



The Middle East Initiative

Pray.
Learn.
Engage.

Faith and Healing

By Wafa Goussous

Biblical Text

Luke 8:43-48, New International Version (NIV)

43 And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, [a] but no one could heal her. 44 She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped. 45 “Who touched me?” Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you.” 46 But Jesus said, “Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me.” 47 Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. 48 Then he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.”



Text Exegesis

The woman who had been bleeding for 12 years visited all the doctors and spent all her savings with no result. She saw **the light** in the midst of her suffering and hopelessness. She left her house and made her way amongst the crowds, bleeding and in pain. She insisted; she had faith; she said to herself, “If I can only touch His robe I will be healed.” It was a long walk, but she continued until she reached the Lord Jesus

Christ and touched his robe. She knew that she was healed on the spot and was heading back home in joy, in silence. She was not planning to announce it.

Suddenly she realized that Jesus Christ knew it and was asking who touched His robe. Of course the disciples were naïve when they answered him, saying, “You see the crowd pressing you on all sides and you say ‘who touched me.’” They could not understand that He felt the power. (Later, and after Jesus Christ’s resurrection, the disciples understood many things.) She came back afraid, fell on her knees, and told Him the whole truth. He told her, “Your faith, your courage, your boldness have saved you.”

Her courage is amazing. She is a woman who bled for twelve years at a time when people considered her not clean and would avoid coming close to her. Yet she did not care. She heard about Jesus Christ and was so sure that if she focused only on reaching Him, she would be healed. It seems that, after all her suffering, she had two choices: either to give up and just die or to use what was left of her physical health and walk her last journey to the one who could save her. And her decision was to walk the most painful road, ready to pass through all the people, knowing that they would be disgusted by her, but she couldn’t care less. Faith is rewarded—always.

Relating the Text to Today

For Iraqis and Syrians, after years of trying to stay home and remain in their homeland, the Islamic State (known as “ISIS” and “ISIL”) arrived in their cities and forced them to leave their homes, their land, and their history. The choices given were not negotiable: they could convert and pay the *jizya* tax (a protection tax) or they would be killed.

A father, mother, and two young women - an Iraqi Christian family - were forced to leave everything and start again in Jordan, hiding at the local churches in Amman and other cities, seeking shelter and security and not knowing what tomorrow would bring them. They were like thousands of families who flee the life-threatening situation in Iraq and Syria.

The local churches in Jordan asked the local church-based organizations several times to hire the refugees as a way to help their financially tight situation and to relieve some of the burden from the local churches. We, the Orthodox Initiative, did just that. Nora, a young Iraqi woman, joined our team at Christmastime in 2014. The first thing she did was to help put up the office Christmas tree.

After one year, Nora came to me and shared her sister Niveen’s medical situation, asking if our office could assist in her necessary operation. Apparently the problem started 12 years ago when they noticed that her back was bending. Year after year, they visited all

the doctors in Iraq, spending most of their savings. But the problem was not solved, they could not afford the operation, and there were no experts to do such a complicated operation. The bending got worse over time and they knew it was already affecting her breathing. Her life was threatened.

We arranged for Niveen to see the most highly recommended doctor in Jordan, who happens to be of Iraqi origin, and the result was that the operation is inevitable and it would cost \$25,000.

What to do? Our team sent a letter to our partners asking them to contribute to her operation. Meanwhile, I called the owner of one of the best hospitals in Jordan and shared with him her story, asking him to speak with the Iraqi doctor to see if he could offer a discount.

On a Monday morning, I received an email from one of our partners donating \$25,000. I was thrilled but I kept it secret from Nora and Niveen, waiting for the doctor's appointment the next Saturday to hear his final decision. On Thursday, I could not wait any longer to tell Nora the good news. She left the office early to tell her family.

On Friday morning, I received another email from the partner asking me to notify them when the amount of \$2,500 arrived at our bank account—it was \$2,500 and not \$25,000! I had misread it. My little heart dropped and I entered into a deep silence. Niveen's appointment was the next morning and they thought we had the money. On Saturday morning, I went out of Amman, acting as if it's nothing. I was running away.

My phone rang. It was the owner of the hospital telling me that he called the Iraqi doctor to ask him if he could offer a discount and the doctor said that he would perform the operation free of charge, that we only need to buy the screws, which would cost us around \$6,000, and he added that the hospital decided not to charge anything during her stay!

It was raining miracles from above, and my heart was again joyfully silent, not knowing how to reach Him to say thank you.

Nora called me after their final appointment with the doctor and said that admission to the hospital would be Sunday and the operation would be on Monday, but I have to buy the screws on Sunday. I still didn't have the money, but I slept like a baby—my heart was at peace.

Sunday morning when I went to church, my heart was even more at peace. I felt like Jesus led me to go to the bank. I withdrew what I had: \$4,000. He led me to the office and I broke the rules, taking the office's petty cash. What we had was exactly what we needed. I went to medical center and bought 95 screws. The owner gave us a discount. It was still raining miracles.

By the end of this blessed Sunday, I received a phone call from London. An anonymous donor would be sending \$12,000, which covered it all, and the balance would be for Niveen to use for post-operative care.

They had to leave their home in Iraq in deep sadness. The father and mother had watched their daughter bending over more every day. The heaviness of becoming a refugee made them realize that they would lose not only their home, roots, and possessions, but perhaps their daughter as well. Yet they walked the road toward the unknown, pleading with the Lord to make it a smooth trip.

The day I met Nora for an interview, she brought her father with her and I understood how afraid they were, as are all the people looking for jobs in our country. God had created a job opening for Nora. Both were very well dressed and clean, smiling and so positive. They were humble, yet proud of their Christian identity and faith. Their exodus was not a reason for them to lose faith. They decided to accept the last journey, which carried much pain and distress, but it was more rewarding than anything they expected.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, we bow our knees in gratitude for the miracle you have given us. We thank you when we look at Niveen walking and her back is now 100% straight.

We thank you for giving us the chance to live and witness that You are the Living God.

We ask you to carry the Syrian and Iraqi refugees and make for them a smooth road, to protect them in the seas and send them your people to serve them.

We thank you for letting us be your servants, because this is the most important blessing in our lives.

We thank you for the peace that will prevail soon in the Middle East and the world.

We ask you, Lord, to be with the leaders, governments, police, army, and security to open their eyes and prevent any shooting or bombing, to give them the wisdom to know how to act, to send your holy spirit so it can guide them and not allow them to be fooled by the evil spirits and principalities of this world.

In His name we pray,

Amen

Questions

1. How can we practice faith when we can't see any light?
2. When we are in our darkest times, how can we be sure that it is but temporary?
3. From where did the women bleeding for 12 years get her courage and faith?
4. Is our planning in our lives missing God's blessing and guidance?

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Ms. Goussous is a strong advocate for the Arab Christian presence in the Middle East and works daily to strengthen the vulnerable position of Christian men, women, youth, and children. As a humanitarian, she has worked since 2003 having designed programs and workshops and implemented a wide range of emergency operations to help the most vulnerable who have fallen under the difficult circumstances of the several refugee crises in Jordan and neighboring countries.