

LESSONS LEARNED

Years ago, when I was entering Nurses Training, we began our first year with 40 hours of classes a week with an hour for lunch each day. This was a daunting experience and an exciting one. We obtained a lot of book knowledge, but it was only when we began "floor duty" that our real education began. We learned lessons then that sustained us our whole lives. I recall so many of those memories beginning with the first patient I lost. He was a cheerful man always joking and happy and when I would walk in and ask him how he was his reply was always "Like a million bucks! Green!" He always made me smile. He died alone and I felt badly about that but the last time I saw him he was still smiling and making others smile. Then there was the woman at Northville State Hospital who proclaimed to everyone who entered the ward that she was going to Harper and took a wrong turn and for this one mistake she was giving her life. She was diagnosed with Paranoid Schizophrenia and her children had told her they were taking her to Harper Hospital (a place she had often been to) and instead took her to a mental institution where she was locked in. She had been taken to a bad place before and wore a tattoo on her wrist. She had been taken to Auschwitz in World War II from her home and nearly died. I would look at that tattoo and think about the reasons she had to be Paranoid. They were out to get her. Then there was the elderly schoolteacher. I walked into her room and called her by her first name, Lucy, and she very loudly told me I was to call her by her full name, Miss Smith. She said she was the teacher, and I would talk to her with respect. She did not realize where she was and demanded the respect she had demanded from her students. I never called elderly patients by their first name again without asking. I learned a lesson in bravery from a paraplegic as he struggled with phantom pains which are very real. I learned a lesson in loss from a woman who gave birth to a stillborn. Many gave me lessons in dying with dignity and trust. There was a young girl who was four years old dying of Leukemia who wanted ketchup on her Hot Dog, the head cook in the kitchen refused and the parents, already grieving, went to the store and bought ketchup. The little girl died three days later. She gave me a lesson in rules and that they sometimes can be broken. The book knowledge served me well at work but the lessons in compassion, humility and faith would serve me all my life.

Colossians 3:12 Therefore, as God's people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

Lord, we thank you for the day you have given us. We thank you for your patience, love, kindness, and most of all for your forgiveness when we fail you. Be with us and help us to be better people. A people that will show love and gentleness toward our neighbors and families and even strangers. Help us to remember we are all your people. Be with those who are ill, those recovering, and those grieving the loss of loved ones. Be with our Pastor and bless his ministry. Be with our families and bless them. Be with our church, may we be the hands and feet of Christ here in this place and where you lead us. Be with our staff and leaders, bless them in their lives and in their work. Be with us in all we do and say and help us to remember we are yours. In Jesus name, Amen

Grace Epperson