

Resilience: A Spiritual Project (Latimer Studies)

Kirsten Birkett



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The secular world is well aware of the problems of stress. Of recent decades a great deal of attention and research has been devoted to understanding what those who cope well with stress actually do; and, as a result, how to help others learn to do the same things. The psychological construct that has been developed to describe what secular researchers are looking for is 'resilience'.

What the literature reveals, however, is that our created natures thrive on spiritual values. What fosters resilience, the qualities and strategies that resilient people demonstrate, are things like religion, altruism and belief in the good. Sometimes these ideas can sit oddly with the naturalistic, pluralistic framework of secular socio-scientific research. However, within a Christian framework. It should not be surprising that what works is just that sort of lifestyle that God created us to have.

Nothing will make Christian ministry easy in this fallen world, dealing with the sinful people that we all are. However we are blessed with resources that perhaps we take too lightly, and could be paying more attention to. We have a gracious God who has revealed truths about the world that make a difference to us - how we feel and how we cope, as well as how we believe and act. Most of all, unlike the secular world, we have a real hope that makes positive thinking entirely rational.

Kirsty Birkett is Latimer Research Fellow at Oak Hill College, where she is responsible for Learning Architecture and Educational Development, and teaches Ethics, Philosophy and Church History. Her many publications cover the whole area of relationships between science and religion. She has also written on psychology, feminism and the family for both a popular and academic audience.

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