



Scripture matters for sustainable whole-person nursing

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Abstract

Nursing is truly an ever-evolving profession. It is one of the most versatile occupations within the health care arena. It is not the same profession today as it was years ago. Nurses need direction to create order out of chaos in today's complex multifaceted healthcare environment. My survival plan entails a personal relationship with Christ which is strengthened by consistent time spent in the Holy Scriptures. Reading the Bible daily and studying scripture is a necessity. Scripture passages can inspire nurses particularly in going forward, in endlessly caring for other individuals and in sharing our passion to serve others as we venture forth.

Key Words: nursing, survival, strength, healthcare, scripture, service

Nursing is truly an ever-evolving profession. It is one of the most versatile occupations within the health care arena. It is not the same profession today as it was 40 years ago when I became a registered nurse. New tech development in addition to the swift rate of change in patient populations mean that nursing is more dynamic than ever before. In today's fast-paced world, transformation is happening in every aspect of nursing. According to Hader, change is unavoidable and the only constant is change.¹ Nurses often experience significant stress at work that is associated with increased workloads, understaffing, higher acuity patients, and emotional demands.² As an ICU nurse, I dealt with many of these stressors daily. Others would frequently ask "How do you continue to show up and push forward with a smile shift after shift?" For twenty-five-years, my answer was always the same: My survival plan entails a personal relationship with Christ which is strengthened by consistent time spent in the Holy Scriptures.

I have learned that surviving in the day-to-day nursing world requires a foundation that is built on the solid rock of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me" (Philippians 4:13, KJV). Because of the firm foundation we have in Christ, we can build our lives in such a way that no matter what comes, we able to be sustained (Matthew 7:24-27, KJV). Each day we need to live our lives seeking to learn more about him and becoming more and more like him. *Studying the scriptures is spending quality time with God.* Studying the scriptures is crucial because of the direction we need in our lives. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105, KJV). Scripture lights the way ahead so we can see plainly which way to go. In every season of life, we can be confident that God is always leading through His word. Nurses need direction to create order out of chaos in today's complex multifaceted healthcare environment.

Scripture also strengthens us in our faith. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the

word of God” (Romans 10:17, KJV). Because nurses are charged with providing emotional, spiritual, and physical care, nurses must live out their faith on a day-to-day basis. Exposure to God’s word will spur on faith in a person. Time spent in scripture will help one to know what to believe and upon what to base their faith. When a person spends time with Him in scripture, God promises that he or she can gain wisdom and understanding. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16, KJV). Wisdom and understanding provide the capability to make correct decisions or choices. “For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding” (Proverbs 2:6). Now more than ever, nurses need to draw upon their discernment abilities to aid with a patient’s spiritual needs as much as physical needs.

When nurses study the scriptures, God’s knowledge and understanding accumulates in their mind and heart. Scripture will permeate their life with God’s encouragement and truth. It tends to splash onto and infuse into the people around you as you live for God. The more you receive God’s holy word *in you*, the more His love and power will flow *through you* to patients, family members, and co-workers. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16, KJV). Those who tuck away scripture in their hearts, who ponder it, who allow themselves to be guided by it, can inspire others to do the same.

Nurses on the front lines of patient care often influence and inspire those around them. Others are constantly watching, listening, and often mimicking what they see and hear. In my role as a Nurse Educator, I found this particularly true in the clinical setting with students. Recently, students followed me into a room of a patient who had just expired. I realized death is a difficult thing, perhaps the most difficult part of life. Those few moments

immediately after a patient dies have been the hardest thing for me, ever since the beginning of my career. Because of my faith in Christ and reliance on scripture, coping with these losses has become much easier for me. A scripture that I have drawn strength from time and time again is found in 2 Corinthians 5:8, KJV: “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” This verse sweeps across my soul, and I often recite it aloud while at the bedside of the deceased. I hold on to my faith and know that there is something greater after this mortal life. Scriptures are God’s personal communication to us and can bring comfort and encouragement as well as hope even in the face of our mortality. Students listen and pay attention to everything. Hopefully, what they see in me fosters hope, encouragement, and a desire to serve Christ as *a nurse*.

As nurses, we strive to provide holistic care for our patients. This means being mindful of their mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual needs. Having a caring heart and loving our neighbors shows that we are desiring to be like Jesus. Scripture passages can inspire us particularly to press on in endlessly caring for other individuals, and in sharing our passion to serve others as we venture forth. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28, KJV). Keeping one’s spiritual faith strong and firm is essential as we take care of patients and families shift after shift. Though we may feel pressed for time, reading the Bible daily and meditating upon scripture is a necessity. It will help us not only to become better nurses, but better people as well. Although nursing is one of the most challenging professions, it is also one of the most personally fulfilling. Every time I step into the nursing arena, I am afforded the amazing opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of others while consciously serving God. Scripture is the essential element to keep a nurse’s life firmly on the rock of Jesus Christ in the midst of the storms life and death in healthcare. I am eternally grateful for his word.

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Submitted 25 May 2021, accepted 14 Jun 2022, published 20 Jun 2022

Competing Interests: None declared.

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Cite this article as: McCroskey D. Scripture matters for whole-person nursing. *Christ J Global Health.* June 2022; 9(1):122-124. <https://doi.org/10.15566/cjgh.v9i1.665>

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