



MIDDLE EAST BIBLE OUTREACH



Entrance to Beiteddine Palace | Beiteddine, Lebanon | Todd Crusey



Midland Vision Trip Group | Beirut, Lebanon | back row (l - r): Liz Crusey, Jo Ann Bridges, Rosette Mansour, Sheila Everett, Alia Abboud. front row (l - r): Randel Everett, Nabil Costa, Keith Skaar, Byron Smith, Todd Crusey, Bill Johnson. | Todd Crusey

“Jesus, Son of David!” blind Bartimaeus cried out. The crowd following Jesus kept trying to silence him, but Bartimaeus only cried louder. “Jesus, Son of David! Jesus, Son of David!” The crowd tries to urge Jesus on, but Jesus stops. He calls Bartimaeus to him. On the road to Jericho that day, Bartimaeus saw something the crowd did not yet see. He cried out to Jesus, the “Son of David.” Even with his blindness, Bartimaeus saw that this was the rightful king of Israel, the heir to David's throne.

After healing Bartimaeus, Jesus entered Jerusalem to shouts of “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!” In spite of these words, the people were only partially able to see what blind Bartimaeus already saw. Only after Jesus' resurrection would anyone even begin to see what type of king Jesus was.

Believing is Seeing: A blind man sees Jesus

Over and over, Mark's Gospel uses the theme of sight. Blind men, blind religious leaders, and blind disciples are all intertwined. Even when the disciples begin to see who Jesus is, Peter's brash response to Jesus' passion prediction shows that they don't yet see clearly. Like the blind man Jesus is about to heal, it will take a second touch from Jesus to restore their clouded vision.

Seeing is important, but often we can see with our eyes without really seeing with understanding. We see, but not with eyes of faith. We like to say that 'Seeing is believing', but this is only partially true. Seeing and believing go hand-in-hand, but in Mark, believing is seeing. This is why Bartimaeus sees, even while he's still blind, yet the disciples have trouble seeing what is right there in front of them, as they grapple with self-exaltation and reject the way of the cross.

But the story doesn't stop there. Bartimaeus doesn't stay blind. His sight is restored by faith. And the first sight that meets those eyes is God incarnate – the humble King of Glory on his way to Jerusalem to die. What a sight to behold!

Too many times, we are looking for the triumphant King of Glory, but we live life between the cross and the resurrection. We are looking forward to the hope of his appearing, but meanwhile, we deal with the realities of suffering and carrying our crosses. But in all these sufferings, our eyes are opened to see Jesus, the King who suffered in our place. Do you see him?

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
Righteous and having salvation is he,
Humble and mounted on a donkey,
On a colt, the foal of a donkey.
(Zechariah 9:9 ESV)

Come and See: Vision Trips

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then the value of seeing the many and varied ministries of the Lebanese Baptist Society is immeasurable.

Recently, a team from Texas spent a week in Beirut touring the ministries, meeting the staff, eating with seminary students, and taking in the beautiful countryside. Here's what they had to say:

My home in Midland, Texas, is in one of the largest oil and gas producing regions in the U.S. Naturally, the Middle East is of great importance and interest to us, since we are involved in this industry. As Christians, we are also very interested in the political and religious current events that effect that region. We think it is difficult to get balanced information and news reporting from the Media for most situations around the world.

Before I left for Lebanon, many people expressed concern about the area. And more than any trip ever, I've been asked by so many people "What's it really like there? Did you see or experience anything like what we see on the news?"

It has been of much interest for friends and family to hear that LSESD

is demonstrating obedience to the Great Commission in a clear, purposeful and focused manner in all of its ministries.

Two thoughts have remained with me. The first: Jesus' words "Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you" is a reality to be faced and walked out and lived out everyday by our brothers and sisters in Lebanon.

The other is: "Lebanon is the Gateway to the Middle East and North Africa". Being the one nation in that large region that has still has religious freedom presents LSESD with awesome responsibility and opportunity.

It is my prayer that what our group experienced and learned will be a springboard for avenues for our churches to partner with LSESD in carrying out "The Great Commission" in the Middle East and North Africa. Perhaps we were all born for such a time as this.

Jo Ann Bridges
Missions Committee
Crestview Baptist Church
Midland, Texas

I would strongly suggest that you bring a group of people with you to tour the work being done in Lebanon. The end of the day discussions with the other team members were so important as I attempted to wrap my mind around what I had experienced that day.

I was deeply touched by the commitment of the staff to the ABTS students. The willingness to take personal risks to share your faith was such a humbling realization upon meeting the students.

Byron Smith
Pastor of Community & Missions
Ministries
Crestview Baptist Church
Midland, Texas

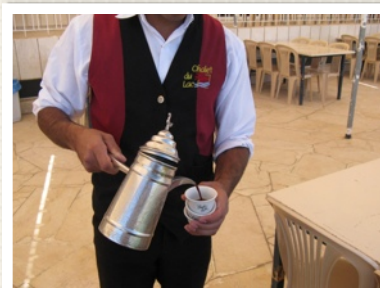
Words cannot adequately express the gratefulness in my heart for the time you shared with us while we were in Lebanon. This was a life-changing event for me. What honor you gave us through your gracious hospitality, kindness, and time out of your busy schedules to get acquainted and show us how God has been at work in your beautiful country for many centuries. I'm still processing all the thoughts, emotions and experiences we packed-in in those five



Enjoying a Laugh | Byblos, Lebanon | (l - r): Sheila Everett, Randel Everett, Byron Smith, Nabil Costa, Rosette Mansour, Bill Johnson | Todd Crusey



NABIL WITH PITA BREAD



TURKISH COFFEE

“I was not aware of the level of development of LSESD.”

short days with you and the Lebanese people. A few summary thoughts I've taken away from my time with you are:

1. The Country of Lebanon:

- Has always been a gateway to the Middle East
- Holds great historical and Biblical significance
- Is very beautiful
- Has been and will continue to be a Gateway, a hub, for the spread of the Gospel in the Middle East and North Africa.

2. The Lebanese People are:

- Resilient
- Entrepreneurial
- Not afraid of risks—courageous
- Negotiators
- Hospitable and kind

3. LSESD is:

- Passionate about the pure and powerful Gospel of Christ
- Committed to the Scriptures as the Life-changing Word of God
- Committed and passionate about reaching the Middle East and North Africa with the Good News through love and truth

Bill Johnson

Minister of Missions
First Baptist Church
Midland, Texas

The greatest thing about the trip (other than the food) was time spent at the seminary. I was moved by the hospitality and openness of the students as we shared meals together in the seminary cafeteria. The greatest single event came when I had a chance to hear their stories one afternoon. To know that these students, along with their families, receiving such strong teaching and great preparation, were about to head back into their home countries to evangelize, disciple and plant new churches was incredibly exciting. These students know the language, the culture, and the nuances of reaching their own people. Missionaries, like I was, could never attain what these students have

naturally. Their commitment to the Kingdom and their willingness to put themselves at physical risk was encouraging.

I was not aware of the level of development LSESD. I had no idea that Baptist work was so well organized and had such a rich history in that country. I had many Lebanese friends in Senegal. Since they were not part of my assignment, I did not get to spend time getting to know them or witnessing to them. It is comforting to know that so many Lebanese are being influenced by LSESD.

One evening Josue and I walked outside the seminary looking for a small store to buy a coke. We ran into a warehouse type shop to ask directions. George, the man who owned the shop invited us to sit and have a cup of coffee. He knew some English, but we knew no Arabic, yet he was hospitable and said that the Seminary was a good neighbor to him and the community. I thought that was a great testimony to the work of LSESD.

Donny Cortimilia

Network Coordinator
Basin Baptist Network
Midland/Odessa, Texas

I was already somewhat aware of the breadth of the Baptist work and ministries in Lebanon, but I was not aware of the depth of each of these ministries and of the impact that each of them has in Lebanon and in the Arab world. It is very hard to single out one ministry above the others, but I was so very impressed with the education ministries in particular. The Beirut Baptist School has such a great reputation and influence with school-age children. The students at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary are an amazing group of young people. Their stories and their commitment to Christ are very inspiring.

I also have to mention how impressed I was with the work of the Relief and Development ministry. Most people

agree that people are most open to the Gospel message during times of need/stress/etc. This LSESD ministry shows the love of Christ by helping people during desperate times.

I have always understood the Great Commission command to "go" to be best understood as "as you are going". This helps me to see every opportunity to interact with other fellow believers as a God-moment to share our stories as fellow Christ-followers. During my visit I found a great richness in hearing the stories of the faith experiences of the students at ABTS. These stories encouraged me in my own walk with Christ.

I would not hesitate to recommend a "come and see" experience in Lebanon. You will experience wonderful hospitality (and food!) and will be able to see first-hand the role that Lebanese Baptists are playing in sharing the Gospel. During my trip, our only venture outside of Beirut was a day-trip to the Bekaa Valley. We did not visit any historical site in particular. But we did have lunch at a restaurant overlooking a large lake in the middle-Valley area. The views were spectacular with the snow-clad mountains in the background. On the return to Beirut we stopped to visit a protected area for the famous Cedars of Lebanon. I would encourage anyone to include this stop in your visit.

Steve Seaberry

Director of Texas Partnerships
Baptist General Convention of Texas
Dallas, Texas

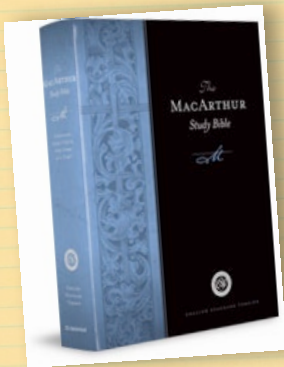


Entrance to Arab Baptist Theological Seminary
Mansourieh, Lebanon | Todd Crusey



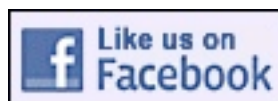
MacArthur Study Bible Arabic Translation Release!

Nabil Costa, MEBO Board Vice President and Executive Director of LSESD, will be presenting the newly translated MacArthur Study Bible at the Shepherd's Conference March 7-11.



Adopt a ministry that helps children such as these. Consider making a monthly donation of \$25, \$50, \$100, or more. Children experience the love of Christ, many of whom hear and see

the gospel displayed for the first time! [E-mail us](#) for more information and look for more updates to follow! Check our [website](#) for summer camp dates and get involved!



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