



Center for Medical Missions

January 2012

Hi! This is Susan writing this month. It has been awhile since you've heard from me. I trust you had a wonderful Christmas holiday and got to spend time with family and friends as you celebrated our Savior's birth. I was blessed to be able to spend a week with my family in Indiana. My parents are in their mid-80s and are still living and are doing a great job taking care of themselves. I am blessed! I pray your 2012 will be a year of great spiritual growth and a time when you see much fruit from your service.

I believe you received a letter from me last week, asking you to complete a four-point questionnaire that will be used to help us plan the 2012 Global Missions Health Conference in Louisville, Ky. I have a pretty good idea of how busy you are, but this is an extra special request. The results will be far reaching.

I'm far past the stage of wondering how to get started, but I remember wondering for months how I was going to get started acting on the call God had placed upon me. There are many still wondering that today. I hope you will take a few minutes to share your thoughts. Thanks so much!

Please know that Daniel Tolan and I are always available to answer questions regarding medical missions. Daniel loves to counsel via the phone. I'm much better using email. Either way, we are here hoping we can be fruitful in our service to you. Please ask.

Susan Carter

Have you registered yet?

Discover the Joy! January 21, 2012, Johnson City, Tennessee. Held by CMDA's Center for Medical Missions, this is a day focused on both domestic and international medical missions. Come and discover your joy in medical missions through plenary

sessions. This is a great opportunity for those students in training, those in the workforce and those nearing retirement to learn how you can be involved in medical missions. Come and be challenged! Registration and conference information is available at www.cmda.org/discoverthejoy

Something to Think About

Comparison - Doing the Math

By Jody 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, 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 their kids and grandkids, more time to read and relax, 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.

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 6:4-5, 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.