

Medicine as a Christian Vocation: Summer 2018 Seminar Series

Faith and Vocation in Healthcare Syllabus

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Introduction: As a follower of Christ, how do you think about the profession of medicine?

Medical school can be overwhelming and can often obscure the larger more beautiful and empowering Christian vision of our calling. It is therefore worthwhile to take time to read about, reflect upon and discuss the importance of vocational calling in our faith and its implications for those of us in medicine. It is my belief that there is no more natural home for uniting faith and vocation than for those involved in attending to the health of other human beings. As we care for the sick, maintain health, assist in recovery or relieve suffering for those at the end of life we can be the tangible presence of Christ for those we serve. Having acknowledged this, there are many important questions that we will raise as we consider how Biblical texts, theological traditions and philosophical worldviews shape our understanding of faith and vocation.

While the church has often created an artificial dichotomy between the “spiritual” and “secular” domains of life, we will try to develop a more Biblical view where we understand every aspect of our lives, including our vocation, as under the lordship of Christ and hence a spiritual act of worship before God. During these four Sunday evening sessions on June 10th, June 17th, July 8th and July 15th, we will meet at our home, share dinner, and discuss the readings for each week. We hope to generate honest discussion about the challenges that face us in medicine and encourage one another toward faithfulness together as a community within the health system.

The timing of these seminars should be hospitable to medical students who have just completed their first year and those just completing their third year. Since the experiences of rising 2nd and 4th year students are so different, a healthy proportion of students from both groups would be ideal to create the best kind of conversation. The responsibilities of the students will be to do the readings ahead of time, coming prepared to discuss them and to be present for a free meal and conversation.

Through readings, film and discussions, we hope to come to a deeper and lasting understanding our calling that will sustain us as we offer care for others. Below are the specific goals of this track which include ways of understanding the professions in general, the integrity and views of a Christian practitioner, as well as how to respectfully and honorably work through conflicts when our values conflict with those of other people or the health system. I look forward to spending time with each of you as we learn together how to follow Christ in the medical profession.

Learning Objectives:

Students should be able to articulate in their own words as part of a discussion group...

1. The scope of vocational calling in medicine and the ideal of the Christian physician
2. The need for Christian physicians to ground their professional values in a solid Biblical worldview while living a life of integrity
3. What it means to be a healthy human being and the importance of seeing each patient as an individual in a healthcare system increasingly driven by efficiency, technology and computers
4. The critical importance of both the science and art of medical care
5. How to interact with colleagues, other health professionals and patients while navigating differences between our values/beliefs and theirs



Seminar Schedule:

- **Sunday, June 10, 6:30-TBA**

- Subject: The Meaning of Being Human and Purpose of Work—"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." Col 3:23-24
- Reading: "Why Work?," Dorothy Sayers (Excerpt, pages 18-27)
The Weight of Glory, C.S. Lewis
"The Work Itself," *Reconsiderations*, Richard V. Horner, March 2007, volume vi, #3.
"Science, Nature and Soul," *Reconsiderations*, C. John Sommerville, May 2010, volume ix, #2.
During this first meeting we will watch, *The Doctor*, a film starring William Hurt which explores the importance of the human dimension in medicine and is based on a true story.

- **Sunday, June 17, 6:30-9:00 p.m.**

- Subject: The Christian Physician—John 13:1-17 "...You call me Teacher and Lord and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set an example that you should do as I have done for you."
- Reading: *Educating the Christian Physician*, Edmund Pellegrino, CMDA Study Guide
A Christian Perspective on Healthcare, Johan Tangelder
"A Biblical Foundation for Medicine – Part 1: Medicine Within a Christian Worldview," John Dunlop, *Today's Christian Doctor*, Fall 2011
"Incarnation and Hospitality," *Reconsiderations*, James W. Lynch, July 2015, volume xv, #2.

- **Sunday, July 8, 6:30 - 9:00 p.m.**

- Subject: A Biblical Worldview of Healthcare—"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." 2 Cor 10:3-5
- Reading: "What Frames What?," *Reconsiderations*, Richard V. Horner, October 2005, volume iv, #5.
"The Mind of Christ," *Reconsiderations*, Richard V. Horner, March 2013, volume xii, #1.
"A Biblical Foundation for Medicine – Part 2: Medicine Grounded in the Character of God," John Dunlop, *Today's Christian Doctor*, Winter 2011
"Medicine in the Grand Scheme of Things," John Dunlop, *Today's Christian Doctor*, Winter 2007

- **Sunday, July 15, 6:30 - 9:00 p.m.**

- Subject: Art, Science, and Relationship in Medicine—Mark 10:35-44 "...whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant."
- Reading: "Ars Brevis," *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, George A Sonos, April 8, 2013.
"Shared Decision Making—the Pinnacle of Patient-Centered Care," *New England Journal of Medicine*, Michael J. Barry M.D., and Susan Edgman-Levitan, P.A., March 2012, volume 366;9.
"How Shall we Then Practice; Medicine as Gift, Power and Vocation," *Today's Christian Doctor*, Farr A. Curlin, M.D., volume 41;4 (<https://cmda.org/library/doclib/sinter-10-tcd.pdf>)
"The Man in the Vest," *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, James W. Lynch, December 2017, volume xxxv, #35, 3987-9.

