

My faith fuels my identity and my identity fuels my purpose. My purpose in life is to help marginalized people feel loved, seen, and included. My purpose and meaning of life as a future professional Christian Social Worker is to be a glimmer of hope and light. While I may not be able to verbally preach the gospel, and can still do so with the way I go about my practice. I know that my calling is to help those who cannot help themselves. What this course has taught me is that a “calling” is: the process over a lifetime of listening to the stirrings in our souls in response to scripture and the world around us. When partaking in this course we realize that there are spiritual levels to a calling. The levels are Personal Connectedness with God, Sense of calling, and Commitment. I have finally committed myself to applying my calling to my profession. I find that it is a leap of faith and a step of surrendering my life to God’s will.

Jesus was slow to speak and a great listener; Jesus cared for women and those in bondage. Jesus truly made people feel important and cared for, he created a place at the table for them. There are acceptable ways that I can exemplify this in my practice. Again, my purpose and calling is to be an includer of all people; as an includer I am to welcome people, to make them feel like they are understood and cared for, even if they just need a listening ear. The meaning of my life is to bring glory to God and to spread kindness. I feel like I am on the right track- I am honored to say that my profession assists with my calling.

Social work and the Christian faith share a lot in common. Some of the similarities are the values. Long before I knew that I was called to be a social worker, I decided to devote my life to being Christlike. What does that look like? That looks like serving my community, fighting for justice, seeing people as worthy, leading with integrity, and understanding the importance of human relationships. Now that I am on the path of becoming a social worker, it makes it that

much easier for me because of the values I already abide by. The social work values are not only to be applied when in a clinical setting; we are to apply these values in our everyday lives.

When referencing the contribution that Christianity has brought to social work, we should point back to the origins - Jesus. The gospels point and show us how Jesus was the first social worker. Jesus asked his followers to love others as He loved. He declared the captives free, he comforted those who mourned and grieved, and he cared for women and children when it was a very patriarchal environment. His ministry was characterized by attention to the weak and helpless and oppressed. Because of this, many have gone on and followed Jesus' example. One example is Thomas Chalmers; He was a Scottish minister who was called to assist the poor and less fortunate by advocating for them. Another example of Christians contributing to Social work is Joseph Tucker. Tucker was also part of the clergy and he devoted himself to assisting the urban population through creating reforms for the less fortunate so that they could access education, and other resources. Other Christian religious organizations rooted in social work are the Churches and the Charity Organization Society also known as the COS Movement. This movement began in England in 1869 in the United States in 1877, building on the work of Chalmers and Tuckerman.

When pointing to the Bible to see what social work values are mentioned we can include the following:

1. Service: Philippians 2:3 says: Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

2. Social Justice: Isaiah 1:17 States: Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, and Plead for the widow.
3. Dignity and worth of a person: Matthew 7:12: So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.
4. Integrity: James 5:16: Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

The verses above show us some examples of how the values are applied in scripture. If anything, it paints a clearer picture of how Jesus was a social worker. It demonstrated how assisting those who are disenfranchised is a correlation to the image God has intended for us to be in. While it is important for me to implement my Christian life in my work, I must be mindful to be appropriate and professional with my beliefs. What we have learned in this course is that it is not ethical to bring up our faith and to aggressively let it affect how we practice. To dive deeper, there are secular and non-religious agencies that ask for us to “check out faith at the door”. I am learning to let my Christian values live within me but not let it affect or motivate my clients and colleagues. Further, even if we find ourselves in a faith-based agency, we have learned that there is a typology to it. This information could guide us, and inform us how much of our faith we are allowed to implement, depending on the level.

As social workers, we should sharpen our skills with people. People are complex and unique; because of this, ethical dilemmas could and will most likely arise in our career. Ethical dilemmas involve a decision making process and depending on which choice is taken, there will be different results. When coming in contact with an ethical dilemma, as a clinician we should remember the core values. We should also remember that our primary responsibility is to

promote the well being of clients. We can use certain tools to guide us such as the Dolgoff model. This model shows us how to prioritize the client when the code of ethics fails to provide enough information. Furthermore, the Ethics Decision-making process Framework found in Reamer's *Social Work Values and Ethics* is a useful skill to help us think of the big picture. This framework guides allow us to think critically and see all the possible outcomes.

Reading *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life* by Henri J.M. Nouwen was life changing. Reading the beginning pages, I found myself being challenged and my faith being stretched. Something that really stuck out to me was in the introductory section on how we see God's presence. As Christ followers we do not focus on pain and suffering too much, instead we like to focus on victory and being an overcomer. The chapter "God with us" explores what biblical suffering and pain is. God is compassionate and He has chosen to be with us. When we think of God being with us, we can easily misinterpret that our life will be flawless and perfect; on the contrary, God with us means that although we will struggle with trials and tribulations, He is there for comfort and emotional support. Jesus' time on earth was full of earthly pain, and this is something that many forget. He is empathetic of what humankind goes through because he himself has endured betrayal, crisis, and pain. This is all useful, when applying this to my clients. I can learn to be there for them (professionally of course) when they go through rough times.

What this book has shown me is that there are layers to compassion and that Jesus is a great example of that. Understanding what compassion is, has guided me on how to be a better person, personally and professionally. I find myself in serving Christ and my mission in all that I do. Understanding and applying the definition of compassion can assist in me being a better social worker. Social work calls us to be there for others to advocate for them. The book shows us how Christ comes and meets us where we are. In social work, I have the opportunity to meet

my clients where they are. Christ comes to us without an ulterior motive, He simply does it because he loves us. I can assist my clients and make them feel loved, important and cared for.

At the beginning of the course you asked us to take certain personality tests and to do a self assessment with our results. While taking my Myers Brigg test my results came back as an INFJ. This personality type is prone to struggle with perfectionism, burnout, and avoid the ordinary. Since the beginning of the course, I have been taking that information into account. Although this course required a lot of work, I made sure to prioritize it and also leave room for rest to avoid burnout. Overall, I have been partaking in sabbath because I know that I am prone to be a perfectionist and burnout easily. Resting and taking a sabbatical once a week was not easy for me at first. I used to feel guilty and worried about all the things that I needed to do. I realize the importance of resting. If I am not taking time to take care of myself, then I am failing in part of my calling to help others. I cannot help others when I myself am on empty.

Taking the course, Social Work and Chrisitanity has strengthened me in various ways. This semester I have become more intune with my mind, body in soul. I found that this semester I have grown professionally and personally. I find it serendipitous that what I am learning in this course, I also happen to be learning in church. If there was a theme for this semester it would be to recognize the importance of emotions and spirituality and how they affect one another. I find that Social work is a serious profession and that one should be covered in the full armor of God. Social work is a profession that at times can see the worst of humanity, therefore it is important that I am spiritually and emotionally protected. From what I have learned this semester I am challenged to be a better daughter, sister, and person. I feel like I have a better understanding of what my faith means to me; and I am inspired and excited to start my journey as a clinical social worker.

Some questions that I have after taking this class are: Now that I am more informed about the correlation of social work and Christianity, how can I assure that I am always in a loving union with Jesus Christ? Another question that I have is in regards to compassion. According to Neuroscience, we cannot be trained to be compassionate. I want to know more about the science behind compassion. Is compassion something that we have to cultivate biologically? Are some just born with it and others are not? Or is it a spectrum where some individuals have more compassion than others? As followers of Christ are we just more aware and sensitive to compassion?