



# Our Calling: Loving God in Nursing (Part 2)

In Part 1, “Our Calling: Loving God in Nursing” (Dameron, 2011) we explored how loving God with our heart, mind, soul, and strength is our calling or ministry in nursing. Continuing our exploration, we find Jesus’ teaching on the Good Samaritan recorded in Luke 10:30-37. This well-known parable of loving our neighbor is a great backdrop for living out our love for God.

Reflecting on the passage we may quickly respond, “My neighbors in nursing are my patients” which is true. Yet, “Jesus does not focus on the object of the neighborly love, the Jewish victim, but on the *subject* [emphasis added], the Samaritan who made himself a neighbor” (Liefeld, 1984, p. 943). It can be easy to be a neighbor to our patients, colleagues, and students, but Jesus challenges us, like the religious leaders who walked by the victim, “Will you make yourself a neighbor to the unlovable?”

Think specifically of someone you are currently struggling to work with. It may be a difficult patient, a cantankerous student, obnoxious coworker, and/or that annoying physician. Keep that person/situation in mind as I share a personal experience. When we get specific about struggles with living out God’s

truth in our lives, God specifically shows us his truth and grace.

My patient was homeless with chronic pancreatitis, which meant we all viewed him as a “frequent flyer” and pain medication seeker. He was demanding and noncompliant. Like many nurses, I did not want to care for him. However, I was reminded of God’s call to love all my patients. I did not know how to care for this

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man, let alone love him. So I prayed and asked God to open my heart. I prayed for opportunities to connect with this patient beyond nursing tasks.

My eyes and my heart were opened to ways to build rapport with the man, even when I was not his nurse. I answered his frequent call lights, listened to his endless bantering, and cared for him in practical ways—men’s gloves in the winter and books to read. Once when he was hospitalized over Christmas, I brought him a little Christmas tree with lights and decorations for his empty room. I knew I had made a difference when he began asking for me when he was at war with the physicians and nurses. I listened to his complaints and talked him into agreeing with the treatments and plan of care. With his permission, we talked about his difficult life of homelessness and alcoholism, as well

as Jesus’ difficult life of homelessness and persecution. Sometimes we prayed and sometimes we just talked. Regardless how our discussions went, my purpose was to show him the love of Christ through listening and compassion in simple, tangible ways.

Reflecting on the experience, I see God taught me much. First and foremost, there will always be people to whom we can extend God’s love—and often it is the people who rub us the wrong way (Luke 4:18-19). Meanwhile, Christ is working through the person(s) and situation for our personal maturity (Philippians 1:6). Christ calls us to love others to the extent he loves us (1 John 4:9-12). This impossible feat is not an excuse to quit. Instead, it is a reminder to depend on God’s Holy Spirit who lives within us (Romans 8:11, 26-27; Galatians 5:22). Human love only reaches so far (2 Corinthians 12:9). Prayer must reside at the beginning, middle, and end of any plan of care as we strive to love others in real, tangible ways (Luke 10:34-35). Finally, we will mess up. We will say hurtful things and miss opportunities to be a neighbor. I am learning to be quicker to seek forgiveness from those I offend and make an active choice to be a neighbor the next time.

Our calling in nursing is to actively love our neighbors in tangible ways, which is the true expression of loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. 



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DOI: 10.1097/CNJ.0b013e31822be04c

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