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Thanksgiving 2017: Pharmacy School Blessings

Grace Christian Huynh

*"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."
(1 Thessalonians 5:18)*



For Thanksgiving this year, I want to acknowledge the ways that God has been present in my life during my first year in pharmacy school. I've learned so much in just a few months and met some great people along the way, and I owe it all to God. Some notable events that I'd like to share with you include the White Coat Ceremony, my overall experience and first impression of pharmacy school, and what biblical values I've taken from my experiences thus far.

The White Coat Ceremony is an event that focuses on the inauguration of new pharmacy students. It's a formal event that is similar to what a graduation ceremony is like. One by one, the students' names are called to walk across the stage while professors help the students don their white coats, which have a patch and pin to signify that we are students learning at the college of pharmacy. At the end of our stage walk, we shake hands with the Dean. Then, we are officially pharmacy students.

The white jacket is an important part of being a student pharmacist. We must wear it to our rotation sites as a sign of professionalism. The white coat that students wear is shorter than a pharmacist's white coat. After graduation, we will get the long coat. For now, as students, we must also wear our white jackets during our skill tests, called OSCE (Objective Structured Clinical Examinations), which test our ability to counsel patients in a near realistic setting. This kind of test is more serious and more application-based than our normal tests. I'm very proud to have walked the stage with my peers after two years of successfully completing my undergrad classes and to have the privilege to wear my white jacket on my rotations. To get to this point, I know that God is watching over me, but I need to keep working and praying to get through the next four years. Thankfully, things have been going well so far in school. Pharmacy school has proven to be quite difficult, not that I didn't expect it. For this reason, I'm very proud to be making good grades in my classes. I'm always striving to do better and try to learn from my mistakes, and I am sure that God is with me every step of the way; I rely on Him to help me be better.

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;" (Ephesians 5:20).

Before I go any further, I should explain the teaching style of my school because it's a little unique. Every semester, the students are put into groups with five other students. They will work together every day applications (in-class work), quizzes, and tests. This strategy is to promote communication and problem-solving skills within each student. I am glad to say that I've been blessed to be in a group of hard working and intelligent students because it's simply much easier to learn the material with other people helping you out. Another part of the school's curriculum is to send students out on rotations, where we go out to real pharmacies in and out of town to practice the skills we learned in class. In total, by the time a student graduates, they will have four years of work experience due to these rotations. In addition to having a great team the first semester, I'm also blessed to be sent to a rotation site full of understanding and patient people, especially since I've not had any pharmacy experience before. They always encourage us to ask questions, which I've sort of been afraid to do because they are always busy. However, I've learned that asking questions is what I'm there for and that the staff and my preceptor do not mind stopping to answer questions to help me learn. I've done tasks from verifying prescriptions, speaking with patients about their medications, giving immunizations, taking calls for new or transfer prescriptions, etc.

In addition to my great experience at my rotation site, I had a great first impression of the school faculty. Since the school is new, they are quite receptive to student feedback and they are always looking for ways to improve. The professors are open and available to the students outside of class hours, willing to answer all kinds of questions, and are knowledgeable. I think having the TBL (Team Based Learning) format works well. I couldn't imagine learning all that we are in a lecture setting, especially since the professor to student relationship would be slightly different. In TBL, the professor can have more time dedicated to communicating with students at each table as we work on our applications, so I feel like that sort of interaction would be lost in a lecture setting. The school isn't perfect, but I appreciate the effort that is being put into our education. That's why I feel it is important to sort of give back to the school as a student volunteer.

As interviews start for the next set of prospective students, the school seeks pharmacy students who can spare a day to help around with the interview process. So far, I've volunteered at two interviewing events and will have another come up in December. Basically, what I do is lead a team of prospective students, who have applied to the school and been called back for an interview. This is an especially nerve-racking moment for many of these students, so my goal is to help them know what they're getting into and answer any questions they may have about attending this school. I also give them a campus tour and guide them through the interview process. Other student volunteers are also team leaders, like me, or they are directly part of the interviewing process by overlooking the stations at which the prospective students will have their interviews with staff and pharmacists. Volunteering for events like this help me get used to talking in front of people as well as give me the opportunity to provide the same positive attitudes I received when I was interviewing at the school. It's an interesting perspective being on the other side of things.

Finally, during my few months here, I found that being in pharmacy school has solidified some values found in the Bible. As a professional, you need to work, act, and look professional. Likewise, as a Christian, you need to work, act, and look like a Christian because people will judge you based on those things. Especially in the healthcare profession, the way you act and

look defines who you are to a patient when you meet them for the first time. Likewise, when we go about in the world, we are representing God through the way we speak, act, and look. It is in our nature, as human beings, to judge one another. First impressions are important, especially if you are a Christian, because our goal is to bring glory to God.

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:”
(I Corinthians 10:31-32).

So, sure, on the outside, we should act like a Christian, but what does it take to truly pull it off? To be able to display those Christ-like characteristics, you need to have the Word of God instilled within you; being a good person comes from the inside out. Honestly, taking care of yourself, self-reflecting, and then growing as a person takes a lot of work, but it's worth the results. You can do it if you have the faith. We all just need to read and study the Bible, apply what we've learned to our lives, communicate with God through prayer, repent of our sins, believe in the atoning death of Jesus Christ, and reap the benefits. It's simple, but can be difficult to pull off if we do not have a strong foundation in Christ and are easily influenced by those who are against Him.

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” (Colossians 3:17).

To sum it all up, there's so much for me to be thankful for after a few months of starting pharmacy school. The course work is challenging but is balanced out by how rewarding it is being with my team, surrounded by a support network that is my family, friends, and Christ. When we have a bright perspective on our lives and relationship with God, our spirits will be uplifted as we experience His grace every day. I wish you all a happy Thanksgiving and blessings from God.

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