

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS.

by Carmal Miller,
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We are preparing the patient in room 5221 for emergency surgery. I am positioned at the head of the bed with a suction tube like those used in the dentist's office. When the patient was admitted, she was burping up dark brown bile, but suddenly, this has escalated into intense projectile vomiting. First of all, it is hard to catch projectile vomit when the patient is with it cognitively. It is like trying to catch the forceful expulsion of water from a fire truck's hose with a five gallon bucket—you catch some, but a lot sprays and splashes outside the bucket. This patient is overcome by pain and is sure she is dying. She is nearly out of her mind, thrashing about as if that could save her life.

Two nurses, the surgeon, the patient's husband and I are in the room. The surgeon furiously scribbles orders in the chart. Nurse One furtively works to insert a second IV catheter while Nurse Two fights to keep the patient's arm in position. The husband is in shock. He should not be in the room, seeing his wife in this condition, but everyone is too occupied to escort him out.

I man the little pink wash basin, using it as if it was a softball glove and I was trying to catch a fly ball. None of us have taken any safety precautions except for latex gloves. No gowns or face shields. When this all began there was no reason to think we would need them. Now it is like we are in a paint ball war zone, dodging and ducking in order to avoid getting plastered with vomit. This little lady's adrenaline has taken over. Though she weighs not much over 100 pounds, we can hardly hold her down. Somehow the first IV line gets pulled out and blood squirts everywhere as the woman flails her arm. Now we've added blood to the paint ball war.

All the while, there I am in my white scrubs playing catch with a little pink wash basin. Around this same time, we had a patient diagnosed with tuberculosis or some other very infectious disease in room 5214. Before entering that room, we don our gowns, masks, and gloves. This particular room's ventilation system has no air return so that the contaminated air does not spread. We know the risk. We take safety precautions—gowns, gloves, masks, the whole works. Then we enter the room confidently and administer care. We can take our time, because we know we are protected against the deadly virus.

As Christians, we are called to live pure and holy lives while at the same time ministering to a sin-infested world. Our lives are to be clean like white scrubs. Those who do not know Christ have a deadly, infectious disease. When ministering to them, we need to need to adhere to all the safety precautions. We need full protective gear. We must not let our lives become contaminated or spread germs to others. Does that mean we completely avoid those with the infectious disease called sin—those without Christ? No! We are specialists with the cure for their disease. We must put on the spiritual armor and the mind of Christ and then jump in and get dirty. That is what it means to be in the world but not of it.