

# 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



## June 2015

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### **New Medical Missionary Pre-field Training**

July 23-26, 2015

CMDA Headquarters, Bristol, Tennessee

There are only a few days left to register for this year's pre-field training for new medical missionaries. This training is specifically for those who will be going to the field for the first time as long-term medical missionaries. If you will be going to the field within the next eight months, you will want to sign up for this training. The cost goes up by \$50 if you register after June 30. To learn more and/or register, visit [www.cmda.org/orientation](http://www.cmda.org/orientation). The next pre-field training will be March 17-20, 2016 so if you plan to go to the field before then, you will want to sign up for this summer's course. Hope to see you there!

### **Domestic Healthcare Rotation Opportunities**

Christian Community Health Fellowship

More than 300 healthcare clinics nationwide are striving to deliver distinctly Christian healthcare to the poor. I'm guessing some of you reading this newsletter would like to gain experience at such a site. Christian Community Health Fellowship has made it possible to easily search among the 300+ clinics for a rotation site. You can search by a) type of service, b) length of rotation, c) disciplines eligible for rotations, d) program structure, e) clinic name and/or f) state. If you have questions, please contact the CCHF staff at [info@cchfmail.org](mailto:info@cchfmail.org).

### **Global Mission Health Conference**

November 5-7, 2015

Southeast Christian Church, Louisville, Kentucky

Registration is open for the 2015 Global Missions Health Conference in Louisville, Kentucky. With 100+ breakout sessions and incredible plenary sessions planned, you will not want to miss out. CMDA will once again have a huge presence in the main floor exhibit hall. Please come by and see us. We love to answer questions and help you make connections.

## TGI Monday

by Rev. Stan Key

"Is not this the carpenter?" (Mark 6:3a, ESV).

Jesus spent 18 years as a carpenter. He spent three years as a preacher. In other words, the Savior of the world invested six times more of His life sawing lumber, hammering nails, planning boards, making cabinets and sweeping sawdust than He spent preaching, teaching and healing. This is astounding. Frankly, if I had been advising Jesus about "time

management," I would have urged Him to be a bit more discerning in how best to use His time!

Think about those 18 years Jesus spent in the carpenter shop. Now, let me ask a few questions:

- Were those years of manual labor wasted?
- Was He less spiritual when He was making a cabinet than when He was preaching a sermon?
- When Jesus made a table, did it wobble? When He made a yoke, did it chafe?
- Did Jesus enjoy His work in the shop or was He impatient to leave it?
- Did He love the smell of freshly cut wood?
- Did He love to talk about the difference between the grain of acacia wood and cedar?
- When He created furniture, did He have flashbacks to when He created the Milky Way?
- Did He ever smash His thumb with a hammer? If He did, did He want to cuss?
- Did He sweat and get dirt under His fingernails?
- How did He respond when a customer was late paying this bill?
- Did He ever feel the pressure and stress of deadlines?
- When He hammered nails into wood, did He wonder what it would feel like to have those nails hammered into His hands and feet?
- Was His heavenly Father as pleased with a well-made cabinet as with a well-crafted sermon?

We make a grave mistake when we try to divide our lives into those activities that are *secular* and those that are *sacred*. The incarnational teaches us that all of life belongs to God and everything we do should be a sacrifice of praise. Some people think that Martin Luther came up with the idea of *the priesthood of all believers*. Nothing could be further from the truth. Luther did not invent the concept; he simply rediscovered what had long been forgotten.

One person who discovered the dignity of ordinary work was Brother Lawrence. Living in the 17th century, this humble cook in a monastery discovered that he could worship God as much in his kitchen as in the sanctuary.

I possess God as peacefully in the bustle of my kitchen, where sometimes several people are asking me for different things at the same time, as I do upon my knees before the Holy Sacrament . . . I turn my little omelet in the pan for the love of God. When it is finished, if I have nothing to do, I prostrate myself on the ground and worship my God, who gave me the grace to make it, after which I arise happier than a king. (*The Practice of the Presence of God*)

*The Church has allowed work and religion to become separate department . . . She has forgotten that the secular vocation is sacred.* Dorothy Sayers

Point to Ponder: Do you worship as much on Monday as you do on Sunday?

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## God Knows

*"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain" (Psalm 139:6, NIV 2011).*

I received a text from Janice today. "They did not have approval for my medicine."

Janice requires long-term immune globulin for an immunodeficiency and my office had forgotten to update her insurance approval. I apologized for the mistake and her wasted time.

The next day, she texted, "You won't believe what happened because I missed my treatment." It took me a couple of days to call her back and hear her story.

"I told my husband when I left clinic that God must have other plans for me. Little did I know. Normally, I meet with two friends for prayer on Wednesday afternoons but have to skip on the day I get my immune globulin. So, this week when I was turned away from your office, I decided to call my friend and meet her as usual. I got to Panera and could not find her, so I sat outside and waited. A young man came up, looking street weary, and asked if I could help buy him some food. I took him inside and bought him lunch, then asked him to sit with me. He shared his story of losing his job and living at the mission. He was about my son's age. He told me his parents lived in another city. Eventually, my friend arrived and joined our conversation. After a few minutes, my friend blurted out, 'I know who you are. Your parents are in my Sunday school.' I then also realized then who he was. I said to him, 'I have been praying for you for two years. I have held your mother as she cried for you.' We talked of Christ, of his turning from faith. Tears came often to his eyes. He did not return to Christ while we were with him but I left him with these words, 'You know that our meeting today was not by accident. Jesus wants you back again. You need to let Him in.'"

Janice finished her story and ended by saying, "I never would have been there for him if your office had not messed up my treatment. God knows what He is doing."

We think we know.

We walk through life, sorting things out in our heads, not only planning our own days, but also planning how God should do things.

We are convinced that the important things in our lives will never work out unless we take hold of them ourselves and control the outcomes; or, if we have a little faith, we believe things will work out if God does what we ask Him to do.

And then God steps in and, because a nurse forgets to file an insurance approval, a lost boy is offered a way home.

"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to obtain." As Watchman Nee put it in *The Normal Christian Life*: "It is not a case of trying but of trusting; not of struggling but of resting in him."

God knows. God cares. God can.

*Dear Father,  
Let me seek to control less and to follow your lead more.  
Amen*

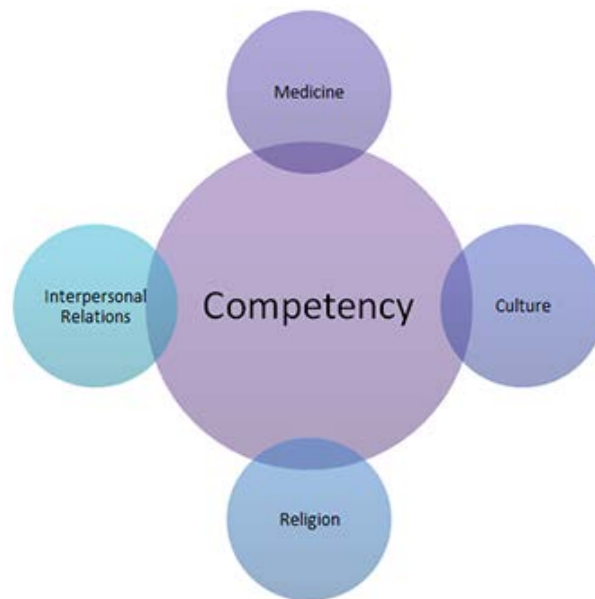
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## **An Open Letter To Medical Missionaries *with a special focus on first-term service***

by Dr. Phil Thornton

### **Introduction**

Competency refers to one's ability to do something with a reasonable measure of success. For the medical missionary, doing his/her job successfully will require that he/she be competent in four basic areas: medicine, culture, religion and interpersonal relationships.



### **Medicine**

Let's start with the obvious, competency in the practice of medicine. Years of training have made you competent in the field of medicine. Whether it be in family practice, or some area of specialization, or as a dentist or nurse, you are competent to practice your trade and to do so effectively. At the same time, practicing medicine in many parts of the world will stretch you beyond your training. At that point, remaining competent means that you will have to re-visit your medical books, hoping to find answers for problems which you have never before faced. You will consult with others who have had more experience in missionary medicine or with the type of issue you are facing. Above all, you will seek wisdom from the

Master Healer and the Holy Spirit will give you insight beyond the training, beyond the books and beyond the consults. You are competent in the profession to which God has called you and, if you will let Him, He will keep you competent as you face new challenges every day.

## **Culture**

Because of the demands of your training, it is highly unlikely that you have given much thought to the culture in which you will be serving. Yet, competence in this area will be just as important to a successful ministry as competence in the field of medicine. Cultural competence includes (a) an awareness of one's own cultural worldview, (b) understanding the other culture and (c) the development of cross-cultural communication skills.

By awareness of one's own cultural worldview, I mean that we understand our propensity as missionaries from the U.S. toward individualism (as opposed to collectivism). We are rational problem solvers, believing that every problem has both a source and a solution. Our focus is on "doing" as opposed to "being." Our orientation is toward the future rather than the present or the past, and we value results and performance. We are highly competitive and do not see the natural world as putting any limits on what we want to do or can do. These are but some of the cultural traits which tend to characterize our Western culture. In and of themselves, they are neither bad nor good. It is only when they conflict with the cultural traits of our host culture that problems arise. Two sources which will prove helpful in this area are *American Cultural Patterns* by Edward Stewart and *American Cultural Baggage* by Stan Nussbaum.

Culture by definition is an intergraded system of beliefs (about God, reality, ultimate meaning and causation), of values (about what is true, good, beautiful, normative), of customs (how to behave, to talk, walk, dress, work, eat, etc...) and the social institutions which embody those beliefs, values and customs (e.g., religious institutions, family, schools, clubs). How they make their living, and what is their political organization, leadership structure and means of social control? What is the role of the arts in social life and how does social stratification and economics affect day to day life? What are the family structure, marriage and kinship patterns and religious beliefs? These are basic to "understanding" them and will have tremendous effect on how you do medicine among them. Most basic anthropological textbooks will speak to these issues. Two of my favorite are *Cultural Anthropology* by William Haviland and *Cultural Anthropology* by Paul Hiebert.

The third element in our equation deals with developing cross-cultural communication skills. Effective communication across cultural boundaries will require you to see the world as they see it (worldview), understand their way of thinking (conceptual vs. institutional vs. concrete relational), comprehend their actions and reactions (body language, physique, use of time and space, etc.), rightly interpret the role of social structure in the communication process and ultimately recognize how they make decisions (as groups, as an individual, through a well-developed "process"). Three very helpful sources in this area are *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally* by David Hesselgrave, *Cultural Intelligence: Improving Your CQ to Engage Our Multicultural World* by David Livermore and *Ministering Cross-Culturally* by Sherwood Lingenfelter and Marvin Mayers.

At this point, I cannot overemphasize the need to learn the local and the trade language. While it is true that many in our overseas hospitals do speak English and translators may be available, a long-term commitment to the mission field is a commitment to learning the heart language of the people! Nothing will allow you to see into the inner sanctum of a person like speaking their native language.

## **Religion**

Even though your specialization is medicine, because you are a Christian missionary you will likely be considered an expert in "religion." This implies that you will not only understand your faith (Christianity) but also their faith (Animism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, etc.). One has to only look at the conflicts going on around the world today to see how important "religious beliefs" are. In addition to beliefs, every religion will also have rituals, ceremonies, symbols and leaders. Understanding these basic elements in the religious context in which you are working will not only give you insight in to the problems you are facing (which are often a mixture of the physical and the spiritual), but also help you avoid some significant mistakes/misunderstandings in your practice of medicine. For example, does the patient view the cause of his/her medical problem as a result of disease or demons?

The other side of the religious coin is your understanding of your own faith. How well do you know the Scriptures? Can you "rightly divide the word of truth" to those who would hear your witness? Can you disciple others into the faith or into a deeper walk with Christ? Obviously, your ability in this area lies in two factors: your personal relationship (walk) with the Lord and your time in the Bible as both a learning and teaching tool. You may not have had a seminary education or even a good local church background, but this does not eliminate the need for biblical competence. In the final analysis, every one of your patients will die. What effect will you have had on their eternal destiny as a result of their being in contact with you?

The question of doing effective witnessing cross-culturally is certainly not a simple one. *On Being a Missionary* by Thomas Hale is a fascinating read from a physician's perspective. The real thorny issues of "dynamic theologizing cross-culturally" are treated by Charles Kraft in his work *Christianity in Culture*. For those who are willing to dig deep into a biblical

Understanding of missions, would recommend Christopher J. H. Wright's *The Mission of God*. A great Bible study of the book of Acts from a missions perspective is the three-volume set *Spreading the Fire* by Peter Wagner. For discipleship, nothing outshines the classic by Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*.

### **Interpersonal Relations**

Most missionaries who "give up the fight" on the mission field do so not because of ministry but rather because of interpersonal conflicts. Many of these conflicts arise within the missionary community. After all, you are put with a team which you did not choose and perhaps would not have chosen had you been given the opportunity! Other conflicts arise from misunderstandings with nationals. This can be especially true in a hospital setting. As North Americans, we tend to avoid social obligations, an action which stands in direct contrast to those cultures where reciprocity is important. We emphasize "equality" in relationships (nobody likes anyone who "pulls rank") while at the same time expecting confrontation. This latter observation flies in the face of cultures where "saving face" is important. Our propensity toward informality in social relationships is in stark contrast to social status dictating the terms and method of interaction. Marvin Mayers says that our first reaction as Westerners is likely to be, "What are my rights and privileges?" or "Who is responsible?" In *Christianity Confronts Culture*, he goes on to point out that the more appropriate question in cross-cultural communication is the "prior question of trust." Is what I am doing, thinking or saying building trust or undermining it? Another source which can be very helpful in untangling the web of interpersonal conflict is Duane Elmer's *Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry*.

### **Conclusion**

Is it really possible, you may ask, to develop competencies in all four of these areas? Yes, successful medical missionaries have proven it to be so. They have shown themselves to be excellent physicians, dentists and nurses, quality cultural anthropologists, competent theologians with a winsome witness, masters at dealing with interpersonal conflicts and all around missiologists. No, the road to competency is not an easy one. But with sensitivity, dedication, study, hard work and the divine enabling of the Holy Spirit, you can do it!

### **Other Helpful Resources:**

*Serving with Eyes Wide Open* by David Livermore

*Peace Child* and other works by Don Richardson

*Communicating Jesus' Way* by Charles Kraft

*The Art of Crossing Cultures* by Craig Storti

*Anthropology for Christian Witness* by Charles Kraft

*Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* and *Case Studies in Missions* all three by Paul Hiebert

*From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya* by Ruth Tucker

*Introducing World Missions* by Scott Moreau, Gary Corwin, and Gary McGee

*When Helping Hurts* by Brian Fikkert and Steve Corbitt

*Toxic Charity* by Robert Lupton

*Invitation to World Missions* by Timothy Tennent

*Christianity Encountering World Religions* by Terry Muck

*Neighboring Faiths* by Winfried Corduan

*Cross-Cultural Partnerships* by Mary Lederleitner

*Leading Across Cultures* by James Plueddemann

*The Beginners Guide to Spiritual Warfare* by Neil Anderson and T. Warner

Also, see books and articles on "orality" and on "shame and honor." These are important concepts in the world of missions today!

### **Journals:**

*Evangelical Missions Quarterly*

*Missiology*

*The Orality Journal*

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## **Power Walking**

by Judy Palpat

*To journey without changing is to be a nomad. To change without journeying is to be a chameleon. To journey and to be transformed by the journey is to be a pilgrim.--Mark Nepo, "The Exquisite Risk"*

She stood as still as a statue. Her clothes smelled of smoke. Gray lines streaked her face where tears mingled with the ash. Her neck remained craned, looking behind as she obsessed about all she had possessed-the people, the places, the

pleasures. "Oh, Sodom," she wailed. "I'll never have it so good again!" The drama and the trauma surrounding the abrupt departure could be understood. I tried to coax her to come along but she refused-the reluctant ruminator. She hardened from the inside out.

I left Lot's wife paralyzed in place. Needing to move on, I headed for some fresh air. Some years later the two sisters, Martha and Mary, joined me on my pilgrimage.

Martha fixated on what had to be done. She rehearsed her to-do lists. I salivated over her delectable menus and felt inspired by creative table arrangement ideas. For a time, I even rolled up my sleeves and worked side by side with her. Such labor and fortitude. But such expectations. Ah. There was the rub. And before completing one task, she was already talking about the next. She never paused long enough to see the hillside view outside her kitchen window. By the time Mary caught up with me, I felt overloaded.

Mary walked with an easy stride-a combination of serenity and spunk. She left space for God in her life and in our conversations. I watched her move with ease past the urgent to the important and prioritize. She took time to muse over the crocus sprouting and nesting robins. Mary recognized her own spiritual poverty and confidently turned to Jesus for His gifts and graces. She invited me to join her at His feet. "Not *that* close," I said to myself, reticent, resisting. But in the end her gentle persuasion won the day. We pondered His words, resting in His love.

\* \* \*

At present, regal Queen Esther, poised and purposeful, is walking with me. I've never walked with royalty before. She breathes rarified air. Honestly, I wouldn't blame her if she proved stuck on her bleak beginnings-orphan and all. But raised, prepared and launched by her old cousin, Esther wants to be stretched. She's awake in the moment, undeterred, undistracted-ready for such a time as this.

\* \* \*

Who knows what might happen in our lives if we prayerfully and thoughtfully walk with Bible characters? This experience puts a new definition on "power walking"-that physical exercise that engages both the upper and lower body. It's one thing to walk in a casual manner with these saints and quite another to do so intentionally. Such rigorous exercise of the spirit allows the Holy Spirit to transform us.

Take Lot's wife for example. It's a good thing that this nameless, infamous woman stepped into my life. I've always had a propensity to look back at the past and perseverate. Even now, my mind and heart can be dogged by "what if's" and "if only's." Vain regrets sap my energy, harden my heart and steal my sleep. I'm paralyzed with my attention split between past and present. Through her story, the Lord reminds me: *Judy, I promise strength for the day. You may squander it analyzing yesterday or use it to live today, but not both. Don't look back except in gratitude. I want to do a new thing.* The exhortation startles me still.

I naturally fall into step with Martha. She is my go-to gal. Any negativity easily allows inner agitation and frustration to breed impatience. And like her, I can be a real task master. Ask my husband. He'll tell you that before one project is finished I'm pressuring to get the next one done. It's best to turn my back on Martha, to walk away and let go of certain expectations. As for hospitality? It can be simplified.

Mary urges me on toward more contemplation-looking for ways to bask in the grace of God. She models how to run relaxed, confident that Jesus will work in and through me. I credit her with getting me to play the piano in a local hospital lobby one hour every week. While making granola or quilting, I sing praises and meditate on Scripture.

And Esther? Already, she's impacted my posture, both outside and inside. When I'm tempted to slouch or despair, she says, *Chin up, Judy. Stand tall. God is your glory and the lifter of your head (Psalm 3:3).*

Interestingly, I didn't choose any of these women. Never would I have chosen Lot's wife. But it was my pen that wrote her name in the front of a notebook designed to facilitate a Bible study on the theme of "feet in Scripture." I penned the names of other Bible women in the other 39 notebooks to give spouses attending the 2002 Christian Medical & Dental Associations' Continuing Medical and Dental Education conference in Brackenhurst, Kenya. As I wrote "Lot's wife" on the page, I thought, "She won't be an easy fit for anyone. Who wants to walk with a woman who has her head turned round looking behind her? Surely, I would opt for Mary, Lydia or Ruth with whom to spend 10 days." Had I known that person would be me, I'd have rummaged through the box of notebooks until I found what I thought was a more suitable companion. But as it was, each participant grabbed a notebook out of the box. Since I was the leader, I took the last one.

For some women at the conference, their Bible character proved a puzzle. One participant, Miriam Fountain, expressed this sentiment to me:

*"Judy, I couldn't for the life of me figure out why I was walking with the bent woman in Luke 13. But gradually, I realized my own position. Since we left the Congo and retired to the U.S., I've been bent over without joy or purpose. We can't afford for me to accompany Dan on his speaking trips. In my spirit I've become so stooped over just like this woman in Luke. The Lord wants me set free. I'm leaving this conference straightened up on the inside."*

We hugged. Her eyes twinkled. I watched her leave. Who would have guessed God would work change in her life through a nameless woman who once showed up at the synagogue 2,000 years earlier, where Jesus was teaching?

Another woman, a young mom and missionary working in the Congo felt nothing but frustration walking with the Shunammite woman from chapter four of 2 Kings. I encouraged her to keep pondering, praying.

At the final gathering we sat in two rows of women facing each other. There were other women in the room with us, all biblical characters, all invisible, but very alive in our imaginations. We enjoyed the chance to share our stories as we soaked our feet in basins of water.

With tears, the young mom walking with the Shunammite said,

*"Just yesterday, I realized why I am walking with this woman. Like her, I've railed against God, 'Why did you give me children only to take them away to boarding school?' He responded, 'They are mine and I will care for them.'"*

Her testimony was met with a chorus of empathy from the others.

We all laughed with delight when Karen Chapman announced she'd been walking with Noah's wife. She and her husband Bob lived and worked among the nomadic Turkana tribe in the arid region of northern Kenya. She told us,

*"We're sisters. We both live with mess. Mrs. Noah cooked and cleaned with all those animals around. In the end, she saw the first rainbow ever to arch the sky-symbol of God's promise. In Turkana a dust devil can interrupt a meal and cover everything in a blanket of dust and dirt. I have critters too! At night, to avoid scorpions, Bob and I carry our mattress outside and set it on sawhorses for support. There we sleep under the blanket of stars. The Southern Cross seems close enough to touch. Like the rainbow, it speaks of God's grandeur and grace."*

That conference was the first one where I included walking with a biblical woman as part of the study of feet in Scripture. I took the idea to the Thailand conference the following year where I again got Lot's wife. I smiled. Several women reported that their prayer requests were answered as they walked with their biblical companion.

Through the years, I've spoken on this "feet-theme" at retreats and acquired other biblical walking pals. Each one has taught me something different. And like the old campfire song suggests, I make new friends but keep the old. They remain my circle of companions-invisible, but influential. On a recent sleepless night, I held court on my pillow, calling four of them in to give me their counsel. Lot's wife shrugged and said, "Good job! Let those worries circle round and round." With determination, Martha suggested, "Keep it up. Just white-knuckle it." In my other ear, Mary whispered, "No. Follow Jesus. Lay your burdens down at His feet." Esther calmly concluded, "No compromising. Approach your Heavenly Father's throne of grace." One by one they walked out of my imagination-leaving me alone. I began to slowly pray through the ancient traditional "Daily Examen:"

*Come Holy Spirit.*

*Thanks be to God.*

*Lord, I want to see.*

*Lord, have mercy.*

*Lord, show me Your way.*

Finally, I felt real freedom of spirit and fell asleep. The next morning I recalled Scrooge, awaking from his night with the three spirits. He jumped out of bed exclaiming: *"I am as light as a feather..."*

What stories will come out of this year's journey with Esther? God knows. Pondering her story through commentaries and sermon series inspires me for my own adventure. Esther and I are exploring the landscape of my soul. Through her, God is helping me face my fears and walk in the light. The fellowship is rich as we hoof it uphill and down together. And what a surprise when my 8-year-old grandson recently told me that Esther is his favorite book in the Old Testament. The conversations and pilgrimage continue.

If you have never walked with a character from the Bible, I highly recommend the exercise. Such power walking will enhance your spiritual life. Choose someone yourself or go the random route-write the Bible names on slips of paper. Pick one and share the others with friends, your Bible study or book group. As you walk with this biblical pilgrim, the Holy Spirit will join you just as Jesus came alongside the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. You may end the walk saying, "I'll never be the same."

\* \* \* \* \*

I'd value hearing your stories. Were you at the conference in Kenya or the one in Thailand where I shared about feet in Scripture? Let me know what has happened with your walking partners. My email is [judypalant@gmail.com](mailto:judyapant@gmail.com).

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