

# The Center for Medical Missions'

## *e-Pistle*

August 2018

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Welcome to this issue of the *e-Pistle*. I hope you find it informative, challenging and helpful. Thank you for taking the time to check out the articles I believe can be helpful.

I can hardly believe I'm writing this, but this will be my last *e-Pistle*. I've been putting the monthly newsletters together for 14 years.

I don't comment very often about the fact that I have two roles at CMDA: the Center for Medical Missions as well as administration/human resources work. I am the director for both. I don't know if it is age :) or increased responsibilities in both roles, but the combination has become overwhelming. I enjoy most parts of both roles so haven't chosen to give one up.

Instead, when looking at where I might cut back, I thought about finding someone to help me with newsletters. I believe the Lord brought to mind someone who loves to write and cares deeply about healthcare missions and missionaries. So I approached Judy Palpant about the possibility of taking over the newsletters. After much prayer and seeking counsel, Judy has agreed to help me out by taking over both the *e-Pistle* and the *Your Call* e-newsletters. What a blessing! (The *Your Call* e-newsletter goes to those preparing to serve.)

I have no doubt Judy will improve the newsletters. She has already invested time and effort in considering topics and possible contributors. I hope you will be as kind to her as you've been to me in offering articles and expressing appreciation when you found an article that seemed just made for you.

Thank you, Judy. I'm so thankful for you and your willingness to help!  
Susan

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## **Breaking the Will without Crushing the Spirit**

by Rev. Stan Key

*“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Psalm 51:17, NIV 1984).*

I know almost nothing about breaking a horse, but I've watched enough cowboy movies to have a rough understanding of what is involved. The process is typically long and rather violent. Though there is something beautiful about an unbroken stallion running wild over the prairie, such an animal is simply of no usefulness until he is “broken.” The word choice is powerful. The great challenge for the cowboy is this: how to break the horse's will without crushing his spirit.

One of the best pictures of entire sanctification I have ever read comes from a little book entitled Embracing Brokenness by Alan E. Nelson. The author likens the inner self (the soul) to an untamed stallion. Jesus comes to conquer the will. Until the “breaking” occurs, the soul remains wild and useless to the Master's service. Nelson describes what this process of breaking is like:

*I have noticed three parallels between breaking a horse and taming the soul. The first is that the world has little use for a wild, unbroken soul. An unbroken soul is primarily a consumer. It*

*occupies space and carries on many of the functions of a broken soul; but it performs little good...*

*The second observation is that the breaking process ultimately strengthens the bond between the cowboy (owner, rider, caretaker) and the horse. Prior to being broken, all that exists is admiration from a distance, and the basic maintenance of life (feeding, watering). Once brokenness occurs, there is a bonding and affection.*

*Third, one would think that the breaking process would sap the spirit, drive and energy of the horse. It does not. The horse is just as strong after breaking as before, but his abilities multiply many times over and his energy is no longer wild, but directed. The process of embracing brokenness is not a matter of becoming passive, unmotivated or lackluster. Rather, it is a catalyzing process that ultimately helps the soul reach its potential.*

I used to believe that after a person prayed the sinner's prayer and became a Christian, all that was needed was to grow in grace. Read your Bible, go to church, pray daily, join a small group, get involved in ministry and you'll automatically grow to be a mature saint of God. Right? It seldom works this way. The truth is, most of us are born into God's family with our wills still unbroken. Whether the unsundered-self manifests itself aggressively like a bucking bronco or passively like a stubborn mule, until the Master breaks us and conquers our will, we are useless in His service. Conquering the will is what sanctification is all about.

Perhaps Jesus is inviting you to meet Him in the Holy Spirit corral where He wants to teach you who is master and who isn't. The breaking process is not pleasant but there is no other way to live a life that matters. *"Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you. Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord"* (Psalm 32:9-10, ESV).

Point to Ponder: Until your will is broken you are like a wild stallion.

Prayer Focus: For someone whose will has never been broken.

**2019 CMDE Conference – Thailand**

Registration for the 2019 CMDE Conference has been open for a couple months now. If you have not received information about this but would like to, please let me know ASAP at [susan.carter@cnda.org](mailto:susan.carter@cnda.org).

## International Rotation Handbook Update in Process – Your Help Is Needed

My sister and I are in the process of updating CMDA's International Rotation Handbook. If you have not returned the form you received asking for updated information, it will sure be helpful if you can do that soon. I sent requests for the update July 25-30.

If your ministry is not listed in the handbook (you can check at [www.cnda.org/internationalrotations](http://www.cnda.org/internationalrotations)), but you would like it to be, please visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/cmmhandbook2018> to share the information needed to add your ministry to the handbook.

## Let Us Not Lose Heart in Doing Good

by Dr. Jefferson McKenney

***“Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith”*** (Galatians 6:9-10, NASB).

It was the natural optimist who, when he fell from the window of his office on the 13th floor, as he passed the 10th floor was heard to say, *“Well, so far so good!”*

It was the burned-out natural optimist who, when he fell from the window of his office on the 13th floor, as he passed the 10th floor was heard to say, *“Well, however this turns out, at least I’ll get a break!”*

People usually want to talk about issues that concern themselves personally. This is axiomatic. This is not only true of private conversations but carries over into public forums.

So let me admit right up front that I have a vested interest in what I am considering here: “growing weary in well doing” or in more modern English, “burning out,” specifically burning out in ministry and service. I’m writing about burnout. And I’m writing about burnout, because it concerns me. It concerns me, in part, because there might be some people close to me who walk along the edge of that abyss. I might own real estate on the edge of that abyss myself. But more importantly, it concerns me because it concerns the state of my Master’s house and His people.

“Burnout” has clearly been an issue for millennia. Remember it was 50 AD when the apostle Paul wrote to encourage the church at Galatia to (literally translated), “*not become despondent in doing the noble*” (as concise a description of burnout as you’ll find). But it was American psychologist Herbert **Freudenberger** in the 1970s who first coined the term “**burnout**” to describe the consequences of severe stress and high ideals in “*the helping professions*” (specifically nurses and physicians working in clinics for the poor).

In the 1980s, Christina Maslach (and Susan E. Jackson), by far the most quoted authors on the subject, broadened the scope and refined the definition as “a psychological syndrome involving emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment that occurred among various professionals who work with other people in challenging situations.” More simply still, “burnout emerges when the demands of a job outstrip a person’s ability to cope with the stress.”

What’s the big deal about burnout? Well, for one thing, a lot of adult American workers experience it (at least one-third of the workforce by most surveys). Some professions have a decidedly higher burnout rate (roughly two-thirds of pastors). And it is a well-recognized occupational hazard for missionaries, often discussed with hard-to-pin-down statistical claims thrown around such as “**80 percent of missionaries burn out and don’t finish their term.**” The exact statistics and the research methods are contestable, but the broader picture is evident. Burnout is a big problem in life in the developed world, in the service professions preponderantly and in foreign mission service specifically. Its causes are dissected, studied and reported upon ad infinitum. And its negative effects range across a broad spectrum, from

significant resultant health problems to an ineffective and toxic workplace environment to an epidemic of attrition from the mission field.

So burnout in the modern world and even more so in missions is a big deal; it's a real problem. But what to do about it...that is the question. There are reams of papers, discussions, websites and blog posts on the subject of what to do about it. People hold regular conferences about it, organize around it and even make careers out of it (many of them missionaries who left the field because of burnout). But I have yet to find one paper, discussion, website or blog giving voice to the thoughts of a missionary who hasn't left the field because of burnout...certainly not a toasted missionary who stayed.

When I began to consider writing an essay on this subject, I thought I might not have much to say and that, unless I had something new to say, I should just keep quiet. Yet I found that after more than 18 years of wrestling with burnout on the mission field, I had picked up a few things. (I'm kind of a slow learner.) I also realized that most of what I had learned of value, I had learned from others: from campesinos, patients, co-workers and countrymen validating what was already plainly placed in the Word. Surprisingly, but not surprisingly, Christ Jesus most clearly dealt with burnout. We don't have to imagine, "What would Jesus do?" For we have a more sure record of: "What did Jesus do? What did Jesus say?"

What I find there is balance, neither a single-answer doctrine of self-indulgence, nor a dictate to march until you drop, but a balance of heart principles. What follows then are principles I've painfully learned on the field from co-workers and countrymen, and from watching Christ Jesus deal with growing weary in well doing. I offer them remembering that I'm never more than a few steps away from being utterly done, nothing left, staring off into the jungle with only the desperate resolve of Peter ringing in my ears: "To whom else can we go?"

As I put thoughts down on a document, it also slowly dawned on me that this document was quickly becoming like a fistful of rice. You add a little water and pretty soon you better get another bowl. Market research has shown that of the half of you who are nice enough to even open this newsletter when it arrives, only half are still reading at 1,000 words, and by the time you cross the threshold of 2,000 words, only my sainted mother is left feigning interest. (I just made those numbers up, though I'm pretty sure my mother does read it through to the end).

The point is that I'm going to have to break this essay into two parts. After this (admittedly) protracted wind-up, the pitch is pretty straight forward, but it will take some words to lay down. There are 10 principles, each with a little explanation, some with an illustrating story from Loma de Luz. What follows then are three of the 10 principles and a story: straight from the gospel primer of "What did Jesus do?" and rigorously field-tested on the edge of burnout.

### **1. We are not made to work constantly. Sabbath was made for man.**

*"Then he said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath'" (Mark 2:27, NIV 1984).*

*"...But the news about Jesus spread all the more, and great crowds came to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses. Yet He frequently withdrew to the wilderness to pray" (Luke 5:15-16, Berean Study Bible).*

There is a reason God ordained a routine time of rest. We are not made to work constantly. And, even the Master needed time off duty, time to rest and time to regroup.

### **2. Recognize burnout (preferably proactively) and do something about it.**

*"Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest'" (Mark 6:31, NIV 1984).*

Jesus recognized the overwhelming nature of what He and His disciples were involved in, and He took steps to do something about it. What He frequently did about it was to go to a quiet place, "far from the madding crowd." He often went alone. But He also recognized when those close to Him were in need.

*"When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick" (Matthew 14:13-14, NIV 1984).*

"What had happened" in the gospel narrative here was that Jesus had just heard about the beheading of his cousin, John Baptizer. He recognized that He needed to get away and

process. But still moved with compassion for the large crowd, He healed their sick, then fed the 5,000 (plus women and children)...well, he actually fed 5,012 men, for the “12 baskets” of fragments which He had His disciples gather after the multitude was fed, in the original Greek, those baskets were “*kofinous*,” the kind of basket used specifically for carrying your lunch to work. He had not overlooked the needs of His 12 closest disciples, those who had served the multitude.

People need purpose, but they also need food, rest, time away, appreciation and loyalty, as well as someone recognizing that they've done well and watching their back because they do.

### **3. Bear another person's burdens.**

*“Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2, KJV).*

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30, NIV 1984).*

So about a month ago on a routine day at the hospital, Rosanne was in the midst of her routine job as nurse anesthetist and went down the corridor to one of the in-patient wards to do the pre-op evaluation of the next patient for surgery. That patient was Doña Julia, an 87-year-old woman who had fallen and broken her hip. She was scheduled for hip-pinning later in the day. Lying next to her on the ward was Doña Conchetina, a 63-year-old woman who had just come in through the Emergency Department with a gangrenous foot from complications of her uncontrolled diabetes. Conchetina needed an amputation and we were looking for a way to work her into the operative schedule later in the day and mentioned to Doña Conchita (and the neighbors who had brought her in) that we would do her surgery when we could. Still, Rosanne spent most of her time “pre-op'ing” Doña Julia since she was previously scheduled. (Pre-op is to prepare the patient for surgery, getting a medical history, checking the chart, explaining about the surgery and praying with the patient).

Doña Julia had only met her roommate an hour or two earlier, but after the prayer Julia's only comment or question, other than a loud “Amen,” was, “Well, what about her? She needs the operation, maybe she should take my place today.”



An 87-year-old poor country woman in pain for days with a broken hip, knowing she needs surgery to fix it, has taken on the burden of her just-met roommate to the degree that she is naturally more concerned about her neighbor's wellbeing than her own. Kind of humbling, isn't it?

We have so often seen the poor in great need show grace in sharing their neighbor's burdens that we can say that just being around it resets your perspective for the day. It **re-balances the demand/reward equation by taking the focus off of yourself**. And not growing weary in well doing is more about **balance** than resolve. These are the first three principles. The rest may get harder.

But, we just reached 1,979 words with 2,000 straight ahead. So, Mother, if you are still reading, the rest of the principles and the stories will have to wait for the next newsletter.

*To be continued in October.*

Jeff McKenney, MD, FACS, is a missionary surgeon. He is Founder and President of the [Cornerstone Foundation](#), and Asociación Piedra Angular de Honduras, Founder and Director of Loma de Luz Hospital in Balfate Colón, Honduras.

## **Global Missions Health Conference**

If you are going to be in the U.S. in November, don't forget the Global Missions Health Conference at Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky on November 8-10, 2018. You will find the registration information at [www.medicalmissions.com](http://www.medicalmissions.com).

## **Remedy Medical Missions Conference**

Also if you will be in the states in March, we would love to have you come participate in CMDA's **Remedy** Medical Mission Conference March 28-30, 2019 in Orlando, Florida. This will be the second annual "mini GMHC." Review of participants at GMHC show that the majority of

attendees travel from no further than six hours away, so CMDA is starting regional mini medical missions conferences for those living further away. Orlando is the first with more to come.

## **“Taboo” Topics**

by Dr. Ronald Koteskey

E. Stanley Jones, Methodist missionary to India, had a difficult year. He had a ruptured appendix, lockjaw started 10 days later, World War I broke out, several other missionaries died, and he was assigned their work. Yet he wrote to his agency in October 1915, “We are all well and happy in the work.” Soon Stanley had “nervous collapses” during important times, such as preaching. His mind would go blank, and he would have to sit down. Stanley seldom said anything about difficult events and how he felt about them.

However, his wife Mabel quite freely said what she thought. For example, Mable wrote this in her January 1929 newsletter, “Eunice (daughter) and I were not happy to have the other member of our trio still absent in America. We feel that as a family, we are paying rather a big price...We are missing Stanley and feel like ‘saying things’ to the Mission Board!”

Although there are very few missionaries that are as radical as E. Stanley Jones about not mentioning difficulties, there seem to be many more missionaries who are “Stanleys” than who are “Mabels.” A few missionaries are “Stanleys” to their supporters, but “Mabels” to their colleagues.

This silence about such “taboo” topics may make other missionaries believe something is wrong with them. Those missionaries may think they are not spiritual enough or that they are too weak to be good missionaries. They may become discouraged and suffer in their own silence. They may even give up and become “attrition statistics.”

It is time to break the silence about these taboo topics and be transparent about difficulties missionaries face. No one can list all these topics, but here are some common ones.

**Living in another culture is really hard.**

Most missionaries talk openly about the joy they have of “going into all the world,” but they seldom tell anyone that it is not fun most of the time. Even if they are fluent in the language, have a great ministry, are accepted by the people and love what they do, they are not really “one of them.” Even after living in their host culture for decades, many missionaries do not feel at “home.” They are always the “foreigner” whom children stare at and the white man or woman at gatherings. It is no fun being the stranger who is always noticed but is not really an integral part of the group.

Missionaries serving for only a few years often quit for “personal reasons,” and they become attrition statistics. Even missionaries who have served for a decade or two still feel culture stress, and they are relieved when they can return “home” to stay for their children’s education in high school or college. Others find a place to serve at agency headquarters. Still others become agency representatives in regions of their passport countries.

### **Missionaries often feel like friends and family have forgotten them.**

When missionaries leave to serve in another culture, they usually believe their relationships with friends and family will continue much like they have been at home. After all, they have email, blogs, Skype, Facebook and other social media. They send prayer letters with pictures of their family and post happy videos online. However, they seldom post anything about friends and family increasingly ignoring them as the months go by.

After the first year, people back home seem to have forgotten them. Missionaries usually say nothing about this taboo topic. A few may complain to colleagues on the field but certainly not to supporters, friends and family. What hurts the most is that it seems like the people back home do not really miss them. Missionaries understand that people back home are busy and have moved on, but understanding does not make it hurt any less. Missionaries do not feel at “home” where they are, and people in their passport countries seem to have forgotten them.

### **Money is such a difficult issue.**

- Asking for money. Missionaries often do not have enough money, and they usually feel uneasy asking for money. However, they do not talk about this taboo topic. Probably supporters do not really want them to ask for it anyway, so missionaries use different terms. They say they are looking for “partners” or “champions” who want the “opportunity”

to be part of the “blessing.” What they really need is money, but they do not want to come right out and say, “Please give me some.”

- Appearing above money. Missionaries think they have to appear more spiritual, so they “walk by faith” and “trust God to provide.” They really do need money for their families and ministries, but they often feel like it is taboo to just out and say so.
- Being judgmental about money. Missionaries raising funds to provide medicine to treat contagious illnesses in their host country find it hard not to be critical at times. If a supporting church cannot give any funds for inoculations because it has just spent several thousand dollars to change the color of a special room in their church, it is hard for missionaries not to be judgmental.
- Hiding their spending. Pastors can go on cruises with their families and church members, but if missionaries acknowledge taking a Disney cruise with their children, some donors may quit supporting them.

### **Missionaries don't like “always” saying goodbye, and it never gets easier.**

New missionaries knew they would have to say goodbye when they left, but they did not expect it to happen constantly. Most missionaries did not realize how different it would be saying goodbye as a missionary from what it was saying goodbye when they were at home. Here are some examples.

- To parents or grandparents (who may not live until they come again)
- To children going to college (for a year)
- Getting the call that a parent is in the final stages of life (and not getting home to say goodbye)
- Not being there on school breaks or vacations (seeing their children only every few years for a few days)
- To the field when going home, and to home when returning to the field (every few years)
- To other missionaries leaving for “home” (when they cannot go to theirs)

### **Missionaries often feel judged by people who don't live up to their own standards.**

Missionaries have no problem with being asked specific questions by churches, by mission committees or by individual donors. However, they do have a major problem when those asking the questions expect them to do something that the churches, committees or donors do not do themselves. Here are some examples.

- The questioners are critical when missionaries say they have had only three converts during the last year (their assignment is to teach TCKs in elementary school). Missionaries would like to ask the questioners how many converts they have had during the last year.
- The questioners want to know how many people the missionaries have disciplined (when the questioners have disciplined none).
- Questioners criticize how the missionaries have been helping the poor (when all the questioners have ever done is help serve the poor Thanksgiving dinner at a food bank).

### **Going back “home” is hard.**

Most missionaries look forward to going “home” where they can see friends and family. They think of it often during the year before they leave. However, not everything is positive.

Most people understand about the logistical problems. Many missionaries do not have a place to live, a vehicle to drive and many of the necessities of life such as dishes, bedding, towels, pots and pans to cook with and so forth. They probably do not like to borrow things—what if they lose or break a loved dish? Likewise, missionaries may have donors and churches all over the country, but they cannot afford all that travel, and some supporters may drop them if not visited.

In addition, missionaries know they have been changed by living in another country and their friends and relatives have been changed by changes in their own culture. Those missionaries may feel ostracized by people who feel uneasy about their own materialism when they are with someone who has given up so much.

### **What can missionaries do?**

The best thing missionaries can do is to break the silence and start talking with others about these taboo topics. Ideally, many of them would talk about the topics with each other, but that is not likely to happen.

Fortunately, there are things individuals or couples can do. Everyone needs someone to talk with. Of course, some missionaries may want to talk with a counselor; however, this issue does

not require a professional. All that is needed is someone who is willing to be transparent about their own experiences and keep confidences. Here are some possibilities.

- Talk with a friend in the same agency or even better with another agency.
- Ask someone to be a mentor.
- Talk with someone in your international church or a parent you have met in your children's school.
- Talk with a friend anywhere on Skype.
- Correspond with a friend through email.

All of the taboo topics mentioned here are commonly found among missionaries, so those experiencing the issues probably do not need professional help.



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