

Leader’s Guide

Episode 1

Faith Prescriptions Introduction

Summary

*Faith Prescriptions* is the third program developed by the Christian Medical & Dental Associations to help Christian healthcare professionals to live out their faith through their practices. Similarities and differences as compared to the prior programs are considered. Also included are cameos by Dr. Bill Peel and Dr. Walt Larimore (who originated the prior programs), what to expect from this series and an overview of how the Lord can utilize healthcare professionals to plant and nurture faith in the lives of their patients.

Speaker

William T. Griffin, DDS, has been a CMDA member for over four decades, and he currently serves as CMDA’s Vice President for Dental Ministries. He is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame, and he received his DDS degree at Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry. His career in healthcare has led him to discover the strong ties between physical health and spiritual health, and over the years he has been greatly inspired by CMDA’s medical outreach teaching programs, *The Saline Solution* and *Grace Prescriptions*. He may be reached at bill.griffin@cmda.org.

Discussion Questions

1. **What from this video inspired, edified or challenged you?**
2. **What would it look like for you to follow Paul’s example in 1 Corinthians 9:22 to “become all things to all people”? (NIV).**

Paul was willing to suffer greatly for the sake of communicating the gospel to others, both Jews and Gentiles. See 2 Corinthians 11:24-28. He was driven by the truth of 2 Corinthians 8:9, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (NIV). If we truly want to see the love of Christ capture new hearts, then that same love will compel us to be inconvenienced for the sake of others (Philippians 2:3-4). Possible examples:

* Communicating with words that make sense to the hearer, rather than religious jargon that might be foreign or offensive to them.
* Demonstrating concern for the other person’s interests, such as music, sports, movies, etc.
* Affirming talents and ideas of the other person which are praiseworthy.
* Being available to respond to the other person’s acute needs.
* Seeking to love the person, rather than to “win” every discussion (1 Corinthians 8:1).
1. **Read Galatians 1:8-9 and then consider: (a) Why do you think Paul was so adamant regarding the purity of the gospel?; and (b) What are some of the essential elements of the gospel, the non-negotiables, which should not be compromised in our verbal proclamation of the Good News?**

Paul realized the inherent offense of the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:18-25). He realized that there would be temptation to compromise the message, to soften it in order to make it more acceptable, but this would render it impotent to connect hearers to the Savior.

It is quite conceivable that some in the group may have floated in Christian circles for many years yet may not have heard or truly accepted the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. This is one reason why this question appears early in this series, so that the heart of the Gospel can be considered in a way that may cause some to reconsider the foundation of their relationship with Christ.

It is important to realize that every gospel presentation is woefully incomplete. Also, the content we present is affected by the available time we have. In light of these limitations, following are some key elements that could be included as we share the Good News:

* We were created in God’s image, but this image has been corrupted by our first ancestors’ rebellion against God, a corruption we have inherited (Genesis 1:27, Genesis 3, Psalm 51:5, Romans 3:9-18,23, Jeremiah 17:9).
* God is perfectly holy, He defines holiness, and even our best efforts cannot enable us to comply with the moral standards He communicates to us in the Bible (Isaiah 6:3-5, Psalm 130:3, Galatians 2:16).
* In addition to His holiness, God is also loving and merciful. He took on human flesh in the person of Jesus Christ so we could be reconnected to Him, both in this life and for all eternity (Psalm 36:7, John 3:16, Romans 5:8, Lamentations 3:22-23).
* Jesus is both God and man. He came to earth and lived a perfect life, then voluntarily went to the cross and received the punishment we deserve for our sins. He was then raised back to life, signifying God’s acceptance of His sacrifice on our behalf (John 1:1,14, Hebrews 4:15, Romans 6:5).
* We are called to acknowledge our sin, admit we cannot do enough to deserve God’s acceptance and look to Jesus as the one who has died and risen so we might be forgiven and made righteous (Romans 6:23, Psalm 32:5, Romans 10:9-10).
* Saving faith in Jesus Christ is not just intellectual agreement with the historical facts about Him. Rather, saving faith is trusting in Jesus Christ alone for our eternal salvation (James 2:19, Hebrews 4:2, Joel 2:32).
* Although our good works will never earn God’s favor or acceptance, when true faith exists there will always be an accompanying desire to serve God, and good works will result (James 2:26, Matthew 3:8).
1. **What similarities exist between physical disease and spiritual disease? Between physical health and spiritual health?**

ORIGIN: Spiritual disease (sin) entered the world through the first humans (Genesis 3), and when they disobeyed God all of their descendants thereafter were conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5, Jeremiah 17:9). Disease entered the world because of the first sin. As a result, all people since Adam and Eve suffer from sin and sickness, both of which cannot be defeated through mere human efforts.

ONGOING BATTLE: Consider 1 Timothy 4:8: “For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come” (NIV). Giving into bad diet and other failures to keep ourselves in good shape will have bad results, both physically and spiritually. Conversely, healthy habits, both physical and spiritual, can help us counteract the negative effects of sickness and sin.

ULTIMATE RESULT: Even our best efforts to stay healthy and prolong our lives on earth will eventually fail. In a similar sense, we are unable to fully submit to God’s standards of holiness. For both reasons, our ultimate need is for a Savior. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we can know God’s forgiveness and acceptance in this life, and we can also look forward to new bodies that will not be susceptible to disease, as well as a soul that will be incapable of sin.

1. **Discuss further what Dr. Larimore meant by “a Christian who happens to be a doctor” versus “a doctor who happens to be a Christian.”**

We who walk with Jesus find our identity in Christ, and this is to apply to every area of our lives. It is tempting to seek to derive identity from activities, attributes or assets connected with our lives—perhaps our medical capabilities, our intelligence, our appearance or our bank accounts—but the core of who we are in Christ comes to us by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). The more we embrace the love of Christ, the more we will exude the love of Christ in the care we provide (2 Corinthians 5:14).

1. **Pastor Bill Peel states, “I believe that the most incredibly strategic place for the spread of the gospel worldwide is the medical workplace.” Agree, disagree, comment?**

There is much to support Bill Peel’s contention. First, healthcare professionals are greatly respected around the world for the knowledge they have accumulated and their ability to help others. Secondly, life-threatening disease can humble even the most prideful human beings, and the Lord can use this humbling to display the need for a Savior. Thirdly, there are many opportunities for us to pray with and for our patients, which can be a testimony to the Lord’s goodness in our lives.

1. **Do you have any patients like Crystal in your practice—patients who seem to reject your attempts to show them the love of Christ? Why might they be oblivious to your efforts, and what could make them more permeable to God’s love?**

All kinds of things can harden a person against the Good News of Jesus Christ. Among the primary roadblocks are the belief that one can earn God’s acceptance, along with the belief that everything seems to be going just fine without the Lord. Whatever pride or apathy might exist can be greatly disrupted by some sort of emergency beyond one’s ability to control, such as a physical illness. Negative circumstances we would never pray for are the type of events God uses to open people to faith in Jesus Christ.

As life becomes hard for a person (whether it’s self-imposed or due to circumstances beyond one’s control), this acute burden can result in humility, leading to a fresh willingness to consider how dependent we are on circumstances beyond our control. The hope of the cross is that God meets our weakness with the powerful love of Jesus Christ. Our efforts to communicate this love to others can be used by God to transform them into new creatures in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

1. **What is your understanding of how God could “establish the work of (your) hands” in healthcare? Psalm 90:17**

This internal confirmation of the appropriateness of our labors before the Lord can arise from a belief that the Lord has equipped us with the necessary abilities required of our work, that He has enabled us to use those abilities for to benefit others and that we can honestly point to Him as the source of whatever success we might attain.

1. **What is one take-home item from today’s session that you hope to implement?**

Additional Resources

1. *The Case for Christ* by Lee Stroebel
2. *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis
3. *A Faith Worth Sharing* by C. John Miller
4. *Telling a Better Story* by Joshua Chatraw
5. *Jesus, MD* by Dr. David Stevens
6. [“Interview of a Patient”](https://issuu.com/cmdacommunications/docs/spring_10_tcd) article from *Today’s Christian Doctor*, Spring 2010
7. [“The Saline Solution Opened My Eyes”](https://issuu.com/cmdacommunications/docs/tcdsummer08) article from *Today’s Christian Doctor,* Summer 2008