

Anonymous Writer

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Opinion Editorial Essay: Factoring Fear

This year's Interdisciplinary Studies Conference helped me to articulate the problem of fear, some solutions to fear, and even some benefits of having fear. Through the conference's incredible speakers I was able to put my ideas of fear into perspective. Dr. Scott Bader-Saye connected many big problems and questions dealing with fear in a clear, concise and interesting way. Reverend Travis Enright and Barry Belcourt helped me to think about my own fears and ways of eradicating unhealthy fear of others. Reflection upon my time in Honduras allowed me to analyze how fear and poverty are linked. The play, *Shimmer*, performed by Michael Peng artistically demonstrated heartfelt depictions of fear and overcoming those fears. And finally, Dennis Edney brought back tears and memories of the story of Omar Khadr and the tremendous fear afflicted upon him.

Dr. Bader-Saye pointed out how fear is often something created. We live in a culture of surveillance that teaches people to assume that everyone else is dangerous. Instead of loving our neighbours, we teach our children that anyone they do not recognize is dangerous. We build up our military to ensure security for our country. Essentially, we are creating a world based around fear. However, as Dr. Bader-Saye explained, if we do not have fear we do not need a state. So the state makes sure there will always be something that we are afraid of. Keeping a cycle going of solving fears and maintaining or creating new fears ensures that the state is always needed. This is a frustrating realization and I hope that we can develop a

healthy fear of letting things continue this way and choose to resist a state driven by fear.

The issue of security has always been something that has puzzled me, and so hearing Dr. Bader-Saye discuss the ethic of security was very helpful for me to rap my mind around the issue. Security is based on three false virtues, suspicion, preemption, and accumulation. We are told that in order to be safe we need to be suspicious of others, basically always assuming the worst. Then we learn that we need to strike first before the other can strike us, or torture prisoners and then get information from them to see whether or not they are guilty. And finally, we are told that we need a lot of stuff in order to be safe. This concept of the necessity of security bothers me because it creates a hateful society and destroys the chance to have unity in the world. We need to stop worrying so much about security and live in the realization that God is bigger than any assumed threats against us.

Something that opened my eyes to a wonderful way of thinking was Dr. Bader-Saye's talk about providence. A phrase he used was, "God does not prevent, he provides." All too often I pray that God will keep bad things from happening and I ask him why He lets bad things happen at all. But in the same way that Joseph in the Bible could not have known how everything would work out when he was sitting in prison, we are not going to be able to see how God will work things out while we are in the midst of difficult times. Even though we cannot see it at the time of trouble, and we wonder why He does not prevent that hardship, the hope comes in the end when God provides. The beauty of the Christian life is the little word "and." When

we are fearful, hurt, or worried about the future we are able to say, “what is the worst thing that could happen?” and then say “and then what.” For Christians, if the story has not ended well, it has not ended yet. This demonstrates what a great God we serve, that He gives us these kinds of wonderful promises.

Both of my breakout sessions focused on removing fears that harm us and instead following God’s command to love one another. In *Surviving Fear on the Urban Streets* we learnt to take off our blindfolds and see people around us instead of overlooking them or fearing them. In the Honduras Water Project presentation we presented some of our fears, some fears that contribute to poverty, and the fears corresponding to doing justice work in a place like Honduras. One of my favourite Bible verses, 1 John 4:18, says, “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear.” This is a constant reminder for me that I cannot avoid helping others because I am afraid, but that everything I do must be driven by love. This verse means for the poor that they cannot stay imprisoned by their poverty for fear of unjust systems, but must overcome their poverty by mending relationships and being driven by something other than their fear.

As students at King’s we are dedicated to doing justice and showing love. This is not always an easy thing to do because our fears often hold us back. In our breakout session discussion we realized that we have fears of not being accepted, of failure, and of letting others down, to name a few. These fears can keep us from showing love. We need to recognize our own fears and channel our fears into love for one another.

The student panel follow-up by Dr. Bader-Sayes highlighted that we do not need to extinguish all fear, but we need to channel it correctly. As King's students, we need to be driven by things like our fear of destroying God's world, fear of injustice being done, and fear of Christians becoming apathetic or thinking the problems in the world are too big for us. If we let these kinds of fears drive us to take action and to be God's hands in the world we can make King's a better place and become better people for it.

Through incredible insights on a difficult topic, this year's Interdisciplinary Studies Conference has given me a wider understanding of fear. I see where fear is affecting us in the world and what it means for Christians to have courage amidst the fear. Most importantly I see where I need to have positive fear that can drive me to serve God more faithfully.