

# The Center for Medical Mission's *e-Pistle* November 2011

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Happy Thanksgiving to all reading this! I do realize that not everyone who receives the e-Pistle is from America, but I hope everyone will take some time in the coming days to reflect on the innumerable blessings of our God. Even if we are facing trials or are uncertain of the future, we are blessed by the indescribably precious grace and mercy of our Savior. I have many things to be thankful for this year. I'm guessing you do too.

## **How To Observe Thanksgiving Poem**

*Count your blessings instead of your crosses;  
Count your gains instead of your losses.  
Count your joys instead of your woes;  
Count your friends instead of your foes.  
Count your smiles instead of your tears;  
Count your courage instead of your fears.  
Count your full years instead of your lean;  
Count your kind deeds instead of your mean.  
Count your health instead of your wealth;  
Count on God instead of yourself.*

Anonymous

Thank you for your prayers for the Global Mission Health Conference. It was very well attended and, while I was kept busy at the Center for Medical Mission booth in the exhibit hall, I've heard only wonderful things about the breakout and plenary sessions. I believe most, if not all, will be on the web as podcasts, so please check to see if there is something that might be helpful to you and your ministry. I believe there were 950 commitment cards laid on the altar during the closing service. Praise the Lord.

All the CMDA staff are excited that we have hired a dental director to begin building up the dental ministry. I think you will also be excited to know Dr. Jeff Amstutz has been a co-worker cross-culturally. He has served long-term in Gabon, Mali, and served most recently in Senegal. Jeff and his wife Carrie will be relocating to the U.S. around the beginning of December and will join CMDA soon thereafter. I know Jeff will appreciate your prayers and we hope you will help him in his efforts to support and promote dental ministry.

Susan

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**Wealth Management**

by David Stevens, MD, MA (Ethics)

*Note: I write a column for East Tennessee Medical News, a regional healthcare publication targeted towards a secular audience. I wrote the article that follows for an upcoming issue that in part focuses on wealth management. I thought I would share it with this group since you all are some of the wealthiest people I know!*

I worked with one of the richest doctors in the world. On a daily basis, I watched him add to his net assets. The wonder of it was that he freely taught me his secrets to being extremely wealthy. Since this issue is about wealth management, I thought it only appropriate that I share those secrets with you.

Before I do that, you should know I think money is a good thing – if taken in the proper doses. Of course, too much or too little of it can be dangerous to your mental and even physical health. Have you noticed, no matter how much money we have, it never seems to be enough? It also doesn't bring contentment or happiness. People seem to be either anxious about getting more or fretting and worrying about losing what they have. Just listen to the discussions in the doctor's lounge!

Sure, money can buy lots of things – cars, vacation homes, expensive jewelry, beautiful knick knacks – but Frank Lloyd Wright revealed the dark side of that coin when he said, "Many wealthy people are little more than janitors of their possessions."

All the same, you and I should be good stewards of our money. We should manage it well. It enables us to take care of our families, pay our staff and even retire some day from our hectic lives.

But I digress. Let me share with you what one of the richest doctors in the world taught and showed me about being wealthy.

First, I should never mistake money for riches. He taught me how to measure real wealth. He said the real measure of my wealth is how much I would be worth if I lost all my money. The real measure of my wealth is how much others value me for who I am,

not for what I have in my bank account. He said my real wealth could be measured by the things money can't buy – love, relationships, respect and contentment.

Secondly, if I want to be really wealthy, I need to keep my priorities straight. If I allow money to become my god, it will be my master and I will be its slave. Thus, I need to continually work to be the master of my money, or that money could easily become the master of me.

Thirdly, I need to learn to invest well to receive greater long-term returns. But his lessons on investments didn't focus on arbitrage, options or cost averaging. He focused solely on high yield investments. He showed me that the highest yielding investment I could make was to invest in the lives of others. He told me it didn't take special skills or abilities, just time. He would say, "Let those that you want to influence spend time with you. Ask them questions and have them query you. Not only will it help them to become all they are designed to be, but you will grow from it as well." He invested like that in me and it changed my life! As I worked with him daily, I found that net assets are built through kind words and deeds generously given every day to others. Thoreau was right, "Goodness is the only investment that never fails."

One last lesson that he taught me in regards to money was generosity. John Wesley said, "When I have money, I get rid of it quickly, lest it find a way into my heart." Money can do that, especially if you consider it your most precious asset. As busy healthcare professionals, our "most precious" asset is not money, but time. And time is something that you and I treasure the most because we have so little of it that we can truly call our own. Yet, true generosity is not just a check you write each month or the handful of coins you drop in the Salvation Army bucket. True generosity is giving what you value most to others.

With these lessons in mind, he was the richest doctor I've ever known. Yet, he didn't own a house or a car until after he retired. When he finished his internship, he traveled to a remote corner of Africa to become the first doctor at a small bush clinic. For the first 10 years, he was the lone doctor at the clinic, taking calls both day and night. On his short home assignments to the U.S., he raised money to buy equipment and build buildings. Others finally came to help him on both a short-term and a long-term basis. National staff was trained. Today, that hospital is a 280-bed tertiary care hospital that surrounds the two small stone buildings that housed the original clinic. Its residency programs train some of the best family doctors and surgeons in the country. This year, the hospital's nursing school was one of six out of 44 schools in the country to have all of its graduates pass their exams, and it had one of the top two graduates in the country.

As wonderful as the facilities, programs and services now are, that wasn't my teacher's most enduring legacy. His heritage bears higher dividends than that. To see it, you would have to see the lives of the nationals and expatriates he worked with and the lives of those he influenced with his character, word and deeds. His riches continue to grow and cultivate as those people he guided now influence others.

Now that is real wealth management!

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### **Cura Animarum**

by Rev. Stan Key

Shallow faith makes shallow Christians. But when we find ourselves in the deep waters of some great tragedy or standing on the brink of the abyss...trite answers just won't do. I don't know about you, but when I face a week like this one, I don't want to sing some "little praise chorus." I find myself turning back to some of the great hymns of the faith that have stood the test of time.

William Cowper (1731-1800) battled depression and insanity all of his life. Even sitting under the ministry of Rev. John Newton (converted slave trader and author of "Amazing Grace") did not lead him to the assurance of inner peace he so desperately craved. But it was from the agony of his life that he wrote some of the deepest and most moving hymns in the English language, notably "There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood" and "God Moves In a Mysterious Way." If you've had a hard week, find a quiet spot to get alone with God and allow these words from Cowper's pen to massage your soul.

*God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform; He plants His footsteps in the sea, And rides upon the storm.*

*Deep in unfathomable mines Of never-failing skill He treasures up His bright designs, And works His sovereign will.*

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take; The clouds ye so much dread Are big with mercy and shall break In blessing on your head.*

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, But trust Him for His grace; Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face.*

*His purposes will ripen fast, Unfolding every hour; The bud may have a bitter taste, But sweet will be the flower.*

*Blind unbelief is sure to err, And scan His work in vain; God is His own interpreter, And He will make it plain.*

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### **Announcements**

#### **Discover the Joy Medical Mission Conference**

CMDA will once again be hosting Discover the Joy, a regional medical mission conference, on January 21, 2012, at Grace Fellowship Church in Johnson City, Tennessee. The goal of this one-day conference is to inspire, educate and equip people in the region regarding both international and domestic ministry opportunities. This year's speakers include: Dr. Harold Adolph, a surgeon for many years in Ethiopia; Ron Brown, Associate Director of GHO who will share about effective short-term ministry; Dr.

Joe Smiddy, a local pulmonologist very involved in both regional and international missions who will be introducing six domestic ministries within a few miles of Bristol; Dr. Jon Hall, a dentist will share about inner city ministry; and the day will end with Dr. Dave Stevens giving the challenge. Included in the day will be a couple hour-long question-and-answer sessions where participants will have full access to the presenters. If you will be in the area and would like to participate, we'd love to have you. You can learn more and register at [www.cmda.org/discoverthejoy](http://www.cmda.org/discoverthejoy).

## **Medical Consults**

Just a quick reminder that you do have access to U.S. based medical consultants through the volunteer help of Mary Jane Jewel. You can send your questions, lab results and/or x-rays to [md2ndopinion@aol.com](mailto:md2ndopinion@aol.com), and Mary Jane will forward them to the appropriate specialist. This service is only for medical missionaries serving internationally.

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## **Comparison - Doing the Math** **By Judy Palpant**

*...comparison is the worst of all seductions...[it] is the parasitic growth which takes vitality from the tree...the hidden worm which consumes in secret and does not die, at least not before it has taken the life out of love.--Kierkegaard*

I'm no good with numbers. A look at my checkbook proves the point. But I want the rest of life to balance out, things to be fair. I keep score.

I watch the addition and multiplication. Somebody somewhere is happier, prettier, smarter, richer and funnier than I am. Someone else has acquired a new car, recently installed carpet or gone on a cruise. Another person enjoys more time with her kids and grandkids, more time to read and relax and more time for retreats and renewal.

Look around. Listen. This calculating is both constant and endemic. Unchecked comparison leads to covetousness. It starts young, is habit forming and compounds with age. The scourge separates us from God and one another.

Even as a missionary in rural Africa, I found no immunity. In the early 1980s, I sat in a women's Bible study at a conference in Kenya. Our husbands worked in African mission hospitals. When one woman mentioned her microwave, my small gas stove suddenly seemed inadequate. It required a stick jammed up against the oven door to keep it closed. I envied another missionary whose home boasted of large, beautiful Turkana baskets. Still another woman enjoyed her spacious, guarded compound.

On a larger scale, ministries and churches also keep score. They crunch the numbers, tally up the donors and jealously eye others' surplus. Overseas, one mission begs for a motorcycle while another boasts an entire fleet. The result is alienation between leaders and loss of unity in the kingdom of God.

Proverbs 13:14 describes envy as rottenness to the bones. We develop spiritual osteoporosis, malignancy or an infection—all of which can cripple us. The dictionary defines coveting as unrest--to ferment, to seethe with agitation. It is vinegar in the making. We exhaust ourselves: losing precious sleep, time and heart. Resentment builds. We belly up to the bar drinking drafts of bitterness and stagger away inebriated with a sense of entitlement. "I deserve better."

In Hebrews 12, the writer warns that the root of this disease defiles other people in our lives. The infection spreads. Comparison breeds competition which kills relationships. Beleaguered and bitter, we subtract from our reserves of joy and contentment, ending up bankrupt.

I once asked a woman where she attended church. She told me the church's name with a wry smile, "We refer to it as the Lord's church." Surprised and flustered, I pictured the remnant left at our church after years of hemorrhaging members due to frequent pastoral changes. Such comparison leaves us in a no man's land.

To help me in the heat of the battle, I have memorized words from Hebrews to shake me out of an envy-induced pity party:

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (Hebrews 13:5-6, NIV 1984)

During my husband's residency and my childbearing years, we occasionally received dinner invitations from his faculty attendings. We often prayed beforehand. I confessed my feelings of frumpiness and ineptness. The Holy Spirit freed me from fixating only on the external trappings of our host's home or their multiple achievements.

Differences, disparities and deficits exist everywhere on earth and will only end in heaven. There, God, the just Judge, will reward according to His good will. In the meantime, we strive to avoid the comparison game.

Is there rest for the calculating soul? In Galatians 6:4, the apostle Paul wrote a good word, "Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load" (NIV 1984).

The Roman philosopher Cicero observed that gratitude is the mother of all virtues. A thankful heart gives the Holy Spirit time to remove the nit-picky microscope of negative

comparison. He then replaces it with a telescope through which we view the vast array of God's goodness. No longer constricted by the tangled roots of bitterness, we find freedom to live content and generous lives.

**Note:** *If you would like to correspond with Judy, you can contact her at [judypalpant@gmail.com](mailto:judypalpant@gmail.com).*

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## **Missionary Singles Issues: Identity**

Although there are a few hermits who withdraw from other people and live alone, most of us get much of our identity from our relationships with other people. Of course, we have our identity in our relationship with God as His children, but we still need other people made in His image. We learn what our roles are as we interact with these other people, and much of who we are comes from living those roles.

Paul was a single missionary who knew his identity well. When in Jerusalem, Paul was arrested as a mob became violent. Here is the way Paul gave his identity as he introduced himself to the crowd (Acts 22:3).

- He is a Jew (his cultural identity).
- Born in Tarsus of Cilicia (city of his birth where he learned Greek language and culture).
- But brought up in this city (Jerusalem as a third culture kid where he learned to speak Aramaic and to live in the Jewish culture).
- Studied the Jewish faith under Gamaliel (his religious identity through a famous teacher).
- He became a follower of Christ and Ananias who sent him to witness to everyone everywhere (verse 15).
- Finally, he revealed that he was a Roman citizen (verse 27).

Paul told about all of the cultures and people who had given him an identity. He knew who he was. Of course, we must remember that in Paul's culture, he became a man at the age of 13.

## **Identity versus Role Confusion**

Unlike in the time of Paul when teenagers knew their identity, teenagers today go through a period of time when they do not know who they are and where they fit. During this time of forced singleness, these teenagers go through what Erik Erikson called an identity crisis and are confused about the roles they are to play.

During this identity crisis, teens are no longer children but the culture still does not consider them to be adults. So they have no specific roles to play and are confused

about who they are and where they fit. The usual path to identity is to find work, settle into a community, become involved in a church, marry and have children. As they take on more and more of these roles, they become more and more sure of their identity.

### **Unavailable Roles**

Individuals who remain single past the age of adolescence find the roles of being a spouse or a parent generally unavailable to them.

- Husband. By definition an unmarried man is not a husband.
- Wife. Likewise, by definition an unmarried woman is not a wife.
- Father. In some places and some occupations, a man is able to adopt a child and be a father, but it is often complicated in a host culture and the child grows up with no mother in the home.
- Mother. Likewise, it is often complicated for a woman and the child grows up without a father in the home.

People who are not committed Christians often want these roles, so they simply try living together without the commitment of marriage and also have children without being married. This disregard of God's Word usually does not lead to the satisfaction they are seeking. However, it does disqualify them from being Christian missionaries.

Single individuals who become missionaries find other common roles which are available but are also less likely to contribute to their identity.

- Work. Single missionaries usually join an agency in which the other workers are spread around the world so the single missionaries may never meet most of their colleagues in their agencies.
- Community. Although most single missionaries have a place they call "home," they are seldom there. When they are in their passport countries, they are often traveling to raise support. When serving in their host country, they do not see neighbors at "home."
- Church. Although single missionaries have a home (sending) church, they seldom attend it because they are either raising support in their passport countries or serving far away in their host cultures.

### **Available Roles in Passport Country**

Singles in their passport countries usually have the same spouse and parent roles unavailable. They often have more choices of other roles available to them, and they can join these roles as well. With more Christians around, they tend to form interest groups that focus fellowship around these interests, making little difference whether the individuals in the group are married or single. Here are some examples:

- One church has a NASCAR Sunday school class of about 50 people, both male and female. Conversation before and after Bible study revolves about cars and races.
- Another pastor and a youth worker became storm chasers. It makes no difference whether one is single or married when chasing a tornado.
- Another church has a knitting/crocheting group. Marital status makes no difference when putting yarn on a needle.
- One community has a book club and a garden club in which singleness makes no difference.
- When spending the weekend hunting or fishing with the guys, marital status makes no difference.
- When attending a ladies night out to shop and watch a chick flick, marital status makes no difference.

The list is just about endless when it comes to clubs and interest groups both inside and outside the church. In these groups, the usual topic of conversation is whatever the group is centered around, so whether a person is single or married makes little difference.

### **Available Roles in Host Country**

In many host countries where unmarried missionaries serve, marriage and parenting take more time out of people's lives, so married couples have less time for clubs or groups. In addition, far fewer such groups exist, especially in the single missionary's heart language. Therefore, it is much more difficult to find other roles which contribute to one's identity.

These roles can range from variations of parental and spousal roles to those quite unrelated.

- Godparents. For centuries in many Christian denominations, godparents have been responsible for things ranging from the child's baptism to his or her religious education. A male godparent is a godfather (in the classical sense, not the "mob" sense), and a female godparent is a godmother. Regardless of age, unmarried missionaries can play this "parental" role.
- Aunts and Uncles. Family names and their roles are played by other members of the agency. Unmarried men about the age of the parents are often called "Uncle \_\_\_\_" and unmarried women are often called "Aunt \_\_\_\_." Sometimes older men and women are called Grandpa and Grandma.
- BFF (Best Friends Forever). A current term that is used by people who text to describe individuals in a David and Jonathan relationship is BFF. Such a person is a friend who is always there for you no matter what happens. With the commitment of agape love and the intimacy of phileo love, such friendships are invaluable assets.
- Mentoring. Whether being mentored or doing the mentoring, either role in these wonderful relationships gives one a sense of identity.

- Colleague. Close relationships with others at your own level, such as fellow teachers and fellow physicians, are roles that give identity to those who are playing them.
- Face-to-face relationships are usually the most meaningful. However, with Skype or other such means at our disposal free of charge, such relationships may be valuable and enduring.
- Connections with Christian nationals may be very rewarding and fulfilling. They may name their children after you or become “Mom” and “Sis” to you. As such, you become part of their family.

For a more complete treatment of this topic as well as 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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