

# The Center for Medical Mission's *e-Pistle* June 2016

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Hi again! As I put together another *e-Pistle*, I'm mindful that many of you are incredibly busy, so I'm hesitant to make this one so long. But each article will be an encouragement to someone, so I couldn't find one to leave out. This issue may be especially helpful to spouses of healthcare professionals. Both Dr. David Stevens' and Judy Palpant's articles are about raising children. I know many families will be heading home for HMA this month and next. Meridith Axt's article will encourage you. As always, Rev. Key's devotional will challenge – I know it did me.

John McVay's and Bruce Dahlman's resources will be helpful to healthcare professionals and Ron Koteskey's member-care article will be just what someone needs.

Together they make a long but useful newsletter. I have asked the Lord to use it to bless those He chooses. If you would like to contact any of the authors, please ask and I will make the introduction.

Enjoy!  
Susan

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## **Cura Animarum – I'm Sorry for the Way I Said I'm Sorry** by Rev. Stan Key

### **Scripture reading: Luke 15:11-32**

*"Then Pharaoh sent and called Moses and Aaron and said to them, 'This time I have sinned; the Lord is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong'...But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet again and hardened his heart..." (Exodus 9:27,34, ESV).*

Confessing sin is harder than you think! Getting it right requires wisdom, timing, courage and, most of all, humility. Many who try to ask for forgiveness sometimes make a bad situation even worse. Take Pete Rose's apology as a case in point. In 2004, after 14 years of loudly denying that he had ever bet on baseball, the baseball legend finally spoke up and apologized for his behavior (I think).

*I'm sure that I'm supposed to act all sorry or sad or guilty now that I've accepted that I've done something wrong. But you see, I'm just not built that way. Sure, there's probably some real emotion buried somewhere deep inside. And maybe I'd be a better person if I let that side of my personality come out. But it just doesn't surface too often. So let's leave it like this: I'm sorry it happened, and I'm sorry for all the people, fans and family that it hurt. Let's move on.*

Huh?

Unfortunately, Pete Rose is not the only one who seems clueless as to how to make things right. Remember Richard Nixon's "confession" concerning the Watergate break-in? "Wrongs were committed." Or what about Bill Clinton's explanation of his relationship with a White House intern? "It depends what the meaning of the word 'is' is." Then there is Martha Stewart, Michael Jackson, O.J. Simpson...does anyone know how to say "I'm sorry?" Does anyone know how to make things right?

1. *Be brief.* If we can't state the matter in one or two sentences, it probably means we are not ready to confess. Lengthy explanations are usually justifications and rationalizations, not confessions.
2. *Be specific.* Name the sin. Don't be vague or generic.
3. *Take responsibility.* Avoid disclaimers such as "if" or "but." Don't rationalize, justify or blame. Don't play the victim. Simply say, "I take full responsibility for what I did. Please know it won't happen again."
4. *Humbly ask for forgiveness.* If steps 1, 2 and 3 are done well, then humbly ask the offended party, "Can you forgive me? Can our relationship be mended?"

Perhaps the best example of someone who got it right is the Prodigal Son. In three short sentences, he was able to name his sin and find authentic forgiveness and restoration. Let his example be a model for you.

*"Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants" (Luke 15:18b-19, ESV).*

*"Never ruin an apology with an excuse." –Benjamin Franklin*

Point to Ponder: Vague confessions result in vague forgiveness.

Prayer Focus: Divine help regarding any apology you need to make.

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## **Raising Children Successfully Overseas – Part 1**

### **David Stevens, MD, MA (Ethics)**

I was sort of raised in a "missionary" family, but I didn't know it at the time. My dad was an evangelist and we lived in a 40-foot house trailer from the time I was two years old to four years old. We parked that trailer by churches for revivals for 10 days at a time. From then until I started high school, Dad was gone from a week to 10 days at a time, home for a few days and then off to another meeting. In the summer, we took off as a family and attended camp meetings where dad was preaching until school started again in the fall. Then, like missionary kids often do, I went to high school at a Christian boarding school 18 hours away from home by car. I usually only saw my parents at Christmas and during the summer. Thinking back to those days, I've wondered why my siblings and I turned out so well. What principles did Mom and Dad follow?

Then I think about my three children. I wouldn't consider myself a super dad. I was extremely busy and overworked, as a missionary healthcare professional just like you may be. Why are all three doing well and working in cross cultural ministry (one in Africa and two in the inner city in the U.S.)? I wasn't exposed to any resources about raising "third culture kids" before we went overseas or even while we were there, at least that I can remember. That is a concept that happened after we were off the field.

Now I have five grandchildren being raised cross-culturally. The nearest ones are eight hours away in inner city Memphis, which is much more dangerous than where we raised our children in Kenya. I'm watching my children rear my grandchildren, and they are doing a great job of it.

I recently came across a handout from a presentation at the [Global Missions Healthcare Conference](#) in 2005 which related some of the principles discovered by Dr. Nick Stinnett, an international family researcher. He studied the characteristics of strong families in the U.S. and overseas and boiled that down to six key principles. As I read them, I realized these were principles my parents, Jody and I and our children have or are employing, though it may be unwittingly. They are worth sharing and thinking about to better use them in your family life.

1. Commitment: I never had any doubt my parents were committed to me more than their ministry. At the same time, I saw they were committed to God more than me. Yeah, that sounds weird, but it is true. As a child I knew I was highly valued by both my mom and my dad. I can remember Dad sharing when I was young that he would miss us so much when he was away that sometimes he would cry. As soon as he got home he had us in his lap asking questions, offering us a quarter if we could wiggle our ears like he could and loving on us.

He missed a lot of our school and church events, but I knew he wanted to be there. When he was at home, he made those a priority. And then we had wonderful summers together being part of his world, listening to him preach, watching him lead people to Christ after an altar call and meeting new people. Between meetings, we always did something as a family, learning, experiencing and having fun together. As I got older, my dad would even take me out of school occasionally to take me to a meeting with him if there was something special to do like fishing or experiencing something together. He did that with my brother and sister as well. And my marvelous mom never complained but seemingly effortlessly changed roles from teaching second grade and managing everything to Dad being home and running the show.

I modeled that with my children. Before they reached school age, we traveled together on home assignment. When they were in school, I made a point of being at home between weekend speaking opportunities, and then I took them along during the summer. On the mission field, we had breakfast, lunch and dinner together, unless there was an emergency. What healthcare professional does that regularly in the U.S.? I helped put them to bed by sharing a Bible story, praying and then telling an adventurous story before they fell asleep. They would wait beside the dirt road until I walked down from the hospital and then ambush me on the way home. I would put one on my back and the other on the front and carry them home before our youngest was born on the field.

We homeschooled, started a one-room schoolhouse and told our children they could go to boarding school when they wanted. They chose to go in fifth and sixth grade, and as I dropped them off I told them what my dad told me when he dropped me off at boarding school, "Son, if things don't go well, just give me a call and I'll come and get you."

I never doubted how much my mom and dad loved each other. I'm sure they had fights, but I never saw them. All we saw was their overarching commitment to the Lord even if it meant sacrifice, their commitment to each other and their commitment to us.

That continued after my family and I moved to Kenya to serve on the mission field. Dad brought a work team over at least once a year to help out, or he would come over just to go on vacation with us. He always said the same thing when he entered our door or we picked him up at the airport, "Well, son, I'm here spending your inheritance. I'd rather enjoy it with you than you have to spend it after I'm gone."

Demonstrated commitment to your children is one of the keys of a good relationship and a strong family. What have you done today?

2. Affection and Appreciation: These two are more than mental attitudes. They are demonstrated in word and deed with hugs, kisses, thank you's and affirmations. They are passed out generously and demonstrated to your spouse as well as your children.

My mom had one of us children be her helper each day—setting the table, helping with the dishes, cleaning up—and I still remember her and my dad, even though being mom's helper was required, expressing their happiness and thanks for what we did until it became a work habit for us. Because of their example, it morphed into a spirit of thankfulness to those who did things for us. I still model that to my grown children by clearing the table, cleaning up why Jody cooks and washing the dishes after meals.

Dad always looked for opportunities to praise my mom and us in front of others. I never heard him say anything critical of Mom behind her back. We were occasionally sermon illustrations when he preached, but he always said something positive about us before others. Not because we were perfect but because we were loved.

Affection goes beyond actions to our attitudes, even when our children or spouse disappoints us in word and deed. Am I kind then? Do I withhold my love and use my emotions to blackmail behavior? When I discipline my children, do I always show affection and love as well?

*To be continued*

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## **Launch Survey**

**John McVay**

The results from this recent survey of 466 long-term missionaries from 46 agencies show how to launch more people into international missions by identifying positive launch factors as well as hindrances to overcome. These insights help recruiters recognize their own blind spots and be more effective mobilizers. Factors and hindrances are presented for three generations: Millennials, Gen Xers and Boomers. Additional survey results and discussion show:

- How many rated the mobilizer/recruiter helpful and why
- How they discovered the agency they joined
- Life stages most significant in deciding to go

You will find the report of this study at [www.launchsurvey.org](http://www.launchsurvey.org).

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## **Digital African Health Library**

**by Bruce Dahlman, MD, and Musya Mutua**

Are you a health-related missionary in Africa? You might wonder what you will use to help make relevant, evidence-based decisions in your new ministry context. You've possibly been told the internet is slow and unreliable, and after your past institution-related library access is finished, what next? Hauling textbooks?

Most healthcare missionaries face the same situation – and so have I during my 23 years of connection to ministry, clinical practice and family medicine education development in Kenya and East Africa. Our residents and graduates, along with their medical and clinical officer colleagues, look for the same thing.

The Digital African Health Library has been created to meet our needs. What is it? It is a specifically chosen set of best of breed, Africa-relevant resources with an integrated search engine that can be used offline on your smartphone or tablet, helping you make the best, evidence-based clinical decision at the point of care.

Five Oxford handbooks covering from surgery to tropical medicine, the British National Formulary, DynaMed, CALS emergency care guidelines, Africa Health Journal CME and more – all for just \$30 for the first year. One Oxford handbook costs more. Android based (with iOS coming); pay with your VISA or MasterCard; 300 mb download takes 45 minutes on 3G or true W-Fi, alternative setups are available for the "bush." For security purposes, it is available only once you arrive in Africa; you won't find it on the PlayStore from where you sit in America. It's available in most of the sub-Saharan African countries.

Institutional subscriptions are available to encourage the medical officers and interns you might work with to think critically; your hospital can decide a level of subsidy to incentivize them to use the evidence.

Visit us on our website for more details at [www.digitalhealthlibrary.net](http://www.digitalhealthlibrary.net). The accompanying brochure explains more detail as well. You can also reach us at [Marketing@digitalhealthlibrary.net](mailto:Marketing@digitalhealthlibrary.net).

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## **Grief & Joy**

**by Meridith Axt**

*Written originally for [www.axts.blogspot.com](http://www.axts.blogspot.com)*

There are many reasons I haven't written in a while...moving back across continents, celebrating weddings,

finding a house, traveling to visit friends and family, celebrating holidays, taking care of my boys, reconnecting with people – all while trying to find moments to rest and survive through the third trimester of this pregnancy...

But there is another reason.

I'm scared.

Every time I think about writing and trying to process some of my swirling thoughts and emotions, fear rises up in me like a huge wave that just might drown me. Right now, I'm keeping my head above water. Just barely some days – but I'm still swimming (or at least treading water!). But something about writing brings out truth and emotions for me – raw and real. Sometimes they spill out onto the page before I even realize they are there.

This is what I'm afraid of.

Because mixed with the joy of being with family, and the excited anticipation of a new and precious little life joining our family any day now – there is a sadness and a grief that I can't explain. It's lurking in the waves and I keep trying to ignore it. I keep trying to push it down and away. I keep telling myself that it shouldn't be there – not now, not here.

Anyone who knows me is well aware that I am not good at hiding feelings, being fake or pretending I'm fine when I'm not. I can do it for a little while, but it always surfaces in some way before very long. I also can't run away from God – He is impossible for me to ignore. His prompting Spirit told me today to write – so here I am.

So why grief? Why sadness? Why now?...

Because I've lost something so precious to me.

"But nothing is truly lost!" I told my husband last night. "We have so many wonderful memories and experiences from this past year and a half, and everyone is just fine without us there."

"Yes," he answered gently. "But we have suddenly lost the everyday relationship with many people we love. We don't get to see, be with and walk closely through life together with them right now."

I insisted that the sadness and grief still don't make complete sense to me. No one has died. All those we love in Cameroon are doing well as far as I know. We get to be with other dear friends and family right now that we've desperately missed this past year - and it is such a gift and blessing and joy.

But my husband is right. We have lost something – and it feels sudden, abrupt and painful.

Leaving Cameroon was a whirlwind of activity. Arriving back in the states has been even more so. After being gone for over a year, many things here feel familiar and foreign at the same time. So many things in Cameroon still felt foreign when we left, but I've found myself longing for the quiet mountains, the calm evenings and even the hard and steady rain.

So what have I truly lost?? What is it that I'm grieving?

I want to run next door to my neighbor's house and borrow butter for a recipe – and stop to talk for just a minute to see how she is doing.

I want to hug and talk with my newly pregnant friend who lives on the other side of our home and see how she is feeling today. "Any pregnancy cravings? Anything I can help you with?"

I want to have the women that are so dear to me over for tea and cookies – just to talk and catch up on the past few weeks.

I want to be able to look into their eyes and really know how they are doing.

I want to take the boys on a hike to the waterfalls.

I want to see and hug and talk with those who were in my house nearly every day this past year – helping me cook, care for myself and the babies and figure out how to live in a different culture and place.

I want to lie in the grass and stare at the sky and pray - without all the distractions and noise that threaten to smother me.

These are just a few of the things that immediately come to mind. The hardest part is that when we left the states last year, I knew that we would be back and that I would be able to continue most of the relationships I left. I still had to grieve then too. But this time, many of the residents and their wives will be gone by the time we are able to return to Mbingo. I haven't even been able to say this aloud yet. I don't want to admit it even to myself.

As we enjoy this time with family and friends, and look forward to our new home in Kansas City for the next two years, I feel God gently prompting me to do it again...

*"Keep your heart open. Let people in. This past year was so good and rich because you let Me help you fully embrace it. Do it again."*

"But Lord, it hurts!" I feel myself crying. Even as I write this, I'm finally letting the tears run down my face. "It hurts so much to let them go when I love them like this!"

*"I know,"* He softly replies. *"I know. But I am here and I will help you."*

I think that this is real, full life. It is wonderful and painful, good and hard, beautiful and broken. It is what we are called to as Christians. It is what I want and what I run from at the same time.

*Oh Lord, give me grace to keep loving, to keep my broken heart open, to live and love the way you do. I can't do this for even a moment without You! This is what you did when you came to earth – opened yourself up completely to the pain and brokenness of humanity – loving us fully in the midst of our mess – and loving us still.*

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## **Spunk and Love** by Judy Palpant

*"Let parents, then, bequeath to their children not a heap of riches, but the spirit of reverence." Plato*

Author and psychologist Mary Pipher encourages parents to expose their children to beauty and goodness. Thus it was, before home school each morning in Kenya, we walked past hedges and the hospital to stand and stare at majestic Mt. Elgon. Evenings we walked to the acacia tree guarding the compound gate to view the red orbed sun setting over the valley. Creation's beauty pointed to our Creator's goodness.

We also found beauty and goodness in the people around us. But with certain individuals, their own choices left them in difficult and debauched situations. I faced such a dilemma with Scholastica, a Ugandan teacher at the school. To reach her with God's love required more than unlocking the gate between the hospital and school compounds. The real hurdles were her hard-heartedness and spiritual hostility.

Scholastica had just given birth to a baby girl. "What effect will this new little life have on brazen Scholastica?" I wondered. My apprehensions grew as I packed a basket with gifts for the new mother and child. "Bright mind. Sharp wit. Unabashedly flirtatious. Unwed mother. Will she welcome a visit from us, the wife and daughter of the American medical missionary?" Royal blood coursed through her veins, a heritage hearkening back to the past when kings ruled Uganda. Now she resented her refugee status in Kenya. With basket in hand I set off with my 3-year-old daughter Andrea.

"Come in!" Scholastica greeted us. Tall and attractive, she cradled baby Rose in one arm as she opened the door with the other. Andrea skipped into the room. She begged to see the baby, inquisitively pointing to her tiny nose and toes. Then she helped me unpack the basket.

"A loaf of homemade bread!" exclaimed Scholastica. "Tea leaves and sugar! Wonderful!"

"Isn't God good? He has blessed you with a healthy baby girl," I observed.

"Stop," she said firmly. "Your words pierce my heart."

"Ah, Lord," I prayed silently, "Help me to be tender without sounding pious."

In the ensuing days, I chose to walk carefully in my relationship with Scholastica. But she welcomed Andrea's visits to help feed, change and bathe Rose. Her innocence and natural affection softened Scholastica's heart. Years later, she remembered Andrea's curiosity and care: "Such spunk! So much love! So many questions!"

After we left Kenya in 1985, Scholastica was falsely accused of spying for Uganda and was sent to prison for a time. The Christians sacrificially and lovingly cared for Rose and visited Scholastica. After her release, she returned to Uganda and taught at a boarding school located on Lake Victoria. There, she eventually accepted the truth of Christ and His beauty and goodness transformed her life. When we visited her a few years ago, she hugged me so hard I thought I might break in half.

"My precious Lord. He can do anything," she said as we drank chai together. "I have raised two lovely girls. They are both Christians. I told them to own their faith. And I have a parenting secret," she went on. "It is prayer." With both girls in college, Scholastica told us she gave each one funds to use as capital so they could bake cakes and raise their own pocket money.

As we said our goodbyes, she expressed her longing to meet the adult Andrea who once exhibited such spunk and expressed so much love. "Tell her to come. We will fish. We will dig potatoes. We will talk."

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## **Victim Mentalities** by Dr. Ron Koteskey

Genesis 3:11-13 has an interesting conversation between God and His creation.

- (God to Adam) "Have you eaten?"
- (Adam to God) "The woman you put here with me...she gave me some fruit, and I ate it."
- (God to Eve) "What have you done?"
- (Eve to God) "The serpent deceived me...and I ate."

Both Adam and Eve admitted to doing what God had forbidden, but neither of them admitted it was their fault. Adam basically said it was God's fault and Eve's fault. Eve said it was the serpent's fault.

Refusing to take responsibility and blaming things on someone else goes back to the beginning. Blaming another person, blaming God and blaming the devil are as old as the fall into sin. This is the core of what is often called a victim mentality.

### **What is a victim mentality?**

People with victim mentalities regard themselves as targets of the negative actions of others. They think and act as if that is the case even if there is no objective evidence that it is. Here are some other signs of a victim mentality in addition to blaming others and not accepting responsibility.

- Self-pity
- Feelings of helplessness
- Focus on problems
- Complaining "If only...."
- Having a lot of "bad luck"
- Relationship problems with colleagues

Bad grades in school are because the teacher did not teach properly. Reports to the agency are late because the computer was acting up. A missionary cannot get excited about a project because the rest of the staff are



cliquish. He does not go to church because the preacher is boring and the Bible classes are a drag. She cannot make friends because God made her too outspoken. Of course, these things may happen to anyone occasionally; however, that is not the case all the time.

### **What did Jesus do about someone with a victim mentality?**

Although people often think of it as a physical healing, the problem with the man at the pool of Bethesda has many of the marks of what may have been his victim mentality (John 5:1-15). Note that Jesus never touched him, and Jesus did not say anything about healing him. Jesus just asked him if he wanted to be healed (v 6).

The man did not answer Jesus' question, but he gave "victim mentality reasons."

- I have no one to help me into the pool.
- Someone else gets in ahead of me (v 7).

Jesus just ignored the man's excuses and told him to pick up his mat and walk (v 8). The man did just that! The only other thing Jesus said to the man was to tell him to quit sinning or something worse may happen to him (v 14).

Jesus himself then became a victim of the Jews, they persecuted him (v 16), and they tried to kill him (v 18). Jesus was a victim, but He did not adopt a victim mentality. Instead, He offered them eternal life (v 19-47).

### **Are there "benefits" of having a victim mentality?**

If the man at the pool of Bethesda had a victim mentality for 38 years, there must be benefits for having one. Here are some.

- Get more attention from others
- Others expect less
- Others give compassion and pity
- Others listen to a recital of problems
- No guilt feelings for not doing their tasks
- Not expected to take responsibility

Unfortunately, these benefits are often short-lived. People may get burned out from listening and giving. They may quit helping the one with a victim mentality. The man at the pool had no one to help him into the pool after so long a time.

### **How does a victim mentality develop?**

Many people may be tempted to develop a victim mentality as they face normal problems in life, and there are multiple ways to fall into it. Here are some common ways.

- Children may see it modeled by their parents, such as seeing their father blame his lack of promotions on his boss.
- Real illnesses result in added attention, compassion and help. Those receiving such things may never get fully "well."
- Parents may continue overprotecting their children so that the children never become independent adults.
- When employees are treated unfairly at work, colleagues may bear part of the load, but they continue to do so too long.

Since the benefits are rewarding, some people just continue wanting the benefits and develop a victim mentality. They may not realize such behavior ultimately results in rejection. The problem is not in accepting help when it is really needed. Problems develop when people make it their lifestyle.

### **What can people do about victim mentalities in acquaintances?**

As individuals whose calling is to help others, missionaries often attract persons having victim mentalities. After



repeated attempts to help such people, the missionaries may reach the point of being irritated and drained. They need to remember it is not their responsibility to "fix" everyone and enabling only makes things worse in the long run. Here are some things to try when approached by those with a victim mentality.

- After listening briefly and politely, say that you will keep praying for them.
- Set firm limits in a loving way, such as saying you have only five minutes to spare.
- Break eye contact and return to your task.
- Prepare for a guilt trip attempt on you and/or unfavorable remarks to others.
- Screen your calls and do not reply to emails or texts from the "victim."

These actions will not instantly stop attempts at involving you, but over time they usually work if you do not enable their behavior.

### **What can people do about victim mentalities in themselves?**

Problems like this can usually be solved by prevention, correction or some combination of the two.

- Ask God to help you not develop a victim mentality.
- When you truly are a victim, resist the temptation to continue to want the pity and attention you are given.
- If you already have a victim mentality, ask God to help you, acknowledge that mentality, resolve to stop and intentionally take steps to do so.
- Forgive those who seemed to encourage you to develop it, both those who caused your pain and the enablers who reinforced the mentality.
- Begin to live the new life God gives you, accept responsibility to live it and ask others to hold you accountable.
- Focus on good things you have by comparing yourself with those who have less and by expressing your gratitude to others and to God.
- Involve yourself in helping others and bring glory to God.
- When you do slip back toward a victim mentality, do not give up. Instead, ask God to forgive you and help you as you try again.

### **How can one develop a victor mentality?**

Missionaries are all victims of Satan's persecution, but that does not mean they must have a victim mentality. As we saw in John 15, Jesus did not develop one when He was persecuted for telling the man to pick up his mat and walk. Likewise, there is no need for missionaries today to develop one. They can develop a victor mentality because though they may be victims, they are also victors!

A victor mentality is another way of thinking, of viewing the world from a different perspective. Rather than seeing persecution as negative, people with victor mentalities see it as a blessing as Jesus said in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5). The Bible has many similar passages about victory and victors. Here are some.

- Jesus said that we would have trouble in this world but to take heart because He has overcome the world (John 16:33).
- Nothing, including trouble or hardship or persecution, can separate us from the love of Christ because we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us (Romans 8:35-37).
- Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that overcomes the world (1 John 5:4).
- In Matthew 24, Jesus said that at the end of the age Christians would be persecuted, put to death and hated by all nations because of Him.
- "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:54b-57, NIV 2011).

After changing the way they view the world, people can take the actions suggested in the previous section.

- Forgive others.
- Accept responsibility.

- Express gratitude.
- Help others.

We are victors, not victims!

For other topics, please visit [www.missionarycare.com](http://www.missionarycare.com). Also please let your non-medical colleagues know about these free resources.

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