

# CNM NEWS

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## Crying for Comfort

### CSNM Conference, Ledbury 2004



*Tim James, Paediatric Staff Nurse, Paediatric Intensive Care Unit, Bristol Royal Hospital for Children*

In March I attended the Christian Student Nurses and Midwives (CSNM) conference, which was held at Dyke House, Ledbury in Herefordshire. The Conference was shared between students and qualified practitioners which also included Allied Professionals from Christian Therapists Network (CTN) & Therapy Students Christian Fellowship (TSCF). The conference was in conjunction with the C.U movement named Universities, Colleges Christian Fellowship (UCCF). The theme of the weekend away was looking at 'suffering' and its application to Christians as health professionals.

The weekend consisted of lots of fun, games, worship, fellowship, seminars, talks, getting to know other health professionals and plenty of food! Our speaker for the weekend was Hugh Thomson, a surgeon and church leader of City Evangelical church in Birmingham. Hugh's teaching came from the book of Job looking at what suffering is, how we can help those who suffer and consider where God is in suffering. The talks were enlightening, helpful and very practical.



*I learnt so much from the weekends teaching and I would need all the room of this magazine to share it with you!*

One thing which really struck me from Hugh's teaching was that God is always with us during the midst of suffering. The Lord God our Heavenly Father feels and shares the suffering of His children. That was a real comfort to me and also helped me gain insight into the reasons behind suffering in this world.

Some of the seminars on offer this year at conference were: Christian medical ethics, overseas mission as the healthcare professional, working in a low-morale environment, listening, and preparing for new disability regulations in the church. All the seminars were enjoyed and well attended. I went along to the Ethics seminar looking at some case studies, which had occurred recently within the UK. It was really interesting because we were looking at these case studies from the Christian healthcare perspective. It gave the ethical decisions we were discussing a different slant from the world perspective.

The conference is a great event to attend if you want to pick up information about Christian Healthcare missions and work in the UK and overseas. There is also literature about healthcare issues and ethics from the Christian perspective. The conference holds a large bookstall with fantastic books including apologetics, theology, healthcare, mission, and biographies. Some of the books are also heavily discounted too!

The best thing about the conference this year was that it was health professionals from a variety of fields in healthcare. We came together as part of God's church and those present included not just nurses but Occupational Therapists, Dieticians, Physiotherapists and Speech Therapists too. As we worshipped God and had fellowship together, it was such an encouragement because we were firstly together as God's children, secondly brothers and sisters in Christ and thirdly as health professionals who understood one another's profession. So often I find professional issues and events of a working day difficult to share with family and friends because they don't understand the 'ups' and 'downs' of healthcare. But here at the conference there were brothers and sisters who I could talk to not just about Jesus but also about professional issues. I made new friends who I keep in touch with and it means we are able to encourage one another in our walks with Jesus and within the workplace.

I highly recommend the conference and next year another joint conference is being planned for 4th-6th March 2005 at Quinta near Oswestry. CNM members are invited to join with the Christian Therapist's Network, Therapist Student Christian Fellowship and Christian Student Nurses and Midwives. The location has moved to create space for more people to attend. Please note this date and further details will be available shortly.

If you would like to hear those talks and the teaching on suffering, they can be purchased in audio-cassette format for a small fee from UCCF via [www.uccf.org.uk/resources/csnmarticles/cfctapeorder.pdf](http://www.uccf.org.uk/resources/csnmarticles/cfctapeorder.pdf)

# Suffering

*This article has been written based on my own experience, professional practice and reflection on suffering teaching I received at the CSNM conference 2004.*

The book of Job is a fantastic example of what suffering can be like, and is relevant to the world around us today. Job was your usual kind-of-guy who suffered, but yet trusted in God and brought glory to our Father. I know from my own sufferings of past depression, I've often asked God the question of Why? In my work in Paediatric Intensive care I've been involved with children and families who have suffered and sadly sometimes died, and I've asked God along with my patients – "Why?"

Often as humans we want to know the reasoning behind our sufferings and we can't understand why God has allowed it to happen to us. We begin to question God's motives and doubt his love for us. The story of Job shows us how he went through dreadful sufferings. Satan believed that if the Lord took away all that had been given and blessed to Job, then Job would curse God and turn away from the Lord. So Job went through ill health and God allowed Satan to take away Job's children, property and livelihood too. But Job's response is amazing throughout the book. He gets down on his knees and worships the Lord: "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job ch1 v21b).

This bible book goes on to tell us of the further sufferings of Job and how God eventually rewards him with fortunes, twice

as much as he had ever had before. Personally, Job's story reminded me of how God has strengthened my relationship with him through 3 years of ill health. I've been well for over a year now. Through my experiences of severe depression and desperation of life, there has been much good which has come from those awful times. My relationship with the Lord is ten times greater than it ever was before my illness. I have learnt to be reliant on God and involve him in all areas of my life. I have a better understanding of Mental Health issues and feel more equipped in supporting friends, colleagues, patients and families who are 'low' or depressed. It's been a privilege to bring this skill into my professional capacity.

But there's even more to the events of Job to encourage us. The book of Job reminds us of how God is sovereign overall and that includes suffering and the control of Satan too. We will as Christians ask the question of why we are suffering and why others suffer too. Could it be a consequence of 'the fall'? Probably I would say! But we aren't always capable of understanding all of God's actions. Suffering is a mystery, which is to be accepted. There will be times of testing for God's people: Do we love God? Or do we love our careers, car, comforts and other things of this world? What we can be sure of knowing, is that all things which have occurred, occur for God's purpose (ch42 v2). It's an opportunity for glory to be brought to the Lord's name!!!

Within the health profession we will most definitely see our patients and their families question suffering and many will perhaps turn to God and ask 'why?' There maybe an opportunity here for us as Christian health professionals to tell them about God and how he sent his only son 'Jesus' to suffer

for all mankind's transgressions. God is somebody who knows all about suffering and most definitely suffers when his own dear children suffer.

So what does it mean for us in this life? Well, I have learnt that at times, things will be given and taken away. The question is, what will our response be to God? Will we curse the Lord and turn away or will we praise God and remain in "real faith" (commitment to God which is unconditional)?

*What will you do the next time you're suffering...?*

Reflect on this song by Beth & Matt Redman...

### BLESSED BE YOUR NAME

In the land that is plentiful,  
Where Your streams of abundance flow,  
Blessèd be Your name.  
And blessèd be Your name  
When I'm found in the desert place,  
Though I walk through the wilderness,  
Blessèd be Your name.

Every blessing You pour out I'll  
Turn back to praise.  
When the darkness closes in, Lord,  
Still I will say:

Blessèd be Your name  
When the sun's shining down on me,  
When the world's 'all as it should be',  
Blessèd be Your name.

And blessèd be Your name  
On the road marked with suffering,  
Though there's pain in the offering,  
Blessèd be Your name.

You give and take away,  
You give and take away.  
My heart will choose to say:  
Lord, blessèd be Your name.

*Tim James, Staff Nurse  
Paediatric Intensive Care Unit  
Bristol Royal Hospital for Children.*

### Further Reading:

*Message of Job*  
David Atkinson, 1991, Inter-Varsity Press.

*If I were God, I'd end all the Pain*  
John Dickson 2001, Matthias Media.

*How Long, O Lord?*  
Don Carson, 1990, Inter-Varsity Press.

*What Could I say?*  
Peter Hicks, 2000, Inter-Varsity Press.

*A Practical Workbook for the Depressed Christian*  
John Lockley 2001, Authentic Lifestyle.

**GOD IS WORKING TODAY AMONGST**

# NURSING STUDENTS

**'TODAY'S STUDENTS WILL SHAPE TOMORROW'S WORLD'**

**CHRISTIAN UNION GROUPS EXIST TO MAKE DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST IN VIRTUALLY EVERY UNIVERSITY AND IN MANY OF THE COLLEGES OF ENGLAND, WALES AND SCOTLAND. THESE GROUPS TOGETHER FORM THE CU MOVEMENT, WHICH IS A CENTRAL PART OF UCCF.**

**UCCF is committed to...**

- The gospel (we have a clear evangelical basis)
- Making disciples of Jesus Christ amongst today's students
- CUs which are student led and unite people from many backgrounds around the gospel

**Could you be a part of the staff team that serves the CU Movement?**


- CU Staff Workers work with the students leaders of local CUs. They are directly involved in ministry within a group of CUs, helping them get into the Bible and equipping and supporting the leaders. The men and women we require are normally graduates with at least a couple of years' work experience.
- We are also seeking a specialist staffworker to work amongst nursing students.

**Are you interested?**


- CU Staff Worker appointments run from September, initially for three years. We would train you for the work and place you in a regional team. We guarantee your salary, but you would be responsible to raise some of the funding for your post.

**Please write for an information pack and application form to:**

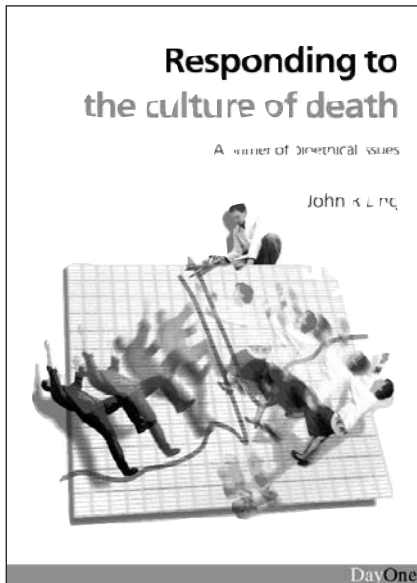
- Mike Sims, UCCF, 38 De Montfort Street Leicester, LE1 7GP.  
Telephone 0116 255 1700 E-mail mrs@uccf.org.uk



THE CHRISTIAN UNION MOVEMENT



# bookreview



## *Responding to the Culture of Death* A primer of bioethical issues

**Dr John R Ling**

**Published by Day One Publications 2001**

**(www.dayone.co.uk)**

**ISBN 1 903087 26-0**

Dr Ling is well qualified to present a Christian perspective on bioethical issues after debating, lecturing and writing on the subject for the past twenty years. *Responding to the culture of death* was written to equip the reader to get to grips with complex bioethical issues and to enable understanding of the past, present and future issues that face us.

The question of when does human life begin is one that dominates bioethics and Dr Ling argues that your answer to this signifies your views on most bioethical issues. As Christians we need to be clear where we stand on ethical issues such as euthanasia, abortion, IVF and genetic engineering and ensure that it is God's word that shapes our thinking and not the prevailing culture, which the author sees as the culture of death. Dr Ling argues that the culture of death has developed subtly over the years and is where human life that was once regarded as sacred and special, is now considered cheap and expendable. A strength of this book is that in response to this mindset, the reader is guided through the themes of scripture, enabling formulation of Christian thinking and responses from a Biblical framework.

The book is very readable and helpfully divided into manageable sections that maintain interest and clarity in what could be swampy waters. Dr Ling deals with the big issues along with secondary issues, which enlightens many of the 'buzz words' in today's healthcare culture such as autonomy and patients rights. The book ends with five very practical applications of what we can do in response to challenge the culture of death including praying and caring, perhaps things we are doing already, but I would suggest that after reading this book you will be better equipped to do both and more! ■

# Assisted Dying Bill for the *terminally ill*

*The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) has recently requested its members to put forward their views on assisted dying in preparation for their submission to the House of Lords Select Committee in July 2004 (see RCN bulletin issue 104).*

The RCN currently uphold the present legal position, that assisted dying is illegal. However, the RCN desires the opportunity for debate on this issue. This is an opportunity not to be missed and CNM member are strongly encouraged to consider writing to or emailing the RCN to oppose any changes in legislation and in particular this Bill. Details of where to address your correspondence can be found at the end of this article.

Lord Joffe's Assisted Dying for the terminally Ill Bill (now reworked and renamed from the Patient Assisted Dying Bill) passed its second reading on 10th March 2004 and goes to the House of Lords Select Committee for detailed scrutiny. The revised bill seeks to legalise assisted suicide and voluntary euthanasia.

Some objections to assisted dying include:

1. Assisted suicide and voluntary euthanasia are unnecessary because alternative treatments for the symptoms prompting requests for euthanasia exist (e.g. treating depression, good palliative care)
2. As nurses we want to promote patients rights but not at the expense of our responsibilities as nurses (our duty to care) and in society to protect the weak and vulnerable.
3. The argument for showing compassion, promoting patients 'self worth' and respecting them as individuals is cited by those in favour. However, as individuals we are all unique (Christians believe that we are made 'in the image of God') and for that reason have intrinsic value. By promoting self worth we should value people and demonstrate our compassion by caring for them. This is a stronger action than simply giving up on them and promoting their death.
4. The right to die could become a duty to be killed, for those feeling that they are a burden to their families and carers.
5. This Bill may cause irreproachable damage to the clinician/nurse patient relationship, which is founded on trust. Patients would be fearful that they may be killed without consultation (especially for disability groups and those unable to communicate)

Further excellent information is available at:

<http://www.cmf.org.uk/index.htm?helix/spr04/editor2.htm>

[http://www.hospice-spc-council.org.uk/public/APM\\_NCHSPCS\\_Brief\\_PAD.pdf](http://www.hospice-spc-council.org.uk/public/APM_NCHSPCS_Brief_PAD.pdf)

Christian Nurses are encouraged to forward their views as a matter of urgency to the RCN encouraging them to oppose this Bill.

Those who wish to contribute views and experiences should send them to Carol Bannister, PND Coordinator, Room 401, 20 Cavendish Square, London, W1G 0RN or email [carol.bannister@rcn.org.uk](mailto:carol.bannister@rcn.org.uk) by mid-July. ■