

Dressed in Christ, Ready for Work

By Esther Hughes

The theme for our UK nurses and midwives conference this year called “NAMfest” was ‘dressed in Christ, ready for work’ with focus passages being from Colossians 3 and Ephesians 4.

I was inspired by what another CMF member, Ellie shared based on Colossians 3:1-3:

“...since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.”

Often in our work as a nurse or midwife, or indeed in any context, a normal day probably doesn’t feel naturally very ‘set on things above’ but often immediate, demanding and stressful. Our natural response to the many demands throughout our day is likely reactive, running from one thing to the next and trying to meet expectations, whether that’s expectations of our managers, our patients, their families, the ‘systems’ or society around us generally, or even ourselves. There’s constant quiet pressure that says ‘do more, be quicker, be the best version of yourself’ all the time.

Let’s take a moment to ask ourselves: *What earthly pressures are impacting us? What’s shaping us?* Because if we’re not careful, our identity will slowly be reduced to performance, pressure and other people’s perception of us.

Ellie shared this story at NAMfest, which I’m sure we can relate to or apply to different contexts:

A few weeks ago, I had a shift where everything seemed to go well. A first-time mum arrived in early labour to the midwife led unit. She laboured beautifully, had a physiological third stage, had some suturing, breastfed her baby and was discharged home. I cared for her from start to finish. As I was leaving, feeling like it had been a very good shift, my manager pulled me aside and said, “What happened up there?”. I was confused. She said, “Women are supposed to be discharged 3 hours after birth, so it’s a good thing I didn’t need you for anything else.” And just like that, how I perceived that day completely changed. It’s potentially a small, surface level comment but it doesn’t stay small.

Because then the questions started...

“Am I too slow?”

“Did I do something wrong?”

“Is that how I’m seen now?”

Before you know it, you’re not asking, *“Was that good care?”* Instead, you’re asking, *“Will this be approved by those in charge?”* That’s what these environments can do to you over time. They push you to look for external validation. Instead of anchored in truth and in your identity in God. You are anxious, and slowly your inner world starts to mirror the chaos around you. When this happens, it makes it impossible to look beyond the immediate and or indeed to set your mind on things above.

So where does the shift need to take place? Because our workplaces are not going to change overnight. The shift has to start in your posture. It has to change from reactive to rooted. From anxious to anchored. Let’s look at the example of Mary and Martha from Luke 10:37-42, where two sisters welcoming Jesus into their home with two opposing postures.

“As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”

“Martha, Martha” the Lord answered. “You are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed - or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

The sisters are in the same environment. Same moment. But they are choosing two completely different postures. Martha is choosing to be concerned by earthly things: overwhelm, expectations, hard work not being recognised or helped. And Mary, who is looking to things above, is listening, present, expecting to hear from the Lord. Rooted not reactive. Being rooted in Christ doesn’t remove the pressure. It doesn’t change the environment that we find ourselves in daily. But it does change what shapes us within it.

As it says in Colossians, we are now hidden with Christ. Our worth is not exposed to every comment, every metric, every opinion. We don't work for validation. We work from identity.

So, how do we translate this when at work?

Firstly, we need discernment to know what voices to listen to and let shape us. We can share with brothers and sisters in Christ, particularly in our nursing and midwifery spheres who understand and can

help process it (this can be such a blessing through NCFs!). And we can cast our anxieties and burdens on the Lord.

Secondly, we need to ask God to help us to have integrity and consistency, even the shifting waves of the pressures around us. Our true identity is hidden with Christ so we can be steady, anchored and rooted in Christ, and who he says we are, rather than other humans or masters.

Recently, while at a women's bible study, I was struck by Romans 12:1-2 where Paul writes:

'Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.'

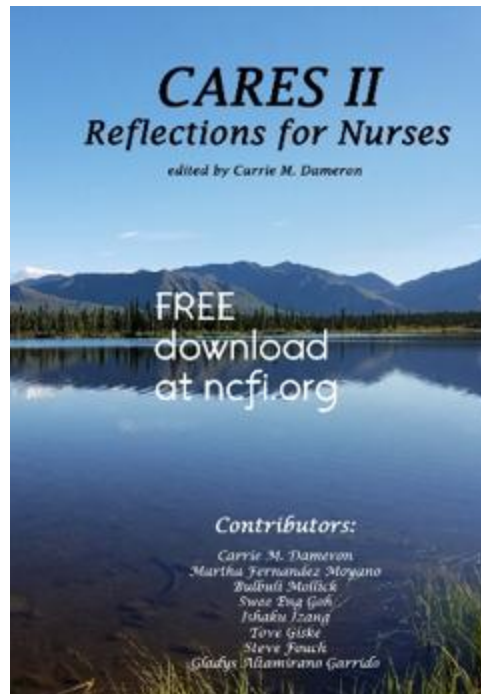
Giving our whole bodies, our whole selves and all of our lives as a living sacrifice to God means every little thing we do - the nitty gritty, unglamorous things like keeping our households going with laundry and cleaning, or the unglamorous tasks needed in our jobs behind curtains, that no one sees or congratulates you for. We can worship God through the small tasks and details, and give ourselves as a sacrifice to him, doing them for His glory and for His approval alone, not for the world around us. We can be like Mary - with our posture focused on God and worshipping him, even as we serve him in different contexts.

And to be able to do this we need to be reminded regularly of the sacrifice God has made for us - the greatest sacrifice and act of love and mercy - giving his only Son to bear His wrath which we deserve, so that we can be seen as blameless and holy.

A prayer:

Father, we thank and praise you for your incredible mercy and your sacrifice for us. Please transform our minds to want to live for you wholeheartedly, - to give our lives and our work as a living sacrifice for you and to be dressed in Christ, living for you. Help us to be rooted and anchored in you and to only care about pleasing you, knowing that you see all of our lives. Help us not to be tossed and shaped by the words and culture that surrounds us, but to be encouraged by You and each other in Christ to have our minds set on things above.

Amen



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