

leadership: vocational discipleship

John Greenall reflects on what it means to lead in healthcare





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At CMF, we want to develop leaders who are passionate about disciple-making, helping medics and nurses to live and speak for Jesus Christ not only on Sundays or at small groups, but in the nitty gritty of daily life.

Many of us know Matthew 28:19–20 well: 'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you'. This is a call to evangelism but, ultimately, to make disciples. Arguably, the key word in this great commission is 'all' – teaching obedience to all that Jesus has commanded. We spend a lot of our time studying or working – choosing to submit to a consultant we find difficult,¹ electing to not be anxious about our futures in an uncertain NHS² and so on.³ Vocational discipleship resists a leisure time mentality – that my faith impacts my evenings and weekends, but not my work. Instead, we are called to take Christ seriously wherever we are and in whatever we do.

Of course, churches play a key role, as we have written elsewhere.⁴ CMF is not a substitute for church. And yet we might have only one to three hours a week in contact with the local church, but perhaps 50 hours in our studies/placements. It is in these places where you spend most of your time that you are being formed and influenced. I have seen so many medics come through university who know their Bibles and know how to evangelise, but they have fallen away because they hadn't prepared for the (inevitable) challenges ahead; they hadn't grasped that they needed to be disciplined (and to then disciple others) in and through their vocation.

So, as we consider what it means to be leaders where we study and work in healthcare, it is crucial that we are making vocational disciples, in partnership with the local church. But what might this look like?

becoming Christ-like in the everyday
My oldest son loves nothing more than 'helping

me', be it in the garden, or making something like the BBQ we recently built. In the same way, God wants to get to know us in the context of a shared task, perhaps especially when that task becomes a real fight. Interestingly I often hear people say they want to take 'time out' to 'serve God'. Of course, taking this focused time to do things you can't do as a full-time student is a valid option – that's why we have a Deep:ER programme!⁵ But so often we grow in our faith amidst our daily tasks and, perhaps especially, our struggles – exams, a family tragedy, a distressing case on the ward and so on.

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Jesus met Peter while at work as a fisherman, and God met Moses at a bush while shepherding. Will we meet Jesus in and through our studies and our work? Leading others to Jesus and grow in their faith in the everyday is part of what leading in CMF is all about.

engaging with the big issues in healthcare

Let's be honest, encouraging people to stay in medicine is not always the sexy option. But it seems clear to me that, in general, keeping people in medicine has great kingdom impact. After all, only someone engaged in their work can ask and begin to answer questions such as:

- What are the battlegrounds in our workplace and how can we apply biblical principles to respond in grace and truth?
- What does it mean to grow in faith in our profession?
- What are the principalities and powers at play in this world?

CMF is about connecting students with local

graduates who are several steps ahead. You can grapple with these questions together, gaining their insight, and see how they model Christ even when being a disciple at the coal-face is costly. Will you lead your colleagues to connect in this way?

grasping God's mission in us more than his mission through us

Dr Helen Roseveare, a recently deceased medical missionary,⁶ had just arrived on her first assignment to the Democratic Republic of Congo. She got off the plane and met the local field director at his Jeep who said to her:

'If you think you have come to the mission field because you are a little better than others, or as the cream of your church, or because of your medical degree, or for the service you can render the African church, or even for the souls you may see saved, you will fail. Remember, the Lord has only one purpose ultimately for each one of us, to make us more like Jesus. He is interested in your relationship with himself. Let him take you and mould you as he will; all the rest will take its rightful place.'⁷

Real vocational discipleship isn't about 'doing more'. Medics can look impressive on the surface. In fact, many in church won't ask you how you really are, because they will assume you have got it all (well mostly) together because you do so much. This is where vocational discipleship hits the road. As a leader, no, as a friend, don't simply ask people 'how is your family?', or 'how are your studies?' Instead ask 'how is your walk with Jesus? Do you know him? Are you prioritising your growth in Jesus more than your medicine?'

The Christian life is about realising that we are called to be with Jesus and made like Jesus. Let's lead ourselves and others in this way.

prioritising depth over breath

I confess that I can sometimes get frustrated that I'm not making more headway in seeing the kingdom come where I work. Sometimes a CMF group can seem so small and feeble. I want to see big growth! But reflecting on the life of Jesus, the temptation must have been great for him to 'go global'. Indeed, the first century crowd expected fireworks... but they got someone talking about a mustard seed.⁸

We can perhaps produce quick results with the right technique. But effective kingdom growth will come in the way that Jesus did it – taking a small group to firstly spend time with them.⁹ Let's consider what that means. Jesus wants to be with you, not to simply use you and your gifts. In fact, God doesn't need you in his mission, but he calls you to the privilege of being part of what he is already doing in his world. Does that excite you?

As a student, this means spending time in his Word and in prayer. It also means spending time with others (the 'fellowship' part of CMF). After all, Jesus devoted most of his time to a group of twelve and to three of them in particular – his leadership was relational not transactional. Like Jesus, your leadership may not be a platform to millions, but as we intentionally invest in the lives of a few, we will see disciples developed who have real depth, and whose lives are transformed to bring glory to God.

This is the high calling – we've been disciplined... to be disciples... to disciple others... even to the end of the wards. ■

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