

Prayer in nursing: the spirituality of compassionate caregiving by mary elizabeth...

[Health & Medicine](#), [Nursing](#)



The paper "Prayer in Nursing: The Spirituality of Compassionate Caregiving by Mary Elizabeth Obrien" is a wonderful example of a book report on nursing. Prayer in Nursing has been relevant all throughout history. Ultimately, spirituality and prayer go hand and hand within the reigns of the compassionate care a nurse bestows on a patient. This paper will explore the full implications of prayer in nursing, and how it depicts what appears to be the hands of a higher power, working through those of many nurses, even today. While working through the questions of prayer in nursing, one thing that should be kept in mind is the idea Mary Elizabeth O'Brien (2003) gives in her book, 'Prayer in Nursing'. "For contemporary nurses, prayer is, I believe, more necessary to support their caring for the sick than in any preceding era" (2003, p. 4).

- Prayer in Nursing: The Spirituality of Compassionate Care Giving

I believe it is fair to say that the majority of nurses (myself included) fell a calling within them to join the ranks of this profession. Even in earliest history, it was evidenced by how sincere a nurse's genuine concern and care for patients were. Contemporary nurse's conservatively followed in their predecessor's footsteps. Centuries ago, nurse's were fully aware of the spiritual ramifications attached to their work, and welcomingly accepted it. Nursing very much represented the symbolic structure of God's church, and nurse's implemented prayer into their caregiving in order to offer a stronger sense of peace and comfort for their patients (2003, p. 5). Florence Nightingale, considered by many nurses to be the founder of the nursing profession, was a steadfast nurse of prayer, beyond a doubt. Her prayer of

petition speaks volumes to other nurses as it specifies an acknowledgment into the devout idea given, of the supreme power of being working through her to ease those who were sick or suffering from other medical ailments (2003, p. 6). The truth is evident through Nightingale's own words, and through a myriad of other nurse's that admired her and held the similar belief that nursing was then and is now, an extension of God's healing grace, presenting itself through the devoted care of nurse's all throughout the world. Nightingale's values in nursing carried over into the American nurse's role in or around the early 1900s. In 1923, "The Public Health Nurse" publication published the following excerpt from one nurse, "all who embrace nursing as a life profession must have, as a secret source of the ministering contacts, a prayerful relationship with God" (2003, p. 7). It is my opinion that prayer when in correlation with caring for the weak, sick, frail, or other medical situation requiring nursing care, are comforted not only by the kindness from a nurse but, the power of a simple prayer as well. Prayer in nursing brings a sense of complete peace for the patient, and a stronger connection with God, in their greatest time of need. Also, a nurse who finds him or herself in the most difficult of medical emergencies with a patient can also find extra strength and peace within themselves, through the utilization of prayer and God's guidance.

Historically, the gift of nursing was known as a blessed attribute, verbally renowned as "charism" (2003, p. 9). In biblical times, it was prophesized by the apostle James, whose words are written as stating, "Is anyone among you suffering? He should... pray... and the prayer of faith will save the sick

person" (2003, p. 10). The true charism of nursing lies in the devotion that a nurse carries within their hearts and souls. Their total dedication in being present for others in need and the sincerest of blessings they bring to ease sickness and pain is a special gift, a charism (2003, p. 11). The devotion of God's word and sharing it through caring of others was and is the supreme guiding force of nurses in past times and continuing into the present days. It was evident in Deacon's and Deaconesses, Roman Matrons, Medieval Monastic nurses, military nurses, and members of the Protestant and Catholic nursing communities (2003, p. 13). In fact, the whole founding of nursing was encircled by the power of devotion, prayer, and spirituality. The most distinct characterization of any devoted nurse, yesterday's ago and into today would be love for the sick, tenderness, generosity, self-forgetfulness, and appreciation for the nobility of the calling. A devoted nurse expresses heartfelt concern for the sick and yearns to ease another human being suffering (2003, p. 14). I firmly believe that this type of unselfishness and deepest sincerity for others is the true hallmark of nursing and would fit well in every contemporary nurse's life and mentality today. The difficult thing I believe many nurses are running into is dealing with time. Although there is a strong sense of spirituality and devotion in contemporary nursing, as well as the desire for prayer, time is so very constrictive in this day and age. Many nurses today raise the concern that they don't have that same closeness with the Christian implementation of nursing because they never seem to have a spare moment to do so. However, my personal reading of some of O'Brien's specific passages on this showed me that there is always plenty of time for prayer. Just the return

walk back down the hall, from a routine visit to a patient, allows time for a small prayer. I had often overlooked this and had never seriously considered it up until now. Of course, I'm aware that each individual nurse is different, and how they might find time to pray might be greatly varied from my own. Yet, by praying, I think more solace and contentment in caring for others and a person's self is far better felt than without any prayer at all. " For each of us, the creative way of finding time to prayerfully practice the presence of God, in our nursing day, will be different (2003, p. 18). For everyone who has the interest to enter the field of nursing and contains the ability to achieve this goal, they must recite the Nightingale oath dedicated to the founder of nursing, " Florence Nightingale" (2003, p. 27). In this, every nurse will obviously be unique in their beliefs but will vocally speak this oath. What it represents is what every practicing nurse is supposed to duly offer, with serenity and patience in care. It takes much dedication in nursing and this oath theorizes on the idea that just because times might get tough, a devoted nurse would never abandon her patient in dire or stressful times. The first line of this oath, " I solemnly pledge myself before God, and in the presence of this assembly, to pass my life in purity and to practice my profession faithfully" speaks volumes in the devotion and acceptance a nurse is supposed to characterize and implement in his or her duties and life (2003, p. 28). Obviously, a nurse's vow is a serious one and one which is made faithfully and with sincere honesty in keeping the promise made. Though changing times, in the field of nursing, have contributed to some of the oath becoming irrelevant, the primary meaning has remained. The promise of commitment, community, spirituality, faithfulness, ethics,

altruism, confidentiality, loyalty, and devotion are still the main driving aspectual points in nursing, and thereby lead to the implement, of caring for the ill (2003, 29). The driving force behind the Nightingale oath is evident in a myriad of contemporary nurses today. Nursing requires so much energy and directed care for others that I personally doubt anyone would enter this profession unless they were totally prepared to give 150% of themselves to caring for those who are in need of support and compassionate understanding. People come to nursing to help others, with an unselfish desire in doing so. It is what makes this profession so beautiful. It does not matter that times are different now, there still remains that same amount of human sincerity there was when Nightingales oath first came into being. Nursing is the subsequent ministry of God through graceful healing and compassionate care. The utilization of prayer and God's divine guidance in contemporary nursing today will overshadow any of the hardships that are associated with it. Every nurse needs to have the ability to turn to the Lord and pray for strength for themselves and for healing for those that are sick.