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The Making of Servant-Leaders at a Christ-Centered School of Pharmacy

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God's Truth and Knowledge

The mission of Cedarville University is to “be a Christ-centered learning community equipping students for lifelong leadership and service through an education marked by excellence and grounded in Biblical truth”. The mission of the School of Pharmacy is to “develop exceptional pharmacy practitioners focused on meeting the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of patients through servant leadership. The school pursues innovative, ethical solutions to health-related issues in diverse populations through collaborative teaching, research, and practice”.

The challenge for both the university and the school of pharmacy in fulfilling their missions is to utilize practical applications of these objectives and values in the individual courses, laboratories and activities students will complete throughout their college career. This is the mandate of Biblical-integration. Greg Bahnsen describes the directive of Biblical-integration when he says “...*God's word demands unreserved allegiance to God and His truth in all our thought and scholarly endeavors*”.¹ As professors at a Christ-centered university, we must view the entire realm of knowledge holistically and teach our students to do likewise. We must each strive to demonstrate to our students that, as the creator and maker of the entire universe, God is the source of all knowledge. Colossians 2: 2-3 states: “*My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*”. We must further prove that God is at the heart of knowledge for each of our disciplines, no matter how scientific or technical that discipline may be. We must enable our students to look past the individual pieces, or facts, and find God in the whole. God has created the human mind to look for unity and coherence in the

observed world. James Orr states that such a mind *“...is not content with fragmentary knowledge, but tends constantly to rise from facts to laws, from laws to higher laws, and from these to the highest generalizations possible”*.²

It is imperative as Christian faculty that we demonstrate the correlations that exist between our respective disciplines and the greater realm of God’s knowledge and truth, especially that truth which is found in Scripture. This is explained in 2 Timothy 3:16: *“all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness”*. Can this be done within a scientific curriculum like Pharmacy? There are many outside of the University who say that it cannot. Many, if not most of the current faculty within the School of Pharmacy were educated in secular universities and taught that, although faith and medicine can both exist, they are mutually exclusive. This is the principle that makes the Cedarville University School of Pharmacy so wonderfully unique. We believe that faith and scientific knowledge cannot only intersect, but that Christ is at the center of any scientific and medical knowledge that we may ascertain. Proverbs 9:10 states that *“the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding”*. Proverbs 1:7 says that *“the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline”*. We must realize that anything that is known, or can be known by man is first known by Christ. Jesus says in Revelation 22:13: *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End”*.

The profession of pharmacy is multi-faceted and builds upon foundations in several of the basic sciences, including chemistry, biology, anatomy and physiology, and mathematics. Again, God, the Creator of the Universe, is the fountainhead of all knowledge that we as humans have obtained, and will ever obtain, in these fields. In Psalm 139: 14 we read *“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well”*. God has imbued upon man a desire to constantly develop a keener understanding of the physical world and the way it works. But He has also placed a finite limit on man’s intellectual capabilities, reserving for Himself some of the mysteries of the universe, which we may never fully comprehend, even upon our own arrival in Glory. Our tasks as Christian faculty within the

School of Pharmacy is to convey that scientific and medical knowledge that God has given us the privilege of discovering to our students, and also to instill within each student a wonderment and awe at God's handiwork and a deep desire to more fully understand God's perfect truth.

The Application of God's Truth and Knowledge to the Profession of Pharmacy

Pharmacists fulfill a wide variety of roles within our society today. The component that underpins the work of all pharmacists, however, no matter the particular facet of pharmacy in which they serve, is providing appropriate medication therapy. In order to ensure appropriate medication therapy, pharmacists must possess a strong background in the pharmaceutical sciences, such as pathophysiology, pharmacology, medicinal chemistry and pharmacokinetics. They furthermore must have a keen understanding of the clinical application of these sciences, as well as the ability to effectively evaluate the medical literature and research. Just as the foundational sciences are rooted in God's perfect knowledge, so too are the pharmaceutical sciences.

Pharmacy schools are required, as part of the accrediting process, to teach pharmacy students the appropriate attitudes, ethics and values of a pharmacist. While it may be difficult to know exactly how secular universities arrive at the appropriate attitudes, ethics and values that must be taught, we as Christians have this information right at our fingertips, as stated in Galatians 5: 22, "*the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control*". If we have the Holy Spirit living within us and allow his goodness to direct our words and actions, these are the attributes that a Christian should display while performing his/her vocation as a pharmacist.

The provision of compassionate care is another key component of the pharmacist's role, especially that of the Christian pharmacist. 2 Peter 1: 5-8 states "*for this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing*

measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ". As this verse indicates, we are called to emphasize to our students the importance of treating each and every one of their patients with the compassion of Christ.

The profession of pharmacy is somewhat unique in that most people enter the profession with a desire to serve mankind and to heal the sick, and yet sometimes that desire is hindered by the rules, regulations and laws that pharmacists are bound to live by. There will be many times throughout a pharmacist's career where he or she will be faced with an ethical dilemma and must make a decision with moral and ethical implications. The healthcare system in general and the world in which we live does not provide any real foundation on which pharmacists should make these decisions. Graduates of the Cedarville School of Pharmacy will be equipped with Biblical principles and a solid understanding of the Word of God upon which they can make these difficult decisions. With the ever-evolving state of science and medicine, there is no way we can predict today what ethical challenges graduates may be faced with in the years to come. We can know, however, that God does not change, and either does the wisdom and advice offered in His Word.

If we as faculty are to successfully impart to our students the wisdom and knowledge of God, as well as his compassion and love, the key is to ensure that there is a connection between that which is being taught, and that which is being lived.

The Integration of Faith into Pedagogy

Each follower of Christ is called to God and his people according to the gifts and talents they have been given. Romans 12: 6-8 says *"we have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully".* 1 Peter 4: 10 says *"each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms".* It is the collective desire of the School of Pharmacy faculty to create not just

pharmacists who happen to be Christians, but to create Christians who utilize the profession of pharmacy as their ministry tool. In order to do this, we, as faculty must role-model servant-leadership. It is one thing to stand before your class and present a lecture on serving others, but it is much more effective to let them see you live it out in practice. It is my sincere hope that I can instill in students the desire to be life-long learners; individuals who continually seek to learn both professionally, as it pertains to pharmacy, but also spiritually, as they strive to learn more about God's creation and the wonder of the world in which they live. Through this continuous pursuit of knowledge, God will continue to reveal His truth to each of us, and the truth of scripture will help to shed light upon the mysteries of the every-day world.

The pharmacy courses which I personally coordinate and teach are Pharmacy Practice Lab I & II. These are courses in the first professional year of the curriculum in which students learn the technical, hands-on skills of being a pharmacist. As such, the courses are very technical, covering rules, regulations, laws and specific techniques. Material this dry and matter-of-fact does not lend itself well to pondering God's great mysteries. However, as part of a class project, the inaugural class of the Cedarville School of Pharmacy chose a verse to represent the Pharmacy Practice Lab courses which they feel best describes how we as pharmacists can serve God and his Kingdom through even the most mundane of pharmacy tasks. This verse is Philippians 2: 3-4: *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others"*. Similarly, Colossians 3: 17 says *"Whatever you do, in word, or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him"*. I seek to make a point of this during each lab section, emphasizing the fact that no matter what task we may be performing, we should do it for the glory of God.

We also introduce scenarios in lab which allow us to discuss the provision of patient care, particularly to patients who might be deemed "difficult" to deal with. I try to instill in the students a Christ-like attitude towards those they are serving. Specific cases are presented which may challenge students' ability to look at their patients through Christ's eyes. However, I routinely emphasize the fact that every person, no matter how difficult, is a child of God who

Jesus loved enough to die on the cross in order to save. We discuss providing patient care with the compassion of Christ, and how the care that we provide may actually look different than pharmacists who are not serving God through their profession.

Furthermore, even though Pharmacy Practice Lab is very technical in nature, I want the students to be aware that sickness and death is not God's ultimate desire for his people. God desires his people to be whole. Revelation 21: 4 says *"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away"*. I challenge each student to consider how they may help to bring about this promise of God as they go about practicing their vocation of pharmacy.

Students need to be aware that the love, care, and compassion they show to their patients can be far more healing than the medications they are providing. They are encouraged to be Jesus to the people they interact with. 2 Corinthians 1: 3-5 exhorts: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ"*.

Conclusion

I believe one of the major factors contributing to my interest in coming to Cedarville was the university's unique vision to eliminate the barriers between faith and medicine. The notion that we can create graduates who are Christians ministering to God's people through the profession of pharmacy is very appealing to me. As each day, week, and month passes, I continue to be amazed at God's fingerprints upon this program. I consider it a great privilege indeed to be part of God's great plan for this School of Pharmacy. To be part of something bigger than myself and to know that I am working to build God's Kingdom through the profession of pharmacy is something very special. With God's continual help and blessing, I sincerely hope and pray that I can continue to improve the integration of faith into my teaching, as well as inspire young pharmacists to apply the skills of their vocation to God's great glory.

REFERENCES

1. G. Bahnsen, *Always Ready*. Texarkana: Covenant Media Foundation, 1996.
2. J. Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1989.