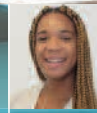


# new times: old agenda

Toyosi Atoyebii reports on the CMF National Conference



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**W**as this CMF Student Conference 2.0? The familiarity of Yarnfield Park Conference and Training Centre led me to believe that, as I arrived. But as exciting as the atmosphere at Student Conference is, there is something incredibly special about being inspired by those just ahead (or much further advanced) in their careers, living their lives unapologetically for God. The buzz of young children enjoying the sunshine amongst the retired CMF members, along with everyone else in between, reminded me of the gift of multigenerational communities. It is such a blessing to learn from one another and share our experiences from our various levels.

I was involved in the student leadership training throughout the conference, helping to guide student links in leading their CMF groups and planning for the upcoming academic year. It was so encouraging to hear what other groups around the country were planning; seeing how God has provided and increased numbers. It was especially lovely hearing from more recently formed groups at some of the newer medical schools such as Lincoln. I look forward to seeing what God

has in store for them in the coming years!

The highlight of the conference was the main session teaching, given this year by former psychiatrist Steve Midgley, Senior Pastor of Christ Church Cambridge, and Executive Director of Biblical Counselling UK. These were around the theme of knowing, feeling, and living well as a disciple of Christ, and were separated into three sub-themes.

The first looked at anxiety, based on Luke 12:22-34. Steve asked rhetorically why, if worrying is forbidden in the Bible in much the same way as theft is, why is it that it's less embarrassing to admit we're worried than to confess to stealing something? Group discussion made clear that worry is not actually forbidden in such a simplistic way. Steve spoke about how the things which we're anxious about reflect what we truly desire; for example, if we desire success the fear of failing will be the cause of our anxiety. Therefore, our anxieties show who or what our hearts are tethered to. It's important to reflect and search our hearts for these earthly idols, which we desire outside of God.

To avoid anxiety, we must have the correct perspective on God; when we worry unduly, we're behaving like orphans who don't have a Heavenly Father taking care of us. We see ourselves as being more in control than we truly are; this is a burden that we don't need to bear. We are reminded of the promise of Matthew 6:33: 'But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be added onto you.' If knowing God is our sincere desire, the only thing we need to worry about is whether our hearts are wholly committed to the things of God.

Steve's second message centred on anger and the glory of God, based on Romans 12. 'If your enemy is hungry feed him, if he is thirsty give him something to drink. In doing this you will heap burning coals on his head.' (Romans 12:20). Steve spoke about how it may often be sweet to think of avenging someone's wrongdoing but surely, it's sweeter knowing that God, the ultimate judge, will deal with all of us in the way we deserve in his own time.

Steve described anger as the 'moral emotion' which establishes a view about whether something is right or wrong. But who are we to determine what is righteous? It's important to remember that anger undermines and disrupts our relationship with others, our relationships with God, and also our own peace.

The takeaway message was simple but meaningful; we shouldn't ever try to take God's place. No matter how we feel we've been treated we won't ever have a bird's eye view of the situation, so it's not our place to seek justice as that's God's job. Instead, Romans 12 instructs us to overcome evil with good, as we can rest peacefully in the promise of justice from God.

The final instalment of the main conference talks ended on a more joyful note and looked at Philippians 2:12-18 and how we can find joy as Christians. Steve spoke about four ways in which Christians might live their lives, and outlined their consequences.

#### 1. God, not me

This produces a passive attitude, where we are always waiting on God without ever initiating anything ourselves.

#### 2. God, then me

This is the idea that God converts us and then the rest is up to us from there, without need for his input.

#### 3. God, plus me

Suggests that life is a collaboration between us and God, but we need to remember that God is able to achieve his purpose without us.

#### 4. God in me

This is what we should be striving for; 100 per cent God and 100 per cent us with the knowledge that we must be obedient. We have a responsibility to work out our salvation as it is written in Philippians 2:12.

Because the world is so difficult and so dark that gives us more of a reason to 'Shine like Stars', which might remind you of another 'shine' command in 2 Corinthians 4 if you attended this year's Student Conference!

Beyond the main meetings, I was also able to attend the regional CMF meeting for those who live and work in London, hearing about how plans to expand the reach of groups, making them more accessible to a wider range of Londoners.

One thing that I believe God revealed to me over the weekend is the importance of the gift of community. From the regional meeting to the general atmosphere at the conference, it became clear that we should rejoice because of one another and the unity of the communities we are in. If you get the chance to go to CMF National Conference as a student, I would truly recommend you take it! ■