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# The Center for Medical Missions'

## *e-Pistle*

### March 2008

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I know most of you are not in an area where you experience the different seasons, I want to wish you a Happy Spring anyway. While it is still quite chilly here in the night, we are enjoying the crocus, daffodils, dogwoods, redwoods and today I noticed the bright yellow forsythia on the way to work. Of course, seeing all the plants return to bloom reminds us of the event we just celebrated, our Savior's resurrection. I pray your heart rejoiced in your celebration this Easter.

I hope you are remembering to pray for our April 10th, Medical Mission Summit that I mentioned in last month's *e-Pistle*. It looks like we will have at least 22 mission agencies represented with about 30 executive participants. There will be 4 short presentations but the majority of the day will be spent in discussion. Please pray that the Lord will take the discussion in the direction that He wishes.

We will also be hosting our third annual conference, "Preparing for the Future: An Orientation to Medical Missions," on April 18-20, 2008. This will be an important event in the lives of future medical missionaries so we will appreciate your prayers. Thank you.

In this *e-Pistle*, Dr. Stevens addresses some family issues. It will be completed next month. We again share some of Rev. Key's thoughts and there is also a challenging article regarding ministry possibilities in the Middle East.

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  - President's Malaria Initiative newsletter
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  - Help for burn patients

Hope you find this helpful.

Susan

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**Family Matters    Section XIII: Family**  
by David Stevens, MD, MA (Ethics)

Two-thirds of medical students, residents and young doctors called to missions have anywhere from “concern” to a “great fear” of raising their children overseas according to a survey recently completed by CMDA’s Center for Medical Missions.

I understand. When Jody and I were preparing for a missionary career, our children’s education was the biggest issue. At that time, children at our hospital were sent to a boarding school five hours away from second grade on. Even though we wouldn’t face that issue in our first term, it was something we discussed and began to make contingency plans for. Home schooling was in its infancy back then but we were early accepters! We home schooled, helped start a one room school house and told our children they could go to boarding school when they were ready; they made that plea and went in fifth and sixth grade.

Of course, education is just one of the issues in raising your family and being the husband or wife God wants you to be overseas. I realize that every situation is different. You may be in a mega-city where the issues are dissimilar from those in the bush hospital where I served. All the same, I think many of the issues faced are common to all busy missionary healthcare personnel. Here are some principles that may be helpful as you endeavor to make your career and your life “family friendly.”

1. Give It Time – Time is your most rationed commodity but there is no generic alternative for it. Your spouse and your children need and value it above everything else. In many ways this is much easier for many missionary docs than for physicians in western countries, if you live where you work. Many mission healthcare centers are located on compounds; mine was. So, unless there was an emergency, I had breakfast, lunch and dinner with my children everyday. Repeated studies have shown the powerful impact of families having meals together. In the US, if families have just five meals together a week, the risk of early sexual behavior or drug use drops significantly for children as they become teens. If you can’t be home for every meal, prioritize family meal times when you can.

The other great advantage you have is that children can be more involved in what you are doing in many non-city situations. My children used to come up to the hospital in pre-phone days to ask when I was going to be down for supper and when they got older, they were able to observe procedures. It is important to let your children (and spouse) see the medical side of your life.

As the children got older, I tried to look for ways to get them involved by taking them on clinic trips, out to the game park when I was taking visitors on a tour or to come along on speaking engagements. The mission field gives you much more latitude in becoming creative in making time for family. We have a distinct advantage over our western counterparts in many situations. They may think we live in a “dangerous” jungle, but in reality the jungle they live in is much more dangerous. It is a master at separating the family herd. Everyone heads off in different directions. Moral carnivores are adept in taking down stragglers.

Of all the blessings of our missionary life, I think God most that I got to raise my children on the mission field in their early days.

2. Special-ize – Find ways to make each member of your family feel special. Everyone needs family time but they also need time with you. Your spouse, if you have one, tops the list. That can be a challenge when because of a remote location, you can't go on a date to see a movie or out to eat. If you haven't read it, get a copy of *The Five Love Languages*, a book that will help you understand the five ways individuals like to feel loved. Figure out your spouse's and your children's love languages and work to make them feel special in their individual language.

Jody likes deep conversations and doing things together. When we grew large enough that missionary docs could take a day off each week. Jody and I would usually sleep in, have brunch and then play Scrabble. It took a couple of hours to play a good game and we would talk and talk while we did something we enjoyed. These days, without kitchen help, I head for the kitchen as soon as I get home from work to help with supper and clean up but more importantly, to talk and debrief our days.

If your spouse likes doing something special, create events at home or in the area – a picnic, a candlelight dinner for two with the kids sent elsewhere, a special movie night, etc. If she likes gifts, make them if you can't buy them or bring them back from trips. I almost always had a dozen or two roses in my hand when I came back from a trip to Nairobi. To my wife they said, "I was thinking of you and you are special."

Find something that you and each child likes to do together and give them some special time with you doing it. My kids liked stories and the favorite ones were the ones I made up. When they were younger, I had a continuing adventure story that serialized with them as I put each one to bed. I was involved in their hobbies and involved them in mine. I wanted some special time with each child so they would feel special.

3. Minister as a Family – All of your family members are missionaries. The best way to avoid resentment or a feeling that you are doing one thing and they are doing another is to look for group and individual ministry activities for you, your spouse and your children. I especially did this while on the field. The kids could be involved in SS for the children in the pediatric ward by using puppets, taking pictures, bringing crayons for coloring or telling a story. Form a family singing group if you have some talent in this area. Take your family to services where you may be speaking. Have your children help write your prayer letter, write an article for your mission magazine, take pictures to use or be in the video you are shooting. Teach them how to share Christ at the appropriate age. If you start early, it will come naturally later on.

I followed a different principle when the kids were school aged and we were on home assignment. I was very judicious about taking them on ministry trips during the school year. Studies have shown how important routines are in children's lives. We lived near family, Jody stayed home with the children and I would not spend long periods on the road. I went to a mission conference and then came home for most of the week. We even

tried to live in the same house each deputation. I knew it was important to put down home country roots and help keep their lives more stable when they were facing the challenges of school, new friends and fitting in. During school breaks we would minister together more.

*To be continued in April*

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## **Cura Animarum**

**by Rev. Stan Key**

Power and pride go together. Proud people seek to have power and control over others. Controllers always proudly assume they are somehow better than others. People who live by the love of power know nothing of the power of love.

The only way to dethrone the power-god is to come to a place where we see God for who He really is (the Holy One who is all-powerful)... and see ourselves for who we really are (self-absorbed sinners who can't even control ourselves). There is only one way to live in this reality: to humble ourselves. Perhaps the following lists will help you to understand the depth of pride in your own heart.

### **Proud People...**

- Focus on the failure of others
- Are quick to find fault in others
- Are eager to tell others what they think
- Desire to teach
- Are quick to blame
- Have to prove they are right
- Are cold and unapproachable
- Are conscious of all the good things they have done
- Are defensive when criticized
- Almost never say "I was wrong"

### **Humble People...**

- Focus on their own spiritual need
- Are quick to praise others
- Are eager to ask others what they think
- Desire to learn
- Are quick to accept responsibility
- Yield their rights
- Are warm and very approachable
- Are conscious of all the good things they have received
- Are open and receptive when criticized
- Are quick to admit failure and apologize

- Are concerned about image
- Confess sin in vague generalities
- Grieve over the consequences of sin
- Don't think that they need revival but are sure others do
- Are concerned about the truth
- Confess sin in specifics
- Grieve over the root causes of sin
- Continually sense their desperate need for a fresh encounter with God

*Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. (1 Peter 5:6)*

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## **Emerging Opportunities in the Arabian Gulf**

A section of Manama, capital of the island Kingdom of Bahrain, stretches before my office window. When I get restless, I look out the window and count construction cranes – it's my index of development activity. Last spring, there were 18 visible. Now there are 24.

The government has recently admitted that over 1 million persons live in the Kingdom of Bahrain – approximately half local and half expatriate. Many believe that number is low. The reality of 500,000 - 600,000 foreigners residing in Bahrain has manifested itself in an interesting way – not enough churches.

A recent newspaper article informed us that on Easter Sunday, St. Mary's Church in Qatar will open for worship. It has been 1,200 years since there was a functioning church building in Qatar. Four other recognized congregations will likely follow suit. The article mentioned that Qatar now boasts 900,000 residents of whom 700,000 are expatriates.

All six of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are in a phase of rapid development not unlike the 70's and 80's. Just as then, this present phase of development is being fueled with oil income. Also, a great deal of investment money has been repatriated to the Gulf in the wake of 9/11.

The present cycle of growth began in the latter half of 2003. These cycles have two growth phases that overlap. The first is physical development such as we are presently witnessing. This calls upon the services of financiers, bankers, planners, architects, engineers and construction personnel. Families follow, and given the influx of such people, other services like hospitality, food service, retail trade, education and healthcare necessarily expand to accommodate greater numbers.

The second phase is human development. The GCC countries continue to have high birthrates and inadequate systems of education. Despite boom-town conditions, they suffer chronic unemployment because significant numbers are unemployable or unwilling to do unskilled work.

Some writers refer to the bottom-heavy demographics of the Gulf as “a ticking time-bomb.” Young minds must not be left untrained, uneducated and unoccupied. Some of the Gulf countries have turned their attention to this issue and the rest will no doubt follow. Opportunities will open up for educators and trainers at all levels.

One hundred and nineteen years ago, three seminarians and a professor determined to reach the Arabian Peninsula with the good news of Jesus Christ. Two of the young men, Samuel Zwemer and James Cantine, dedicated their lives to this work and led many others in pioneering outreach as the Arabian Mission of the Reformed Church in America. They were never a large band – in the 1950’s they may have numbered 50 adults – but they were persistent and effective. However, their work is unfinished.

We who follow in their footsteps do not labor alone. In recent decades, the influx of expatriates to the GCC countries has brought intended and unintended messengers of the good news. Moreover, they have come from east and west, north and south. More will follow in the present and next decade. Oil will remain an important energy source until at least the mid-21st century, so we can expect a significant foreign presence in the Gulf countries for many more years.

Within these dynamics of human migration and development lie some unusual opportunities. The first is to influence the development of the GCC countries. Major social changes are taking place: governments are accepting greater participation of citizens, more women are in the workplace, more people are traveling. English is widely spoken although there are still good arguments for learning Arabic. Education, healthcare and other human services offer key opportunities.

A second opportunity lies in the presence of so many expatriates from all of the inhabited continents of the world. In some respects, the Arabian Gulf today is a sample of the future world – multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, migratory – a seething cauldron of nations. The result is that the churches of the Gulf have expanding opportunities for ministry. Efforts like the Ecumenical Conferences for Charity in Bahrain and Oman are just a start. Ministries to laborers, prison ministries and other efforts will raise the profiles of churches in these societies. As the churches become more dynamic forces in the Gulf countries, opportunities to address social ills, ethical and lifestyle issues will increase.

Recent history, two ongoing wars, two civil conflicts and an emerging nuclear Islamic republic all emphasize the volatile nature of the Middle East. Do we avoid this region or do we seriously engage our Savior’s command to “make disciples of all nations?” There are challenges and risks involved, but did the challenges and risks of the first century Roman Empire stop that initial band of believers?

The time has come for followers of Jesus Christ to offer concerted prayer for the light of the gospel to shine in the Middle East. Leaders of Christian ministries are beginning to gather and discuss this emerging situation. Minimal funding is required as most persons entering GCC countries do so for gainful employment. The question is, how many will prepare and go with the intention of joining the churches and cooperating in ministry? Is God calling you?

\*If you are interested in communicating with the author of this article, please let me know and I will put you in contact with him. – Susan ([susan.carter@cnda.org](mailto:susan.carter@cnda.org))

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## Resources

USAID is now producing a monthly newsletter - **Frontlines**  
[Click to Subscribe to FrontLines Electronic Edition!](#)

To sign up for the **President's Malaria Initiative** newsletter:  
<http://www.fightingmalaria.gov/news/enews/archive.html>

### **Safe Drinking Water While Traveling**

Recently I learned of a great method for creating safe drinking water when traveling or working abroad. It is the STERIPEN, which works by ultraviolet light. The product is a compact instrument that is easy to carry and runs on batteries though solar energy can also be used.

There are various models with a new one to be out in April. A basic unit is about \$100.

Made by Hydro-Phonton, Inc., P.O. Box 875, Blue Hill, ME 04614  
[www.steripen.com](http://www.steripen.com)

### **For Help with Care of Burns**

Burn Care International is a non-profit ministry based out of the USA dedicated to helping improve the lives of burn patients in developing countries around the world. We work with existing burn centers to train personnel in the construction of pressure garments for scar prevention as well as act as advisors for burn recovery.

For more on this opportunity, please contact:

Cindy Jackson  
Burn Care International  
419 Woodland Drive  
Florence S.C. 29501  
[burncareinc@aol.com](mailto:burncareinc@aol.com)  
[envoyseminar@aol.com](mailto:envoyseminar@aol.com)

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## **Center for Medical Missions**

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

[www.cnda.org/go/cmm](http://www.cnda.org/go/cmm)

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