



Women in the Father's heart

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Easter: Overcoming Fear?



International Women's Day 8 March 2023

The church has not always been kind to women. Some 50 years ago, the non-conformist church where I became a Christian did not allow women to speak, unless it was a women-only meeting. One of the more progressive elders remarked that because they were not allowed to serve in the church, (unless we were talking about tea and biscuits), many women went to the mission field, underlined by the fact 90% of the denomination's missionaries were women.

By contrast, Jesus had nothing but compassion for the women he encountered in his ministry. He neither condemned, nor condoned the woman who was caught in adultery and dragged to Jesus by the Pharisees. (Where was the man?) He disarmed her accusers *"...let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!"*, gently admonished her and sent her on her way.

His encounter with the woman of Samaria was remarkable not just because it was the longest single conversation in the gospels. Socially, Jesus as Jew, should have had nothing to do with a Samaritan, far less a Samaritan woman. Yet he saw her as an individual in need. She was shunned by her community and only went to the well in the midday heat to avoid the sneers and barbs from other women.

In the Arab World women have been routinely treated as second-class citizens. And worse. Through our television programmes and social media, Arab Vision seeks to follow Jesus' teaching by supporting women and exposing the abuse that many have suffered. This often means discussing taboo topics, some of which are covered further on in our newsletter. These conversations can be quite stressful for our Follow Up team. Please support them with your prayers.



Ian Sutherland
Arab Vision UK

Why Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Yemen?



Although Arab Vision produces television programmes and social media content for the entire Arab world and we are in contact with most countries in the region, we are focusing on certain specific countries. You can read more about Algeria on pages 4 & 5. We have many contacts there and we are looking to recruit Algerians, particularly Kabyle-speakers, to join our Follow Up team.

Saudi Arabia

Although it is one of the most repressive countries in the Arab World, we have seen small signs of openness in the country. Last year we created twenty short clips for social media in the Saudi Arabian dialect produced especially for women. We look forward to the day when we can meet them face-to-face and share the love of God.

Libya

Like Saudi Arabia, Libya is a repressive country but also chaotic. Two different groups, both supported by foreign fighters claim to be the authentic government. It is too dangerous to work in the country itself, but we are working with Libyan friends living in Europe with whom we make programmes in the Libyan dialect. They are also active in follow up work. Libyans who have contacted them regularly express disbelief that there are actually any Libyan Christians. This creates great opportunities for further conversations.

Yemen

Our Facebook page for Yemeni and Saudi women is very popular and generates many responses. Through this page Yemeni women are able to share their stories. While there is a lull in the civil war, the humanitarian crisis is as bad as ever. The needs of the Yemeni people, both material and spiritual, have never been greater.

One of our Yemeni employees, who was living in another Arab country, has been in prison for more than a year and has yet to come to trial. His wife, despite having a difficult time, has continued her work in our social media team. Other Yemenis are currently being trained work in our social media team.

We ask you to pray for Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Yemen.



Churches ordered to close in Algeria

Algerian Christians have been under pressure from the authorities for several years. More and more churches have been closed by the Algerian government, particularly those affiliated to the Église Protestante d'Algérie (EPA), since it was legalised in 2006.

Tizi Ouzou is a province in the Kabylia region on the north coast of Algeria and home to many Algerian Christians. As well as closing their churches, the authorities have arrested both pastors and lay people on charges of attempting to convert Muslims to Christianity.

Algeria promotes freedom of religion, but in practice the freedom of Christians, to come together, to worship and to read Christian books are increasingly being restricted.

At the same time, there is a growing hunger for the Gospel. Last year many Algerians responded to our programme and social media posts. Extracts from their conversations with our follow Up team are shown on the next page.



Stories from Algeria

Cherifa, an Islamic woman from Algeria, regularly responds to our Follow Up team. In response to our programme series 'Names of God' she said: "I know that there is a heavenly father close by, that encourages me."

Maryam, a young Muslim Algerian, is separated from her husband but sought help to save her marriage. We guided her and slowly they are rebuilding their relationship and trusting each other.

Kamal is an Algerian Muslim who responded to our self-image programme. We showed him words from the Bible to encourage him. Meanwhile, Kamal has started reading the Bible himself and has many questions that we are happy to answer.

Moussa is also a Muslim from Algeria and responds to our "Forgiveness" programme. To start with, he is very aggressive "All Jews and Christians are infidels" and "Islam is the only true religion." We've been in

conversation for a while when he asks for a Bible. We are glad that Moussa, despite his firm beliefs, want to make an effort to understand the Bible.

Ammar responds to the same programme about forgiveness. We ask him if he knows Jesus. He

tells us that 10 years ago he decided to follow Christ, but that he has not been baptised. He will, but says he is 'too shy'. Ammar asks us to pray for him, to be brave and to take the step. Two months later he sent us a video of his baptism!

Please pray for Moussa, Maryam, Ammar, Kamal and Cherifa and for so many others, each with their own story.





Women in the Father's heart

International Women's Day was celebrated on 8th March. Over the past 25 years Arab Vision has produced a series of programmes addressing issues that Arab women and girls should not have to endure. These included female circumcision, violence against women and a plea for equality of men and women in all walks of life.

The job is not finished. We have dedicated social media platforms for Arab women. Over the years, hundreds of thousands (perhaps millions) of women have watched our television programmes and thousands have sought and found support and advice from our Follow Up team.

More recently, we produced a fifteen-part series, based on frequently asked questions and problems that Arab women and girls are facing in their daily lives. For example, we have discussed the dangers of sharing nude photos via social media. Several years ago, we discussed another, similar taboo subject based on a true story, incest. The reaction was like a tsunami. We were inundated with similar stories from women who had endured such abuse. 'This is my story' was the shocking response from many, many women.

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If you would like to make a special gift for our women's work, please use the bank details on the back of this newsletter.

Would you like to share our programmes for Arab women? Visit Arab Vision's Youtube channel where you will find subtitled examples. Or send an email to contact@arabvision.org.



Easter: Overcoming Fear?

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Psalm 27:1

David had a number of incidents when he had reason to fear for his life. In the Psalms he testifies of his trust in God, the security that he finds with God, words that are still a source of encouragement today.

Our team in the Middle East has chosen the theme 'fear' for this year's Easter project. We only need to look around to realise how much fear and uncertainty reigns in the world, often very close to home. And how great the need for safety and comfort.

In our fifteen-part series we will portray the witnesses to Jesus' arrest, suffering and dying, and we will show how human it is to feel fear and uncertainty.

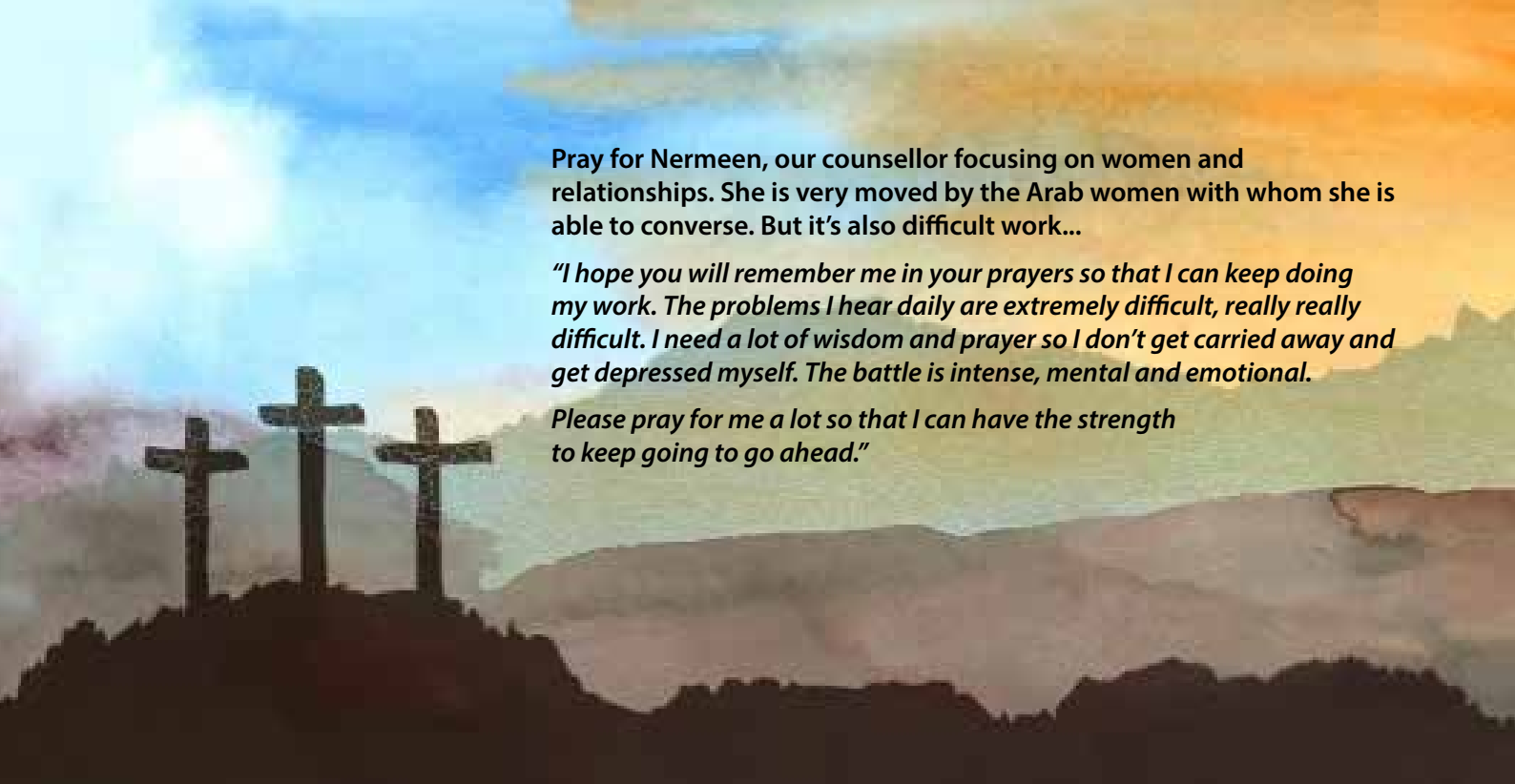
We will look at Jesus' disciples at instant of his arrest. They deserted him and fled. And Peter, for fear of the consequences, denied even knowing Jesus, cursing and swearing to it. How beautiful and encouraging is it to read in Acts that Peter and other early Christians overcame their fears as they were filled and led by the Holy Spirit.

The fear and uncertainty in which so many people live is acknowledged in the series through reflections and songs. Finally, fear and death do not have the last word, but our God of Light and Life, who is our refuge.

The series will be broadcast around Orthodox Easter (16th April) via our social media platforms and satellite television.

Will you pray for our production team, for the people who will watch the programmes and comment on them, and for our Follow Up team as they respond to the many questions and stories about suffering, fear and uncertainty?

We also ask you to support our Follow Up team financially. We realise that there are many demands on your pocket but we boldly ask for you to support our team. Thank you!



Pray for Nermeen, our counsellor focusing on women and relationships. She is very moved by the Arab women with whom she is able to converse. But it's also difficult work...

"I hope you will remember me in your prayers so that I can keep doing my work. The problems I hear daily are extremely difficult, really really difficult. I need a lot of wisdom and prayer so I don't get carried away and get depressed myself. The battle is intense, mental and emotional.

Please pray for me a lot so that I can have the strength to keep going to go ahead."



contact@arabvision.org

www.arabvision.org

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