

# Twelve Ways to Integrate your Faith with your Practice



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***Christian physicians have a unique opportunity to touch people's lives when they are most vulnerable.***

*Luke 8:16 "No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so those who come in can see the light."*

Christ gave us an unparalleled example of how to practice medicine. The Great Physician healed all who came to him, regardless of their social status or medical challenge, and with boundless energy. He acted with all authority and power under heaven, and the world has never been the same because of his sacrifice.

Christian physicians have a unique opportunity to touch people's lives when they are most vulnerable and ready to learn. The impact of that well-timed intervention can have eternal consequences, if physicians are ready and willing to act. This brief article highlights a dozen ideas Christian physicians can use to demonstrate the love of Christ in practical and meaningful ways in their medical practice.

1. **Art work** - The wall hangings in your waiting room, halls and exam rooms can speak thousands of words about you. Choose art that demonstrates your commitments. The inspirational art of Nathan Greene are excellent examples, available from Art Classic Editions in Fallbrook, California (800) 487-4278.
2. **Stationery** - Convey your reasons for serving others with a simple statement on your letterhead and business cards. An example comes from the Barbourville (Kentucky) Family Physicians, "Ministering the love of God through health care."
3. **Faith flags** - Look for opportunities to raise what Dr. Walt Larimore of Kissimmee, Florida calls "faith flags." They are moments when patients seem ready to talk about faith and they can be captured by a brief statement such as, "You seem pretty anxious about this issue. Would you like me to pray with you about it right now?"
4. **Pray** - Make it a practice to pray with a patient in the quiet setting of the exam or hospital room. Keep it simple and heartfelt, and let the patient join you if they seem ready to lend their voice.
5. **Family-friendly education** - Invite your patients for an evening session, or even a series on child-rearing, how to care for an aging parent, alternatives to abortion, or other family-friendly topics. You'll be in a position to share your beliefs, and you are likely to also benefit from a better-educated patient group.
6. **Prescribe a resource** - This program from the Christian Medical and Dental Society (1-888-231-CMDS) is an outstanding tool for meeting patients' needs that medicine cannot treat. The pre-printed prescription pads can be used to direct your patients to appropriate books selected by Christian doctors. Patients call a toll-free number to get their "prescription" filled, and the literature is delivered to their door.
7. **Work with deacons** - When patients are chronic in their habit of not paying their portion of the doctor's bill, everyone suffers. Rather than sending them to a collection agency, consider developing a network of local deacons to work with your patients to restore their financial responsibility. Your demonstration of mercy is likely to do more than make sure your bill is paid.
8. **Referral network with churches** - Look for churches that are ready to support you with counselors, prayer partners, and friends that can step into the lives of

**Philippians 1:27**  
**“Only let your conduct be worthy of Christ...”**

*Consistency, compassion, and fairness speak louder than words.*

*“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord.” Colossians 3:23*

your patients when they are ready to learn about the Lord. Use them as readily as you use other physicians when a referral is indicated. You'll be more efficient with your time, and patients will be well-served by motivated Christians eager to be your partners in faith.

9. **Start a parish nurse program** - Extend your effectiveness with the help of a local church or your hospital through the development of a parish nurse program. The parish nurse can provide screening services for patients uncertain about their need for medical intervention, follow-up visits for post-hospital patients, and timely demonstrations of mercy for those who are anxious about their health. Some parish nurses programs are supported in part by public funds.
10. **Respect your patients and staff** - Managing your practice by the golden rule means showing respect for your patients and staff through consistent, compassionate routines. That may include suggestions like these:
  - Stay on schedule or apologize sincerely when you're not.
  - Conduct patient satisfaction surveys and act on the feedback.
  - Maintain market wages and benefits.
  - Listen to your staff's suggestions for improving your service.
  - Provide consistent and regular feedback to your staff about their performance, and support their professional development..
  - Resolve conflicts at the office before they become disruptive.
11. **Manage your resources as for the Lord** - Colossians 3:23 says it best: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord..." Being a good steward of your business might include these actions:
  - Keep your expenses in line with the market for your specialty.
  - Prioritize your time and energy to balance your life. You can't be helpful if you aren't healthy.
  - Plan for the future. Develop and implement a strategic budget and plan for your business with wise counsel and sound management.
12. **Align with other Christians** - You don't have to practice exclusively with other Christians to integrate your faith with your work, but it helps. The more like-minded your colleagues are about faith, the more your witness can be consistent and extensive.

### **Caveats**

Be careful about using God's name in vain. If Christian physicians apply these ideas to secure a homogeneous collection of patients, staff and colleagues, they can't be the salt and light God calls us to be.

Beware also of aligning with others simply because they identify themselves as Christians. Long term compatibility depends on a wide variety of factors that go far beyond a common love for the Lord.