

Nothing to Do, or So I Thought....

By Mary J. Ferrill



Earlier this year, I was blessed to be the Keynote Speaker at a pharmacy conference in India. The conference was originally scheduled for 2020; but due to Covid, it was postponed several times and finally came to fruition recently in 2022. I love to travel, but I absolutely HATE long flights. In order to survive the grueling 16-hour overseas flight, I intentionally did not sleep at all the night before departure, in keeping with a plan to alternate between watching movies and sleeping for brief intervals on the plane. But God had other plans. Proverbs 16:9 (NIV) states, *"In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps."* My own translation of this verse is: "We self-centeredly decide what we want to do, God snickers, and then points us toward the course we should be taking." This is also based on an old Yiddish proverb, *"Man plans, God laughs."* Of course, it's up to us to choose whether to remain on our own path or submit to gentle urgings from the Creator of the Universe.

I don't know about you, but for me, listening to God's plan and adjusting my course accordingly is no easy task. Typically, God has to employ creative strategies to really get my attention. So back to my flight to India: on the plane, I felt as if I had been thrown back in time. The plane must have been manufactured sometime in the 1990s (maybe even the 1980s). Toward the end of the flight, I noticed a sign designating a "Smoking Area." Since

smoking was banned on all domestic and international flights by the year 2000, that confirmed my suspicions regarding the age of the plane. Yikes! It was my ardent hope that the plane's engine and other important equipment had at least been refurbished or replaced since then. Talk about flying on a wing and a prayer.

There was no internet on the plane and my very antiquated in-seat media system was simply a white screen that displayed "Internal Server Error." I couldn't charge my phone; and of course the seat light was linked to the non-functioning stone-aged system, so I couldn't read either. I usually bring my laptop on long trips; but I decided against it this time since my computer is also old (though not nearly as old as the plane) and I feared that it might not survive the trip.

I used to always carry a written Bible with me everywhere I went. Whether it was doctor's appointments, travel, jury duty, or Department of Motor Vehicle visits (that's a story for another time), my trusty Bible was always handy and made great conversation starters. Sadly, it was lost during one of my recent moves... but hopefully it was part of God's plan to provide someone else with a Bible. Since then, I began using an internet-based version of the Bible when I travel and I've found it to be more convenient. Unfortunately, because I had not downloaded the contents of the app on my phone and the plane was without an internet connection, I had no access to scripture during the flight.

Unable to sleep, I sat in the dark conversing with God and hoping to discover a *Christianity & Pharmacy* editorial somewhere in this experience. I pulled out my phone to type a draft email of this story using the last vestiges of battery power. Normally I think about an editorial for quite a while, exploring several versions in my head before typing an initial draft into my computer. Not this time, according to God's plan.

As I was spending time with God, I began to reflect on the story of Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10:38-42) and how blessed she was to have had that opportunity. But we are also blessed to have that same opportunity with God's word so readily available to us! Scripture states: *"The word of God is alive and active..."* (Hebrews 4:12, NIV) and *"All Scripture is given by God..."* (2 Timothy 3:16, ERV). And in John 1:1, *"...the Word **WAS** God"* [emphasis mine]. This means we can go to Him and sit at His feet anytime, anywhere. In Luke 10:38-42 (NIV), Jesus said that Mary *"had chosen what is better"* (that is, to be with Jesus) and we must do the same. Isn't it wonderful that we serve a loving God who allows us a choice?

While I sat in my cramped 1980s seat without a Bible, I silently spoke to God and let Him speak to me through the portions of His Word that I've memorized and hidden in my heart. Although not the same circumstances, I thought of the prophet Jonah and how he spoke with God after turning his back on Him (Jonah 2:1-9). My antiquated airplane was a major upgrade from being stuck inside a huge stinky fish.

We usually don't realize how spoiled and fortunate we are to have the everyday luxuries that we often take for granted. As my mind wandered, I pondered the origins of the word



“bored.” It seems like a word that should only be found in the dictionary of a decadent society. How can one become bored while engaged in the consummate struggle of living life in this amazing world that God created? I once looked up the word “bored” in my Bible’s concordance, but I couldn’t locate that exact word – only a reference to a “bored hole in a tree.” Perhaps idle hands and laziness could both be loosely associated with boredom in the Bible. I prayed that I would be more aware of (and grateful for) all that God graciously provides to me on a daily basis. The next time I feel bored, may I be more mindful to view it as a message from God that I need to spend more quality time with Him and pay more attention to how much He has blessed me.

During the last 4 hours of the flight, I moved to another seat and was able to watch a movie. But the many hours I had spent with God was priceless and I am thankful that He is faithful, even when I am not. I need to be better about proactively seeking Him on a regular basis rather than waiting for

God to go to the extreme to get my attention. I pray for His grace to cover me that I may always choose the best by choosing Him first.

On the flight home, I was on a different plane but it was the same year and model. This time, however, the TV screen, phone charger, and light worked perfectly. Before watching a movie, I remembered to make the best choice by first taking time to talk with and listen to God, not wasting a moment to be at His feet.

Before I left for India, I had prayed for safe travels, for the Lord to provide me with opportunities to shine His light, and for inspiration regarding a topic for my next *Christianity & Pharmacy* editorial. God graciously answered all of my prayers. But there were other blessings as well: during the trip, I met the most wonderful and beautiful people who will be lifelong friends. There was even a goat born during my



trip that was named in my honor: “Mary Ma’am.” (The name sounds better when you pronounce it with a heavy British accent. The black and white little goat in the photo is my namesake.) And the Taj Mahal was truly magnificent! Words cannot do it justice; it must be experienced. While I was there, I prayed for all the visitors of that magnificent architectural wonder... that the Lord would open their eyes to His infinite glory and majesty. And I prayed that I would be more intentional about choosing Him first by daily sitting at the feet of Jesus.

Side Note:

I felt like I was a celebrity while in India. I literally have never had so many people ask to have their picture taken with me – perhaps because I was the first blonde Caucasian that most people I encountered had ever seen, and they all wanted a picture with me. While I was in a restaurant, a random woman came up to me and without saying a word, handed her baby to me. Without skipping a beat, I instinctively held the child. I also took the opportunity to silently pray that the Lord would bless her and reveal Himself to her. The mother took a picture of me holding her daughter, then said “thank you” and left. I will continue to pray that God answers my requests for that woman and her little child.

Expanding Pharmacist’s Roles: Allowing Spiritual Well-being a Place at Our Counter

By Nancy Stoehr

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to gather quantitative data via survey concerning practicing pharmacists’ views regarding taking on the responsibility of collecting spiritual data from patients for the purposes of healthcare. The goal was for the data collection survey to reach multiple areas of pharmacy

practice over a broad span of practice years. The objective was to determine the type of response, either positive or negative, that pharmacists have to spiritual data collection and spiritual awareness education. There is very little published data surrounding pharmacists and spiritual data