

The Center for Medical Missions'

e-Pistle

July 2009

Welcome to this month's e-Pistle. I'm sorry there is not an article from Dr. Dave Stevens this month. He is on a three month sabbatical and while I was seriously tempted to ask him to make an exception and please write an article, I managed to refrain. Well almost! Maybe I did mention to him that it was time for the e-Pistle, but I didn't outright ask him for an article. I'm sad to say he didn't take the hint.

In place of Dave's article, I have shared some thoughts that I've been contemplating in recent months. I hadn't actually sat down and tried to put my thoughts in order until I took on the task of writing something for this newsletter. As you will quickly see, I am neither a writer nor a theologian; but hopefully someone will be challenged and encouraged by what I share.

Also included here are some announcements, Rev. Key's "Cura Animarum" and Dr. Ron Koteskey's article on "The Trailing Spouse." Enjoy!

Now, I need your help. Do you have something you would like to share with the 1200 missionaries who receive this newsletter? I will need an article for next month's newsletter since Dave will still be on sabbatical. Surely one of you have 1) a lesson learned 2) best practice 3) amazing story of God at work or something that will inspire others. PLEASE!

I want to remind you that we here at CMDA are praying for you. If you have a specific request, please feel free to share it. Our staff are great prayer warriors and we will be happy to pray with you. Susan Carter susan.carter@cmda.org

Here is a list of articles that follow:

- [And the Lord Added to Those Who Were Being Saved](#) – by Susan Carter
- [Cura Animarum](#) – by Rev. Stan Key
- [Announcements](#)
- [Just a Trailing Spouse!](#) – by Ron Koteskey

And the Lord Added to Those Who Were Being Saved

By Susan Carter

The village is crowded with needy people. Widows are begging for scraps of food, orphans are barely covered in their tattered clothing, the elderly in broken down homes suffer in silence – lonely and without hope, harried mothers long for just a couple hours of rest, teenagers have a

million questions but no one to ask. Do you recognize this village? It is probably right outside your door.

These are just a few vignettes of almost every community in the world. What else is true of these communities? In most, there will be the Church.

Have you ever wondered how God reconciles the Church with the plethora of needs around it? I've been pondering this question in recent months, wondering what the Lord will say to me when I stand before Him. Will the Lord hold the Church responsible for the millions who are lost because they never saw the love of Jesus through the hands and hearts of His children?

Acts 4:32-35 (The Message)

32-33 The whole congregation of believers was united as one - one heart, one mind! They didn't even claim ownership of their own possessions. No one said, "That's mine; you can't have it." They shared everything. The apostles gave powerful witness to the resurrection of the Master Jesus, and grace was on all of them.

34-35 And so it turned out that not a person among them was needy. Those who owned fields or houses sold them and brought the price of the sale to the apostles and made an offering of it. The apostles then distributed it according to each person's need.

Acts 2: 43-47 (The Message)

43-45 Everyone around was in awe—all those wonders and signs done through the apostles! And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person's need was met.

46-47 They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved.

In these verses we have the history of the earliest church. The greatness of the coming of the Holy Spirit raised them above the world and filled them with such love that every man saw others as himself. This led them to make all things common, not by destroying property, but by doing away with selfishness and causing charity. There was no command to live this way, but love constrained them. It was a natural fruit of the love that each member of the community loved every other as his own soul. They felt and acted as family. It was voluntary and mutual, not mandatory. Love and concern, not social leveling, was the motive! This was love in action.

The guiding principle was “*from each according to his ability (Acts 11:29), to each according to his need (Acts 4:35).*”

Matthew Henry's commentary on these verses says, “There were evident fruits of Christ's grace in all the disciples said and did. They were dead to this world. This was a great evidence of the grace of God in them. They did not take away others' property, but they were indifferent to it. They did not call it their own; because they had, in affection, forsaken all for Christ, and were expecting to be stripped of all for cleaving to him. No marvel that they were of one heart and

soul, when they sat so loose to the wealth of this world. When such dispositions prevail, and are exercised according to the circumstance of the times, the testimony will have a very great power upon others.”

Therein is the issue from which my mind does not escape – that lifestyle resulted in “Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved.” If our churches today practiced mercy and grace in a manner similar to the earliest Church, I wonder how quickly the lost would be added to God’s kingdom? Making the question more personal – I wonder how quickly the lost would be added to God’s kingdom if I practiced mercy and grace in a manner similar to the earliest Church?

I don’t have a blueprint for what this should look like for every believer but I know the Lord will make it known to those who seek Him. We are responsible to take care in the distribution of charity – which it is given to those who have true need, such as those who are not able to provide maintenance for themselves, those who are reduced to want by well-doing and for those who give good testimony of having tried.

Let me ask you about the body of believers with whom you worship. What would your community look like if that body of believers took on tasks of welcoming widows to meals a few times a week, sharing clothing with orphans, offering friendship and help to the elderly, carrying water or providing some other necessary service for a harried mother or planning question/answer gatherings for teenagers with mature adults? Since God is unchanging, I believe He would take the actions of His children’s hearts and hands and would see that “every day their numbers grow as He adds those who are saved.”

I am resolved to get more intimately involved in meeting the needs of the hurting around me. If the Lord asks the same of you, will you respond?

[Back to top](#)

Cura Animarum

By Rev. Stan Key

What has become of the world in which we live? Seismic shifts are taking place. Have you noticed?

- Truth and morals are determined by polls and surveys.
- Being “real” is more important than being “right.”
- The idea that all men are created equal has been perverted into thinking that all men are created identical.
- The greatest virtue is “openness” and “tolerance.”
- “Homophobia” is considered a sickness while “homosexuality” is considered a lifestyle choice.
- We can no longer define the word “family.”
- People today are considered “great” simply because they are famous.

- We no longer have “heroes.” We have “celebrities.”
- The most important political reality is no longer who the leaders are and what they believe, but who the spin doctors are and how they manage the image.
- Moses (the law-giver) has a statue in the Supreme Court yet that very court makes the display of his laws (the Ten Commandments) in other government settings unconstitutional.
- The only sin our culture seems to believe in is believing in sin.

Maybe this helps to explain why the Episcopal Church now has an openly homosexual bishop and why America as a nation are unable to decide whether or not it is wrong to yank a baby from her mother’s womb and suck out her brains.

Can such cultural drift be stopped? Is it inevitable that societies drift from the right to the left, from discipline to permissiveness, from orthodoxy to heterodoxy, from faithfulness to unfaithfulness? What can be done to reverse the effects of the slippery slope?

Many think nothing can be done. Ah, you can’t turn back the clock, many say. Wrong. You can turn the clock back. And you better if the clock is telling the wrong time! A clock, like a culture, is man made. We created it, we messed it up, and with God’s help, we can fix it.

[Back to top](#)

Announcements

International Aid Closes

Just last month I told you of International Aids on-line catalog and some wrote to say how excited they were about this opportunity. This month I am saddened to have to tell you that International Aid has closed its doors due to insufficient finances.

XIV ICMDA World Congress

International Christian Medical and Dental Association

Punta del Este - Uruguay
 South America
 Hotel Conrad Resort
 1-8 July 2010
www.icmda2010.org

Past Issues of CONTACT

The publication Contact, one of the influential journals in global health over the years, which has been a publication of the World Council of Churches, is now being published by key WCC partners around the world. Past issues are available on the WCC website. You can find it at <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/justice-diakonia-and-responsibility-for-creation/health-and-healing/contact-magazine.html>

Just a Trailing Spouse!

By Ron Koteskey

The year did not turn out like Mary expected. She had thought that taking time off and living in a developing country while her husband taught in a national hospital would be a welcome relief from the stress of working as a teacher. However, she soon got bored with sweeping floors, painting walls, doing laundry and trying to find fresh meat at the market.

She felt little satisfaction with what she was doing after just a couple of weeks and was looking forward to getting home and back to work using her talents. However, Tom felt fulfilled and loved what he was doing, and now he wanted to stay at least another year, maybe permanently.

At first these differences led to tension in their home, and they avoided discussing them. However, as tension increased and they talked more about the differences, their discussions began to become disagreements that were never really settled.

Mary was what many people call a “trailing spouse,” a husband or wife following a marriage partner who takes a job in another place. Being a trailing spouse may mean leaving behind a deeply satisfying place of work and service to begin again, somewhere else in the world. The challenge of finding such a place in foreign locations without support networks and knowledge of the local situation may be difficult, frustrating and time consuming. Consider how this has happened in history, what makes it an issue, and what can be done about it.

Did this happen in Bible times?

This has happened since the Book of Genesis. God told Abram to leave his country and his extended family. If he did this, Abram’s descendents would be a great nation. Abram took his wife Sarai (later Sarah) and his nephew Lot and followed God’s direction to Canaan, to Egypt, and back to Canaan (Genesis 12-13).

The agreement was between God and Abram, and when it was renewed, it was again between the two of them (Genesis 15). Both Abram and Sarai came up with “schemes” for the other to do, schemes indicating that they did see her as a part of the agreement.

Finally, more than another decade later, when He again confirmed his agreement with Abraham, God changed Sarai’s name to Sarah and included her in the agreement, saying that “she will become the mother of nations; kings of people will come from her” (Genesis 17:16).

This issue affected the marriage relationship even after God said Sarah had an important role in his plan. Here is how it unfolded chronologically after God made the agreement with Abram in Genesis 12.

- 10 years after the agreement: Sarai told Abram that it was his fault that she was suffering (Genesis 16:5).
- 25 years after the agreement: Sarah told Abraham to get rid of the maid when Ishmael teased Isaac (Genesis 21:9-10).

This issue was a quarter of a century old. Both times they tried to resolve the issue by sending the maid out into the desert.

What is the issue?

The basic problem is that, like Mary, spouses who have been involved in fulfilling occupations of service to others suddenly find themselves doing “trivial” tasks that anyone could do. Lack of meaningful work, culture shock, and loneliness may leave the spouse miserable. Marital problems and even premature departure may finally result.

Trailing spouses experience the following:

- Frustration & resentment
- Loss of identity & self-esteem
- Loss of self-confidence
- Feeling empty & lost
- Sleep problems & unhappiness
- Anxiety & depression
- Physical illness

The list could go on and on, but with about 80% of the spouses having a college degree and about 65% having left careers at home; it is not surprising that about 40% of overseas assignments are cut short because of failure of spousal or family adjustment. The overwhelming majority of the trailing spouses are women, but men have the same symptoms, perhaps even more pronounced since they so often find their identity in their work.

What can agencies do?

Agencies can take some steps to help:

- Involve spouses in the selection process. Remember you are moving a family, not just a person.
- Involve spouses in decisions about the move from the beginning. The more they feel a part of the move, the less they feel like they are just “trailing.”
- Send both husband and wife on a familiarization trip so that they can make decisions together about housing, schools and so forth.
- Allow for some flexibility in policies when something concerns the spouse. The spouse’s attitude may be far more important than a policy.
- Ask spouses if there are things they would like, such as subscriptions to magazines or DSL Internet access at home, and provide reasonable ones.

- If spouses are interested in either full or part-time employment, find a place in your agency if possible, or use resources there to help find work locally.
- Do whatever you can to encourage spouses to take “ownership” of the move too.

What can trailing spouses do?

Here are things spouses can do:

- Realize that contentment is a choice, a choice they can make. If they choose to be content, it will color their whole experience. Paul, an early missionary, said that he had learned to be content in any and every situation, whatever his circumstances (Philippians 4:11-13).
- Learn about their new home through books, the Internet, or people who have lived there. Of course, people who had a bad experience need to be taken with a grain of salt because they may view things through rust colored glasses.
- Take this experience as an opportunity to evaluate themselves and their lives. This may be the time to rethink and regroup.
- With e-mail, Skype, and the Internet they may be able to continue their work in another country—or develop a new line of work that they can do back “home” or anywhere else for that matter.
- The spouses need to talk with each other often and throughout their move and settling time realizing that being expats means repeated compromise.
- Take this as a time to develop a new “hobby” that is both enjoyable and meaningful.
- Continue their education in the context of a new culture to get a different viewpoint.
- Find a new ministry with children in the neighborhood.

Finally, rather than remaining a trailing spouse, become a prevailing spouse. Eleanor Roosevelt could have faded into the background as a trailing spouse, but she chose to make an effective and satisfying life for herself. Even after the death of her husband she continued to be an internationally prominent author, speaker, politician, and activist. She is remembered today for what she did, not just that she was a “first lady.”

Taking these steps may result in a trailing spouse becoming a prevailing spouse, one that gets a whole new lease on life.

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

[Back to top](#)

The fastest and most secure way to give to CMDA is through our [secure online giving site](#). Your gifts will be used to continue and expand the critical work of CMDA as we minister to doctors, students and patients.

Center for Medical Missions

PO Box 7500
Bristol, TN 37621
423-844-1000

www.cmda.org/cmm

To unsubscribe, send an e-mail to susan.carter@cmda.org. Thank you.