

## CARING

It is the emphasis on caring that makes nursing unique among the healthcare professions. Caring is undoubtedly a part of all such jobs, but whilst in the other professions caring has a practical emphasis, in nursing alone is the call to care primarily about a relationship.

- In medicine, caring is demonstrated through diagnosis and treatment – a gentle and understanding attitude is important, but fundamentally caring medicine is about curing.
- In physiotherapy, a caring approach is important, especially in order to win a patient's confidence and get them to allow, and co-operate in, interventions, but again it is the therapy that is at the heart of the relationship.
- In occupational therapy, a caring and understanding department can make a huge difference in helping patients face up to the changes ahead, but in none of these professions is caring itself the therapeutic framework in the way that it is within nursing.

I want to be wary of overstating my case, and I don't mean to imply that nurses alone among the professions have the monopoly on caring, but I do think the very fact that nurses alone are by the bedside 24 hours a day watching every twist and turn of the emotional roller-coaster that patients and relatives alike are on, interacts with our desire to care for people in a very particular way. Caring becomes a goal in itself and not simply an attitude that shapes a therapeutic intervention. In fact during my training we even had a module called *Caring Skills*. The module could as easily have been called *Nursing Skills* for in fact that was what the module consisted of – how to give a bed bath, what to look for when bathing someone, listening skills, performing and charting obs. etc. etc. – but it wasn't, it was called *Caring Skills*, the implication being that nursing is about caring. Similarly our nursing interventions are documented on *Care Plans*; not nursing plans as they could very properly be called, but *Care Plans*. Why is that if not because nursing is about caring?

But what does caring look like? The NMC and your lecturers will have plenty of answers I'm sure, but I want to ask a bigger question – I want to ask what it looks like when a *Christian* cares, because this will help me to see what a *Christian Nurse* might look like. To do this I have put together 4 Bible studies - two looking at God and Jesus as the ones who care, and then two more looking at our calling to reflect their caring image in the world. I hope you will find these personally useful, but why not arrange to meet with one or two of your Christian colleagues and over the course of a term work through these studies together. I always find I learn so much more when others are stimulating me to think, and it stops me staring out of the window too often if I think I might get caught!

# GOD'S PATTERN

## 2 Corinthians 1:1-11

1. If you could use just 2 short phrases to describe yourself, what would they be and why?
2. In verse 3 the words that Paul uses to describe God are *Father of compassion* and *God of all comfort*. Is this the way you naturally think of God? Why / why not?
3. Glance down at the end of verse 8 through to the beginning of verse 10. It is in the context of fearing for his own and his companion's life that Paul recalls God's caring qualities. Explore the ways in which this particular knowledge of God might have offered strength and comfort at this particular time. Why do you think Paul refers to these qualities over and above God's sovereignty, his majesty or his mercy for example?
4. Paul was able to praise God for his caring qualities and to look to him for comfort in his time of need because he *knew* God's character. Read the following passages and look at the ways they show God to be the *Father of Compassion* and the *God of all comfort*. In each instance think how this shows that God is the one who can *comfort us in all our troubles*.
5. It's interesting to see that the reason Paul gives here for God offering him comfort is so that he in turn can pass that comfort on [v. 4]. Look again at verses 8-11. What comfort was there for Paul and his companions and what might he say to others – in similar and different situations – to pass on that comfort to them?
6. Our experience is not quite like Paul's, for we are not apostles, but it is still true that we can comfort others with a personal knowledge and experience of *the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort*. Think back over the kind of day you have had today, or some of the patients and relatives you have looked after recently.
  - How might the knowledge of the *Father of compassion and the God of all comfort* as we have just been studying have helped you to care for those particular patients?
  - How could you comfort them with the comfort you have received from God?
  - How will you try to pass on this comfort to some of your patients next time you are at work?
  - How will it shape the way you approach people and nurse them?

# JESUS' PATTERN

## *Romans 5:1-11*

1. Look at verses 6-8. How does Paul show us the extravagance of Christ's love? Consider:
  - a. What we are like.
  - b. What Christ does.
  
2. What effect does Christ's act of love have on:
  - a. Our experience of the present (v1-5)?
  - b. Our hope for the future (v9-11)?
  
3. How does this challenge:
  - a. Our motives as we care for our patients?
  - b. The way we care for our different patients?
  
4. How can we help our patients find meaning in their suffering, and lead them towards the kind of certain hope for the future that Paul is talking about here?

## *Mark 1:40-45, Luke 7:11-17, 8:42b-48*

1. In each of these cameos, Jesus responds with compassion to three very different cries for help. Think about:
  - a. What types of patient / personality these different people might represent.
  - b. How you might normally be tempted to respond to them.
  - c. What these cameos suggest Jesus' response might have been.
  
2. What are likely to be the particular challenges you face in trying to care for these types of patients with the same kind of compassion as Jesus?
  
3. How can we support one another in this task?

# OUR CALLING

## *Philippians 2:1-16*

1. The call to be like Christ comes from a heartfelt understanding of what Christ has done for us. Discuss, if you feel able to, what difference knowing Christ has made in your life. Do you recognise any of the benefits that Paul talks about in verse 1? If not, try to articulate what it is you struggle with, and spend some time praying together. You might find it helpful to read John chapters 9 and 20:24-31, which deal with who Jesus is and what he has come to do in the context of encounters with 2 people struggling with different barriers to faith.
  
2. How does Christ's attitude as set out in verses 6-11 help us to cultivate the qualities Paul mentions in verses 2-4?
  
3. How does this challenge the way we demonstrate that we care for:
  - a. Our classmates?
  - b. Our colleagues on placement?
  - c. Our patients?
  
4. Look at verses 14-16.
  - a. What are some of the characteristics of the children of God who shine out like stars in a crooked and depraved world?
  - b. In what situations do you find it easier to be 'crooked and depraved' than a shining star?
  - c. What needs to change in the way you think about or approach those situations / people in the future?
  
5. Look at verses 12-13. God's good purpose is that we should look increasingly Christ like – on the outside and the inside! As a result of this study, identify a couple of areas where you have really seen God at work changing you, and a couple of areas where you need to see the power of God at work changing you. Spend some time in prayer and thanksgiving now and arrange to meet to pray regularly about these issues until you start to see some real changes taking place. (Then you can start to pray about some other areas needing God's power to change!)