

Your Call

Keeping you focused on God's call for your life

An e-newsletter encouraging and equipping you for a career in medical missions



Center for
Medical Missions
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Welcome to the July 2018 issue of *Your Call*. I hope you can find some time this summer to think and pray about your call to healthcare missions. In the busyness of training and the noisiness of so many things pulling at you, has the fire of your call perhaps dimmed some? I hope not!

Please take a few minutes to read through this issue and let the Holy Spirit revive both you and your call. I am here and available to answer questions or help as I can as you journey toward healthcare missions.

Just a few minutes ago I read a blog from a new medical missionary who, after 11 years of medical school and surgical training and 1 year of language study, just completed his first day in the field. I could almost feel his excitement. Don't misunderstand—it was a difficult day with trauma, death and difficulties—but he was finally getting to do that for which he has spent years training. One day I hope that will be you.

If I can do anything to encourage or help you on your way to full time involvement, please don't hesitate to ask. I will help anyway I can.

Remember, it is time to register for the Global Missions Health Conference that will be held at Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky on November 8-10, 2018. The website to register is www.medicalmissions.com. I hope to see you there.

Susan

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Included in this issue:

- [Breaking the Will with Crushing the Spirit](#) by Rev. Stan Key
- ["Picking your Team"](#) by David Stevens, MD, MA (Ethics)
- [Humility and Empathy Refresher...](#)by Dr. Jenny Bryden
- [Forward Focus](#) by Judy Palpant

Breaking the Will without Crushing the Spirit

by Rev. Stan Key

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Psalm 51:17, NIV 1984).

I know almost nothing about breaking a horse, but I’ve watched enough cowboy movies to have a rough understanding of what is involved. The process is typically long and rather violent. Though there is something beautiful about an unbroken stallion running wild over the prairie, such an animal is simply of no usefulness until he is “broken.” The word choice is powerful. The great challenge for the cowboy is this: how to break the horse’s will without crushing his spirit.

One of the best pictures of entire sanctification I have ever read comes from a little book entitled *Embracing Brokenness* by Alan E. Nelson. The author likens the inner self (the soul) to an untamed stallion. Jesus comes to conquer the will. Until the “breaking” occurs, the soul remains wild and useless to the Master’s service. Nelson describes what this process of breaking is like:

I have noticed three parallels between breaking a horse and taming the soul. The first is that the world has little use for a wild, unbroken soul. An unbroken soul is primarily a consumer. It occupies space and carries on many of the functions of a broken soul; but it performs little good...

The second observation is that the breaking process ultimately strengthens the bond between the cowboy (owner, rider, caretaker) and the horse. Prior to being broken, all that exists is admiration from a distance, and the basic maintenance of life (feeding, watering). Once brokenness occurs, there is a bonding and affection.

Third, one would think that the breaking process would sap the spirit, drive and energy of the horse. It does not. The horse is just as strong after breaking as before, but his abilities multiply many times over and his energy is no longer wild, but directed. The process of embracing brokenness is not a matter of becoming passive, unmotivated or lackluster. Rather, it is a catalyzing process that ultimately helps the soul reach its potential.

I used to believe that after a person prayed the sinner’s prayer and became a Christian, all that was needed was to grow in grace. Read your Bible, go to church, pray daily, join a small group, get involved in ministry and you’ll automatically grow to be a mature saint of God. Right? It seldom works this way. The truth is, most of us are born into God’s family with our wills still unbroken. Whether the unsundered-self manifests itself aggressively like a bucking bronco or passively like a stubborn mule, until the Master breaks us and conquers our will, we are useless in His service. Conquering the will is what sanctification is all about.

Perhaps Jesus is inviting you to meet Him in the Holy Spirit corral where He wants to teach you who is master and who isn’t. The breaking process is not pleasant but there is no other way to live a life that matters. *“Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you. Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord” (Psalm 32:9-10, ESV).*

Point to Ponder: Until your will is broken you are like a wild stallion.

Prayer Focus: For someone whose will has never been broken.

“Picking Your Team”

by David Stevens, MD, MA (Ethics)

If you are called into career missions, it is never too early to begin thinking about the mission agency you will join. It is a big decision and you want enough time and information to choose wisely. The process can be easy or very difficult.

It was easy for me. In my third year of college I was talking to my father, who knew many missionaries around the world, about my need to get some experience working in a hospital. I had been called into medical missions, but my experience in the nuts and bolts of medicine peaked at dissecting a cat. I didn't know how I would do in the blood and guts arena.

Dad said, “Of all the missionary doctors I know, I have the greatest admiration for Dr. Ernie Steury in Kenya, who your mom and I have supported since his first term of service in 1959.”

I was able to go and spend a summer in Kenya with World Gospel Missions' student program then called, “Summer Career Corp.” We helped with all sorts of ministries from running a Christian bookstore at the national fair to painting IV poles. I got to spend a few weeks at Tenwek and Ernie taught me to scrub with him, helped me deliver my first baby and took me on a hunting safari with his family to shoot meat for the hospital. I came back “hooked.” I wanted to grow up and be just like Ernie Steury, and I wanted to go help him with the overwhelming needs at Tenwek.

The way to get there was to go with World Gospel Mission, the organization that started the hospital. I figured if it was good enough for Ernie and the other missionaries, it was good enough for me, and so I didn't even look at another agency.

As a missionary, I learned it was a great mission board with lots of ways of doing things that would have attracted me if I had sat down to compare agencies. Instead, I signed up knowing very little about the agency. I just knew God had called me to Tenwek.

If you don't know the specific place where God is calling you, your decision will take a little more work. Here are 10 things you should consider:

1. **Its Focus** – If you have felt a specific call to India or to go into the 10/40 Window, the first thing you should do is look at agencies with ministry in that part of the world. You can eliminate groups not working where you have been called. For example, you don't need to take a close look at Central American Mission if you feel called to Africa! If God is calling you into the 10/40 Window, a mission agency that only works with Alaskan Indian Tribes won't meet your needs.
2. **Its Strategy** – You obviously need to look at agencies that have the type of ministry focus that God is calling you to do. Many mission agencies don't have medical or dental outreach. If they do, do you want to be in a hospital-based program, doing community health, conducting

research or teaching? Maybe you want to do all four. Do you want to be part of a pioneer mission group reaching the unreached or be involved in building and strengthening the church where it is already established? Do you want a mission with multiple strategies with medicine as one of those or one that is totally focused on medical missions? Look at your talents, abilities, needs and passions, and then look for agencies that can utilize them. Most of the population growth in the world will be in urban areas, and rural agencies will just stay stable. Is God calling you to the challenges of urban ministry? Do the agencies you are looking at employ urban strategies?

3. Its Makeup – If you are a female physician who will have young children, you may want to work where there are enough staff so you won't have to take too much night call or where you can even work part-time. Can the mission agency use someone with your specialty or interest? You are going to eliminate lots of mission groups if you are a neurosurgeon, though some of the larger agencies have that outreach and others could use it. If you are an ophthalmologist, you may want to look at agencies like Christian Blind Mission that specializes in that area, or you can find a larger group that has an eye hospital as part of its makeup.
4. Its Theology – This can be a significant issue. I served with a mission that didn't accept candidates who did not share its theological position. If you grew up a Methodist and participate in that tradition, the Southern Baptist mission board may not be interested in you and vice versa. On the other hand, there are interdenominational mission agencies that focus on just the key tenets of evangelical faith and accept missionaries from a wide variety of faith backgrounds. Know where you stand and make sure you are a match with agencies you are considering.
5. Its Experience – Does the agency know what it is doing from long experience, or is it newer, cutting edge and forging new paths? What fits best with your personality and interest? I know of a small board that recruits students just out of college and is led by leaders in their 30s. Their passion and strategy is living with the local people in urban slums at almost the same economic level. They have a history of success, but it is a short one. They are making lots of mistakes and learning as they go. Their focus is incarnational. This agency is attractive to the young, single and passionate individuals, but is a little harder group for families to work with. They don't focus on medicine since they don't want to establish clinics or hospitals. There are no other medical missionaries with the group but they would like to get into a community health program that would integrate well with their strategy. No one in leadership has any experience in community health, so if you join this group, you will be the "expert" and have lots freedom in developing the outreach.
6. Its Support – Denominational mission groups are often supported by their churches through regular giving or special appeals. Individual missionaries are expected to speak but are not responsible for raising their own support. "Faith" mission agencies train and work with their missionaries to raise the support they need. They establish the level of support needed based on their usual salaries and benefits, specific country parameters, the size of family and travel and shipping costs. You are then told how much you need to raise as they help you write appeal letters, secure services or conduct personal solicitation. Don't rule either one in or out. I worked with a faith mission and loved it. I had wonderful opportunities for ministry during "home assignment," as I built close relationships with individuals. (This weekend I spoke for the first time in 18 years at a mission conference in a church with many supporters. Their welcome rivaled that given to the prodigal son. I was still "their missionary.") I felt I had

better prayer support through a faith mission and some of our supporters came over to help us build our house or do other projects. Pray about which type of agency God wants for you.

7. Its Success – Organizations are either growing or involuting. Of course, every organization goes through cycles, but if you see a pattern of fewer and fewer missionaries, ministries closing, assets being sold or frequent leadership changes, be careful. The agency may be dying a fast or slow death. You will likely lack the support and energy you need. How effective is the group in accomplishing its goals. Are people coming to the Lord? Are the national churches growing? Are national leaders being trained? Is the mission moving into new countries or new fields of ministry? Have they done effective healthcare ministry?
8. Its Management Style – I'm very entrepreneurial. (The joke around the office is that the thing my staff dread to hear me to say is, "I have an idea!") My mission had a very decentralized management style. Budgets were developed from the bottom up so we could prioritize our needs at the local level. Once in the budget, we could raise money for that project if we thought it was important. We could raise extra money from our own supporters in our "ministry" account and transfer it to any approved project. For example, I saw the strategic importance of a strong media department at headquarters and transferred money to that department to help them get the equipment they needed. I could even help other missionaries who were low on support. Faith missions more often operate this way, whereas denominations have a more centralized management style that can be more difficult for an entrepreneurial missionary to operate in. There are exceptions. My sister and brother-in-law were in a faith mission but at the end of each year, any money left in their ministry account that they raised was emptied out into the general budget for the administration to decide where it would be used. It wasn't a deal breaker, but they didn't like their system because often the money didn't go back to the seminary ministry they had given their lives to.
9. Its Culture – Every mission group has its own culture. Some foster very close relationships among their staff, while others have a very difficult time doing that due to size, geography or other factors. Others place people in teams while some utilize more "Lone Rangers." Some prescribe how parents will educate their children on the field. Others allow parents lots of choices. Some have great field leadership and others do not. My mission realized that often the missionaries most needing a vacation break were the ones not taking them so they established a "vacation fund" for each missionary and almost mandated they take some time off to renew and restore. The missionary no longer could use the excuse, "I can't afford it." This policy put a lot of oil in the gears to reduce interpersonal conflict and improve the culture.
10. Its Openness – Will the mission let you go and experience their work through short-term missions? Will they answer your questions completely and accurately? Will they let you ask questions of missionaries on the field? Be careful if everything seems too rosy. Every mission agency has problems and challenges. If they won't share theirs, warning bells should go off.

One of the best ways to really understand a mission agency is to have an honest talk with missionaries on furlough who serve with that group. Ask specific questions and, if possible, find someone who will be doing what you want to do. Even so, realize that they desperately want you to come to help so it is impossible for their answers to be completely unbiased.

Most importantly, pray about your decision. God will give you direction on this important decision. There is no perfect agency and the bottom line is, "Who does God want you to serve with?" He may put you in an agency with many problems because He is bringing you in as part of the

solution.

“Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this” (Psalm 37:5, NIV 1984).

Humility and Empathy Refresher...

by Dr. Jenny Bryden (first appeared in PRIME International newsletter)

Recently I've sprouted a stick (needing one for walking), and while the practicalities have been a pest, the anthropology has been an education.

My initial experience was of becoming much more visible, patients from all parts of the hospital started to greet me with “I've seen you about, you're the doctor with the stick!” Before I got the stick, my colleagues had managed to ignore that I was limping, but acquiring it was an undeniable sign that something was wrong. The irony is that the same stick that labelled me disabled, enabled me to function. The sympathy and concern from colleagues and patients was triggered just as the stick improved my pain and mobility. Eight months of physio has still to do that.

Like most folk, I found this embarrassing. I see my social role as being a background helper, not someone requiring help and attention. Occupying the sick role yourself is a difficult adjustment, especially when it's your patients who're concerned and asking questions. The idea of a psychiatrist as a blank slate had clearly gone. You could argue it's helpful for patients to see that you're human, but I worry about my depressed patients feeling they need to shield me. Without anyone meaning anything but kindness, I found myself being asked detailed questions by colleagues I only know to smile and nod to, the reverse of the doctor's normal asymmetric intimacy.

Travelling between countries also changes the dynamic. In the U.K. people take care to give you space, in France they were less bothered at bumping the stick or me. In Rwanda, a security guard tried to confiscate the stick, reasoning it was a potential weapon. Out in the community, I slowly realized that the consideration I thought was because of my weakness (the stick) was actually because of my high status as a foreign doctor.

I'm more nervous about going back to Eastern Europe, where people with disabilities are still expected to stay hidden. There, a mother once told me that people were right to throw stones and catcalls at her disabled son; he was the problem for not being normal. In Nepal, disabled people lost their caste (as though their birth caste had somehow cheated karma). That's traumatic enough in social terms, but causes practical problems in higher caste families who can't live or eat together without becoming ritually impure. I can't imagine adjusting to a life-changing disability while losing your friends, family and social status, too. Were I working there now, many of my Hindu patients would have seen my stick as a symbol of past sin. How does that work when you're giving lifestyle advice? Or trying to offer spiritual care?

In Papua New Guinea, strength ruled the world, and a disability simply made you less able to fight back. The focus on family connections and identity meant disabled women were still able to marry,

then abandoned in favor of second and third wives once the desired inter-family connections had been forged. There was another danger for the disabled or disfigured: witchcraft accusations were commonplace and (as in Europe) those who're disabled or disfigured were seen as most likely to channel evil forces.

That idea of illness and disability as intertwined with wrongdoing is seen throughout the world, with disabled or disfigured villains appearing universally in books and films. The crooked-back witch comes from an era where we don't expect most people to know better, the James Bond villains from an era where we do.

Stigma and prejudice are hard to shift, even when the adult holding them wants it. When teaching abroad I'm already fighting against being small, young looking and female. I'm usually teaching about stigmatized conditions and that stigma clings to doctors who treat mental illnesses as well. Being unmarried (and certainly not being a mother) is also deeply suspect in most other cultures, so how do I persuade people to listen now I've added another stigma in?

If I come in a team then part of the answer is easy. I can trust my PRIME teammates to model mutual respect in precisely the same way they've unthinkingly modeled it for differences of age, seniority and gender. Both this and simply the diverse makeup of our teams are an important part of PRIME's untaught curriculum. If I'm alone then I have to continue to rely on making sure that I'm bringing what people really feel they need, and bringing it to places where it's hardest to get. I wouldn't have chosen this current humility-and-empathy refresher, but for as long God prescribes it, then perhaps I can remember its lessons aren't necessarily only for me.

Forward Focus

by Judy Palpant

“Christ be with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me...” – St. Patrick

Today I threw away our 2011 calendar—a thin volume, thick with living. I paged through it briefly—recalling birthday parties, weddings, concerts, vacations, appointments—then pitched it.

Holding on to the past impedes forward motion. *“Remember Lot’s wife,”* Jesus says (Luke 17:32, ESV). Who can forget her? She is infamous. Permanently paralyzed. Petrified. A salt block.

A theologian friend once told me Lot’s wife and her family were already in Zoar, the place of safety, when she did her death-dealing look back. Urged at dawn to hurry and leave, they hesitated. So the angels grasped their hands and led them out of the city. Once more, they were commanded, *“Flee for your lives! Don’t look back, and don’t stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!”* (Genesis 19:17b, NIV 1984). Again, Lot lingered. He negotiated for Zoar to be the safe place, not the mountains. The angels agreed and said the rain of destruction on Sodom and Gomorrah would not begin until they reached their refuge.

Not on the road, not along the way, but from her place of shelter, Lot’s wife disobeyed, turned,

looked beyond her husband, toward home. She pined for the possessions, the people and paths of the past.

I was sorely tempted to do the same in 1980 when we reached Lugulu, Kenya. Not just a single year represented by a calendar, but a lifetime—32 years of living in America—begged for more than a backward glance. Yearning for family and friends, I wanted to look past the strangers around me, the different language and ways of doing things—to draw the familiar lifestyle back within my reach.

But during orientation with the Mennonite Central Committee, we were warned, “Upon arrival, unpack all your bags—both physical and emotional. Don’t leave even a small one packed or you will be tempted to leave.” They knew the unpacked bag symbolized a hesitancy to establish new cultural roots, holding on to the past. It could paralyze—just as it did Lot’s wife.

Lugulu was God’s will, a safe place for us. Still, the move forward posed challenges. Reluctance and homesickness dogged my feet, my heart and mind. Thankfully, our three young children forced me to maintain momentum. In the process of daily living, I adjusted, acquired the language along with new acquaintances. In time friendships deepened, the new ways of living grew familiar.

I’m back in America now. All our children and grandchildren came home for Christmas. With such a brimming cup, why do I hesitate here on the threshold of 2012? Change will come. Joys and sorrows amidst new activities.

My sister once repeated a quote she’d heard: “Don’t look back or you may trip over what is in front of you.” I thought of this when I dropped her off at the airport yesterday. Pulling her luggage, she turned to give me one more wave. Turning back toward the door, she nearly plowed into the steel post holding the “unloading only zone” sign. We all face these same risks from an importune backward glance.

Awake, my soul. Face forward. Continue “a long obedience in the same direction”—as Eugene Peterson titled his book. “...I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me” (Philippians 3:12, NIV 1984).

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