

PRAYER & PRAISE

Quarterly news from Middle East Media

ISSUE 92 APRIL 2016

LIFE IN THE DESERT

Bible truths through animation

FARID'S STORY

An Omani believer's testimony

SPONSOR A BLOSSOMS PARTICIPANT

Women's inner healing media workshops

middle east
media

Dear Friends,

In February, I had the privilege of visiting our teams in North Africa and the Gulf. As I met with my Middle Eastern colleagues and learnt about their work, it became clear that in all our media productions and training, we are aiming to meet the innermost needs of the people of the Middle East in a holistic way. Whether it's women in need of guidance in parenting and marriage, refugee children in need of comfort and counselling, or believers in the Gulf needing to know they aren't alone in their faith - we look beyond a person's religion, to come alongside them in their very real emotional, spiritual, social and practical circumstances.

In all these cases, what people need most is an encounter with the truth of God's love. Women encounter God's love when they participate in our emotional intelligence workshops, and find people who will listen to them and give them a creative outlet for their pain. Children encounter God's love whenever they see one of our 3D animations and realise that they too are a precious individual with their own voice, which they can use for positive change in their communities. Viewers across the Arab world encounter God's love when they see one of our *Arabian Dawn* testimonies, and hear about the total transformation that faith in Christ has brought to their compatriot's lives.



In this edition of *Prayer & Praise*, you'll find one such testimony from an Omani believer - a captivating insight into the way God is moving in the Arabian Peninsula. You'll also find news and points for prayer for *Life in the Desert*, our new 3D animation for Middle Eastern children, and an urgent prayer request regarding funding from trusts and foundations.

There's also an update from Nelly, our International Director, on the security situation in North Africa, for which we would greatly appreciate your prayers.

Thank you so much for your support!



Emily Shurmer
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Will you help a North African woman find her voice?

Women in North Africa live in a male-dominated society, and are often taught that their worth is only half of a man. Many have experienced significant oppression, trauma and abuse, but it is often considered shameful to speak out against it.

Our Blossoms course helps women deal with their pain and empowers them to break their silence. The course provides psychological training and simple filmmaking training, to give women the tools to express themselves through short audiovisual messages.

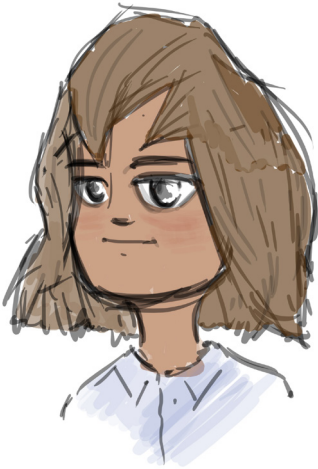
For just *£15 a month*, you could sponsor one woman through our Blossoms training over the course of a year.

To pledge to support a North African woman through the Blossoms training, please fill in the details on the response form and send it back to us. Thank you.

"I gained a new insight about unconditional acceptance and love, and realized that we all need to be accepted as we are."

- Blossoms participant

Life in the desert

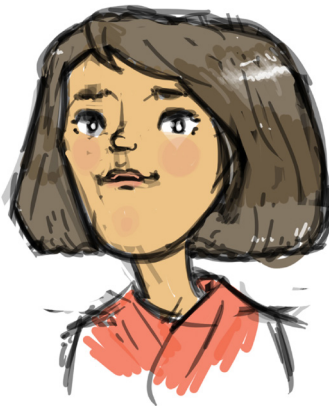


***Life in the Desert* is our new 3D animated series for children aged 5-9, to help them deal with loss and fear and encourage them with hope for the future.**

Many children in the Middle East, particularly refugees and those in conflict zones, are dealing with trauma, fear, loss and grief. This animated series will provide comfort, support and biblical teaching to children, to equip them to deal with the difficult challenges they face.



The *Life in the Desert* series follows the story of an 8-year-old girl called Farah. After her mother dies, Farah goes to live with her father, who works in the desert as a tour guide. She doesn't know her father very well and finds it hard to adjust to her new life and the loss of her mother.



As she is feeling alone and struggles to sleep, her father reaches out to her by reading her stories about the heroes of the Bible. He tells her how they also faced big challenges and carried big questions in their hearts like she does.

As Farah and her father discuss these characters and the choices they made, Farah develops her own personal faith. She begins to open her heart to her new community, making friends and inviting them to her house to join in the evening discussions and stories. She becomes an inspiration to others in the village, reading the Bible herself and telling the stories to others.

MEET THE FARAHs:

Some early concept drawings for Farah, the main character of *Life in the Desert*.

Each episode will contain a biblical message, centred on a 1-2 minute Bible story that comes alive in animation as Farah's father reads it to her.

Life in the Desert will present Bible characters in all their human complexity, showing children that God can speak to them through his Word and can help them overcome whatever hardships they are going through.

We are hoping to use this series as part of a package for refugee children, as they have been through some of the most extreme traumas and are in particular need of teaching on God's love and healing power.

Please pray that we would secure funding for at least the two pilot episodes of *Life in the Desert*, which would be a lifeline for our animation department.

The animation team is one of our best assets, and are of such high calibre that they are constantly being offered jobs elsewhere! If we can secure funding for this project, we'd be able to keep them all in their jobs with us for at least the next few years.

We need your prayers for a funding breakthrough...

Please pray for us as we seek funding from Christian trusts and foundations.

We rely on these organisations for most of our income but are finding it increasingly hard to secure funding, as many of them are now focusing only on emergency response to the refugee crisis. Last year we had to let a considerable number of our field staff go, as the funding that would normally have covered the projects they were working on was redirected to the humanitarian crisis.

Whilst we absolutely see the desperate need for aid for refugees, we also see that the crisis can't be solved only through emergency funding. It's vital that a local Christian presence remains in the Middle East, both physically and through media, to address the root of human brokenness in people's hearts out of which all other crises arise.

Our projects seek to address this human need, as well as providing jobs and training for Middle Eastern Christians who wish to stay in their home countries, despite being under increasing pressure to leave for a safer and more prosperous life elsewhere. Once our talented staff have left, we are unlikely to get them back again, which would be a great loss to us and to the region.

Please pray that those in charge of these trusts and foundations would see the need for both emergency response and longer term projects like ours.



Farid's story ARABIAN DAWN

Farid had some serious doubts about Islam, but was taught to obey without questioning. In one of our recent *Arabian Dawn* videos, he describes how in Jesus he found the answer he was looking for.

Arabian Dawn is an online video series in which Muslim-background Gulf believers share their testimonies. The series has been viewed by millions of people across the Arab world.

Farid* grew up in a Sunni Muslim family. When his family moved to Oman, he joined a very strict strand of Islam. "I tried to be convinced this was the true religion," Farid says. "Then I started having doubts on some of the stories and verses mentioned in the Quran or the Hadith."

"When I tried discussing these things with [the Muslim leaders], they refused and said, 'A Muslim must obey without questioning.' I came to the conclusion this was not what I was looking for."

In his twenties, Farid moved to a different Arabic country and started exploring Shiite Islam, and became very active and devout. "I created a website for Shiite media. I was practicing all the rituals," he says.

"The same thing happened again. I started having a lot of questions and there were no answers. For the second time, I felt I needed to evaluate where I was."

*Not his real name

Whilst in that country, he became good friends with one of his neighbours, who was a Christian. Farid noticed that even though his friend was going through extreme hardships, there was something different about him.

"He was always laughing and was always showing love. If he was being told that someone was talking behind his back, he would say, 'Please don't tell me. I forgive him anyway.' He was the one to give me my first Bible. I asked him and he gave it to me on the spot."

Farid found he could discuss the Bible openly with Christians, and that his questions were welcome.

When he moved back to Oman he lost contact with Christians, but found Arabic Christian channels on TV. At first he found them shocking. "Very simply, I hated them," he says. "I used to cry in front of the TV. Sometimes I would take off my shoes and throw them at the TV!"

"I searched and checked on the laptop. I was hoping to find out that what they said wasn't true... Unfortunately, I was always shocked to find that what they were saying was true."

"Now I was trying to balance between two sides, Islam and Christ. With time, Islam's side was decreasing and Christ's side was rising higher."

More than anything else, Farid found himself compelled by the life of Christ.

"He was the first one to live what he was preaching. I noticed he never forced anyone to follow him, never held a sword or a rod saying 'follow me!' He gave a choice - those who come I will give eternal life and water to never thirst again."

It had taken a long time, but Farid was finally ready to welcome Christ into his life. "That day I promised him, 'Touch my heart and I will dedicate my whole life to you.' I tasted the sweetness of faith in Christ."

"My old belief was that God is like a trap, waiting for the smallest sin so He can throw me in hell, curse me and cast me away from his mercy. Now I'm not scared of him like before. Even when I sin I return to him, knowing he will accept me... I am 100% confident that God hates sin, but doesn't hate me."

To view Farid's full testimony and more videos testimonies from our Arabian Dawn series, visit www.vimeo.com/middleeastmedia

Join Farid's prayer for the people of Oman

Lord, I thank you for coming into my life. I stand before your cross proclaiming you King and Lord over my life.

My Omani brothers are religious. They love you, but don't know who you are and they are deceived. I am praying for them, that you may touch the heart of every person in Oman. Give them a reason to start thinking and start searching.

Lord, it saddens me so much that they are not able to experience the joy I have in you. Please open their eyes, Lord! Oman is for Jesus.

In the name of Jesus, Amen.

From our International Director

Please pray for the protection and security of our field teams

MEM faced tremendous pressure last year, with financial challenges in our North Africa office and seeking new personnel in the Gulf. Now, recent additional security pressures are causing unnecessary anxiety!

A few weeks ago as staff members in North Africa were heading into their office building, a van parked on the street approached one of our producers and a man introduced himself as 'security police'. He asked our producer about his job. Well, our staff member answered politely, but was further harassed as to why he seemed nervous and restless. They left him unharmed, but this repetitive 'checking' affects the morale of the team, is rather intimidating, and causes our staff members to feel that they are continuously at risk.

We need all our partners to stand with us in prayer for the safety of our field teams. We ask the Lord for complete protection for our staff and their families, as well as our office buildings. Please pray for us.

I want to praise the Lord that despite those challenges, our team is grateful for several new projects. Moreover, we are grateful to the Lord that the team is still excited and still has the ability to dream and plan together. In the past few weeks, the MEM directors revisited our vision to ensure that our visual material and media training continue to impact Arab people's lives in a holistic way.

I want to praise the Lord that looking back on 2015, we believe we have witnessed a miracle as we continue to work on projects like women's trafficking awareness, the women's inner healing workshops and counselling website, producing testimonials of new believers and soon the broadcasting of our animated drama.

God is good to MEM and we believe that without your prayers and support, we could not have come this far. Thank you.

In Him,

Nelly Gloryfield
International Director

Justice, compassion & hope through media

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