

local groups: Forum 2021

Eleanor Sture reports from a field on the Welsh borders



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Fellow

Over 1,000 students, spike ball and pesto pasta in a field – it can only be Forum. Forum is held by Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship (UCCF) every summer to help people involved in university Christian Unions (CUs) hit the ground running in making Jesus known on campus.

One of the most inspiring moments for me was in the Thursday evening meeting. The speaker was John Lennox, Professor of Mathematics at Oxford, and an internationally renowned speaker on the interface of science, philosophy and religion who wrote *Can science explain everything?*¹ and *Where is God in a Coronavirus World?*² He gave his top tips for living as a Christian. We need to make friends with non-believers and bring them in to feel the warmth of Christian fellowship. We should learn to listen to our friends, asking them about themselves, their hobbies, interests and who they are, rather than just what they do. He recommended we don't ask initially what course people are studying, so that we don't put them in a box before we have started to get to know them. This struck me, as I feel it is so easy to have my identity wrapped up in being a 'medic' instead of being saved by grace. Our spiritual life was also challenged – we need to learn to spend quality time getting to know the Lord through his word and praying. That's just not going to happen when we only read the Bible for ten minutes before bed.

I also attended a seminar on follow up – in Matthew 28:19 Jesus says 'make disciples'; it's not enough just to tell people about Jesus or even convert them. It is a testament to God when we're not willing to give up on those we meet; it really shows we care when we create a culture of consistently walking alongside people. On a practical note, the speaker advised getting people's phone numbers instead of emails – they are so much more likely to respond! So we now have a follow-up champion in our CU who makes sure we don't let this slide!

a typical day at Forum

Wake up (early enough to avoid the shower queue, but not so early that you are too tired to see the tent guy ropes) and have breakfast with your CU. Head to the morning meeting and hear a wise person give great biblical teaching, then worship our God, the creator of the universe. Go to an interesting seminar, such as 'the Christian and mental health', and have great discussions that help you think about issues in the context of a biblical worldview. Grab some food at a mock lunch bar and learn how you could run a similar event. Spend the afternoon with your CU to plan and pray for the year ahead; please note, this is also time for high quality snacks (all the best UCCF staff workers bake for their CUs). Have dinner, then head to the evening meeting to worship, pray and learn, equipping you for the start of the new academic year. Finally, spend late evening browsing the bookstore, drinking hot chocolate round the campfire or playing Uno, making memories that will last a lifetime.

how can I attend Forum next year?

You can book to attend Forum via the UCCF website (uccf.org.uk). There you'll find a list of everything you might need to bring (a warm hat is an essential!) and travel information. You can go to Forum with a CU size of 50 or just one – I can guarantee you will come away wiser and so excited to bring Christ to your university! ■

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1. Lennox J. *Can Science Explain Everything?* Epsom: The Good Book Company, 2019
2. Lennox J. *Where is God in a Coronavirus World?* Epsom: The Good Book Company, 2020