

## Clothed in Compassion

*Whenever the Time, Whatever the Work: Team Up with Jesus*

*“And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.” -Colossians 3:17 (NLT)*

My first experience outside the US in volunteer veterinary work was in August of 2012. My employer fully sponsored me to serve as a veterinarian in a huge spay/neuter campaign in Quintana Roo, Mexico. This was not a Christian organization but by that point in my growing faith, the Lord had placed missions deeply in my heart. So, by my expectations, this was a mission trip! I was looking forward to using my veterinary skills to serve local people and their animals. I prayed for opportunities to share Christ’s love with my teammates. As we were landing over the lush, Mexican rain forest of Cancun, a rainbow followed us all the way in behind the wing of the plane. It was a beautiful reminder from the Creator of the universe that He was with me.

We were warned up front that this would be a very intense week. Our team of vets would be expected to do 90-100 surgeries per day in August, in an un-air-conditioned community building, in tropical Mexico. I remember our team leader telling us that if we did not use the restroom at least once a day that we would be in big trouble! Now, being a young vet at the time, this sounded exciting! Right up my alley and full of adventure ahead!

The night before the first day of the clinic, I prayed, *“God give me your strength to persevere in the conditions tomorrow. But most of all help me to show your love, compassion, and true joy to those around me.”* I arose the next morning with great anticipation of the day ahead. That first day, I spayed about 8 of the 100 animals we were hoping to care for. There were only 8 surgery tables. I was expected to do 12-13 surgeries and I missed that mark by far. I remember feeling angry and pretty devastated because I thought I was a decent surgeon after 7 years of being out of school!

The next day, the leaders placed me in “receiving.” I didn’t even get delegated to anesthetic induction or monitoring. I got placed at pet intake. I had to use my elementary Spanish to speak with owners about their pet’s health and wrangle dogs and cats that were covered in ticks and fleas. As you know, this was a dirty job. Amidst the sweat and dog saliva, it dawned on me: *“Elizabeth, THIS is what God has commanded you to do. Work with the people, show them compassion, and proclaim Christ.”*

I don’t dare assert that I always had a stellar attitude moving forward but I started asking the Lord if this was more of what He had planned for me in the veterinary profession. Would He use the skills He gave me as a veterinarian to create relationships with **people**? As the week of hard work finished, I was exhausted yes, but I was completely full of joy as God showed me a picture of what it looked like to work for Him: to do the work that He had called me to do. My body was

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tired, but my heart was alive. In Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV), Jesus says “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” An ox yoke is often custom fit for each animal. The younger ox is teamed up with another, more mature ox. When we team up with Jesus, we get to do the exact work that He created for us to do. Our yoke becomes easy because, in His kindness, He designed the work specifically for each of us.

In Colossians 3:23, Paul writes, “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.” The NLT version says to work “willingly.” This experience in Mexico showed me that when I work, I am working for the Lord, it does not matter what the task is. I can do it joyfully because He has created the work particularly for me. My work will glorify God and my attitude should be one of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. We cannot meet this challenge in our own strength. In Philippians 4:12-13, Paul reminds us, “...I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through Him who gives me strength.” (NIV) Chuck Swindoll says, “Our attitude at work is an announcement bigger than any gospel tract you put on someone’s desk. So: wherever, whenever, whatever, however...Christ.”

- 1. Brainstorm some areas in your life where you are seen as a representative of the Lord. Where are you a representative and you may not even be aware of it?**
- 2. What are some ways that you can work willingly for the Lord on your college campus or in your clinical setting?**
- 3. In what ways can we have a more compassionate attitude at work or school?**
- 4. In closing our study of Colossians 3:1-17 in this series of devotions, what passage or verse most stands out to you?**



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