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Your Practice Has Purpose

God has placed you where you are on purpose and for a purpose.

In the last issue, I discussed how our work is ordained by God and that we were made to work (Genesis 2:15, Exodus 20:8-10a). I touched on the fact that when our work has purpose, it can be much more enjoyable. I also challenged you to look for daily opportunities to encourage others in your office. So how have you done?

Before I share some additional ways you can serve God in your practice, I want to dwell for a moment on this theme of “purpose.” I cannot stress enough how important this is in your practice/ministry.

If I were to ask you to come help me move a pile of bricks from a spot in the road to eight feet off to the side, you might agree to do that — let’s assume you do. After about five minutes of backbreaking labor, you might be thinking to yourself, “What’s the point in doing this? This is horrible. I think I’ll quit”!

What if I changed the story a little bit? What if I said in an excited voice, “Hey, can you come help me move these bricks from this spot to eight feet over there? We just got word that an ambulance is heading this way and will be going through this alley on its way to the hospital. They have an urgent situation, and taking this route will save them ten minutes which may help to save a life.” Don’t you think you would be more enthusiastic about moving those bricks? You would probably be more efficient at it as well.

It’s because you can see the purpose in what you are doing. The same is true with what you do everyday — if you can see the purpose, you will not only enjoy it more, you will also be more productive. God has placed you where you are on purpose and for a purpose. Let me repeat that. God has placed you where you are on purpose and for a purpose. “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

He truly has great plans for you right now! You may feel at times like your work is drudgery. You may get tired of dealing with certain patients. You may dislike dealing with the headaches associated with insurance companies and Medicare and Medicaid. But you cannot escape it — your practice has a higher purpose. You can be God’s servant where you are. You have the opportunity to serve many patients day in and day out who don’t know Christ. You have the opportunity for those patients to see Christ’s love through you.

“If you can see the purpose... you'll enjoy it more and be more productive.”

You may be saying, “This sounds great, Jim, but come on...this is the real world. I have so much going on. I really don’t have time to do this stuff...at least not now.” Well relax. There are many simple actions you can do to be a light to your patients. I am going to share one simple — but incredibly effective — idea you can do. Before I do, I want to ask you a question. How many times in the past seven days have you felt like you were not being listened to? One instance could have been when your friend was looking at his watch during your conversation. Or it might have been when

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your spouse was looking past you at whoever was walking through the restaurant door. Maybe it was when your friend started talking before you were finished with your thought as if they were simply waiting for their turn to talk.

Not being listened to is frustrating, isn't it? Yet it seems to happen more and more in the world in which we live. After all, there are numerous things that compete for people's attention:

- Blackberries
- Cell phones
- Pagers
- TV
- Tivo
- Video Games
- Ipods
- Sudoku

The list can go on and on.

My point is that listening has become a lost art. Not many people really do it, or at least do it well. James 1:19 (NLT) tells us, "My dear brothers and sisters, be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry." So we are commanded to listen. James is not simply talking about just hearing what the other person said, he means really listening and seeking to understand what they said.

Two hunting buddies are out for their weekly hunt. As they are trudging through the woods, one of them falls over and appears to stop breathing. His partner whips out his cell phone and dials 911. The 911 operator answers and he says in an excited voice, "Help me! Help me! I think my buddy Bubba is dead!" Calmly the 911 operator responded, "Okay, sir, calm down. First, I need you to make sure he's dead." There is silence on the phone, and the operator then hears a gun shot. Then the hunter gets back on the phone and says, "Okay, now what?"

This seems like a silly story, but it serves to illustrate the difference between hearing and really listening. The hunter heard correctly, but had he truly been listening (*actively listening*), I don't think he would have shot his partner.

In this case, active listening might have meant asking some clarifying questions. Some other pointers for listening are as follows: look the person in the eye, lean into them, repeat things occasionally for clarification, write things down if appropriate, show empathy, don't rush to make a point (*as if you are simply waiting for your turn to talk*).

Though these are simple ideas, I promise if you apply them in your practice, you will be amazed at how you will minister to your patients and even your staff. This will truly set you apart and can be a seed planted in a patient or staff member who is seeking the Truth.

Goal: Commit to consciously listen, and actively listen without any agenda of your own to one person in your office sometime today. Then repeat throughout your week. **Tip:** Put it on your calendar with a box next to it so you can check it off. Don't leave your office until this is done each day. Once you do this a few times, it will become more natural.

Jim Lange is a supplier member of the CCA and is the author of the award-winning book *Bleedership, Biblical First-Aid for Leaders*. He also serves as a leadership consultant and as president of Bleedership, a ministry which provides personalized newsletters to help doctors easily, effectively and consistently encourage and impact the spiritual health of their patients. For more information and to learn how to receive a free gift that is only available to CCA members, go to www.bleedership.com/cca.html

