



Newsletter | OCTOBER 2019



# Forgive Us Our Trespasses AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US

In a culture of shame and honor, like ours, that leaves little room for restoration and redemption we tend to overlook the forgiveness that we have freely received from God when relating to others. With a still active tribal mindset, our extension of forgiveness seems to be pre-determined by unspoken codes of conduct set forth by cultural constructs. The lip service that we sometimes grant to 'the other' is often void of a process of cleansing the heart and of healing broken relationships with God and our neighbor.

Raised by those who were once children of a 15-year civil war, I am part of an entire generation that is still struggling with inherited bitterness and resentment. However, I am also blessed by the opportunity to witness what freedom looks like when God-fearing individuals, communities and people groups are reconciled with God first, themselves second and their neighbor third.

This reminds us that asking and receiving His forgiveness with vulnerability and humility is the only way to break a destructive cycle of self-pity, anger and violence. True forgiveness flows and stems from a heart that has tasted and is satiated with God's mercy and grace! Kenneth Bailey writes in his book, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*, "Through forgiveness, the bitterness, anger, hatred, and desire for revenge are drained out of the struggle and the person contends with those for whom he or she may now be able to feel genuine compassion... After the offered forgiveness, the struggle for justice continues, but now there are things the person will not do. The day of victory or defeat will not become a day of vengeance."

**MAY-LEE MELKI**

Development Officer | LSESD

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# ROSETTE: THE JOURNEY TO FORGIVENESS

*Forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling. Who are we to decide who is worthy to be forgiven, after God has forgiven us so much? We shouldn't wait for our healing to come before we start to serve others.*

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Imagine that you are held at gunpoint waiting to be executed by the foreign soldiers who are terrorizing your land. You close your eyes and anticipate the pull of the trigger that will end your life in an instant when suddenly a miracle occurs, and your executioners are blown away by the blast of a friendly tank shell. Thanking God that your life has been spared, you escape with your life and the lives of your family members. However, the trauma doesn't end there as the invaders continue to ravage your land, kidnap your countrymen, and rape your countrywomen. For years after your divine deliverance, you continue to be wracked with terror, waking up at night with nightmares, tossing and turning in your bed while you wait for soldiers to come drag you away. The fear begins to warp your mind, causing even the very sound of the intruders' dialect to become odious to you. After such trauma, do you think that you would be able to forgive and love your enemy? This was Rosette's story.

Having lived through the Lebanese civil war, Rosette faced a near-death experience at the hands of Syrian soldiers. For many years after the end of the civil war, she found herself struggling to forgive, despite knowing full well God's call on His children to forgive and love their enemies. Five years of fasting and praying to forgive seemed to make the fear and pain go away until suddenly a new war broke out, this time in the heart of her former enemies' country. As Syrian refugees began to flood across the border, seemingly "invading" the land anew, Rosette felt paralyzed to reach out and help them, even though she knew this would be the Good Samaritan thing to do. Praying for them from a distance, Rosette felt unable to visit them face to face despite their widespread presence in her town.

God, however, had other plans for her. As her son and his wife began to help the refugee families, they would come back to her recounting myriad tales of the miraculous works that God was performing among the Syrians. One day two particularly powerful stories finally broke the back of Rosette's inhibitions. Suddenly, she realized that she no longer wanted to sit on the sidelines and miss out on what God was doing. She decided to start visiting refugee families and reach out by lending helpful hands and listening ears. In order to heal her heart of the past, God continually spoke to her the verse, "Love your enemy", allowing it to echo through her mind each morning when she woke up. Finally, one day, the echoing stopped, and she realized that God had completely set her free from her trauma. By serving others, she was able to let go of her past and fully love her former enemies.

When asked what wisdom she can impart to Christ's followers from her experiences, Rosette emphasized the need to obey God before receiving healing. It was through serving that she was set free, not the other way around. Forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling. Who are we to decide who is worthy to be forgiven, after God has forgiven us so much? We shouldn't wait for our healing to come before we start to serve others. Just as the lepers were healed as they obeyed Jesus (Luke 17:14), so shall we, too, be healed as we follow God's call upon our lives.

**Support  
reconciliation efforts**

Go to [bit.ly/SupportLSESD](http://bit.ly/SupportLSESD)

**EMILY HOPPIN**  
Communications Officer | LSESD



## HEALING THE HURTING

Our small team from New Zealand comprised two dentists, one general practitioner and two Tearfund NZ staff members. This visit to Lebanon was saturated with history, culture, hospitality, and stories of the redemptive power of God's love in the marginalized of Lebanese society.

The fissures in Lebanese society can be as multitudinous as the cracks in the bark of a Lebanese cedar. A litany of people groups has swept through this land: Phoenicians, Persians, Romans, Crusaders, Arabs, French. A historically fissile mix of 18 religions makes Lebanon the most religiously diverse society in the Middle East. Christianity has ancient roots here, as Jesus walked and performed miracles in areas near Tyre (Lebanon was once part of the biblical land of Canaan).

Lebanon has had an uneasy history with its eastern neighbor. The Syrian army occupied Lebanon from 1976 (shortly after the inception of the multi-faceted civil war) until 2005. Hence, to many Lebanese, the current 'invasion' of their country by Syrian refugees is complicated. The sheer number of refugees, totaling perhaps 1.5 million, has placed unbearable stress on the existing infrastructure.

Jesus' modern-day followers in Lebanon are instrumental in caring for those whose homes have been destroyed and whose societies have been decimated.

DR. HIMALI MCINNES

Volunteer | Tearfund New Zealand

Churches, funded by organizations such as LSESD and Tearfund, are providing food, shelter, fuel, and education.

Our free medical and dental clinic, set up in a church located in the purple-hazed Beqaa Valley, saw about forty patients a day. There were complex medical cases, multiple carious teeth, and many stories of sadness and loss. We treated patients and held their hands as we prayed with them.

One night, we attended a home group in a refugee settlement. Hymns in Arabic swelled around us. Stories of healing by 'Isa', visions and dreams of Jesus proclaiming forgiveness and hope, and the compassion shown by Lebanese Christians who had had to overcome their own prejudices and resentment all demonstrated how God is working in powerful ways rarely seen in the global church today.

A week after we arrived, we left Lebanon in awe of the grace, love, and forgiveness saturating this space. There is much more work to be done, and there is an urgent need for more helpers. We look forward to returning to this 'thin' place, a place, according to Celtic Christianity, where heaven and earth almost touch.

Provide medical assistance for refugees

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

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*Although smart phones serve as our most useful companion, allowing them to have the priority in our lives violates the first commandment of having no other gods besides the Lord our God.*

**”**

## **FATHER, FORGIVE US FOR WE HAVE SINNED**

When we wake up each morning, what's the first item we lay our hands on: our Bibles or our smart phones? Jesus commanded us to “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33), but how many of us have the resolve to lay down our distractions and truly focus our attention on God alone? Lina Abu Jamra, founder of Living with Power Ministries, boldly exhorted us to confront such questions at a conference, jointly organized by LSESD's youth and publishing ministries, on the influence of cell phones in our daily lives. Referencing the classic story of Mary and Martha, she asked us which type of person we are. She also contrasted Samson and Daniel to portray how allowing distractions into our lives, though seemingly harmless at first, can lead to our destruction. As a God-ordained judge, Samson was filled with the Spirit of God and capable of doing mighty acts; however, his unquenchable lust for foreign women ultimately resulted in his capture and the loss of his eyes. Daniel, on the other hand, proved his undivided devotion to the God of Abraham by not allowing himself to compromise with the world and partake in its delicacies.

His desire from a young age to sanctify himself and commit to staying pure and undistracted resulted in the conversion of one of the most wicked rulers in the history of man and the glorification of the One True God across an entire empire. When faced with these two opposites, we must ask ourselves: Who would we rather be like?

Along the same theme, the conference also presented the launch of DMAH's Arabic translation of the book, *12 Ways Your Cell Phone is Changing You*. Its author, Tony Reinke, also calls us to evaluate how our smart phones have changed us and our relationships with God. Although smart phones serve as our most useful companion, allowing them to have the priority in our lives violates the first commandment of having no other gods besides the Lord our God. In today's technological world, few of us are immune to its addictive pull that quietly creeps into our daily lives and demands all our attention. As we realize that our closest friend has most likely become an idol in our lives, we must turn our faces back to God and say, “Father, forgive us for we have sinned.”

**EMILY HOPPIN**

Communications Officer | LSESD

# ABTS: PRAY FOR RETURNING STUDENTS

ABTS's first-year students are beginning to arrive in Lebanon! We are excited to have them join our family. Pray with us that their transition into our community will be smooth and blessed. Pray that God will give us the wisdom to guide them and that the time they spend here be fruitful and transformational. We pray that the Lord uses us as instruments in their growth into effective leaders and devoted servants for the Church in the Arab world.



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

**Visit our prayer page**

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

## OCTOBER EVENTS

**Children go back to school at MERATH education centers**

**OCTOBER 1**

**First-year ABTS students start academic year**

**OCTOBER 7**

**MERATH retreat for Syrian partners**

**OCTOBER 9-11**

**ABTS launch of "Sacred Misinterpretations" by Martin Accad at Elias Salibi Hall**

**OCTOBER 21**

**Inauguration of SKILD center at NDU**

**OCTOBER 26**

*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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**Donate to LSESD**

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