

Disciples in the Marketplace – Erika Hedtcke

Transcript of Audio from the Video (04:46)

00:00:00 I feel closest to God when I get to polish an eye.

00:00:10 So I started in the medical field in college. I was looking to get my foot in the door anywhere – anything to kind of figure out what I wanted to do with my life. I emailed probably every ocularist in the U.S. and I was like, ‘I just want to come see what it is that you do.’ So I went to an interview and they were actually looking for somebody to train. And that's when I just felt like God led me to Nashville. And what that entailed was working on the front end of with patients. And I fell in love with it.

00:00:41 You can help them become whole again. You get to use your hands and create and build and all the artistic parts, but also also the nerdy medical parts as well. But I also get to still have that interaction with the patient. I get to emotionally [and] mentally talk to them about everything they've went through and help them become whole on a completely different level as well. And that's when I knew this was something that I wanted to get involved with.

00:01:08 The process of making an eye is really exciting. We start in the morning; we start with an impression of their socket and cast it into wax, we get to whittle and sculpt it, and then we cook it throughout the day and then we hand paint it halfway through to match the companion eye. And then we get to polish it up and deliver a natural looking eye to somebody and kind of bring them back together.

00:01:31 I have hands that God gave me to do this and to help somebody in a way that I never really imagined I could. It's very humbling and it shows me grace every single day.

00:01:48 On a daily basis, we meet many patients who have been through tragedies, accidents – and it leaves a lot of emotions that a lot of patients haven't dealt with by the time they hit our office. Some people are forward and if they believe in God and know God and some aren't. Some are struggling with that because of the reason they lost their eye. And that's another element that I get to discuss that you've been dealing with. The idea of loss for months on end and then when they hit our office, we have the joyous process of starting to put them back together. We're allowed to see an intimate side of this patient. Some patients don't even allow their spouses to see them without their prosthetic in or have not seen them without their patch on if they had an eye removed.

00:02:33 So at the end of an entire day, I have sat down and I have worked with a patient for four or five hours, got to hear their story, where they're from, built a connection with them. There's been many patients I've sat and cried with, many patients that just they need a hug and we get to do that. You witness a patient believe in themselves again and look at themselves in the mirror again, and sometimes we all cry in the room together and you just feel, you feel a lot of grace.

00:03:05 I'm always surprised at the faith that people still have after the hand they've been dealt and I always wonder if I were in their position, would I react like that? Would I have the faith and the hope to want to continue?

00:03:23 When patients look in my eyes, I hope they see that I'm here to help and that I want to support them. And I hope that they see me as an ally and somebody that wants to help them get through this time of their life.

00:03:38 We get to share a way of love with other humans. We get to show them it's OK to be vulnerable and that sad things happen, but we can make them better and we can work together and we can support people and we get to love them the way God loves us.

00:03:57 It's incredible to watch somebody blossom again. You put an eye back in their head and they're so excited. We had a gentleman recently, he skipped down the hallway. He was so ecstatic. And his wife said that he was finally acting like himself again.

00:04:13 The support and love that we're able to give our patients I think helps them go back into the world and show God's glory through their experience and to help give hope to everybody they encounter. And I think that's pretty incredible.

00:04:32 My name is Erika Hedtcke and I'm a disciple in the marketplace.