

“The light shines through the darkness,
and the darkness can never extinguish it.”

JOHN 1:5

SHINE THROUGH DARKNESS

The month of June marked the passing of my first year in Lebanon. The time has flown by and it seems as if I just arrived. At the same time, though, it feels like I have been in Lebanon forever and it is hard to imagine that just one year ago I had no idea what it meant to live in the Middle East. As I look back on this year, I am very pleased to see what the Lord has done. There are goals and dreams still to be fulfilled, but even so, God has done so much more than I could have expected. One objective for my first year was to adjust to the culture and people. So you can imagine that my heart is thrilled when I hear comments like “You’re Lebanese now!”, or when people assume that I am Lebanese and speak to me in Arabic. I have been overwhelmed at how the people, especially the church, have taken me in. I can sincerely say that they are my family, and I love them from the depths of my heart. It is an honor to stand with them and serve alongside them, as we work to see lives changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. I feel that a part of my purpose here in this region is to encourage the believers, and many would tell you that my presence here is doing just that. When we step out in obedience to what God tells us to do, we may not always understand and we may not always feel that we are doing enough, but we can trust that God is working. I would say this is the biggest lesson I have learned this year, to trust God. I do not usually understand or know what to do, but I will rest in the fact that God does know, and He will guide me. I believe this past year has been a year of building a foundation for many years of work here in the Middle East.

Now that the first year has passed, I am looking with much expectation to what the future holds here in Lebanon. One goal yet to be fulfilled is fluency in the Arabic language. The biggest hindrance is that most people here speak English, so it takes away the urgency. I can live in Lebanon easily without learning Arabic. However, to minister to the people effectively, I must learn the language. I am currently enrolled in a school taking Arabic lessons. The teachers say that I am doing well and that I am moving through the material quickly. People around tell me that they can also see the improvement each time I speak with them. It will come, and I appreciate your prayers as I continue to study. One of my greatest desires is to be able to communicate with the people in their language.

Day by day I am learning, adjusting and moving forward. It is an honor to serve the Lord in this part of the world. We are seeing God do great things and know that it is only the beginning. Lebanon is a key nation in the Middle East, what happens in this nation will spread throughout the region. We will see salvation reach the farthest ends of the earth!

Prayer Needs:

- *Wisdom & Direction*
- *The Lord's protection*
- *Becoming fluent in Arabic*
- *Adjusting to new life & culture*
- *Provision*

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For more information on the church where I am serving, please visit:

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Make checks payable to
Westside Church.

List “Mary Beth Thoms” in the
memo line.

Support received after 20th of
the month will apply to the
following month cycle.

I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

Philippians 1: 4-6