

The Center for Medical Mission's e-Pistle August 2016

I put this newsletter together yesterday and have been trying all day to write this opening. It is now 5:45 p.m. and I'm finally sitting here staring at this empty white paper. I'm guessing you have experienced a similar day, though yours was more likely dealing with life and death. As director of the Center for Medical Missions, one of my privileges is to pray for you as you serve. I know your days are long and difficult, so I find it rewarding to take you to the Father. I trust you recognize the Lord's help even on the days that are particularly difficult.

About the time you receive this newsletter we will once again be hosting the Medical Mission Summit in cooperation with MedSend. There are 90 folks registered for what we hope will be a helpful meeting. The schedule includes considerable time for small group discussion regarding the presentation topics:

- Global Healthcare Missions Strategic Planning Process
- Unique Challenges of Sending Healthcare Professionals as Missionaries
- Creating Metrics for Global Healthcare Ministries
- Biblical Foundation for Healthcare Missions
 - The Body: A Biblical History
 - How Jesus Dealt with Disease
 - How the Early Church Dealt with Disease
- Healthcare Missions: The Joy of Keeping the Main Thing....the Main Thing
- Overcoming Obstacles to Missions with Millennials
- Attracting, Recruiting and Retaining the Millennial Generation

That is a lot to cover in only two days, but we trust the Lord will guide our thinking and discussion and the world of building the kingdom through healthcare ministries will take a giant step forward. Will you pray for this meeting, which is taking place in Charlotte, North Carolina August 31 through September 2?

I hope you know I am happy to pray for you. Please share if you have a specific need.
Susan

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Cura Animarum – Clergy Malpractice by Rev. Stan Key

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"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" (Matthew 23:13a, ESV).

When I was a boy, my mother taught me not to call people names. And yet the sermon Jesus preached in

Matthew 23 is full of invectives and name-calling. But notice that His verbal projectiles were carefully aimed at the scribes, Pharisees and no one else. Six times he called them "hypocrites," and five times He called them "blind." Beyond that He labeled them as "fools," "sons of hell," "whitewashed tombs" and a "brood of vipers."

Reading a passage like this causes one to ask: What made Jesus so angry that He would resort to name-calling like this? The answer is obvious: Jesus was upset because the men who were supposed to teach the truth and care for the sheep were instead propagating half-truths and abusing those under their care. God's house had become toxic, and its leadership was guilty of gross negligence and spiritual malpractice. This made Jesus upset, really upset. An examination of the passage reveals four ways to recognize a toxic church, four marks of clergy malpractice.

Hypocrisy. Six times Jesus calls the religious leaders "hypocrites." The word refers to someone who is pretending to be someone else. In the Greek world, this word was sometimes used for actors on stage who wore masks, playing as if they were someone else. The scribes and Pharisees pretended to be holy toward God and loving toward others. But it wasn't true. Jesus hit the nail on the head when He observed, "For they preach, but do not practice" (Matthew 23:3b, ESV). Jesus knew the greatest obstacle to faith in the world was not the prostitutes and thieves on the outside of the church but the phonies on the inside!

Performance-based. Jesus knew the Temple was meant to be a grace-based community where love covered a multitude of sins. Instead, the scribes and Pharisees had turned it into a religious workhouse where everyone's actions were measured and evaluated by everyone else. "They tie up heavy loads, hard to carry, and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to even lift a finger to move them" (Matthew 23:4, NET). The message in abusive churches that comes through loud and clear is this: Try harder!

Image-driven. The scribes and Pharisees wore religious garments. They loved the places of honor at public events and the titles by which they were called. "They do all their deeds to be seen by others" (Matthew 23:5, NET). But Jesus pointed out that, though outside these religious leaders looked shiny and clean, inside they were "full of greed and self-indulgence" (Matthew 23:25, NET). They were like whitewashed tombs, beautiful on the outside but inside "full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness (Matthew 23:27, ESV). In a toxic church, the key question is not, "What does God think of me?" but rather "What do others think? How do I look?"

Distorted Priorities. The scribes and Pharisees had forgotten to keep the main thing the main thing. Consequently, they were tithing their spices (!) and yet had forgotten all about "justice, mercy and faithfulness" (Matthew 23:23, NET). Oops. In toxic environments like this, it is the sheep who suffer most. Their leaders, by words and actions, have literally made it impossible for them to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 23:13). And those "converted" into such a dysfunctional community become "twice as much a child of hell" as their leaders (Matthew 23:15).

What about the spiritual environment in your church? Is it toxic? Is clergy malpractice occurring? When Jesus came across such a community, He got really angry. How should you respond?

*"A Pharisee is hard on others and easy on himself,
But a spiritual man is easy on others and hard on himself."*

—A. W. Tozer

Point to Ponder: Have you noticed any toxicity in your church?

Prayer Focus: Authenticity and transparency before God and man.

Raising Children Successfully Overseas – Part 2

David Stevens, MD, MA (Ethics)

Cont'd

3. Communication: Good communication is probably the most important aspect of good family relationships. By good communication, I mean patterns are put in place that allow it to happen even when there are problems, conflict or discipline that has to take place.

In healthcare, we communicate all day with people, so it is easy to come home and just want some peace and quiet, but that hasn't been my main problem in good family communication. One of my strengths, and maybe yours as well, is my ability to focus and concentrate. I can tune out the world while working on an email, writing an article or reading a journal. That strength is also my weakness when I bring work home or while working on household chores. When I'm doing something else, I'm there but I'm not really there, and communication doesn't flow between me and my family. I've learned that I have to put what I'm doing down and focus on my spouse, child or grandchild for good communication to take place. Only about 35 percent of communication is what you say. The bigger part of it is tone and body language. Those are things you can't catch if your mind is running on two different rails. There is no such thing as "multitasking" in great communication. It takes your full attention. That is why distractions should be minimized when important communication is needed. Turn off the TV or DVD player, shut off the music and look into your family members' eyes.

One of the best places for good communication is around family meals. Dr. John Patrick talks about this in his excellent talk, "[Why Are There No Hittites on the Streets of New York?](#)" He contrasts that fact with the insight that there are lots of Jewish men and women. Their families and their culture stayed intact because they communicated at meals, and much of the spiritual teaching and role modeling occurred there. They preserved their culture and the Hittites did not.

When we were on the field we had all our meals together unless I was tied up with an emergency. It was also the time we had visiting staff in for a meal every third day or so. I didn't realize how important guests were in teaching my children social skills and being able to enter into conversations with adults. They were comfortable dealing with people of all ages at a young age. That and other factors caused them to be much more mature than other children their ages in the U.S.

I also found that different children need a different approach. One of our children was a "talker" and another was quieter. I had to ask the quieter one questions to get her going and inquire how she felt about things. Encourage your children to communicate facts and feelings to you and then do the same to them.

Family meetings are important to establish and reinforce boundaries, discuss security concerns and set expectations. When appropriate, get them involved in the decision making. It is also a good time to articulate, demonstrate and enforce your family values. I do that with the CMDA "family" as I remind them of the values we expect to govern their behavior—this is how we act as we serve together.

Praying together is a critical activity. It needs to be done both routinely and non-routinely. It needs to be modeled and mentored as you encourage your children to pray with you and then in front of people they don't know. You may even want to write a family prayer list on a chalkboard or sheet of paper and let your children add their concerns for each other and those outside the family to it.

If you are away from your kids, communicating with them regularly is important, as is expecting them to communicate with you. The same is true of your family back in the U.S. Now we have FaceTime and Skype, but when we were on the field our family made a tape recording each Sunday to send to our families back in the states. Jody and I did much of it, but we always had the children talk as well. That warmed the hearts of the Grandmas and Grandpas home in the U.S. My dad kept all those tapes and had them transcribed. What a wonderful readymade diary of our experiences, feelings and concerns that we now cherish. Unfortunately, that isn't something you can do with a FaceTime conversation.

One final thing, communication is often a problem during your children's teenage years. When puberty hits, it is time to do a lot less telling and ask a lot more questions to draw your children out. It is also helpful to help them learn to make decisions by giving them options for their decisions, and then have them relate what they think the consequences of those options might be. Let them make small mistakes to learn from so they will be prepared to make the right decisions in more important decisions. Make sure to give them lots of positive feedback and love, and then let them know mom and dad are safe to confide in.

Oh, and a second "final thing." Don't neglect focused communication with your spouse. We used to play

Scrabble together on my day off, a humbling experience for me because Jody loved to do crossword puzzles and she almost always beat me. But it was a great time for focused communication between the two of us while the children were out playing.

To be continued in October

Re-introducing Developing Mental Health Resource

Developing Mental Health is a free resource designed for healthcare professionals and others concerned with restoring and maintaining mental health. It aims to contribute to both training and clinical practice in communities worldwide, particularly those in resource-poor settings. In its original form, the journal was distributed in hard copy to more than 200 countries.

The newly relaunched publication is now produced in electronic format. It includes inspiring and relevant articles from an international team of healthcare professionals, all with established expertise in mental health. It will also highlight relevant articles from the academic world as well as practical tools to support individuals working on the front line.

Six editions have so far been published and are available online. Individuals are encouraged to sign up to receive new editions by email four times a year.

To learn more and to sign up, visit <http://www.developingmentalhealth.org/welcome.htm>.

Crumbs from Elisabeth Elliot's Table by Judy Palpant

"God's work is never done under prime conditions. It is never what you expected. It is infinitely more glorious." - Elisabeth Elliot

My favorite photo of Elisabeth is in her book *The Savage My Kinsman*. Still living with the Quichuas in Ecuador, she is sitting at a table, her head bowed in prayer, elbows resting on the table and hands covering her face. A small lantern glows next to her Bible. All around is pitch black. The caption reads: "The Lord is my Light and my Salvation; whom shall I fear? I believe that, and asked Him daily, in the quiet hours before dawn, for light for that day."

I stare at this picture now, wondering where I would be without the example of this woman.

In 1980, our family was trying to find its way to a new nesting ground. Like a small flock of birds, our migration from Tucson, Arizona ended in Lugulu, Kenya at a Quaker mission hospital. I wrote to Elisabeth that first year in Kenya: "Thank you for playing a part in getting us here." A year earlier, while in the throes of deciding whether or not to go with our three children to Africa, I attended a retreat where she spoke.

On Saturday afternoon of the event, I stood in a line of women. It snaked through the restaurant. We all waited for five minutes with her. Like the Old Testament judge Deborah, sitting under the palm trees, Elisabeth sat in a booth. When it was my turn, I slid in across from her.

"How can I help you?" she asked. I laid out the possibility of going to Kenya as medical missionaries and paused.

Going directly for the jugular, she asked, "Do you want to do God's will?"

"Yes," I replied, while still quaking at the myriad of unknowns.

Her confident reply settled my heart. "My former husband Jim said that God is good at pulling strings for His children."

She ended our brief interaction regarding Scripture and counsel for discerning God's will by quoting a line from the hymn, "How Firm a Foundation:" "What more can He say than to you He hath said?"

Plain and simple. Direct. No nonsense.

As I left her, I hummed a different hymn in my head and heart: "My chains fell off, my heart was free. I rose, went forth and followed Thee." Back home in Tucson, I walked in the door and told my husband Sam, "I'm ready to go to Kenya."

Some months later, with tropical medicine school completed and three months of language school behind us, I put pen to a blue air form to let Elisabeth know and to express appreciation for being God's conduit. The Spirit used her words to soften and prepare my heart.

But in that moment of writing, we felt unsettled. Our spirits longed for family, friends and the familiar. New sights, sounds, smells and flavors assaulted our senses. We were experiencing the vice grip of the narrow end of the upside down funnel Elisabeth described. Not yet at home in our new place and culture, her words rang in my ears: "Do the next thing. In so doing God will meet you there. Do today what you know. Then you'll know what to do tomorrow. Make it an offering to God. Every task is material for sacrifice." So I picked up a broom and swept my cement floors.

"Wherever you are, be all there." I worked at not drifting through the day, week or month waiting for circumstances to change for the better--to stay engaged in the present.

"Accept your givens and your not givens." This proved a good Rx for comparison with other missionaries.

Over the six years in Kenya, these themes became part of the warp and woof of my life.

* * * * *

I was an impressionable 7-year-old when *Life* magazine was delivered to our home in Colorado Springs in 1956. The Auca Indians and the story of the martyred missionaries captured my imagination. Fast forward through high school, college, Urbana missions conference and life as a teacher married to a medical student. I rode train and tramped through tough neighborhoods to hear Elisabeth speak at a CMDA gathering in the fall of 1970. Over the years, I copied by hand whole paragraphs from her books onto pages in my journals.

I carried *Twelve Baskets of Crumbs*, a collection of her essays, to Kenya. A gift from a friend, she wrote on the fly leaf: "Surprise! You can't go to Africa without this!" Every book counted in our baggage allowance. We took a carefully chosen few. This one offered new territory to cover.

Like the prophet Samuel, Elisabeth's words did not fall to the ground. She herself recommended using Scripture or hymns to prepare your heart to move into God's presence. This practical advice issued from someone who admitted prayer to be work and confessed, "Praying is the hardest thing in my life. Thinking is next."

But she had an astute mind, and read widely. Her first books, *Through Gates of Splendor* (1957) and *Shadow of the Almighty* (1958), were best sellers. Critics of her book *No Graven Image* (1966) said that she asked more questions than she answered and "this book will edify no one." But her determined character and disciplined writings eventually spanned more than five decades, inspiring and instructing generations who followed. I was among them. Not only did she mentor and build me up in the faith, I enjoyed her references to other authors. Because of her recommendations, I consumed books by Amy Carmichael of India, Lilas Trotter of Algeria and British novelist Elizabeth Goudge.

We've recently watched futuristic demos of air drones delivering books to our doorsteps. But in the late 1950s, Elisabeth lived in the Ecuadorian jungle and received periodic air drops of books. I imagined her reading in her hammock after a day of translation work, her daughter Valerie sound asleep. Although an ocean away, I followed a trail of reading suggested by Elisabeth. She introduced our family to the writing of Isak Dinesen, so one of the first things I read by lantern light in Kenya was *Out of Africa*. Surrounded by distant drumming and bird calls, it was an environment that would have been familiar to Elisabeth.

* * * * *

The extremes of Elisabeth's life offered perspective. She lived and worked with three different tribes in Ecuador. Each time she started over at the bottom of the ladder. Eleven years of faithful translation work "achieved precisely nothing." Once, her portfolio of translation work tumbled off the roof of a bus and rolled down the mountainside.

She often referred to life as being a mystery to be comprehended and lived, not a problem to be analyzed and solved. "I can endure if I know life is not a problem but a mystery," she said. "The Apostles' Creed is full of mysteries. The mystery of God was the answer to all of Job's problems."

When I remember this, I am helped to walk by faith through the vicissitudes of life.

* * * * *

Since her death in June of this year, magazine articles and two memorial services stirred-up memories for all who knew Elisabeth well.

My relationship with her grew out of correspondence, a few retreats and a seminar at her home in Massachusetts. She spoke candidly about the joys of her life as well as her self-doubt and disappointments. Even though famous, I told my children, Elisabeth needed friends too. So my 10-year-old daughter made a trivet and we sent it to her. Later, she received a personal thank you postcard.

During one trip to Spokane, Lars and Elisabeth accepted our invitation for Sunday breakfast at a restaurant. In the rush of my husband leaving for hospital duty and me getting the family to church on time, we had the dubious distinction of inadvertently leaving them at the table to pick up the tab. Our chagrin and written apology brought only laughter and an enhanced intimacy to our relationship.

Another family story involves my sister inviting them to her home for lunch when Elisabeth was speaking in Colorado Springs. When Sandi asked them what they'd like to drink, her 3-year-old son piped up, "My mom drinks beer." While my mortified sister who doesn't even like beer pondered what to say, Lars chimed in, "I like an occasional beer myself." The lunch went on alcohol-free but with a good head of humor.

Controversial. Prickly. Forthright. Funny. A visit to her own home offered substance as well as hilarity. She introduced us to the skull on her book shelf. He had a name and she said he served as a reminder of her mortality. Later, we howled at her impersonation of a British preschool teacher.

"When the thing you fear comes upon you, He will be there," she aptly observed. Little could she have imagined that the last 10 years or more of her life would be progressively restricted by dementia--back in the narrow end of the upside down funnel. She lost all sense that she was part of something epic. Even in those last years, in some mysterious way, God's grace carried her.

Now, in her real home at last, she has passed into and through the wide end of the funnel. God has planted her feet in the ultimate spacious place.

Early this morning I heard geese honking. The migration south begins. I'm reminded of Elisabeth's clarion call to trust and obey the sovereign Lord. She frequently underlined this summons by quoting lines from "To a Water Fowl" by William Cullen Bryant:

*He, who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.*

Art asked Ron to loan him a book. When Ron asked to look something up in the borrowed book, Art told Ron that he had placed it in his mailbox in the central office. Art said he could "see" his hand placing it in the box. Ron let it go at that, knowing the book would probably turn up because his name was written in it. A few days later when he entered Art's office, Ron noticed the book sitting on top of Art's filing cabinet. How could that be?

Chris taught in the local international school, and she taught several different grades during her decade of service. When a new administration came to the school, she was not happy, especially with the new principal. She did not say anything in public, but she voiced her increasing disappointment with the school repeatedly to her closest friends and asked to change to a different type of service, one with national women in the church. Over time, most of her friends transferred to different fields. A decade later, while catching up with one of her friends, Chris mentioned how wonderful the school was and how she had enjoyed her time teaching there. How could that be?

These situations can be explained by considering the nature of memory. During the last half of the 20th century, neuropsychologists found that previously accepted concepts of memory may be wrong.

Classical View of Memory

Early experiments on memory showed that when individuals learned a fact or had an experience, most of the forgetting took place during the first few hours or days, a time called the consolidation period. When this period ended, most psychologists assumed the memories remaining were stable and permanent. They thought these memories remained unchanged for unlimited periods.

Such memories can be thought of as something like the books in one's bookcases, books that can be opened, read and perhaps even highlighted. Then the book can be placed back on the shelf with the original material unchanged. The next time a person takes the book off the shelf, the material in the book is the same as it was previously.

Current View of Memory

During the 1960s, neuropsychologists found that these memories do not always remain unchanged. They could literally see that neural connections in the hippocampus of the brain could be changed each time those memories were brought into consciousness. Unfortunately, the classical view was so widely held that these findings were largely ignored. However, around the turn of the century, people began to accept these new facts.

Apparently any time an old (consolidated) memory is recalled, it may become open again to changes and additions so that the original memory actually changes. Of course, it can go through reconsolidation again and again changing some each time.

From this view, memories are like files saved in a computer. They can be opened, read and, if they are changed, saved again in that changed form. The changes then become part of the document, and the original form is gone. The memory itself is different, and even the author does not have the original.

Each time the memory is recalled, it may be changed a bit until the reconsolidated memory is quite different from the original one.

False Memories

In their research on memory, psychologists have created false memories of events that never happened, such as adding an event in a person's childhood, getting lost in a mall or even being attacked by a dog. Although the event never occurred, people believe it did and recall details of what happened and how they felt.

False memories occur in real life as well. A woman identified psychologist Donald Thompson as the man who raped her. However, Thompson was on a live TV show at the time of the rape. Apparently the woman was watching him on TV just before the attack occurred, and she associated Thompson's face with the rape.

Art, in the first paragraph, probably had planned to put Ron's book in his box in the office then confused that

thought with an actual event creating a false memory.

Modified Memories

As noted in the current view of memory, whenever an existing memory is brought into consciousness, it may be modified before it is reconsolidated. A familiar example is a fisherman describing the fish that got away. Each time he tells the story showing the length of the fish between his hands, the fish gets longer. Is he lying?

When Hillary Clinton visited Bosnia in 1996, she and others emerged from the plane. A decade later after repeatedly telling the story, she recalled running off the plane under sniper fire. However, 2008 news footage of the event showed her and other passengers smiling as they walked off the plane. She may have been worried about sniper fire at the time, or she may have confused it with another event, and it became part of this memory. Of course, she may just have lied. A similar incident occurred with newscaster Brian Williams who saw a helicopter shot down in Iraq in 2003. By 2007 he said his helicopter was under fire, and by 2013 he said his helicopter was shot down. Either he lied or his memory was modified when recalled.

In the second introductory example, Chris modified her memory of teaching at the school. When parents of her former students thanked her for what she had done for their children and her former students also expressed their gratitude, those events became part of her memory and made the memory of teaching much more positive.

Metamemory

Metamemory refers to what people know or believe about their own memories. Most people, including missionaries, believe their memories do not change over time and their memories are correct. They often think that, after all, they were there when events occurred so they certainly saw and heard what happened. They have vivid memories of what they personally experienced, but they may not understand that the memories have changed.

What does the Bible say?

The Bible is not silent on the subject of memory. In fact, when people look at a concordance or search a digital file for a given word, they find hundreds of verses about words related to memory. The word "*memory*" comes from the Latin word *memor*, and it is the root of *memorable*, *memorial*, *memories*, *remember*, *remembrance*, *remind*, *reminder* and other similar words in modern translations.

The Old Testament is filled with different Hebrew words commanding the Israelites not to forget their heritage through people such as Abraham, prophets such as Isaiah and kings such as David.

Likewise, in the Greek New Testament gospels, Jesus urges the apostles to remember their Old Testament history as well as events recorded Acts and the epistles.

In Luke 22:19, Jesus told the apostles to take communion to remember Him and ended by saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me" (NIV 2011). Then in 1 Corinthians 11:23-25, Paul repeated Jesus.

An extended passage on memory is 2 Peter 1:12-15, "So I will always **remind** you of these things...I think it is right to **refresh your memory** as long as I live in the tent of this body...And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to **remember** these things" (NIV 2011).

Implications

Two missionaries who believe their memories are unchanging and who both believe their own memory is correct are likely to, at some time, find differences between what they "remember." Fortunately, this usually involves minor things such as the color they chose for paint or the route they were going to follow. However, it may also involve important issues such as the availability of car seats for children or differences in salary to be paid. These cases may lead to misunderstanding and conflict.

Believing that their own memories are correct, either or both missionaries may come to the conclusion that the

other is lying. This may occur between missionaries from the same culture and may be even more likely on multicultural teams or between missionaries and the nationals they serve. Having different memories does not mean either is lying. Such differences may occur because of a misunderstanding at the time the memory was formed or because memories of either or both may have changed over time. Discussing the differences is far better than confrontation.

Missionaries need to give each other the benefit of the doubt when differences occur. They must remind themselves that different memories may be formed during the event, or they may occur over time as they recall the original memories in different situations. In fact, field directors' memories may change more than those of persons they lead because similar situations may occur repeatedly, so field directors have more opportunities to modify their memories. The following suggestions may be helpful in preventing misunderstandings.

1. Put things in writing and give copies to all individuals involved.
2. Taking pictures of people present is easy with smartphones.
3. Take videos of the events.
4. All keep personal journals of activities and decisions reached.

Finally, all missionaries who have to raise funds or prayer partners when on home ministry assignments need to realize that, unless they have their presentations memorized and never change, their stories may change. Each time they think about an event, they may change their own memories of that event.

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

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