

local groups: Cambridge

Stephen Hogg discusses the day conference Burnout or Resilience?



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CMF and the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship (LCF) co-hosted this engaging, practical conference in Cambridge in March 2017 and I had the pleasure of attending. The day addressed important questions: how do Christians working in the public sphere navigate careers that are becoming increasingly demanding of our time and energy? How do we live in a world that is becoming increasingly hostile towards the values of Christian people?

Peter Saunders opened the conference by sharing some reflections on Elijah's 'burnout' in 1 Kings 19. Elijah has fled Queen Jezebel and, fearing for his life, runs to Beersheba and then into the wilderness from where we hear of his exhaustion. He cries, 'It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers'.¹ The angel of the Lord appears and food and water is miraculously provided for Elijah. Elijah is reminded that he ought to 'Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you'. From this, we are reminded to avoid neglecting our physical needs when facing times of challenge. I think of how my sleeping and eating habits go out the window when I become particularly busy!

Next we see Elijah bringing his problems before God. He lodges in a cave and waits upon the Lord. Eventually he hears God's voice in a whisper. When you're busy, do you bring your many jobs and long 'to-do' lists before God and ask him to give you the strength to work for him in all that you have to do? Often my quiet time gets shorter and shorter as the pace of life gets quicker and quicker. The busy times are the times when we are most in need of the nourishment that comes with feeding on that pure spiritual milk.² Only in Jesus do we find true rest for our souls.³

Following Peter's talk, we spent some time in groups with new friends where we discussed personal experiences and prayed for personal challenges. Lawyer Christopher Townsend shared wisdom on the importance of 'emotional



intelligence'. He spoke of the practical wisdom of being 'politely assertive', dealing promptly and discerningly with challenging circumstances as they arise. He encouraged us to think about building 'margin' into our lives, time for 'shock-absorption', time that enables us to deal with the unexpected yet maintain spiritual and physical discipline.

Sunil Raheja, consultant psychiatrist and blogger, reminded us of the fact that we live in a world that is VUCA – Volatile, Unpredictable, Complex and Ambiguous. We are working in an NHS that is proclaimed to be at 'breaking point' in politically tumultuous times. We face unprecedented numbers of choices every day. Our senses are overwhelmed by multimedia. This predisposes us to burnout.

May God grant us the wisdom as we seek to navigate our brave new world and, by the power of his Spirit, find resilience and true rest by coming to Jesus, whose burden is light. ■

REF

1. 1 Kings 19:4 (ESV)
2. 1 Peter 2:2
3. Matthew 11:28-30