

Gospel-Minded Mission Field: A Student's Perspective by Deborah Chien



“...Let your light shine before others, that they may...glorify your Father in heaven.” –Matthew 5:13-16 (NIV)

With pharmacy moving in a direction toward promoting more and more direct patient care, the opportunities to provide spiritual care is becoming ever more endless. This concept isn't about forcing your religion on someone. It's about listening and responding to the patient's needs and if it involves spirituality, it involves spirituality. In reality, the concept is not so foreign in the healthcare field. In fact, the Joint Commission requires hospitals to implement whole person care. It's also been a topic discussed and published in the medical and nursing field, but hardly ever in the pharmacy field. Even though it's hardly ever discussed, it is possible for a pharmacist to practice it and honestly, it's never too early to start thinking about it. To me, as a Christian, my goal is to use the whole person concept as my mission field with the mindset of glorifying God.

My Mission Field Called School

With the constant emphasis of good grades, networking, and doing whatever it takes to help land a job (mostly the latter), pharmacy school is no walk in the park. And yet, that's the beauty of school. It is through our struggles at school that God may be glorified. Through my own struggle, I found that even at school I am a missionary. Struggles and stresses unique to pharmacy students require an encouragement and understanding that could come from only brothers and sisters in that profession. So to show God's care and faithfulness to them, I have found that to best reach my classmates and professors was through prayer. Why would I choose prayer? Because prayer not only lifts up our intercession to the Lord but also reminds each of us that there is a sister or brother in Christ who cares and listens to our joys and fears.

I have one classmate who I grew very close. Being in the same class as her has been a privilege as I have watched her grow so much over the years on a personal, professional, and spiritual

level. She used to be someone who would never pray publicly and never shared the Gospel. But, I asked to pray with her so that I may encourage her to fall deeper in love with Christ. I took her to concerts, Bible studies, and small groups that let her see how God is being praised and is working in her. Now, every once in a while I'll see her pray for our friends. For me to see the Lord act on a simple act of prayer is so encouraging, and I hope to continue to be there for her and challenge her to grow spiritually.

My Mission Field Called Southern California

But the mission field is not just in school among similar brothers and sisters but also around my school and community. During my first summer of pharmacy school, I volunteered at a low income clinic alongside my professor.

Our main purpose was to assist patients in receiving their medications for free. But we didn't simply assist patients with their medications alone. Alongside my professor, we prayed for our patients. I've learned that when using the right words and situation a patient rarely ever turns down prayer. There are undeserved people not just in need of physical and mental health but also of spiritual health.

My experiences at this small clinic showed that prayer is not the only means to witness to others. If I can't pray, I found the next best thing to do at work is to just show love and listen. By listening, I was able to serve the patients. At the clinic, I realized very quickly that patients are very keen to such opportunities when given the chance to be listened to. They will speak in great volumes of everything and anything when asked and through such intimate conversations, I have crafted relationships with the patients on not just a professional level but personal one as well.

For one of my patients, she was always anxious and stressed out because she had a lot of things going on at home. It was through watching her grow from never attending church to realizing how important Christ is in her life that I realized that God can soften hearts through the simple act of praying and listening. I honestly didn't do more than give my attention and time to hear her as she recovered. But the Lord used our prayers for His good and His kingdom. In the mission of Southern California, the Lord worked in other pharmacists and me by helping us realize that all we needed to do was responsibly love like God, serve like Christ, and pray like the disciples. Through our humble actions, God will do the rest and plant the seed in the patients we serve.

My Mission Field Called the World

My first mission trip ever was to Cambodia and it was life changing. One thing that stuck with me after that trip was that the purpose of medical missions is to help strengthen

the people of God and advance His kingdom through both physical and spiritual services. When I went on the trip, I saw that while some people who won't go to church, they will go see a doctor. Through this moment of curing physical ailments, I was able to have a chance to speak about the spiritual ailment that we all have and the antidote for it: the Gospel.

Truth be told when I was in Cambodia, I was very frustrated. The main reason was that though I longed to be of assistance to these patients, I couldn't speak their language to communicate. One day, I was helping provide eyeglasses to help some of the Khmer people to see better. The chaos from the abundant miscommunication between English and Khmer made it all the more frustrating as some were given the wrong prescription and others took one without understanding what it was for. But in my frustration, I quickly realized how my medical experience is most meaningful only when paired with God. I realized that even though my medical expertise was not very useful as a student, I had other talents too. One of the places God used me was through children's ministry. Though I couldn't speak the language, I knew how to do arts and crafts very well. All I needed to do was show the children how to do it once, and within a couple hours they would make lanyards prettier than me! Not only are the people there extremely smart but I realized that people there just as it was in Southern California just want to know they matter and that they are loved. Through this, I was able to share the Gospel to the children doing the crafts with me by using each craft to symbolize how Christ died for our sins so that we may be of God's once more.

Within six months after Cambodia, I found myself again on the plane to my next mission trip: Dominican Republic. When I went to the Dominican Republic with CPFI members, I knew already what to expect after Cambodia. What I most loved about this trip was how passionate every single person on my team was about sharing the Gospel. The passion to share the Gospel was vital to being moved to pray, listen, and share the Gospel.

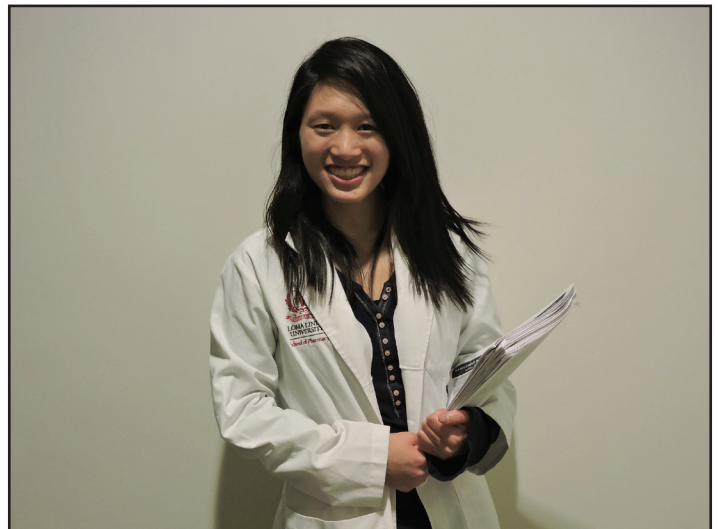
Unlike Cambodia, I was mostly in the pharmacy during the mission to the Dominican Republic due to better knowledge and expertise in pharmacy over the last six months. I filled, dispensed and counseled. But I also wanted to be there to challenge my classmates out of their comfort zone. I wanted them to learn to not do missions because it will help enhance their resume but instead to do it to show the love of God. One of my classmates embraced this challenge. By the end of this mission trip, she went from knowing little about the Gospel to learning more and only wanting to know more. My other classmate felt distressed and frustrated many times because she couldn't speak the language in a way that I did. But thanks be to God, He put me in such a situation in Cambodia that I was able to leave her understanding that being able to serve doesn't mean she has to speak their language. Instead it is about doing the little things and exposing yourself to the greatest potential by doing the best you can do. And it is with faith that I know God shall use the little things to show His glory and grace.

Application for Students

With this I end with some concluding thoughts:

1. With God, anything is possible.
2. Everyone needs prayer.
3. Serve and love.
4. We all have a talent that can serve God's kingdom.

No matter where the mission field was, whether it is on campus at my school in Loma Linda, the city of San Bernardino, or even the rice fields of Cambodia and the beaches of Dominican Republic, we can all be missionaries to those around us. Indeed, by doing the four applications, I have learned that in this Christian life, the Lord does mightily with the smallest of actions. By striving to serve Him with the knowledge of the Gospel and the motivation by the Holy Spirit, we are all able to share the Gospel wherever we are. I know that in whatever I do as long as I do it for the glory of the Lord, I have no reason to be afraid or be discouraged because God will prevail. †



Deborah Chien is part of the class of 2016 at the school of pharmacy at Loma Linda University. She currently serves as the Inter-professional Liaison at the Loma Linda University CPFI chapter with the mindset of promoting whole person care to the school of pharmacy. She is also currently serving in the National Student Council (NSC) Board as the first North-Pacific Regional Director.