

Capstone Essay

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Module One

I believe that every Christian has a call to respond to crisis in other's lives. All Christians have the capabilities to help those in need through prayer, listening to stories, and blessing others with their presence. In John 21, Jesus repeatedly tells Peter that in order to show his love for Jesus, he needed to take care of Jesus' people. Isaiah 61:1-3 are popular verses showing how God wants his people to help others, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified."

I have chosen to highlight this subject because I think we often forget that we are all called to care in some aspects. We might care in different ways and in different settings, but Jesus has placed a call on each of our hearts to care for the hurting.

When a family in my church community loses a loved one, I am called to care. The Bible says we are to weep with those that weep (Romans 12:15). When I hear about the refugee crisis in Iraq, I am called to care. I may not be called to go there and help, but I am called to care about the situation and pray for those hurting people. I used to live in North Carolina, and hurricanes happen almost every fall season. When hurricanes would come through and destroy people's homes, I had a calling to help and care for those in need. I couldn't always care financially or even physically, but I could do it by praying and helping where I was able.

Module Two

One of the concepts that stood out to me in this module was how we can prevent burnout if we are prepared before we go and when we return. If we make sure we are ready to go into a crisis and that God has laid this calling on our hearts, then when we are there in the middle of the sadness and hardship, that calling will keep us going. And if we have a professional facilitator ready to debrief our team when we get back, our transition from crisis to normal life will go much smoother. When we take the time to care for ourselves, we can better care for others.

The reason for highlighting this concept is because it was a good reminder to me that I need to take care of myself if I want to be a good caregiver.

I have decided to go over to Iraq to help with the refugees and the people who have been captured by ISIS. I have been working on the required training for that, and this has been a good time for me to pray about this calling. I do not want to go overseas unless I am sure that this

calling is from God and not from my inner self's desire for adventure. I also want to set up a debriefing time for when I get back. I know I will be full of stories and things I need to share, and I want to put someone in place to help me with that.

Module Three

Psychological first aid is the immediate response to victims of trauma to help them heal emotionally, spiritually, physically, and mentally. It is a temporary, immediate action, more like skimming the surface rather than digging deep. It is imperative that victims of trauma have people enter in their lives immediately to help them process their thoughts and feelings.

I believe this is an important part of any crisis response, so I wanted to write on this concept.

If one of my friends had their house burn down, I would be giving them psychological first aid by driving to their house as soon as I heard the news. I would be there with her family, comforting them, giving them blankets to keep them warm as they watched the firemen struggle with the flames, or take them to my house and make them hot chocolate. I would pray with her, cry with her, and give her a hug. I would support her physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally. I would be a true friend in time of need. I would care for her like Jesus would do.

Module Four

One important topic in this module is on PTSD and how important it is to normalize the symptoms to the patient. Posttraumatic Stress Disorder is when trauma has occurred in a person's life and leaves them with persisting symptoms after the event. Many patients of this disorder feel like they are going crazy and they don't think anyone else understands. In helping them through the disorder, it's necessary to show them that they aren't crazy and many people who've faced trauma in their lives react this way.

I chose to touch on this subject because I believe showing a PTSD patient that this is a normal response when you have been through trauma is one of the first steps towards the journey of healing.

Let's say my friend Monica has been through a vehicle accident in which she was driving. Another vehicle hit her and the driver in it was killed. One day after church when I asked my friend how she was doing, she covered her face in her hands and started sobbing. I gently wrapped my arm around her shoulders and led her away from the crowds into a quiet room. After she collected herself enough to talk, she said through her tears, "I feel like I'm going crazy. I can't sleep, I can't eat, I don't have patience with my kids or my husband. All I can think about is seeing the truck in my mirror and not being able to do anything to stop it from hitting me. The scene just replays over and over in my mind and I feel like my brain never shuts down. The doctor said I have PTSD, and that is just so weird to me!" I nod as she looks up at me, waiting for my reaction. "It sounds like you have been under a lot of stress." She nods. "But that is completely normal with what you have gone through. Being in an accident like that was traumatic for you. I am sorry you are having to relive those memories again and again. But in my

experience, that's not unusual. Your brain is reacting like it is still facing the trauma and that's why you can't sleep or eat; you're still in panic mode. It happens to a lot of people after they've faced trauma. You're not going crazy." She looks at me again. "Thank you. That means a lot. I have an appointment with a counselor and I'm hoping she'll be able to help me work through this so I feel more like myself again."

Module Five

The Ministry of Presence is an important part in helping others through crisis. Basically, it's just being available to them to help them through this time in their lives. It's showing them God by God living in your life. If you are trained in these areas, you might be asked to perform some religious ordinances. It is an opportunity to show others the love of God.

I feel like this is one of the best opportunities God has given to us to reach others with the gospel. When we enter into someone's life in their crisis, to support and love them, we show them who God is.

If my friend's father passed away in a sudden heart attack, I would want to be with her to show her my love and support. I would give her a hug, cry with her, and be the presence of God in her life. Maybe I would pray with her, maybe I would just hold her hand and weep. To minister to her with my presence would be to show her God incarnate.