



THE MEDICINE TRIATHLON

Preparing for and Persevering through a Medical Career

Compiled by David in Christ

Welcome.

I pray this document will help prepare your heart for the triathlon of medical training. May it give you God's perspective on a potential practice that would make Jesus super famous.

It is comprised of three books.

- (1) *The Pre-Med Swim*
- (2) *The Med-School Cycle*
- (3) *The Residency Run.*

Zoom through what you already know, so you can soak in what you need God to work deeply within you. It was written to be given, so share as you wish, but please, seek first His kingdom and His righteousness as you trust our Father to provide the rest.

God speed,

David in Christ



BOOK ONE

THE PRE-MED SWIM

INTRO

The pre-med years are real. Many waves crashing from different directions drawing your attention and expecting your devotion. As much as any season, you will need solid time alone with the Rock to know what is true and what is of value. When the storm clouds of uncertainty overshadow, may Jesus lighten your soul with words of His unwavering love for you and of His plan that stands firm through all generations (Psalm 33:11).

General Advice from Jeremy (a Senior Undergrad accepted into Med School)

Fall and Spring Semesters of Freshman Year:

- If at all possible, don't take more than 2 difficult classes a semester. 1 Math + 1 Science + 2-3 Easy Classes is plenty. 2 Sciences + 2 Easy Classes is plenty. Get A's. You can.
- Find your favorite spots to study.
- Look into campus clubs: AMSA (Pre-med Club), CMDA (Christian Medical and Dental Association), AED (Honors Pre-med), Nutrition Club, as well as other clubs outside the science realm. Definitely join a campus ministry, super helpful for learning what being a disciple of Jesus looks like within community.
- Start Volunteering and Shadowing (e.g. Hospitals, clinics, free clinics)
- Choose a hobby or continue an old one. This will serve you well when you need characteristics to set you apart from other students.
- Don't get distracted! Making good grades your first year is just as important as acing your classes when applying to medical school...

Fall and Spring Semesters of Sophomore Year:

- You've gotten about 30 credit hours out of the way and now it is time to start really building your résumé. Continue volunteering, shadowing, and working in a hospital or clinic if possible.

-By now you are taking (or have taken) Chemistry, Physics, and Basic Biology. As much as these classes can be uninteresting, try to keep that material fresh in your mind because you will need it for the MCAT.

-Take Summer classes to get a head if at all possible. You will appreciate the openings to take other classes later. However, if you are like me and hate taking classes in the summer, use your time wisely! Spend those summers shadowing, volunteering, and going overseas where you could do that even more so.

-This is also a good time to decide if you want to be in the **Honors College**. Medical Schools look highly upon honors students and it will often times secure an interview... It is extra work though, so weigh your options carefully.

Fall Semester of Junior Year:

-Believe it or not, this is when you really need to get serious. Your Junior year is probably the most important, stressful, and fun year of a pre-med's college career.

-By now you will have around 60 credit hours done so it's time to start looking for **leadership positions** in campus clubs or other organizations you might be involved in.

-You'll be taking courses like Organic Chemistry which may cause grey hairs to appear on your head ;) but you need to start looking for upper-level science courses to slip in as well. Examples: Genetics, Anatomy, Physiology, Microbiology, or Cellular/Molecular Biology. This will be great for your application later.

-Schedule a couple mock interviews for medical school. To prepare, keep up with current political and medical topics as well as spending time on **Studentdoctor.net**

-The **MCAT** is around the corner so you need to pay attention to your classes, brush up on General Chem and Physics, and choose MCAT-study materials.

-Take Christmas Break to really study for the MCAT in your weak areas. You can never prepare too soon for this test it will ALWAYS take you by surprise.

-Look for professors, doctors, or other close acquaintances that would be good candidates to ask for **recommendation letters**.

Spring Semester of Junior year:

-Now is when you really need to get crackin' on the **MCAT** material. It's going to be rough trying to study and take care of a full semester of college courses but hey – you're getting close!

-Some sign up for the MCAT during April or even earlier but your biggest mistake would be to take it when you are underprepared, so there is no problem with waiting until June or July to take your first MCAT.

-This is really your last chance to boost your résumé so start looking for weak spots at the beginning of the semester. For instance, if you need to shadow a few more docs or do some extra volunteering. I think it's always a great idea to shadow/volunteer in the ER, so if you haven't by now, I would look into it.

-You need to start either an "Exam Crackers" or "Kaplan" course by now to really prepare for the MCAT.

-If you are short on upper-level science courses, this semester and next Fall are the times to slip those in.

Summer Before Senior Year:

-This is the summer of cramming/taking the MCAT. You honestly don't want to try to do too much stuff during this summer because you are supposed to be sitting pretty with all your volunteer/shadowing/working hours by now. If you cram everything in at the last minute they will notice and you'll have to defend that in your interviews.

-If you need to take the MCAT again to try to improve your score, the latest I would sign up for one is in August.

-You will be putting together your application in May and June and then sending it in as early as June or July. Being an **early applicant** is incredibly important! Most medical schools run on a first-come-first-serve system.

-For some schools you will be required to have D.O. recommendation letter and for others you will need an M.D. letter. This is the minimum so try to get several if you can. This means you need to be contacting doctors and others who will be writing recommendation letters and get them to send them by the end of the summer.

Fall of Senior Year:

-This will be a hectic semester of tough senior classes combined with the painstaking process of sending in all the materials you need for your primary and supplementary applications.

-Your grades this semester are just as important as ever. You will send in your schedule to the schools and they may be looking to see how you will do in those classes in order to consider your admittance.

-A good tip for when you start receiving phone calls to schedule interviews is to schedule the schools that you least prefer first in order to get practice interviewing and be confident for the school you wish to attend.

-If medicine is what you want to do, don't give up and you'll make it!

-This is your moment. Take it by the horns and always keep an attitude of God-given humility and God-centered confidence. Don't doubt the power of His design of your heart and His call over your life.

Advice from *Preparing for a Career in Medicine* by Kent Shih

-Successful medical students are...

1. Motivated by love
2. Intelligent
3. Fascinated by the biological processes of life
4. Able to find gratification in hard work

-One of the reasons successful medical students are able to continue without becoming callous or cynical is because they *enjoy hard work*. Work is not simply tolerated—it's anticipated. They enjoy work. Solomon had at one time all anyone could want and more, yet his conclusion was essentially that the reward is the labor itself—not the money, fame, or impact that labor brings. Successful medical students don't look for gratification five, ten, or fifteen years down the road; they find it just where they are, in the work they're doing today.

-Ask a doctor: What do you feel are the most important qualities a physician should have? What do you dislike about medicine? What would you have done differently if you could have?

-Get involved in CMDA Pre-med chapter on your campus or start one.

-I have never let my schooling interfere with my education. --Mark Twain

-The hardest part of the undergraduate years for me was learning to say “No” to so many good and rewarding opportunities because of my decision to pursue medical school. It is all worth it, however, if God is calling you into this particular field.

-My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work –Jesus Christ

-Know and understand that God may call you out of proverbial “balance” during your undergraduate years. Some may criticize you for your devotion to your studies.

Remember, you are not “out of balance” if God has called you to invest this time in your life toward studies. You are right where you need to be. I’m not referring here to breaking fellowship or ignoring such precious means of grace as Scripture, prayer, evangelism, and the like. I’m just encouraging you not to be fooled by rhetoric. Join a small group!

Study the Word! Exercise with friends! Go out on dates! But remember—do not worship what some may call “balance”; accomplish the work that God has placed in front of you.

-According to God, He is not to be on your List of Priorities at all. He *is* the list. He’s not first on your list; He gives the list. He is our purpose-*given* Life.

-James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

-It is through the mundane struggles of daily living that the Christian’s heart is shaped and molded, and from this heart comes the fruit of Christian character. Christians in college have little difficulty with this fact—namely that God will use our studies and ultimately our jobs to make us into the people He wants us to be. The difficulty is in accepting the fact that He does not hurry in doing so! If there is to be continued steady growth, it will be slow.

-Work serves as a vehicle by which we can worship God.

-Time management. Discern between what is urgent and what is important.

-Ephesians 5:15-16 Live not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity.

-We need the confidence of heart that has heard God say “Wherever you are, *I am with you.*”

-Vision, not time management, empowers. Ask God for vision to see people’s need of grace. Ask for vision to see and believe that God has a specific plan for your life. If you believe this, you will not have to muster up your greatest effort only to see it fail four or five days later. You will walk peacefully at what others may deem a rapid pace. Ask God for vision in your life.

-All things excellent are as difficult as they are rare. –Benedict Spinoza

-Three Aspects of the Application:

1. Academic achievements: Grades, MCAT, letters of recommendation, honors, and awards.

2. Exposure to the field: hospital volunteer work and research experience.

3. Personal Qualities: activities during college, letters of recommendation, a personal statement about your goals, and interviews.

-Tips for the Best Grades

1. Be willing to commit overkill.

2. Stay ahead of (not even with) your professors.

3. Become an expert note-taker. Sit in the front row. Write the entire time! Record important and difficult classes. Make an outline of your notes. “See one. Do one. Teach one.” Use mnemonics. “The more creative, the easier to remember.” Review. Review for 20-30 minutes the information taught in class within the first 24 hours after you hear it.

4. Don’t miss class.

5. Don’t cram.

6. Get to know your professors.

7. Learn to say NO.

-Letters of Recommendation

1. Prepare from day one.

2. Choose people who know you. A letter from a “nobody” that is colorful, detailed, and persuasive is far stronger than a bland one from someone “famous.”

3. Get letters from a variety of professors. (This will show that you are well-rounded.)

4. Prepare a portfolio. (Even write out personal statements about yourself.)

-When I started college my goal for my freshman and sophomore years was a 4.0 GPA while I was involved with a small Bible study group for accountability and encouragement. It was not until my junior and senior years that I became more involved with leadership organizations, social functions, hospital experience, and research.

-Extracurricular activities (and all parts of the process) are not just hoops that medical schools make you jump through—they are real experiences that should mold your way of thinking and believing. Ultimately these experiences are for your own personal benefit—not just to impress the medical school. Let God use these experiences to create vision for your life. Dare to dream big.

-Give yourself the freedom to dream big dreams that God can use and remember that He will direct, shape, and if necessary, remold those dreams.

-Ways to Get Medical Experience

1. Volunteer at a hospital. (The best place to find some experience is at a charity hospital where staffing is minimal and rules are generally more relaxed.)

2. Volunteer at a nursing home.

3. Spend time with a private physician. You might consider challenging a Christian physician whom you respect to disciple you while you are in college. Discipling is never a one-way channel by which we impart Christian knowledge or experience “down” to a somewhat less endowed person. Rather, discipleship is a deeply mutual experience in which two people build each other in Christ.

4. Work with a service organization.

-Research. If the admissions committee are interested in research, how much more favorable are you as an applicant if you too are interested in research? Some really impressive interviews may revolve around your undergraduate research work. Research is an awesome opportunity to appreciate the wonder and the glory of the handiwork of God.

-Ways to Get Research Experience

1. Schedule it as a course.

2. Apply for student work scholarships. Request a laboratory assistant position.

3. Use your summer for research.

-Ways to Write a Better Essay

1. Present your strengths.

2. Avoid “Christianese.”

3. Avoid the controversial topics.

4. Be creative. (Write one that will capture their imaginations. But be careful not to appear eccentric. Ask many people to read your essay and give their honest opinions.)

-If this was helpful, buy the book! It has much, much more that will help you! Buying it off the www.cmda.org website is probably the easiest.

General Advice from David in Christ

-When interviewing at most schools, you'll only meet a few of those making the decision, so it's your job to convince the ones interviewing you that you're worth fighting for when they meet with the other interviewers to discuss the applicants.

-Go over your application the day before your interview, as those reading it will have *just read it*.

-If you don't get in the first time: Ask them why not, work on that, and then reapply showing your improvement.

If you're serious about following Christ and if He's leading you to be a doctor, you *do* have time to increasingly know Him and make Him known. By His grace (*100% by His grace*, and I mean that!), He guided me to maintain the following pace in a regular school week for my years of pre-med studies:

-Be active in and invite many to a campus ministry (at least 5 hours/week along with trips and other events)

-Lead a Men's Bible Study every week (2 hours/week)

-Begin and lead a CMDA Pre-med chapter (1-3 hours/week)

-Be mentored (1 hour/week)

-Volunteer at the hospital (3-5 hours/week; I had an entry desk job that allowed me to study too)

-Mentor multiple guys throughout the week (Hard to put an hour limit on this.

Just invite them to walk to class with you, eat with you, pray with you, memorize Scripture with you, live life with you.)

-Begin and lead a Prayer Room community (at least 4 hours/week)

-Be active in a local church (at least 5 hours/week)

-Tutor in chemistry and biology (10 hours/week)

-Take a 24 hour Sabbath rest where I did not work, do any school-work, or scheme about such things from 1pm Saturday to 1pm Sunday.

-Maintain a 3.96 GPA, do well on the MCAT, memorize multiple Bible verses each week, continue key friendships back home along with my five siblings and two parents, as well as spend good time alone with the Lord before each day began.

-Now I don't dare say any of the above to make anyone think I'm this amazing dude, *NO!* I say it to speak truth over the deception: For those in Christ, you *can* be used by Him mightily in this season of life, but you *must* give up the petty pleasures of this world so that you can pursue Him hardcore. Perhaps the list of "didn't do" activities would be even more helpful: watch TV/movies, play sports often (even though I really like them), go on lots of dates, go home on the weekends, sleep-in when it was time to get up, eat out with friends without Jesus' purpose included, extracurricular hobbies that weren't of eternal value. First John 2:15-17 says "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, the boasting of what he has and does—*comes not from the Father*, but from the world. The world and its desires *pass away*, but the man who does the *will of God* lives forever."

-Use www.ratemyprofessors.com to find the best teachers to teach you the material you *need* to know.

-Take advantage of your Summer and Winter breaks for the gospel of Jesus to be enjoyed by all peoples. Don't let anything stop you from vital training to be had on the overseas missions field. If you have undergrad debt, raise some funds. If you're taking a gap year, factor debt repayment into your missions fundraising. For those called long-term, this is training for after your medical residency, when you'll have a whole lot more debt than you do now. The best way to go is *to go*. There are so many who can't go due to family, work, or other reasons, but they *really want* you to go. They will send you. I have a cousin who has a wife and five children. He feels unable to go but has consistently donated \$500 every time I let him know the Lord's leading for me to spread Jesus' love in other nations. Every time we interact, I feel like his gift is as much to me as mine to him and both of ours to Christ.

-Volunteer at two places weekly for at least an hour at each. Let these experiences change the way you view people, love them with the Gospel, and bring other pre-meds with you.

-Shadow at the same place regularly. Learn from the same doctor regularly, so he will know what he has taught you so far. Most importantly, know what you're about to sign up for! This happens best when you're consistent.

-Look at a medical school application as soon as possible; you'll want to know what documentation you'll be filling in as you shadow, volunteer, and participate in different activities. Here is some of mine:

Personal Statement (3000 characters)

My passion is people, and in a way, people are like pennies. When I see a penny on the ground, I pick it up. One time, as I bent down to pick up a penny, someone kicked it. When I caught up to it, I noticed the penny had been abused for so long that its face was barely recognizable. Many would say it was worthless; however, I would disagree. Volunteering in two Mexican medical clinics and being reared in a tight-knit Oklahoman community, I have enjoyed building meaningful relationships by bringing hurting people healing in their whole being so that they may know their immeasurable value.

For three summers my heart grew three sizes while spending a total of ten weeks in the beautiful country of Mexico. For four of those weeks, I was located in an economically challenged fishing village. My desire to practice small community medicine increased intensely as I noticed the encouragement and service the doctors provide to the entire community. In summers prior, I served in a Mexican City garbage dump named Neza and its surrounding areas. This stretched our team's physical limit as we met the people's immediate need of healthcare while we helped them build a stable community with quality jobs. Our mobile clinic entered the neighborhoods with smiling faces and open arms. I was delighted to take vitals and register patients as well as translate for the short-term doctors. During one of my favorite weeks translating, I helped a doctor bring healing to sometimes a hundred patients a day, which skyrocketed my interest in becoming a doctor of osteopathic medicine. OMM truly is a great gift that I desire to utilize as people commit their most prized personal possession into my hands.

Back in my hometown, I have become fond of the continuity of friendships and the positive influence a community has on us Oklahomans. Growing up being a leader in church, sports and theater, I was honored to have a community hold me in high respects. Knowing that with great opportunity comes great responsibility, I constantly discipline myself in order that others would be confident in following my example as well as my advice. With my mother completing her masters in nursing and my father being the administrator for a family medicine residency, many physicians have become my close friends. A number of them have moved out of the comfortable suburbs and into underserved areas. I have heard their heart for the hurting and caught their vision. I eagerly look forward to fulfilling the needed role of a caring physician in a small Oklahoman community with this same discipline and devotion.

After catching up with the penny kicked into the mud, I cleaned it off and put that penny in my pocket. It may not appear to amount to much, but that penny was made with a purpose. It does have value. Just as we all do.

FROM OFFICIAL MEDICAL SCHOOL APPLICATION
(Modified, but you'll get the idea)

Work Experience (Notice the “Average Weekly Hours” vs. “Total Hours”)

Employer	Position Title	Average Weekly Hours	Start Month	Start Year	End Month	End Year
Job 1	Student Tutor	10	August	College		
Job 2	Retreat/Weekend Baby-sitter	Vary	July	Sporadic		
Job 3	Convenience Store Clerk	14	June	High School		

Extracurricular, Volunteer, Community Service [Anything that’s been important]

Organization	Position Title	Total Hours	Average Weekly Hours	Start Month	Start Year	End Month	End Year
Hospital 1	Physician Shadow	23	5	August			
Club 1	Founder and President	62	3	November			
Hospital 2	Volunteer	121	5	October			
Clinic 1	Physician Shadow	31	31	December			
High School	Actor and Co-Director	450	15	January			

Med School	Summer Research Assistant	59	8	May
Clinic 2	Physician Shadow	36	8	January
Hospital 2	Physician Shadow	28	4	January
Free clinic	Volunteer	40	2	September
Missions	Student, Translator, Volunteer, and Physician Shadow	240	60	July
Missions	Volunteer, Translator, and Physician Shadow	72	3	August
Missions	Volunteer, Team Organizer, and Physician Shadow	380	70	June

Awards, Honors, Scholarships [that have been important to you]

Name of Award, Honor or Scholarship	Organization	Year	Month
Award 1	Organization 1		
Scholarship 1	Organization 2		

You will also be writing a paragraph for each “Work” and “Extracurricular, Volunteer, Community Service” experience, so know what you learned about:

(1) Other people, (2) Yourself, and (3) What you’ll do differently because of this experience.

In conclusion: Swim hard, rest well, don’t stop.

May the grace and peace of God be with you as you continue to follow Him and do whatever He says.

	M.D. — Medical Doctor	D.O. — Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine
WHAT SETS THEM APART	<p>A statement from the AMA: "A D.O. (Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine) is a physician just as an M.D. (Doctor of Medicine) is a physician." From the AMA website: "Physicians diagnose and care for people of all ages who are ill or have been injured. They take medical histories, perform physical examinations, conduct diagnostic tests, recommend and provide treatment (including administering pharmaceuticals) and advise patients on their overall health and well-being."</p>	<p>According to Marino, M.D.s and D.O.s have many similarities, and in many cases, especially in hospitals, patients have no idea whether their hospital doctor is an M.D. or D.O. Doctors of osteopathic medicine perform all the tasks as outlined previously for medical doctors. The main difference is that a D.O. takes a holistic approach to treatment, believing that all parts of the body work together and influence one another. They are specially trained in the nervous system and the musculoskeletal system through OMT — using their hands to gently move muscles and joints to diagnose injury and illness and to encourage the body's natural ability to heal. Some traditional osteopaths primarily practice OMT, although their numbers are decreasing.</p>
EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ College graduate ■ Requires MCAT (the standardized test that is part of the medical school admissions process) ■ 141 U.S. medical schools* licensed by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (4 years) ■ Federally mandated residency after medical school, its length dependent on the medical specialty chosen. (Note: the AMA no longer uses the term internship to designate the first year of residency.) ■ Medical doctors can be divided into three broad categories: primary care physicians, surgeons and specialists. ■ Fellowships for additional training are offered. <p><i>* Although it's possible to become a U.S. doctor after training in a non-U.S. medical school, the process is quite complicated.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ College graduate ■ Requires MCAT ■ 26 U.S. osteopathic medical schools operating in 34 locations licensed by the American Osteopathic Association (4 years) ■ Federally mandated residency after medical school, its length dependent on the medical specialty chosen. D.O.s have a choice between allopathic (M.D.) residencies or osteopathic residencies, accredited by the American Osteopathic Association. ■ D.O.s can be divided into three broad categories: primary care physicians, surgeons, specialists. ■ Fellowships for additional training are offered.
LICENSES AND REQUIREMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ M.D.s receive their licenses from the New York State Board of Regents: ■ Graduated with the M.D. or D.O. degree from a medical school accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education or the American Osteopathic Association; ■ Completed at least one year of post-graduate medical training as a resident physician in a New York-state approved residency program. ■ Graduates of unaccredited/unregistered medical schools must complete three years of residency and pass a proficiency exam. ■ Successfully passed a State-approved licensing examination. ■ Cost: License, \$735. Limited permit: \$105. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ D.O.s receive their licenses from the New York State Board of Regents: ■ Graduated with the M.D. or D.O. degree from a medical school accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education or the American Osteopathic Association; ■ Completed at least one year of post-graduate medical training as a resident physician in a New York-state approved residency program. ■ Graduates of unaccredited/unregistered medical schools must complete three years of residency and pass a proficiency exam. ■ Successfully passed a State-approved licensing examination. ■ Cost: License, \$735. Limited permit: \$105.

As for med school, a common trend is that the M.D. schools focus more on the scientific academics (e.g. biochemistry and molecular biology; which a D.O. is, of course, trained there as well) whereas D.O. schools learn the same science but have focus more on the clinical world of medicine (which an M.D. is, of course, trained there as well). Traditionally, a D.O. is trained to use his hands and view the patient from a holistic approach, but both are taught to critically assess a situation and work to cure disease as well as further health in the body, mind, and spirit of a man.

Hope this encourages your heart and vision of Jesus in the pursuit of medicine. Remember that the most important thing you can learn in undergrad is to say "No." When to you say "No," how to say "No," why to say "No." Please learn this as soon as possible- Jesus only did what He saw the Father doing, which means He did not do everything. I'm praying you will be able to "just keep swimming" in the rhythms of the love shown on His cross and in the fullness of the rest brought through His resurrection.



BOOK TWO

THE MED SCHOOL CYCLE

THE WAIT

You're gonna make it. You've come so far, and after the interview day is finished, you'll have merely weeks to months of more...waiting. There's always more, it seems, but the new beginning will come faster than you know, so *enjoy* the journey. Enjoy this time of waiting and wondering. Remember you're not alone—we all had to go through that season, some longer and some shorter. Soak it up, as there are things to learn about ourselves and others that can only be taught when we have to wait on an answer we want so much.

THE ACCEPTANCE

Okay, just imagine with me: You're accepted. The reality sets in, "*Whoa. I'm going to medical school. I'm going to be a doctor! This dream is actually happening.*" I probably won't be there to congratulate you, but I rejoice in advance for that happy day!

THE PREPARATION

Once the butterflies find their content place in your stomach, you'll start wondering what to do in regard to the possible move or the definite life change in becoming a medical student. This is the time when you should invest in the relationships most important to you. Spend as much time with your family, friends and Jesus as possible, and do it in a way that you guys can look back on as a special season when you had quality time together. You'll need that. It may be a few years or more until the burden of medicine is lifted a little and you feel like a normal human again.

Yes, med school is hard. Very hard. At my school, the first semester is the toughest. The school works to make that transition go smoothly and the community of other students makes a big difference. Nevertheless, prepare your heart and mind accordingly. You're probably going to have to work more and study harder than you ever have. It'll be good for you. It'll be good for your future patients. And if you maintain the right perspective, even your current relationships can further and deepen through the experience.

ADVICE FOR NOW AND LATER

I'm not sure if these words will be passed in your hands when you need them, but I wanted to get them in your hands now, and I pray you'll use them later too, especially when you're struggling. Whichever school you end up at, this advice will prove useful. Also, if you don't get in your first round of applying, keep going! There's a definite percentage of each med school class that were "wait listed" or had to apply multiple years. It's not the end, find out what you need to improve, and push forward.

DAY OFF

Each week, consider taking a full day off of school, or at least a half day. Have fun! Go on a date. Take a nap. Rest with Jesus. Whatever you do—don't think about school! Many med students before me had done this and as I read in the Bible about the Sabbath, I decided to go it. Even in the toughest part of med school, the Lord let me a Sabbath from Saturday 1pm to Sunday 1pm. It was fantastic! It was scary. It took faith. And was 100% worth it. I did well on my battering of exams and God honored my trust in Him by giving me a drive throughout the week that was sustainable. You could do the same.

STRESS

This is the best piece of advice I received in all of medical school: *Med school doesn't have to be stressful!* Read it again: Medical school doesn't have to be stressful. You don't have to be stressed out. You choose to keep worrying that something will go wrong rather than trusting everything will be okay. It will be. If you pray, pray all the more, but pray with the peace that surpasses understanding. In John 14:1, Jesus says "Do not let your hearts be troubled." Most of your classmates *will* let their hearts be troubled, but Jesus tells you—"Do not let your heart be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in Me." He's got this. He's got you.

TIME

You make time for what you love. If you love Him, you'll make time for Jesus. If you don't love Him, you won't. I challenge you to *read your Bible*. Make minutes and hours in your schedule for quality time in His word, quality time with His people, and quality time alone listening to the Holy Spirit.

VALUE

There's a secret to significance. Your worth is not found in success, family, people's opinions, your belief system, organizations, or education. It's found in Christ.

CHOICES

Fight the worldliness of wealth, prestige, and selfishness. Fight it with a resilience for Bible saturation, for generous giving, and for obeying the Holy Spirit's leading no matter how crazy to this world it seems. Your classmates will buy fancy cars and spend money like candy, but as a slave of Christ, choose to be wise in your finances because they aren't yours but His.

STUDY-BREAKS

By now you should start noticing when your brain needs a 10 minute break, a 10 second reset, or a full hour to focus on something fun and then hit the books with renewed drive. Rest first. Work second. Then party hard. Here's the catch: Always with the Treasure.

For example: If I have sufficient rest, I can push hard for the first two to three hours. Then my brain starts its day-dreaming. This is when I have to take mini breaks. These are excellent times to rest. I pray, I read a Christian book, or I lay my head down and receive from the Lord for however long I need until He's refueled my strength to go for another session. Sometimes it's as quick as 60 seconds, other times 30-60 minutes, but mostly 5-10 minutes is sufficient for Him to re-motivate me to continue the day's work that He has assigned.

SURRENDER

This Scripture was the main one for me going into professional school... Luke 22:42 "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but Yours, be done." I did not want to be a doctor, but I did want my Father to be happy. His will is more important than yours, so if you're considering medical school but believing God has something else in His heart for you, rest from your pursuit. Seek His face. Get right with God so that you can seek first His kingdom and His righteousness because you are right with your Lord.

LONG-HAUL

Med school like a 112 mile bike race. It isn't a sprint. It's a long journey with a big hill every other mile. Yes it's timed, but don't forget, you're in it for the long-haul. Pace yourself. I got 8 hours of sleep almost every night for all four years and did way better academically than I imagined possible. Rest daily. Rest weekly. And keep going.

WORDS

Your sin will find instant gratification if you voice your complaint immediately. But your heart will benefit in the long run if you write down your struggles in a journal and only share your dislikes when truly necessary and out of love for the listener. You probably need help with this. Nevertheless, I promise the self-discipline of clearing your mind of purposeless words and the self-discipline to rest when you need it will together allow you to enjoy med school so much more. This is about being healthy emotionally. Let me encourage you—be healthy emotionally.

Be positive. Med school is full of negativity. It starts in your heart.

BOUNDARIES

You might set boundaries on your emailing, Facebooking, and texting. Those minutes add up. And every minute matters when you have a mountain of tests ahead and are already behind on intimacy with Jesus.

FOUR FINGERS OF FOCUS

These are the four most important aspects of medical school education...

(1) Becoming a good doctor – If I finish my training and am a bad doctor, I failed. My school failed. Therefore, if I hear something that will make me a better doctor, I'm going to learn it. I'm going to do whatever it would take to know it deeply because I wanted it that much.

(2) Doing well on boards – I believe America puts out good physicians. I've traveled the world and have seen that everyone respects doctors from the USA. Out of the belief, I trust that the standards of accreditation and licensure are worth taking seriously.

(3) Making straight A's – This is my way of showing that I trust my school to put out good doctors. I don't need 100% in every class, but an "A" shows I put the time and effort to learn the material and that I want to learn from those who know this stuff better than I do. Plus, if I don't have a reputation among my classmates of someone who understands the material presented, then my reputation for being an excellent physician already has some evidence against it.

(4) Getting the easy points – If I care anything about my class rank, I'll get the easy points easily so I can use my time to get the hard points too.

Lastly, the *thumb* touches all four and is to *glorify and love God* through each finger of focus. If I'm making 1, 2, 3, or 4 the thumb, then I'm cut off from Christ and am useless for His kingdom.

NONNEGOTIABLES

Make these three nonnegotiables:

1. Time alone with God everyday
2. Weekly fellowship with 10+ people
3. Regular confession and transparency with 1-3 other disciples

THE BOAT

Much of my education was centered around me being in the boat. *As long as I stay in, I'll make it*, I thought. This is true to a certain extent. However, some of us are such good students that we could score an A in every class, get a Bachelor's degree in the language, and still not be able to speak Spanish. This is an atrocity! The closer I am to being a doctor, the more intensely I desire to study medicine. The Lord has given me a holy fear of the boat arriving and, despite all the classwork and examinations, me not having a clue how to speak the language.

COMMUNITY

Find the classmates who don't have a friend group. Keep an eye out for the ones who don't have someone to celebrate with or hear their problems. Throw a party after a big test and invite those who wouldn't be invited otherwise. They'll need it. You will too.

PRESSURE

Second Corinthians 4:8 says "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair." Med school will cause a ridiculous amount of pressure on your time, your identity, your relationships, and your dreams. That pressure could crush you and very well will unless Christ is the solid Rock centered in your soul. You will be confused and perplexed about a decision to make, be it a question on an exam or which residency and specialty to choose, but may the Hope of the nations (Matthew 12:21) be *your* Hope even when you don't know what to do.

THE CHALLENGES OF MEDICAL SCHOOL

Like eating a thousand pancakes a day, learning how to learn a lot of information. Then learning it.

Learning how to learn from poorly compromised sources (some professors are amazing teachers and some are better researchers). This is good training because when treating patients, some will be poor communicators or have language barriers.

Learning how to keep learning even when you're tired, bored, sad, discouraged, or confused. This is good training because when serving patients, your emotions will go up and down, so you must have a source of strength and love that isn't dependent on the circumstances of the moment. Classmates will complain, patients will demand, you will get down, you will fatigue, and you must continue strong and steady. The best way to do this is to rely on the most consistent person ever—Jesus Christ.

PURIFICATION

Med school is a purifying experience. With free time limited and the stakes set high, it forces one to cut off whatever isn't perceived as important for now. It seemed that many disciplines God brought to my life in high school and college were dropped, one by one. There are seasons for disciplines, absolutely; however, be careful who you're living for and how they want you to live. You might wake up one day and realize Jesus hasn't been your Lord or Guide in a long time. I pray earnestly that won't be you. In the same breath, recognize that God does work in seasons. There are disciplines that will be more useful in certain seasons than others, but there is only one God and Most Important One all the time.

STANDARDS

Before medical school, my standard was to get into medical school. Upon acceptance and arrival, my standard was useless! My new standard unknowingly became... my classmates. *Could I keep up with the pack? Was I at the top? Did I study as hard as this*

guy? Am I working as hard as that girl? Bad idea. The Lord was good to set my standard straight: “*Jesus, did I please You today?*”
May you let Him do the same.

RESPECT

Love your professors. Develop a deep, unchanging respect for them, whether they are the worst teacher or the best, whether they use too many jokes or not enough, whether they bore you to death or hold your interest to a “T”—LOVE your professors. Respect them so much that you have an honest belief that they and the books will teach you what you need to know. This will encourage you to focus in the required classes and to study the lectures with peaked attention.

ENERGY

When you’ve exhausted your energy, you need food or sleep. Ask God to give these commodities in a way that *He* would be glorified, not them.

Hebrews 13:9 says “It is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them.”

James 1:16-17 says “Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”

TRUTH

True: A human being can succeed in medical school without relying on Jesus.

False: A Jesus follower can glorify God by relying on his own strength and wisdom to carry him through med school.

True: A Jesus follower may receive a lower grade or even fail a class when relying on Jesus and being obedient to His Spirit.

False: God is displeased if I fail.

True: The plans of the LORD stand firm forever (Psalms 33:11).

PLUGS

Get ear plugs. Wear them while studying, in lectures that aren’t help for now, and for sleeping if roommates are loud. Eyemasks can be helpful for sleeping if lights wake you up. Study is important and sleep is precious, welcome to medical school.

LEARNING

To learn, you must add one new item at a time to your previously acquired pile of knowledge. When given two items at the same time, you must choose one, find where it fits in the pile, then add the second. Medical school will give you around three or four hundred new items a day. To add these to the pile, you often have to gather other items which connect the new ones to your previous learnings. Diligently assemble your pile every day and make sure you can stand on it tomorrow. Don’t miss today’s three or four hundred, otherwise tomorrow’s won’t have the right foundation. You can do it. Work hard. Stay on top of things and when you get behind, start where you left off with increased speed. Learn “one more thing.” Don’t be slowed down by condemnation.

REMINDER

For med school...Drawkcab dna drawrof sgniht wonk.

MARGIN

Medicine doesn't have much margin. Ministry doesn't have much margin. A medical ministry has even less. Likewise, family life can be consuming and the first one neglected is usually God. Be a physician Christian, not a Christian physician. Be a husband Christian, not a Christian husband.

ACCEPTANCE

Philippians 3:9 speaks of a "righteousness that comes from God and is by faith." Your value, your acceptance, and your ability to be right in medical school can, little by little, depend on your test grades. 81. 96. 63. 67. All these deceive us to believe our studies, our work, and our attempts define our righteousness. They don't. Christ does. I have lost all things, all achievements, all awards, all A's for the sake of Christ—to be found in Him not having a righteousness of my own that comes from upholding the law but that which is through faith in Jesus, the righteousness that comes from God, not me, and is by faith, so I can't see it. Only then can the grades and accolades be received as they are—last week's garbage and this morning's diarrhea in comparison to Jesus. This belief is the only way to know Christ, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, because you become like Him in your daily death to the glory of the world and like Him in His eternal life to the praise of God the Father.

INTERESTS

If you pray, ask for delight. Ask that you would genuinely enjoy your study material. Some of my story is that I hated science. It was my least favorite subject growing up and I distinctly remember being in freshman biology, feeling called to be a doctor, and begging God to change my desires so that I would like science. He did. Yes, my old way of life still raises its lazy, doubtful opinion, but His voice is stronger nonetheless.

MED SCHOOL PARAPHRASE OF PSALM 44:1-8

- ¹ O God, we have heard with our ears,
our predecessors have told us,
what deeds You performed in their days,
in the days of chalkboard lectures and handwritten exams:
- ² You by Your own authority failed those studying in their own strength,
but our predecessors You grounded in truth;
You afflicted the unbelieving with fear and anxiety,
but Your students have You set free with peace and rest;
- ³ for not by their own wit did they pass the test,
nor did their own mind save them from distress,
but by Your best instruction and consistent conviction,
by the light of Your face,
for You delighted in them.
- ⁴ You are my Ultimate Teacher, O God;
ordain success for Your students!

⁵ Through You we study long hours;
through Your name we shall pass each test with peace in our hearts.
⁶ For not in my diligence do I trust,
nor can my intelligence rescue me.
⁷ But You have saved us from our self-glorifying struts
and have put to shame those who want their own gain.
⁸ In God we have boasted continually,
and we will give thanks to Your name forever.

EXAM CONVERSATION

Don't talk about exam scores. You can turn someone's bad day into a terrible one. Encourage others. If someone asks you how the exam was, ask them back before answering. This lets you know how to respond if they need a shoulder to cry on, a high-five of celebration, or a "yeah, it was okay." If you get inside their shoes, you can react in a way that would build them up and point them to the redemption of Christ.

READY WITH THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

The medical journey is a difficult one. I heard just last night of a pediatric resident committing suicide. It is more difficult for some than for others. If, by God's grace, you maintain an intimate relationship with Him throughout your training, the overflow of His Spirit alive in yours will minister greatly to your hurting colleagues. God will open your eyes to see their pain and have compassion. To see their problems and share His solution—complete forgiveness and unashamed acceptance through Jesus Christ.

CORPORATE MINISTRY

There are four types of medical students based on Mark 4:16-20.

- (1) Full with other commitments (e.g. church, children, significant others, clubs, friend groups) – These are the rocky paths that an event invitation can be given but there isn't any dirt that doesn't have a building already on top of it!
- (2) Lacking and they know it, but they don't want it – These are the thorny soil that the word can take root and grow for a while but once the worries of med school, the deceitfulness of success, and desires for basketball, TV shows, or anything-but-obligation arises, they don't show up.
- (3) Lacking and they know it, and wanting – These are the shallow soil that come to the events and are always enthusiastic about the ministry but seem to fall through in some way or another. Don't give up on them, because they could be:
- (4) Full but wanting more – These are the perseverant ones who have caught the vision of what God is doing inside the community of medical disciples and can't keep going alone—they want in!

Here's the approach I suggest to loving the above, especially if they are already disciples Jesus with just other commitments than medical corporate ministry:

- (1) Bless them. Release them to be excellent in the commitments to which God has assigned them. In your heart, be super excited that they are giving their lives for a worthy cause, and in your interaction, be their number one cheerleader!

(2) Pray for them. Ask that the Father would have compassion and lead them into His abundant life that is found only in wholehearted devotion to Christ. Don't work to win their time—you'll fail. Pray that Jesus would win their hearts and increase their faith. Then keep enough relationship with them that you're there when He does.

(3) Be patient with them. Pray God would deepen their roots of personal devotion to Christ and develop His very own relationship with them. Be glad to let them connect with God through you (you might be their only link currently), but strive to point their eyes to Christ as their own Savior.

(4) Run alongside each other. Don't domineer, but do lead. Invite them into the ministry you have with the three types above, and in that work, you'll find the strongest bond any humans can form—one of sacrificial service. Pray earnestly for one another daily, that the Holy Spirit would fill you, and that He would use you together to influence the world to love Jesus well.

Most Christian medical students are type (1) or (2), and that's okay. I use this parable to describe corporate medical ministry solely. There are so many who are type (1) or (2) in my school who have solid relationships with Jesus, and we each appreciate the work that the other is doing. The (1)'s and (2)'s might not participate in ministry like the (3)'s and (4)'s; however, they very well might be brothers and sisters and hopefully serving our Lord in the ways He has chosen in this season. For this discussion, I use this parable to describe how Christians respond to *ministry invitations*, but *Jesus* used it to describe how all people respond to the *God's word*. Obviously, Jesus' parable is point on, so that's why I use it to help portray other, less-important things.

EVANGELISM

You will never invite a patient, a classmate, an attending, or any friend for that matter to start a relationship with Jesus unless you are convinced that your life with Jesus is better than theirs without Him. We must truly believe that their careers, their families, and everything important to them will be better with Jesus as Master. Otherwise, our evangelistic efforts are out of self-righteous compulsion. However, there is such a gift from God that results in genuine love. That gift is faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and the Holy Spirit as the most helpful, fun Friend anyone could ever know.

PREFERENCES FOR CLINICALS

For your third and fourth year rotation schedule, make friends of medical students in the classes ahead of you. Ask which rotations they liked, didn't like, and why. I signed up for rotations that one of my friends liked but for a different reason than he esteemed it. Bad move as I feel like a fly-on-the-wall shadowing this doctor and learn very little yet get off at a nice time of the day (which is why my friend liked it).

ROTATION PRIORITIES

After finishing the treatment and paperwork for my patient one morning, I was very tired from a couple late nights of ministry. Having two hours to kill, I went into an open room in the clinic and took a nap *without thinking* this would bother anyone. I didn't consider

what my preceptors thought but only whether the action mattered for patient care. I didn't seek the Lord, the guidance of my classmates, or the approval of my attending. I merely did what was right *in my own eyes* and received a formal reprimand from the Associate Dean for it.

Although I knew my preceptors wanted a relaxed clinic suitable for learning, I took advantage it. Don't take grace in vain. Show up in a tie the first three days. Be early, not just on time, the first week. Earn their respect initially and they will be lenient later (when you truly need it). Request their feedback on your performance in the middle and end of the first week and then again at the end of any remaining weeks.

The Church is run by grace, but the world is run by works. You need to perform to get their approval, and commit overkill on your studies, patient-care, and professionalism to do so. Colossians 3:23 tells slaves, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as if working for the Lord, not men." However valuable this appears or not, if "*a good name is better than great riches* (Proverbs 22:1)," then you better work for a reputation that could bring God glory. Dress nice. Show off. With God's help, do everything short of sin to make these people like you. Then, after the decade of people-pleasing passes, you can set up your own practice that runs on grace. But for now, it's based on works. So submit to the authorities that God has placed over you (see Romans 13 for true heart change).

Thanks to this experience, these became my priorities within rotations, and I believe they will protect you from the pain I went through.

1st – Jesus^{3rd} – Residents 5th – Medical Staff 7th – Myself
2nd – Attendings 4th – Students 6th – Patients

RESPECT

On your rotations, don't suck up, but do pay your dues of honor and respect. This will require your love which will ask for your timeliness and time itself. Romans 13:7-8 says "Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, *respect* to whom respect is owed, *honor* to whom honor is owed. Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who *loves* another has *fulfilled the law*."

WORSHIP

A.W. Tozer said, "In contrast to the man of heaven, the man of earth kneels also, but not to worship. He kneels to examine, to search, to find the cause and the how of things. Just now we happen to be living in a secular age. Our thought habits are those of the scientist, not those of the worshipper. We are more likely to explain than to adore." Psalm 111:10 instructs, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those practice it have a good understanding."

HUMILITY

Med school will at some point show you that you know enough to know you don't know much. There's a comfort that can be gained when God teaches us we're not that great. It's okay to make mistakes. It's okay to fail an exam, misdiagnose a disease, or be stumped yet again by a "pimping" session. He has grace for the humble (James 4:6). So spit out your pride and let the Holy Spirit humble you. It is only then that He'll be able to lift you up in honor among your peers, which is the way that you'll have the confident boldness to invite them to likewise receive the grace and mercy of God.

STRENGTH

The more medically apt you become, the more tempted you'll be to lean on it. As a young whipper-snapper M3, I knew almost nothing. I cared most about the spiritual health of the patients, partly because I didn't know any else. Somewhere in that year, I gained confidence medically, to the point that as I led a team on a mission trip where our main purpose was to share the gospel, it wasn't until the last day that the light-bulb turned on and I realized that we had almost wasted our week giving some pills that would run out in a month.

God's grace is good. We switched our focus, and the last day, despite us seeing the fewest patients, was the most rewarding and confirming. We prayed with our patients!

One woman, through tears, opened her heart to me. She had been suffering from severe depression due to her daughter being murdered the year prior. I shared the good news with her, and she met Jesus that day. Medicine might have been the beginning step of love into her house, but now Jesus is the forever-lover of her heart.

VISION

Vision, not time management, empowers. Vision will transform a terribly difficult situation into an exciting opportunity. Time management, although a great tool, is only that—a tool. If your hand doesn't feel like fighting, a sword is pointless. If you don't have a strong goal you're working toward, it doesn't matter how nice your plan is, you won't take the necessary steps to get there. You have to want it. To want it, you have to *see* its importance.



BOOK THREE

THE RESIDENCY RUN

ALMOST BUT NOT YET

You've made it so far. Your swim was tortuous but somehow feels like so long ago. Your medical school ride was fast and furious and now it's nearly over. You have one major leg left. You don't feel ready. No one does. You long to just be out in practice yet you know the training is necessary. You perhaps move to a new city, your family is in a new season, and you're curious if you'll be closer with God than you were in medical school. Ready or not, welcome to residency.

TIPS FOR THE TRAIL

Before residency began, I heard the LORD preparing me with these words:

"Have fun. Everyday, have fun with Me and have fun with those around you."

"Be shameless because of Jesus."

Proverbs 23:23 says "Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding." Seek medical excellence. Yearn for others' excellence even more than your own (Philippians 2:4).

Proverbs 22:29 says "Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men." Don't play to your strengths. Instead, strengthen your weaknesses. No sloppy grace. Only excellent grace!

"You learn what you read, you know what you see."

"Don't look to any other source of pleasure or rest but Jesus."

Being a godly doctor during the 12 hours of a regular day is a mission in itself. Missions is more about the inside life than the outside one.

Don't resent medicine, wishing you had more ministry or family time. Embrace it as God's will. He doesn't see a difference between sacred and secular.

Be seen, not heard. Write a really good note or take really good care of a patient without telling anyone that you did it.

Work hard at work so that the staff and patients will know that Jesus came. Adorn the gospel. Don't wait for your ministry. You're in it.

INTERN LEARNINGS

If you do these four, you'll do well: Be on time. Be alert. No excuses. No regrets.

Deuteronomy 10:12-13 was good for me in the midst of the to-do list one day. "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God *require* of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good?"

Be an intern. Don't lead, learn. If anything, lead by exemplifying a desire to learn as much as possible. Very soon you'll be in charge of teaching, so learn as much medicine as you can right now.

Respect your seniors and your attendings for the position that God has placed them in your life. "We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves." - 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

Serve the residency. If you focus on what you can gain from this residency, you will come out with less. A ridiculously wise man said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." If you focus on how the Lord would like you to serve Him by serving those around you, you'll come out stronger, wiser, and a better doctor.

For those of us in missional residencies where we focus on the poor, the lost, or the unreached nations, may we hear His heartbeat: "Friendship first! Mission flows from friendship if it is from Me."

"Sin separates but the Spirit unites."

It will be a scary day when you are low on sleep, behind on work, haven't spent much time alone with Jesus, your family and friends miss you, and you still haven't done the laundry. This will not be new, but what will you do?

I strongly suggest that you trust in the Lord, don't do everything, and try to hear from Him what His priorities are in that moment.

Be humble. You're an intern; it's okay that you don't know. Ask your senior.

LET JESUS BE JESUS

Remember that you aren't bringing Jesus anywhere He isn't already. While you are rushing to the OR because you heard a mother is bleeding to death after her newborn has just died, do you really think Jesus would wait for you to get there? This God-Man, who knows our weaknesses and comforts the hurting better than you could ever, is there holding that mother in her arms and weeping with her. Your decision is whether to impose your self-preserved religiosity or fall on your face to join them in the tears.

Jesus didn't heal merely to preach, He healed because He loved people and wanted to relieve their suffering. There were times when they brought all the sick and He healed them. Likewise, He preached because He loved people and wanted to remove their eternal punishment with its accompanied suffering. Use medicine as ministry, because medicine is ministry. When you heal, you are doing the works of Jesus. When you preach the gospel, you are recalling the works of Jesus. May they each serve as a reminder to the other.

FEEDBACK

You're going to get a ridiculous amount of feedback, most of it will be what you are doing wrong. It's not that your seniors and attendings don't care about the good, it's that they likely forget because they themselves have some many other things they're thinking about. This can be very emotionally taxing. Learn how to receive feedback well. This happens best by being as humble as Jesus. I'd suggest soaking in Philippians 2 often.

Sometimes seniors may not have time to explain why your assessment or plan isn't the best. Be humble. You can ask them "why" later. For now, go with the flow.

Proverbs 15:31-33 says, "The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise. Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence. The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor."

CHOICES

The season of residency selection and to do a fellowship following brings to the surface how you make decisions--based on what you want or what God wants. These can be the same, but they aren't by default. Have you sought the Lord's direction over what type of doctor *He* wants you to be? Where *He* wants you to live? The what and the where isn't what He's after. God is going for the jugular, and He won't stop at the superficial fascia.

Two friends told me that they had dreams the night before “The Match” results came out. One dreamt that she was accepted into her first preference of ophthalmology programs. She woke up surprised but excited and opened the email to read that the dream was true! My other friend had a dream in which she too read an email declaring her acceptance into her first choice of residencies; however, in the dream, Jesus was weeping and said to effect, “Why wouldn’t you let Me lead you?” Graciously, the next day her email didn’t include her top preference, but God’s.

The premier purpose for guidance is getting to know your Guide. In Jeremiah 29:13, God says “You will seek *Me* and find *Me* when you search for *Me* with all your heart.” Let this season be one of *pursuing Jesus* and asking that He would pursue You. Ultimately, the best way to know God and do what God wants is to pray and obey. Be still and hear God’s voice. Then do what He says. It’s simple. Pray and obey.

This feels elementary in the midst of medicine’s complexity, but for those who trust in Christ, it can be simply this easy which is always merely impossible for the flesh. My challenge to you stays: Pray and obey.

GUIDANCE TEACHING

The best thing about guidance is getting closer with our Guide. Let’s humbly let Him tell us where to go, what to do, and who to be.

Proverbs 14:12

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

Psalms 25

¹ To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

² O my God, in you I trust;

let me not be put to shame;

let not my enemies exult over me.

³ Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame;

they shall be ashamed who are treacherous.

⁴ Make me to know your ways, O LORD;

teach me your paths.

⁵ Lead me in your truth and teach me,

for you are the God of my salvation;

for you I wait all the day long.

...

⁸ Good and upright is the LORD;

therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

⁹ He leads the humble in what is right,

and teaches the humble his way.

¹⁰ All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,

for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

¹¹ For your name’s sake, O LORD,

pardon my guilt, for it is great.

¹² Who is the man who fears the LORD?

Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose.

¹³ His soul shall abide in well-being,
and his offspring shall inherit the land.

¹⁴ The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him,
and he makes known to them his covenant.

Proverbs 12:15

The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.

Proverbs 16:33

The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD

Psalms 48:14

For this God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our Guide even to the end.

Twelve Points to Remember in Hearing the Voice of God

(Taken from *Is That Really You, God?* by Loren Cunningham, Founder YWAM)

If you know the Lord, you have already heard His voice—it is that inner leading that brought you to Him in the first place. Jesus always checked this voice with His Father (John 8:26-29) and so should we; hearing the voice of the heavenly Father is a basic right of every child of God. The following discoveries are never just theory, they came out of our own adventures:

1. Don't make guidance complicated. It's actually hard NOT to hear God if you really want to please Him! If you stay humble, He promises to guide you (Proverbs 16:9). Here are three simple steps that have helped us to hear God's voice:

SUBMIT to His Lordship. Ask Him to help you silence your own thoughts, desires, and the opinions of others, which may be filling your mind (2 Cor. 10:5). Even though you have been given a good mind to use, right now you want to hear the thoughts of the Lord, who has the best mind (Proverbs 3:5-6).

RESIST the enemy. In case he is trying to deceive you at this moment, use the authority which Jesus Christ has given you to silence the voice of the enemy (James 4:7; Ephesians 6:10-20).

EXPECT an answer. After asking the question that is on your mind, wait for Him to answer. Expect your loving heavenly Father to speak to you. He will (John 10:27; Psalm 69:13; Exodus 33:11).

2. Allow God to speak to you in the WAY He chooses. Don't try to dictate to Him concerning the guidance methods you prefer. He is Lord--you are His servant (1 Samuel 3:9). So listen with a yielded heart; there is a direct link between yieldedness and hearing. He may choose to speak to you:

Through His Word (Psalm 119:11). This could come in your daily reading, or He could guide you to a particular verse.

Through an audible voice (Exodus 3:4).

Through dreams (Matthew 2).

Through visions (Isaiah 6:1, Revelation 1:12-17).

But probably the most common of all means is through the quiet, inner voice (Isaiah 30:21).

3. Confess any unforgiven sin. A clean heart is necessary if you want to hear God (Psalm 66:18).

4. Use the Axehead Principle--a term coined from the story in 2 Kings 6. If you seem to have lost your way, go back to the last time you knew the sharp, cutting edge of God's voice. Then obey. The key question is: Have you obeyed the last thing God told you to do?

5. Get your own leading. God will use others to confirm your guidance but you should also hear from Him directly. It can be dangerous to rely on others to get the word of the Lord for you (1 Kings 13).

6. Don't talk about your guidance until God gives you permission to do so. Sometimes this happens immediately; at other times there is a delay. The main purpose of waiting is to avoid four pitfalls of guidance: (A) Pride, because God has spoken something to you; (B) Presumption (Presuming additional details rather than receiving them from Him), by speaking before you have full understanding; (C) Missing God's Timing and Method; (D) Bringing Confusion to others; they too need prepared hearts (Luke 9:36; Ecclesiastes 3:7; Mark 5:19).

7. Use the Wise Men Principle. Just as the Three Wise Men individually followed the star and in doing so were all led to the same Christ, so God will often use two or more spiritually sensitive people to confirm what He is telling you (2 Corinthians 13:1). Pray with a group of believers, asking the Lord to talk to you each personally what to do, then talk about it together. Pray first, then discuss what each of you heard. If there is division, ask the Lord about it, ask Him to reveal any unknown factors or things you don't understand.

8. Beware of counterfeits. Have you ever heard of a counterfeit dollar bill? Yes, of course. But have you ever heard of a counterfeit paper bag? No. The reason is, only things of value are worth counterfeiting. Satan has a counterfeit for everything of God that is possible for him to copy (Acts 8:9-11; Exodus 7:22). Counterfeit guidance comes, for example, through Ouija boards, séances, fortunetelling, and astrology (Leviticus 20:6; 19:26; 2 Kings 21:6). The guidance of the Holy Spirit leads you closer to Jesus and into true freedom. Satan's guidance leads you away from God into bondage. One key test for true guidance is this: does your leading follow the principles of the Bible? The Holy Spirit never contradicts the Word of God. For example, a guilt trip.

9. Opposition of man is sometimes guidance from God (Acts 21:10-14). In our own story, we recognized much later that what seemed like blockage from our denomination was in fact God leading us into a broader scope of ministry. The important thing here is complete surrender to the Lord (Daniel 6:6-23; Acts 4:18-21). Rebellion is never of God, but sometimes He asks you to step away from your elders in a way that is not rebellion but part of His plan. Trust that He will show your heart the difference.

10. Every follower of Jesus has a unique ministry (1 Corinthians 12; 1 Peter 4:10-11; Romans 12; Ephesians 4). The more you seek to hear God's voice in detail, the more effective you will be in your own calling. Guidance is not a game--it is serious business where we learn what God wants us to do in ministry and how He wants us to do it. The will of God is doing and saying the right thing in the right sequence, under the right leadership, using the right method with the right attitude of heart.

11. Practice hearing God's voice and it becomes easier. It's like picking up the phone and recognizing the voice of your best friend...you know his voice because you have heard it

so much. Compare young Samuel with the older Samuel (1 Samuel 3:4-7; 8:7-10; 12:11-18).

12. Relationship is the most important reason for hearing the voice of the Lord. God is not only infinite but personal. If you don't have communication, you don't have a personal relationship with Him. True guidance is getting closer to the Guide. We grow to know the Lord better as He speaks to us and, as we listen to Him and obey, we make His heart glad (Exodus 33:11, Matthew 7:24-27).

A Devotional to help Hear God's Voice

Psalms 5:3 says, "In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice..."

There's something special about the morning. It's quiet. Work hasn't busied our minds yet and there is peace. There's something special about praying in the morning. God hears what we say. He always does when in accord with His will, but this verse highlights Him hearing us "in the morning."

"...In the morning, I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation."

A huge question in my life has been on my mind a lot lately. I don't have the answer. Just a request. Will I lay that request before the Lord? Or will I just wonder about it, think about it, go through the pros and cons, and find it's just me trying to solve the problem.

Jesus invites us to lay our burdens, our questions, at His feet and wait in expectation. For those who believe God speaks, there's hope when we pray. He can answer. And He does it often in the quiet of a dim morning before the world voices its opinions.

My challenge to you: Along with Psalm 5:3, for the next 30 mornings, keep a journal with 30 pages.

Each morning, prayerfully lay the top 3-5 long-term desires you have before the Lord.

At the end of your "waiting in expectation" time (maybe 4-5 min), record the main one, second one, and third that you feel He's leading you toward the most that day on your Day 1 page. Be sure to work at removing your personal opinions on the matter, surrender those to Him, and sit patiently, waiting on the Holy Spirit for His turn to speak.

Don't look at the journal until Day 30, and then go back through all of the pages and see how the Lord has been leading your heart as you lay your requests before God, wait in expectation, and hear from Him in the morning.

Proverbial Wisdom

Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."

I would sure hate to make a life-altering decision based solely on my self-gathered information. I would hate to steal that opportunity from my Master and Lord. One reason is that if God is my Guide and things *go well*, then He is the one worthy of the *glory* of the success of that decision. If God is my Guide and things *don't go well*, He gets to be my *Comforter* on whom I lean during the sufferings that will come as a result of that

decision. One example in my life: Medical school, both the glory and the suffering. Either way, I can rest in knowing that He who is good all the time and who loves me completely had this in His plan.

Scriptures on Guidance

In addition to the above, the following verses are ones that I pray through when I am needing God's leading as well as some practical advice on how to go about hearing and obeying the voice of the LORD. Enjoy.

Psalm 33:11

But the plans of Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of His heart through all generations.

Psalm 37:4-7

Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him and He will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him.

Psalm 46:10-11

Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the Earth. The LORD Almighty is with us, the God of Jacob is our Fortress.

Psalm 37:25-26

I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be blessed.

Proverbs 29:18

Where there is no revelation (or vision), the people cast off restraint (and perish); but blessed is he who keeps the law.

Proverbs 19:2

It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way.

Isaiah 30:19-22

O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious He will be when you cry for help! As soon as He hears, He will answer you. Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it." Then you will defile your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them, "Away with you!"

Isaiah 32:17

The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.

Isaiah 48:17

This is what the LORD says--your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go."

Jeremiah 10:23

I know, O LORD, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps.

Jeremiah 33:3

Call to Me and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things which you do not know.

Amos 3:7

Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing His plan to His servants the prophets.

God is sovereign. Man is responsible. God *reigns* over all: There isn't anyone more powerful that can stay His hand. Man *responds* to God's call: Every day God invites man to a relationship with Himself. Man answers or denies that call according to God's over-ruling plan and man's personal desire.

So please! Please answer God's invitation to a deep relationship with Himself—one more fun and delightful than the best marriage, one more exciting and adventurous than a childhood dream, and one more sure and secure than any career. Will you say "Yes" to His call?

2 Corinthians 2:12-14

When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord, my spirit was not at rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia. But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.

Galatians 5:22-25

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Ephesians 1:17-19

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and His incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of His mighty strength, oh, the utter extravagance of His work in us who trust Him--endless energy, boundless strength!

Colossians 1:9-10

We have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.

James 1:5-8

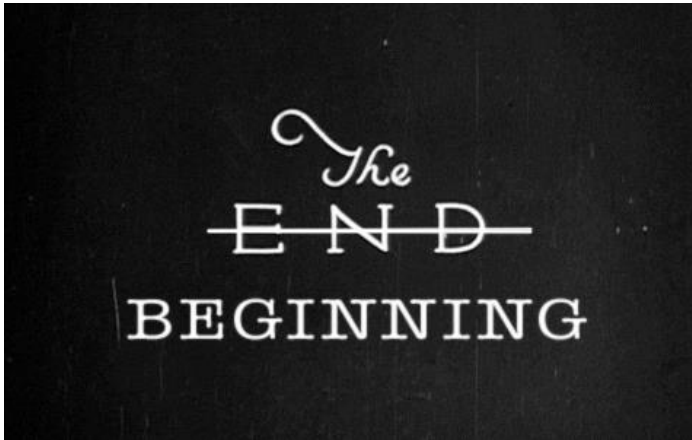
If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because anyone who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

1 Peter 4:1-2 MSG

Since Jesus went through everything you're going through and more, learn to think like Him. Think of your suffering as a weaning from that old, sinful habit of always expecting to get your own way. Then you'll be able to live out your days free to pursue what God wants instead of being tyrannized by what you want.

Numbers 7:89

When Moses entered the Tent of Meeting to speak with the LORD, he heard the voice speaking to him from between the two cherubim above the atonement cover on the ark of the Testimony. And he spoke with him.



THE END OF THE BEGINNING

ENDURANCE

The race is not to the swift, but to those who stay the course. Sit in Hebrews 12 when you're tired, lonely, or pretty sure you're done fighting. From here we learn that if we want to change eternity, we should: (1) Build on the faith of those ahead of us. (2) Lock in on Jesus. (3) Trust Father God knows what's best. (4) Let our Father discipline us with difficulties. (5) Never, never quit.

YOUR ONLY HOPE

Ultimately, only one motive will move you to seek first God's kingdom and God's righteousness in your medical training. Only one reason will propel you to give away your life and resources to a cause that will outlive both. The sole purpose that drives medical disciples is not a love for their patients or their practice, but a deep affection for their Lord. *Loving Jesus* is why we get up in the morning. Because Jesus has ravished our hearts, taken over our dreams, and set us free from the cage of striving for our own gain, medical disciples make an impression in heaven. We do what Jesus commands not from sheer willpower but from an intimacy with the Father and a dependency on the Holy Spirit. If this is what you believe, if this is in Whom you believe, then let's do this thing—let's swim, bike, and run hard for the Gold Medal that can't perish or fade and no thief can take. Such a life will be remembered in the record books of eternity. And Jesus is worth every moment. United in mind and purpose, may we be won by His love. May we keep the faith. May we finish the race.

This was written to be given, so please email this to whomever you wish or email jesusinvasion@gmail.com if you have questions.

Much love,
David in Christ