

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
A ministry of Christian Medical & Dental Associations

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Welcome to this issue of *Your Call*. Many of you in training are surely looking forward to the end of your school year. Staff here at CMDA will be praying you will have freedom in studying for and then taking the end of the year tests.

We had a great class of new healthcare missionaries in our pre-field training last month. A few of the facilitators are meeting tomorrow to discuss possible changes in the curriculum. Our goal is to keep the training as relevant and helpful as possible. If you will soon be leaving for the field and are interested, our next pre-field training will be July 20-23 at the CMDA national office in Bristol, Tennessee. We will definitely be adding a multi-hour session on the healthcare missionary marriage. We've not done this in the past but recognize there are many stresses on a healthcare missionary marriage, so we want to give time to this important subject. For more information, visit www.cmda.org/missionarytraining.

Another important announcement is that registration for the **Global Missions Health Conference (GMHC)** in Louisville, Kentucky is already open. The earlier you register, the lower the registration fee. Students need to be registered by June 30 for the early bird price. We've already missed the "crazy early bird" price. The dates for this year's GMHC are November 9-11. To register, visit www.medicalmissions.com.

If I can help with anything involving long-term healthcare missions, please don't hesitate to ask. cmm@cmda.org.

Susan

Included in this issue are:

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Resources

Crossing Cultures with Ruth

Crossing Cultures with Ruth offers kingdom workers encouragement and inspiration as they discern and work out God's call in their lives. The book also provides practical insights based in Nelson's years of Fruitful Practice research into the best means and methods of missionary outreach. Here are just a few of the lessons from the book of Ruth:

- *Commit to and identify with those you serve*
- *Cross cultures boldly*
- *Know how to remain on the field effectively*
- *Minister out of your own life-and out of your own loss*
- *Earn your reputation so that it can be spent*
- *Trust in the Master's partnership and promises*

Compassion Fatigue

The Resilient Practitioner: Burnout and Compassion Fatigue Prevention and Self-care Strategies for the Helping Professions

The authors are psychologists at the University of Minnesota and this book has lots of resources, references, further reading and includes exercises at the end of each chapter. It's very practical. Most of it is compatible with a Christian worldview, and it recognizes the tension between caring too much and being so self-protective and self-oriented that you're not doing right by your patients. There are lots of insights into the motivations of people in the helping professions and many ideas for how to recognize when you're getting in too deep and how to promote your personal resilience.

Destroying Giants

by David Stevens, MD, MA (Ethics)

What are you scared of? For most of the 12 spies Moses sent to scout the Promised Land "flowing with milk and honey," it was the giants who lived there. In Numbers 13:27-32 they said, "We can't attack those people; they're way stronger than we are" (NIV 1984). Then, they spread scary rumors among the people of Israel.

Remember the result of their disobedience? They wandered in the desert for 40 years.

God has called you to go into an unknown land. What "giants" do you fear? Maybe it is the giant of isolation from friends and family, or perhaps you are afraid of the giant healthcare issues you will face without backup. For me, it was the giant of educating our children overseas and the possibility of separation if they had to go to boarding school. Maybe your giant is just the uncertainty of what God has in store and the countless challenges you will face in making your call a reality-picking a mission organization, raising your support, learning a foreign language, cultural adaptation or working in a hostile country.

I have good news! God specializes in destroying giants.

He does not call you for what He will not equip you to accomplish.

He says to you what He said to Joshua and the Israelites when they were on the brink of crossing the Jordan to finally make His promise a reality in Deuteronomy 31:1-8. "Be strong. Take courage. Don't be intimidated. Don't give them a second thought because God, your God, is striding ahead of you. He's right there with you. He won't let you down; he won't leave you" (Deuteronomy 31:7, MSG).

What is courage? The dictionary says it is, "the ability to face danger, difficulty, uncertainty or pain without being overcome by fear or being deflected from a chosen course of action."

Better than Webster, I like the "Wayne" definition. John Wayne put it this way, "Courage is being scared to death-and saddling up anyway."

Courage is not pulling yourself up by your soul's bootstraps. Your source of courage is:

1. **Knowing God has told you to go.** The Holy Spirit, just like He spoke to Moses ("And God told me..." in Deuteronomy 31:1, MSG), has spoken to you. You follow His direction out of love and because of His promise. "...Do what I command so that your lives will go well" (Jeremiah 7:23, MSG). You can have confidence in His commands.
2. **Knowing God is with you.** Verse 6 makes no bones about it. "God, your God, is striding ahead of you. Here's right there with you..." (Deuteronomy 31:6, MSG). You are not alone. Courage is not something you have to psych yourself up to have. You already have the most experienced, most knowledgeable and most powerful entity in the universe with you. He can handle anything.
3. **Knowing you can trust God.** Note Moses said three times, God will give you the land, God will prosper you and God will give you success. God is not only capable, but He is willing to do what He promised to do. You can take Psalm 37:5 to the bank, "Commit your way to the Lord; trust Him and He will do this" (NIV 1984). You must go by faith, not feelings.

Harry Fosdick said it well: "Fear imprisons; faith liberates; fear paralyzes; faith empowers; fear disheartens; faith encourages; fear sickens; faith heals; fear makes useless; faith makes serviceable."

Dr. Haddon Robinson said it even more succinctly: "What worries you, masters you."

The measure of courage is the willingness to act. What is the next step you should take to complete the call God has put on your life?

Take it!

On a trip to Kenya a few years ago, I was driving out in the bush with my family when I saw a 10-foot long snake slithering across the sand road in front of me. There are few "good" snakes in Kenya, but many poisonous ones. I hit the accelerator determined to run over it.

The snake was not intimidated.

It stopped, reared the front third of its body and spread its broad neck. Irrationally fearing it was going to come in through a window or the floorboards, I slammed on the brakes stopping inches away from the hissing mouth of a giant king cobra. By the time I realized I was in a two-ton Land Rover facing a 20-pound snake, he had dropped to the ground, slithered under the vehicle and was gone.

That was one brave snake! When I face giants in my life, I remember I can be like that cobra with this little acronym. I can have:

C-ourage to

O-bey what He has told me to do because I

B-elieve God will do what He promised to do. I can

R-est in His abilities and our relationship. All I need to do is

A-ct and He will do the rest.

Have courage! Your giants will fall.

A Change in the Weather

by Judy Palpant

My good friend just left Spokane for Mexico to visit her father. She'll be gone several weeks. When she returns she hopes to find all the snow and ice melted, dry roads, blooming crocuses and longer, brighter days. May it be so.

I'm left behind and can only imagine her blue true sky and sunshine as I stare out my window at a dreary landscape: piles of old snow and a gray sky.

Some years ago we left for a medical mission trip in early February and returned the end of that same month. Compared to the life and color of Kenya, Spokane's bleak mid-winter depressed me. We'd relished the long days of sunshine there on the equator. Back here darkness fell too soon. My neighborhood was a ghost town. No people bustled here and there as they did along the roads and in the markets of East Africa. No color popped out of the frozen ground. But in Kenya pansies, daisies, mums and poinsettias all bloomed at once in a single flower bed.

Pondering my plight, I sighed facing yet another dull day. Just then a flock of red winged black birds flew into our sunburst locust tree. For a full half hour they flew and chattered amongst the bare branches. I watched and wondered. Their visitation cheered and thawed my paralyzed heart. Gratitude gradually warmed and filled my soul. I praised the Creator God and Giver of every good gift.

Those birds never returned. Perhaps our tree looked like a good rest stop on their migration route to some other place. I still savor the memory. Those birds stirred my heart. Their motion and commotion moved me off square one. Caught in a mental loop constantly comparing Kenya and Spokane, they brought a breath of fresh air. I could accept this place called home.

But what about the times when God doesn't send a flock of birds to cheer us? Is the inner person dependent on the outer circumstances? In *Moby Dick*, Herman Melville describes the whale as a mammal that keeps the same inner temperature whether swimming in the frigid arctic waters or the warm waves off the coast of Australia.

How can we do the same-keep our spirits warm and hopeful in the mid-winter when darkness dominates? The canvas is blank. The heart is empty. Light dims. Life slows.

Years ago when homeschooling our kids, we'd pick up a woman from our church once a week and take her on an outing. Ruth lived in an assisted living facility. Though her mind was sharp, she suffered from Parkinson's Disease. For some reason, she was placed in the Alzheimer unit. We'd load a wheel chair in the car so that she wouldn't have to walk long distances. How she relished picnics in the summer sunshine. She'd regale us with poems she memorized as a child or tales about teaching the children of the men building the Grand Coulee Dam. Upon returning to the nursing home, I'd push her wheelchair through the doors. She'd always say with a smile, "There's been a change in the weather." Gone the blue

sky. Gone the summer breezes. Gone, the chatter of children.

Ruth, a veteran adult Sunday School teacher, read Scripture daily. She mended cushions and clothes for the other residents in the facility. Every night, after the nurse pulled her curtains shut, Ruth would get up and open them so she could see the moon and stars. Then she'd crawl back into bed and pray. Like the whale, Ruth's daily choices and routines maintained the steady spiritual temperature of her soul regardless of her circumstances.

I can't command another flock of birds to choose my yard for an hour or two. I cannot engineer such visitations or provisions. But I can open my eyes and relish the frost on the twigs. Accept my limitations imposed by weather or circumstances. Choose to be grateful. Practice nurturing essentials for my spirits-music, poetry, quilting.

The other night I took my 96-year-old mother out on the front porch. Four years ago she came from Colorado where the sun shines and the sky is blue even when it snows. During her transition to life in Spokane, she surprisingly did not complain or compare the climates. Now this is home.

As she breathed in the chilly nighttime air and surveyed the mounds of snow, I asked her, "What are you thinking?" She replied, "For the beauty of the earth. The trees are dressed in beauty. It's so still, you could carry a candle." Yes. I imagined walking out into the darkness holding a candle with a steady flame.

"The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord," wrote Solomon. (Proverbs 20:27) Though my heart's flame be flickering and nearly out, I pray to the Light of the World to rekindle it. I repeat a prayer by St. Ignatius I've found to be very helpful: "Come Holy Spirit. Thank you for my life. Lord, I want to see. Have mercy on me. Show me the way. Amen."

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The Most Hated One

by Dr. Al Weir

"To you, Lord, I call; you are my Rock, do not turn a deaf ear to me. For if you remain silent, I will be like those who go down to the pit" (Psalm 28:1, NIV 2011).

Last week I contacted a young doctor I had been praying for but had not seen in over a year. She had been a leader in Christian student work at her medical school. I was brokenhearted at her response to my email.

"These past couple of years have been very hard. John decided he wanted a divorce about two years ago, telling me he had been very unhappy for a number of years. I tried very hard to get him to do marital counseling but he made it very clear he wanted out, so we are now divorced. He isn't doing well; he has been spiraling downwards mentally ever since. I cherish him dearly and he's still the love of my life. In addition to the divorce, I lost my best friend from childhood last year to a series of unfortunate consequences of chronic steroids-which would be the second best friend from childhood I've lost. So I'm *struggling* to be a full-time mom, full-time doc and part-time clinical researcher. Anyway, the long and short of it is that God and I aren't on great terms right now. I don't like Christians very much either because they haven't been too useful in all of this. I'm happy with wandering for a few years and seeing where that leads me. Just being honest with you and with myself, which is always the way I've done this. I hope you're doing better than I am."

Wow.

We don't always do well with the Lord, do we?

I have absolutely no criticism or words of instruction for this young doctor.

She is in the crucible of life and has lost sight of the God who loves her, the God who has allowed such loss in her life.

I pray daily that her struggle will ease and God will bring good out of her suffering, worthy of her pain.

Mother Teresa once said, "Lord, my God, who am I that you should forsake me? The child of your love-and now become the most hated one-the one You have thrown away as unwanted-unloved. I call, I cling, I want-and there is no One to answer."

Many faithful followers of Christ go through times of great distance from the Father. I don't know why; I can only imagine why. The fascinating thing to me is the way Mother Teresa completed her note begun in prayer above:

"If this brings You glory, if You get a drop of joy from this-if souls are brought to You-if my suffering satiates Your Thirst-here I am, Lord, with joy I accept all to the end of life-and I will smile at Your Hidden Face-always" (Mother Teresa, *Come Be My Light*).

*Dear Father,
If I lose sight of your love, let it be for your glory.
Amen*

Healing with Christ & Family Medicine in Burundi

by Dr. Lillian Quinones

In the tiny country of Burundi, East Africa, 300 physicians care for 10.8 million people. A 21-year-old from Wisconsin, my faith in Jesus Christ and my desire to serve His people in the medical field brought me to this impoverished place. It was working alongside a young Burundian medical doctor I realized that this daunting statistic could be overcome. At Kibuye Hope Hospital, Dr. I. and a handful of Christian medical doctors are using family medicine to mitigate the dire shortage of doctors.

Kibuye Hope Hospital is situated in the rural town of Kibuye atop mountains rising at 6,000 feet. Driving up a mountain road to the missionary compound, I saw men walking their bicycles laden with bananas, groups of mostly naked children standing idly in groups alongside the road and a man holding a cellphone in one hand and machete in the other. The poverty and the lack of purpose in these people left a heavy feeling.

As a healthcare missionary, my eyes were opened to the great need as both doctors and medical facilities were desperately deficient. Dr. I. explained that training Burundian family medicine physicians would make a radical improvement in the doctor shortage. Dr. I. will be one of two Burundian general practitioners to specialize in family medicine in the entire country. He also will be the fourth to specialize in his medical school class of Hope Africa University, a private Christian university based in Burundi's capital city. With 80 percent of the population living in rural communities, most doctors trained by the Western model of specialization are not suited to serve in impoverished rural areas without the necessary equipment.

Dr. I. first experienced rural medicine as a medical student at Kibuye Hospital. Since 2010, six American physician specialists, known internationally as the McCropders, have practiced at Kibuye, which was chosen as the teaching hospital for Hope Africa University beginning in 2013. Dr. I. was in the second medical class to undergo clinical rotations there and was transformed by the experience.

"As a Christian physician, I believe that God has put a calling upon my life to care for the people who need medical care the most in my country, and that's rural Burundi," Dr. I. said. "In this environment of poverty, you are constantly challenged to think about your life and what you can give back to the community," Dr. I. said.

Dr. Bruce Dahlman, director of the family medicine master's degree program at Kabarak University, believes family medicine physicians can transform African healthcare. "We have given them our tendency to specialize. The problem with specialties is that there is no one to lead the primary care team and there aren't enough specialists to staff hospitals. The pediatrician, OB/Gyn and general surgeon can't all take call at once. You need three to four well-trained family medicine doctors who like the babies but can also do the C-section," Dahlman said.

Dr. I.'s mentor at Kibuye Hope Hospital, Dr. Eric McLaughlin, is currently the only family medicine physician practicing in Burundi, and he helped design the curriculum for Kabarak's family medicine program. A graduate of University of Michigan Medical School, McLaughlin and his wife Rachel, an OB/Gyn, and their three young children made a 15-year commitment to serve with the McCropder team.

Dr. Eric believes family medicine is the cornerstone for the future of the Burundian healthcare system. The family medicine physician can provide medical care in every category and ensure that all parts are well integrated. He hopes to establish Burundi's first family medicine residency program at Kibuye and, within 10 years, envisions 20 to 30 family physicians delivering holistic primary care that integrates the Christian dimension of the spiritual in healing.

Dr. I. recounts bringing Christ to a dying patient at Kibuye Hospital. "We gave her all the treatment we could for kidney failure. I sat down with this 22-year-old and I asked her if I could talk to her about Christ and life after death. She said yes," Dr. I. said. "I reminded her that this life is not our own and that death is the end of our life but the first chapter of eternity. I prayed with her, and she invited Christ into her heart. The next morning she died. We couldn't treat her body but God helped me to reach her soul. I couldn't do that without being a Christian physician."

When discussing the body-soul dynamic in healthcare, Dahlman drew upon 20 years of experience in Africa. "Africans understand spirituality in their bones unlike us in the West. In Kenya, if people in the village have a problem, you could ask them where to go to find the best shaman or witchdoctor; these people have power in the community. Everyone understands the spiritual nature of the universe," Dahlman said.

"The Western model of medical training lacks a spiritual dimension. I ask African medical students how they cope with that and they say, 'I live in two worlds. I give the answers my professors want to hear in medical school, but with my grandma, well, she knows where the witchcraft doctor lives,'" Dahlman said.

This strong awareness of the spiritual makes Africa a unique place to serve the Lord. Working alongside Dr. I. and the McCropders opened my heart to the call of Christ to serve His people who are suffering and dying in poverty. I began clinging to the promise of eternal life with a new intensity when patients I had grown close to passed away. I witnessed the power of prayer and how simple acts of love would truly uplift patients with a hopeless diagnosis.

As we bowed in prayer at the bedside of a man with a dire prognosis, I was humbled by the utter dependence of the healthcare profession to ask for mercy and guidance from our God who is the true physician; we are merely His hands. I was blessed to understand that a physician commits oneself to love in His name without limit.

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