

PRAYER & PRAISE

Quarterly news from Middle East Media

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HEALING FROM TRAUMA

The psychological toll of conflict on Syria's children

POWERFUL POETRY

Embracing the rich tradition of Arabic poetry, for God's glory

middle east
media

Dear friends,

Welcome to Prayer & Praise! This edition has a special focus on *On Bended Knee*, a new series of short films of poetry, prose and prayer for the Gulf by local believers. We hope you're inspired as you read about how we're using poetry to reach the Arab World - take a look at the back page to find out how you can give to this exciting project.

Of course, we also have many other ongoing projects, for which we'd also appreciate your prayers! You can find more information about all of our current projects on our website at www.mem.org.

Among them is *Life in the Desert*, our animated 3D series for children. We're now developing a curriculum to go alongside the series, specifically for those who are working with traumatised children in the Middle East - read more opposite.

We also have projects focusing on women and gender equality, supporting new believers, and filmmaking and discipleship courses for children and young people - so do keep an eye on our Prayer Blog (www.mem.org/pray) for all our latest prayer requests!

In Him,



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Healing from trauma

The terrible psychological impact of the conflict in Syria on Syrian children is only just coming to light. According to a report by Save the Children, Syrian children are suffering from extreme levels of psychological trauma and emotional stress, and a staggering 70% of children interviewed were experiencing common symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder such as bedwetting, loss of speech, aggression and substance abuse.

The scale of this tragedy is vast. If left untreated, this kind of trauma can cause permanent and irreversible psychological damage. If something is to be done, it needs to be done now!

In partnership with child psychologists, our North Africa team is developing a series of trauma recovery workshops to go alongside our *Life in the Desert* animated series. We want to run these workshops with groups of refugee children in Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan. Ultimately, the aim is to encourage traumatised children to lift their eyes to God, in whom true healing is found.

The 3D series itself focuses on a young girl named Farah. After her mother dies, she is forced to move to the desert to live with her father, which leaves her full of pain, sadness and conflicting emotions. Over the course of the series, Farah learns to overcome her pain and reconciles with her father, through the example of biblical heroes.

Many of the children in the workshops will be experiencing similar emotions to Farah – sadness at having to leave their home against their will, the loss of leaving their toys and friends behind, anger at having no control over their situation or where they live, and the grief of losing family and loved ones.

Our workshops will unpack some of the issues the children are facing. Coordinators will be given training in how to connect with traumatised children, and will use the film as a tool to help the children explore their emotions and begin their recovery process.

This is not a standalone project but will involve local partners on the ground who are already working with refugee children, to ensure the project is sustainable. We will train groups of their trainers, who can then take our trauma recovery workshops to children across the Middle East and beyond.

To find out more about this project, and for ways to give, visit our website at www.mem.org/Lifeinthedesert

A prayer for Syria's children

Father God,

Our hearts cry out for the children of Syria, who in their short lives have already been through unimaginable suffering. We know that true healing in mind, body and spirit can only be found in you. Please draw near to these children now by the power of the Holy Spirit, and be to them the peace and safety they have never known.

Thank you for the Middle East Media's work with refugee children through their *Life in the Desert* series and workshops. We pray that these workshops would help to start the recovery process, and that these precious children would find love, support and hope for the future.

In Jesus' name,

Amen





Powerful poetry

A YEAR OF POEMS AND PRAYERS FOR THE GULF

Poetry holds a special significance in Arabic culture. Through *On Bended Knee*, our new short film series, local believers from the Gulf are writing and filming poems to communicate the life-changing power of Jesus in their lives, using a medium that their audience reveres and understands.

PHOTO: MURATART

Poetry is an incredibly meaningful way to communicate about Jesus to an Arab audience. Historically, poets were revered as people who received unique supernatural insight, and poetry is still used today across the Arab World to communicate spiritual, cultural and even political ideas. By writing poems about Jesus, we're showing that becoming a believer doesn't mean a loss of cultural identity - a common misconception.

Many Arab Muslims have a certain perception of Christians, typically associating them with a 'Western' culture and ideology. We want to show them that it is possible to be a follower of Jesus without abandoning the local culture and customs - and poetry is the perfect way to do just that!

In our brand new film project, *On Bended Knee*, we will combine the tradition of Arabic poetry with the power of modern online media, to communicate God's love and His transformational power in local people's lives.

The aim is to create 365 short film clips of poetry, as well as prose and prayer, in the Gulf Arabic dialect. The clips will be written and produced by local believers, and will provide them with a safe way to share their thoughts, experiences and revelations about God with their own people and nations.

It's our hope that these clips will be inspirational to believers and non-believers alike, as they see people from their own background praying and reciting poetry in their own language and style.

*I trust in my Lord
who knows what is hidden.
My Lord Jesus,
Saviour of all His creation.
The Saviour of all humans,
the one who trod paths of pain.
Who but you lifts the burdens
off my back?*

- FROM A POEM BY A MUSLIM-BACKGROUND BELIEVER, AS FEATURED IN ARABIAN DAWN

These episodes will be distributed online, so have the potential to reach millions of people across the Arab World.

Overall, we hope this project will shatter stereotypes of Christians, as Gulf Arabs see believers from their own background speaking about Jesus in a culturally relevant way that will resonate with their hearts and heritage. We hope the beauty of poetic language will stir the hearts of our viewers to find out more about Jesus and a life of faith in Him.

Read on for ways to pray, plus an interview with Basma, one of the poets and producers for *On Bended Knee*, to discover what poetry means to her.

We're also trying to raise funds for more episodes of *On Bended Knee* - take a look at the [back page](#) to find out how you can help!

Basma's story

"Poetry is a way for me to get through to my own people, since I am speaking the language that touches their hearts."

We interviewed Basma, one of our team members, about her view on poetry. She spoke with great passion about how important poetry is in her life and the lives of many across the region. Basma writes her own poetry, and will be an integral part of the *On Bended Knee* production team.

Q: What is the significance of poetry in Middle Eastern culture?

Basma: Middle Eastern people in general learn to love poetry because it was the language that they believe God used to speak to them through the Qu'ran. Poetry has a high value within the culture, and is seen as holy. In fact, they believe it's the language that will be spoken in heaven!

Historically speaking, when Arabs lived among other lands, they didn't know if someone was a true Arab. When in doubt, they would often test someone by asking him to recite poetry. If his poetry was good enough, they knew he was a true Arab! This shows how truly foundational poetry is in Arabic culture.

Poetry recitation events are still an important part of society here. The Royal Family even pays large sums of money to the winners of poetry competitions!

How often do you read poetry?

Basma: I love poetry, so I read it every day. It is as important to me as reading the daily news.

What is your favourite type of poetry?

Basma: In general, my favorite type of poetry is spiritual. I really enjoy reading the Psalms and Song of Solomon. My favorite from the Qu'ran is Sura Al-Shara, which means the book of the poets. Many Arabs have a place in their hearts for Arabic poetry, especially because of the poetic nature of the Qu'ran. And anything written in Classical Arabic is the best. It is beautiful, especially when the reader pronounces it correctly!

How does poetry help you in your life?

Basma: Poetry is a way for me to get through to my own people, since I am speaking the language that touches their hearts. The way the poetry is recited, with certain chanting and rhymes is very important. When done in a correct manner, it is the most beautiful thing.

Please pray for Basma as production for *On Bended Knee* gets underway, that her passion for poetry would inspire other believers and seekers across the Arab World.



How to pray for the *On Bended Knee* project, and all those involved:

- **Thank God for the beauty of Arabic poetry**, which is being used in such a creative and culturally respectful way to tell others about Him.
- **Thank God for a provision of some funding**, which will enable the training of Muslim-background believers, and the production of 35-40 episodes of *On Bended Knee*. Please pray it would bear great fruit!
- **Pray for local new believers** as we train them in filmmaking skills, that they would be empowered to reach their own people through media.
- **Pray for our writers, such as Basma**, as they develop content for 35-40 episodes of *On Bended Knee*, as they find creative ways to inspire audiences in the Gulf - particularly through poetry!
- **Pray for mentors to follow up with the trainees on their spiritual journey**. This is a very important part of the project - it's not just about producing videos, it's about the holistic personal and spiritual development of the trainees too.
- **Pray for viewers** of the *On Bended Knee* episodes, that they will be open and receptive to what God might have to say to them.

PHOTOS: ONE MUNCH PUNCH / HAIDER Y. ABDULLA / BLEND IMAGES / ZOUIZOU



If just 12 people gave £100 each, we'd be able to fund an entire episode of *On Bended Knee*!

Each episode of *On Bended Knee* costs around £1200, and we'd love to bless our Gulf team with the funds for more of these short films of poetry, prose and prayer.

Would you consider giving a gift, however large or small, to help local Gulf believers communicate God's love to their own people in a culturally respectful way?

Visit www.mem.org/give to make a payment by card or Paypal, or send a cheque or charity voucher to Middle East Media at the relevant address below.

With your help, we can continue to sow seeds of transformation across the Middle East, and bring healing and hope to the lives of millions of people. Thank you so much for your support!

Sowing seeds of transformation

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