

The Center for Medical Missions'

e-Pistle

May 2010

It's time for another e-Pistle. I've put this one together with hopes that you will be encouraged and inspired. Much of this issue is about marriage and family issues. Several good things are ahead including a new resource for medical supplies and an opportunity to share your experience and wisdom. Read on.....

Here's what is ahead:

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Child Sacrifice

by David Stevens, MD

Spoken or unspoken, what is the most common question running through the minds of those considering God's call into career missions? By far it is, "What about our children?" Prospective missionaries wonder what effect their leaving father, mother, friends and siblings will have on their children's lives. What impact will missionary service have on their kids' education, security, socialization, adjustments and a host of other concerns?

Those questions all filter down to the same issue. Can you really trust God? That question doesn't disappear when you reach the mission field. God entrusted your children to you. You want to raise them to love the Lord and serve Him. You want them to be well-adjusted, mature, caring, deeply spiritual, highly educated and much more.

The problem is, in the midst of seriously undertaking your important parenting responsibilities you can turn God's gift to you into your God.

It is not the first time that's happened. The first missionary that God sent into a foreign country had the same problem.

The sadness and stress of infertility is much worse in many cultures than it is in the US. In Africa where I served, the husband could dispatch his new wife home and demand back his dowry if she did not become pregnant within the first two years of marriage. If that happened, as far as she was concerned, her life was over. Many women thus disgraced, committed suicide. If the husband didn't exercise his right of rejection, he came under intense community pressure to take a second wife so he could have children to continue his lineage.

I dealt with many desperate couples who came to the hospital begging me to help them conceive and spent many hours as a detective trying to figure out their problem and help them. Those couples that got pregnant after treatment had a joy that knew no bounds! I was their hero!

I was thinking about that recently when I was pondering the story of Abraham and Sarah. In their eyes, God had, at best, inexplicably delayed fulfilling His promise to them. Worst, I suspect they doubted it would ever happen as the years and decades flew by. Desperate, they tried surrogacy, which led to a tragedy that continues today with Arab hating Jews and Jews hating Arabs.

In His time, God did keep His promise. Reading between the lines, I suspect their excitement and exhilaration knew no bounds. Ancient Abraham probably acted like a lovesick newlywed, overprotecting Sarah during her pregnancy and assuring she had the best midwife when his intensely desired son came into the world.

After that birth, his pride knew no bounds. The most important thing in his life was his boy. He guarded him from injury, assured him the best education and doted on him in every way. This was the child of his old age! There would be no other and he loved him more than anything.

And that was the problem. He thought he had to do his and God's job. That everything about raising Isaac well, depended on him. It was all on his shoulders.

So one day God asked him to put his son on the altar.

It didn't make sense to Abraham. Why would God give him Isaac and then ask him to kill him like a sacrificial lamb. Worst yet, his son was old enough to understand what was about to happen! How could he as a father look into his son's eyes and then plunge a knife into his heart?

But as you hear on TV when they activate the emergency broadcast system, this was "only a test." God asked Abraham to demonstrate that he loved and trusted Him more than he loved "his precious" - his son.

This test is given to every missionary as well, not once, but many times during his or her career. It is a test you have to pass

- when you say yes to God's call
- when you climb on the plane to head overseas for the first time with your children holding your hands
- when you cry and hug your kids as they head off to boarding school

- when you bring your teenager back to the states and say a tearful good bye in front of their college dorm before you head back to the field.

Jody and I fought some of these battles. Home schooling was in its infancy when we were planning to go overseas and every parent on our Kenya field had sent their kids off to boarding school, hours away, at age seven. Before we left the states, we had all sorts of conversations conceiving plans to work around this biggest of all issues. We thought maybe we would start a one-room schoolhouse with another missionary wife who was an elementary teacher. We would home school our kids if that didn't work out. When they got to high school, we thought, maybe we would come home to have them attend school in the states.

And then one day God spoke and said, David, put Jason and Jessica on the altar.

What?

“God, I thought you were loving and caring? Listen, I'm going halfway around the world and have given up financial security, relationships, prestige and so many other things that I already have put on the altar. Don't take what I value most.

God was kind. He didn't ask me to go get a donkey, wood and travel to the top of a mountain and make an altar. He dealt with me one on one and asked me questions.

- Dave, do you think you can trust Me with everything but your children?
- Do you think you have to take care of them because you love them more than I do?
- Why don't you just trust Me completely?
- I can take care of your children much better than you can.”

And one night we committed child sacrifice to a God who will have nothing else before him.

It didn't mean we cared for our children any less, but the burden of doing so became so much lighter. God was now in charge of our “most precious” and we were working with Him. He was giving the directions and we were His stewards carrying them out.

Like with Abraham, God gave our children back to us.

Over the years we had the one room schoolhouse, home schooled and told the kids they could go to boarding school when they wanted too. Looking back, we can see God's hands so clearly at every cross road and how God used all of these options to help our children to become all that He had designed them to be. He took our “sacrifice” and turned it into bountiful blessings above our imaginations.

I don't know where you are camped on your life's trail or what children issues you are wrestling with right now, but I do know this. The greatest barrier to full service is an incomplete sacrifice. The greatest obstacle to a full blessing is an incomplete commitment. The greatest barrier to truly loving your children is to love them too much.

Don't hold onto what you can't possess. Give them up.

Anyone who comes to me but refuses to let go of father, mother, spouse, children, brothers, sisters—yes, even one's own self!—can't be my disciple.

Luke 14:26

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Cura Animarum

by Rev. Stan Key

Through the centuries Christians have debated over what term best describes “deeper life”:

• Spirit-filled living	• Christian perfection
• The exchanged life	• Abundant living
• Entire sanctification	• Full consecration
• The crucified life	• The second blessing

I have reached the place where I don't really care what term is used (as long as it's biblical). I simply want **all** of God's people to surrender **all** of themselves so that **all** that Jesus died to make possible might be realized in their lives **all** of the time. All of me for all of Him.

A. B. Simpson, the founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, expressed the call to a higher level of Christian experience in words that I find very helpful... and challenging. His poem is entitled “Himself.”

Once it was the blessing, now it is the Lord;
Once it was the feeling, now it is His Word;
Once His gifts I wanted, now the Giver own;
Once I sought for healing, now Himself alone.

Once 'twas painful trying, now 'tis perfect trust;
Once a half salvation, now the uttermost;
Once 'twas ceaseless holding, now He holds me fast;
Once 'twas constant drifting, now my anchor's cast.

Once 'twas busy planning, now 'tis trustful prayer;
Once 'twas anxious caring, now He has the care;
Once 'twas what I wanted, now what Jesus says;
Once 'twas constant asking, now 'tis ceaseless praise.

Once it was my working, His it hence shall be;
Once I tried to use Him, now He uses me;
Once the power I wanted, now the Mighty One;
Once for self I labored, now for Him alone.

Brothers and sisters, heed the call. Don't live in the shallows when God is calling you to launch out into the deep. There is more that God wants to do in you... through you...

But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved (Hebrews 10:39).

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Resources

Warehouse of Medical Supplies

Dr. Bruce Steffes has learned of an organization, with warehouses in Atlanta and California, that is happy to share from their large stockpile of medical supplies. We've not had opportunity to utilize it but want to let you know of the opportunity. Check it out at www.medshare.org/

Opportunity to Share Your Wisdom – www.askamissionary.com

Ask a Missionary is a recently released book that you may want to suggest to those you know who are interested in missions. (soon to be available at the CMDA bookstore) It is a compilation of responses to 100 frequently asked missionary questions. Additionally there is a www.askamissionary.com forum website which allows individuals to ask questions and missionaries to respond. When you get a chance, you might want to check it out. It would be wonderful if some of you want to respond.

Book for Parents / Grandparents of Missionaries

Savageau, Cheryl, Diane Stortz. Parents of Missionaries: How to thrive and stay connected when your children and grandchildren serve cross-culturally. Colorado Springs, Authentic, 2008, ISBN 978-1-934068-39-7

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Everyone Needs to Know They are Special

By Jeff McKinney, MD

*He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness: He encircled him, He cared for him, He kept him as the apple of his eye. “
Deuteronomy 32:10*

Luis is just an ordinary boy. There must be a million like him in Honduras. Brown hair in a burr haircut grown shaggy, brown eyes, middling features, he's of average height and build for an eight year old, though I expect he'd be larger and healthier looking if he got to eat on a reliable basis. Luis was referred to us by INFA, Honduras's Child Protective Agency. The story that was passed on is that Luis's mother died a few months ago leaving him in the care of his stepfather. Luis's natural father was long gone. He had never known him. The stepfather did not elect to care for Luis. He had 4 children of his own, stepbrothers and sisters to Luis. There were just too many mouths to feed and hardly enough money to do that.

Then Luis got sick and then sicker. It was his 15-year-old cousin Rosa who finally took him to the public health hospital. Luis underwent surgery on the 14th of February. That was not quite three weeks ago as I write this. Luis's little cousin Rosa stayed with him in the hospital for three days, but then she too had to leave. She had no money and no food and just couldn't stay. So Luis was left in Hospital Atlantida by himself. No one ever came to claim him.

That is when INFA, the child protective services, called us. We have developed a close working relationship with the directors of INFA in La Ceiba, our nearest city. This is due in part to the charm, reliability and hard work of Iain & Liz Mckenzie, our Foster Children's Home Directors. But it is also due to our Children's Home being connected with a first rate hospital, Loma de Luz. It doesn't matter a bit to them that we are located out in the boondocks and in the next *Departamento* (state). There is apparently no other Foster Home in Honduras that is connected to a licensed Hospital.

Without really planning to do so, we have become the preferred referral center for abandoned children with medical problems. INFA is now calling every week, sometimes several times a week, wanting us to take another sick child, a special needs child, a child abandoned in the public health hospitals, abandoned children like Luis. We take all we can, and it really hurts when we can't. But the staffing and funds required to take in sick children, particularly children with long term disabilities and special needs, is many times what it takes to care for children without particular medical problems. We did take Luis. He had nowhere else to turn.

We had had Luis for about 2 weeks when one of the staff at the Children's Center found him in a corner, crying and holding his belly. Liz took him down the road to the hospital. (She was already spending the night there with little Orlin, one of our disabled/ special needs kids). Dr. Green admitted Luis and gave me a call as it looked like he might need surgery again. I first met him in Radiology, asked a few questions and studied his X-rays. Later I talked to the nurses about their observations, then sat at his bedside talking with him and watching. The nurses told me that there had been stool and urine specimens ordered. They had brought in the specimen bottles, the urinal and the bedpan. Luis had assured them that he could do that by himself. Sure enough, he had come back with the specimens in the bottles. He had washed the bedpan and the urinal. Mind you, this is an eight year old boy. Clearly much of that eight years he has spent taking care of himself. But again, in this part of the world, this is ordinary. It may not be so common in such rare and prosperous and privileged parts of the world as North America or Europe, but in this neck of the jungle, it is sadly all too common.

After asking questions regarding hunger, nausea , pain & other bodily functions, I told Luis that I knew his Mama had died and that I was sorry. He just nodded. I asked where he came from. “ El Prado”.

“ El Prado? Where is that?”

“ Near Discombros” .

Puzzled look from me (There are several Discombros.)

“ In the municipalidad of Jutiapa.”

“Is your Papi there? ”

“I don’t have a Papi”

“ Do you have brothers and sisters?”

“ Four”, three brothers and one sister. Their Papi is not mine”.

“So they are your stepbrothers and sisters?” Luis nods.

“Do they live in El Prado?”

“Yes, & in Zona Guierra”.

“ Oh, and where did they do this operation?” (touching his scar).

“ In La Ceiba”.

You might have noticed that these questions and answers all had to do with geographic places, three dimensional locus points. They bore little emotional weight. Even when I asked, “Where do you live now?” though he brightened a little, he just pointed. From his position in the bed he was able to point in the exact direction of where he was staying. He had not been there long enough to know its name, but he was able to point unerringly toward the Children’s Center, out of site and a half a mile down the road. This too might seem rare, but remember in Luis’s world, his safety depends upon knowing where he might be safe. He kept track of physical locations for survival. So I suppose that this seemingly extraordinary ability in an eight year old for cataloging locations, in the hard world that Luis comes from, might sadly be all too ordinary too.

It wasn’t until I asked him where he wanted to be that I glimpsed something undeniably special. His answer was not a place. It was a person. When I asked him where he wanted to be he answered, “ with Rosa”. Though his face didn’t move, a tear leaked out and meandered tentatively down to his ear. Rosa is his 15-year-old cousin, the one who had taken him to the hospital in La Ceiba. You see even ordinary boys need to be special to someone. Where he had been operated on, where he had stayed before, where he was staying now, those were just places. Keeping track of where they were helped him stay safe when he had no one to look out for him. But they were just places. Where Rosa was, there he was special to someone. It has been my long understanding that this is one of the most fundamental of human needs. Each of us, in our heart of hearts, needs to be special to someone. We need to have someone who will not forsake us, no matter what. This is just one more point in which the One that Jesus Christ referred to as His “Father in Heaven” stands out. Our Heavenly Father stands alone among all other versions of supposed gods as the only one who holds us each as special. For *“are not five sparrows sold for two farthings and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.” Luke 12:6,7.*

Even Rosa had to leave Luis in Hospital Atlantida. But *“He himself has said ‘ I will never leave you nor forsake you’.” Heb. 13:5.* We will take care of Luis as best we can. We will do all we

can to take care of his sickness, to feed him and to clothe him, to get him to school and to keep him from harm. But I hope we can do more than that. I hope we can let him know for certain that there is someone that considers him special, someone who will never leave him nor forsake him, and that Luis is the apple of His eye.

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Marriage or Ministry?

by Dr. Ron Koteskey

When faced with competing demands and “impossible” schedules, missionaries may feel trapped into making very difficult choices. They may feel like they have to choose one thing over another, often forced to choose one good thing over another.

Marriage or ministry?

On April 4, 1793, William Carey thought that was the choice he had to make as he took his 8-year-old son and boarded a ship to become a missionary to India. He was leaving his pregnant wife, Dorothy, and their other two sons. He did not want to leave his wife and break up his family, but he apparently believed he had to choose between marriage and ministry.

When he could not reach India at that time, he returned home and was able to convince Dorothy to come with him, but his ministry was still more important than his marriage. Things did not go well with his marriage in India.

After Dorothy’s death in 1808 William married Charlotte in 1809. By then he realized that he did not have to choose between ministry and marriage but that he had to blend ministry with marriage. William and Charlotte were able to build a loving relationship in ministry. After her death in 1821 William said that his wife’s death was the greatest loss a man could live with.

Today probably no church or agency would allow anyone to break up marriage and family to go the field. However, even today some people still believe that the choice has to be between marriage and ministry. If marriage and ministry schedules conflict, some choose ministry over marriage thinking that they must make an “either-or” decision.

What does the Bible say?

Fortunately, the Bible gives us a good example of a husband and wife in cross-cultural ministry together. Priscilla and Aquila always appear together in ministry. Sometimes they are referred to as Aquila and Priscilla, and sometimes as Priscilla and Aquila, but always together (Acts 18, Romans 16, 1 Corinthians 16, 2 Timothy 4).

Aquila was a Jewish TCK growing up in Pontus near the Black Sea on the north side of what is now Turkey. People from Pontus were present at Pentecost (Acts 2:9). Aquila and Priscilla became Christian missionaries to several countries.

- They served in Italy but had to leave when Jews were ordered out (Acts 18:2).
- They then became tentmakers in Corinth, giving hospitality and work to Paul (Acts 18:3) as well as hosting a house church there (1 Corinthians 16:19).
- They later served in Ephesus where they engaged in a discipleship ministry in their home (Acts 18:26).

Thus we see this married couple moving from Jewish to Roman to Greek to Asian cultures. Always serving together in a variety of ministries and viewed as a team with neither one more important than the other, they were a great example of marriage and ministry. For them it was not a question of choosing ministry or marriage, it was a matter of serving together in a “both-and” situation, both marriage and ministry. They were in ministry together, and people viewed them as a team.

Marriage is ministry?

Many missionaries have found that their marriage is a ministry. As one lady put it, “We realized that our students at various levels of theological training were reading our lives more intently than listening to what we taught.” What you do may speak so loud that nationals cannot hear what you say.

Few people in ministry have students or parishioners come up to them years later and tell them how a particular lecture or sermon changed their lives. However, many have had people tell them how observing their actions, their lives, and their marriages had influenced them profoundly.

Missionaries, more than most people, would understand what an ambassador is. Missionaries, like other believers, are Christ’s ambassadors through whom God makes his appeal to people of other cultures (2 Corinthians 5:20). When nationals come into missionary homes, they are entering the residence of God’s ambassadors. The way husbands and wives relate to each other and to their visitors affects God’s appeal to them.

What about ministry and marriage in the early church?

The Bible does not deal specifically with husbands and wives in ministry together as missionaries. However, it does deal with husbands and wives as leaders of churches planted by missionaries.

Timothy grew up as a TCK in the town of Lystra in Lyconia. His mother was a Jewish believer and his father was a Greek (Acts 16). Timothy joined Paul during Paul’s second term of missionary service and traveled with Paul and Silas to many countries, including Greece, Macedonia, and Asia.

One time when Paul, the senior mission administrator, was leaving for Macedonia, he asked Timothy to remain on-site in Ephesus to deal with problems in the national church there (1 Timothy 1:3). Later, probably from Rome, Paul wrote a letter to Timothy instructing him how to deal with several issues including the qualifications of church leaders (1 Timothy 3).

- Church leaders (all men in that church) were to be respectable, self-controlled, hospitable, gentle, not quarrelsome, etc. (1 Timothy 3:2-10).
- Their spouses (wives) were to be respectable, temperate, trustworthy, etc. (1 Timothy 3:11).

Marriage and ministry?

Although God does not make us choose between ministry and marriage, and ideally our marriage is often our ministry, missionaries usually still have to make some difficult choices. So many demands are made on their time that they cannot do everything they want to do in both ministry and marriage. Here are several things to consider when faced with this choice:

First, everyone has 24 hours in each day. People vary greatly in how much money they have, the physical stamina they have, the intellectual prowess they have and so forth. However, everyone has exactly 24 hours each day. Each person is responsible for how they use that time. When people say that there is “no time” to do something, what they mean is that other things are more important. Everyone must be careful not to let the good crowd out the better and the better not crowd out the best.

Second, what you do is more important than what you say. Paul did not need to urge the Corinthians to imitate him. Children imitate their fathers! Of course, before you urge people to imitate you, you must make sure that you “walk the talk.” Paul sent Timothy, the same person he had sent to the Ephesians, to remind the Corinthian church that Paul’s way of life agreed with what he taught “everywhere in every church” (I Corinthians 4: 16-17).

Third, intentionally schedule both marriage and ministry times. Missionaries may come from time-oriented cultures where their agencies and supporters are more interested in “results” than in relationships. Such missionaries are likely to become more involved in doing things that show up in reportable statistics than in maintaining relationships with spouses, children, colleagues, and nationals. Without “relationship time” marriages suffer.

Relationships are often more important than “results.” Be careful to maintain your marriage as well as your ministry. When you model this in your own lives, it will not only enrich your lives but also nationals will imitate it in theirs.

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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