

WITNESSING

Opening Issue

What difficulties have you faced with regards to witnessing at work?

Goal of this article

The aim of this work-sheet is to see witnessing to Jesus as:

- i integral to being a Christian
- ii a legitimate nursing activity

The Bible on Witnessing

It's all very well to listen to what our friends or lecturers have to say about telling people about Jesus, about what is and isn't acceptable and when. But as Christians, our ultimate authority is God's word, which we find in the Bible. The important question for us to get to grips with then is what does the Bible say about witnessing? I have split this up into two sections – the *why*, and the *how* of witnessing.

1. Motivations to witnessing

Look at the verses below. In what ways should they help to motivate evangelism?

- Command Matthew 28:18-19
- Gospel Hebrews 9:27-28; Romans 3:10-12; John 14:6; 2 Thess 1:8-9
- Truth 2 Peter 1:16 – 21
- Purpose 1 Peter 2:9

Essentially the reasons why we witness are because we are commanded to, because of the nature of the gospel itself (i.e. it is all about life and death and eternity), the fact that the gospel is the truth and that part of our very purpose as Christians is to be telling people about Jesus.

We must be clear in our convictions – we must have a firm grasp of the gospel and reality for ourselves. Reality is what the Bible says it is, not what the world says it is.

2. How do we witness?

The Bible is clear that we should be telling people about Jesus, that this is not an optional extra for the orally gifted but rather the responsibility of every Christian. We should therefore not be surprised to learn that the Bible also tells us how to go about telling people the gospel.

Look at the verses below. What do they tell us about the how, the when and the where of evangelism?

- Tell the good news Romans 10:13-14
- On the back of lifestyle 1 Peter 3:15-16; Colossians 4:5-6; Phil 2:14-16
- Wherever we are based Acts 8:4
- With help & encouragement Hebrews 10:24-25

There are three components to our witnessing. We must tell people the gospel, but in the context of living it out ourselves in the world and in fellowship with other Christians. It is a Christian lifestyle issue and not an optional extra for some people some of the time. It is for all people all of the time.

The question is then how do we go about living and witnessing to Jesus in nursing and midwifery? Being a Christian is about having a renewed mind and bringing that renewed mind to bear on all the issues of living (Ephesians 4:17-24). As we do this, we are witnessing to people – showing them that there is a God, that we believe in him, that he has communicated his values to the world and that we intend to live by them.

One of the ways we can do this is by standing up for his values in lectures on ethics and other issues. We should get to know what God has to say about death, abortion, euthanasia, evolution, the dignity and value of the individual, sexuality etc. and be willing to articulate this in lectures. To help you do this you can look at the relevant sections on the rest of this web site.

However, another thing we can do is to know our nursing theory and code of conduct well. Why do I say this? Well, I firmly believe that a careful reading of the nursing literature **fully supports us telling our patients about Jesus**. Lecturers who tell us that we have to keep our faiths to ourselves do not know their Code of Conduct, and they do not know their nursing models.

If you are doing this in small groups you might want to look at nursing models together in one session and then in your next meeting look at the Code of Conduct. That way you'll really have time to look at the material thoroughly.

Nursing Models

- Nursing models are designed to define the nature of nursing activity. How do we understand what a person's needs are, and how do we articulate what the nursing response to those needs are? These are the kinds of questions that nursing models were designed to answer. They contain theory as to the nature of humanity, health and wholeness and therefore how to understand and respond to the illness experience.
- Nursing models are designed to drive the nursing process. What frameworks do we have for assessing what our patients' needs are and what constitutes appropriate nursing intervention? The answer is models of nursing which seek to articulate what our human needs in health are, and the role of the nurse in dealing with those needs in times of ill health.
 - Why not get hold of a book on nursing theories from your uni library and look at a number of different nursing models and examine their spiritual content. To what extent do the different models legitimise Christian witness?
 - I have included below extracts from a couple of nursing models from Chinn and Kramer's book, *Theory and Nursing – a systematic approach*. Why not discuss in groups the ways in which these models might support you having a gospel conversation with your patients.

E. Wiedenbach: 'Clinical Nursing: a Helping Art', 1964

'...Nursing is concerned with the needs that patients have for help. What the nurses does and how he or she does it comprise clinical nursing. Clinical nursing has four components:

- i) Philosophy
- ii) Purpose
- iii) Practice
- iv) Art

Philosophy is a personal stance of the nurse that embodies attitudes towards reality, and purpose is the overall goal. The purpose of clinical nursing is to facilitate efforts of individuals to overcome obstacles which interfere with abilities to respond capably to demands made by the condition, environment, situation or time.'

According to Wiedenbach's model of nursing clinical nursing demands that the nurse take her faith – her philosophy on life – seriously and into account as she cares for her patients for it is an integral part of what it means to provide clinical nursing care.

J. Travelbee: 'Interpersonal Aspects of nursing' 1966, 1971

'Nursing is an interpersonal process aimed at assisting individuals, families or communities to prevent or cope with the process of illness and suffering, and, if necessary, to find meaning in the experience. Nursing's purpose is achieved through human-to-human relationships, which are established by a disciplined intellectual approach to problems combined with a therapeutic use of self... **The values and beliefs of nurses determine the quality of nursing care provided and thus the extent to which nurses are able to help the ill find meaning in their situation.** Illness and suffering are spiritual, emotional, and physical experiences. The nurse assists the ill patient to experience hope as a means of coping with illness and suffering. Communication, a central concept for Travelbee, implies guiding, planning, and purposely directing interaction to fulfil nursing's purpose.'

Travelbee clearly thinks that having a faith and being able to use that faith to help the patient understand their illness experience, to find hope and meaning, contributes positively to the quality of nursing care being offered. Is it possible to get a more clearly articulated permission to tell patients the gospel.

V. Henderson: 'The Nature of Nursing' 1966

'The patient is an individual who requires help toward independence. The nurse assists the individual, whether ill or not, to perform activities that will contribute to health, recovery or peaceful death that the individual would perform unaided if he had the necessary strength, will or knowledge... Help toward independence is given autonomously by the nurse in relation to 1) breathing, 2) eating and drinking, 3) elimination, 4) movement and posture, 5) sleep and rest, 6) clothing, 7) maintenance of body temperature, 8) cleaning and grooming of the body and integument protection, 9) avoiding environmental dangers and injury of others, 10) communication, 11) **worship**, 12) work, 13) play and participation in recreation, and 14) learning and discovery. Nursing can be evaluated as a profession based on the extent to which it achieves each of these functions autonomously.'

How interesting that Virginia Henderson thinks that helping the patient to worship is important if nursing is to be properly regarded as a profession. Note too that it is the nurses responsibility to pass on to his patient the necessary knowledge to worship, if it is lacking. In other words the nurse ought to find out if his patient knows about God, and to tell them the gospel!

Code of Conduct

Many people will try to use the Code of Conduct against you if you witness to your patients or want to argue that you should legitimately talk to your patients about spiritual matters. Look at the following 5 clauses / sub clauses in the Code of Conduct and discuss how they might be used to support your having a Christian / spiritual dimension to your nursing care.

1.2 As a registered nurse or midwife you must:

- Protect and support the health of individual patients and clients
- Protect and support the health of the wider community
- Act in such a way that justifies the trust and confidence the public have in you
- Uphold and enhance the good reputation of the profession

Define 'health.' Many models of nursing have a distinctly spiritual aspect to health c.f. Travelbee.

2.1 You must recognise and respect the role of patients and clients as partners in their care and the contribution they can make to it. This involves identifying their preferences regarding care and respecting these within the limits of professional practice, existing legislation, resources and the goals of the therapeutic relationship.

Identify patient's preferences with respect to care. You cannot identify their 'spiritual' preferences unless you have at least one conversation about them.

2.3 You must, at all times, maintain appropriate professional boundaries in the relationships you have with patients and clients. You must ensure that all aspects of the relationship focus exclusively upon the needs of the patient or client.

Focus exclusively on patient / client needs, not our own. So often other members of staff will tell you not to talk about Jesus because they are scared, or they have a world-view that precludes it. Your silence is meeting their need, not the patient's.

2.4 You must promote the interests of patients and clients. This includes helping individuals and groups gain access to health and social care, information and support relevant to their needs.

Access to information and support can include telling the gospel if it meets a need. For example, Henderson identified a need to worship, and a need to have a peaceful death. Talking to people about Jesus fits in with both of these needs.

4.2 You are expected to work co-operatively within teams and to respect the skills, expertise and contributions of your colleagues. You must treat them fairly and without discrimination.

You are worthy of respect. You should not face discrimination for being a Christian and your knowledge of spiritual matters should be respected as a particular contribution to the team. Wiedenbach identifies your faith as an important and integral part of good clinical nursing practice.

Witnessing at Work

Given that witnessing is integral to being a Christian and is a legitimate nursing activity:

- What will this mean in lectures?
- What will this mean on the wards?
- What will this mean with my mentor?
- Where will the difficulties lie?
- How can we help each other to live the Christian life?