

FIRST DAY FEARS

BIBLE READING: Exodus 33:13-18

"My presence shall go with thee."

You arrive at the hospital. This is the day you have looked forward to, the first day of training. You're looking your best. New suit, new hairdo, and sleek new luggage.

But there are too many other new things: a new room, new associates, a new and strange lack of freedom; new rules to observe, and a world of new things to learn.

Your knees begin to shake and you have butterflies in your stomach. You stand hesitantly before ringing the doorbell.

Maybe you should never have come.

Will you make it? You've heard so many tales of student nurses quitting or flunking out the first weeks of probation.

What makes you think you can take it?

The same assurance that Moses was given is yours today. Moses had asked, "Show me thy way." Now if the Lord had done that, Moses could never have borne it. To know all the way the Lord would lead him! The long, difficult way! The rebellious, uncooperative people he would have to lead!

"Show me thy glory," Moses had also asked, and again the Lord knew this would never do. One glimpse of the glory that awaited him—and Moses would have wanted to go to Heaven right there and then.

God's reply was, "My presence shall go with thee."

What the Lord did for Moses He will do for you. He will dispel your first day fears.

"Sweet is the promise, I will not forget you."

FORMULA FOR WISDOM

BIBLE READING: James 1:1-8

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God."

What is wisdom? And who among us does not admit to having a lack? Wisdom is that something more than knowledge. Wisdom teaches you how to use what you know. Applied knowledge, you might call it. And who needs it? Everyone of us. Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, admitted he needed wisdom.

And where can we obtain wisdom, if not from God? Paul tells you, in Colossians 2:3, that in Christ "are hid *all* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." So we need have no doubt as to the source of all wisdom—and it's yours for the asking.

There's a worldly wisdom that many folks will pass on to you. Like advice, it is both free and plentiful, but it is not true wisdom.

The wisdom you need as a student nurse is great. You need it for your complex studies: those drugs, solutions, instruments, bones with names you know you'll never be able to spell. You need it in your dealings with your friends, your fellow students, your instructors, your patients. You need the wisdom to make right choices, ones you will not later regret. You need more than man's wisdom.

All this wisdom—and more—is available to you from the depths of God's storehouse: His riches in Christ.

Just one thing will keep you from having God's wisdom. Not asking for it. "Ye have not because ye ask not," stated James.

"Ask, and ye shall receive."

TOUCH NOT

BIBLE READING: II Corinthians 6:14-18

"Touch not the unclean thing."

Perhaps not until you started nurses' training did you realize the seriousness of touching contaminated things. Now maybe you feel like the girl who said, "It seems I spend half of my life just keeping sterile."

It is serious business. You come into contact with communicable diseases. You don't just say, "I'll trust the Lord." You take precautions: a long-sleeved gown, a cap, gloves. Each precaution is a conscious effort to keep from touching the infected person. This is not only for your sake. You have to think of other people; your family, whom you visit on your off-duty hours; store clerks; passengers beside you in the bus, subway, or a car. You owe it to them not to spread disease wherever you go.

The Bible gives solemn warning not to touch the unclean. You yourself will be contaminated if you do. Your spiritual health will suffer. Your influence as a Christian will be ineffective.

You must mingle with people. You are not "out of this world." You're in it, but you need not be of it. Use your influence to win your friends to your side, to faith in Christ. Don't be swayed in their direction.

A very little contact with some diseases will make you their victim. Even so, the first drink, the first smoke, the first questionable place of entertainment will lead to eventual habit. "Touch not" is the only safe practice. A sincere love for the Lord is the only antidote to worldliness.

"My Jesus, I love Thee; I know Thou art mine;
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign."

THINK ON THESE

BIBLE READING: Philippians 4:4-8

"Whatsoever things are true, . . . honest, . . . just, . . . pure, . . . lovely, . . . of good report; . . . think on these . . ."

As a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he." You can't always be *doing* just what you would choose to be doing, but nobody can govern your thoughts.

Maybe today you will be assigned to the most distasteful jobs, duties you had never reckoned on when you took up nursing. It will help, while you carry on the unpleasant tasks, if you let your mind dwell on more worthwhile things.

Paul gives you an impressive list for you to think about. Try memorizing the eighth verse. You will find that thinking on "these things" leaves little or no time for thinking less worthy thoughts.

Sinful actions and angry words have their source in wrong thoughts. Guard your thoughts, and you will have little difficulty with your words and actions.

Maybe you say, "What I think is my business."

You're right, as far as that goes. But the outcome of your thoughts will undoubtedly involve other people.

Thank the Lord for the free will He has given you, the right to think for yourself, to speak, to act. Then remember, in spite of all you might hear or read about, "You are what you eat," in reality.

You are what you think.

HOW HONEST IS HONEST?

BIBLE READING: Romans 12:10-17

"Provide things honest in the sight of all men."

"It's the little things that count." You've probably heard that all your life.

Kathy, second-year student, had heard this too, but somehow it hadn't registered.

"I don't call it stealing," she says in defense of herself when her roommate discusses her "taking ways." "All I ever do is take little things like—oh, maybe pins, or a few band-aids; a pencil or two. Well, once I took a thermometer. But that's nothing."

Kathy is a Christian. Is she "providing things honest" in the sight of the other nurses, do you think?

"Providing things honest" might mean something different for you. It may be that you cheat the hospital in other ways. Do you spend a great deal of time with personal telephone calls when you're on duty?

"Well, the night shift is so long, I have to do something. I just call my girl friend on another floor, and we talk for a while."

A good "measuring stick" of strict honesty is this: Ask yourself, "Would I do this if I knew the Lord would come while I'm doing it?" If you can answer, "Yes," you can be sure you are doing the right thing. There is an honesty that goes beyond not stealing, not cheating. Ask the Lord to give you a sensitive conscience, that in big and little things you will "provide things honest."

"I must be true, for there are those who trust me."

WITH PURPOSE IN YOUR STEP

BIBLE READING: Psalm 37:23-31

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord."

Orders are orders. You know that, of course. But that does not mean that they are always the kind of orders you like to obey. That applies to your patients too. Much of the time they wouldn't choose to carry out their doctor's orders.

Does it seem to you that sometimes the orders don't even make sense? That doesn't matter either.

Yours not to reason why;

Yours but to do, or—

David the Psalmist knew what it was to have to obey orders. He was a flunky before he was a king. It is he who states for your encouragement, "God plans your way. He orders your steps."

That gives meaning and purpose to your otherwise mundane round. You belong to God. The head nurse is issuing the orders. The nursing office, with its schedules all over the place, is planning your life for you. But far and away beyond this, the Lord is ordering your steps. He is the One Who plans your life. And only the Lord can rightly plan. He alone can "see around the next corner." He knows the end from the beginning. His plans are best for you.

"Follow, I will follow Thee, my Lord."

SHADOWS CAN'T HURT

BIBLE READING: Psalm 23

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death . . ."

You read "the Shepherd Psalm." You come to the fourth verse, and your mind goes to that first dreadful contact with death. Professional contact, that is. What young nurse does not shrink from this phase of training? The dreaded P.M. care.

And the bereaved families. What of them? How can you ease the burden of grief? How can you comfort them? Only as you yourself know the comfort that the Lord gives.

"The valley of the shadow of death." A dark valley, but the Lord Jesus passed through that valley. He took the sting out of death; He took the fear out of the darkness. And, anyway, can *shadows* hurt? Christ defeated the substance, the last enemy, death. Now all that remains are the shadows.

Who's afraid of shadows?

There never was a shadow without some sunshine.

Not only did the Lord Jesus rob the valley of its darkness, leaving only the shadows, but He will walk with His own through the valley. "Thou art with me," David writes confidently. The One Who made the path now walks its length with the home-going child of God.

"Fear thou not, for I'll be with thee."

YOUR ATTITUDE IS SHOWING

BIBLE READING: Romans 12:5-8

"... he [she] that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."

You walk briskly into the room and raise the window shade to let in the sunshine. In your best professional tone you suggest, "Shall we have our bath?" or "Shall we take our pills?"

Do you, or do you despise the affectation that is the bane of so many patients? The lack of genuine interest in the patient that hides behind a cloak of professional light-heartedness? The fixed smile that holds no warmth whatsoever?

Real cheerfulness is like a ray of sunshine that lights up the room. It has healing virtue all its own.

"Be of good cheer," was our Saviour's greeting to many a troubled person He met.

"Be of good cheer," you can echo in His Name. You may not have the opportunity you wish for to speak, to give testimony to your faith in Christ—but your cheerful attitude will speak its own message.

Mercy can be loving compassion such as Jesus showed, or it can be the coldest, most impersonal carrying out of duty.

Being a cheerful Christian will not always be easy, but it is always possible. The Lord will give you the needed grace. This cheerfulness is not loud laughing nor silly giggling. It is a steady trust in Christ that makes you an optimist. And keeps you buoyant, refusing the devil's temptation to depression.

"Do not wait until some deed of greatness you may do, . . .

Brighten the corner where you are."

TAKE MY HANDS

BIBLE READING: Galatians 5:22-26

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

This verse (Ecclesiastes 9:10) is the exhortation given by the "wisest man who ever lived." It could have been written just for Christian nurses!

Your hands—a nurse's hands. What power they have! Your hands soothe the fever-hot forehead. Your hands smooth the crumpled sheets. Your hands massage the weary, aching back of your patient (when sometimes you might like to trade places and have someone rub your back!)

What can be more comforting to a sick person than the touch of a kind hand—not capable only, but kind. Your very touch can reveal interest and compassion, or a stern carrying out of your duty.

"I knew she must be a Christian," a patient confided to a visitor. "She's so kind, so different from some of the other nurses."

It is a real temptation to "hurry with this patient and get on to the next one." You do have a supervisor to contend with if you appear to be "wasting time" on your patients. But kindness doesn't take extra time.

As a representative of Him who "came, not to be ministered unto but to minister [serve]", make the words of Frances Ridley Havergal's beautiful hymn your prayer for today.

"Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love."

“STAND, THEREFORE . . .”

BIBLE READING: Ephesians 6:10-18

Stand! How much easier it would be to do something, to do almost anything rather than just stand. But “stand” is the command. And sometimes you may not understand this command.

You stand long hours in the O.R. till you think your leg muscles will surely let you down. You stand, observing new techniques, new procedures until you feel you’ll scream if you can’t go and sit down some place.

There’s a sure way to keep from screaming, from being weary and unnerved. Be certain that “your feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” As good-fitting duty shoes are to your busy feet, so is the Word of God to your soul and spirit.

Gird on the whole armor of God and, having done all, stand!

“How can I stand for the Lord when I’m the only Christian in my class?” you ask. Thank the Lord for the strategic place He has put you for service, the trust He has given you.

As the life of a patient may depend on your “standing,” by the bedside or in the operating room, so the eternal life of a fellow student or graduate nurse may depend on your stand for Christ in the hospital.

Stand, therefore!

Ask the Lord for the strength it will take today to be the kind of Christian you really want to be, the grace to

“Stand up, stand up for Jesus!
Stand in His strength alone.”

SCRUB NURSE

BIBLE READING: Psalm 51:1-10

"Wash me thoroughly . . ."

You're the scrub nurse in O.R. today. You may be saying to yourself, "I'll soon have all the skin off my hands." The prescribed ten minutes that will make your hands aseptic seem endless. And all the lotions and creams you have to use to keep your skin from being red and rough!

But you know this is a vital necessity, not somebody's whim. So you scrub scrupulously so that *your* hands won't cause contamination in the operating room. You can't sterilize hands as you do instruments, but you do everything possible to prevent the invasion of bacteria.

To the Psalmist, too, cleansing was no trifling matter. Nothing short of *thorough* cleansing would avail to wash away his sin. And well did David know he was powerless to cleanse himself. Only God could answer his heartfelt plea, "Create in me a clean heart, O Lord."

You can scrub your hands; you can bathe your entire body, but you cannot cleanse your heart. No! not with all your scrubbing!

But, thank God, there is a "sterilizing agent" that assures perfect cleansing, sufficient to meet the eye of the "Master Surgeon."

The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin and, applied daily, "keeps on cleansing from *all* sin."

"What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus."

WATCH AND PRAY

BIBLE READING: Matthew 26:36-41

"Could ye not watch with me one hour?"

Oh, the pathos of this question—and of the Son of God asking this question of the men with whom He had walked and talked these three wonder-filled years!

Today, our Lord is asking the same question of you, His servant. "Can ye not watch with me one hour?" And what will be the result of your watching? ". . . that ye enter not into temptation." The disciples failed in their watching, and the results have echoed through the centuries: "They all forsook him and fled." Peter committed the awful sin of denial, of blasphemy. The "inner circle" of disciples failed in a crucial hour.

Can you hope to succeed where these followers of the Lord failed? Without the "watch," be it morning, noon, or night, inevitable failure will dog you.

"But you don't know how tired I am all the time. I can't keep awake long enough to read even a few verses, or pray for more than a minute," you say.

A student nurse came to know Christ in her freshman year. A wise Christian gave her this good advice. "Don't ever start the day without your spiritual nourishment. Get up a half hour early even though you *are* tired. It will pay off. You'll be less tired after communion with God. And the whole day will go better for you." She tried this and her testimony in that hospital was radiant.

There's a twofold benefit to spending time alone with the Lord:

1. You will be strong to withstand temptation.
 2. You will be an effective, witnessing Christian.
- "One little hour for watching with the Master;
Eternal years to walk with Him in white."