

The Good Profession Calling All Pharmacists...Pharmacy: A High Calling

by James Nesbit, Ph.D.

The profession of pharmacy is a high calling. Following Jesus entails the highest calling. Combining the two creates a spiritual synergism that, with the empowerment of God's grace and Spirit, truly further the advancement of the Kingdom of God.

As I reflect on my life as pharmacist and follower of Jesus, the more I am amazed at how God has used pharmacy in my walk with Jesus beginning over 30 years ago to the present day. While some people may get tired of the mundane, day in day out routines of both the practice of pharmacy and the wear and tear on one's spiritual life, my practice as a pharmacist and walk with Jesus has been anything but dull. In fact, it has been a wonderful adventure.

You see, for me, the practice of pharmacy has been not so much a job but a vocation. The word vocation comes from the same root word as the term voice which really means...a calling. Pharmacy has been a journey that has taken me down many roads that, with the wrong motives, led to several heartbreaking dead ends. However, when I got my eyes off money, upward mobility and myself, pharmacy became a road to spiritual discernment, discovery and demonstration. I found by trading in my vision of pharmacy as a career and seeing it instead as my vocation, my calling, then God's purpose and vision for my life unfolded and became eternally satisfying. Therefore, I am thankful that the Lord led me into the

practice of pharmacy, because, together with my walk with Jesus, I have found a powerfully eternal combination. Therefore, as I reflect back upon my life, I can think of at least three reasons why I am thankful to the Lord for the practice of pharmacy in my life.

The first reason I thank God for pharmacy is because I met Jesus in pharmacy school.

In fact, pharmacy school drove me to Jesus! In the beginning, I was a big-brained, big GPA guy whose faith was in no one but himself. However, the rigors of pharmacy school were unlike anything I had ever encountered before. No longer could I get by with studying for exams the night before or relying on my natural intellect to secure good grades for myself. By the end of my first year of pharmacy, I realized I wasn't as smart as I thought I was. God humbled me and showed me that I needed more than myself to make it through school. Thus, almost flunking out of pharmacy school my first year caused me to cry out to God; and it was there that I met Jesus for the first time. From that point on, I realized that not only had I found the Lord, I had found my calling.

In putting my career to death, HE brought my vocation to life, and it was then that He started showing me His vision of exactly what a job was for....to work for HIM.

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About the Author

James M. Nesbit, Ph.D. is assistant professor of pharmacy practice in the College of Pharmacy at Harding University. He teaches Communication, Christian Bioethics, Psychosocial Aspects of Health Care, and Spiritual and Professional Values. Although he enjoys being in the classroom, his favorite role at the school is as a mentor for his students. Dr. Nesbit has traveled to several countries sharing Jesus including Kenya, India and the People's Republic of China where he lived for 3 years. His current areas of interest include communication issues in pharmacy, cultural competence in health care, health disparities and spiritual issues in pharmacy practice. Dr. Nesbit has been married to Melissa, a gift from God, for 20 years. They have two children, Jacob, 15 and Jared, 12.



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So instead of worrying about “What I was going to do” for a living, God rebirthed the question into a divine answer within a question, “WHO are you going to BE?” Although I worked hard as a pharmacist, my hard work was but a means to a greater end. The income I made as a pharmacist was but God’s provision for me to share Jesus all over the world. I traveled to India and Kenya initially, then later all over the United States.

I would work for a season, continually asking the Lord where He wanted me to be. Sort of like Paul, I “made tents” by being a pharmacist, working only as a means, with the end being where God wanted me to be. Therefore, the second way God has used pharmacy in my life has been as a wonderful tool to provide for me to go wherever and whenever He said, “GO!”

He took me to impenetrable places like the Santo Domingo and San Felipe Indian Pueblos of New Mexico where they do not allow missionaries in their midst. Yet, there I was filling prescriptions; but more than that, I was pouring Jesus into the hearts and lives of a hurting and broken people. Soon afterwards, God walked me right through the Great Wall into The People’s Republic of China, which had been closed off to the world for 30 years, and where it was illegal to baptize anyone below the age of 18, and parents were not even allowed to “proselytize” their own children! But there I was sharing Jesus in my lessons in Chinese universities, building Jesus into my lesson plans in order to create questions in the minds of the students. My hope was that the students would later want to talk to me about the spiritual questions that I had raised in their minds during class. I shared more Jesus in Communist universities than I was allowed to share in any state-run American university! I went back to India on two other occasions, as well as Thailand and Hong Kong. However, despite having ministered in many “foreign” countries, the place where God had me sharing Jesus the most was the “foreign” land I called home.

Which leads me to the third way God has used the practice of pharmacy as a tool within my spiritual calling, as a minister of grace and healing...a missionary right there in the pharmacy itself. I shared with patients, practitioners, and nurses. I interacted with ill-tempered people, lost people, churched people, poor people, famous stars and street people. Wherever He sent me, God put me right in the middle of people’s lives to bring HIM glory and to walk out His will. God did not have me preaching sermons or handing out tracts; He had me involved in the daily grind of people’s lives, usually through routine conversations where God would lead it

further into a deeper spiritual dialogue.

As a pharmacist, behind the counter, I dealt with hurting and sick people all day; most of whom I prayed for, quietly even as I counted out their medication, counseled them or rang their prescriptions up on the cash register. Yes, there were even times when my relationship with a particular patient allowed me to pray with that person right then and there or even visit that person in his/her home. While there are plenty of patients to pray for, remember that those we work WITH, our store managers, technicians, clerks, co-workers, colleagues and clerks all need God’s intervention too. We can impact so many lives for God’s glory because God has put us in the midst of so much turmoil on a day-to-day basis.

So you see, as God has used pharmacy as my vocation, my calling, my ministry, I have touched the very core purposes of my life. The challenge for us as believers and Americans is that we MUST allow God to use our jobs for His glory...otherwise those jobs have the potential to control us, devour us and use US instead. I have noticed that we have this natural tendency to try to “fit” our spiritual lives into our career paths. I think the Lord would have it that we see our jobs as one small part of the much larger picture of our walks with Jesus, then we will see a job for what a job is for, a place to free us to serve Jesus. All of us want to be successful. I would suggest that Jesus led the most successful life ever. Therefore, our walk with Jesus redefines what true success really is. He also redefines what a career in pharmacy is for. We have a calling, which makes each one of us free, flexible and available to always be “on call.”

“Our mission may not involve hanging on a cross, being jailed, or being burned at the stake here in America, but we have other, more invisible obstacles. Ours is a society built by pride, materialism, and dedication to the status quo. In a world built on free will instead of God’s will, we must be the Freaks. While we may not be called to martyr our lives, we must martyr our way of life. We must put our selfish ways to death and march to a different beat. Then the world will see Jesus.”

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