



Our Calling: Loving God in Nursing (Part 1)

One of the distinctions of Christian nursing is our purpose. We see our work and career as a calling or ministry. Mary Elizabeth O'Brien, an expert in Christian nursing, states, "We are doubly blessed in that both the *First Testament*, as well as the gospel message of Jesus, emphasize the importance of each individual's personal call to care for those in need of health and healing" (2006, p. 77). Most Christian nurses readily recognize our personal calling. The primary question is how do we respond?

One way we can respond is by loving God. Jesus reminded the First century audience (and us today), of the most important command: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind" (Luke 10:27, NIV). Completely loving God in nursing with all our being becomes the basis of our calling. What does it mean to love God with "heart, soul, mind, and strength"? Let's examine each concept separately, although together they represent a comprehensive view of one's self.

God wants to be the center of all we are and all we do. In Psalm 63, we see David's love for God expressed through praise, worship, and meditation. An intimate, maturing

relationship with God is central to our personal and professional life. As we reflect on loving God in nursing with all our heart, we want to ensure that we haven't compartmentalized our faith. Do we leave God at church or in Bible study? Or, on the other hand, does our walk with God lack the intimacy expressed by David? Loving God with "all our heart" takes note of

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our "affections which will ultimately determine our actions and pursuits" (Keathley, 2000, p. 5).

All our soul can be described as a giving of one's life or career to God and devoting it all to him (Keathley, p. 6). Whether it is choosing a career, defining a specialty, or deciding on a facility or organization to work for, our choices come from the desire to submit to God's will in our life. One way we can devote our nursing career to God is to question, "Is this where Jesus is guiding me or what he wants me to do?" Then we obediently respond to his guidance (John 14:21). We are to question all things, not just the big decisions, as to whether they are God's good, acceptable, and perfect will for us (Romans 12:2).

Loving God with our mind means to "submit our thought patterns, opinions, and decisions to the [Word]

of God" instead of what we may think or how we feel (Keathley, p. 6). Loving God with our mind means we discern our nursing knowledge with God's truth, asking about any theory or practice, "Does this line up with what the Bible says is true?" It also means we bathe our thoughts with the truth of Scripture and express truth in our education and practice (Romans 12:2; Philippians 4:8).

Loving God with all our strength may be described as devoting our "abilities, talents, gifts, and physical power to God and depending upon him for all we need" (Keathley, p. 6). God has uniquely gifted all of us for his work (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). No matter where you work, whether in pediatrics, oncology, academia, research, or private practice, God has equipped you to do good works in him (Ephesians 2:10). The exciting part of nursing is seeing the uniqueness of our gifts displayed through the body of nursing in Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12, 27).

We immediately notice overlap in these four concepts, for we cannot love God with sections of our person. Loving God in nursing becomes a manifestation of the completeness of our self found within our heart, soul, mind, and strength, which in turn supernaturally spills into loving our neighbor.

In the October/December 2011 issue, we will discuss how we live out our calling to love God in nursing through loving our neighbors.

O'Brien, M. E. (2006). *The nurse with an alabaster jar: A biblical approach to nursing*. Madison, WI: NCF Press.

Keathley III, J. H. (2000). *The paramount issues of life (Mark 12:28-31)*. Retrieved from <http://bible.org/article/paramount-issues-life-mark-1228-31/>



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DOI: 10.1097/CNJ.0b013e31821effe1