



testimony

work as worship

Georgie Coster looks at how her working life was transformed by a hospital prayer meeting

My first year as a newly qualified nurse was possibly the hardest year of my life. The busy AMU of a large hospital was a baptism of fire for a girl who didn't even know how to cannulate. I found myself filled with nauseating anxiety before a shift, often sobbing in bed the night before. I started looking online for other jobs: cleaning, retail, admin. The idea of sitting behind a desk and filling my day with mind-numbing tasks that didn't significantly impact anybody else's life (or death) was so appealing.

Whilst I gritted my teeth and endured time on the unit, I lived for days off where I could serve as a youth worker in my church. That was the really important stuff, I thought. That was my ministry. And I resented every minute spent at work for keeping me from it. There was a very clear divide in my thinking – time spent 'in ministry' was valuable and filled with purpose, while time spent as a hostage in a huge building for twelve hour stretches, was time wasted when I could have been serving the Lord. During this time, a young doctor felt God calling him to begin a monthly prayer meeting at my hospital. Those prayer meetings changed my life.

I have learned that there is something very

powerful when Christian healthcare professionals pray together. For me, hearing my colleagues (even lead consultants) asking God for boldness to carry his light into the darkness of the hospital was pivotal. They were right: our hospital was a place of darkness – it was certainly my unhappy place. It hadn't even occurred to me that God was right there with my crushed spirit.¹ How had I missed such an obvious truth?

In my head, God was very interested in all the spiritual events of the week – church, youth group, evangelism etc. but he drew the line at the big, depressing hospital. This was not his realm, I'd subconsciously decided. What a revelation to hear Christian staff connect the sacred with the secular – asking God for opportunities to be used by him as a testimony to those around them, to stressed colleagues, frightened patients and grieving relatives. I had disconnected faith with work, leaving God at the main entrance on my way in and telling him I'd be back for him when I'd finished my shift. But if our God is abounding in love and compassion as Scripture says,² then surely all the happenings of a hospital have his full attention.

For too long, I lived as though God only saw what I did for him when I had my 'Christian'

hat on. What I've come to realise is, whichever 'hat' I'm wearing, I serve the same Lord. When God called me to be a living sacrifice,³ he meant **all of me**. Not just the time in my week I give to reading the Bible, sharing the gospel, or serving in church, but every hour and every minute. That includes work, which is not an interruption to time spent serving God. Every little thing I do in my working day, from checking the resuscitation trolley to holding the straw so my patient can have a drink, is worship to God. There is so much joy in working 'as unto the Lord'.⁴ How often do you hear NHS staff complaining that they would appreciate more thanks for what they do? When we're working for the Lord and not for man, we can rest assured that not a single act done in love for him has slipped his notice; his 'Well done, good and faithful servant'⁵ will be sweeter than the most glowing review on NHS Choices.

I have now been qualified for almost four years, and I am a very different nurse now. Much of that change is due to increasing experience and competence. I do believe though, that had God not used the prayers of others to transform my thinking and break down my sacred/secular divide, I would now be at best, a competent but miserable nurse, living for days off and annual leave; and at

worst, a competent but miserable retail assistant, living for days off and annual leave.

The average person spends 92,120 hours of their life at work. That's 35% of your waking hours in a 50-year working life!⁶ I really believe that it is too much time to spend counting down the hours until you're somewhere else.

My own experience has taught me the life-changing value of meeting with other healthcare professionals who love Jesus, not just as a one off, but habitually, because we need a regular refreshing and a consistent stirring up to love and good works.⁷ For this reason, I am passionate about the work of CMF in connecting nurses and midwives and organising local groups to meet monthly. I am thrilled to have joined the team as Associate Head of Nursing alongside my clinical work, and am already revelling in seeing God inspire nurses and midwives with the privilege of worshipping him in their work. 🙌

Georgie Coster is the CMF Associate Head of Nursing and a staff nurse in Stoke

1. Psalm 34:18
2. Nehemiah 9:17
3. Romans 12:1
4. Colossians 3:22-24
5. Matthew 25:21
6. *Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings*. UK Office for National Statistics. 2017. bit.ly/2HYSrXQ
7. Hebrews 10:24