
Laborers of the Harvest by Deborah Chien



"The harvest is plentiful, but laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." –

Matthew 9:37-38

January 8, 2016 was the first day of the CPFI North Pacific Regional Retreat at the METS (Medical and Evangelical Training Strategies) Whole Person Care Conference. Students and health professionals not only learned how to integrate their faith into their profession, but also had the opportunity to practice it as well.

The first speaker emphasized the truth that as Christians, we are called to be followers of Christ. Through this message, I was reminded

that my identity is not in my own work, but through the work of Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9). I was also told that God's plan is better than my own, so I must worship God through the work He gives me (Colossians 3:23) including in my profession. Therefore I must show compassion to my patients; and if given the opportunity, to share the Good News (1 Peter 2:9).

The next portion of the conference was on the ethics of discussing spirituality with patients, as well as how to take a spiritual history. It was emphasized that spiritual care should be practiced if it will benefit the patient and if the patient's autonomy is respected. We learned how to ask open-ended questions and listen for spiritual cues. This can lead to creating closer relationships with our patients and might even provide an opportunity for us to pray with them.

The best part came as a surprise. To practice spiritual care, everyone was paired with an experienced preceptor and was given the assignment to visit actual hospital patients at the Loma Linda University Medical Center. For some students, this exercise was a time for students to pray and share the gospel with the patients. While for others, it was an opportunity for the student to be encouraged by the patient's resilience and faith through the hardships they were facing at the hospital. An example of this was when I spoke to a patient with multiple disease states, though

her chief complaint was back pain. I was blessed to have the opportunity to pray with her, and I was reminded that God has a plan and a purpose for all of us, even as we go through our own suffering.

The conference ended on January 9, 2016 with dinner and a time of fellowship, which also gave us opportunities to pray for and encourage each other. I pray that everyone who attended not only made new friends, but also realized what their calling is as a healthcare professional. I challenge everyone to pursue Christ in your profession and strive to be laborers in the harvest.

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