

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



November 2016

Welcome to this issue of *Your Call*. I can hardly believe this is the last newsletter for 2016. The year has passed so quickly—at least for me. I wonder if it has been the same for you.

Have you scheduled your international rotation at a mission hospital yet? In case you have not found it, a helpful three-part International Rotation Handbook is now available at www.cmda.org/internationalrotations. This is not only for physicians and dentists, as it also includes opportunities for other types of healthcare professionals. Nurses will find they have their own handbook and searchable table listing those opportunities. Medical and dental students and residents will also find information for scholarships to help with the cost of an international rotation at www.cmda.org/scholarships.

I hope you find this issue of *Your Call* especially helpful. If you have questions or would like to communication with me, you can do so at susan.carter@cmda.org.

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Tell Me Why

by Rev. Stan Key

"For the love of Christ controls us.." (2 Corinthians 5:14, ESV).

The real question that must be answered when it comes to missions is not *Where?* or *How?* Or even *Who?* The real question is *Why?* If we can answer this question, all other questions will take care of themselves. I have discovered at least eight reasons why we should be actively and passionately involved in sharing the Good News of salvation both across the street and around the world.

1. **Obedience.** Matthew 28:19-20 is not called the Great Suggestion. It is called the Great Commission because it is a command, an order. Don't wait for some mystical calling. Obey! Jim Elliot asked, "Why do you need a voice when you have a verse?"
2. **Justice.** God's blessings are meant to be shared (Luke 12:48). William Borden stated the matter powerfully, "If 10 men were carrying a log, nine of them on the little end and one at the heavy end, and you wanted to help, which end would you lift?"
3. **Final Judgement.** God will hold us accountable if we fail to share the message with those around us (Ezekiel 3:16-21). When asked if those heathen who had never heard the gospel could be saved, Charles Spurgeon responded, "It is more a question with me whether we, who have the gospel and fail to give it to those who have not, can be saved."
4. **Love.** How can we obey the second commandment (Matthew 22:39) if we do not show concern for our neighbor's soul? Alexander Duff put it well, "I will lay my bones by the Ganges that India might know there is one who cares."
5. **Christ's Return.** When we share the gospel with others, we are actually hastening the day of Christ's return. "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14, NASB).

6. **Personal Blessings.** Those who cling to possessions and seek security by playing it safe will lose both. But those who surrender to Christ and obey His call will find blessing upon blessing (Matthew 19:29, Luke 9:24, Acts 23:35).
7. **No Other Name.** Only the name of Jesus has the power to save (John 14:6, Acts 4:12). All other names (Buddha, Mohammed, Krishna, Marx, Freud, etc.) lead to hell.
8. **Societal Improvement.** The most important thing we can do to improve society (poverty, malnutrition, trafficking, disease, AIDS, war, racism, etc.) is to preach a gospel that transforms the human heart. Only redeemed people can redeem culture.
9. **Revival.** Some think revival is the cause of missions. Perhaps the truth is just the opposite! Don't wait for a visitation of the Spirit to get involved. Get involved and then see God move! Christ promised His presence to those who go (Matthew 28:19-20).

Give up your small ambitions and get involved in the only cause that matters!

Point to Ponder: What hinders you most from sharing the gospel with others?

Prayer Focus: People you know who are spiritually lost.

Pyromania

by David Stevens, MD, MA(Ethics)

I love a real log fire. It is a feast for all my senses. The flames dance before my eyes in yellows, reds, blues and purples. The popping and snapping is a never-tiring music and the smell of wood smoke fills the house. A real fire is so nice that I will arise from my warm cushy comfort to go out into the bitter cold to add logs and then stoke the fire. Why? Because if I don't, the fire burns down and ultimately goes out.

The same is true of God's call on your life and my life. If we don't fuel and stoke it, the beauty of His call burns down to only a nice memory and finally flickers out. Oh, we don't mean to let it die, but busyness, study pressures, professionalization and delayed gratification pour quenching water on the flames. We begin thinking, "I deserve a nice car, a big house and a great school for my kids." We are reluctant to give up control of our finances, our safety or our comfort.

We begin to rationalize, but of course as Christians, we do it in the most spiritual terms.

DELAY - I'm not saying no to God. I'll just delay answering His call until I get my school debts paid back or I will go as soon as the kids are older.

- But God says, "When you tell God you'll do something, do it-now. God takes no pleasure in foolish gabble. Vow it, then do it" (Ecclesiastes 5:4, MSG).

BARGAINING - I will go as soon as I find the right spouse. I know God wants me to be married and I will be much more effective if I have a helpmate. Yes, I will go as soon as God gives me what I want and need, a spouse.

- But God says, "'Yes,' said Jesus, 'and you won't regret it. No one who has sacrificed home, spouse, brothers and sisters, parents, children-whatever- will lose out. It will all come back multiplied many times over in your lifetime. And then the bonus of eternal life!'" (Luke 18:29, MSG).

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING - I know God's call is important, but He also wants me to be the best Christian father or mother. I couldn't really take care of my children, as God would want, if I were over there. My duty as a parent is the most important thing.

- But God says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33, KJV).

OTHER LOVES - It would kill my parents if we went and took their grandchildren thousands of miles away. Doesn't the Bible say I need to honor my parents?

- But God says, "Anyone who comes to me but refuses to let go of father, mother, spouse, children, brothers, sisters-yes, even one's own self!-can't be my disciple" (Luke 14:26, MSG).

Self! Ultimately, that is what smothers our call. We begin to think about our needs, our wants or our dreams, while the fire of God's call is smothered. Let me give you some advice on keeping your fire burning:

- **USE DRY WOOD** - I love to do wood work, but no matter how careful I am in measuring, cutting and fitting each

piece together, I'm going to end up with a pile of junk if the wood is don't properly dried. It contracts, warps and cracks unless it is properly prepared. The same is true of the wood you put on the fire of your call. You have to keep you heart tender and easy to ignite through a close walk with Christ day by day. God's fire won't stay lit if you are spiritually soggy.

Yeah, I know that is hard with the pressures of training, but in the long run, your relationship with God is more important than cramming some other esoteric fact into your cranium. Fight for time to be alone with God. Read His word. Attend church when you can. Get a good missionary biography or other Christian book and read it, even if you only read two or three pages a day.

- **ADD AN ACCELERATOR** - That is what the fire marshal calls substances used to start an arson fire. They fuel the blaze and make it spread quickly. For Christians, our "accelerator" is prayer. Talk to God throughout the day. Practice His presence in your life. There are hundreds of opportunities each day to talk to Him. Pray for the ability to understand and remember as you study. Pray for wisdom as you make patient care decisions. Pray for strength for nights on call. Pray for your patients' physical and spiritual needs. Live every moment in God's sufficiency and not your own. Pray He will keep the fire of your call blazing, and then also pray for those who are waiting for you to come and tell them the Good News. Get other people-family, friends, pastors, colleagues-to pray for you as well. Prayer accelerates God's grace in your life.
- **PILE ON MORE WOOD** - I try to get back overseas to lead a mission team every year. Why? Because the physical needs are great? Surely! Because there is great spiritual darkness? Of course! Because it is good to get a change from my daily hectic life? Not really. I know that seeing the physical and spiritual needs and giving of myself unselfishly to help meet them renews my soul and spirit. My battery is recharged. I realign my priorities when I get out of my comfort zone and am totally dependent on Christ.

I urge you to get overseas three times during your training. For medical students, that is once during your first two years on a team outreach, during your fourth year for an eight-week rotation and then during your residency for at least a month. These experiences put new fuel on the fire of your call. If possible, go to places where you are considering serving long-term to renew relationships with missionaries and nationals. Each time you will have a better knowledge of how to prepare and equip yourself for long-term service.

- **STOKE THE FIRE** - After a while, a fire doesn't burn well unless you sift the logs around to let in more air while still keeping them close enough together. The same is true for you. You need to be spending time with mission-minded fellow believers. The heat of their focus will make your flame burn brighter. Their ideas will infuse fresh oxygen. It is difficult to keep a single stick burning, but if you stack them together they will roar into a bonfire.

Other mission-minded believers hold you accountable to your call, something we all need. Look for friends, family, conferences or serving missionaries with which you can correspond or chat with regularly. Attend mission conferences locally, regionally or nationally. Take a missionary out to eat or have them stay with you in your home or apartment. They will stoke your fire.

There is nothing more beautiful than seeing God's hand on a willing Christian's life. As a future missionary, you will walk in the footprints of giants. C.T. Studd, the Michael Jordan of cricket of his day, was one of them. When it came to keeping his fire brightly burning to carry the light to the ends of the earth he said, "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him."

When it comes to keeping the flames of your fire burning bright, I pray you will be a pyromaniac.

Pre-field Training for New Medical Missionaries

The next pre-field New Medical Missionary Training will be March 9-12, 2017 with arrival on the 8th. This training is for those who are under appointment with a sending agency and will soon be heading to their assignment. All cadre of healthcare professionals will find the training useful. The topics for this training are specifically for the healthcare missionary. General mission topics are presented by the sending agency. Some topics include: Playing God and Other Bioethical Issues, Working with the Ministry of Health, Preventing Burnout, Taking Care of Self and Sharing Faith through Your Profession. Visit www.cmda.org/missionarytraining for more information.

Ministry Employment Opportunity

The Western Apache Team of Pioneers Mission has opportunities for professional medical personnel of all types at the new San Carlos Apache Healthcare Corporation facility. This corporation is different and separate from the typical Indian

Health Services facility.

The vision of the various stages of ministry includes the following needs: persons with a passion for discipleship and evangelism; organizational and community development; communication and leadership skills; cross-cultural relationship building; mentoring and teaching skills; counseling skills in addiction recovery, trauma, brokenness or grief; and "wholistic" community health and wellness. Additionally, the San Carlos Apache reservation has a large, newly constructed, state-of-the-art medical facility with a need for doctors, nurses and medical technology personnel. The campus of this modern hospital includes new housing units available to employees and is one of the only ways non-tribal people can live on the reservation. **Professional Christian presence working in this tribal hospital and living on the reservation would be an amazing opportunity.**

Please note the hyperlink to the San Carlos Apache Healthcare Corporation website <http://scahealth.org/> where there is information about employment needs, a little about housing and contact information.

Struggling Well

by Al Weir, MD

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds" (James 1:2, NIV 2011).

We were seated in a large circle, each with our spouse, sharing family war stories so that we might hold them up to the Lord-physicians, dentists, physician assistant, medical student, resident in obstetrics. Linda shared her story and then concluded before we prayed, "We have our struggles-but we are struggling well."

We certainly will not leave this side of Glory without struggling, but we must each choose how well we will struggle.

Paul struggled well when he was beaten, shipwrecked and spent his last days in prison, writing the letters now guiding our churches (2 Corinthians 11:25).

David struggled well when he slipped up on the sleeping Saul and refused to kill the Lord's anointed (1 Samuel 24:1-7).

Jesus struggled well in the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-39).

What does it mean to struggle well?

Struggling well means continuing on mission as long as the Lord calls us forward.

Struggling well means walking in obedience even when disobedience might ease our struggles.

Struggling well means pouring our hearts out to the Father within our struggles and saying, "Yet not as I will, but as you will."

Struggling well means glorifying our God from within our struggles, even as Jesus did on the day of the cross.

*Dear God,
When it is my time to struggle, let me struggle well, for your glory.
Amen*

An Attitude of Gratitude: Raising Thankful Kids

by Judy Palpant

**"Gratitude takes nothing for granted, is never unresponsive,
is constantly awaking to new wonder, and to praise of the goodness of God."
-Thomas Merton**

We deserve better than this, I thought. Sam left a university medical center in America for this hospital? No other doctors to consult. Nothing but a monocular microscope in the lab.

I stared at my six-foot-two husband prone on the floor crying. Our small children crawled over him like puppies.

"We can't both fall apart," I groaned, wishing for a help-line. *I need my pioneering grandmothers. How do I manage without a refrigerator? No hot water. No washing machine. No reliable plumbing. Only three hours of generator-driven electricity at*

night.

The year was 1980. We had boarded a jet tilted toward the equator. Traveling halfway around the world to Kenya, we arrived only to discover our assignment had changed from serving in the well established, historic hospital at Kaimosi, to the more primitive Friends Lugulu Hospital, a facility recently upgraded from health center.

Surrounded by people of another color and tongue, our family was an anomaly-the only white family for miles around. We'd ventured out on a limb for God. We felt like He'd cut it off, letting us free fall through the air with three small children in tow.

Despite our apprehensions, we kept moving. Diaper to diaper. Meal to meal. Patient to patient.

Our children slept peacefully and played eagerly. Kids on the compound loved climbing the small guava tree next to our porch. Five-year-old Ben joined them. Up in its branches, they picked guavas, calling out phrases in the local language. Ben echoed them.

"Your son is using swear words just like his friends," a neighbor informed me. I could see the headlines: "New missionary kid swears in local language."

Bitterness knocked at my door. Convicted, I recalled a verse: "He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God" (Psalm 50:23, NIV 1984). *Yes. I can choose to thank God despite disappointments. I'll bake a cake.*

Searching through the well-worn *Jungle Cook Book* from a retired missionary, I read a quote from George Washington: "Actions, not words, are the true characteristic mark of the attachment of friends."

"What actions will make friends in Lugulu?" I wondered, stirring an egg into the batter.

That evening I presented my offering to the family-a plain cake.

Setting it on the table, I suggested we each fill in our own reason for being thankful as we sang *O Thank You, Lord*.

"My first trip to the market," I said.

"Seeing the Milky Way and Southern Cross," added Sam.

Five-month-old Nathan smiled and cooed.

"Blue sky!" chimed Andrea.

"My bed!" exclaimed Ben.

I ached. A mattress on the floor seemed a poor substitute for the sturdy bunk bed left behind-built by his dad.

One week later a boy turned up on our doorstep. In broken English, he introduced himself as Juma and handed a small parcel to Ben. Removing the brown paper revealed four blackened sweet potatoes, freshly dug from hot coals. Juma peeled off the skins and ate the white potato meat with his fingers. He motioned for us to join him.

What about germs? But we gave ourselves to the gift, savoring the warm, flavorful sweet potatoes-without salt, butter or sugar-a fitting celebration for our one-week anniversary in Lugulu. Off Juma ran. We never saw him again.

His generosity jolted me from my cramped survival mode. Was he an angel? I lifted my eyes, so riveted on us, to see individual smiles and outstretched hands. Below our plateau, a valley dotted with sugar cane fields stretched to the horizon. A luminous sunset silhouetted the acacia tree at the hospital gate.

My heart thawed. Expanded. Gratitude sprouted. "We're not called to survive, but to give," I once read. We determined, though babes in culture and language, to discover ways to give just as Juma freely gave to us.

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