

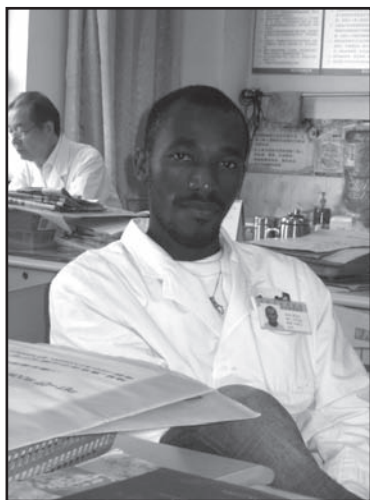
have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.” If, after reading these admonitions from Scripture, we still find it difficult to engage people whom we find repulsive or have prejudged, we must prayerfully give those feelings to God and move ahead, determined to engage such persons with Christian love, even though our thoughts or hearts are not entirely pure. If we will do so, I believe God will honor our efforts, for oftentimes I have found that the heart will follow our actions. This accords with what I recently read in an article entitled, “Love, God’s Way”, which said: “Love is an action, a response. When you respond, the feeling may not be there at first, but it will come. Feelings follow actions; actions don’t follow feelings. I don’t wait for my feelings to get right before I study or do the things that take discipline. Do first and the feelings follow.”⁶

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Integration of Faith and Pharmacy: A smile that strengthened Faith of a heart surgery’s patient.

by Guy-Armel Bounda, M.Sc, PhD Candidate



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After graduating from high school, he moved to China to pursue a Bachelor of Science degree in pharmacy at the China Pharmaceutical University in Nanjing. He graduated in June 2007.

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During the final year of this degree program he spent a semester doing a clinical internship at the Nanjing Drum Tower Hospital. Following graduation, he chose to pursue a Master of Science in Clinical Pharmacy at the China Pharmaceutical University. During the two years of this program he did a clinical internship in the same facility. During this program he was able to serve as a clinical preceptor for clinical pharmacy exchanges between the Drum Tower Hospital and its overseas affiliated hospitals, medical centers and universities. After being offered a scholarship, Mr. Bounda has continued his studies and is pursuing a PhD with research into the relationship between a Chinese herbal medicine and hepatotoxicity. He anticipates graduating in December 2013.

The profession of pharmacy is a high calling. Following Jesus is 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.¹

The beginning of a Journey of Faith

Have you ever had a rush of thoughts and emotions after signing up for something you have been working or praying for? Usually you come with many self-questions, such as “Why did I register for this in the first place?” or “Did I clearly hear from The Lord?” or “Is it really for me?” or was it just for my ego?” These are all the questions I asked myself after being selected for a scholarship to pursue my studies in China, even if it happened after several weeks of prayer and fasting. When I left my home country, Gabon, to go to China to pursue my Bachelor Degree in Pharmacy at China Pharmaceutical University, in Nanjing, I knew things would not be easy. China was a country which I knew had no clear understanding of Christianity. The little knowledge I

had about China through history and geography lessons in high school was not very helpful. “How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?”² Remembering the way I was selected for this scholarship, gave me the strength to understand that my choice was not a mistake, even though I did not have a clear picture of my spiritual mission at that moment. The Psalmists wrote: “Trust in The Lord with all your heart and lean not on your understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and he will make your paths straight.”³

Tearing Down the Wall of Communication

After completing several years of the clinical pharmacy curriculum, I was sent to the Nanjing Drum Tower Hospital where I did my clinical internship. Being a foreign student, especially an African student, in a Chinese tertiary referral teaching hospital, where most of the patients spoke a local dialect and not Mandarin, put me in a very difficult situation. Additionally, my Mandarin abilities were not at a level to effectively communicate with the patients. “How do I prepare,” I asked myself. In such a case, after several weeks of prayer and preparation, God’s provision is seen in the planning.⁴ By meditating upon the experiences of Moses described in Exodus, and by recalling all past experiences in which the Lord intervened in my life, I declared, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”⁵ From that time, I could see communication barriers being torn down. My daily work at the hospital became a joyful ministry through which the Lord enabled me to win souls.

In those days, I had the privilege to read the Spring 2009 issue of Christianity & Pharmacy, which belonged to a former international student at my school and who was member of Christian Pharmacists Fellowship International (CPFI). I remembered one afternoon as I was reading an article entitled: “Overcoming Medications Errors” by Barbara Flynn Spring 2009 issue, my clinical pharmacist preceptor asked me few questions about the journal. Even the title of the Journal was confusing for her. I had the opportunity to explain to her that the title is based on the mission statement of the fellowship: “Serving Christ and the World through Pharmacy.” We had a short conversation and she took the journal home to read more. Two days later, she told me that the article and the entire journal were relevant. Representing Christ in the workplace is both possible and legal, even in places like China.

The Smile that strengthened Faith

We cannot escape the way our Christian faith and standards alter the decisions we make in our personal lives.⁶ In this editorial, Dr Welty stated, “The ways that we choose to counsel a patient or dispense a medication are influenced by our ethics.” Smiling is an integral part of my personal and professional ethics. A smile costs nothing, but gives much. It enriches those who receive, without making poorer those who give.

The second year of my internship, there was a patient who was admitted because he was suffering from severe rheumatic heart disease. Three days into his admission as we were rounding with the group of surgeons, he realized that there was an “international doctor” on the medical team. He said, “Wow!!!! You even have an expat doctor in your team!” We all gently

laughed and the chief surgeon added. “Yes, we specially brought him for you.” As we reviewed his medical record, I noticed a Chinese bible close to his pillow. During the encounter, the chief surgeon told his family that his case was severe and would cost a lot of money. A half-hour after rounding, I went back and tried to learn more about his situation. When I approached him, he was reading his Bible and saw the cross I was wearing on my necklace. As soon as I started the discussion in Mandarin, he was amazed and even forgot about his condition. I asked him, “What is this book?” He said, “A Bible”. He then asked, “Are you a Christian?” “Yes,” I answered. That was the turning point of his hospital stay. He told me about his family financial situation. He was fearful of the recommendation for surgery and his medical condition.

As a born-again believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, my faith is at the foundation for who I am, what I stand for, what I dream of accomplishing, and what I desire to become as a man. My faith is an inextricable element of my personality and life’s experiences.⁷ As Christian pharmacist, I saw a crucial moment to sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land, and to enhance the application of my faith to my profession of pharmacy. We are called to glorify God in everything we are and in everything we do. As Georgia Harkness has observed: “God decrees that man fulfill his calling, not in a monastery, but in the world.”⁸ My presence within this profession of healthcare providers is for me one of the signs of integrating my faith and my work.

The Time of Fellowship

Christian fellowship occurs when two or more Christians are in one another’s company. Christian fellowship is critical! Being in the company

of people who think like you do is very important to growth and survival as a Christian. In daily routine life, beside our Church, Bible study group, we often wonder, where can I connect? Where can I find Christian Fellowship? Faith is, believing in what is true. Faith has two elements: 1) being convinced of the truth, being certain of reality, and 2) believing, hoping in, embracing, seizing the truth. You may be surprised to discover that God has placed Christians almost everywhere. They are where you work, where you go to school, where you shop, and even in your own neighborhood. Asking God to show you fellow believers around you is encouraging. I believe this was the same case for me and that patient. His Bible, near his pillow and the cross I was wearing on my necklace were the signs we needed to start fellowship. Christian fellowship is essential for our growth. Rick Warren says: "The entire Bible is the story of God building a family who will love Him, honor Him, and reign with Him forever."⁹

Through our conversations, despite his current medical situation, this patient had faith and deeply believed that my presence and my fellowship with him were a sign of our heavenly Father. Faithful Christians should give the reason for their hope, but many hesitate, not exactly sure how to intelligently respond to tough questions about Christ and Christianity, especially when you found yourself in the midst of non-believers like Chinese.¹⁰ In difficult situations, we have the opportunity to glorify God in how we handle ourselves and our relationships.¹¹ God puts us in our specific workplace to serve a purpose. That patient had found in me a smile that strengthened his faith, to undergo his heart surgery. Regardless of his

medical condition and financial situation, he found faith to believe that God will do something great no matter what the clinical results were.

Day by day, after my daily routine on the ward, I spent more time with him in fellowship and sharing my faith. I clearly remembered a Friday when he asked me to bring his prayer request to my Bible study and have whole fellowship lift him up in our prayers. We took his prayer request and made a prayer chain within my Bible study group. His surgery was scheduled for the next Monday morning. That morning, I arrived at the hospital early to be able to meet him before surgery. I told him, "Don't worry, God doesn't forget his children".

Faith and Deeds

James reminds us that: "Faith without deeds is dead."¹² How do we prepare to serve others with compassion in challenging or stressful situations? Prayer, spending time daily in God's Word, and fellowship with other believers can help us serve others with compassion and a Christ-like attitude. [10] I usually was able to go to the operating room, but on that particular day I could not go because I had to review anticoagulation outpatients. During my clinical interventions, I was challenged and prayed for the Lord to show Himself strong. My only prayer was for God to be glorified in the midst of this stressful condition. After 6 hours of surgery, the patient was brought to the intensive care unit (ICU). After finishing my work, I rushed to the assistant surgeon learn how the surgery went. With a smile he told me in Chinese mandarin: "the surgery was a bit complicated, but very successful." Inside I said, "Thank you Lord, you hear our cries."

Testimony

During my clinical internship in the cardiothoracic surgery department, I was conducting a patient education program on warfarin. According to our warfarin protocol, each patient who undergoes heart surgery and needs warfarin should start therapy the second after the surgery. During my clinical routine in the ICU, we were blessed to share our testimony of faith. A few days later, I shared with this patient Paul's word addressed to Timothy, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the Faith."¹³

Once again, through this experience, I came to know that God does not lead us to a place where he doesn't equip us with his Grace.

Since that day, I have fully embraced the Oath of a Christian Pharmacist drafted by the Perdue University CPFI student Chapter. I always take God as my witness and Strength to provide Pharmaceutical Care to anyone who needs it no matter where God leads me. With gratitude to God for the opportunity to serve humanity, I will make an effort to increase my knowledge and skills as I practice professional Pharmacy.¹⁴

Please allow me to show you some of my patients and Colleagues to whom I had the honor to minister during my clinical internship. We must recognize God is with us no matter where we live, and His plan is far greater than our own. After several years of faithfulness to the Lord, God has led me through the valleys, and He continues to lead me wherever He wants me to go. I encourage us to pray for our patients and people we work with.

A Conclusion Prayer

Almighty Father, You are Alpha and Omega, Jehovah El-Shaddai. We thank you for your bountiful love and ever-present grace. We thank you for your countless and gracious gifts of Faith, Hope and Love.

Father God, through the ministry of pharmacy and the healing sciences, let us help and serve and do no harm.¹⁵

In Jesus Christ mighty name, I pray.
Amen

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