

Why the Kingdom of God Thrives in This Medical Practice

Dr. Wes Saade has the opportunity to sow many seeds for the kingdom of God in his thriving medical practice. Co-owner with his brother, Dr. Roger Saade, of TotalCare—which includes three clinics and one freestanding emergency room in greater Fort Worth, Texas—"Dr. Wes," as he is called, makes certain he puts his faith first. This holds true in the way he and his brother run the business and in how they treat their patients.

Consider the 17-year-old girl who sat, expressionless, as Dr. Wes Saade offered a silent prayer for wisdom.

"Her story didn't make much sense," he said. "Most 17-year-olds are pretty healthy, and she was describing abdominal pain. Something didn't add up."

The ailing teenager's parents had accompanied her to one of Dr. Saade's TotalCare clinics in Fort Worth, Texas. And although, he said, "we're taught in medical school not to make assumptions," her mother's next question shocked him, especially as he had known the family for some time.

"Do you think it could be her drinking?"

At that moment, Saade said, "I sensed the Lord moving me into something that might be a stronghold." Once he collected himself, he spoke truth into his patient's life.

"You know, you're almost 18, and you'll be an adult. If you decide to drink, I will love you and continue to treat you. But if you drink, you will die from drinking in a few years."

"She just stared at me," Saade said. "I thought she didn't even receive what I said."

A few months later, he received an unexpected invitation from the teen's family. She had died in an automobile accident, and they wanted him to speak at her funeral.

Dr. Saade only learned the full truth of the situation when her mother spoke at the funeral.

"Our daughter had a drinking problem, but she did not die as an alcoholic," the mother said. "God used our family doctor to speak to her."

The teenager lost her life not as a drunk driver, as might have been expected, but as a passenger in a vehicle heading to a Christian concert.

"As believers, we are called to speak truth, sow seeds," Saade said. "God will bless that."

God at the Center

Saade said when he and his brother started the practice, they began with just one clinic.

They wanted God to be at the center because "every believer is called to full-time ministry," he said. "Some may be called to church-based ministry, and some should be called to marketplace ministry."

As he speaks, Saade's passion for his calling shines through.

"Usually, if I'm in a room and they say, 'If you're a missionary, raise your hand,' my hand doesn't usually go up. Right? But it should. I think it should! ... We're all missionaries. We're all sent with the Great Commission."

When the brothers founded their business, Saade said they had to answer one key question.

"Do we see everything we do, as founders of this organization, as putting God in the center of our personal lives and

everything we do, whether it's business or health care? This is where it started: putting God in the center of our lives, putting God in the center of our business."

For Saade and TotalCare, putting God in the center includes a voluntary weekly Bible study for employees, a company chaplain available to serve both staff and patients, a prayer box for those to wish to share requests, and the freedom to pray with and speak spiritual truth over patients as the Holy Spirit leads.

TotalCare offers three types of medical treatment: general family practice, offering regular preventive care, yearly physicals, well-checks and immunizations; urgent care, provided on a walk-in basis; and emergency medicine via the freestanding ER, open 24/7. The other three TotalCare sites are open daily until 8 p.m., Saade said, and are closed Sundays.

Small wonder, then, that TotalCare received recent certification by Best Christian Workplaces, a research-based organizational and human resources consulting firm. The company name, Saade said, reflects its medical practice as well as its spiritual focus.

From the beginning, "we wanted to minister to people," he said. "So it has been a good name for our organization, and for what we want to do."

Care for Patients

Another powerful patient encounter continues to inspire Saade.

"It was the end of the day, and I work 12-hour days," he said. "And so it was the last patient, and you know how it is when you're ready to go home? I don't care if you're a doctor or a minister, you're ready to leave."

Entering the examination room with a smile, Saade scanned the

patient's chart.

"I had not seen this couple before; a colleague of mine was seeing them."

He prepared to share "patient results," in this case, a radiologist's summary of a CT scan on the wife.

"You know, the CT scan shows some spots," he told the couple. "I don't know that this is necessarily bad, but we need to look into it a little bit further."

Like any good physician, Saade paid attention to their response and in that moment, noticed the husband's face fell.

"His countenance changed; you could tell there was something there."

Saade looked back at the chart and saw what he had overlooked: This woman had been in remission from breast cancer. Now, the disease had returned.

Writing about this experience on his blog at [http://www.totalcare.org](#), Saade said, "I realized I had a choice in those split seconds. I could put on my caring face and offer them pleasantries and my professional recommendation. That would have been OK; it would have been expected. But I chose not to do that.

"After I learned their entire story, I stopped. I slowed down. I offered them all I could. I told them that I felt their pain. ... For a moment, I put myself in this guy's shoes, and it hurt. I had a choice to touch a life, not just simply do my job. That night, I was able to recognize the opportunity and empathize and help."

Saade draws his inspiration from more than just his medical experience, however. As the son of a lay preacher who later became an ordained minister, the Scriptures guide his life and work. In fact, the home page of the TotalCare website proclaims, "For I will restore health to you, and I will heal

your wounds" (Jer. 30:17a, AMP).

Saade, who emigrated from Lebanon more than 30 years ago, makes no apologies for his public proclamation of faith.

"A lot of times when I hear the news, I feel like believers are in retreat," he said. "We're sometimes ashamed to say, 'I'm a Christian.' But I'm proud to be a Christian. I'm proud to be a follower of Jesus Christ. ... And I'm proud to call God my Father. And we are blessed to be in a country where we can say that freely, and without persecution, so we do not need to be afraid, and we do not need to be ashamed, and we need to be bold about it."

Saade offered another favorite Bible verse that guides his leadership: "And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them" (Ps. 78:2, NIV).

"'Integrity of heart' means the heart that loves the Lord and has a love of people. ... It's an authentic heart," Saade said.

Beyond this loving heart, leaders must have "skillful hands" or "business skills, leadership skills, cutting-edge skills," he said. "And we have to be good stewards of what God has given us."

Investment in People

From childhood, Saade said, he observed the importance of learning about godly leadership. He has a unique definition for that term: "Godly leadership is: Will we decide in the moment to make our workplaces places of spiritual healing, not just good places of business where we are nice to people?" said Saade, adding, "Any person of faith is called to be a leader."

But leaders, Saade learned as he watched his father serve in various churches, must seek wisdom for their calling. He references Solomon's famous prayer in 1 Kings.

"We all know that Solomon asked for wisdom, right? ... But what's not focused on, I believe, is the reason. He asked for wisdom for a reason: 'So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people. And to distinguish between right and wrong' (1 Kings 3:9).

"So I believe that Solomon asked for wisdom, and God gave him wisdom to lead," Saade said. "And early on, growing up, I saw Christian leaders loving the Lord but not seeking wisdom to lead, and not seeking equipping and growth in the area of leadership and bringing teams together."

Jesus, Saade said, gave us a wonderful example.

"He left behind a very effective ministry team. ... He was very intentional for three years to build leaders." As the church today, "We proclaim the faith, and we speak the truth, but we're not intentional in building leaders, whether it's in the workplace, whether it's in the ministry, whether it's in our Christian organizations. ... About 10-15 years ago, I started studying this and seeking the Lord for guidance [about] how I could minister to leaders."

As the years have gone by, Saade's commitment to serve his fellow leaders has only increased. A John Maxwell-certified leadership trainer, he is also an author and coach who loves to share the life-changing impact healthy leadership has made on him. His books include *Healthy Leadership*, the *Healthy Leadership Journal* and *40 Treasures From 40 Years of Wisdom*.

In addition to co-founding TotalCare, Saade founded both WesMD, a leadership training program dedicated to inspiring and equipping leaders, and Aspire to Lead, a nonprofit arm that reaches out to communities in need of leadership support. Saade's mission as cited on his website is "to provide leaders with the practical tools and support they need to grow themselves, impact others and build healthy organizations." He also seeks to provide a source of reprieve and restoration to

leaders exhausted from the journey.

In addition to his blog and regular speaking engagements, Saade reaches leaders by sponsoring an annual Healthy Leadership retreat. Held each fall at the Beaumont Ranch in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex and intended as a place for leaders to grow alongside their teams, the retreat features workshops, built-in breaks for reflection and strategy, and team-building activities.

"I share what the Lord is speaking to me in that year," Saade said. Pointing out how this retreat differs from other conferences, he added, "It's a time of regeneration. ... I'm here in Texas, so we have to go on the ranch and just enjoy nature and seek God and what He wants to do in our lives."

A family beach vacation taught Saade yet another powerful leadership lesson. His sister brought in an expert in sandcastle building to help with a project that became, Saade said, "the first time I built a sandcastle that big."

The expert told them the sandcastle's foundation had to be strong, the consistency of the sand just right. But then came the message that surprised Saade.

"When you start chiseling away at the sand, you have to start from the top, because whatever happens at the top ends up being dumped at the bottom," he said.

The leadership lesson? Saade said he sees it often.

"A lot of times, leaders want to move forward with their organizations, with their churches, with their businesses, but sadly enough, they are the top, the lid, and they don't know it. If you are at the top of the organization or the top of the team, you are the lid. You are most likely to limit the growth of your team. Once we realize that, we're more apt to be humble about our journey."

This lesson helped shape some of Saade's key advice for leaders: "If you want to grow your organization, grow your people. And if you want to grow your people, you have to grow first."

"So many times as leaders, we are overwhelmed," Saade said. "We look at our organization and we say, 'I cannot do this; my people aren't with me.' And we start lamenting and blaming and have kind of a victim mentality. So this truth helped me early on: OK, I want to have a successful organization, a successful business that ministers to others—how do I go about that? I have to focus on growing my people."

In line with this, TotalCare hosts a weekly one-hour meeting for its staff of 40.

"We invite speakers, we invite pastors, we partner with other ministries and organizations, and we invest in our people," Saade said. "And from that investment come leaders who then lead the ministry and lead the organization."

"Investing in your people has to be paramount. And you cannot invest and take your people to the next level if you have not gone to the next level," Saade said.

The sandcastle principle holds true.

Some may call that great leadership. But for Dr. Wes Saade, it's TotalCare.

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