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The Nearness of God

By Nena Lindrose

On September 4, 2021, I stepped on a loose stone while hiking in the Roan Highlands and broke my left ankle. The Roan Highlands straddle the Tennessee/North Carolina border and are part of the Southern Appalachian Mountains. The highest elevation is 6,285 feet. The mountain range is divided into 2 sections: Section 1, which lies west of Carver's Gap, is characterized by dense, evergreen forests and contains the world's largest Rhododendron Garden. Section 2, which lies east of Carver's Gap, is known as Grassy Ridge and is the longest stretch (approximately 7 miles) of grassy bald in the Appalachian Mountains. Grassy Ridge has 3 peaks: Round Bald, Jane Bald, and Grassy Ridge Bald. These grassy balds reward hikers with magnificent panoramic views that include 3 states: North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

My friend Marlene Simpson and I hiked most of the east range that afternoon. Just before 6:00 PM, we decided to turn around and begin the long hike back to my car, which was parked at Carver's Gap. The accident occurred a few minutes after we started our trek back. As I balanced myself on my right foot with the aid of my hiking stick, Marlene quickly caught up and helped me remain upright. I tried putting my injured foot down to take a step, but it was quickly obvious that walking off the mountain would be impossible. It seemed that our only option was for Marlene to leave me there and hike off the mountain so she could get cell service and call 911. Concerns for how long that

could take – and the possibility of being alone on top of the mountain at night – made the decision difficult.



(From left to right: Sasha, Mike Konrad, Vitali Navitski, Matt Stone – 9/4/21)

In His book, "Letters to Malcolm", C.S. Lewis said, "We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade, the presence of God. The world is crowded with Him. He walks everywhere incognito."¹ During those first few moments as we struggled to make a decision on how to proceed, I am sure I "ignored" the presence of God. Caught up in the pain and anxiety of the moment, I believed my safety and survival depended on

my physical ability and mental acuity to find my own solution. I did not stop to think of the countless times my Heavenly Father has helped me in the past.

I'm so glad that I was not able to "evade" the presence of God that day. He sent 3 strong men to carry me (piggyback) off the mountain – Mike, Vitali, and Matt. They did not know me and they did not know each other, but they appeared one-by-one offering help. Amazingly, our little rescue caravan arrived at the parking lot before dark. Marlene and I arrived at the Johnson City Medical Center emergency room about 45 minutes later, where x-rays confirmed a fractured fibula.

I am grateful for a God who always remembers us even when we momentarily forget Him. He is able to meet our needs in unexpected ways; and on that day I experienced the truth of C.S. Lewis' words, along with the truth of Ephesians 3:20 (NKJV) – "God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think..."

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Patient Health – It's Not Just Physical

By Luke Nesbitt

COVID-19 has revealed something that has been true in our society for a long time, but either we weren't open about it or we just didn't pay attention to it: mental health is a huge issue for so many people. While this isn't necessarily a new concept, I think the way we look at it definitely is. I've been encouraged this year to see celebrities, universities, and sports commentators addressing the mental health crisis in the US. According to the Hope for Depression Research Foundation, depression affects over 18 million adults in the US in any given year and accounts for \$23 billion in lost workdays each year. Every day, approximately 110 Americans take their own life, and roughly 3,500 people attempt to do so... which brings us to the question: what can we as Christian pharmacists do about it? To hopefully answer that, let me tell you a story.

I am a P3 student at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston. Starting in the spring, our Pharmacy program offered Mental Health First Aid

Certifications through the National Council for Mental Wellbeing. I didn't take the course in the spring, but I took it when it became available again in the fall -- only because one of my classmates encouraged me to do so. While the material we covered was incredibly insightful, I couldn't imagine a situation where I would actually use it.



Fast forward 2 weeks. As I walked out of our student health building, an older student grabbed me and begged me to sit down with her. She was in tears and she was shaking, so I sat down and asked her what's going on. Through our conversation, I learned that she was having a drug interaction between caffeine and her antidepressant, and she was on the phone with the Suicide Prevention Hotline. My recent training instantly kicked in and I asked what I could do for her and if she needed any outside resources. I asked her the hardest question you can ask someone: "Are you planning to kill yourself?" She said yes, which is the most heartbreaking thing I've ever heard. Somehow, the hotline she had been on hold with for over 7 minutes still had her on hold, so I finally took her inside the building and asked a nurse for help. I am thankful to say that she was able to speak to a counselor she knew.

I've talked to her since then, and she is so grateful for that help. When I think of how the Lord used my classmate to encourage me to