

be prepared: night shifts

Chris Borges Da Silva shares some practical tips



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I work as a junior doctor in the Emergency Department (ED), training in General Practice, alongside working for CMF, and serving my local church, while juggling a busy family life. It can be overwhelming at times. I am no stranger to the challenges working nights can bring; working in ED requires me to navigate shift work, described by many as antisocial.

I asked colleagues and companions what advice they would give to help people flourish while doing a run of night shifts. Most people answered, 'Don't do them!' Unfortunately, you cannot always opt-out. So how does a Christian healthcare worker practically thrive while doing night shifts?

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters. (Colossians 3:23)

God speaks to us through Scripture. This brings me to four practical points inspired by my relationship with God and personal experience. Remember these are tips, not regulations. Do what works for you.

1. Perspective – The one, true, living God created us for this specific time in history. This way of seeing the world when I prepare for a string of nights helps me realise I am part of a bigger story – God's story. When I am reviewing that blood gas at 4am, I am working for God, and God is working through me. Attitude determines altitude. In everything I do I serve Christ. Let your godly perspective inform how you approach the night shift.

2. Priorities – With God we will work heartily, but remember you are weak and tired at times.

This is OK. Through the finished work of Christ on the cross, I can now approach the God of the universe as my heavenly father. Unique conversations between colleagues and patients happen on the night shift that wouldn't happen in the day. We are the ambassadors of Jesus Christ. This becomes even more tangible in antisocial hours. Share his love – let that be your priority.

3. Purpose – That excellent history, examination, investigation, and management of clinical concerns in the twilight hours is worship to God. We were made to worship. If you are on the night shift, you have a unique opportunity to worship God. Your efforts may be unseen by the consultant in charge, but God sees. There is purpose in your pain. Work heartily – God is watching.

4. Preparation – Get as much help as you can. Prayer is necessary just like sleep. I have personally found preparing meals beforehand so I can grab and go, ensuring transport home is safe and organised, optimising sleep, eye mask, noise cancellers, increased calorie intake of healthy foods can all help in preparation for and during a night shift. If you fail to plan you plan to fail. Remember you have a heavenly Father who does not sleep.

For more on this topic, check out Matt Baines' *Triple Helix* article *Are you in rest deficit?* on an often forgotten commandment.¹ ■