

Spiritual Health Article on Vocation

Imagine ...

It's 2 a.m. in the morning, your phone rings and you are awakened out of a deep sleep. You pick up the phone and hear a very faint voice saying, "Please come. I need you." You recognize the voice; it's a voice from the past – someone with whom you have not had contact in a very long time. You are finally able to get her to tell you what's going on. She is in trouble and in a part of town you don't normally venture into. Your anxiety goes up, you can feel your heart beating in your throat, your palms become sweaty and you whisper a prayer asking for strength. Even though you are afraid and you are not sure what you are about to walk into, you know that you have to go, because this is someone who has expressed a need for help. You get dressed, get your keys and wallet, and get into your car and you "go afraid." For you see, being afraid does not prevent us from moving with compassion toward someone who is in need.

When I think of the two missionary aid workers, the above is what I imagine. At some point in their lives, they heard a faint voice, a voice within that only they could hear saying, "Go." The pain and suffering of their brothers and sisters across the waters in a faraway land touched their hearts and they had to respond.

When Emory heard that same call a little over a week ago, we also knew there was only one way to respond. We knew it was our ethical and moral responsibility to open our doors to receive the missionary aid workers and to provide the care we provide for all who come through our doors. We responded, not because it would bring notoriety or fame, but because it is our calling as a health care institution.

It is a calling to serve those who are suffering and in need. It is a calling to go into uncharted territory, knowing the risk involved in doing so, but going because we cannot respond any other way. It is a calling to follow the urgings of our heart to go where others fear to tread, to receive the ones others have rejected. It is a calling to serve with compassionate hearts those who come to us seeking healing and wholeness.

Frederick Buechner, theologian, says that true vocation is "the place where your deep gladness meets the world's deep need." The vocation of health care (in whatever capacity or role you function) invites us to enter into the deepest need within our world: suffering. Standing in the face of suffering engages a heart of compassion, a willingness to serve everyone despite one's station in life and a hope that our service will bring about transformation in the lives of those whom we serve. This transformation is a

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mutual endeavor, for we are also transformed by the relationships that are nurtured when we care for those who are in need and suffering.

As we go forward in the days ahead providing care for the two missionary aid workers who, as a result of responding to the call placed on their lives, now find themselves in need of care, may we always remember that our greatest gift is that of love demonstrated in our ability to greet everyone we meet, including each other, with compassion and care.