

Newsletter | NOVEMBER 2019

GIVING TUESDAY™  
special

Lead us not into Temptation  
**BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL**

Every moment in life, whether a hardship or a blessing, can bring temptation. Hardship may tempt us to fear, lose hope, doubt the love of God, or be estranged from Him, while a time of blessing may tempt us to become boastful, conceited and self-sufficient.

This is why we need to cry out to our Father in humility, acknowledging our weakness and asking Him not to lead us into a place of trial. However, in case, in His providence and wisdom, He does lead us into a place of trial, we plead to Him not to let us succumb to the snares of the evil one. We do so while remembering that He will not let us be tempted beyond our ability to endure it (1 Cor 10:13).

We might wonder why God would allow us to be tried? The first reason is that we live in a fallen world in which we “will have tribulations” (John 16:33). The second reason is that this is part of our sanctification process which is described in 1 Peter 1:6-7 (ESV): “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

In summary and to quote Martin Luther, “Temptation is the best school into which the Christian can enter, yet, in itself, a part from the grace of God, it is so doubly hazardous, that this prayer should be offered every day, ‘Lead us not into temptation’ or if we must enter into it, ‘Lord deliver us from evil.’”

**WISSAM NASRALLAH**

Chief Operations Officer | LSESD

**CONTENTS OF THIS  
MONTH'S ISSUE:***ABTS: Is There Hope? - 2**LSESD: Giving Tuesday-  
Tempted by Hope - 3**MERATH:  
When Tempted to Flee,  
Stand - 4**SKILD: One Mom's  
Temptation to Deny  
Her Son - 5**OP-ED on the Situation in  
Lebanon by Wissam  
Nasrallah - 6**Prayer Request - 7*

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*It is easy for us, as a Church, to curse the darkness. We forget that we are called to be light, and that our light, no matter how dim or insignificant we think it is, shines best in the dark.*

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## IS THERE HOPE?

After two weeks of mass demonstrations, road closures and a resigned Prime Minister, the fate of Lebanon hangs in the balance as the country faces the unknown. Moreover, the conflict in Syria is far from over, and more than half of the country's population is displaced. In Yemen, the devastating war has turned the country into a humanitarian catastrophe. The economy is collapsing in many countries of the region. Churches are being closed in Algeria, not to mention the Arab-Israeli conflict that continues to destabilize the region. The security, political, economic, social, and religious situations are all unstable. Is there hope?

It is easy for us, as a Church, to curse the darkness. We forget that we are called to be light, and that our light, no matter how dim or insignificant we think it is, shines best in the dark. We get frustrated with corruption and injustice. We forget that we are called to be salt, and that the salt needs to be scattered around to have an effect. We are afraid of hardship and persecution. We forget that our calling and fate are often connected with that of our Master. God did not stay aloof in heaven keeping peace far removed from our messed-up world. Instead, He came among us, into our mess, into our sinful and violent world, and lived among the very people that rebelled against Him, in order to redeem and restore.

**ELIE HADDAD**  
President | ABTS

Common sense dictates that we flee from a troubled region, while God's calling for the Church is to endure, to discover its prophetic role, to proclaim the love of Christ, to live out Kingdom values, and to exhibit to the world the marks of the reign of God. This is the kind of Church that is needed in the Arab world at a time like this. We, at ABTS, are humbled and thrilled to be called by God to serve such a Church, to help develop missional leaders for the Church and provide educational and ministry resources.

This is an abridged version of an article that was published in the ABTS newsletter in July, 2019.

You can read the full article here: <https://abtslebanon.org/portfolio-item/july-2019-newsletter-is-there-hope-a-word-from-abts-president-elie-haddad/>

**Read Full Article**

Or go to  
[https://abtslebanon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/ABTS-ENL-07\\_2019.pdf](https://abtslebanon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/ABTS-ENL-07_2019.pdf)

# SAVE THE DATE



#GIVINGTUESDAY

## TEMPTED BY HOPE: GIVING TUESDAY

What if a story of hope came out of the Middle East instead of the usual news of war and chaos? What if you had a chance to partake in this story of hope?

In a country where the Lebanese youth see no other prospects than to emigrate and the refugee Syrian youth have never known anything besides displacement and need, the ache for hope and meaning amidst the senseless suffering is overwhelming. By reaching out to the hurting children of Lebanon and sharing the love of Christ with them, the Baptist Children and Youth Ministry (BCYM) brings light into the darkness with the offer of healing and renewed hope.

What is this hope? It is a hope that stems from the knowledge of God's love and from a sense of community, of belonging, and of never being alone.

BCYM shares this hope with the disempowered children and youth of Lebanon through its three-day camps and follow-up events where children can have fun and learn about the love of Christ, through its training workshops and conferences for youth and youth leaders, and also through its home visits.

This Thanksgiving, in order to support BCYM's programs and activities, LSESD and MEBO will be taking part in the worldwide Giving Tuesday campaign. By participating in Giving Tuesday to raise support for the work that BCYM engages in among refugee and vulnerable Lebanese children, LSESD is investing in Lebanon's future and raising awareness about the dangers of neglecting Lebanon's next generation.

Partner with us this year by giving the gift of hope to Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese children. By doing so, these precious lives have a chance to experience the love, joy, and hope that Christ brings to the world, giving them more confidence for their future. With the help of generous sponsors, BCYM's desire is to be able to continue its meaningful work among underprivileged children and youth and even expand its horizons to minister to previously unreached communities. Please consider joining us in this endeavor on **December 3rd** and follow us on Facebook to receive further updates about the campaign!



Watch our  
Giving Tuesday Video

Or go to [bit.ly/BCYMGivingTuesday](http://bit.ly/BCYMGivingTuesday)

Participate in Giving Tuesday

Or go to [www.mebo.org](http://www.mebo.org)

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*What if a story of hope came out of the Middle East instead of the usual news of war and chaos?*

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EMILY HOPPIN

Communications Officer | LSESD

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*By choosing not to let their surroundings evoke fear and anxiety but rather use the opportunity to show God's love and grace, they were actually able to catapult themselves above their circumstances and launch into greater areas of ministry and influence.*

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## WHEN TEMPTED TO FLEE, STAND

Wave after wave of violence has threatened to extinguish the light of Christ in Iraq as the country has been vacated of over two thirds of its Christian population since the early 2000s. And yet, at least one pastor and his congregation can be highlighted as having stood firm in the face of the temptation to flee and chosen to shine as bright lights in the impending darkness.

This story is of Pastor Ara, an ABTS graduate, and his church in Baghdad. Shortly after the church's establishment in 2004, the Iraqi sectarian war broke out in 2006 and lasted until 2008 causing many Christians to leave. Following a brief respite, militants with the Islamic State of Iraq massacred a number of congregants in a Syriac Catholic cathedral in Baghdad in 2010, triggering a new wave of fear among Christians. To further exacerbate their difficulties, ISIS entered Mosul and the Nineveh plains in 2014 forcing Christians to flee the regions that had been their home for over 2000 years.

At this point Ara's congregation stood at a crossroads. They could either give in to feelings of fear and helplessness and emigrate (as some had already

done), or they could choose to stay and respond positively to the crisis by helping those who had been displaced. As Ara felt strongly that God was calling him to stay, which is what ABTS encourages its graduates to do, he likewise emboldened his congregation to take heart and stay as well. Their first step was to start giving assistance to those people who had come to Baghdad seeking refuge; so, they gave food packages to 25 displaced families. These families were touched by their acts of compassion and by the visits they received. Gradually, with MERATH's help, his church was able to increase their efforts to help people from a variety of backgrounds in their community.

Now after five years of serving the community, the Baptist church led by Ara has extended its reach to include around 20 home groups in the Baghdad area. By choosing not to let their surroundings evoke fear and anxiety but rather use the opportunity to show God's love and grace, they were actually able to catapult themselves above their circumstances and launch into greater areas of ministry and influence.

**Support a Pastor**

Or go to [bit.ly/SupportABTS](http://bit.ly/SupportABTS)

**EMILY HOPPIN**  
Communications Officer | LSESD



## ONE MOM'S TEMPTATION TO DENY HER SON

“If you are able? All things are possible for the one who believes’ ... Jesus gently took his hand and raised him to his feet, and he stood up.” When the disciples asked Jesus why they could not heal the boy, Jesus answered, “This kind can only be resolved through prayer and fasting” (Mark 9:14-29). It’s all about faith. How often is our fear greater than our faith, pushing us to avoid facing our challenges through any temptation that crosses our path.

This story is about Betty’s wakeup call when she realized that nothing is impossible for God, as long as we believe. Betty’s testimony gives hope, joy, and calmness to all parents of children with special needs.

“When I first found out that my eldest boy was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, I was shocked. I was in denial. I did not want to hear it. My fear was so great that I decided not to face it. For years, I ran away through sports, friends, and texting all the time at home so that I could stay away from my son, family, and reality that I was failing as a mom. Spending hours at the gym, I ignored my husband and son whom I feared would grow up to be dependent on me all his life. I felt that I was being punished by God. The temptations I gave into kept me away from my son who was growing into a boy I did not know with skills and abilities that I was not discovering.

DANIELLA DAOU

Partner Relations Coordinator| SKILD

Not accepting my son’s case prevented me from seeing anything outside my own fear. While I was away dealing with denial, fear, and frustration, my husband was taking care of the family, playing the role of both mom and dad. It was not until my marriage fell apart and our lives became miserable that I acknowledged my weakness and vulnerability. I was terrified that my children would one day blame me for being a selfish mother. Studying the Bible and learning how to live by its teachings gave me great faith that nothing is impossible for God. I learned that anything can be overcome through prayer. I repented as a woman, wife, and mother. It was then that I truly started discovering my son’s abilities and realized that he has superpowers in languages and technology. The more I accepted him, the more talents I discovered in him, but all this happened only after I started working on myself first. Walking daily with God brought peace and joy and helped me see His hand in everything, even in hard times.”

Betty now coordinates the Parent2Parent support group at the SKILD Center where she supports other parents going through similar hard and happy times.

**Support SKILD**

Or go to [bit.ly/SupportSKILD](http://bit.ly/SupportSKILD)

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*Not accepting my son’s case prevented me from seeing anything outside my own fear.*

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# Op-Ed: Opinion on the Situation in Lebanon

*The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of LSESD.*

Lebanon is a unique beast. It is a country of sharp social contrast and a fragile sectarian balance—a balance that has dominated Lebanese politics since the end of the civil war in 1990 and that has recently started to show cracks.

The unprecedented popular uprisings of the past three weeks were sparked by an economic and social crisis that was long overdue. Today Lebanon has reached a breaking point where Botox injection (a Lebanese specialty) can no longer hide the deep wrinkles and skin cancer of a crumbling economy: at 150% of GDP, the Lebanese public debt is the third highest in the world, with no prospect of future economic growth and endemic corruption permeating all levels of society.

While this crisis was long in the making, Lebanon's political class was able to maintain its power through a sophisticated clientele and tutelage system that was carved along confessional and geographical lines. Bread and low-paying jobs were given to the most vulnerable in exchange for obedient consent while a piece of the economic pie was shared with the more affluent. However, this system could not sustain itself anymore with the mounting institutional and economic woes that became too egregious to disregard. Living standards have declined for citizens while costs of living have increased. The future prospects of Lebanon's brightest youth have become synonymous with emigration.

In the 60s, Lebanon was considered the “Switzerland of the East”. Today with its potholes, unstable electricity and the rampant environmental crisis, Lebanon looks more like Swiss gruyere cheese rather than a Swiss watch.

There are several reasons why the situation in Lebanon is the way it is. Below is a non-exhaustive list that would give us a small flavor:

- Post-war reconstruction efforts were limited to the real estate and tourism sectors while little was invested in the industrial and agricultural sectors. The Lebanese import most of what they consume, and political stability, which is essential for tourism, has been eluding Lebanon for a long time.
- Political, economical and financial resources have been mismanaged by a corrupt political elite that has sought to enrich itself.
- Lebanon endured military occupation by its Syrian neighbor from 1990 until 2005, which enshrined a culture of non-accountability amidst the political class towards the Lebanese people since accountability was instead owed to the Syrian patrons.
- The country has been deeply divided along sectarian lines. There was never a proper reconciliation process after the civil war. The political class decided to have a generalized amnesia regarding what happened while each community was left to write its own narrative. The wound beneath the scar is not yet healed.
- The existence of a state within the state has continuously undermined the authority of the Lebanese government which has lost “the monopoly of the legitimate use of force” to quote Max Weber.
- Deeply rooted sectarianism and political affiliations to foreign governments has linked Lebanon's fate to regional politics making it a bargaining chip for regional and international hegemons.

So, amidst this bleak portrait, is there hope?

For a long time, I had lost hope. I believed my countrymen to be too apathetic and fatalistic to do anything with regard to the situation, especially since the last parliamentary elections in March 2018 brought the same political elite back into power while half of the population abstained from voting.

The past month's spontaneous uprising of people from all walks-of-life, young and old, female and male, across religious and geographical divides gave me a glimmer of hope. The unity shown by the protesters in raising only the Lebanese flag reminded me of the successful popular uprising in 2005 that led to the withdrawal of Syrian troops after 15 years of occupation.

In 2005, we learned how to be Lebanese together. In 2019, we are learning how to be citizens.

More than ever, we need wisdom from above as there are no easy answers or quick-fix solutions. The algorithm and myriad variables behind what is happening is beyond my comprehension. No one knows how things will unfold. However, as members of the body of Christ we are committed to remaining salt and light in Lebanon and the MENA region and will continue to “do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with [our] God” (Micah 6:8).

**WISSAM NASRALLAH**

Chief Operations Officer | LSESD

# PRAY FOR LEBANON

As the fate of Lebanon remains uncertain, all of our November events have been put on hold. However, we ask that you would please join with us in prayer for our nation, that God's will might be done here in our country as it is in heaven.

- Pray for safety and God's protection all around and that we will have the wisdom to know how to shine in a way that glorifies God;
- Pray that God grants us wisdom to know how to pursue our different projects and keep working on strategic plans for the future that will impact the Church and the local community in Lebanon and the region;
- Pray that the efforts of the Lebanese people will not be in vain;
- Pray for wisdom for those in authority so that they may make decisions for the common good.

[Visit our prayer page](#)

Or go to [bit.ly/PrayForLSESD](https://bit.ly/PrayForLSESD)



## MERATH: WINTERIZATION

Last winter, intense storms, heavy rain, snowfall leading to floods, and freezing temperatures severely affected numerous families in Lebanon and Syria. Please pray with us that the coming winter will be more lenient, and help us prepare for the cold season by supporting our winter programs. \$100 keeps one family warm by providing mattresses, blankets and/or heater and fuel.

To learn more go to:  
<https://merathlebanon.org/2019/03/08/in-the-bleak-mid-winter/>

[Provide winter supplies for refugees](#)

Or go to [merathlebanon.org/donate](https://merathlebanon.org/donate)



*None of this would be possible if it weren't for you our faithful partners, friends and loyal supporters. ❤️*

[Commit to pray for us](#)

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**to learn more about LSESD's ministries**

**Read last month's newsletter at [bit.ly/OCTOBERNewsletter](https://bit.ly/OCTOBERNewsletter)**