

The Center for Medical Missions'

e-Pistle

September 2009

Yesterday began the fall season here in the USA. Tomorrow, CMDA will hold its annual national convention for 4 days. I don't know if the leaves have begun to change colors in the Asheville, NC area or not, but it would be great if they have so that convention participants could enjoy the beauty of this time of year.

For those of you in Africa and surrounding area, have you signed up for next year's continuing medical education conference? If not, you need to do so immediately. The registrar's e-mail is lupercmda@suddenlink.net. I believe it is late enough now that you may also sign up your national colleagues, should they wish to attend as well.

Also, if you are going to be in the States and free on the second weekend of November you need to register for the Global Mission Health Conference in Louisville. I don't know if they have any booth space left, but if your mission agency is needing medical workers, there is probably no better place to recruit. There will be a couple thousand young people attending who will be researching medical mission opportunities.

I trust things are going well for you and your ministry. Things are good here in Bristol. Dr. Stevens is back in the office. We are glad he is contributing to the e-Pistle once again. Here is a list of the articles in this month's e-Pistle.

- Eminent or Preeminent by David Stevens, MD
- Cura Animarum by Rev. Stan Key
- Recurrent Short Term Medical Teaching Trips – a New Vehicle for Mission by Huw Morgan
- Time Management in an Event-Oriented Culture by Dr. Ron Koteskey

Enjoy!

Susan Carter

Eminent or Preeminent?

By David Stevens, MD

I turn 58 this week.

How in the world did I get this old?

My life is past its mid-point and maybe way beyond it. My dad had a heart attack at age 61 while visiting us in Kenya and four years later died after acquiring malaria when he and mom came back for a visit. No guarantees of three score and ten or longer.

Birthdays are good in a number of ways.

If you stop having them, you are dead.

Okay, I'm not dead yet. That's good news!

People give you gifts, but those drop off as you get older. Maybe because they more commonly give you things you don't need or want. They somehow realize that, so they stop giving gifts.

Birthdays are a great time for reflection as well. Something all of us, who live such busy lives, should do more of. I know I do. I get so busy running to do the next thing that I don't spend enough time considering if the next thing is worth doing.

Not that I'm doing bad things. Those things, thank God, are almost always easy to discern.

The challenge is in distinguishing the eminent from the preeminent. What falls under the heading of "important" and what should be listed as "most important?"

Yeah. That is an important I mean the most important question!

And it is a question that should be asked periodically of every area of your and my life – our work, our family and in our personal spiritual walk with God.

Yesterday, I spent an hour writing a long detailed e-mail to a member who had questions about healthcare reform. It was a very poor investment of my "life time". Today, as I reflected, I realized it would have been more important to have spent that time creating a resource that I could give to everyone who had questions. Most importantly, I could have invested an hour in having a webinar and invited all CMDA members to log in online to discuss this issue.

Tonight, after work, I need to weed the hill that goes down to the woods behind my house. I invested lots of time over the last three years planting Vinca, a ground cover, on that bare hill where I can't mow. It was important for erosion, aesthetics and to crowd out weeds.

But my important project hasn't done anything but control erosion. It doesn't look good because of all the weeds that grow among the vinca anyway. Jody and I have spent many hours weeding that hill each season. If I had done the most important thing, I should have paid the cost in money and time, put down landscaping fabric and then planted the vinca. Now I ask myself, "Do I really want to weed this hill the rest of my life?"

That is a mundane example about doing the important, the eminent, instead of the preeminent. Yet if I had done the preeminent with the hill, I would have time tonight to

write an article for a magazine that could touch thousands of people or to spend some great time with my family or to go trout fishing. Standing in a river casting a fly is some great time for thinking and restoration.

Deciding on what is eminent or preeminent is very important for busy missionaries and their families. There are so many things to do, so many people vying for your time and so many opportunities.

I have a mental grid that helps me discern, (at least some of the time!) what to do. Maybe the questions I ask myself will help you.

1. Do I have the skills, abilities and passion to do this? If not, is it worth the investment of my time to develop them?
 - a. Is there someone that is better suited to delegate this to or to teach how to do it?
2. Are my motivations biblical? Am I doing this to fulfill biblical mandates of how I should invest my life or am I doing it for fame, power or fortune?
 - a. God's primary concern is bringing the lost to Christ, discipling them and turning them into soul winners.
 - b. My primary responsibilities are to God, my family and then my ministry.
3. How many people will this effect?
 - a. Am I fishing or teaching people to fish?
 - b. Will there be a ripple effect?
4. Is there a more efficient or better way to accomplish this goal that will have a wider impact or a longer effect?
5. Is it worth the "life time" I will have to invest to accomplish it?
6. Are there better investments of my time?

Applying these questions can lead to minor and major changes. You may be investing all your time in medicine and not doing ministry? Maybe you are too focused on procedures and not people building? Maybe you need to focus your medical ministry more to help the church bring people to Christ and disciple people?

For Dr. Tom Hale, a missionary surgeon to Nepal, these type of questions moved him from the eminent of providing surgery to the preeminent of writing a commentary on the whole Bible in the local language and writing books to influence people into missions.

For Susan Carter, as a young missionary nurse, these questions moved her from hospital nursing and midwifery to starting a community health program that now reaches over a million people regularly.

For 56 doctors and spouses who went through our "Completing Your Call" course over two years, it moved everyone back into practice, but doing it in a new and more effective ministry mode.

No matter how old you are, you are getting older. Your “life time” is being spent. Are you making preeminent investments?

Cura Animarum

By Rev. Stan Key

It is wise to visit your doctor periodically for a “physical.” This morning let me suggest that it is time for a “spiritual.” The following questions based on The Ten Commandments will enable you to better assess your true spiritual health. (Taken from *Life Action Ministries*.)

- 1. You shall have no other gods before Me.** Do my checkbook, calendar, and topics of conversation reflect that God is first in my life? Do I have relationships with others that are more important than my relationship with God?
- 2. Do not make for yourself any graven image.** Do I possess anything that receives more of my time and focus than the Lord Jesus Christ and my ministry for Him?
- 3. Do not use God’s name in vain.** Do I allow flippant use of God’s name in my presence? Do I worship the Lord without sincerity of heart?
- 4. Keep the Sabbath day holy.** Do I refrain from activity on the Lord’s Day that does not include rest, worship or ministry to others? Do I schedule church around my weekend plans rather than scheduling my weekend plans around church?
- 5. Honor your parents.** Do I show respect to my parents by giving them quality time, focused attention and regular expressions of my love?
- 6. Do not murder.** Do I display hate through my words or body language towards family members, friends, acquaintances or even those I may view as enemies?
- 7. Do not commit adultery.** Am I defiling my soul by not putting to death the lusts that arise in my heart?
- 8. Do not steal.** Is there anything that I possess or claim rights to which belongs to others? Do I give my tithes and offerings to the Lord’s work?
- 9. Do not lie.** Am I allowing others to believe something about me that both God and I know are untrue? Do I ever lie to protect my reputation? Do I reflect a true witness of what Jesus really is like?
- 10. Do not covet.** Am I content with what I have? Am I obsessed with acquiring things that are not needs?

The law of the Lord is perfect... it gives life to the soul (Psalm 19:7).

Recurrent Short Term Medical Teaching Trips – a New Vehicle for Mission

By Huw Morgan

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Consultant in International Medical Education (for PRIME)

Introduction

The world of mission, including medical mission, is changing. Today's electronic systems and speeds of communication mean that increasing links and networks are being created between believers in developed and developing countries without the intermediary of traditional mission agencies. Relatively cheap airfares mean it is possible for those in rich Western countries to travel to distant places for short periods quite easily. Some new dynamic Christian groups are at the cutting edge in exploring the possibilities of this new world.

Partnerships in International Medical Education (PRIME)

PRIME is a registered charitable network of doctors and other health care workers involved in medical education that is seeking to use the opportunities provided by medical teaching as a vehicle for holistic mission. It enables those with skills and experience in medical teaching in the UK and other 'developed' countries to link with partners in 'developing' countries who wish to invite them to come and provide educational programmes for their personnel. Although the key partners in host countries are usually Christians, this is not always the case, and some links have been forged with those of other faiths or none who share a commitment to good, whole-person care, high ethical standards and a spiritual perspective in medical care. PRIME's vision is to spread 'God's values' in medical education around the world, reclaiming the ground captured by Secularism, Communism and other Godless value systems in the last few decades. It also seeks to teach and model good learner-centered educational methods (which in themselves can demonstrate Christ-likeness to participants). PRIME currently works in many Eastern European and former Soviet countries, as well as some in South Asia and Africa.

Initially the majority of people involved in PRIME were General Practitioners, as GP (Family Medicine) development is a current growth area in many countries and there are a number of opportunities for those experienced in GP education to serve overseas. However, there are increasing numbers of Hospital Specialists and Allied Professions members who have also worked with PRIME, and it is now networking with Nurse Tutors and others as new opportunities for teaching in needy situations come to light. If you are an experienced teacher in your discipline, and are willing to spend a week or two a year (or longer) teaching in a developing country at your own expense, PRIME will be interested to hear from you (see below). We would also be pleased to hear from you if you are working in the developing world and would like to explore ways in which PRIME input could be of help to your programmes. PRIME tutors normally travel in pairs or small groups so the first trip would be made with another experienced tutor who'd previously visited the relevant country. Some PRIME tutors (including the author

of this article) have spent many months in host countries contributing to the development of various medical education programmes.

The rewards

It's a great privilege to meet enthusiastic and committed Christian and other colleagues in different cultures who have a vision for improving health care in their country. Often they are trying to do this in the face of very limited resources and indifference or even hostility from government and university authorities. The presence and input of 'international experts' is usually a great encouragement to them, and repeated visits enable us to see what progress they are making and signal an on-going interest from supportive overseas colleagues in their struggles. Introducing new ideas and learning methods to under-resourced colleagues, modeling learner-centered approaches to teaching and seeing eyes light up with enthusiasm is very exciting. Facilitating the development of doctors and others serving the poor in isolated rural situations and so hopefully improving health care for people in the real 'developing' world is rewarding. It is exciting to see non-Christians agreeing with the power and effect of the values and principles we teach. In a few places it has been very gratifying to find that consultation/communication skills training in particular has transformed some doctors' appreciation of the value of what they do, and they have found patients wanting to see them rather than other types of doctors, because they've developed a reputation for really listening to the patient's problems. All PRIME work is built on forming relationships and it has been very rewarding to build these over the years with doctors and others in many countries that appreciate the support we give. Christian values and compassion really do revolutionize health care, and it is great to see Christian colleagues in many countries truly grasping this for the first time when they participate in PRIME programmes. Many have thus been inspired for the first time to see medicine as a Christian vocation, so potentially having a transforming effect on their country's health care system.

The challenges

These are mostly to do with the expectations and beliefs that we carry from Western culture coming up against those from very different cultures. Time orientation, efficiency, reasonable conscientiousness, honesty and directness are things we take for granted in the West. Other cultures are different; in most Eastern and African cultures more emphasis is placed on the importance of relationships and time spent on building them. Also in the East 'saving face' is very important so visitors may not be given the whole picture about a situation if it includes things the hosts perceive to be embarrassing – this can lead to problems even in initial e-mail communications while trying to set up a programme. Interactive teaching methods are largely unknown in many countries and participants may take time to adjust to them as they transgress familiar hierarchical cultural norms. There is the need to be constantly aware of the poverty of non 'First World' countries and the implications of this in terms of lack of equipment, very low pay for health care workers and general lack of infra-structure that makes running teaching programmes, planning activities and organizing meetings much more of a challenge than it is in the 'developed' world. Failing power supplies often interrupt teaching sessions so you can't necessarily depend on projected Power Point presentations or even an overhead projector and simple things like getting handouts printed can be a major task. Having to work

through interpreters is also an interesting challenge, although one that is quickly adjusted to and not a great hindrance if, as is usually the case, they are medically qualified or medical students. In some places there is a real sense of spiritual warfare and it is necessary to be prepared for that – prayer support from as wide a network as possible is crucial in doing this work. You need to be an enthusiastic traveler and be prepared for the usual hassles associated with international travel. But all of these challenges pale into insignificance compared to the privilege and excitement of using teaching skills to improve the health care of those in the real ‘Two-Thirds’ world in the name of Jesus.

For further information contact:

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Time Management in an Event-Oriented Culture

By **Dr. Ron Koteskey**

The phrase “time management” would not even naturally occur in the language of an event-oriented culture. It is a phrase that would only occur to someone coming into such a culture from a time-oriented one. In time-oriented cultures we think of time as a commodity. Our language reflects this when we talk about “spending” or “saving” time and when we talk about “investing” or “wasting” time. The phrase, “time is money” would make little sense in an event-oriented culture.

However, since many missionaries are from time-oriented cultures and receive support from people with that orientation, it remains relevant to their lives when interacting with family and supporters back in their passport countries.

Jesus lived in a culture in which people did not wear watches on their wrists and did not hang clocks on every wall. Sometimes he responded immediately and went to people, and at other times he delayed his response or withdrew to be alone.

For example, on one occasion when two of John’s disciples began following Jesus, he did not send them away but spent the day with them (John 1:39). Likewise, when Nicodemus came to him at night, Jesus did not say that it was time to go to bed, but spent time carefully answering his question (John 3:1-21).

However, on another occasion when his brothers urged him to publicly show himself to the world, Jesus said the time was not right. He said, “You go to the Feast. I’m not yet going up to this Feast, for the right time has not yet come.” Then when his brothers left for the feast, Jesus also went in secret. (John 7:1-10). Jesus dealt with time in a variety of ways. How do we manage our time in an event-oriented culture? Let us consider some ways.

Be God-oriented first.

When asked what was the most important commandment and how to obtain eternal life, Jesus replied with what we call the Great Commandment—putting God first in every area of life (Matthew 22, Mark 12, Luke 10). **Your time with God is the most important thing in either a time-oriented or an event-oriented culture.** Settle this before attempting to answer questions about time vs. event or task vs. people.

The most important question is, “What does God want me to do in this situation?”

- Ask him.
- Pray for wisdom, guidance and help in knowing what to do with your time.
- Look for Scripture passages related to event-oriented cultural responses.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to illumine passages.
- Ask people to pray for you to have God’s wisdom in how to spend your time.

Be Teachable.

First you probably need to learn about the event-oriented culture in which you are living, so be open to being taught.

- Observe.
 - How do people greet one another?
 - How do they connect socially?
 - What do they talk about?
 - How do they say good-bye?
- Ask.
 - Consult with other missionaries.
 - Ask nationals about time-related issues and norms.
 - Ask to which events one can be late and how to interpret the time stated. For example does 8:00 mean 8:00, 8:15, 8:30 or 9:00?
 - Find out what reasons for tardiness are acceptable.
 - Ask how late you can or should be. That may depend on your status.
- Read. As you read books about the culture, pay close attention to the sections about the use of time.

Time may be very specific to particular events. For example, it may be more acceptable to miss the wedding than to miss the reception—and perhaps you must not leave the reception before the meal is served and the cake is cut. If your visit to the wake at a funeral is too short, it may be perceived as cursory, indicating that you do not really share in the grief of the family.

Coach yourself well.

Quiet those automatic thoughts that condemn event-oriented people as inefficient, unproductive, and wasteful. Replace them with positive thoughts.

- I’m being productive in a different way.

- I'm expanding my repertoire of uses of time.
- I'm becoming more flexible for the Master's use.
- I'm learning how to manage relationships instead of time.
- I'm learning how not to offend people.

Remember that use of time is not inherently a moral issue. You may just be learning to be more like Mary and less like Martha. What Martha was doing was not bad, but what Mary was doing was better at that time. You may have to earn the right to speak to people's needs before presenting your extensively researched Bible study. Be sure you know what their needs are before you try to speak about them. Remember that the watch on the national's arm may just be a status symbol, not an indicator of time-orientation.

Try these tricks of the trade.

Here are a few things you can do to help you adapt to the event-orientation of an event-oriented culture.

- Take your watch off.
- Remove all clocks from your home.
- Pay attention to the position of the sun instead of the minute hand on your watch.
- Build ample time cushions (between events) into your planning.
- Memorize Scripture when you wind up waiting for half an hour.
- Always carry a Bible or Testament so that you can use unexpected time for devotions, sermon preparation, class preparation, etc.
- Reward yourself for not being time-conscious.
- Make notes of good things that happen when you are not in a rush.
- Journal about times when you are not able to be time conscious.
- Use the time to observe and learn about your host culture.

Get out of town.

You may want to "escape to a mountain" as Jesus did. At times he got away from people, and he encouraged his disciples to do the same thing. If you are from a time-oriented culture, you may feel more relaxed if you can get away to a place where "time management" is a meaningful concept. Just as you continue to speak your mother tongue at home even when living in another country, there is nothing wrong with having a place where you can make lists and accomplish "things" in timely fashion. Rather than a retreat from time-orientation, it is a retreat to time-orientation.

Some people may believe that a Christian worker, especially a missionary, should not refuse to spend time with people who want them to stay, but that was not the case with the apostle Paul. At the end of his second term he briefly visited Ephesus, leaving two other missionaries to continue the work. When the people of Ephesus asked him to spend more time with them, he declined, saying that he would come back if it was God's will (Acts 18: 20-21). At the end of his third term and in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, Paul decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time there (Acts 20:16-38).

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.

The fastest and most secure way to give to CMDA is through our [secure online giving site](#). Your gifts will be used to continue and expand the critical work of CMDA as we minister to doctors, students and patients.

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