

In Health care for God's Service – Being Distinctive in Mercy Part 2

(Suitable for use within a group over approximately one hour, or for an individual's personal Bible reading)

Thinking about life as a student in healthcare

We can be proud of the Christian contribution to the history of the healthcare disciplines. Almost every major component of our healthcare system originated out of a Christian ministry. Christianity is unique among world religions in its focus on broken and vulnerable people, the sort of people the world likes to ignore, and it is God's imperative that we love the unlovable that underpins this. As our health system has gravitated away from recognising Christian love as its reason for existence we have seen the culture of healthcare changing. People have always been selfish – that is not new – but now there seems less and less in our system to challenge those motives and call us to something higher. Healthcare professionals are no longer urged to live sacrificially for the sake of the widow, the fatherless, the alien and the poor, but are instead encouraged to be self-actualised, fulfilled, and very handsomely remunerated in their careers.

1. What were some of the reasons you chose healthcare as your career?
2. Without wanting to judge others, do you think your reasons are the same as the others around you in your course? What are some of the influences on your class mates that move them to these alternate reasons?
3. We know that Christians don't have a monopoly on good intentions and high ideals: what do you think drives the altruistic motives of some of your non-Christian colleagues? Would it be helpful to ask them?
4. How does the Bible direct us in the way we pursue our careers as health professionals?

What does God have to say?

Read and consider Matthew 20:29-34.

The book of Matthew is one of the four Gospel accounts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this passage we are able to witness a healing miracle of Jesus as He encounters two blind strangers on the roadside. This miracle occurs as Jesus makes his final journey up to Jerusalem. By this time He has a large and expectant following who are anticipating a great confrontation. The two blind men cry out to Jesus as He passes by. These men are perceived as a nuisance by at least some of the crowd who are journeying with Jesus. Jesus however doesn't appear to feel the same way, and has mercy upon them, just as they asked.

1. The crowd probably had a sense that Jesus' ascent to Jerusalem was a profoundly significant moment, especially given the extent of His opposition by this time. Could they be forgiven for resenting the interruption of the men?
2. What do we notice about the faith of the blind men? How do they address Jesus?
3. Is it possible that Jesus had His mind on bigger things when these men called out? Yet what is the response of Jesus to their plea?

Putting it into practice

1. Think of an occasion at uni in the past 1-2 weeks when you have resented an interruption to something you thought was terribly important. How did you handle this imposed situation?

2. In your career you will meet people whose work is so important that the patients themselves become an interruption. Have you seen graduates like this? How might we keep a healthy perspective and avoid becoming like this? Does Matthew 20:29-34 offer any assistance?
3. Often the most difficult and draining patients are the ones who are most needy and demanding. How do we maintain compassion for them?
4. Healthcare originated primarily from Christian service to the poor and needy. Have we become so consumed with our own greatness as healthcare professionals that we have lost sight of what it is to serve? Can you think of any real life examples of:
 - a) Lack of service; and
 - b) Noticeable, costly, humble service?
5. There is nothing wrong with feeling good about having helped someone. How can we guard our hearts as we both celebrate the work God does through us, and yet try not to admire ourselves in the process?
6. What pressures exist in our environment as students (social, teaching, physical) that make guarding our hearts difficult? What pressures can you foresee will exist in your future environment as a health care professional that may make guarding your heart difficult? What measures can we put into place to overcome these pressures and live before God as His humble servants?

Bible Bites

(Suitable to be completed over approximately 20-25 minutes)

In healthcare for Gods Service - Distinctive in Mercy Part 2

Thinking about life as a student in healthcare

Although our healthcare system originated largely out of Christian ministries, there is little remaining in our current system that recognises Christian love as the basis for the care of the sick and needy. Most healthcare professionals seem more interested in working for their own satisfaction, prestige and prosperity than being committed to sacrificial service of broken people. Even Christians find it difficult not to fall into this same temptation.

What does God have to say?

Read and consider Matthew 20:29-34.

²⁹ As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. ³⁰ Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!” ³¹ The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!” ³² Jesus stopped and called them. “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked. ³³ “Lord,” they answered, “we want our sight.” ³⁴ Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.

The book of Matthew is one of the four Gospel accounts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this passage we are able to witness a healing miracle of Jesus as He encounters two blind strangers on the roadside. This miracle occurs as Jesus makes his final journey up to Jerusalem. By this time He has a large and expectant following who are anticipating a great confrontation. The two blind men cry out to Jesus as He passes by. They are perceived as a nuisance (by at least some of the crowd) following Him along the way. Jesus doesn't appear to feel the same way, and has mercy upon them, just

Putting it into practice

Jesus is moved by compassion to heal, not by any desire of self-gratification. It is difficult for us share such pure motives, and there is nothing wrong with us feeling good about having helped someone. However it is very easy for our celebration of God's good work through us to become a celebration of ourselves.

1. Often the most difficult patients are the ones who are most needy and demanding. How do we maintain compassion for them? Does Matthew 20:29-34 provide any direction for us?
2. Healthcare originated primarily from Christian service to the poor and needy. Have we become so consumed with our own greatness as healthcare professionals that we have lost sight of what it is to serve? Can you think of examples of such amongst your class mates or amongst senior colleagues you have observed?
3. Most people go into healthcare careers with the best intentions, yet as the years pass those intentions become overshadowed by: career ambition and prestige; the need for personal success; financial considerations; pressures and ambitions; as well as the sheer 'busyness' of working life. How do we galvanise ourselves against this almost inexorable slide, and so maintain being distinctive as followers of Christ by treating our patients out of a motivation to be merciful?

4. Do you see Jesus like the blind men – Ruler of the World (Lord) and God's chosen King to bring deliverance/salvation (Son of David)? Are we, as people who have physical sight, in fact more blind than these shouting men?