

The Center for Medical Mission's *e-Pistle* April 2013

Welcome to this issue of the e-Pistle. I want to start by saying “Thank You” to everyone who responded to the last e-Pistle. I appreciated what you shared, but it is also encouraging just to know that people are reading the newsletter.

Here are some things I’d still love to have your feedback on.

- Will you be in the vicinity of Southwest Virginia or Northeast Tennessee on July 20-22 or July 25-27? We’d love to have your input during the question and answer time each evening at our two [Orientation to Medical Missions](#) conference for new medical missionaries. All you need to do is let me know that it is a possibility and I will make a note and let you know when we get closer to those dates. It is not too late for folks to register for the first conference, but the second one is already full. To learn more, visit www.cmda.org/orientation.
- Two people sent some examples of their facility’s policies – thank you so much! I am going to name a type of policy each month hoping a smaller task will make it easier to do. This month, let’s see how many **Training Policies** you will send me. Email your policy to susan.carter@cmda.org. This can be either a staff training policy or a training school policy.
- Scott Reichenbach continues to work on updating our Handbook for International Rotations. To the right is a sample of what each hospital’s page may look like. He has received needed information from only 15 hospitals though, so he will be resending the survey within a few days. Please be on the lookout for the survey and if you would like your hospital/clinic to be included, please return the survey promptly. We have made it very easy to give the information needed. If you do not receive the survey but would like your ministry included in the listing of rotation sites, please contact Scott at scott.reichenbach@cmda.org.
- You Should Know also got a couple responses from last month’s *e-Pistle*. You will find them below. What do you know that another doctor, nurse, hospital or clinic would benefit from also knowing? As you will see below, it does not need to take a lot of time to share, yet it is information that could be very valuable to someone else. This could become the highlight of the *e-Pistle* each month if you will take time to send information. Once I have received several items, I will try to



categorize them and post them to our website so you can easily find what will be helpful to you. When you send me the info, please let me know whether you want your name or your institution's name included.

Ok – there is more I could say, but I'd better quit. I trust you will find the following helpful.

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This month you'll find the following articles:

[Who Packed Your Parachute?](#) by Rev. Stan Key

[Is the Cart Before the Horse?](#) by Dr. David Stevens

[You Should Know](#)

[Obnoxious Love](#) by Dr. Al Weir

[Ministry Separation](#) by Dr. Ron Koteskey

Cura Animarum

Who Packed Your Parachute? by Rev. Stan Key

“Serve one another with the particular gifts God has given each of you, as faithful dispensers of the wonderfully varied grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10, Phillips Translation).

All of us are debtors to scores of men and women who have served us in one form or another. These people, known and unknown, are heroes because without them, we simply could not function. Parents, teachers, police officers, highway workers, church elders, grocers, publishers and soldiers have impacted our lives through deeds of humble service...usually behind the scenes. The following story is a dramatic illustration of this truth.

Charles Plumb was a U.S. Navy pilot who flew some 75 combat missions during the Vietnam War. Shot down behind enemy lines, he parachuted to earth but was immediately captured. He spent six years as a POW. Eventually he was released and resumed life as a civilian in the United States.

At a restaurant one day where he and his wife were eating, a stranger came to his table and said, “You’re Charles Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down.”

“How in the world did you know that?” asked Plumb. The stranger replied, “Because I packed your parachute!” In amazement, Plumb stood and extended his hand. The man continued, “I guess it worked.” “It sure did,” Plumb responded. “If your chute hadn’t opened, I wouldn’t be here today.”

That night Plumb couldn't sleep. He kept thinking about the man who had packed his parachute.

I kept wondering what he might have looked like in a Navy uniform: a Dixie cup hat, a bib in the back and bell-bottom trousers. I wondered how many times ... I might have seen him on the Kitty Hawk and not even said "Good Morning, how are you?" or anything because, you see, I was a fighter pilot and he was just a sailor.

Plumb wondered how many hours the man had spent at that long wooden table in the bowels of the ship weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of those chutes. With each humble act of faithful service, he held in his hands the fate of someone he didn't even know.

This morning, I'm wondering something too: who packed your parachute? As you prayerfully contemplate this question, perhaps it will help change your attitude and your actions the next time you have the opportunity to serve someone else by packing theirs!

Is The Cart Before the Horse?

by Dr. David Stevens

I guess I'm a "doer" because there are lots of things to be done! Okay, maybe the more basic reason is because I'm a leader and you have to be "doing" to facilitate change and progress. Goals and objectives need to be accomplished if the mission and vision of an organization are going to be realized.

You are a "doer" as well. It goes with the healthcare profession and was hammered into you by tests, quizzes, practical exams, rankings and mentoring in your undergraduate, medical school and residency days. Now you go to your workplace every day "to do," and you usually measure the success of your day by how much you got done.

I was thinking about that as I was working on my report last week for the strategic planning committee of the CMDA board and was sharing about our progress, problems and plans. They hold me accountable to do what we set out to do. I thought about it again a few minutes ago when I opened my reminders app and pulled down my Office Task list and saw I needed to write this article before tomorrow! One more thing to get "done."

But as you lead, it is important to remember that "doing" is the cart that should follow the horse of "being." If not, you will wreck your life.

Think about it. How many stories have you heard of successful leaders who have had moral failures, marriage problems, broken families, destroyed relationships or financial mistakes? They are in the news almost every day, but these casualties not only happen in the secular world but in the ministry world as well. Oh, they may not be newsworthy,

but they often have an even more profound effect in the lives of others who trusted and believed in that person.

By God's grace, you probably won't have the visible tragedy, the tsunami, that harms so many, but the issue of "being" goes way beyond just that. Think about it like this. When your life is over, what will you be remembered for?

Let's get practical. Do this little exercise recommended by Steve Covey in his landmark book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Take out a piece of paper or grab your word processor and write a paragraph or two containing what you would want each of your two or three dearest friends or loved ones to say at your funeral.

Let me illustrate that personally. Would I want my wife Jody to stand and say, "Dave always had good audit reports in the organizations he led and 80 percent of the time he met his fundraising goals?" Or would I want her to say, "He was an honest and generous man?" Would I want my son Jason to say, "Dad did good things. He paid the bills on time, covered the cost of my college education and there was always food on the table?" Or would I hope he would say, "People loved Dad because Dad loved people. You saw that, but you didn't see how he acted in his private moments as he sacrificially loved my mom, my sisters and me."

Would you want your best friend to say, "He saw 50 patients a day and started a dozen new health programs in the hospital" or "He reflected Christ's compassion in every relationship and always had such a passion to have people know Christ?"

As you do this, don't just base it on what you already are doing well but what you know God wants you to be.

After you have done this from the standpoint of two or three people, you will have a half dozen or more paragraphs about characteristics that define what you really believe defines true success. Now do step two.

Andy Stanley recommends that you read over your paragraphs and develop a list of seven words that you consider to be the most important things for you to be that will have the greatest effect on your loved ones and ministry. Some of them may be the things you struggle with and you know you need to work on.

Maybe you are easily irked and touchy so you pick that you want to be known for your patience. Maybe self-discipline in devotions or exercising is your issue so you pick that characteristic to develop. If you are a guy like me, you may play your cards close to your chest in your relationships and you want to focus on transparency.

You probably will come up with a list that is longer than seven, so prioritize it and mark the seven most important things you think God wants you to be.

After you make your list of seven words, go back and write one sentence next to each one of them answering the question, "Why?" For example, "I want to be transparent because it will influence peoples' lives as they know my struggles" or "it will nourish my relationships with my spouse and family." "I want to have patience so I don't harm people with unkind words."

Now add a good Scripture verse that enforces the importance of these seven characteristic in your life. For patience, you might note Colossians 1:11: "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness" (KJV).

Finally, put the seven words, sentences and verses where you will review them often. Write them on a card and put them on your desk or your mirror at home. Make them the wallpaper on your smartphone or computer. Review and remind yourself about them regularly.

The bonus of this exercise is that as you know what you want to be and pursue it, you will get profound guidance in making decisions on what you should do and how you should set your priorities. If you want to be loving to your family and friends, you may decide you need to be on time for supper more faithfully, take time to read devotions with your kids or regularly visit your grandchildren. If you are determined to be more joyful, you may listen to more praise music, testify to God's goodness and start keeping a praise diary of God's answer to prayers.

Once you have a clear view of what is really true success in your life by knowing what you want "to be," you will have clear direction on what "you should do." The horse of "being" will be in front of the cart of "doing." God designed it to be that way!

You Should Know

As promised, here are some things that You Should Know:

- Dr. Richard Bransford shares that the International Federation of Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus should be contacted if you are caring for children with these problems. They may help provide shunts and other materials. He has enjoyed their help for more than 10 years. They are located in Belgium. www.ifglobal.org/
- Staff members at Lamb Hospital in Bangladesh are in the process for applying for USAID building fund ASHA grant (American Schools and Hospitals Abroad). "We've never had direct USAID funding before, and are looking for information related to potential restriction on spiritual activities in a building funded by this grant. We have received help from hospitals in Africa whose spiritual activities have NOT been restricted, which was reassuring. We'll see if our Asian

experience is similar.” If you have any ASHA experience to share, they are anxious to receive it. Write kristine.prenger@gmail.com.

- *Global Health: Science and Practice* Journal
Very little of the scholarly literature represents lessons learned from global health programs implemented in the field. *Global Health: Science and Practice* (GHSP), a new open-access journal, has been developed for global health professionals, particularly program implementers, to validate their experiences and program results by peer reviewers and to share them with the greater global health community.

The inaugural March 2013 issue of GHSP illustrates the breadth of topics of current interest to the global health community, using a clear and concise communication style that lays out key concepts prominently.

www.ghspjournal.org/

Obnoxious Love

by Dr. Al Weir, MD

“So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard’” (Acts 4:18-20, ESV).

Obion was asking me about the health of a fellow patient with whom he had spent a great deal of time in the waiting room. They had become friends waiting for their treatments and Obion knew that Johnson did not have long to live.

“We all have an appointment with the Big Man someday,” he said.

I responded, “For us Christians, that’s not a bad thing. In fact, your friend Johnson is quite happy that he is going to heaven soon.”

“I know he is and I agree with him,” he replied. “Did you know that Johnson brought me back? I was far away from believing in God and he brought me back and made me believe again.”

Long conversations in the waiting room between two sick men: one who did not believe there was a God, the other who was spontaneous and intentional with his faith in Christ. Many thought Johnson obnoxious with his open testimony, with Obion and with every doctor and patient he met. However, Obion, the skeptic, knew that this man loved him and saw his sincerity and Obion will now live forever because he listened.

I called Johnson at home to ask if I might give Obion his phone number.

“Of course you can.”

He was not even aware until I told him that he had brought Obion back to the Lord.

“Well that’s the best news I’ve heard all day,” he said.

I could not help but think, “Where, O God, is my boldness to speak openly for you?”

Dear God,

If I need to be obnoxious at times to bear witness for you, let me be so. If I need to lose respect at times so that you may be glorified, let it be so.

Amen.

Ministry Separation

by Dr. Ron Koteskey

Whenever people in ministry are separated, disagreements are likely to occur. The most famous case is probably when Thomas refused to believe what the other disciples told him about Jesus’ resurrection (John 20). Of course, the same was true of other disciples as well (Mark 16, Luke 24).

This has especially been true relative to missions. Even after Peter became convinced about the gospel being for the Gentiles and witnessed them receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 10), the other early Christians not there at the time were critical of his actions (Acts 11). A major crisis arose in the early church after Paul and Barnabas returned from their first term of missionary service and had not required the Gentile Christians to be circumcised (Acts 15).

These disagreements and misunderstandings still occur today among missionaries in general but may be especially difficult for husbands and wives experiencing separations related to their missionary ministry. In these days of air travel, absences of a few days or a few weeks are very common, as are even longer absences. This is true not only on the field but perhaps even more so when on home assignment. One spouse or the other may be gone nearly every weekend or several weeks at a time raising support. Although these absences may be more frequent today, the reactions of individuals to them have not changed. What are some of the difficulties that may occur? What can be done to minimize these difficulties?

It always happens when you are gone.

For the spouse left at home, it seems like that is the time crises are most likely to occur. A pipe breaks. The car will not start. The computer locks up and will not reboot. The kids get sick. The teacher wants to talk to a parent about a problem at school. The list goes on and on. Whether such things happen more frequently when a spouse is gone

or not, they at least seem to. Here are a few steps one can take to cope with this situation.

- Develop a “practical” support group. Make a list of people you can call on to help with the car, computer, illness and other problems.
- Use whatever means of communication you have available to contact your spouse. Email can usually bring a response in a few hours. A cell phone can often get an immediate response.
- Ask older missionaries who have lived in the same area for suggestions on how they coped with such situations.
- Lower your expectations. Rather than trying to fix everything, let something go.

I need your stability.

Marriage is about sharing life, and today that is more possible than ever before. When one spouse feels the need to discuss a situation with the other, the sooner they can do that, the better. When both spouses share in the decision, both have responsibility for the outcome. With our varied means of communication, one can contact a spouse virtually anywhere within a few hours, and the traveling spouse should make that possible. Do not hesitate to spend whatever money is necessary to communicate. Here are a few ways that can be done.

- Cell phones. Do not turn them off unless absolutely necessary for an agreed on length of time. When you do, return the call as soon as possible.
- Email. Check your email on an agreed-on schedule and reply immediately.
- Fax. Leave word with whoever receives your fax messages to get them to you as soon as possible and reply immediately.
- Even if there is no “emergency,” communicate on an agreed schedule.

I get so angry.

The spouse left at home may become angry at the traveling spouse or angry at God. One may feel abandoned, that the absent spouse is gone because she or he really wants to be. Even if agreed to beforehand, one may feel anger at God for calling the spouse away. Such feelings must be faced, and so must thoughts about the absent spouse. Talk with others about them, beginning with the object of your anger. If necessary, with permission, talk with selected others.

- With the spouse
- With God
- With a support group
- With a counselor

We seem to have less and less in common.

Of course, you do. People involved in different activities become concerned about different issues and develop different interests. A strong marriage requires common interests, and that will require intentionally maintaining these.

- Openly discuss with each other what is happening and what interests you want to nurture together.
- Choose interests that you value in your marriage.
- Choose friends that you each value, people with whom you are both comfortable and have similar interests.

I get so lonely.

Of course you do. You are alone. Both of you are alone, so both of you are likely to be lonely. To combat this, you need to intentionally plan how you will combat the loneliness.

- Tell each other about your loneliness.
- Find activities that help decrease the loneliness. For some it may be watching a video, for others having friends in, and for still others, reading a book.
- Both journal about your feelings of loneliness while apart, and then share your journals with each other when together.
- Communicate frequently via email and telephone.

I can't believe I'm attracted to ____.

Although being attracted to someone other than your spouse takes many people by surprise the first time it happens, it is very common. This attraction may be either sexual or emotional. As one song put it, "When I'm not near the girl (guy) I love, I love the girl (guy) I'm near." Typically we come to like the people we interact with most, which is usually our spouse. If you feel vulnerable in this area, you are. If you do not feel vulnerable, you may be even more vulnerable than those who do feel it. Such attraction must not be tolerated in any way.

- Be honest with yourself about it.
- Be honest with God about it.
- Find an accountability partner (or group) of the same gender to call you regularly to ask for a report.

It's so good to have you home, so why are we arguing now?

You have been looking forward to being together for several days or weeks, and now you find yourselves in an argument. What is the problem? Remember that both of you are probably physically and emotionally exhausted from all the things we have discussed. The spouse who stayed at home has been carrying the load usually carried by two people. The spouse who traveled is tired from work, travel and perhaps jet lag

and intestinal disturbances from getting some of the flora and/or fauna from the local water.

- Both of you need to realize what the situation is.
- Both of you need to be especially patient with each other.
- If disagreements begin, it is best to shelve discussion until you both have time to get rested; perhaps taking turns covering for each other while the other rests.
- Celebrate your reunion (when you are rested) in some special way.

We need to talk.

Missionaries, of all people, should know the importance of debriefing. You consider it routine when you reenter your passport country, and it is the same for any transition. Coming home from a few days or weeks is also a reentry, and you both need the chance to debrief this minor transition. Again, communication is of greatest importance, so debrief each other.

- Look at your journals and tell each other everything about your separation.
- Consider how this fits in to your life story together.
- Decide what changes this may imply for your lives together in the future
- Make specific plans for how you will cope with separation next time.

For other topics, please visit www.missionarycare.com. Also please let your non-medical colleagues know about these free resources.

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