

**One day in 2016, Yamani left his house at 3pm with his wife and kids for what seemed to be a road trip. No one in Sudan except his brother and his friend knew that they would be fleeing to Egypt in a few hours. Not even his kids knew. The day before, Yamani had kept the luggage at his friend's house so the kids would not find out. Everything had to be done in utter secrecy.**

"I asked Hayat, my wife, to take the kids' passports along with the money," Yamani shared, "and if I were to be caught and left behind, that she and the kids would board the plane anyway." But Yamani and his family made it safely to Egypt, and today, he has a wonderful ministry with Sudanese refugees. Recently, in an interview, Yamani shared with us about God's work where he is.

### **How did your ministry take off in Egypt?**

My ministry in Egypt started in 2016 as an extension to the ministry I had started in Sudan, *Cush Returns to God*. Its vision is to bring glory to God by seeing Sudanese in Egypt, Sudan, and other host countries return to God and be reconciled with Him through His son Jesus Christ. In Egypt, I began to think of ways I could reach out to Sudanese refugees. I began to meet the Sudanese pastors and ministry leaders, and I joined the First Baptist Church in Shobra. In that same year, I led a small workshop and invited around 17 church leaders. By the end of my workshop, two people had joined me, and with each month, more kept joining.

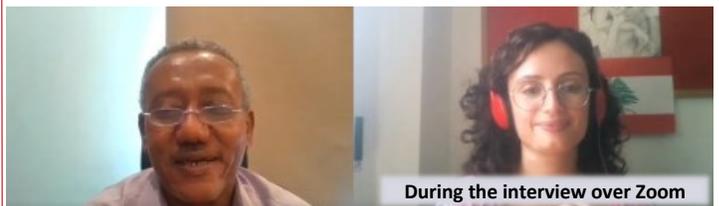
### **How did ministry with Darfuris start?**

During my first year in Egypt, I met a number of Darfuris who live in Six October City, which lies an hour and a half away from

Cairo. I would minister to them all day every Friday, and eventually, God started a home church there. We were seven people right then, but today, we have four discipleship groups, and those who have been in the faith long enough are now discipling new believers.

When I saw how miraculously God was working among Darfuris, I began to pray that God would raise up Church leaders from among them. Because many were travelling from Egypt to other countries, I worked hard to train leaders who can reach out to the Sudanese diaspora abroad. Several of them even returned to Sudan and are currently serving God faithfully there.

The ministry grew, and we began to hold three to four trainings a year for Sudanese ministry leaders coming from different denominations. More and more, a bigger number of church leaders began to realize the importance of mission work.



### **What is the status of Sudanese refugees in Egypt?**

Generally, things are not bad. Refugees in Egypt are allowed to stay anywhere in the country rather than huddle together in one big refugee camp. Refugee kids struggle to get a proper education, however, because refugee schools are usually held in small residential apartments, and there aren't enough teachers. Sometimes, they don't have access to proper healthcare, either, since they earn very little, and they have no health insurance.

But despite all this, those who come from war zones such as Darfur and the Nuba Mountains find life in Egypt much better.

**Why are Sudanese refugees drawn to Christ?**

The Darfuris I served with tell of how they suffered at the hands of religious extremists, but they also tell of Christian individuals and non-profit organizations who had stood by them when they needed it the most. While the atrocities of war led some to denounce God and religion altogether, many came to Christ because they had experienced His love through His people. Most of the Darfuri believers are college students with bright minds and a strong desire to know the truth. We answer their questions, start discussions, and pray with them.



During a baptism for Darfuri believers

appeared through the gate with three young men who had heard so much about Christ from her mother that they decided to become His disciples. We prayed together, and after our meeting, my mood was completely altered.

**Is there a certain story that illustrates the change you see in the people you serve?**

Once, during a trauma healing conference for Darfuri believers, the speaker began to call for forgiveness. Suddenly, an attendee stood up and, enraged, he cried out, “I can never forgive al-Bashir! I can never forgive the religious extremists who killed my family!” During the ongoing conflict in Western Sudan, a systematic genocide had taken place in Darfur. Some villages were completely annihilated. Many were burned alive in their own homes.

We helped the young man calm down, and we prayed together. Then, on the last day of the conference, he stood up again and said as he struggled to hold back his tears, “I have forgiven al-Bashir and the religious extremists who killed my family. All I want for them is to know Christ.”

**How did the seminary training change you?**

I had applied to ABTS hoping to become a good Bible teacher, but I ended up getting much more than that. I found myself gaining the skills needed to invest in people’s lives and to call for missional work, which was lacking in Sudan. Within me grew a concern for Sudan as a whole, and I eventually came up with a clear vision for ministry called *Cush Returns to God*. I am thankful for ABTS President Elie Haddad with whom I met several times as I worked on my vision. I remember sitting in his office as he wrote on his whiteboard, and we brainstormed together.

**What are your hopes for ministry?**

The hopes are many and often bigger than I am. I dream of starting a discipleship school for Sudanese people that runs for



Yamani giving a course at a Bible school

**What moves your heart while doing ministry? What keeps you going?**

One of my favorite verses about Jesus is Matthew 9:36. It says, “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them.” Twice, the gospel shows Jesus weeping. Once, He cried before the tomb of Lazarus, and another time, He wept while looking at Jerusalem. When I see the Sudanese people in their desolation and separation from God, I can’t but think of ways to serve them.

As a student speaker during my 2013 graduation ceremony, I remember speaking about how the disciples had asked Jesus to send the crowds away, but Jesus instead asked the disciples to give the people something to eat. I cannot feed all these people alone, but I can inspire a small number of leaders to inspire others in their communities and churches.

**Do you feel that your passion has dwindled with time?**

That is not the case at all! The fire in me burns brighter than ever. Sometimes I feel discouraged, but my passion for God and His ministry only grows stronger. One time, as I sat in our churchyard, quite tired and downcast, a young Darfuri woman

three to four months yearly. I dream of starting a radio station that spreads God’s word in the Sudanese dialect exclusively. Currently, I am working on translating the Bible, along with a team, to the spoken Sudanese dialect. It will be in the form of an audio app, and we will distribute it in hard-to-access places. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:58 “Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

**We are encouraged that many Darfuris are seeking Christ and boldly speaking of His love. We stand amazed at God’s changing work, and we pray for our graduates who, like Yamani, are allowing the Holy Spirit to work through them.**



Yamani sharing during a leadership training conference

## The Spiritual and Christian Life

**We offered our continuing students a set of electives from August 9 to September 5. Grace Al Zoughbi, our adjunct faculty member who taught one of these electives, *The Spiritual and Christian Life*, shared her experience teaching the students.**

This course is important for those serving God in the Arab world because it removes their attention from their selves and turns it to God’s work, to God’s Kingdom, and to God’s labor. When we commit to a life of faith, we are continually transformed into His image as we identify with the needs of one another. The Arab world needs such leaders to be a witness for our living and loving God, the God of Hope.

It has been a humbling experience teaching this course. I have thoroughly enjoyed interacting with the students, and my life has been richly blessed by reading their prayers, devotions, journals, and reflections, which were part of their assignments. Their dedication to grow in their journey with the Lord and to be His disciples, no matter what, is inspiring.

In our online Scripture reading that we held together, we read the words of Jesus from Matthew 5. The beatitude “Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted” spoke poignantly to us as a class at this time: though suffering is part of our spirituality, joy comes in the morning.

Suffering in the lives of the students comes in the shape of persecution for their faith, the absence of freedom, and the meagerness of resources, yet an acknowledgment that God is bigger than all that they go through becomes evident in them as they grow in their faith. As for me, this course has challenged

me to pray more specifically for the needs of the persecuted church.

Here, I quote a written prayer from one of the students, which has deeply encouraged me:

**“Lord of all grace, I thank you for preserving my life till this moment. Thank you for teaching me so many of your wonderful insights. Thank you for opening my eyes to meditate on your holy word. Lord, during this time of learning, help me to learn more how I can be in holy fellowship with you so that I can yearn to meditate on your word every day, with joy and diligence. Thank you, Lord, for listening to your servant. In the name of Christ, I pray.”**

After teaching this course, I was reminded afresh that the academic rigor of theological education must go alongside the character formation of the students. The spirituality and maturity that the students have exhibited through this journey is precisely what the Arab church needs.



**Grace holds a B.A. in Biblical Studies from Bethlehem Bible College and an M.A. in Theology from the London School of Theology. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. at the London**

**School of Theology with a special focus on the theological education of Arab women in the Middle East.**

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## Pray with Us!

### Prayers for Students and Graduates

#### Couple from Algeria | 2010 Bachelor and Diploma in Theology graduates

Please pray for the situation in Algeria in light of the recent fires. The flames ravaged our town, but we were safe since there aren't many trees near our home. A few families whose homes were destroyed stayed with us for a few days, and in all, there was a strong sense of community. We had a hard time sleeping knowing that the swiftly spreading fires could reach us at any moment, but it also served to remind us of our eternal home in heaven.

#### Michel from Lebanon | 2010 Diploma in Theology graduate

In the midst of all the mess that Lebanon is going through, we see God drawing souls to Himself and completing His work in us and through us. Pray for our ministry team in the North of Lebanon and the church that the Lord recently used us to plant. I also ask you to pray for my wife who is pregnant with our first child.

#### Nihad from Syria | 2017 Certificate in Ministry graduate serving in Lebanon

Our internally displaced Kurdish people who are living in camps are suffering so much. Many are coming to Christ, but the material need is huge. People with disabilities cannot get

proper treatment. They have no access to electricity or clean water, and they are suffering from diseases. Please pray for them and for the Kurdish Church so that it shines God's light to its people.

#### A student from Morocco | Integrated Theology Program student

I have recently been suffering from unintentional weight loss and anemia. My husband also got into a car accident, and due to his injury, our business has been affected. We know that trials are temporary, and we continue to praise and trust God through it all. In this perplexing time, my husband has been expressing a desire to study theology like me. Please pray that we overcome these trials in Him who has already overcome the world.

#### Wiam from Iraq | Integrated Theology Program student

I have gone through several surgeries due to my stomach problems, and my uncle recently passed away, so I haven't been able to fully focus on my studies lately. Due to the support of the people at seminary, however, I have found new strength to pursue my theological education. I would appreciate your prayers for me this season, and for my kids, that their relationship with Christ remains strong.