

Dear Partner in Ministry,

The Psychiatric Emergency Room is not an easy place to be, not for anyone. Most patients have attempted suicide multiple times, most staff members have exhausted the capacity of their compassion long ago, and the Chaplain is expected to just come in and fix everything.

As I entered into the Psych. E.R. the nurse said, "good luck, he's back there." She opened the door and locked me in a small white room with an African American patient secured to the bed. The first thing he told me, before I could even introduce myself was, "I *am* going to kill myself." He then went on to inform me that though pastors have told him suicide is a sin and he will go to hell if he does, he was convinced it was just another trick 'white men' invented to enslave him. He asked me what I thought about that, adding, and "where do you think I'm going to go when I kill myself? God won't send me to hell, He's more loving than that."

I responded slowly, "well, to begin, not a single 'white man' had anything to do with writing the Bible." He was shocked to learn that Jews wrote the Bible, not European white men. He then began to tell me the story of his painful existence. The abuse, the poverty, the suffering, it was by all human reckoning, a tragedy. He was trapped between two insurmountable evils. Life was too miserable to prolong, but death was too frightening to face. As Hebrews 2 states, the bondage was unbearable, but the fear in death kept him enslaved.

What could bring such a person hope? I've learned that the answer to that question is always the Gospel. It is the balm for every pain. So I told him that to understand whether or not God would send him to hell, we needed to first understand who and why God takes some to heaven, and who and why God casts others to hell.

I gave him a one hour long Gospel presentation from Scripture. After explaining the bad news of sin and hell, then the good news of forgiveness and heaven through Christ's cross, he looked me straight in the eyes, as if very puzzled, and stated, "you really believe all that, don't you?" I responded, "Yes, with all my heart."

He couldn't understand why I would believe a book, just a book. In his mind, I couldn't see or hear God, so I couldn't know for sure that it was true. He had no faith that the Bible was God's Word, so all the pain he faced made no sense. Sadly, that is how we ended. I hope he changes his mind in time.

As we enter into the holiday season I am thankful for much this year. Yet the visit with this man has made me especially grateful for His Word. What a joy it is that I have answers. I don't have to go insane wondering why in the world I exist. I don't have to go mad because of the pain I face. I may not understand it at the moment, but I can pick up a book, and by His grace, rejoice because I know that it is for my good. I understand that it is because of sin that death came into the world. Yet I also know that through one death, my sin left as quickly as it came. The cross is the fountain which fills my soul with God's satisfying grace. What a joy that I can pick up a book, anytime I want, and read of the wonderful things that God has done for me. What a gift, that I can know what He is doing for me this moment. What a hope, that I know how it's all going to end.



VBS in Mexico City

Our Mexico City Missions trip was so wonderful that we are already planning for next year! We had the joy of teaching God's Word daily and even leading some to Christ. Thanks to all for your prayers and support.

This semester in Seminary has been wonderful. I am in a class called 'Preaching Lab,' where I preach in front of the teacher and students and then they critique me. It has been a wonderful blessing not only to humble me :), but also teach me how to more effectively communicate God's truth to His people.

As ministry becomes more and more difficult in the Hospital, please pray that God would open doors for His Word. As Chaplains, the Hospital even forbids us from saying "Merry Christmas!" Thankfully, since I am not paid by the Hospital, I have the liberty of sharing Christ with many. Praise Him that though the administrators may protect the patient's privacy in ways we don't appreciate, patients in their pain still find a Savior in the one who has "born our grief and carried our sorrows...by whose stripes we are healed."

Check out the website for pictures from our Mexico City Trip, or even a sermon if you can't sleep :)

We would love to hear from you if we can serve you in any way...

Any contributions can be sent to:

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