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Being a Light in the Darkness: The Conundrum of Community Pharmacy

by Sarah Anderson



Large corporate retail settings are full of expectations of productivity and professionalism, but where does our faith fit into this setting? The workplace can be a microcosm of society with many faiths and beliefs. Laws bind employers from

discriminating based on religion and beliefs.¹ As a result, the pharmacy setting ends up with a diverse population in the same place pharmacists are expected to work together and interact with the public. However, the faith of a Christian encourages an employee to be a witness to their fellow coworkers and patients. The question stands as to how you can express the love of your Savior while respecting your employer and the beliefs of others?

Pope Francis of Assisi once said, “Preach the gospel, and if necessary, use words.” Jesus taught us through His actions, and it is just as simple to practice this in your pharmacy. For example, when asked how your weekend went, it is okay to talk about church activities and different religious-related events. Most importantly, it is crucial to resist participating in activities that are sinful both in an out of the workplace. Simple things like gossiping about coworkers and patients needs to be avoided. Gossiping, as you know, can be the most toxic element in most settings. For example, imagine that one of your

coworkers has a negative attitude and finds ways to put down all aspects of pharmacy. Some people who work with this pessimist talk about him/her when he/she is not there. These thoughts and behaviors trickle down to the other employees and create a cycle of negativity. This can put everyone on edge and can create a hostile work environment. It is easy to get angry with all of the challenging situations in pharmacy, but how you react to these situations speaks volumes about your Christian character. However, the opposite is also true when the conversation sheds a positive light. The same effect takes place and can provide positive reinforcement to the employees. Ultimately, your reaction to scenarios sets the tone for each day.

Secondly, you must be careful in your approach of bringing your faith into the workplace. Your workplace is a mission field of its own. There are laws in place forbidding coercion with faith. If you are in a position of authority, such as a pharmacist over your technicians, this is a situation you may

find yourself involved in while working. An opportunity may arise when you will be asked about your faith, and it is okay to share. However, it is not acceptable to make stipulations or judgments based on faith when making decisions about your coworkers. For example, if a technician asks for permission to leave work early for a church activity and you let the technician go, you must do the same if someone else needs off early for example a sporting event. Otherwise, this could be seen as preferentialism. Lay down expectations in advance and refer to the company policy to remain fair when making decisions.

Most importantly, remember to let your light shine every moment. When your coworkers and patients see you doing the right action, it is noted in their memory. Especially in reoccurring patients, the opportunity is there with every interaction, and there may be a time when they ask you about your faith. When the pharmacist invests in the patient's life by simply knowing their name, this shows your technicians and other patients that you value them. Knowing the names of those visiting your pharmacy makes them

feel like friends or family, further adding to the positive experience they have while there. Taking in the concerns of your patients and following through on an adverse event they experienced will show your compassion for them. The examples are endless, but all examples have one thing in common and that is the pharmacist taking interest in the lives of others. After all, you never know when a moment of your time will mean a lifetime to someone else. Being a light requires intentional actions, focusing on others, and a nourished spiritual life that is disciplined with daily prayer, reading Scripture, and involvement in a faith community. Without these it is really hard to show God's love.

Pharmacy may not be the place where you can be extremely proactive verbally about your Savior, but you can display His character every moment. Every impact for the Lord is important, and the pharmacy is a great place to start showing your love for the Lord. Whether you are talking on the phone, performing medication therapy management, or operating the cash register with a positive attitude and a smile on your

face, you are making a difference. After all, Romans 3:23 tells us that we have all sinned and fall short of God's glory. Verse 27 also states that boasting is excluded; and this is especially important in pharmacy, as one person is not better than another. The question during every personal interaction is: Will you or will you not choose to show the love of your Savior?

References

1. U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Compliance manual section 12: Religious discrimination. <http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/religion.html>. Updated July 22, 2008. Accessed June 10, 2015.

Sarah Anderson is in her last year at Cedarville University School of Pharmacy and will be graduating in May 2016. She has been active in organizations such as the American Pharmacists' Association and Phi Lambda Sigma. Anderson has a strong interest in global health, and in the future would like to help develop pharmacy education in developing countries around the world. Currently, Anderson is pursuing a clinical residency in NE Ohio.

Live Each Day by Charlotte Wilson

I was standing on a large portable stage with a microphone in my hand. My gaze roamed through the African crowd, thousands of people listening to me speak about the Lord's love and sacrifice. That was it. The beginning and end of what I believed was a glimpse into my calling and future. During worship one Sunday, that image came to my mind so clearly I was certain it was cementing my hopes to be a long-term missionary in an African country. I forged through each day seeking out each and every missionary-focused event, book, YouTube video, and magazine article. I thought that if only I could get my hands on it all, then I would find out where God wants me to go. "I will go Lord!" I cried over and over, "I will go, send me!"



Fast forward several years and I am in deep discussions about theology and missions with a young man where I live. He pushed me to consider my motives for becoming a long-term missionary and because of his questioning I grew deeper in my faith. As we spiritually grew together it became clear that we were an excellent team. We discovered how we could serve God far better together than apart and were married. The most difficult part of marrying this wonderful man of God was that he was very clearly called to serve in short-term

missions, but he was still waiting on God to indicate if long-term missions was also an aspect of our calling. We are still in that place. While seeking guidance from the Lord on our future, we were both struck by the importance of living as missionaries at all times in all places. Perhaps we are all called to be not just long-term, but life-term missionaries in whatever area God places us.

This year God placed us in Selbyville, Delaware; a rural town on Delmarva's Eastern Shore. We moved there shortly after I graduated from school because I matched with an excellent community pharmacy residency program at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore and Apple Discount Drugs. While completing my residency, I have been praying that God would lead me to live in a way as to be a shining light for Him. I must say, I do not always feel that I fulfill that calling. There are days when I am grateful that I just made it through without screaming in frustration. There are days I made it through to spill tears at home. That is the nature of life. There have also been days when I felt that I truly made a difference in a life or two, and I would like to tell you about an experience which provided two of those difference-making opportunities.

Early in the residency I was given the opportunity to precept two advanced pharmacy practice experience (APPE) students in their community/ambulatory care rotations. As part of the rotation, the students accompanied me to a comprehensive medication review appointment. Breast cancer, arrhythmias, diabetes, and hypertension started off our patient's past medical history. As you can imagine,