

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*. Whether you are enjoying a break from school or are still in the routine of training, I pray you are keeping your eyes on the Lord as He leads you along the path He has chosen for you. For many reading this newsletter, I trust that path will include serving the lost and least - whether at home or abroad.

I've compiled several articles this month - I think all of them will be challenging but, hopefully, also encouraging. If I can answer any questions, put you in contact with the writer of a particular article or serve in any other way, please don't hesitate to ask.

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Global Missions Health Conference: November 9-11

Have you registered yet for the Global Missions Health Conference that will be held in Louisville, Kentucky? I think if you ask anyone who has attended in the past, they would tell you this is one conference you don't want to miss. Registration fees go up the closer we get to November, so if there is a chance you will be able to attend, please check it out soon. The early bird price ends on June 30. www.medicalmissions.com/gmhc.

Pre-field Training for New Medical Missionaries: July 20-23

If you are leaving for your field of service within the next six months and plan to spend several years there, this is an opportunity unlike any other you will find. CMDA's training is specific to those in a healthcare profession covering such topics as: Playing God and Other Bioethical Issues, Dealing with So Much Death, Working with a Ministry of Health, Dealing with Conflict, Leadership from a Second Culture, Prevention and Management of Burnout and Keeping Spiritual Ministry a Priority. These are a few of the topics covered. For the first time ever we are also including several hours on the topic of The Medical Missionary Marriage. To learn more or to register, visit www.cmda.org/missionarytraining.

Cura Animarum – The Beauty of Holiness

by Rev. Stan Key

*"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty..."
(Isaiah 6:3-4, NIV 1984).*

Systematic theology books often begin with a discussion of the attributes of God. Until we understand God for who He truly is, all our efforts to know Him and worship Him will be off center. Who is this God we worship? What is He like in the essential core of His being? Which attribute is central? Is it power? Perhaps love? Maybe justice? What about wisdom? The way we answer this question has enormous implications for how we understand both who God is and what His purposes are for us and the world. For Isaiah, enlightenment came when he grasped the reality that God was holy. Not just holy, but holy, holy, holy! The three-fold repetition expressed the Hebrew superlative. This vision of God changed everything for Isaiah. From this point onward, all the other attributes of God would need to be understood in the light of this essential core: God is holy power, holy love, holy wisdom, holy justice, etc. The one we worship is indeed the Holy One.

Holiness denotes both God's otherness as well as His moral purity. He is transcendent, other than, apart from the common. He cannot be explained by categories of this world. But more than this, He is morally pure. He is perfect in goodness. "[His] eyes are too pure to look on evil; [he] cannot tolerate wrong (Habakkuk 1:13, NIV 1984). As we worship the Holy One, may what happened to Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-7) happen to us.

May the awesomeness of God's holiness humble your pride. "...I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted...the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke" (Isaiah 6:1-4, NIV 1984). As you worship, let the vision of His majesty drown out all the petty notions of your own self-importance. Let the awareness of His moral perfections work like a spiritual disinfectant to cleanse out all silly notions of your own righteousness. He alone is holy. You aren't. So, humble yourself before Him.

May the penetrating power of God's holiness expose your sin. Many today seem to regard "worship" as energizing, inspiring or even fun. But for Isaiah, it was an experience of sheer terror. "Woe to me! I cried. 'I am ruined!'" (Isaiah 6:5a, NIV 1984). The light of God's holiness exposed his sin. There was nowhere to hide. When we worship the Holy One, it is not just God we see but ourselves! And the mirror He holds before us reveals ugly things in our hearts and lives of which we were not even aware. In worship, "...Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account (Hebrews 4:13, NIV 1984).

May the contagion of God's holiness transform your character. "Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand...'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for'" (Isaiah 6:6-7, NIV 1984). Isaiah's sin did not pollute the throne room of heaven. Rather, God's holiness purified Isaiah's sinful heart. In worship, God longs to share His holiness with you. He exposes your sin only so He can heal it! Worship is the place where we learn how to obey His command: "Be holy, because I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16, NIV 1984).

On the day of Pentecost, Jesus poured out the *Holy Spirit* on His disciples. That adjective "Holy" is attached to the word "Spirit" not only to remind us what kind of Spirit we are dealing with, but also, as importantly, to tell us what this Spirit intends to do. It informs us of why He came. He is *Sanctifying Spirit*, He has come to make us holy.

*"Continually restate to yourself what the purpose of your life is.
The destined end of man is not happiness, nor health but holiness."
—Oswald Chambers*

Point to Ponder: We become like the one we worship.

Prayer Focus: The Holy Spirit would humble, expose and transform worshippers during worship.

Comparison - Doing the Math

by Judy 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.

Medical Missionary Bibliography

Thanks to our friend Dr. Neil Thompson through CMDF Australia's website, I'm happy to share a medical missionary bibliography he compiled. <http://www.cmdfa.org.au/Resources/medical-missions-bibliography>

Book Review:

First 30 Daze: Practical Encouragement for Living Abroad Intentionally
by Larry and Susan McCrary

Book reviewed by Ricky Don Wilhelm, a non-profit worker living in Russia.

Synopsis

Many Christians have embarked on the adventure of life overseas but haven't lasted long enough to tell much of a tale. A rough start is often the reason why. Finally, however, there's a guide for a healthy beginning. In *First 30 Daze*, Larry and Susan McCrary provide Christian expats a helpful one-month guide for starting off on the right foot in their new host cultures.

The practical devotional-style book provides 30 daily Scripture references and topics about living abroad, followed by assignments for application to help the sojourner intentionally find his or her way through the crucial, but "daze-like," time after arrival to the new location abroad.

As I read through the first few days of topics, I thought to myself, "Where was this book 10 years ago when I was making my own start in a new culture?" I appreciated the simplicity of the thought process and the fact that the McCrarys' stories are often light-hearted and humorous.

THE NUTS AND BOLTS

The daily lessons only take a few minutes to read, and the applications are straightforward and relevant. Readers won't feel overwhelmed by the weight of the content, nor is it more than they can handle on top of already busy schedules. The suggested applications are actually meant to streamline into daily life so that those utilizing the material won't feel as though they need to go out of their way to "get their homework done."

The discipline to follow their guidance and the time to fill out the journaling section will yield incredible results. Not only will it serve the reader well now, but it will also create great memories for years down the road. Journalers will enjoy looking back at their first experiences and impressions and realizing how far they have come.

The authors are a great source of wisdom to the reader. From the first day, they offer one of the most valuable lessons an expat should understand about a new location: things will go far better for you if you approach your new culture with humility. "Entering a new culture requires a humble spirit," they write. "The people around you know a thing or two (or more!) about their own culture. Trust them. Lean on them. Be willing to admit you don't know much but are willing and eager to learn."

As the McCrarys explain, admitting your helplessness to people around you and putting yourself in a posture of learning and dependence on them will actually serve you better in the long run. You'll make more friends. You'll accomplish more. And you'll experience the hospitality and generosity of your new home, making it feel more like home.

INTENTIONALITY

Although I can't stress the importance of the topic of language learning enough, I actually believe the soul of this book is found on Day 8: Intentionality. The authors share about how, when they were struggling the most, they found themselves retreating to the relaxing familiarity of their apartment—a common response for people experiencing culture shock. "Finally, we realized that this tendency to retreat had to stop."

They created a list of things to find in their neighborhood, which helped them to be more intentional about engaging the environment around them. The McCrarys started to feel more at home as a result. That, in my opinion, is the main reason this book is a valuable tool for those moving to other contexts. It will help expats purposefully step out of their doors and accomplish meaningful tasks that lead to a well-adjusted life. As the McCrarys said, "Being fully invested and fully present moves you more quickly from what is new to what is familiar. Intentionality is the ability to determine how you will view your day and how you will engage well."

One word of caution I'd like to add about the book. Although it has the feel of a daily Bible study or devotional, it is not meant for that purpose. The Christian is certainly always kept in mind, and Scriptures are referenced. Spiritual formation and Bible teaching, however, are not the driving force in this work. That fact doesn't take away from the sound advice given for life overseas, though. The McCrarys refer to the book as a "how-to" guidebook for living abroad, and I agree that this is the best way to classify it.

If you are preparing for a short-term trip or vacation abroad, this book won't be of much use to you. Feel free to grab your camera, strap on your fanny pack and go. However, if you are considering a life overseas for any length of time beyond a month, currently living overseas but moving to a new city or just need a reboot to your overseas life, I highly recommend this book. Living in a foreign land is a challenge, to say the very least. As children of God, we want to do all to the glory of God. *First 30 Daze* will be a great resource to help you live intentionally and for the glory of God from the very beginning of your adventure abroad.

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Thinking Inside the Box - Pandora's Hope Chest

by Judy Palpant

Curiosity is vital to learning and discovery, but it also has the potential to kill the proverbial cat. Children love the picture books with tales of that mischievous monkey, Curious George. In Greek mythology, curiosity tempts Pandora. She opens the forbidden box. Out fly disease, cruelty, pain, old age, disappointment, hate, jealousy, war and death.

For good reason, we hear the repeated warning, "Don't open Pandora's Box." Some things are better unspoken, unheard or unexplored.

But televised nightly broadcasts open the box for us. With a simple app, your smartphone will flash news across the screen throughout the day. Tweets bring up-to-the-minute reports. News can be a nemesis. Once our heads hit the pillow, we play mental reruns of local, national and international tragedies. Accompanied by the images and sounds, they crowd one another for focused attention, catapulting us into worry and anxiety.

During my husband's first year of medical training, his shifts stretched through the day and into the night. I was pregnant with our first born and kept the radio humming in the background as a kind of substitute companion. I complained to a friend that sleep was slow in coming at night. She asked me, "How often do you listen to the news?" "Every hour on the hour," I replied. "That's too often," she exhorted me. "Listen to it once and be done with it." Following her advice helped. I knew I'd turned a corner when I awoke one morning to learn I'd slept through crashing thunder claps and dramatic lightning flashes.

My mother, a former history teacher, once thrived on continuous media reports. Like my dad, she loved politics and current events. Their TV blared talk shows, political debates and updates-a virtual fire hose of happenings and opinions. Now as a 96-year-old widow in our home, her mild dementia is easily accentuated by any bad news. It confuses and upsets her. She perseverates on it for days. Sometimes she pulls events out of the past and ponders them for weeks. Most recently she recalled a news piece from 1932 about the kidnapping of Charles Lindberg's 20-month-old son. Lindberg's name came up in one of her word puzzles. She wanted to know if it was true that his son was kidnapped. She brought it up at meals and other odd times out of the blue.

In an attempt to keep our eyes and ears somewhat protected, the two of us, mother and daughter, restrict news input. My husband feeds me bits of news before Mom comes up for breakfast. I take them, measure them and mete them out to her only if I deem them timely or important. The litany of "breaking news" never ends. Somewhere on the earth there is always war, disease, famine. In his own time on earth, Jesus predicted, "There shall be wars and rumors of wars" (Matthew 23:6, paraphrased). But the ostrich "head-in-the-sand" position is neither pragmatic nor advisable. We need to keep abreast of what is happening. Just when and how we do this is the trick. Can good news follow bad?

Most people know about Pandora's Box. Few people, however, know that when Zeus packs the box for Pandora, he includes a beneficent surprise-hope. After all the ills fly out, hope remains to help humanity cope with pain and suffering. I learned this when my granddaughter, Samantha, and her third-grade class put on a play about Pandora's Box. One by one the evils came out dressed in ghoulish garb, including face paint, to represent their particular plague. At the very end, despite her awful company, Samantha emerged, bright eyed and pink cheeked-a breath of fresh air. She introduced herself to the dismayed Pandora.

"I am Hope. Keep me in the box. The miseries will go out among the mortals. But I will remain so that humans will always have me in spite of all the evils that have gone out among them. I will help them bear the pain." And so Pandora shuts the box, protecting Hope inside to help people bear the miseries.

One of my friends watches the nightly commentaries and habitually heads to bed distraught. But once his head hits the pillow, he pushes the national and international scene to the periphery. Paring his thoughts down to his immediate family and friends, he simplifies his prayers and centers his thoughts on the presence of God. This discipline has proven to be his path to peaceful sleep.

Sometimes, however, a national or international crisis is front and center in our lives. While we were in Kenya, a coup attempt brought chaos to some major cities. Nighttime drumming in our rural area aroused thoughts of tribal rivalries. Believers from our mission hospital and school compounds gathered in a home. Our Ugandan refugee friends exhorted us to pray first and foremost for the Christians in the fray. Having baptized people in the face of Idi Amin's guns, they knew firsthand how to triage their thoughts in a time of political instability. This guidance helped focus our hearts in the midst of rumors and frightening possibilities. We slept with a rekindled hope and trust in God.

In the nighttime hours, do we remember that we live by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7)? Do we know that our hope is rooted in God's love (Romans 5:5)? Will we commit all our cares to the Lord who gives His beloved sweet sleep (Psalm 127:2)?

Memo before going to bed: We are the people of the Good News-the gospel of Jesus Christ. The angel's message to the shepherds is still germane today. "Don't be terrified. I bring good news which shall be for everyone" (Luke 2:10, paraphrased).

Long before technology's capacity to bring the world's woes into our hearts and minds, Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury (1033-1109), wrote this beseeching prayer as a hope-filled surrender: "*God of love, whose compassion never fails; we*

bring before you the griefs and perils of people and nations, the pains of the sick and injured, the sighing of prisoners and captives, the sorrows of the bereaved, the necessities of the homeless, the helplessness of the weak, the despair of the weary, the failing powers of the aged. Comfort and relieve them, O merciful Father, according to their several needs and your great mercy; for the sake of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen."

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