

# 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



## October 2015

Happy fall! The air is crisp each morning as I leave the house to head to the office, and I love it! I confess this is one of my favorite times of the year. The weather is perfect for me; not too hot and not too cold. I was definitely spoiled by my years in Kenya where the temperature was between 55 and 85 degrees year round. I'm guessing that might surprise some of you, but the hospital was 6,800 ft. elevation, so though we were close to the equator, the elevation kept the temperature perfect!

This will be the last *Your Call* for 2015. That is hard to believe. It seems we were just celebrating the start of 2015 and now it will soon be over. I trust your training is going well. I have no doubt you are keeping busy.

There are a couple things I hope you have on your schedule. The first is the **Global Missions Health Conference** that will take place in Louisville, Kentucky on **November 5-7**. The venue will be Southeast Christian Church. You can learn all about it at [www.medicalmissions.com](http://www.medicalmissions.com). If you sense the Lord calling you to ministry cross-culturally, or if you even have an interest in such, you will not want to miss this conference. With close to 200 breakout sessions to choose from and 150 exhibitors, this is the place to get your questions answered, as well as find some information you don't even know you need. I hope you are able to participate. By the way, students are offered housing in the homes of the church members so the conference is priced as reasonable as possible.

You will find me amongst the 12 CMDA booths in the middle aisle of the main floor exhibit hall. Just look for our bright red backdrop. The Center for Medical Missions booth will be on the far end and I'm sure to be there. I'd love for you to stop by and introduce yourself, highlighting that you do receive the *Your Call* e-newsletter.

The second thing I want to remind you of is the **Pre-field Training for New Medical Missionaries Conference** that will be held in March. Right now the dates for that conference are **March 17-20, 2016, with arrival on the 16th**. There has been some discussion about where the conference will be held and the exact dates, but that information should be finalized and on the website within a couple weeks. [www.cmda.org/orientation](http://www.cmda.org/orientation). Right now the information on the website is about last summer's class. The dates are no longer correct, but all the other information will be the same.

If you are almost ready to head to the field for the first time, this is a conference you will not want to miss. There are many parts to being a medical missionary that are not about healthcare. We know you have had great healthcare training, but it is the other things that we share in this conference.

We try really hard to also give access to experienced medical missionaries during the four days of this conference. They will be there to answer the myriad of questions the participants ask and their answers are from real-life experiences. Ever wondered about raising your kids in a cross-cultural medical setting? Ever wondered how your healthcare ministry can help build the church? Come learn from the medical missionaries who have experienced such.

Don't forget I am here to assist you in any way I can. You can contact me Monday through Thursday at [susan.carter@cmda.org](mailto:susan.carter@cmda.org).

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## Expenditure or Investment?

*"To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey" (Matthew 25:15, NIV 1984).*

Yesterday I attended a retreat for Christian medical students at a beautiful spot on a small lake in Arkansas. Tim is a third year medical student who led a session on discipleship for his fellow students there. I was struck by his speaking ability, his maturity in Christ and by one particular statement he made. As he was talking about the price paid by God for our salvation, Tim asked, "In your life, in accounting terms, was that cost an expenditure or an investment?"

God indeed paid a great price to bring me home.

The question that needs to burn into my soul is whether that price, that rejection, that cross, was, in my life, an expenditure or an investment.

An expenditure means the price was paid for the product gained, period. And I have no doubt that God would have died for me alone, but He did not.

An investment plans that the price paid acquires a product which multiples after it is purchased.

Which am I? Did Jesus die for me so that I might walk home to the Father alone? Or did Jesus die for me and, because of that investment, many other children of God will be holding my hand as I bring them along to the throne?

Expenditure or investment?

*Dear Father,*

*Thank you for bringing me home. I am not worthy. You paid too much. Let me prove to be your great investment.*

*Amen*

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## Crumbs from Elisabeth Elliot's Table

Judy Palpant

*"God's work is never done under prime conditions. It is never what you expected. It is infinitely more glorious." - Elisabeth Elliot*

My favorite photo of Elisabeth is in her book *The Savage My Kinsman*. Still living with the Quichuas in Ecuador, she is sitting at a table, her head bowed in prayer, elbows resting on the table and hands covering her face. A small lantern glows next to her Bible. All around is pitch black. The caption reads: "The Lord is my Light and my Salvation; whom shall I fear?" I believe that, and asked Him daily, in the quiet hours before dawn, for light for that day."

I stare at this picture now, wondering where I would be without the example of this woman.

In 1980, our family was trying to find its way to a new nesting ground. Like a small flock of birds, our migration from Tucson, Arizona ended in Lugulu, Kenya at a Quaker mission hospital. I wrote to Elisabeth that first year in Kenya: "Thank you for playing a part in getting us here." A year earlier, while in the throes of deciding whether or not to go with our three children to Africa, I attended a retreat where she spoke.

On Saturday afternoon of the event, I stood in a line of women. It snaked through the restaurant. We all waited for five minutes with her. Like the Old Testament judge Deborah, sitting under the palm trees, Elisabeth sat in a booth. When it was my turn, I slid in across from her.

"How can I help you?" she asked. I laid out the possibility of going to Kenya as medical missionaries and paused.

Going directly for the jugular, she asked, "Do you want to do God's will?"

"Yes," I replied, while still quaking at the myriad of unknowns.

Her confident reply settled my heart. "My former husband Jim said that God is good at pulling strings for His children."

She ended our brief interaction regarding Scripture and counsel for discerning God's will by quoting a line from the hymn, "How Firm a Foundation:" "What more can He say than to you He hath said?"

Plain and simple. Direct. No nonsense.

As I left her, I hummed a different hymn in my head and heart: "My chains fell off, my heart was free. I rose, went forth and followed Thee." Back home in Tucson, I walked in the door and told my husband Sam, "I'm ready to go to Kenya."

Some months later, with tropical medicine school completed and three months of language school behind us, I put pen to a blue air form to let Elisabeth know and to express appreciation for being God's conduit. The Spirit used her words to soften and prepare my heart.

But in that moment of writing, we felt unsettled. Our spirits longed for family, friends and the familiar. New sights, sounds, smells and flavors assaulted our senses. We were experiencing the vice grip of the narrow end of the upside down funnel Elisabeth described. Not yet at home in our new place and culture, her words rang in my ears: "Do the next thing. In so doing God will meet you there. Do today what you know. Then you'll know what to do tomorrow. Make it an offering to God. Every task is material for sacrifice." So I picked up a broom and swept my cement floors.

"Wherever you are, be all there." I worked at not drifting through the day, week or month waiting for circumstances to change for the better--to stay engaged in the present.

"Accept your givens and your not givens." This proved a good Rx for comparison with other missionaries.

Over the six years in Kenya, these themes became part of the warp and woof of my life.

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I was an impressionable 7-year-old when *Life* magazine was delivered to our home in Colorado Springs in 1956. The Auca Indians and the story of the martyred missionaries captured my imagination. Fast forward through high school, college, Urbana missions conference and life as a teacher married to a medical student. I rode train and tramped through tough neighborhoods to hear Elisabeth speak at a CMDA gathering in the fall of 1970. Over the years, I copied by hand whole paragraphs from her books onto pages in my journals.

I carried *Twelve Baskets of Crumbs*, a collection of her essays, to Kenya. A gift from a friend, she wrote on the fly leaf: "Surprise! You can't go to Africa without this!" Every book counted in our baggage allowance. We took a carefully chosen few. This one offered new territory to cover.

Like the prophet Samuel, Elisabeth's words did not fall to the ground. She herself recommended using Scripture or hymns to prepare your heart to move into God's presence. This practical advice issued from someone who admitted prayer to be work and confessed, "Praying is the hardest thing in my life. Thinking is next."

But she had an astute mind, and read widely. Her first books, *Through Gates of Splendor* (1957) and *Shadow of the Almighty* (1958), were best sellers. Critics of her book *No Graven Image* (1966) said that she asked more questions than she answered and "this book will edify no one." But her determined character and disciplined writings eventually spanned more than five decades, inspiring and instructing generations who followed. I was among them. Not only did she mentor and build me up in the faith, I enjoyed her references to other authors. Because of her recommendations, I consumed books by Amy Carmichael of India, Lilas Trotter of Algeria and British novelist Elizabeth Goudge.

We've recently watched futuristic demos of air drones delivering books to our doorsteps. But in the late 1950s, Elisabeth lived in the Ecuadorian jungle and received periodic air drops of books. I imagined her reading in her hammock after a day of translation work, her daughter Valerie sound asleep. Although an ocean away, I followed a trail of reading suggested by Elisabeth. She introduced our family to the writing of Isak Dinesen, so one of the first things I read by lantern light in Kenya was *Out of Africa*. Surrounded by distant drumming and bird calls, it was an environment that would have been familiar to Elisabeth.

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The extremes of Elisabeth's life offered perspective. She lived and worked with three different tribes in Ecuador. Each time she started over at the bottom of the ladder. Eleven years of faithful translation work "achieved precisely nothing." Once, her portfolio of translation work tumbled off the roof of a bus and rolled down the mountainside.

She often referred to life as being a mystery to be comprehended and lived, not a problem to be analyzed and solved. "I can endure if I know life is not a problem but a mystery," she said. "The Apostles' Creed is full of mysteries. The mystery of God was the answer to all of Job's problems."

When I remember this, I am helped to walk by faith through the vicissitudes of life.

Since her death in June of this year, magazine articles and two memorial services stirred-up memories for all who knew Elisabeth well.

My relationship with her grew out of correspondence, a few retreats and a seminar at her home in Massachusetts. She spoke candidly about the joys of her life as well as her self-doubt and disappointments. Even though famous, I told my children, Elisabeth needed friends too. So my 10-year-old daughter made a trivet and we sent it to her. Later, she received a personal thank you postcard.

During one trip to Spokane, Lars and Elisabeth accepted our invitation for Sunday breakfast at a restaurant. In the rush of my husband leaving for hospital duty and me getting the family to church on time, we had the dubious distinction of inadvertently leaving them at the table to pick up the tab. Our chagrin and written apology brought only laughter and an enhanced intimacy to our relationship.

Another family story involves my sister inviting them to her home for lunch when Elisabeth was speaking in Colorado Springs. When Sandi asked them what they'd like to drink, her 3-year-old son piped up, "My mom drinks beer." While my mortified sister who doesn't even like beer pondered what to say, Lars chimed in, "I like an occasional beer myself." The lunch went on alcohol-free but with a good head of humor.

Controversial. Prickly. Forthright. Funny. A visit to her own home offered substance as well as hilarity. She introduced us to the skull on her book shelf. He had a name and she said he served as a reminder of her mortality. Later, we howled at her impersonation of a British preschool teacher.

"When the thing you fear comes upon you, He will be there," she aptly observed. Little could she have imagined that the last 10 years or more of her life would be progressively restricted by dementia--back in the narrow end of the upside down funnel. She lost all sense that she was part of something epic. Even in those last years, in some mysterious way, God's grace carried her.

Now, in her real home at last, she has passed into and through the wide end of the funnel. God has planted her feet in the ultimate spacious place.

Early this morning I heard geese honking. The migration south begins. I'm reminded of Elisabeth's clarion call to trust and obey the sovereign Lord. She frequently underlined this summons by quoting lines from "To a Water Fowl" by William Cullen Bryant:

*He, who, from zone to zone,  
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,  
In the long way that I must tread alone,  
Will lead my steps aright.*

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## Test Driving Healthcare Missions

by David Stevens, MD, MA (Ethics)  
CEO, CMDA

I was in Dallas, Texas a few weeks ago and drove by a Ferrari dealership. (They don't have one of those in little Bristol, Tennessee where I live!) There it was--a red *Ferrari LaFerrari* sports car with 48-valves, a 6.3-liter V-12, 789 hp. engine. As a bonus, it is a hybrid and has a 161 hp. synchronous electric motor for a total of 950 horse power if you rev both at the same time. It can go from 0 to 60 mph in 2.5 seconds and the car looks like an earth-bound jet fighter. Beautiful!!

Okay, I admit it. The thought ran through my mind, "Is there any way I could convince them to let me take that \$1,420,000 car for a test drive?" As I plodded along in my rental Jeep, that was followed by the thought, "In your dreams! No way!"

But there is a way you can "test drive" your mission call. You should do it.

First, let me say this. Going on another short-term mission trip is not a bad thing, but it doesn't count as a test drive. You have to experience missions in an environment similar to what it would be when you go overseas on a long-term basis.

Secondly, you need to be more than an observer. You can't get the full experience of driving a Ferrari by sitting in the passenger seat. You need some medical or dental skills under your belt so you can put your hands on the controls. That is

not only more helpful, but you will also have a level of responsibility that will drive home the reality of the risks and rewards of healthcare mission service. So your "test drive" needs to be taken during the latter part of your training in graduate school, during your residency or preferably both.

Here are some tips for conducting a thorough test:

### Go Long

If at all possible, go for eight weeks to give time for the "bling" of your time overseas to wear off. There is a different experience between taking a spin around the block and taking a true road trip. The more experiences you have, the more challenges you face, the more missionaries and nationals you get to know and the more time you have to process overseas service, the more you will learn and the better prepared you will be.

The long-term missionaries you work with need to get some value out of your visit as well. They have to spend significant time teaching you how to function on the mission field in a different healthcare environment with different diseases, different medications and limited resources. They can't afford to do that unless they are going to get some help out of you to lower their workload. That benefit doesn't start to accumulate on the positive side until after you've been there for three to four weeks.

### Go Deep

Get under the hood, kick the tires and check the clutch. On the mission field, that means working as hard or even harder than you work in your most challenging class or rotation during your training. When I was a missionary, students and residents fell into three compartments: the Tourists, the Coasters and the Immersers.

The "Tourists" wanted to experience as much as possible and do as little as possible. If there was a chance to get away from work, they were ready to go—a walk through the countryside, a trip to see the animals or a grocery trip to town. They pushed or exceeded the limits of leaving early to see the country, go to the beach or go on a safari. Irritating! I was often glad when a "Tourist" returned home.

The "Coasters" were not as bad as the tourists. They just wanted to get by, so they did what was expected to earn a good evaluation and carried a fair share of the load. I appreciated their efforts and they learned a lot.

The "Immersers" were my favorite group. They dived into the deep end of the pool and wanted to be involved in everything, no matter how much it added to their workload. I remember some of their comments, "Dr. Stevens, if you get an interesting delivery or surgery care could you call me during the night, even if I'm not on call? I would love to learn how to do a breech delivery or scrub in and help you on a trauma case." I even had some of the "Immerser" residents ask if they could take some of my night call to get extra experience or for me to have more chances to mentor them.

I remember one of those students vividly, Mike Chupp. I was so impressed with him after his rotation at Tenwek Hospital in Kenya that I wrote and asked him to pray about coming back to Tenwek as a long-term missionary. He did and has been there for 20 years and now serves as the Medical Superintendent.

### Go Wide

Adapt to the road conditions of your test drive. If you are a student, make it your top priority to be as helpful as possible. You probably already know what your specialty interest is and it is natural to want to spend all your time learning surgery, OB or whatever your interest is, but that may not be where the greatest need for help is in the hospital or clinic. They may need help in outpatients, pediatrics or another area that is not your favorite specialty. Jump in and help out joyfully! Missionary healthcare professionals have to work beyond their areas of interest and expertise much of the time, so get used to it. They will make sure to give you experience in your specialty interest as well.

Go beyond healthcare. Get involved in spiritual ministry. Speak in chapel, if they have one, or on a ward. Spend some time with the chaplains. Get involved in a local indigenous church. Makes friends with national staff and visit them in their homes. Ask tons of questions. Work hard to learn some of the local language, even it is only greetings and a few medical phrases. Use what you learn even if it generates laughter. Everyone will appreciate your efforts. Say as little as possible with nationals about how "wonderful things are in the U.S." or what you own. That can change and harm your relationship building.

### Go Back

If you were buying a house or an expensive car, you would probably take your spouse or a friend with you to share the experience. That is even more important when you test drive missions. If you are still single and then get married, go back overseas and take your new spouse with you. You can't describe the sights, sounds and smells adequately. They need to experience it so God can lay on their heart the same burden He laid on yours. It is also good for you to keep pouring oil on the fire of your call so it doesn't burn out.

You and I will probably never test drive a Ferrari, but test driving your mission call makes great sense, and, unlike a super sports car, you can own your call and find fulfillment in serving the Lord because of it for the rest of your life.

Come on! Take a spin and see what God will do!

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## Help for Test Driving your Healthcare Mission Call

CMDA has several ways to assist you in test driving your mission call. The **International Rotation Handbook** is available at [www.cmda.org/internationalrotations](http://www.cmda.org/internationalrotations). This handbook is in three parts. First there is a narrative about how to prepare. The next is a document in table format that helps you look for possible service sites by either where you are in your healthcare training or by where you are interested in serving. The final document has a page given for each site, including contact information. I will be updating the handbook over the next few months, but most of the information in the current handbook is still relevant. Questions: email [susan.carter@cmda.org](mailto:susan.carter@cmda.org).

A second way that CMDA offers help is **scholarships** for the cross-cultural experience. There are several different scholarships available, some based on country of service, some for students of particular schools, but most are general. You will find a description of the various scholarship funds as well as the applications at [www.cmda.org/scholarships](http://www.cmda.org/scholarships). I read many of the scholarship applications. I encourage you to take the application seriously and invest time in your answers as I take the responsibility of awarding the scholarships seriously. After all, many of the gifts were given sacrificially. Questions: email [susan.carter@cmda.org](mailto:susan.carter@cmda.org).

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