

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



July 2016

Happy summer, everyone! For those of you not in training this summer, I trust you are finding time to spend with the Lord, as well as relaxing and having some fun. Training will soon be starting again. I hope you can head back to it refreshed and ready.

Things are busy in the Bristol office, especially for me. Next Thursday, July 21 begins our next New Medical Missionary Training conference for new healthcare missionaries. There will be 27 in this class, all part of the post-residency program at World Medical Mission, the medical arm of Samaritan's Purse. Most of this class will be at their field assignment by the first of the new year. An exciting part of this training is that we bring in healthcare missionaries to serve as resources for the trainees. You can imagine three and a half days of having ready access to those who are currently serving. We also usually include some retirees who can share experiences from a lifetime of service.

If you are called to serve, I hope you will make sure to include this pre-field training on your list of things you need to do. The evaluations from the training always relate that it was well worth the time and effort, but frankly one of the most wonderful parts of it is simply being with other singles and couples who are at the exact same point in their lives. You don't have to try to explain why you are doing what you are doing. Everyone already knows and understands.

Global Missions Health Conference (GMHC)

Have you registered for the GMHC that will take place in Louisville, Kentucky on November 10-12? If not and you can go, you need to register soon. I believe the registration fee goes up the closer you get to the conference. This really is a life-changing experience. I hope you will really consider attending. Housing is provided at no cost for students. CMDA will have a huge presence in the center aisle of the main floor exhibit hall. We love for people to stop by to say, "Hi." Remember, November 10-12 at Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Your Call*. Just three articles:

[Devotional: You Ain't Nothin' but a Hound Dog](#) by Rev. Stan Key

[Service Spot](#) by David Stevens, MD, MA (Ethics)

[Sugar Cane Sabbath](#) by Judy Palpant

You Ain't Nothin' But a Hound Dog

by Rev. Stan Key

Luke 19: 1-10

"...the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10, NIV 2011).

According to *Rolling Stone Magazine*, Elvis Presley's rendition of *Hound Dog* (1956) is No. 19 on their list of all time greatest hits. Whether or not you like the music, you have to admit the lyrics are rather strange.

You ain't nothin' but a hound dog, cryin' all the time;
You ain't never caught a rabbit and you ain't no friend of mine.

Huh? Elvis gave hound dogs everywhere a bad name forever. And yet, if we can get beyond Elvis' body contortions and those mindless lyrics, we may be able to grasp the reality that God is, in fact, a lot like a hound dog. Think about it. Bloodhounds are noted for their ability to follow a scent for long distances. Once on the trail they are famous for their tenacity. They just don't give up. God is like that.

In one of the greatest poems of English literature, Francis Thompson imagines God as *The Hound of Heaven*. The poem is autobiographical because Thompson sees himself as the prey! Desperately trying to avoid God, his life spiraled out of control, leading to homelessness, destitution and opium addiction. But though he ran as hard and as fast as he could, God had Thompson's scent. And the Hound of Heaven just wouldn't give up!

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him down the arches of the years;
I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from Him and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated
Adown titanic glooms and chasmed fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after;
But with unhurrying chase
And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy
They beat - and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet -
"All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."

The day finally came when Thompson realized the futility of running from God. Not only were such efforts ultimately useless, they were irrational and just plain dumb. Why run from the only One who truly loves me and desires my ultimate happiness?

"Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee
Save Me, save only Me?
All which I took from thee, I did but take
Not for they harms,
But just that thou mightst seek it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
Rise, clasp My hand and come!"

Friend, are you afraid of and running from God? It's no use. The Hound of Heaven has got your scent. When you listen, you can hear His unrelenting feet hot in pursuit...of you! Continued flight will only prolong your agony. You can't outrun Him and you certainly can't hide. More importantly, why would you even want to?

*Why I am a Christian is due ultimately neither to
the influence of my parents and teachers, not to
my own personal decision for Christ, but to "the
Hound of Heaven." That is, it is due to Jesus Christ
Himself, who pursued me relentlessly even when I was
Running away from Him in order to go my own way.
John Stott*

Point to Ponder: You may have stopped searching for God, but He has not stopped searching for you.

Prayer Focus: Someone who is running from God.

Service Spot

by David Stevens, MD, MA (Ethics)

I was checking my email in the family room with the Wimbledon Tennis Championships on TV in the background when a phrase the announcer used grabbed my attention. He said Nick Kyrigos, an Australian tennis player, was a "spot server." I had never heard that term before, but he went on to explain that Kyrigos picked the exact spot where he wanted his serve to land and tried to place the ball right on that spot. He observed his opponent's strengths and weaknesses and tried to exploit them when he served.

He knew his "service spot." Do you? If not, you are not alone. Most people called to missions only have a vague idea, if any idea at all, where God wants them to serve. They usually don't even think about that issue until they finish their

training. Starting that process earlier has some advantages, but even if you do, how do you go about it?

Need

You can pull up [information](#) on the internet to look at the quality of healthcare in every country and pick one out on the bottom tier. (Interestingly, the U.S. is rated 37th out of 190. Costa Rica is rated better than us!) You could go to the inner city of any major city in the U.S. and find dramatic health needs. But is that the best criteria to use to make a decision?

Christ didn't say, "Go and make people healthy." He called us to spread the gospel and make disciples. Using that criteria, you should seriously consider where people are the most unreached with the gospel. In other words, where is there no self-propagating church?

In many places around the world, Christian healthcare can open minds and hearts to hear the truths of Jesus Christ like no other single factor.

The unreached are usually unreached for a number of reasons-religious practices hostile to the gospel, harsh and difficult environments, unfriendly governments, civil instability and numerous other factors. But there is no lack of these groups.

Checkout the [Joshua Project](#) to find out more about the 3,117,724,000 people, 40.4 percent of the world's population, who still don't have the gospel. (For more information about reaching the unreached, check out the [summer 2016 edition of Today's Christian Doctor](#).)

Most of these people live in the "10-40 Window," from ten degrees north of the equator to 40 degrees north of the equator from Africa through Asia. Some people call this the "Resistant Belt" due to the difficulty people have in coming to Christ.

A total of 5,571 unreached people groups are located around the world, and some of those groups are right in the middle of "reached" areas all around. There is an increased focus on these groups, but still only 8 to 10 percent of missionaries and less than 1 percent of mission finances are focused on these needs. Each day approximately 50,000 unreached people die and enter into eternity without Christ.



Willie Sutton, a prolific American bank robber, was once asked why he robbed banks. He replied, "Because that is where the money is!" You should consider going to the 10-40 Window because that is where the greatest need is, but there are other factors to consider as well.

Explore

Start exploring to see what location God may place on your heart. Read missionary books to let God use one of them to direct you. Talk to missionaries on home assignment about their work and needs. Ask them lots of questions. Attend [mission conferences](#) to visit exhibitors, listen to sermons and go to workshops. God can't give you a burden for what you don't know. Correspond with and visit mission agencies to let them know your mission interest. Ask them how someone like you can fit into their plans for reaching the world for Christ.

The best immersion is to take the guidance or interest you have and visit a country or people group. Early in your training, you can go on a [service team](#) and help out. Later in your training you can do a rotation overseas and actually use your skills while checking out a spot. Check out the [International Rotations Handbook](#) for details about finding an overseas rotation. CMDA also has [scholarship programs](#) to help you go and serve. If you are about to finish your medical or dental residency, check out Samaritan's Purse's [post-residency program](#). They provide most of the funding for you and your family to go and serve two years overseas to check out a place God may call you to serve on a full-time basis.

Examine

Examine yourself. Do you have a pioneer spirit, or do you need to be part of a team? Are you a leader or a follower? How well do you adapt to other cultures? Are you a fretter? If you are married, what does your spouse need? What concerns your spouse about serving overseas? As you do this, don't sell God's grace and power short. He empowers those He employs for the task He gives them. Look at your skills and interests. If you want to be a missionary neurosurgeon, you are going to look at larger healthcare mission facilities that can support the work you want to do. Your needs, interests and talents can help you make a short list of countries to consider.

Pray

God should be your ultimate decision maker, and He will reveal where He wants you to serve via the work of the Holy Spirit. He can use a sense of certainty, Scriptures, a message, an experience, circumstances, a sending organization or

countless other ways to reveal His will to you.

God may surprise you. Our tendency is to logically think things through, but God doesn't always work that way. I went to Tenwek Hospital during a summer spent in Kenya before my senior year of college. When I came back home, I knew that was where God wanted me to serve. It just made sense to me. I was so sure that I applied for a preliminary appointment with the mission agency that had founded the hospital and ultimately moved there with my family eight years later.

Dr. David Thompson was a pioneer missionary to Gabon where he founded Bongolo Hospital and initiated the Pan-African Academy of Christian Surgeons to train national surgeons in Africa for Africa. Really though, it made no sense at all. Dave and his wife were missionary kids in Cambodia. Dave's parents were martyred for their faith. He felt a call to go back to the people he loved and use the local language he knew so well. The Christian Missionary & Alliance Mission Board appointed them, but the Khmer Rouge took power and starting killing over a million people just as they were leaving. So, though it "made no sense," David, Becki and their family's country of service was changed to Gabon where they had to learn French and a tribal language. Their plans changed midstream, but God had a better plan. Looking back, they could clearly see God's hand.

So don't fret. Don't worry. God will lead you each step of the way to your service spot. Just seek His direction, trust His guidance and follow His leading. You will be glad you did.

Sugar Cane Sabbath

by Judy Palpant

"In observing the Sabbath one is both giving a gift to God and imitating him."-Lauren F. Winner, "Mudhouse Sabbath"

Sugar cane-sweet, juicy. Anyone familiar with the taste will salivate at the mention of the word. During our years in Kenya, a fresh stalk of sugar cane trumped all other treats as far as our children were concerned. Eagerly they watched us cut away the tough outer layer with a sharp knife. Then we hacked it into 12-inch segments and passed them each a piece. Off they'd run outdoors to eat it-ripping off a chunk with their teeth. They sucked out the sweetness, swallowing the juice and spitting out the fibers. Then they'd take another "chaw." Even now as adults in the U.S., no candy bar compares.

On our recent trip to Kenya, the subject of sugar cane surfaced as we rode with our friend Solomon. "Saturday is my Sabbath," he said, "I always eat a stick of sugar cane." He pulled his car off the dirt road and stopped. Opening his car door, he walked towards a man standing beside his bike. It was loaded with long stalks of sugar cane. We watched him negotiate the price. Soon he returned with his Sabbath-treasure.

Now we knew one of Solomon's Sabbath secrets. I imagined the mere thought of this stalk of sugar cane helped him cope with the multitude of demands he faced day in and day out in his ministry. He knew there would be time on Saturday to sit and stare, to be.

On his Sabbath, I pictured him retiring to his veranda or garden where he sat down on a low three-legged stool. Slowly, he savored the sugar cane, extracting the juice and the joy--discarding the dry, remaining fibers. In this simplicity of time and place, stress and strain fell from his shoulders. Gradually rest, release and renewal made room for quiet prayer.

While his taste buds relished the sweetness, his soul's taste buds savored the goodness of God.

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