

The Center for Medical Mission's *e-Pistle* March 2012

Welcome to this issue of the e-Pistle. I am blessed to have several good articles to share with you. I hope you'll come back to it if you don't have enough time at one setting to read it through.

We have a new contributor this month, Dr. Jon Hall. Jon is just beginning his dental career. You'll soon see that in addition to studying dentistry, he has also spent a great deal of time in the Word and thinking about the cost of discipleship. Jon, his wife, Stacy and daughter will soon follow the Lord beyond an inner city ministry to a difficult and dark place in the 10/40 window. I know they will appreciate your prayers. By the way, I think you will be interested to know that Jon is Dr. Stevens' son-in-law.

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Enjoy! If you have questions, comments or concerns, please contact susan.carter@cmda.org

Helpers of Health - Section X: Community Health and Development

by David Stevens, MD

Continued from February

2) Imitation is the Nicest Form of Flattery – I knew nothing about community health when Susan Carter (now the Director of Center for Medical Missions at CMDA) and I started our community health program. We read books and articles as we contemplated our startup and then developed a list of all the questions we had and decisions we were going to have to make:

- a) Should it be a church, hospital or community program?
- b) Should it be volunteer-based or should we pay our community health workers?
- c) Do we need trained supervisors or can we train them ourselves?
- d) Do women or men make the best community workers?
- e) Do we call them workers or something else? Does the term “workers” communicate the idea of a salaried position?
- f) Who should select our community committees? And how should they be chosen? How big should they be?
- g) What training will they need?
- h) How and where should we train our volunteers?
- i) How often do they need supervision?
- j) How do we avoid dropout?

And that was just the beginning. If I remember right, we had eight pages of questions ranging from what sort of transport we should buy, to what topics we should teach, to asking other groups where they were getting funding. After much discussion that led to few answers, we made our smartest move. We scheduled two one-week periods away from the hospital and tried to visit as many community health programs as possible. With questionnaire in hand, we asked specific questions, as well as general inquiries, that helped us troll for difficulties we might not have considered such as:

- a) What are your biggest problems?
- b) What would you do differently if you started over today?
- c) What are the three most important things we need to know to be successful?
- d) How are your relationships with your stakeholders? What has gone well and not gone so well? Why?

We even mailed our questions out to those programs we couldn’t visit in order to ensure we had as much information as possible. We then sat down and reviewed the answers, dividing the remaining issues into three categories:

- a) It is obvious this solution works for this issue, and we should do it the same way the vast majority found successful.
- b) The answer is not as obvious, but here is what seems to work best. How can we tweak this solution to make it better?
- c) All of the programs have this problem, but no one has found the answer. What solution can we come up with?

Let me give you an example. We asked how often each program provided supervision for its volunteer Community Health Workers (CHWs), and most programs tried to do it once a month. When we asked them to clarify the word “tried,” we learned it was actually only every two or three months at best for a litany of reasons mainly involving transportation. “The Land Rover is in the shop. The Bishop needs the vehicle. The Land Rover can’t get to that site because the roads are so bad. We don’t have the money for the fuel for the vehicle. Someone else in our program needed the Land Rover.” Vehicles had a 100 percent import duty and were so expensive that most groups only had one.

We learned that those employees hired to supervise and motivate the CHWs spent the vast majority of time sitting in their offices. Visits were sporadic and infrequent; as a result, programs were losing volunteers because of it.

Realizing that volunteers required more supervision than paid staff, we did something no one else had done. We didn't buy a Land Rover. Instead we bought each supervisor a motorcycle designed for herding sheep in the Australian outback. They were built like tanks with protective bars around all vital components with powerful engines, huge knobby tires to move more easily through mud and platforms behind the driver's seat for transporting goods.

We told our salaried supervisors we expected them to be out in the community four and a half days each week with only a half day in the office to get caught up on paperwork. They were expected to meet with each of their CHWs three times a month. During their first year or two, they were expected to spend two to three hours individually with each CHW each month visiting homes. At the first home, the supervisor would do a home assessment, teach and share a witness. They would discuss what happened after leaving the home. At the next hut, the CHW would do the visit, allowing the supervisor to critique the performance and point out ways for improvement. This modeling and teaching technique fostered rapid improvement in the first year or so after CHWs received training.

The supervisor would also meet with their CHWs at the monthly community health committee meeting and at the monthly immunization clinic the supervisor held in each community. Frequent supervision, role modeling and deep relationships including praying together fostered extraordinary achievement and low dropout rates as each CHW gave two half-days each week to help their neighbors.

We would not have come up with half of our ideas if we hadn't taken the time to learn from other programs' successes and mistakes. It enabled us to avoid many pitfalls and our new program took off like a racehorse. It is always easier to do it right the first time than to change horses in the middle of the stream.

It is never too late to learn from others even if you have already started your program. Take the time to visit other groups. If others come to visit you, pick their brains and continue to learn. You are either getting smarter or you are getting dumber.

To be continued.....

Cura Animarum

by Rev. Stan Key

Several days before his crucifixion, Jesus was invited to the home of Simon the leper in Bethany (Mark 14:1-9). During the meal, a woman came and poured a bottle of very

expensive perfume over his head. We can easily imagine that during those next few days, as the momentous events unfolded leading up to Jesus' death, everywhere he went and everyone he interacted with became suddenly aware of the aroma he carried. The disciples, the soldiers, the Sanhedrin, the crowd, Pilate, Herod, Caiaphas and the executioners must have all responded with a jolt when they encountered Jesus: *Whoa! What's that smell?*

Paul makes the astounding claim that Christians smell like Jesus. He is not talking about perfume, of course, but that unmistakable fragrance that fills a room whenever the Spirit of Christ is present. The ingredients of this perfume are spelled out in Galatians 5:22-23: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. It is a smell like no other. Some like it and some don't.

"For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life..." (2 Corinthians 2:15-16, NIV 1984).

Yes, like Christ, Christians smell. And you can distinguish the genuine from the counterfeit by the unmistakable odor that fills a room whenever they are present. If the smell is not there, neither is the reality. Just because someone looks like a Christian, talks like a Christian or even acts like a Christian don't be fooled. Your eyes and ears may deceive you. But your sense of smell seldom does.

At the risk of offending someone, let me be bold to ask: What do you smell like? What odors are you producing? It is very difficult to smell yourself (!), but go ahead and take a whiff. Your salvation may well be at stake in what you discover. Better yet, ask your friends and family what you smell like (if you have the courage). Is your life scented with the aroma of Christ? Or is there perhaps an air of pride, selfish-ambition and smug complacency? Our true identity is revealed more in the odor we emit than the image we portray.

Jesus healed blind eyes and deaf ears but there is no indication he ever healed someone who couldn't smell. Perhaps this teaches us that while other senses are often faulty and flawed, the olfactory capacity is still basically sound. The nose knows.

Announcements

CMDA National Convention: If you are in the states, I hope you will join us at the CMDA National Convention on April 26-29 at the Ridgecrest Conference Center in Ridgecrest, North Carolina. You will find all the information needed at www.cmda.org/nationalconvention.

2012 Pre-field Orientation for New Medical Missionaries: We are holding this year's conference in July so Samaritan's Purse Post-residency appointees can participate. The

dates are July 20-22, beginning at 8 a.m. on the 20th. If you or anyone you know is almost ready to head to the field, this is a conference you will not want to miss. The conference will be at CMDA's headquarters in Bristol, Tennessee. Visit www.cmda.org/orientation for more information.

Hands for Jesus

by Jon Hall, DDS

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More than 20 years ago in a small town in Georgia, I was sitting in my church's sanctuary as a missionary told stories of what God was doing on the other side of the world. As best as I can understand the concept of "God's call," I received mine right there. I felt this burning passion to be part of making God's name known and treasured in the most unreached places in the world. I was only a kid, but based on my understanding of what it meant to be a follower of Christ, I figured I better start telling others about God right away, right where I was. So that's what I did.

My best friend was an eight-year-old boy named Hakeem. I lived in a racially divided town, and Hakeem was black and I was white. Since I went to church with Christians, I thought they would be just as excited as I was when Hakeem heard the gospel and decided to follow Jesus. So I started bringing him to church with me. I admit I had never thought much about the fact everyone I went to church with was white. It did, however, become painfully obvious when some of those church members decided that was the way it was going to stay. My family was approached and warned that "others" were upset that we were bringing Hakeem because he had the wrong skin color for our church. Being forced to leave the church because their son made a friend who became a follower of Jesus became a real possibility for my parents.

That experience continues to stick with me. I've never been able to understand how it could be possible for people with the very Spirit of God inside them to reject their spiritual brother due to something as simple as skin tone. I genuinely believe some of those people were real Christians, but I also believe they had twisted the gospel to fit within their culture and comfort zone. The irony is my church spent thousands of dollars on evangelizing to the ends of the earth and even brought in speakers to inspire others to do the same. Yet they were unwilling to love their neighbor if it actually affected the way they lived their everyday lives.

I learned it is extremely easy and common for the bride of Christ to be influenced by the culture or people around them. It is even easier to twist the very message and commands of the gospel to suit their own desires and comfort. I've wondered over the last several years if I am doing the same thing. I began to specifically question if it was possible the western "Christian" culture with its emphasis on prosperity and the American dream was influencing my understanding of what it meant to be a disciple of Jesus.

A while back I stumbled across the parable of the treasure in the field in Matthew; as I read it again, it was like a light bulb clicked on in my head. You remember how it goes: A man finds a treasure in a field, and he buries it again because the field is not his own. He sells all he owns, buys the field in his joy. I'd read this story an unknown number of times but I'd never really tried to understand it before. Think about it with me for a second. Why does the man sell all of his possessions? Because that's the cost of the field. Why does the man have joy even while he is losing everything he owns? Because the treasure he is getting is so much more valuable than what he was giving up. What does this have to do with my life? Everything. It is the very message of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. As I began to read the story with new eyes, I saw Jesus was telling those who wanted to follow him that there was a cost for such a decision, and the cost was their very lives.

Truth always become more relevant to me when I see it modeled. During the 1930s as Hitler was rising to power, a young German pastor named Dietrich Bonhoeffer actively opposed the Third Reich as it slowly took right away from the Jews as well as the German church. He was outraged that the majority of Christians in Germany stood silent in the face of evil. Rather than flee the persecution he knew was coming, he became a leader of the underground church. His bravery resulted in his death as he was hanged at the personal order of Hitler just weeks before the end of World War II. Before his imprisonment, he wrote a book aptly titled *The Cost of Discipleship* in which he described what it meant to follow Jesus. He powerfully depicts the cost:

- “Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods....it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him.”
- “It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life.”
- “When Christ calls a man he bids him come and die.”

I wonder if that's too radical for our tastes in America -- the idea we could actually live out the truth we confess with our mouths every Sunday. I struggle with it every day. It's easy to say the words “I've been bought with a price and I'm no longer my own.” And yet, I seldom seem to live that way. I wonder if there is a disconnect between what I say I believe and what I actually treasure in my heart.

Jesus focused on making sure His disciples understood their identity. He said extreme things like when he told the crowd they couldn't be His disciples if they didn't give up everything they owned (Luke 14). He also made unreasonable requests of His followers. He did this with Matthew when he walked by his tax collecting booth and told Matthew to get up, leave his life and follow Him. Jesus wanted His followers to trade in the worthless for the irreplaceable, and to understand if they followed after Him their lives were to be completely controlled by Him for His purposes.

I'm not sure why we've convinced ourselves it's any different today. When I say the word "church," the first thing that comes to mind might be "building" or "Sunday morning." However, when Jesus spoke about the church, he invoked the image of warriors charging the gates of hell. He didn't have in mind a place or time, but rather a people set apart for the purpose of advancing His kingdom and His glory; a people that view His purposes as greater than their own plans.

A friend and I were recently talking with a kid named Brandon about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Brandon lives in inner city Memphis and has faced many challenges to overcome that I never encountered as a teenager. At the end of the conversation, we asked him if he wanted to follow Jesus. After thinking hard for a few seconds, he stated he was interested in the gospel, but he wasn't willing to give up his career dreams in order to follow Jesus. It was an honest objection, and one I thought could be easily resolved. I proceeded to tell him following Jesus didn't mean he had to give up his plans; instead, he could follow Jesus and still pursue his old dreams.

The problem with my response was that it wasn't really true, and it revealed my own struggles to understand what Christ really desires. The Holy Spirit was at work in Brandon's heart and I should have been able to see it. He was clearly being convicted and challenged to wrestle with his future. Would he submit and follow Jesus, or would he continue down his own self-projected road? Would he be willing to lay down his dreams if that is required, or would he try to "manage" God by making deals and compromises to validate his decisions? As I think about my response, I'm convicted again by how I injected a culturally acceptable message I thought would be more palatable, when God was showing Brandon that becoming a Christian means real surrender of everything in his life – including his future plans – into the capable hands of Jesus.

It shouldn't be any different in your life or mine. We can't continue to profess a faith we neither fully embrace nor demonstrate in our actions. It really comes down to ultimate purposes. If we think our purpose in life is to get saved and pursue the American dream, then we will spend our time focusing on our careers, our houses and the respect of our colleagues. However, if our purpose is the glory of God and salvation of the nations, then many of us will be challenged to give up our careers, houses and the respect of others to waste our lives on the kingdom of God in the darkest of places in America and overseas. And the kicker is that we'll do it with joy!

If we are truly in love with our Creator and understand our purpose to glorify and enjoy Him forever, then why would we even consider wasting our lives on anything less important? As I read the words of Paul, I long for them to be true in my life. *"But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him..."* (Philippians 3:7-9, NIV 1984). We spend our lives chasing after the things we treasure. That's a terrifying truth. Paul treasured Christ to the point that he didn't mind giving up everything. My fear is we are so tentative to give

up anything that we may not treasure Christ much at all. We are perhaps in need of a paradigm shift.

A man named Howard Guinness once posed this question in his book *Sacrifice*: “Where are the young men and women of this generation who will hold their lives cheap and be faithful even unto death? Where are those who will lose their lives for Christ’s sake — flinging them away for love of him? Where are those who will live dangerously and be reckless in his service? Where are his lovers — those who love him and the souls of men more than their own reputations or comfort or very life? Where are the men who say ‘no’ to self, who take up Christ’s cross to bear it after Him, who are willing to be nailed to it in college or office, home or mission field, who are willing, if need be, to bleed, to suffer and to die on it? Where are the adventurers, the explorers, the buccaneers for God, who count one human soul of far greater value than the rise or fall of an empire? Where are the men who are willing to pay the price of vision? Where are the men of prayer? Where are God’s men in this day of God’s power?”

It really does come down to treasure. If we treasure the glory of God then we will care for the people Jesus cared for and go to the places Jesus went. It will be hard and there will be a cost to obedience, but it will be worth it. As healthcare providers, we have incredible opportunities to be the hands and feet of Jesus in a broken world, to use medicine as a platform to bring the gospel into dark places, to be radically obedient to a counter-cultural message of surrender to our King, to hear, “*Well done, good and faithful servant*” (*Matthew 25:21, NIV 1984*).

Of Brooms and Burglars

by Judy Palpant

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Dawn breaks in East Africa. The rooster crows. The birds chirp. Then sounds of rhythmic brushing reach the ears. Someone is sweeping a dung floor, a dirt compound or a concrete courtyard.

When I arrived in Kenya in 1980, I was baffled to find brooms without handles. Short ones made from the Turkana palm fronds, long ones made from Mombasa coconut tree bark. If necessary, one could break off a few young cypress twigs and bind them with sisal. Bending from the waist, the sweeper went to work.

Over time I preferred this type of cleaning—nose to nose with the grit and grime on the concrete floor in my Kenya home. I’d collect the clutter in a pile, pick out the trash and sweep the remainder out the back door.

On a recent return trip to East Africa, my husband and I rode a bus from Jinja, Uganda to Nairobi, Kenya. At the bus stop where we waited at 8 a.m., a woman held a large Jerrycan of water in her left hand and a short, stiff broom in her right. She poured water

as she swept the concrete porch, cleaning it for the day. Later, from the bus window, I spotted an old woman stirring up a cloud of red dirt as she swept the path in front of her mud hut. I watched with satisfaction, glad I mopped and vacuumed before leaving for a month. I like returning to a clean house.

Sometimes one can be astonished by who sees the need and picks up the broom.

Once on the wards in the Kenyan mission hospital where my husband Sam worked, a mess on the floor cried out to be cleaned. Without hesitation, the Kenyan male medical student stepped out of his expected role and took care of it. The nurses watched in amazement. Nearly 30 years later, he's remembered for his humility and helpfulness, a witness to his Christian commitment.

By age three, our grandson Noah started assessing floors. "Nana," he'd say upon walking in the front door, "your carpet needs cleaning." I'd pull out the vacuum. With effort and pride, he maneuvered it into position and proudly made it gobble up the dirt and crumbs.

Jesus cleansed the temple at the beginning and end of His ministry here on earth. Astonished onlookers watched the ensuing chaos as He swept the place clean of money changers, returning it to its original purpose—a house of prayer.

In our month-long absence, thieves broke into our home through a basement window and made a clean sweep. They took our laptop computers and some jewelry—gold and silver clip earrings, the diamond pendant my parents gave me as a high school graduation gift, the Huguenot cross Sam hung around my neck on our wedding day and the blue sapphire necklace he presented to me on our 25th anniversary. They found nothing else of street market value.

We returned home to mopped floors and vacuumed carpets, but the burglars did a deeper cleaning, forcing a heart-checkup. Are we overly attached to our material possessions? Have we stored up our treasures in heaven?

I feel a cloud of emotions thinking about what is lost. Not unlike the dust stirred up by the woman sweeping the path to her hut, I can whip up a cloud of dirt that settles right back where it came. I choose not to live with regret and resentment about the past or fear of the future. At the same time, I am grateful for the One who lovingly searches and knows me. The Holy Spirit moves in and, using a short broom, powerfully washes me with the water of the Word and makes straight paths for my feet. Astonished by the mystery, I once again commit the waste management and security system of my heart into the Master Sweeper's hands.

Sexual Stress

by Dr. Ron Koteskey

You and Pat have been working together for several months, but during the last three weeks both of you have been spending every available minute on the big project. You ate working lunches together and continued working after the others went home for the night. You realize you are beginning to look forward to going to work more than ever before. This morning when you saw Pat, your heart began to race. Certainly you couldn't be falling in love, could you? You are a missionary, so sexual immorality, adultery, homosexual activity or incest are not possible, are they? Why do you feel this way? What can you do to prevent this from happening? Let's consider some of these questions.

Me?

Could it happen to you, a missionary? Of course, it could. You are human, aren't you? It is a natural human tendency to grow to like people you spend time with, so much so that even people taken hostage often grow to like their captors and the captors grow to like their hostages. It is even more likely you will like people you are working with, and that liking may become sexual attraction. People can gradually "slide" into sexual sin over a period of time. An example of this is found in the case of Amnon and Tamar where Amnon became obsessed with her "*in the course of time*" (2 Samuel 13).

Although it is rare, it can be "love (lust) at first sight." In this case people can "fall" into sexual sin rapidly. An example of this is David and Bathsheba. Rather than being out leading his army where he should have been, David stayed in Jerusalem. Having trouble sleeping, he went for a walk on his roof and noticed a woman bathing. Rather than looking away, he sent someone to find out who she was. Rather than leaving it there, when he found out her husband was out fighting in the army, he had her come over. Then "*he slept with her*" (2 Samuel 11).

Immorality or adultery?

Could you, a missionary, get pulled into immorality or adultery? Of course you could, and the "slide" into it usually begins in harmless, innocent ways. For example, you are field director, so it is your responsibility to show the attractive new single missionary around. Or you feel sorry for the new missionaries who have no place to stay, and you invite them to live with you temporarily. Or while talking with Chris, a long-term missionary friend, you find out Chris feels neglected at home, so you try to give him some extra attention. Before you realize it, the two of you are sharing deep things, and this intimacy leads to increasing time together and finally adultery.

It happens not only with other missionaries, but with nationals as well. It happens to both men and women. It happens with young and old. If you think you are invulnerable to sexual sin, you are actually the most vulnerable. 1 Corinthians 10:12 describes our vulnerability, but verse 13 promises God's faithfulness in providing a way of escape. Attraction to other people is very likely to happen, and if you do not know what to do, you may well find yourself in a position like King David, trying to cover up your sexual sin and causing serious problems for your entire family, field and mission agency.

Homosexual activity?

Can two missionaries begin a homosexual relationship? Yes, they can, and it can happen with men or women, married or single, young or old. As a result of isolation and loneliness, people living together with same-sex partners may form emotionally dependent relationships. These rather exclusive relationships may become possessive and lead to physical activity with sexual elements. An embrace may become more than just comforting.

This may progress into homosexual activity, so that the people involved have progressed into a sinful relationship. But even if it is stopped before reaching this level, confusion, guilty feelings and the relationship itself need to be carefully examined.

Incest?

Certainly incest cannot occur, can it? Again, the answer is, “yes.” Incest is still legally defined as sexual intercourse between close relatives, as described in Leviticus 18-20. Because incest is often a “family secret,” no one knows how often it occurs, but it apparently occurs most often between an adult male and a younger female relative.

The missionary community often refers to itself as a family, and socially it functions like a family. Children often have many “aunts” and “uncles” on the field they feel much closer to than any biological relatives back “home.” Incest can also involve sexual exploitation of an intimate involving secrecy and misuse of authority—and that also happens in the “missionary family” (the field or the entire agency). Again this is most likely between an older adult male in a position of authority becoming sexually intimate with a younger female, most often the child of a co-worker or a young single female missionary.

The underlying processes seem to be the same in both. The perpetrator is a person in a position of leadership and power in the “family.” The close family is seen as a place of safety and security in a hostile world, but the perpetrator betrays this trust. The victims often blame themselves, thinking their spiritual leader would not have done such a thing without being provoked. Secrecy follows. The victims may keep it secret, thinking no one will believe them. When others find out, they react with disbelief, then shock, then silence--to protect the victim. They may also want to protect the perpetrator or the image of the mission “family.”

How can I prevent it?

Although sexual sin does occur among missionaries, it is not unavoidable. Here are some things you can do to make it less likely.

- Acknowledge your vulnerability. Until you do this, you will not be motivated to do anything to prevent it.

- Avoid triggering situations. Know what leads you to sexual temptations. If visual stimuli do, be careful what you see on TV, the computer monitor, etc. (King David needed to stay off roofs). If it is touch, be careful about physical contact. Once you begin the sexual slide, temptation becomes stronger the further you go.
- Pray. You pray. Ask others to pray. Pray with your spouse and ask your spouse to pray for you. You have a support group back “home,” so ask them to pray.
- Communicate with your spouse and regularly fulfill each other’s sexual needs. Talk regularly and frequently about how you feel about your relationship with each other. As you talk, develop ways to create privacy, such as locking the front door from the outside and coming in the back door. If you can’t hold hands in public, develop other ways of saying you love each other in public, such as a wink, a raised eyebrow, etc.
- Have an accountability relationship. You also need a support group physically present who will look you in the eye and ask you regularly (weekly, if possible) about the purity of your sexual life. Remember that your capacity for self-deceit is great.
- Make a commitment to God. Read Leviticus 18-20 and 1 Corinthians 5-7. Note that they encourage you to be holy, and the way to be holy is to enjoy sex with your spouse and avoid it with anyone else. Make that commitment.
- Practice the presence of the omnipotent God. You may think no one knows about what you are downloading from the internet, but remember God is there. Not only is He there, but He wants us to be holy and promises to strengthen us (Ephesians 3:16).

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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