

The Center for Medical Missions'

e-Pistle

October 2010

Welcome to this issue of the e-Pistle. We have been praying for you and trust your efforts for the King are bearing fruit.

I have to start this newsletter with a couple clarifications. The first is an apology for the lack of explanation when you received the September e-Pistle just a few days ago. We thought we had sent it on September 28th but later learned that a system glitch occurred while the e-Pistle was going out. What with launching the new website and trying to work out all the glitches with that, we failed to check on the e-Pistle. It was only later when a recipient questioned why he had not received the September e-Pistle that we realized what had happened. So I owe two apologies: one to those of you who received it twice and one to the rest for resending it without an explanation. I am sorry.

I also need to let you know the research focus group that was to take place at the Global Mission Health Conference has been canceled. Suzanne, the one doing the research, has been advised to delay any focus groups until she is further along in the process. I'm not sure if that means we will try it again at next year's GMHC or at some other time. Suzanne and I are both grateful if you were planning to participate. It will not take place at this year's GMHC.

I hope any of you who are planning to be at the GMHC will stop at our Center for Medical Mission booth to say 'hi' or introduce yourself if we have not met. I seldom get away from the booth so you should find me there. The CMDA booths are generally easy to find as there are so many of them. For the past few years they placed us in the center of the main floor's exhibition area. Just look for the bookstore. We will be nearby.

I hope the following are helpful to you.

[Is Your Monitor Working? - Section II: Monitoring](#) by Dave Stevens

[Cura Animarum](#) by Rev. Stan Key

[Premature Departure](#) by Dr. Ron Koteskey

Be sure to let me know if there is some way I can be helpful to your ministry for the King.

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Is Your Monitor Working? - Section II: Monitoring

by David Stevens, MD, MA (Ethics)

Do you ever get ticked off at a TV, radio or print ad? In most overseas situations you aren't exposed to them as much, but here in the United States you can't escape the ad bombardment. In fact, last week federal legislation passed a bill prohibiting stations from automatically increasing the volume on TV and radio ads when they come on.... Sweet relief!

Actually, it is the ad content that more often upsets me. One recent laundry advertisement shows a teenager asking her mom if she has seen her blouse to which she replies, "No honey, I don't have any idea where it is." The ad then takes you on the mother's memory trip that reveals that she had worn her daughter's top to go out dancing and spilt something on it. She then pulls the blouse out of her clothes hamper, washes it with the advertiser's wonderful laundry soap and slips it back in her daughter's closet. The 60 second ad ends with her daughter going out the door smiling and telling her mom she had found her blouse.

So we should buy this laundry soap so we can cover up our lies to our kids?

The health ads drive me even more bonkers, "Lose 30 pounds in 30 days with our miracle pill," "Do you want 'natural potency enhancement?' or 'Regaining your strength and feeling renewed is as easy as wearing the iRenew Bracelet. Just \$19.99 and you can be full of energy and live your life to the fullest!"

Doesn't anyone monitor the veracity of these advertisements?

As personal integrity declines in the United States, companies are into monitoring the behavior of their employees more and more. New software allows employers to automatically monitor computers, phone and other technology use to prevent employees spending company time surfing the web, using pornography, playing games, instant messaging or sending personal e-mail during work time.

Don't get me wrong. I'm a great believer in appropriate monitoring. The best monitoring is the individual having such high integrity and belief that the Boss monitors what they do all the time, that they self-monitor their own actions.

Human nature being what it is though, people still need outside accountability. That may be a men or women's small accountable group where those coming have permission to ask each other the tough questions. "How is your relationship with the Boss?" "How are you cherishing your husband?" "Are you tithing?" "How are you dealing with lust?"

Sometimes that accountability partner can be an individual. My best friend, Gene Rudd, helps hold me accountable and I him. We are involved in each other's lives.

The Word tells us we have a responsibility to be vulnerable and let others hold us accountable. Eph. 5:21 states it clearly. *Submit to one another out of reverence for the Son.*

But I want to focus in on our duty to monitor those that the Boss places under our direct supervision. Our ability to wisely hold them accountable not only helps them be what the Boss designed them to be, but helps us accomplish our organization's mission.

The problem is that we get so busy doing our routine work that we forget the importance of turning our “monitors” on. Here are some practical pointers that will help you do a better job in this important role.

- Put it on your weekly schedule – I have seven senior staff that directly report to me. Each week we have a fixed day and time when they have a short appointment with me. For important or urgent things, they can stick their head in my office at any time but these “monitoring” sessions are set in stone on my calendar if I’m in the office. In the midst of your busy schedule at your healthcare outreach, find a time for a regular private meeting with those you supervise.
- Have an Agenda – I encourage my staff to have an agenda of items we need to discuss so they don’t forget something important. I may mentally note or jot down topics I want to discuss with them as well.
- Strategic Planning – Work with those you supervise to develop a strategic plan for their area of responsibility. What are the specific goals that they should be attempting to accomplish? What specific measurable objectives will lead to the accomplishment of their goals? If they are aiming at nothing, that is exactly what they will hit.
- Broader Assessments – The 4 “P’s” – Each month I write a two-page update for my board that helps hold me accountable. A few days before it is due, I ask each senior staff to submit a one-page report to me accessing their Progress, Problems, Plans and People. This gives me a snapshot of where we are and assists me in preparing my report. It also causes each senior staff member to pause and assess their success. The category “People” is for them to report stories, testimonials or other quotes showing that people are being transformed by their ministry. It tells us if our activity is making a difference in individual lives?
- Group Meeting Should be About Group Issues – Everyone circulates their monthly report to all senior staff so we don’t take valuable time in our monthly senior staff meeting reporting to each other. That meeting is for brainstorming, cross-pollinating and discussing issues that affect everyone.
- Mileage Assessment - We have three board meetings a year. Those months instead of a regular report, I ask each senior staff member to give me a short written report on their progress towards each of their goals and objectives. These roll up into my report to the Strategic Planning Committee of the board. Do we need to delete, change or expand major organizational goals?
- More Than Monitoring – Why do you monitor a patient under anesthesia for a major operation? Don’t you want to identify problems early and jump in to assist the patient where needed? The same is true for people monitoring. Is someone having an interdepartmental problem that I can give them advice in handling or perhaps intervene to pour some oil in the gears? What resources do I know of or have access to that could assist them? I also want to pat them on the back when they accomplish something, help them refine their strategies and think through their problems. Monitoring is score keeping, pep rallying, coaching and after the game celebrating all rolled up into one.

It is important to help my staff accomplish CMDA’s mission but more importantly, monitoring is about my stewardship responsibility to help each person to be successful at what God has called them to do, to mentor their personal development and to remove barriers to their success.

Do you want to prevent system malfunction, the loss of good staff and the failure of accomplishing your mission?Turn you monitor on!

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Cura Animarum

by Rev. Stan Key

For most of human history we humans have believed that our planet was the center of the universe. The sun, moon and stars all rotated around the earth. Right? This geo-centric understanding of existence was most famously articulated by the Egyptian mathematician Ptolemy in the 2nd century A.D.

It was not until the 16th century that anyone dared to challenge the Ptolemaic conception of reality. At first people thought Nicolaus Copernicus was a madman. How could the sun be the center of the solar system when it so obviously “rose” and “set” around the earth? Ultimately, however, the Copernican view won out. The facts were irrefutable: the sun is at the center, not the earth.

This heliocentric view of the solar system led to one of the most radical intellectual revolutions in the history of the world. Men and women began to think differently, view the universe differently, and see their place in the cosmos differently. Man was no longer on center stage. Our planet was but a tiny speck in a vast universe of infinite space.

Friends, listen to me. What Copernicus did for science, the Son wants to do for you. He wants to correct your false notions of reality. He wants you to understand who is at the center of all things... and who is not. Worship is the best place I know to have your worldview radically altered.

Some people think of “worship” as those “preliminaries” done in the body service before the preaching. Wrong! Worship is when we are invited to conform our lives to Reality. We are not the center. The universe does not revolve around us. The Boss is the fixed point around which our lives are in orbit. Our identity and significance are found in relation to Him... not vice versa.

Let’s be honest. Most of us have spent most of this past week living as if the universe revolved around us. Our view of reality has been governed by questions such as: How do I look? Where do I hurt? What’s in it for me? How do I feel? Are my needs being met? How am I being treated?

As you worship the One who is on the throne at the center of all things, discover the glorious freedom that comes when you recognize the fact that the Son is the One.

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Premature Departure

Paul and Barnabas were commissioned to serve cross-culturally, and before they sailed John Mark joined to help. They served across Cyprus and then traveled to Perga, a city in what is now Turkey (Acts 13:1-13). Then the premature departures began.

- From Perga. John Mark left Perga to return to Jerusalem, the headquarters (Acts 13:13). The Word does not say why he left, and today the official explanation would be given as “personal reasons.” He may have been homesick, tired, or any of many reasons.
- From Antioch. People from their passport country stirred up some nationals in Antioch to expel Paul and Barnabas, so they left the region because they were asked to leave (Acts 13:50-51).
- From Iconium. Again people from their passport country and nationals from Iconium were plotting to harm Paul and Barnabas, so they fled from the potential harm (Acts 14:5-6).
- From Lystra. The same two groups actually stoned Paul and left him for dead. Paul survived. He and Barnabas left Lystra the next day in the face of proven danger (Acts 14:19-20).

Cross-cultural workers have probably always had to leave their host country from time to time. They are not citizens there, so they know their time may be limited.

Why do missionaries have to leave?

In these two chapters of Acts people departed prematurely from their fields because of personal reasons, because they were expelled, because they needed to flee from potential harm or to escape a proven danger. People may leave for many other reasons, and here are some of the most frequent ones.

- Physical illness which makes them ineffective or requires treatment at home
- Psychological problems ranging from anxiety to mental illness
- Problems with children or adolescents who are unable to function in the host culture
- Political turmoil in the host country
- Financial needs which require raising funds in their passport country
- Stress and exhaustion which make staying in the host culture impossible
- Problems with aging parents unable to care for themselves or property needs
- Moral failure which prohibits effective work in the host culture
- Conflict with other cross-cultural workers which cannot be resolved

This is just a sample of the reasons people leave their host countries. The list is almost endless, but the reason for leaving has an effect on how people feel about their own leaving and how others react as well. For example, if people leave because they have illnesses that need treatment at home, they may feel quite different about it, and others may react differently than if they are caught embezzling agency funds.

What emotions occur?

The range of emotions is as varied as the reasons for leaving. Some may be very positive, at least at first. For example, if one has just returned from a stressful, dangerous, or conflict filled situation, the primary emotion is likely to be a feeling of relief. However, negative emotions are likely to occur as well. Here are some of the most common.

- Grief because of the loss of so many things such as home, friends, work, and social position
- Anger because of having so many things taken from you through no fault of your own
- Fear and anxiety because of the unexpected trauma and not knowing what will happen next
- Concern for the plight of those left behind
- Guilt because you are no longer helping the people you felt called to serve
- Shock because everything was so sudden and you have still not had time to process it all in your mind
- Shame because what you did was morally wrong and it hurt so many people among your family and friends
- Depression and discouragement because you should have known better and things seem so bleak now
- Resentment because people you believed were your friends turned on you

The list can go on and on, but, in general, people tend to have low self-esteem, believe they are misunderstood or forgotten, and feel useless.

Who is involved?

Individuals tend to feel alone and forgotten when having to leave; however, the premature departure has an effect on many other people as well.

- Families, including both the immediate family and the extended family. Spouses and children usually have to depart as well, so their lives are also disrupted. The extended family back “home” is often involved as this part of the family returns.
- Colleagues who are left on the field and have to take on new responsibilities may resent what has happened.
- Nationals with whom the missionary has been working may not be ready to fulfill their roles alone.
- Agencies which have to scramble to try to find someone to take over projects on short notice may be under severe stress.
- People back “home” who do not fully understand what has happened may feel like you have abandoned your calling

What can missionaries do?

Although transfer to a different field or reentry into one’s passport culture after premature departure is more difficult, the steps are basically the same as after a scheduled one. If it was a sudden, unexpected departure, the order of the following steps may have to be changed slightly.

- Face the Present. As soon as possible do whatever is necessary to bring a relatively “normal” structure to your life and the life of your family. For example, you need to immediately get temporary housing, transportation, and anything else necessary for living. If you have children, get them in school or begin home schooling to bring structure to their lives.
- Acknowledge your loss. Leaving early means that you have more losses and less time to grieve than people departing at scheduled times. Take time to grieve these losses whether this means doing it with others who have also had to leave or do it alone if you find yourself apart from others who left. Remember that you lost your role, your ministry, your plans for the future there, and so forth.
- Close the past. Although you may be able to return after your illness is over, after the political situation is resolved, and so forth, do not count on it. You served the Boss there as he led, and you are not able to continue at this time. You may be able to return as Paul and Barnabas did (Acts 14:21-24), or you may never be able to go back. Have someone debrief you and help you see how your premature departure fits into your life story. Then let the past go—but be ready to return if the opportunity comes again and you feel led to go.
- Move into the future. After you are functioning in the present and have closed the past, you are ready to begin planning and moving into the future. This may be anything from taking a similar position in another country, to starting a new ministry in your passport country, to returning to your host country, to pursuing higher education, to taking an entirely new course that you believe is the Boss’ plan for you and your family.

For a more complete treatment of this topic as well as other topics please visit missionarycare.com. Also please let your non-medical colleagues know about these free resources.

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