

The Center for Medical Missions'

e-Pistle

January 2011

Happy New Year! I trust you had a wonderful Christmas celebration with family and friends and you had plenty of time to reflect on the birth of our Savior. Now in the New Year, I pray you are refreshed and looking forward to continuing your service as the hands and feet of Jesus to a hurting world. What a privilege that He would choose to use us! I pray His love shines brightly through each of you.

We are very busy in the office preparing for our second annual Discover the Joy Medical Mission Conference. This is a regional conference where our goal is to promote both international as well as domestic missions. We promoted it heavily in area medical schools, nursing schools and schools of other health sciences. We also anticipate local medical professionals who frequently say they would love to serve the needy but never know of the opportunities. Our dream is to one day have these conference replicated around the country with focuses on avenues for medical ministry within an area. This conference will be held February 5th from 8:45 – 5:30. Thanks for praying with us.

We are also planning for our 3rd annual Medical Mission Summit which will take place September 8th and 9th. This is a gathering for sending agency executives and our goal is to promote partnerships and collaboration in completing the Great Commission. If you would like a leader from your sending agency to attend, please let me know.

Please be praying for the 2011 CMDE conference in Thailand. It will begin on Feb. 15th and go through the 24th. Drs. Stevens and Rudd will be leading some sessions. Be sure to chat with them if you have a chance and let them know if you have an idea of how the Center for Medical Missions could serve you better.

I hope the following are helpful to you.

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Cachinnation - Section XII: Taking Care of Self

by David Stevens, MD, MA (Ethics)

*Most of the time I don't have much fun.
The rest of the time I don't have any fun at all.
Woody Allen*

Woody Allen wasn't a medical missionary but he articulated the sentiments of many who are when it comes to fun. Their days are one long breathless sprint trying to catch up to an overwhelming workload. Nights are often a somnambulation to the operating room or wards. Add to those burdens - administration, management, communicating with supporters, spiritual ministry and trying to have family time, and fun falls off the curve. Fun and laughter is relegated to happenstance or more likely doesn't happen at all.

What do I mean by fun? I'm not talking about finding time to watch a video or even reading a good book. Both are important breaks from your busy schedule, but what I'm talking about is putting more laughter into every day and planning times for cachinnation (to laugh loudly or immoderately). You know belly laughing and having such a good time you are going to be talking about it for months if not years.

Hey, it is a holy thing to laugh! The Bible says so. Remember the story of Sarah's infertility? God came to Abraham and told him that Sarah would have a baby and then said he should be named Isaac, which literally means, "Laughter." Why? Because Sarah first laughed in derision that God could give her a son with this old man, but then she laughed with joy after Isaac was born. Sarah said, in Genesis 21:6, God has blessed me with laughter and all who get the news will laugh with me! (Message)

When God used Esther to save her people, the Jews created a new holiday for laughter (Esther 8:16, 9:17) David in Psalm 9:2 said, I'm whistling, laughing, and jumping for joy; I'm singing your song, High God. Eccl. 3:4 reminds us that there is A right time to cry and another to laugh. David tells us in his great Psalm 100 how to give thanksgiving to God, Bring a gift of laughter; sing yourselves into his presence and in Romans 12:15 we are told to, Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy.

Science has demonstrated what the Bible already tells us is true. Dr. Lee Berk and fellow researcher Dr. Stanley Tan of California's Loma Linda University have been studying the effects of laughter and found it reduces blood pressure, decreases stress hormones (epinephrine, dopamine), increases muscle flexion, boosts immune function by raising the levels of T-cells, B-cells and gamma interferon. It also causes the release of endorphins reducing the level of pain and produces a general sense of well-being. Other studies have shown increases in IgA, IgB and complement and those levels remain elevated for long period of time.

Laughter is emotional purging and a good vitamin for the soul. You feel better and are healthier when you laugh. If you could package the effects of laughter into a pill, you would become wealthy overnight!

Don't you love being around truly funny people? They make you feel good. Well, each of us can bring some laughter to others. The best way is to poke fun at yourself and what you do. Secondly, look for a source of laughter in common everyday occurrences and "crack a joke" about it. Take some time to read some jokes or funny stories and share them with others.

Have fun with your family. My wife Jody's dad lives with us and has advancing Alzheimer's. He has had a rich life of ministry as a college professor, gymnastic coach and mayor of his small town. Now he has trouble reading and his memory is largely gone but he makes me laugh because laughing is contagious. He still loves watching The Three Stooges and does he cachinnate! His belly laughs are contagious and before I know it, I'm laughing too!

Find things that make your family laugh. Over Christmas break we laughed a lot with our family. We shared funny stories from the past, told jokes and played games. One game that I learned can be played anywhere with some paper and pens with a group of people. Cut the paper into 2-3" squares. Give each person as many pieces of paper as you have people in your group. You start by writing any word or phrase on your paper such as War and Peace, a few good men or mid-life crisis. You have 60 seconds. You pass on the paper to the person on your left they have three minutes to put the phrase at the back of their stack and draw a picture (no words or numbers) on the next piece of paper to communicate that phrase to the person on their left. They pass their picture to the left; the person looks at it, puts it at the back of their stack and writes on the next piece of paper what they think the word or phrase is. You keep up the sequence until your stack gets back to you. Then each person shares their stack with everyone in the group. It is hilarious! A "a few good men" can end up being Columbus discovering America!

It is also good to have periodic planned times for fun and games. If not, you will get consumed by every day things. When we arrived on the mission field, we had "game night" every Friday evening with the other missionaries. We met at someone's house, had some good things to eat and played games, did skits and had lots of laughter. I can still remember a game night when we all came dressed for Christmas. Have you ever seen a tropical Santa? I came in a baby blue leisure suit with a huge pillow that shook like a "bowl full of jelly" with a beard made out of a surgical mask and cotton balls. I had written an appropriate adaptation of the 12 days of Christmas song to go with it. That was 25 years ago and I still can hear our laughter!

For even more fun, plan parties around holidays or just for the fun of it with your colleagues. Put a small committee together to plan the party. Play an old TV game like Hollywood Squares. We did that at a CMDA Christmas party by handing 12 staff a bag with a costume and giving them 15 minutes to change and come out acting and speaking as that character to play the game. I was Elvis in a white jumpsuit and cape! Dolly Parton, Don Knotts, John Wayne and other characters were there. That happened 10 years ago and I can still remember the hilarious time we had. We have had "50's" parties, Hee Haw's, an afternoon high "Tea" (all the ladies had to wear hat creations.) and a go-cart race between Elvis and Johnny Cash

This year at our Christmas party everybody arrived and had 5 minutes to cut out a snowflake to hang from the ceiling. We followed that with an ornament exchange to find the person who would be our prayer partner for the next year and then went out to the lobby. There you could earn fake money by answering questions about snowflakes, telling a funny Christmas story or

singing a chorus that has the word “snow” in it. The fake money was then used in an auction to buy any of eight boxes that had gag gifts in them or something valuable like a half-day off certificate. We played a new TV game (have you ever fished for pretzels with a wet gummy worm and tried to get it into your mouth?), had a banquet with a singing group, gave presents and had a devotional to end the evening. It was a 3 hour party that people are still talking about.

Okay, God tells us to laugh and it is good for us! What can you do to get more laughter in your life and the life of your friends and colleagues? As you do you will find the added benefit of better morale, better bonding and better strength for what God has called you to do.

Now, go cachinnate!

Here are a few funny quotes to get you started:

- I didn't attend the funeral, but I sent a nice letter saying that I approved of it.
 - Mark Twain
- They say such nice things about people at their funerals that it makes me sad to realize that I'm going to miss mine by just a few days.
 - Garrison Keillor
- Skiing combines outdoor fun with knocking down trees with your face.
 - Dave Barry
- No matter how rich you become, how famous or powerful, when you die the size of your funeral will still pretty much depend on the weather.
 - Michael Pritchard

Rom. 12:15: **Laugh** with your happy friends when they're happy;

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Cura Animarum

by Rev. Stan Key

Shallow faith makes shallow Christians. But when we find ourselves in the deep waters of some great tragedy or standing on the brink of the abyss... trite answers just won't do. I don't know about you, but when I face a week like this one, I don't want to sing some “little praise chorus.” I find myself turning back to some of the great hymns of the faith that have stood the test of time.

William Cowper (1731-1800) battled depression and insanity all of his life. Even sitting under the ministry of Rev. John Newton (converted slave trader and author of Amazing Grace) did not lead him to the assurance of inner peace he so desperately craved. But it was from the agony of his life that he wrote some of the deepest and most moving hymns in the English language, notably There Is a Fountain Filled With Blood and God Moves In a Mysterious Way. If you've had a hard week, find a quiet spot to get alone with God and allow these words from Cowper's pen to massage your soul.

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessing on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

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Resources

Consultations: Every once in a while I like to remind you that you do have access to many specialists who are willing to receive ex-rays, labs and questions concerning patients you are caring for. To take advantage of this process you need to send the information to md2ndopinion@aol.com. Mrs. Mary Jane Jewell will happily share your email with a specialist who has volunteered to assist. I trust you find this service helpful. If you do, you might want to send a note to Mary Jane, telling her how much you appreciate her service. To be fair to the consultants, this free service is only available to those who are working in international ministry.

Book you might want to recommend to visiting medical/dental students/residents: **Ask a Missionary: Time Tested Answers From Those Who've Been There**, by John McVay, General Editor

Description: If you are exploring doing something extraordinary for the glory of God among the nations, *Ask a Missionary* will give clarity and answers for a journey into missions. Because they have “been there,” over one hundred missionaries from around the world including Elisabeth Elliot, Tom Hale MD, David Stevens MD, David Topazian DDS, and George Verwer, share their insightful wisdom and practical advice on everything from making the decision to go, to stepping into a new culture, and everything in between.

- How can I know if God is leading me to become a missionary?
- How do I select a mission organization?
- What type of academic or practical training should I consider?
- How will I be funded?

This book can be purchased from the CMDA Bookstore but it will have to be sent to a US address.

Relationship Time

By Dr. Ron Koteskey

Most people in missionary service today are not that blatant about ignoring their family, at least not in statements about their priorities. Most missionaries say that their relationship with God is their top priority, but their priority order after that may differ greatly, some putting their ministry second while others put family second.

However, even those who say that spouse and children are their next priorities may not “walk the talk,” may not live what they say. Let us consider the real order of a person’s priorities and relationship time. Here are the “who, what, when, where, and why” of such time.

What?

Many missionaries say that their relationship with God is their top priority but do not have time for daily devotions. Likewise they may say that their relationship with their spouse is their second priority but do not have time to spend with him or her. Though people differ greatly in talent, intelligence, income, and so forth, everyone has the same amount of time, 24 hours in every day, 7 days in every week, and 52 weeks in every year. One can see the real order of a person’s priorities by looking at how that person spends time.

Every relationship takes time to maintain. We may marvel at the wonderful relationship a person has with God and wonder how it happens. Then we find that the person daily spends much time in the Word and in prayer. Likewise, for spouses to have a wonderful relationship, they need to regularly spend time together. This is relationship time, a regularly scheduled time when they can do things that they both enjoy together. This is not a “problem-solving” time for their relationship, but a positive, stress-free time for them as a couple.

Why?

The author of Hebrews (2:1) gives the general principle that people who do not pay careful attention tend to drift away. Though that writer was talking about the truth those people had heard, it is also valid for relationships both divine and human. People who neglect their relationship with God tend to drift away from him. People who do not “pay more careful attention” to their relationships with each other tend to drift apart.

The people that author was writing to were not rejecting what they had heard, just neglecting it. Likewise, one does not have to reject God or other people to drift apart. Spouses who do not regularly maintain their marriages find themselves drifting apart. Such maintenance takes time, relationship time.

Who?

Husbands and wives of all ages must have time alone to maintain their marriages. Of course, they want to spend time with their children, friends, colleagues, nationals, and may want to talk with a pastor or counselor. However, relationship time is a time for them to be alone together without interruption. Here are some guidelines.

- Children sleeping, gone to school, or with a baby sitter
- Cell phones and pagers turned off, not even on vibrate
- Telephone off the hook or silenced so the call can go to the answering machine
- Doorbell ignored (with blinds pulled so that potential visitors cannot see you are home)
- If in “public,” a place where you can be “alone” as a couple, such as a table or booth far back in a restaurant

By definition relationship time is time to be alone without interruption or distraction.

When?

The time of day or day(s) of the week makes no difference. The important thing is that it be regular, long enough for both partners, and “carved in stone” on both schedules. That means that if a committee meeting is scheduled during your relationship time, your answer is “I have something on my schedule then. I’ll see if I can change that.” Then you change it only if your spouse is in full agreement (no pressure).

The time can be daily or weekly, and which is best often depends on the family situation and personal preferences. One spouse may not want to miss particular television programs. That spouse is saying, “My watching _____ for a couple hours each week is more important than my relationship with you.” Or, “my watching the news for half an hour every day is more important than my relationship with you.” They may not say it in those words, but as we all know “Actions speak louder than words.”

Some couples prefer to spend one larger block of time (at least two hours, preferably more) together during the week. Others prefer spending a shorter time together each day. Here are some examples.

- Date night every Thursday evening with a sitter taking care of the children
- Tennis and lunch every Saturday
- Ample cuddling time every morning before getting out of bed
- Reading books aloud and talking together about them before falling asleep at night

The point is that it does not matter when you carve out a space for each other; all that matters is that you do it at the best time for both of you in your situation.

Where?

Where you spend the time together is irrelevant as long as you can have uninterrupted time alone. Where you meet depends on cost and what you want to do together. Some places are free, and you may want to go there most of the time and then occasionally go to places that cost something. Here are some places that people have met.

- Somewhere in your home (the most common place)
- A park
- A restaurant
- A lake or river
- Hiking trail
- Coffee shop

Again the point is that it does not matter where you meet; all that matters is that you do so at a place that both of you enjoy.

How?

How you spend your time together is again up to you, as long as you do something that you both enjoy. Remember that this is not a problem-solving time that you come to dread each day or week. If you have problems that need to be solved, set aside a different time to work on those and ignore them during your relationship time; let them temporarily be the “elephant in the room” that no one is talking about.

Relationship time is not a time for complaining; rather it is a time for building each other up. It is all right to apologize by saying, “I’m sorry I _____” as long as there is no expectation or pressure for a similar apology from the other spouse. It is not a time for sex, unless both spouses want it (no pressure put on either).

Relationship time is a time for interacting with each other. That is why dinner together or a walk in the park is better than a movie or a concert where others in the audience discourage conversation and the focus of attention is the entertainment. Here are some activities people do.

- Play a table game together
- Climb a hill and look out over a valley
- Canoe on a river or lake
- Skate on a rink or sidewalk

- Feed the birds

Of course, these are all rather traditional. Many books and websites have ideas for more “creative dates.” Such times together may include such things as the following.

- Washing the car together (as long as it includes lots of throwing and spraying water on each other)
- Playing hide and seek together in the back yard (when one finds the other, you can hide together in the same bushes—from no one in particular)
- Taking a pile of paper to the park and seeing who can make the plane that will fly the “funniest”
- Skipping rocks on the lake to see who can get the most skips

Again, the possibilities are limited only to what you can imagine. What matters is that you are having fun doing something you both enjoy so that you can talk and laugh together.

I have come more and more to realize the truth in what the professor said in my first psychology class. “Couples who do not talk regularly about how they feel about their relationship drift further and further apart regardless of how close they think they are.”

For a more complete treatment of this topic as well as other topics please visit www.missionarycare.com. Also please let your non-medical colleagues know about these free resources.

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