

nucleus

the student journal of the christian medical fellowship

christmas 2009



distinctively different

summer camps

dialogue dinners

asylum seekers

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editorial...

**'Tis the season to be full of Christmas cheer!
At the risk of jumping on the bandwagon let
me offer a hearty Christmas welcome to both
new readers and old! I pray that the festive
season will be a joyful time with friends and
family for you. Amidst the secular materialism
of a western Christmas may we also rejoice
at the unassuming birth of our Saviour
- born in a peasant home in Palestine
over two millennia ago.**

Many churches have coined December as mission month. This is recognition that Christmas is a time when our secular friends are more receptive to the message of Jesus Christ. If, however, this prospect brings a creeping sensation of guilt or fear then Matt Lillicrap's article 'Sticking in and Standing out' (page 15) provides help and advice tackling the motivation behind effective evangelism. Alternatively, if you require some practical advice then Mark Pickering's article (page 23) on hosting a dialogue dinner for non-Christian colleagues and friends will be useful. Additionally, the synopsis of the mission events run at St George's University CU (page 30) may be of help. These articles remind us to commit all our evangelistic efforts to God in prayer and to have faith that the love of Jesus really can melt the hardest heart. This truth will encourage us to be bold; we will never know a person's response to the person of Christ unless we first ask, for 'how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?'

Sadly, for some, Christmas is a time of loneliness and heartache, as they cannot be with their loved ones. The Bible exhorts us not to oppress 'the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor'. Instead we are to welcome them into our homes and Christian communities. Elizabeth Redman's article (page 33) concerning our response to asylum seekers will help broaden our horizons when we think about who to reach out to this holiday season.

Continuing on the theme of broadening our horizons, Colleen McGregor and Ben Saunders offer a review on their recent summer trip (page 26). Their words remind us that we are his witnesses in 'Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth'. This time of year is frequently when plans for next summer are formulated and considered. Let us prayerfully consider whether God is prompting us to use our gifts and talents for him this summer on a short term mission trip or elective.

We would be delighted to hear your comments and responses to these articles and will endeavour to publish some of your letters in the next edition.

Merry Christmas!

***Pete Mackley** is the Student Editor
and a fourth year medical student
at Leeds University*

learning to lead

Alex Bunn interviews Greg Downes



Alex: *Greg, our medical students will all be leaders when they qualify, whether they think of themselves as leaders or not. What can they learn from Jesus' example of leadership?*

Greg: Jesus is the greatest leader humanity has ever seen; he was distinctive in many ways. First, he was completely non-coercive. In Christ, we see clearly the character of God, who woos us into discipleship, leading by example and inspiration. Even though he was the Son of God walking the earth, the disciples were never

coerced, but were simply captivated by his greatness. At one point when people were deserting Jesus in droves, he didn't chase the disciples, but simply asked if they would desert too. Christ-shaped leadership is unique in being servant-hearted. We assent to this in hymns, but rarely practise it. Jesus led from the centre of the pack, walking alongside those he disciplined.

Alex: *How does that contrast with other leaders?*

Greg: A prison chaplain once told me that the secret of

leadership is to 'let them have your way', meaning we trick people into thinking they're getting what they want, when in fact you are getting your own way as a leader! Christian leaders too often follow the world's lead. Though we say 'there are no conscripts in God's army', in practice we can be guilty of manipulation and intimidation. Some leaders in charismatic churches (including some of my colleagues) are guilty of 'spiritual abuse', claiming to have an exclusive hotline to God, and considering



themselves beyond accountability, saying 'touch not the Lord's anointed'. Some Anglo-Catholics also demand obedience in an unhealthy way. I once saw one wearing a T-shirt claiming 'Father knows best'! But Christian leaders should treat other church members as brothers, not children. Conservatives are also guilty, as we can use the Bible as a weapon, and teach a single watertight interpretation which controls others.

Alex: *What tips can you share from your leadership?*

Greg: I always say that 'the only authority I have is that which you choose to give me'. I'm not saying that spiritual authority doesn't exist, but simply that it's not the same as exerting power. Christian leaders need to take seriously the priesthood of all believers. We are not the sole earpieces of God; we have no monopoly on hearing God, no direct line. We need to value the experiences and gifts of others - like those of the football hooligan at our church who was called into social action. He became a pastor in prison ministry at the Ashfield Young Offenders Unit. He started a church for offenders when they emerged from prison, the first of its kind in Britain, and we were 100% behind him.

Alex: *Do you go along with those who 'invert the pyramid', saying that ministers should serve the congregation, and release them into their ministries?*

Greg: Church leaders have abdicated our responsibility to teach and model biblical submission, for instance in marriage. This has been jettisoned at a cost. We're now deeply suspicious of all authority. There are two extremes here (see table).

At one end are those who run a benign dictatorship, who lead by 'command and control' and simply lock up the gifts of members. At the other extreme are those who abdicate leadership altogether, and preside over a democracy, merely looking for some kind of consensus from the members. I prefer Jesus' model - he led from the centre of the pack. At my old church of Woodlands, in Bristol, leaders aimed for high accountability and low control.

Alex: *Your wife is a doctor who has been influential in the press. In what sense are doctors leaders?*

Greg: Traditionally, doctors have been influential in their community, respected leaders - although this is not so much the case now. My wife has patients coming to her with clutches of internet print-outs telling her their diagnosis and management! But doctors still have enormous influence in shaping thinking on ethics. My wife has been quoted lots in the press,¹ and she can speak with an authority as a professional that clergy simply can't, even though many doctors don't think they have a voice. They do, if they dare to enter the fray! I understand the hesitancy though, as I've seen the cost

Benign dictatorship:	Jesus' example of leadership:	Democratic approach:
■ Leader is over-controlling	■ Jesus had a non-coercive authority	■ Leader lacks influence
■ Leader is unaccountable	■ Jesus led by example from the centre	■ Constant search for consensus
■ Stifles growth of members	■ Jesus' followers matured as they followed	■ Members have no role models

first hand. But doctors are not just technicians, functionaries of the state. Why should certain politicians dictate an aggressive secularising agenda when they are so ill-equipped to lead on these issues?

Alex: *Tell us about your new course; how did it start and what makes it different from others on offer?*

Greg: One of the previous staff from St Andrew's, Chorleywood, had a real heart for our needier neighbours in Watford.

One of the members was a businessman, who felt uncomfortable in his workplace after conversion. Some advised him to leave, reinforcing the classic sacred/secular divide which causes believers to retreat from the world. But others encouraged him to see his work as his mission field. He went on to help set up the Watford School of Leadership (WSL). Only one in 20 Christians will enter full time church-based ministry. Yet all the 40 or so Bible colleges in the UK train

primarily for church-based ministry. WSL offers training to the other 19. It exists 'to train ordinary believers to be transformational leaders in the world'. We want the 95% who work in secular environments (doctors included!) to rediscover a vocation of work, and to live out our faith in the secular world. For instance, my wife works in a Christian practice, but her patients include the 70% of the population who have no natural contact with church. She works alongside a counsellor and chaplain, who can care for body, mind and soul like no clergyman can. Work is mission!

Alex: *Some of our students take a year out of medicine, and might be interested in a course like this. What would it involve?*

Greg: There are four modules: discipleship, leadership, evangelism and theology. First discipleship: we all need to learn 'followership' before we can step up to be leaders. Evangelism: not just 'hit and

run' evangelism that irritates and alienates people, but learning how to be contagious Christians. Can we be an 'embodied apologetic', winning others by our life and words together? Theology underpins this, not stuffy theory, but the word of God transforming lives. This is all in the context of mentorship, communal worship and missional placements. It would be an ideal gap year, and only costs £2,000 for a year, starting each September.

Anyone interested can contact Greg Downes via www.wsol.org.uk

Greg Downes is a vicar, is married to a doctor, and is principal of Watford School of Leadership

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failing exams

Chidimma Onwere considers a Christian response

It was a beautiful summer's day in June 2002, the sort of day most of us would crave for - perfect conditions for water fights, Ultimate Frisbee, reading a novel in the park, sunbathing or alfresco dining.

It was also the day I was to get my exam results for medical school finals. Needless to say, basking in the midday sun was last on my list of priorities. I was extremely anxious and felt sick with worry. This was it; the culmination of six long hard years at medical school would be defined by what was written on that slip of paper.

A pass would signal the successful end of my student career and triumphant beginning of a medical career as a pre-registration house officer [now known as F1 doctor] at Ealing Hospital NHS Trust. I had already landed an amazing first year job there to start in August 2002, including a paediatric rotation, which was what I felt God was calling me to do - surely he wouldn't have given me that job if I wasn't going to pass?

I arrived at the university campus and bravely made

my way through the crowds of elated final year medical students who had got their results already and had, quite obviously, passed. Shouts, cheers, laughter and lots of 'good luck Chid' were ringing in my ears as I headed towards the medical school reception to get my brown envelope.

The jovial mood really did lift my spirits and renew my hope. My tentative steps became more firm, gaining confidence as I approached the office that I too would share in the success of my peers and be able to join them celebrating in the sunshine. Jubilation is so contagious; I could feel the success, as though just being there was enough.

it wasn't enough

What I had spent all night fasting and praying against was staring me in the face - the slip of paper told me that I had failed finals. My hopes were dashed.

Questions, questions and more questions filled my head: Why did God let this happen? How could this happen to me, I'm a committed Christian? What on earth do I do now? What shall I tell my parents?

how could it happen?

*shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?*¹

In some Christian circles, there is an assumption that God owes us success in life - as if it was part of the deal when we became followers of Christ that success would always follow no matter what.

The Bible tells countless stories of our brothers and sisters of faith who endured many trials and tribulations, in spite and sometimes because of their commitment to God. Our Lord Jesus was not spared the cruelty of this fallen world, so why do we think we should be?

why did it happen?

*'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the Lord.*²

God does know best and we are called to trust his sovereign wisdom as we live for him. During my preparation for the resits I was astounded as I realised how ill-prepared I had been for the exams in the summer. I had to eat big slices of humble pie during that difficult, but educational time. I don't have all the answers -

but I do know that when I did qualify in November 2002, I was a much better house officer than I would have been the summer before. I was not only six months older and wiser, but I knew that I had matured spiritually. I had been through the 'refiner's fire' and realise now that the purpose of this, as with raw gold, was to start to reflect the image of the refiner himself, Jesus Christ.

what happened next

Praise the Lord, O my soul³

Well, I didn't die! I wasn't black-listed and unemployable, in fact, I discovered that many highly

respected consultants had failed finals and it hadn't affected their career progress at all.

Of course I was upset, but once I accepted that sulking at God was not going to change anything, he graciously provided friends and family to 'pick me up' and steer me in the right direction towards success.

Since that time I haven't looked back - God has opened many doors for me, doors I wouldn't have dreamed of approaching - let alone knocking on!

I still don't pass everything first time around (my driving instructor can testify to that!) but my approach and priorities have changed.

keeping things in (Christian) perspective

Who is this is for anyway?

In the secular world, how we perform in life defines who we are and our worth amongst our peers and society as a whole. We want to look good and get ahead.

Rev Richard Bewes, former Rector of All Souls Church, used to warn against this over-competitive work ethic by saying: 'In life's great rat race, even if you win, you're still a rat!'⁴

We were chosen to glorify God,⁵ to do good works that he prepared in advance for us to do.⁶ Just as Nimrod was a mighty hunter before the Lord,⁷ so too are we to excel in whatever we do before the Lord.

We also need to remember that we are always Christ's ambassadors to our non-believing friends and family who are there for the rises and falls in our lives.⁸ Failing does not reflect badly on God - it's how we handle it that matters.

Most importantly, because of Jesus' death and resurrection, we are 'more than conquerors' as Christians.⁹ We have already 'passed' the biggest exam of all, without even taking the test. Christ has done it all! God the Father examines our hearts and finds Christ's righteousness there, reconciling us to God now and for all eternity; true success is his.

Ultimately, we are victorious from the time we receive Jesus as Lord - the past is dealt with, our future is totally secure, so there really is nothing to worry about.

practical tips

start early and make a plan

The old adage 'fail to plan; plan to fail' is true. It's vital that you make (and stick to) a realistic timetable that enables you to get through revision thoroughly with plenty of time to practise past papers and iron out areas that need special attention. Avoid last minute cramming!

talk to people who have gone before and succeeded

Make plans by seeking advice; if you wage war, obtain guidance.¹⁰

Good advice is invaluable. Those that have already passed may offer advice about books to read, courses to go on, pitfalls to avoid and tips about how to study; you may consider having a study partner, which is great for encouragement and accountability. Use advice to tailor-make your revision.

understand the basic principles well

People who score highly in medical exams are not necessarily the ones who have read all the recent journals; rather, they have understood the basic principles of medicine extremely well. Don't be afraid to get help from your lecturers and tutors or fellow students to clarify parts of the syllabus you find difficult. By doing so, you will have an excellent grasp of the fundamental principles, which is vitally important for your clinical practice as well as the exams.

don't neglect yourself

Exam revision is physically and spiritually demanding, so look after yourself; eat well, get enough sleep and exercise

regularly. Resist the temptation to overlook your Christian life in favour of spending more time revising. Integrate the two by asking your church or small group to pray for you - especially for wisdom, endurance, guidance, and protection against unhelpful distractions. Take every opportunity to demonstrate the peace-giving joy of the Gospel because you are 'too blessed to be stressed'!

you labour in vain without God

Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain.

Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late toiling for food to eat - For He grants sleep to those he loves.¹¹

Chidimma Onwere is an obstetrics and gynaecology specialist trainee in London

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10. Proverbs 20:18
11. Psalm 127:1-2

SPOTLIGHT ON: Obama's healthcare reforms

what is the current US health system?

Currently 66.7% of US citizens receive healthcare through private insurance, provided mostly by employers or by directly approaching insurance companies. There are also government-funded insurance programs for specific groups: Medicare (for individuals 65 years and above, and some under 65 with long-term disabilities), Medicaid (for those in financial need who fulfil certain criteria), SCHIP (for children in low-income families who are not eligible for Medicaid), military health plans, state-specific health plans, and Indian Health Service (for eligible American Indians). Despite these programs, approximately 15.4% of Americans (46.3 million) are uninsured.

what are Obama's healthcare reforms?

President Obama outlined his 'Obama Plan' in a speech to Congress in September. It outlines a number of proposed reforms, which include:

- Making it illegal for insurance companies to deny cover to an individual because of a pre-existing medical condition
- Requiring insurance companies to include cover for preventative care (eg mammograms) at no extra charge
- Creating a new marketplace ('The Exchange') where people without insurance can compare plans and buy them at competitive prices
- Reforming medical malpractice laws so that doctors can focus more on healthcare delivery
- Providing a new, voluntary public health insurance option

Under these plans every American would be required to obtain insurance. It is proposed that these reforms would be paid for by finding savings in the current healthcare system, which Obama described as 'full of waste and abuse'; an independent commission would be created to identify such areas.

what do people think?

Liberal members of Obama's party, the Democrats, would rather the reforms go further, including a greater regulation of insurance companies and more generous subsidies to those less well-off. Some conservative members of his party, however, advocate removing a publicly run insurance option altogether.

The Republicans oppose government-run healthcare and have been staunchly opposed to his reforms; one Republican senator has, however, voted in support of some of Obama's proposals. Insurance companies originally supported many aspects of the reforms but have since published a report suggesting that premiums would increase under the reforms; fears of loss of business due to a public health insurance option have also been expressed. However, the mandate for every American to have insurance will create new customers for insurance companies.

Doctors and hospitals generally back the proposals but express fears that a publicly run insurance scheme may result in a decrease in their earnings.

(*Student BMJ* 2009;17:b1488, US Census Bureau. CPS Health Insurance Definitions; *census.gov*, The Obama Plan; *whitehouse.gov*, *bbc.co.uk* 2009; 10 September, *ibid*; 13 October, *ibid*; 13 October, *Health Care*; *gop.com*, *timesonline.co.uk* 2009; 14 October)

assisted suicide law clarified

New guidance has been published to clarify the assisted suicide law in England and Wales. Many rejoiced with Debbie Purdy at the ruling that forced the publication of the guidance, following several failed attempts with the High Court and Court of Appeal. The guidance, published by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), details the circumstances under which individuals may be prosecuted for assisting in a suicide. However, it gives no guarantees of protection from prosecution and represents no change in the law.

Current assisted suicide legislation allows the DPP discretion when considering cases, but does not itself give direction over how that discretion should be exercised. In the new guidance, factors that weigh against a prosecution include the individual committing suicide having a 'clear, settled and informed wish' to do so and the individual helping them being 'wholly motivated by compassion'. Factors in favour of prosecution include the individual committing suicide being under 18 years old and having an impaired capacity to make informed decisions.

Lord Falconer said that the DPP had 'unquestionably changed the law' in issuing the guidance, but Dignity in Dying insisted that Parliament should still legislate. Both sides of the argument consider this a major stepping stone in the 'right-to-die' debate; 'right-to-life' groups have claimed that the DPP has exceeded his authority and effectively made it legal to assist suicide whilst others are hailing it a 'significant breakthrough' for patient choice. The current guidance is temporary and will be finalised following public consultation in Spring 2010; whether assisted suicide should be legalised is still hotly debated.

The Care Not Killing Alliance has published a response to the guidance, noting that the guidelines mark a 'shift in gravity' away from prosecuting in all cases unless there are clear public interest reasons not to. The Alliance also described the guidelines covering disabled people as 'discriminatory as well as dangerous'.

(*telegraph.co.uk* 2009; 31 July, *bbc.co.uk* 2009; 30 July, *ibid* 2009; 23 September, *timesonline.co.uk* 2009; 24 September, *carenotkilling.org.uk* 2009; 13 November)

new Alzheimer's genes discovered

A British-led study has discovered two new genes believed to be associated with Alzheimer's, with a French-led study uncovering a third. The British-led study has been hailed as 'the biggest advance in Alzheimer's research in 15 years'; genetic faults are thought to account for 60-80% of an individual's risk of developing the disease.

The first gene, clusterin (CLU), produces a protein of the same name, which is known to protect the brain in a variety of ways, helping the brain remove destructive amyloid protein and reducing inflammation caused by an overactive immune response. The second gene, PICALM, plays an important role in the formation of memories. The French-led study, involving more than 14,000 DNA samples, highlighted the third gene, complement receptor 1 (CRI), with mutations in that gene believed to be involved in 4% of Alzheimer's cases.

The recent findings have increased the hope of finding the primary cause of Alzheimer's and increase the chances of both fighting the disease and improving the lives of those affected. The

British researchers are planning an even larger study with up to 60,000 participants.

(*alzheimers-research.org.uk* 2009; 6 September, *timesonline.co.uk* 2009; 7 September)

human material can be used in hybrid experiments without consent

New rules have given scientists working on stem cell research permission to use human tissue without the express consent of the individual it came from. The legislation, part of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008, came into force on 1st October and covers material such as blood and tissue samples collected by the NHS during treatment and biopsies, and specimens from 'tissue banks' stored before the legislation was introduced.

According to the Act, such material can be used in somatic-cell nuclear transfers with human and non-human ova. Scientists are expected to gain explicit consent before obtaining samples but are permitted to use the material if the samples were taken before the 1st October 2009 and the donor cannot be contacted.

Joyce Robins, co-director of Patient Concern, expressed fear that most people would not be aware of the changes whilst Professor David Jones, director of the Centre for Bioethics and Emerging Technologies, said that many may have donated to medical research in the past but would now be unaware that their tissue 'could be used to clone an embryo'. In a recent study, 50% of couples who stored embryos at fertility clinics could not be tracked down after 5 years. A spokesman for the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority

stated that circumstances under which scientists wished to create hybrid embryos were 'very specific' and the chances of such a creation without explicit consent were still 'very small'. Licences permitting such embryos are still required to meet legal criteria and applications must be approved by an ethics committee before being granted.

(*Lancet* 2009;374:861-863, *telegraph.co.uk* 2009; 12 September)

carbon emissions: is the third world to blame?

A study published in the journal *Environment and Urbanisation* has claimed that population increase in third world countries has a much lower impact on climate change than over-consumption by developed nations. It advises that western countries should aim to reduce consumption in their own countries, rather than focusing on reducing population growth in developing countries.

The study, carried out by a London based think-tank, looked at worldwide changes in population and greenhouse gas emissions between 1980 and 2005. The author of the study Dr Satterthwaite said: 'A child born into a very poor African household who during their life never escapes from poverty contributes very little to climate change, especially if they die young, as many do. A child born into a wealthy household in North America or Europe and who enjoys a full life and a high-consumption lifestyle contributes far more – thousands or even tens of thousands of times more.'

These findings fall in line with another study published recently, carried out by the New Economics Foundation. They concluded that a typical British person would take roughly four days to

generate the same amount of carbon emissions that a person in Tanzania would take a year to create.

This perspective raises interesting questions for debate between those who support the call for worldwide population restraint by the Optimum Population Trust, such as Sir David Attenborough, and those who oppose this view.

(*timesonline.co.uk* 2009; 29 September, *Nucleus* 2009; July:8-16 *www.cmf.org.uk*)

doctors call for tough alcohol measures

Doctors in the UK have called for a comprehensive ban on all forms of alcohol advertising to curb rising alcohol consumption. The call was made in a report published by the British Medical Association (BMA) in addition to other proposals, including a rise in the minimum price of alcohol, an increase in taxation linking it to units of alcohol in drinks, and a reduction in licensing hours. Professor Gerard Hastings, author of the study, said that alcohol promotion was helping to 'normalise drink as an essential part of everyday life'. The report paid particular concern to increasing alcohol consumption amongst young people.

Alcohol campaigners welcomed the recommendations. Alison Rogers of the British Liver Trust commented that current advertising practices led people to feel that alcohol 'is just the same as life's essentials like bread and milk' and the report provided a 'compelling case for change'. However, Jeremy Beadles of the Wine and Spirit Trade Association voiced concern that the proposed measures would adversely affect consumers and employees of the drinks industry. He also expressed doubt that higher taxation and

prices would curb alcohol misuse, but instead this required long-term education and tough enforcement. Britain has some of the highest taxes on alcohol in Europe.

Currently 37% of the population drinks more than the recommended number of units of alcohol per week, with alcohol related disease costing the NHS anything up to three billion pounds each year. According to the World Health Organisation, alcohol has the third largest burden of disease globally.

(*bbc.co.uk* 2009; 8 September, *timesonline.co.uk* 2009; 9 September, *bma.org.uk* 2009; 'Under the influence')

PETA and 'moobs'

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) have released an advert showing a full-breasted, overweight man. The billboard has been displayed outside the Southern General Hospital in Glasgow with the caption: 'Dude looks like a lady? Lose the breasts. Go vegetarian.' The aim of the advert, PETA say, is to warn meat-eaters of the link between obesity and gynaecomastia; they claim obesity can be caused by consumption of animal-derived products.

Scotland has seen an 80% increase in the number of requests for breast reduction surgery in men, an increase fuelled by obesity according to Scottish plastic surgeon Ken Stewart. PETA Director of Special Projects, Poorva Joshipura, maintained that gynaecomastia means that there is 'nothing manly about meat' and that gynaecomastia was another good reason, along with other examples such as cruelty to animals, to go vegetarian.

According to PETA, meat-eaters are nine times more likely to become obese than vegans. I would suggest that this is obvious, but not simply because of consumption of animal products; and I could fashion a reasonable argument to counter the other comments by PETA, but what do I know? I am a meat-eating Christian medical student!

(*timesonline.co.uk* 2008; 6 July, *peta.org.uk* 2009; 9 September)

fresh or frozen?

There is great news for us medical students with sensible freezer stocking habits. Researchers at Sheffield Hallam University have found that frozen fruit and vegetables are often the same and sometimes superior nutritional value to the fresh.

The reason for this is that frozen food is often frozen almost immediately after harvest, whilst fresh fruit and vegetables are passed link-to-link, starting from producer, before they finally reach the customer up to a month after their harvest. In this period the vegetables deteriorate and gradually become depleted of their nutrients. According to research, for example, frozen peas contain a higher level of beta carotene than fresh peas. The advantage to the Government is of course that frozen veggies are cost efficient and can now be marketed as the healthier option.

I could not help but make the comparison between this article and the kingdom of God. I wonder though as a student if this can be related to me in any way. I imagine the question being asked of me: 'how would you like your faith Tosin, fresh, straight from the Lord of the harvest or frozen to savour all that freshness to be used for another day?' Whilst the frozen type is very

efficient for vegetable preservation, I am not sure we are built for the same sort of standstill. For like fresh vegetables: 'Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day' (2 Corinthians 4:16).

(*dailymail.co.uk* 2009; 11 September, *telegraph.co.uk* 2009; 11 September)

HIV infections and deaths fall

World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNAids figures show a drop in both new HIV infections and AIDS related deaths. New infections have been reduced by 17% since 2001. This is thought to be due to the impact of HIV prevention programmes - particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Infection rates have also fallen substantially in south-east Asia and eastern Europe. Anti-retroviral therapy is also reducing infection in children as more mothers are treated during pregnancy.

However, the number of people infected worldwide is still rising - estimated at 33.4 million people living in 2008. Part of this increase is because fewer are dying with HIV. Data suggests that the pattern of infection is changing worldwide, with increased transmission between heterosexual couples, who are still perceived (wrongly) by many to be at very limited risk. UNAids has recently set up a social networking site at *AIDSpace.org* to bring together those suffering from and treating the disease.

(*bbc.co.uk* 2009; 24 November, *UNAids.org* 2009; 25 November)

Charlotte Davies, Siôn Glaze, Tosin Haastrup, Rachel Hubbard, Vongai Madanire

distinctively different

Matt Lillicrap *considers living differently among non-Christians and answering their questions*



When you saw the title of this article, what did you think? Was it, 'Fantastic, another opportunity to sharpen up on witnessing, I'm looking forward to this'?

Or maybe your reaction was like this: 'Oh... An article about witnessing. Shall I skip over it? No, I'd better not, let's read it quickly and get it over with.'

For many of us the second response is more likely. If you're anything like me the phrase 'living differently among non-Christians and answering their questions' triggers a few emotions, most of which aren't positive.

Maybe you'd rather it wasn't mentioned at all: 'Why do people insist on trying to get

me witnessing? Can't they leave me alone to get on with my life?' Perhaps it's apathy: 'I've heard this all before'. Or maybe fear of what others might think: 'I wish I was better at living out my faith and speaking about it but I don't want people thinking I'm weird'. Or there might be hundreds of other responses.

One of the most common feelings triggered is guilt. 'I know I should be living differently, but I'm not' or 'I'm doing my best to live differently but I'm not bold enough to talk about why'.

If you identify with that, please understand that I don't want to produce a guilt-related response. In my life as a Christian so far, there have been lots of periods of increased activity in trying to share the gospel with those around me. These last a few days, maybe a couple of weeks, before fizzling out again for a while. The common theme? A sermon or an article like this one that made me feel guilty. The problem is the activity only

lasts until the sermon is forgotten or the article is safely on the shelf gathering dust, when I can forget the guilt and get on with my life.

*the gospel
is the starting point
for living the
Christian life*

The problem isn't with the articles or sermons though, it's with me and my tendency to form wrong motivations for even the good things I try and do. So, in this article I want to tackle the motivation behind living differently before saying anything about the method. And the great thing is that getting our motivations right will not only help us live differently, but also give us the starting point to answer the question 'why?'

**motivation:
why live differently?**

The Bible stresses that the gospel is the starting point for living the Christian life. This is the ultimate revelation that

motivates us to live differently. In Colossians, Paul says: 'so then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, *continue* to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught...' ¹

If we want to live differently among non-Christian friends, colleagues and patients, and answer their questions about why we do, we need to be motivated by the gospel. There are three main ways the gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection motivate us.

the cross: our past death with Christ

The place to start is at the centre, with Jesus' death. He was 'in very nature God'. ² He didn't just come into being that first Christmas, but left the glory and majesty of his throne in heaven and 'made himself nothing'. ³ He lived a simple life in first century Israel, and ultimately 'humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!' ⁴

When Jesus died he suffered



unimaginably. The cry ‘My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?’⁵ echoes through the centuries. And he did that for us. What other response could there be but to live differently for him?

As Vaughan Roberts puts it: ‘He died to set me free from wickedness. How could I go back to it? What appalling ingratitude that would be! Surely the effort involved in living a godly life pales into insignificance compared to what it cost him to die for me.’⁶

Paul adds more in Romans 6 where he tells us that in God’s sight we were *with* Jesus when he died. We were there on the cross too! We have (spiritually) died to our old sinful lives.⁷ I don’t know about you but it didn’t take much medical experience for me to learn that unresponsiveness is a worrying sign. The point Paul makes is that Christians died to sin when Jesus died, so we should be completely unresponsive to its power.

So our first motivation is found at the cross in Jesus’ death to save us and in our death to sin, united with him. If we get asked why we’re living differently we can say ‘because when Jesus died I died too’. That answer is bound to provoke questions!

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the resurrection: our present identity with Christ

Jesus’ death doesn’t stand alone. Easter Sunday tells us that Jesus rose from the dead. As he did, he gave us new lives, which means that when we became Christians we underwent a fundamental identity change. United with him in his death, we are also united in his resurrection.⁸ We were once enemies of God, but are now his people,⁹ his friends,¹⁰ adopted as his sons.¹¹ That’s why, instead of telling us to be

‘salt and light’ as we live differently amongst those around us, Jesus says *we are* salt and light.¹² The issue is not will we be salt and light, but what kind of salt or light will we be?

*...if the salt loses its saltiness,
how can it be made salty again?
It is no longer good for
anything...¹³*

Similarly, Paul says that Jesus ‘gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.’¹⁴

Notice the word ‘eager’. Within this change of identity is a change of desire. So here’s a deep motivation to live differently, and a great way of answering questions about why: Because we’re new people, so we want to live differently!

If you’ve ever spent time trying to explain the gospel to a friend, chances are you’ll have heard this objection: ‘if you can be forgiven for everything, and



being accepted by God doesn't depend on being good enough, why don't you do whatever you want?'

And the answer is... 'I do!' As Christians we have been given a new identity with new desires. Whilst there are times that we seem to be fighting against our old sinful desires (when living differently feels like the last thing we want to do) that battle is evidence that Jesus died and rose to make us a people for himself, eager to do what is good. We wouldn't be fighting at all if God hadn't made us new.

the resurrection: our future destiny with Christ

Jesus' resurrection doesn't just mean a new identity now. It also determines our future destination.¹⁵ We will be raised, and if united with him in his death will be united with him for eternity in the new creation.¹⁶ For Paul, his future in heaven was a supreme motivation for the way he lived, preaching the gospel and serving God:

*Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*¹⁷

Jesus' resurrection shows us that there is a world beyond this one

A friend of mine is currently working in Bangladesh. One of the things she did before she went was buy a Bengali phrase book. Then, once she had arrived in Bangladesh she spent a month learning some of the language before doing anything else.

Why spend time learning language like that? Because a month later she was working in a hospital seeing patients and needing to speak it.

The world around us is deeply focused on the here and now, forgetting or ignoring the world to come. But Jesus' resurrection shows us that there is a world beyond this one, and we're part of it. Like my friend using her time in light of her destination in Bangladesh, we should seek to live our lives in light of our destination - the new creation. If we get asked why we live differently we can answer 'because I know where I'm going'.

method: how do we live differently and answer questions about why we do?

Now we've got an idea about



what motivates us to live differently, and even some fuel for answering questions about why... but how do we actually do it?

get the balance right - living differently among non-Christians

There are two keys to living differently among non-Christians. They are:

1. Live differently
2. Among non-Christians

It really is that simple!

As Jesus put it: 'let your light

shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven'.¹⁸

Imagine three members of your CMF group. We'll call them Will, Sarah and Ben (not based on real people!)

(Worldly) Will is the kind of guy everyone likes. He plays in the university football team, is a popular member of your year, and has hundreds of friends on Facebook. He occasionally comes to CU and CMF and gets to church pretty regularly, when he's not with his football mates or his medic-friends. The problem is, whilst trying to get on well with friends, he neglects his Christian life. His motto is 'Christians are normal too' and he lives by it as much as possible. He's regularly found staggering home after a night out, and is often flirting with girls in the bar. Will is brilliant at getting among his non-Christian friends, but they think he's just one of them, and don't really see any differences at all.

(Saintly) Sarah also has lots of friends. Friends in CU, friends in CMF, friends at church... she's also very busy. She goes to church, Bible studies, prayer meetings, CU and CMF (she

might even be a CMF rep). In fact, all her friends are Christians, and everything she does is with Christians. She reads her Bible regularly, doesn't get drunk, and seeks to be kind and loving. She's doing pretty well at living differently; the problem is she doesn't actually have any non-Christian friends to be 'among'.

Finally there's (Biblical) Ben. He has fewer friends than the other two, but his friendships seem closer than theirs. He plays in the university orchestra and is regularly at CMF meetings and church, where he's a music group leader. He's often found in the pub with friends from the orchestra or his medical school seminar group, some of whom he lives with. He tries to talk to them about his faith, especially when they try to persuade him to play drinking games with them, or if they wonder why he gets up at some unearthly hour to read his Bible. His friends think he's a bit 'stuffy' now and then, but secretly they admit he's a good friend and they enjoy having him around.

Do any of these people sound familiar to you?

As much as we'd all like to think of ourselves as someone like Ben, striking a great balance between spending time among non-Christian friends, and living differently as we do, all of us have a tendency towards being like Sarah or Will.

Paul knew this tension very well. He wrote to the Corinthian church telling them about his methods of sharing the gospel with people:

*I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.*¹⁹

At this point Will would be pretty happy. 'See,' he'd say, 'Paul says that Christians need to be like non-Christians around them so they don't put them off'. And he'd be right, to a point. Paul was keen to make sure he was spending time with non-Christians, doing things they liked doing and sharing his life with them.

But a few verses later Paul adds to what he has already said:

*I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*²⁰

Paul knows that a danger in spending time with non-Christians is that you can end up living like them too. Although he 'becomes all things to all men', he strives to make sure that he doesn't compromise. Instead, keeping his future destiny in the new creation ('the prize') as a motivation, he preaches the gospel and aims to keep his body in check and keep living differently.

So the key to living differently is: get the balance right - be among non-Christians but distinct from them.

be prepared - answering their questions

For some time after I became a Christian, I couldn't understand why I wasn't getting opportunities to explain the gospel. I was trying to live differently, and wanted to

explain the gospel if I could but no-one ever asked me any questions.

get the balance right - be among non-Christians but distinct from them

Then someone pointed out that it wasn't that no-one was asking anything, but that I thought they weren't asking the *right* questions. No one ever threw themselves at my feet, crying 'what must I do to be saved?'²¹

The problem was, that was pretty much the only question I was looking for.

It would be great if our friends were asking such direct questions, but often they aren't. More often they might ask about the way we live - 'why wouldn't you let someone else sign you in for that seminar you didn't go to - everyone else did?' or 'why get up so long before you need to leave



the house to read something as irrelevant as the Bible?’ or ‘why don’t you have some fun and come drinking with us?’

These questions are a great starting point for explaining something about what we believe. Our motivation to live differently is found in the gospel of Jesus’ death and resurrection, so the answer can always be ‘because Jesus died and rose again’!

A bit more specifically, Peter gives us some great guidance on answering questions:

*‘Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.’ But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.*²²

Peter gives us four key

principles in these verses:

1. Do not fear people and what they think of you or might do to you (‘Do not fear what they fear’²³ is a quote from Isaiah, as God encourages him not to fear other people but to regard God as holy)
2. Instead, remember: Jesus is Lord. He is in charge, so he’s the one worth obeying!
3. Always... at all times even (especially) when we don’t feel like it ... be prepared. It’s actually OK to prepare (and even practise) answers to questions we might get asked! It’s even OK to prepare by ‘prompting the question’. For example, you might ask a friend what they did at the weekend, knowing they might ask you too. You can be prepared to talk about church and even why you went!
4. Answer with gentleness and respect. The way we answer questions is just as important as what we say.

Answering in a proud or argumentative way will give our friends the message that we think we’re better than them, no matter how hard we try to stress that salvation is by grace alone, not what we do.

the only person who can do the work of opening blind eyes is God

pray, pray, pray

Paul tells us that before we believe, we are ‘blinded by the god of this age’.²⁴ Ultimately, however clearly or gently we explain the gospel, the only person who can do the work of opening blind eyes is God:

*God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*²⁵

If we aren’t praying regularly



for our friends, we may betray an attitude that we think they don't really need the gospel, or that we can persuade them ourselves by being clever enough. Instead, in seeking opportunities to explain the gospel, we need to be asking God to work the miracle of salvation in those around us.

a final word:

messing up

There will be times when we go wrong. Either we'll mess up among our friends, we'll miss opportunities to answer questions or we'll answer them badly. What do you do when you've messed up?

repent and believe the gospel

Remember the motivations for living differently? We begin and stay with the gospel. So don't wallow in guilt. Instead, turn to God and repent. Seek forgiveness in the death of Jesus and resolve to live the new life he gives you in his resurrection.

preach the gospel

'Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.'²⁶ Even when you mess up! We dread people saying something like:

'I can't believe you did that - I thought you were supposed to be a Christian!' but those times are opportunities to explain that being a Christian is about accepting God's forgiveness, not being 'a good person'.

pray

God alone has the power to help you live differently. Ask, and he will help you because he delights in changing his children to be more like Jesus.

seek accountability

Amazingly, God uses his people to help his people! If you're trying to live differently among non-Christians, your Christian friends are a vital support. Be honest with one another about your struggles, and pray together regularly about how you live and for the friends you live among.

the challenge

The gospel is amazing! God gives us forgiveness we don't deserve, a new life unrecognisable from our old one, and puts us in the world to live out our relationship with him as his people. Then he uses us to call more people to himself as he makes us more like Jesus, as 'salt and light' in the world.

The challenge is not 'are you being salt and light' among your friends, but 'what kind of salt and light are you being?'

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dialogue dinners - the Gospel on the menu

Mark Pickering outlines a recipe for effective evangelism

Imagine the scene. A room filled with your med school friends. Good food, good company, and an evening spent talking about the gospel – whether it's true and what it means in practice. Does that sound like merely a fantasy? Well, it's just what happens at a dialogue dinner.

Dialogue dinners have happened sporadically for years in CMF groups around the country, occasionally in more organised bursts. They're one of the evangelistic ideas promoted in CMF's *Confident Christianity* training days.

so what's the big idea?

A dialogue dinner is a really effective way to get talking about gospel issues with your friends. It basically consists of a small number of Christians inviting a larger number of non-Christian friends around for dinner, with the explicit understanding that along with good food there will be discussion about what Christianity is all about, with the opportunity to ask any questions they like.

There is an external speaker who is confident taking any

questions that may come and leading the discussion. After dinner they will kick things off with a brief outline of the gospel (for instance, using the 'God-man-God' outline promoted in *Confident Christianity*). This gets people thinking and then the floor is thrown open to questions.

an evening spent talking about the gospel ... does that sound like merely a fantasy?

In the right circumstances, this can lead on to a couple of hours or more of great discussion where people really get to air their objections, be challenged and hear the gospel explained clearly, perhaps for the first time.

here are some we made earlier...

In March this year, CMF students at Hull York Medical School organised a Grill-a-Christian event in York. This was a panel discussion in a campus bar where non-Christian students were invited to come and ask any questions they wanted to a

panel of Christians, both doctors and students. This was very popular and so the group organised three dialogue dinners in April and May as follow-up events with their friends, some of whom had attended the Grill-a-Christian event and wanted the opportunity to talk further.

I led two of the events and local CMF psychiatrist, Jeff Clarke, led the other. Each was organised and hosted by different CMF students, inviting their own friends to come. This meant that each event had its own character. One was made up mostly of all the housemates from one house; one had almost all Muslims.

The questions discussed tend to depend somewhat on the background of the group. The first event I led leant quite heavily towards questions like, 'how could God send nice people to hell?', 'what's so wrong with homosexuality?' and 'aren't all religions the same anyway?'

The second event was much more Muslim-focused and so the questions centred on the reliability of the Bible, how God



Feel free to ask as many searching, difficult and controversial questions as you like

could exist in multiple persons, whether Jesus was more than a human prophet, and why God couldn't just forgive without having to let Jesus die.

In both evenings there was a real buzz and some great discussion. I came away feeling like I'd done a few rounds with a heavyweight boxer, but exhilarated to think of all the big issues we'd aired. With the Muslim students especially, there was a real engagement with the issues, and an agreement that the issues we were talking about were of crucial importance.

In the third event, Amy Watson and Melanie Mack (both first years at the time) invited their friends and Dr Jeff Clarke spoke. Amy recalls:

Our dialogue dinner in my kitchen in halls last term was a real encouragement. It was scary

inviting close friends but I know they really appreciated our willingness to talk about what are very personal and relevant issues. Also having a Christian doctor gave an insight into a Christian viewpoint from another stage within medicine. I would really recommend having a dialogue dinner amongst a group of your friends at medical school.

Melanie also adds:
I really enjoyed the dialogue dinner. Having a Christian doctor there was really comforting for those moments when you're tongue-tied and don't know what to say! It also brought up some questions I'd never considered before, but would now feel confident talking about to my non-Christian friends in the future. So it was really beneficial for me spiritually, as well as for the friends we'd invited, which I hadn't expected.

Having one of the medical school psychiatry lecturers speaking gave an added dimension as some of the students quizzed Jeff on psychiatry over pudding!

I could do that!

Running a dialogue dinner really is a great way to get your friends talking about the gospel. It's not expensive, it's not (very) scary and it can make a real difference to your friends' understanding of the gospel. Why not think about organising one or more dialogue dinners in your CMF group this year? You could run them as follow-ups to a larger evangelistic event, or stand-alone events at any time. The second year HYMS students who hosted the events I led knew that this was their last chance to get all these friends together before they got split up for clinical placements, so they took the opportunity and went for it.

If you want to organise a dialogue dinner, why not talk to your relevant CMF staff member, or local medical school secretary, to get some more advice and find a good speaker for your event?

But it's also good now to be aware of some of the things that make a dialogue dinner likely to go well...or badly.

secrets for success

- i) Be clear from the outset what you are inviting friends to. They need to be fully aware that along with the food is a discussion about Christianity - otherwise they will feel they've been conned!
- ii) The better your existing friendships, the better the conversation. If you have a good number of non-Christian friends you can talk freely with, the more likely it is that the group will gel and the discussion will flow.
- iii) Choose your leader carefully - you need someone who will be able to lead the discussion clearly, calmly and put guests at their ease, respecting them but being able to handle hard questions and explain the gospel and its implications

clearly, bringing things back to focus when they inevitably go off at a tangent.

- iv) Prepare well - in prayer, in cooking or buying good food, in having some resources available (eg Gospels or evangelistic booklets) for people who want to go further at the end.

recipes for disaster

- i) Don't have too many Christians there, or the non-Christians may feel like a lion in a den of Daniels! In order to get 6-10 non-Christian friends you may have to invite twice that number.
- ii) Don't let dinner run on too late or get sidetracked on washing up - be slick and be prepared to move into discussion once people have had a chance to eat.
- iii) Don't collect together too disparate a group - people who don't know each other or are from very different backgrounds, eg different religions. This may stunt the conversation or risk taking it off in too many different directions.

now it's your turn

Dialogue dinners are a brilliant

CMF staff members are keen to lead dialogue dinners - please contact us in the office. Medical school secretaries are local doctors who provide a link between graduates and students - if you need to know who yours is please contact the CMF office - even if they can't help themselves they may well know someone who can. Others who might be able to help you are local church student workers or UCCF staff and relay workers. Of course every great speaker starts somewhere ... and more senior medical students might want to try out and enhance their skills at a dinner for younger students, perhaps with some guidance from someone more experienced.

way to get the gospel on the agenda with your friends. And it doesn't stop when the evening ends. A good discussion can lead to many more personal conversations afterwards once things have been stirred up.

Why not think about organising one in your group?

Mark Pickering is a GP and CMF medical school secretary in York

a season for sowing

Oluwatosin Haastrup and colleagues at St George's encourage us in evangelism on campus

The last year at the St George's (SGUL) Christian Union (CU) has been a year in which God has demonstrated to us that prayer is powerful and that he is faithful to answer when we pray. I say this partly as encouragement; it may seem such a long time since you noticed tangible results in your life or the lives of others that could be directly attributed to your praying. Scripture offers examples of when God has been faithful in providing for his people. Much of the Old Testament details Israel's repeated straying from God's commands, and his continued grace in providing for them. We also see God working through other believers, for example in the collection detailed in Philippians 4.

The CU at SGUL as a whole has witnessed a great shift in recent times. The last term of the previous academic year saw the CU at a low in terms of participation and activity. The summer term often sees such changes, as senior students are sent further away on clinical firms and the rising panic begins amongst first year

students as end of year exams approach. However, God showed us he can do great things through only a few people. All who remained got the opportunity to observe the great faithfulness and abundant provision of God for his people.

We started the year with a pre-term outing, a residential weekend trip for the new first years. It provided the opportunity for new students at the university to experience fellowship with other Christians and so begin to put down roots at a time when everything is new and daunting and the lure and hedonism of university life are perhaps most attractive. Advertising via Facebook, supported by a video produced with help from a local church, enabled the students to hear about the event before they arrived at university.

The event was a breakthrough, the beginning of a godly tradition. The students had fun; Christians and non-Christians were treated to some great activities. We played games - skittles, archery, pedal go-karting, and went paintballing on the Sunday. The young

students also had the chance to meet some more senior students who provided great advice on how to survive as a medical student! Crucially, behind all the fun and games the gospel was clearly presented. The success of the event was not in the numbers - there were about twenty attendees. Rather its success could be measured in terms of the relationships and friendships that were built. In the words of a nominal Muslim who attended, you could always feel at home with the CU; within us he found a family.

A successful undertaking is always one built upon strong foundations with a great commitment to looking after the 'fresh bricks' today that will stand as the pillars tomorrow. The weekend trip away was supported in prayer by a number of local churches who dedicated their time to prayer walking around the University campus, praying that many who studied there would come to know Jesus Christ for themselves. Likewise we benefited from our predecessors at CU who provided a platform of unity and commitment

amongst CU members. One of the CU members remarked that,

Friendship within the CU helped us grow stronger as a CU and our friendship with others fed our desire for them to know Jesus Christ and to see a revival in our campus. It never fails to amaze me how Jesus the Son of God calls us sinful men his friends, and it doesn't stop there! John 15:13 says 'Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friend'. We believe he is calling us to do the same - to be like Jesus, the visible image of our invisible God!

This event and the things that followed would not have been possible without sacrifices of time and energy from a handful of faithful individuals. Their example should lead us to consider whether we are prepared to lay down our time, our energy, our imaginations and talents so that God can use them to save our friends at university and beyond.

There were challenges as well as successes for the CU. As a committee we were a group of different but intensely

passionate and opinionated people, all busy medics with one equally busy physiotherapy student. This could have led to a lack of unity and fellowship as a CU. However we have held on to God's promise to the divided Israelites in Ezekiel 37. He said that he would unite the northern and southern factions by taking the stick of Judah and that of the house of Israel, and they would become one in his hand.¹ As God did for the Israelites so he has done for us! Not only has he united us, but he has also graciously provided for our needs when we have stepped out in faith. At the beginning of our mission week entitled S.W.A.Y., we had just enough money to host two meetings, barely £100. However, we continued in faith that God would provide and he did!

S.W.A.Y. was a great success. Highlights included a 'FREE' black and white dinner, (launching the 'FREE' Mark's gospels produced by the

Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship), a testimony night given by Ian McCormack and a variety show amongst other things. We saw numbers in attendance like we had never witnessed before, with people actually wanting to hear this gospel, to stay behind and ask questions, 'what was all this fuss about?', 'why on earth were these people so excited?'

Daniel 10 illustrates how an ordinary man like us can pray, and God will answer. Daniel contended in prayer for 21 days fervently awaiting his answer from God, meanwhile the messenger sent to bring him an answer fought fervently for those 21 days with determination to deliver his message.

Laurence Crutchlow, managing editor adds ...

St George's is just one of 40 medical schools in the UK and Ireland, all of which have the potential for mission work on campus. For those in London, UCCF are co-ordinating with a number of London CUs to host the first London-wide university mission in many years in January 2010.

CMF staff members have recently given several talks as part of the CU mission on King's College London's Guy's campus, and are keen to do more of the stimulating and important work.

Why not consider organising events aimed specifically at medics when your CU has its mission week? Other recent evangelistic events have included debates on topics such as euthanasia, dialogue dinners (or curries!), and provocatively titled talks (such as 'is love just a chemical reaction?' in Brighton earlier this year).

CMF also continues to run the 'Confident Christianity' and 'Answering Other Faiths' training days to help you grow more confident in your witness. See www.cmf.org.uk and click on 'events' for details of upcoming events in 2010. If you are keen for a member of CMF staff to speak at an event, please contact us in the CMF office.

He was opposed and delayed because his message brought truth,² likewise we have been given truth with the power to set the captive free in the form of the gospel.³ So, people of the most high God, it is time to pray and wait expectantly for God to move.

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caring for asylum seekers

Elisabeth Redman and Richard Roberts offer a Biblical perspective

A man sits alone in the corner of a busy room. He looks gaunt and sad. As we talk, he soon reveals why. He cannot sleep; he doesn't want to eat. He explains he is completely alone in the UK. He has a ten year old daughter in Sri Lanka, but has lost contact with her. All he knows is that she is somewhere in the Tamil region - the same area where a massacre is taking place.

Zaine¹ has just arrived in the UK and doesn't speak English. She has a large family of ten children, but when she fled her home country of Somalia she could not bring them, and now she doesn't know where they are. Zaine was severely beaten before fleeing, receiving injuries to her face and body, with the worst injuries inflicted as her attackers tried to rape her.

These two individuals are examples of asylum seekers who have recently arrived in Cardiff, and no doubt many more with equally horrific stories are being sent to different areas of the UK. What can I do to help them as a Christian medical student?



I have no doubt that both individuals are telling the truth, but many asylum seekers are not truthful about their situations - does that affect my response? What is a biblical perspective?

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.²

The New Testament was originally written in Greek, and in this language there are four words for love. *Storge* is the Greek word meaning family affection; *philia* means friendship love and *eros* sexual love. These three 'loves' are given and received by Christians and non-Christians alike. However there is another Greek word for love, which is the highest love imaginable - 'God is *agape*'.³ *Agape* is a divine love, selfless and self-giving. God has demonstrated his *agape* love for us through his own son Jesus, and throughout the Bible there

are many verses telling of God's steadfast love for us. His love is particularly emphasised for the 'unlovely' - the oppressed, the fatherless, the widow and the alien.⁴

[Jesus prayed] I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.⁵

There are clear biblical commands to love one another and live a life of love as Jesus did.⁶ Before Jesus was arrested, he prayed for all believers, that they may have this *agape* love in them. However Christ's perfect love is expressed differently for different people. For example, Jesus showed his love for the Pharisees through seemingly harsh words, because they needed to understand they wouldn't be saved while they held on to their lack of faith and to their hypocrisy. For the woman caught in adultery, it was a softer approach, diverting attention (from her probably uncovered body) to the ground and from her sin to the sins of her accusers. He didn't say that she didn't deserve to be punished, but by his grace and

in his wisdom, he saved her from being stoned and gave her an opportunity to repent.⁷

Likewise, we are to love the people around us, though this may be through different means. Paul wrote to the mature believers at Philippi 'And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth in insight'.⁸ He prays that the believers may be wise in their love.

how can we apply this to asylum seekers?

Firstly and most importantly, we can support them through petitioning our Father in prayer. We can pray for specific individuals, for organisations working with them and for wisdom to know how to love them.

The 'wise way' of practically loving asylum seekers does not need to involve money, as they are supported by the government whilst their application is being processed. The greater need, and what they are often lacking, is social and personal support. Many asylum seekers have experienced very traumatic situations and arrive in the UK

alone, as the Sri Lankan man did. Appropriately loving them should involve showing them that we care, for example through supporting community projects. Some are believers, and need to be welcomed as brothers and sisters.

It is true that some individuals may not be honest about why they have come to the UK. But God has established governing authorities to make just decisions for the individual and for our country - pray for wisdom for them too. God is sovereign. He may have brought them to this country to hear the gospel. For example, there are a large number of Kurds currently coming to the UK, and in the past there have been large influxes from Somalia and Bangladesh. All these are among the nations 'least reached' with the gospel. Often situations that seem 'bad' to us can still be used for God's glory. For example, Paul's unjust removal to and imprisonment in Rome resulted in the whole imperial guard hearing the gospel.⁹

For many medical students, asylum seekers are not individuals you regularly meet. However, they are a group that have received a lot of medical

media attention recently, in regards to treatment of failed asylum seekers. Therefore it is important to consider your own views, and to walk as Jesus did,¹⁰ loving our neighbour in whatever way we can in obedience to God's word.

Elisabeth Redman

is a clinical medical student in Cardiff

Richard Roberts

is a consultant in public health in Wales

Some useful organisations and opportunities to volunteer

- Refugee council¹¹
- Student action for Refugees (STAR)¹²
- Local church based projects eg Oasis in Cardiff¹³

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HEROES + HERETICS

Alex Bunn examines the greatest hero and the greatest heretic of all time

HERETIC: SATAN

Heresy is a very unpopular and archaic word, but in fact there are many modern heresies. These are beliefs that contradict popular consensus, or 'orthodoxy' on important issues. Christians often agree with atheist friends on many issues, and want to defend important truths with them. For instance, it is a secular heresy to claim today to say that human rights don't apply in Guantanamo Bay, or that women are of less value than men, and such heresy is roundly opposed. Rightly so. But over other issues non-believers can be dogmatic and intolerant of rival views held by Christians - these are 'secular heresies'.

For instance, Christians who claim that life in the womb should be valued and protected unconditionally (the 'sanctity of life' view), can be treated with contempt and suffer discrimination at work.

So the question is not *whether* orthodoxy and heresy exist,

because believers and non-believers both distinguish between key truth and dangerous fallacy. The question then is *which* beliefs are so critical to get right, and are so central to the well-being of a community to justify the intolerance of dissent? In this instalment we will consider the greatest hero and the greatest heretic of all time, Jesus and Satan. Of course a belief in Satan is itself considered a heresy by many now, but we should be aware of his schemes,¹ if only to avoid them. There are several great showdowns with him in Scripture, but let's start with the first.

Satan's tactics are laid bare in the words of the snake to Eve in Genesis 3, and are still familiar today. Firstly, note that Satan gently distorts what God had said: 'Did God *really* say, "You must not eat from any tree in the garden"?'² Indeed God had not said that! Rather the very first statement he makes to

mankind is 'You are *free* to eat from *any* tree in the garden',³ with one single exception. How easy it is to be convinced by the enemy that God is a spoilsport who wants to rob our freedom. We sulk over the rare prohibition against destructive behaviour, rather than delight in the abundance of good things God gives. So the first heresy was the idea that God is a tyrant who wants to rob us of our freedom. It is such a seductive heresy that Eve bought into Satan's lie, and we frequently follow. Eve distorts what God had said, falsely remembering God's warning about the fruit as 'you must not *touch* it, or you will die'.⁴ But God had said no such thing, only that *eating* the fruit would bring death.⁵ Fear was the fruit of the poisonous seed of suspicion that Satan had planted in Eve's mind.

Having sown the seed of distrust, Satan's second approach is direct

contradiction: 'You will *not* surely die'.⁶ Satan argues that there will be no negative consequences. Ever since, he has been known as 'the father of lies',⁷ the great heretic. Once again, the deeper allegation is that God cannot be trusted: 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil'.⁸ These are profound yet somewhat ambiguous words. As so often, Satan is *partially right*! When we reject God's commandments intended for good, we will indeed *know* evil in a new way, and how it differs from innocence. But by then it's too late, and you can never un-know sin and the harm it wreaks; once the toothpaste is out of the tube, you can't put it back in again! Adam and Eve soon knew the consequences of sin for themselves: pain, blame and shame, and exclusion from God's life-giving presence. Medics should well appreciate the fateful consequences of mistrusting the maker's instructions, as it makes up much of our trade: existential despair, addictions, broken relationships, shame and stigma, poverty and STIs to name a few. The irony is that the snake, not God, poses the greatest danger to our freedom.



But the good news is that when our gracious God judged the serpent, who had wrought so much havoc with his lies, he promised to raise up a serpent crusher from Eve's offspring,⁹ who would defeat the great heretic once and for all. The Old Testament heroes and even the angels longed for him to be revealed,¹⁰ but we are fortunate enough to know his name: Jesus. Fast forward now to about 30AD, when the serpent crusher was revealed. What can we learn from Jesus? Here are three top tips from the master, from his answers to Satan.

Firstly, **recognise your weakness** and surrender it to God. Luke 3 tells us that Jesus is like a second Adam, who had to contend with Satan's lies all over again, recapitulating

Adam's struggle, but finally defeating him in the place of man. Unlike the Hollywood version, there are no guns, car chases or clash of superhero egos. Quite the opposite; instead a demonstration of obedience to God, even in the vulnerability of human flesh. In the three temptations, Jesus is goaded by Satan to use his 'super-powers', calling down angels or miraculously creating food. But the most extraordinary thing is that Jesus refuses to use his divine power, showing us what obedience looks like as an obedient human. 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test'¹¹ was his reply. This is enormously encouraging - it is possible to oppose Satan despite our human weakness. 'Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from

you.’¹² Sometimes we would rather believe that we are too weak and powerless to resist; ‘I just couldn’t help myself’, we tell ourselves, quite falsely. No, weakness given to God is strength enough.

Secondly, **know the truth** that God has revealed, so you can spot the dangerous lie. Do you know how bank clerks spot forgeries? They study normal bank notes minutely so that abnormal ones are recognised instantly. Or how to recognise an abnormal ECG? Doctors who have spent years poring over them have no problem in detecting pathology. Likewise, Jesus’ mind was so soaked in Scripture that he recognised and rejected Satan’s lies boldly: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’.¹³ Do we spend as much time and effort feeding on Scripture as we do even in the canteen?!

Thirdly, like Jesus, **recognise no rivals** for your obedience and devotion: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only’.¹⁴ Unlike Eve, Jesus did not enter into a conversation with Satan, his love of God was unswerving. Experts warn us not to negotiate with terrorists, who are experts in manipulating us

to their destructive wills. Likewise, Jesus did not negotiate with a snake whose weapons are suspicion, lies, fear and enslavement. How much do we compromise with the enemy of our souls, settling for a cosy cease fire on his terms? We resign ourselves to bad habits and loveless religion. There’s a wonderful but sobering poem about a fly and a cunning spider.¹⁵ The spider had no power over the fly until she flew too close. Her fatal error was to enter into a conversation, slowly spiralling closer and closer to her enemy...you can probably guess the outcome!

How much better to follow our hero Jesus, to recognise our weaknesses, submit them to our Father in heaven who will equip us to resist the great heretic, and escape his clutches. He gives us two freedoms. Freedom *from* suspicion, lies, fear, enslavement and the love of worthless things. And he gives us freedom *to* love and serve wholeheartedly the one true lover of our souls. What a great and merciful God!

Alex Bunn is a GP in London and CMF Acting Head of Student Ministries

SUMMARY

SATAN’S DANGEROUS LIES

- God wants to take away your freedom
- God cannot be trusted
- Sin has no consequences

JESUS’

LIFE & TEACHING:

- God gives freedom to those who submit to him
- Recognise dangerous lies by knowing the word of God
- Don’t negotiate with Satan

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7. John 8:44
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9. Genesis 3:15
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how to read the Bible

Lizzie Groom helps us to understand Revelation



This series is summarised from Fee G, Stuart D. *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth* (3rd ed). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003

Seven golden lamp stands? A beast with ten horns and seven crowns? A dragon chasing a pregnant woman? Confused? We often view Revelation with apprehension, seeing it as a book for the highly academic Bible scholar or science fiction fanatic. This next chapter in our series helps us gain confidence when unravelling the rich theological truths in this often overlooked book.

The key to understanding is to work out what the original hearers should have understood when hearing Revelation read. If we immediately apply Revelation to our situation today without understanding the context and nature of the book, we are likely to end up making poor interpretations and reaching wrong conclusions.

Revelation - style

Revelation contains a unique blend of three different types of

literature - apocalypse, prophecy and epistle. Apocalyptic writing is seldom seen today; however it was a common form of literature between 200BC and 200AD. This type of literature is full of imagery, often quite fantastical, which can make it difficult to understand the meaning of what John says. Since Jesus' first coming we are living in the 'last days'; this creates a balance as some of the book is eschatological (containing doctrine concerning last or final matters)¹ whereas other sections are God's words to John's readers regarding their present situation, future salvation and judgment. Revelation is written in the form of a letter so is in part addressed to specific people in particular situations.

historical context

Revelation was written to the churches of Asia Minor. The churches are facing persecution, which John expected to increase. He writes to prepare these Christians for coming

trials, but also to remind them to look ahead to the end of history when Jesus will return triumphant to save his church and judge those who have opposed her. Keep this big picture in mind as you read to avoid getting lost in the detail!

literary context

Unlike the Old Testament prophecies, which often started as stand alone spoken words from God and were later assembled, the individual visions in Revelation are highly ordered in sets that are arranged to create a structured whole.

structure of Revelation

Fee and Stuart recommend trying to visualise the scenes as you read Revelation imagining the book as one vast play where scenes are acted out in front of you. The visions are not arranged chronologically; rather the author zooms out to show the big picture in chapters 8-11 and then goes back and zooms in at various points to add more detail in chapters 12-22.

- **Chapters 1-3** - introduce the main characters.
- **Chapters 4-5** - give you the backdrop.
- **Chapters 6-8** - the drama starts.

- **Chapters 8-11** - overview of story.
- **Chapter 12** - A key chapter! Conflict between Christ and Satan is depicted in two different visions. In Satan's attempt to destroy Christ, he himself is defeated and Christ is raised up to rule. Satan although ultimately defeated is still defiant and vows to 'make war' against the church on earth.
- **Chapters 13-14** - Satan and the powers of this earth demand the worship of the world and persecute the church.
- **Chapters 15-16** - God's wrath is poured out on the powers of earth.
- **Chapters 17-22** - the eternal fate of those in opposition to God is contrasted to those whose names are in the Lamb's book of life.

tips for understanding imagery

- The images used are taken from a wide variety of sources, but their meaning may be altered from their original context.
- Some images are fixed - for example the beast from the sea - while others are fluid, an example being the Lion which becomes a Lamb.²
- Some images refer to specific

things or events, while others are more general.

- John interprets some images explicitly - use these interpretations to guide your understanding of the others

six interpreted images

- **Son of man**³ = Christ
- **Golden lampstands**⁴ = Seven churches
- **Seven stars**⁵ = Seven angels/messengers of churches
- **Great Dragon**⁶ = Satan
- **Seven heads**⁷ = Seven Hills on which woman sits
- **The prostitute**⁸ = The Great City (many see this as representing the world in opposition to God)

- Try not to get lost in attempting to interpret all the details of the images. Details in themselves often have no specific significance but are there to create a dramatic atmosphere or help aid our understanding of the overall image.
- Keep your eyes open for images plucked from the Old Testament and look at their Old Testament context. This will often help in working out how John is using the image in Revelation.
- Invest in a good commentary! Fee and Stuart suggest Osborne⁹ and Mounce.¹⁰

hermeneutical questions

We can run into difficulties when applying the pictures in Revelation to our lives today. There are areas of ambiguity, such as the identity of the antichrist. Pictures are just that - there may not be a literal fulfilment. Don't get too caught up trying to work out the details of how our contemporary history fits into the prophetic visions of Revelation.

Putting the difficulties of interpreting how God will bring about the end of history aside, Revelation tells us with confidence that Satan and the powers of this world are limited, Christ is reigning and will return in judgment; and that we, the redeemed, can look forward to eternity with him in glory. How important it is to be reminded of our great and certain hope in these last days!

Lizzie Groom is a student intern with CMF in London

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fearfully and wonderfully made:

mutiny

Fat', as Dr Paul Brand states in reference to our western culture, 'connotes a lack of discipline, an unnecessary aggregation of cells that should be reduced'. It can be said that fasting or 'dieting' has, over the ages been an instrument towards the development of the inner self for Christians or physical self for the secular world respectively.¹

However, being a surgeon, Paul Brand brings to attention some positive attributes to being a fat cell. They insulate against cold, give organs like the kidneys a cushion against shock and most importantly provide fuel for the body when supplies around are diminished.

What happens, however, when a fat cell decides to be disloyal to the greater need of the body? What happens if it continues to grow and bulge, ignoring checks on growth and choking out normal cells? Dr Brand describes this as analogous to a lipoma or cancer. Furthermore, he extends the analogy between 'a cancer in the physical body and mutiny in the spiritual body of Christ'. If wealthy people are

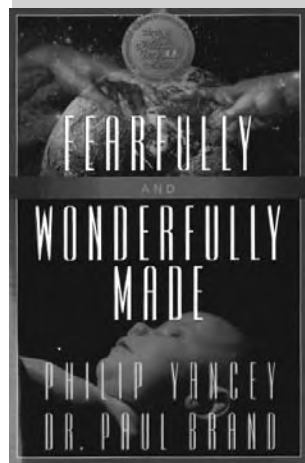
likened to fat cells, they can be very useful in the church when it comes to hospitality and generosity. However, what happens when the wealthy or 'we in the west' as Dr Brand exclaims, 'get caught up in a competitive spiral with others around us and become oblivious to the needs of the rest of the world?'

What happens, however, when a fat cell decides to be disloyal to the greater need of the body?

Brand has challenged me to recognise what a privileged position I occupy as a medical student in a well-resourced country. In light of this, I should help those who are less fortunate. As Jesus tells us simply but profoundly, 'freely you have received, freely give'.²

Brand's strength lies in his ingenious use of analogy. He asks: why are fruits like apples and pears weighted? The answer is that when they fall to the ground, they make a slight indentation in the soil, and

This article is inspired by a chapter from Yancey P, Brand P. *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987. The authors expand on the New Testament analogy of the Body of Christ, linking it to the human body.



contain enough 'meat' to nourish the seeds inside. The question then comes to you, as good fruit-bearing Christians, what impact are you leaving behind?

Norris Igbineweka is a clinical medical student at King's College London

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Affluenza

Oliver James



Vermillion; 2007; £8.99; Pb; 592pp
ISBN 0091900115

'Never have I read a book that so precisely captures the way we are being emotionally snookered by the demands of 21st century living...' Jeremy Vine

How often do we consume more than we need?
Is sincerity the same as authenticity?
Why isn't parenthood as valuable to society as a job?

Oliver James, a clinical psychologist, travelled all over the world to compile this book. The title of the book refers to a set of values and behaviours that he models on a virus which infects the heart and the soul. James looks at what we prize, how we achieve our goals, and how this affects our wellbeing. Important issues for Christians today include biblical interpretation and homosexuality - of course. But what about politics and economics? Is it important to live holy and different lives in terms of how we treat our children and partners, and to act in a way towards the poor and towards climate change which sets us apart, and puts us at the forefront of change for the better?

Oliver James isn't known as a Christian, but in a way this makes for a bigger challenge. His findings and suggestions brush so close at times to Jesus that a call to a life more real whispers to you. Many of us like to think that our goals are simple; we are working towards loving God and each other more. This book makes uncomfortable but essential reading. Even as Christians, we can be 'snookered' by society into damaging ourselves and others, often without even realising.

Katie Dexter is an intercalating medical student in Leeds

www.bethinking.org

From the plurality of culture and worldviews to understanding who we are as individuals, this website offers topics relevant for the thinking Christian - even the Christian medic. There are resources for understanding, defending and communicating the Christian faith.

There is a variety of stimulating articles like 'Am I significant in the universe, or just an accident?' and reviews of films like 'The Bourne Ultimatum'. Whatever your interest, *bethinking.org* includes something likely to engage, equip and challenge you on practical aspects of life rooted in Christian doctrine. The website has a clear layout divided into several colour coded categories such as 'Bible & Jesus', 'Who am I?' or 'Truth & Tolerance'. What's more exciting is that if you're bored of reading articles, you can listen to audio or podcasts on some topics. With today's generation of mobile phones, you can listen to it before sleeping or whilst on the go!

I enjoyed *bethinking.org* and have been spiritually challenged and encouraged further in my Christian journey. I listened to Andrew Fellows' talk in which he argued that today's modern self is characterised by narcissism. This got me thinking: do I see others as individuals with their own subjective sense of self, needs, hopes and worries? Or do I simply see other people as a reflection to augment my own feelings and sense of wellbeing? I would encourage you to have a look at the website and get thinking...

Norris Igbineweka is a clinical medical student at King's College London

letters...

editor,

'Obama: change for good?' (*Nucleus*, April 2009) was a challenging read. Van Mol put forward a convincing case supporting the positive legislation that came out of the Bush administration. There is a great variation in how the two leaders are presented by the world's media - Obama, the man of powerful rhetoric and great personal credibility, is portrayed in contrast to Bush, the great buffoon or performing monkey. However, setting aside the ill-advised foray into Iraq, we see that the Bush administration was responsible for a number of positive initiatives in healthcare, especially with regard to ethics. Whatever our views about Bush's other political decisions we should have some appreciation for these policies, which are influenced by and support Christian principles.

I find it concerning to see the Obama administration already starting to unpick many of these Acts. Obama is known for his liberal views but, as is the case in UK, such views may not in fact promote liberty: his moves to restrict rights of conscientious objection for medical staff who object to carrying out certain procedures on ethical grounds, strike me as illiberal.

I have to confess that I do not avidly follow political developments. However, as Van Mol reminds us, we are exhorted to pray for our leaders. I was challenged to look beyond the media presentation of our political figures and know more about their policies in order to pray in a thoughtful and informed way.

Lizzie Groom is a third year medical student in Cardiff

managing editor Laurence Crutchlow comments

What a difference a few months can make! Andre Van Mol's discussion of Barack Obama led to lengthy debate both at *Nucleus* editorial committee and in the CMF office. We received it only a month after President Obama's inauguration, not long after a *Daily Telegraph* cartoon had depicted the White House Lake with a sign banning the new President from walking on the water! We wondered if we were the only publication in the world considering publishing something less than adulatory about him.

Now nearly 45% of Americans disapprove of his record to date, nearly matching the 49% who approve.¹ It took until well into George W Bush's second term in

2005 for his poll ratings to fall consistently to this level.² Healthcare reform (as detailed in *News Review*), along with the financial crisis and the situation in Afghanistan have all proved stumbling blocks.

Lizzie Groom's comments above about praying for our leaders are brought into much sharper focus when we know that they are in difficulties. Yet how many of us remembered to do so when it was thought that Obama could 'do no wrong'? Paul instructs Timothy to pray for those in authority, stating that it pleases God, and linking it to 'peaceful and quiet lives' for believers.³ Liturgical prayers for the Queen and politicians were once common (especially in Anglican circles), but how many of us include these in our worship now? With an election imminent in the UK, we should consider our response to Paul's instructions.

1. tinyurl.com/9kholt
2. tinyurl.com/yd3kp9l
3. 1 Timothy 2:1-2

student services

These include literature, conferences, elective advice, international links and Christian Union support.

Reps can supply joining forms, literature, extra copies of *Nucleus* and information about conferences and activities. Further information is on the CMF website: www.cmf.org.uk or from students@cmf.org.uk.

Ideas or feedback can be sent to the National Students' Committee through its chair, Lloyd Thompson, on lloyd@cmf.org.uk

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