, I felt God calling me to get better equipped. Therefore, I pursued a theological degree at Tyndale Seminary. It was after graduation that we received the invitation to move back to Lebanon and for me to lead the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary. This was a very difficult invitation for us, to go back to the place that we ran away from after having lived a very stable, enjoyable, and fruitful life in Canada. As we investigated the move, and whether the call was genuinely from God, we visited the seminary in Lebanon. It became obvious to us how critical and strategic the role of the seminary was, not just for Lebanon, but for the entire Arab world. With its openness to the West, and being an integral part of the Arab world, Lebanon acted as a strategic gateway, especially for ministry. ABTS had the freedom to enrol students who come from various religious backgrounds

from the entire Arab world. This is very strategic as large numbers of people are coming to faith in the region and the need for leadership formation and theological education was rapidly increasing.

With the fast advance of radicalism in the region and with the resulting danger on Christian communities, it is easy for Christians to just pick up and leave. However, the role of the Church in the region is even more strategic these days. Despite the persecution and pressure, new opportunities to proclaim the Gospel are emerging every day, and Muslims and others are coming to faith in unprecedented numbers. Now is not the time to leave. Now is the time for the Church to have a prophetic voice, to proclaim the Gospel boldly, and to act as an agent of peace and reconciliation for a needy region. The Church in our region needs leaders who can “read the signs of the times” and can help the Church respond in Christ-like ways. Now is the time to make sure that the Church maintains a vibrant witness to the love and deliverance that Jesus brings. Christians in our region, at these difficult times, are not victims. We are privileged to be where we are to represent Christ and to bring the presence of God to the deprived.

This is not easy. The Church needs prayer, for strength, for boldness, and for wisdom to engage at the right level. Our students and graduates serve God in tough environments. They need the prayer support of the global body of Christ for God’s grace to uphold them, empower them, and protect them.

I praise God for what He is doing in our region, and I am grateful that He uses feeble ministries and frail people like us to accomplish His mission.

PLEASE PRAY

God of Abraham, who led his people throughout the region we call the Middle East, we pray that this region would be known for peace and praise of you. We thank you that you call your servants to serve you in these times when the church is growing. Thank you for the faithfulness of Elie to hear your call to service in Lebanon.

