

counterparts - Malawi

when all the time seems gone

I remember walking through the dimly lit corridors. The ward was full. The *chitenjes* (multicoloured cloths) wrapped around the patients as their caretakers' eyes swung back and forth. The sound of children's cries echoed through the cemented room as the warden and nursing sisters distributed the medication. The scorching November sun was unrelenting. My 'to-do' list seemed to add to itself as little tasks snuck their way into my pint-sized pocket book. I thought about my week: early mornings, late nights and little time to myself. With piles to read and syndromes to memorise, I could feel the exhaustion of my mind tug mercilessly on me. The heaps on my plate weren't getting any smaller.

'Finding time' seems to be a far-fetched task. Yet, with little surprise, Jesus proves my thoughts otherwise.

We often get confronted with burnout. Seldom do we recognise its tentacles slowly wrapping around our lives as each moment and each day thrusts us deeper and deeper into tiredness. Being a medical student has taught me the art of 'time martyrdom'. Our days and weeks often consist of patient care, problem lists, and follow-ups. If it's not scheduling reading tasks or counting down the days before exams, we longingly envisage a good night's rest with no alarm clock.

Yet, this is not all that is required of us. What about our friends and families? What about our other dreams and ambitions? What about God? By the end of the day, week and month we stumble across the lingering hollowness and sheer exhaustion that seems to latch faithfully onto our every move. I often wrestle with the responsibilities I have as a student, juggling between the roles of a son, friend and student. 'Finding time' seems to be



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'Jesus got up, left the house, and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed'.¹ These words are all too familiar. With people to heal, broken hearts to encourage and a world to save, one can only fathom Jesus' jam-packed schedule. Yet he, the Son of God, made room for the author of time himself. Our minds often get clogged and consumed by the multiplicity of demands that poke us from every corner. I would often find myself getting too busy for the very person that sustains all of creation (including my medical education). God is not calling us to negate our responsibilities nor is he asking us to be frivolous with the things he has stewarded us with. Yet he is calling us to himself. He is calling us to rest. He is calling us to stiller waters; waters whose tranquillity surpasses knowledge and understanding. Would our outlook be perpetually morphed if we let him into 'our' programme? Is he, perhaps, willing to bring life into each waking second that keeps us on our feet (besides, is he not the author of time?).

He promises to walk in and through our mundane musings; to walk through the crowded wards; to walk through the tremulous decisions with regards to patient care for therein he infuses his rest into our souls as he graciously holds us by the hand, reminding us of his eternal stay with us. ■