

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*, where I hope you will find just the word the Lord has for you specifically. For an unknown reason to me, these articles just seemed to be "right" for this issue. I don't always sense that, but it is certainly true of this October issue. So for those for whom I've put this newsletter together, I am praying you will hear and respond to whatever it is the Lord says to you through it.

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Motives for Ministry

by Rev. Stan Key

Whether working in the nursery at church, serving in the soup kitchen downtown or planting churches in Africa, people get involved in ministry for many reasons. Over the years I've come to marvel at some of the motives that drive people to service. Let me introduce you to some servants of Christ I've known. Though obviously fictitious, they represent a broad cross-section of that vast army of volunteers who serve in and through the church.

Bored Bob. Discontent and restless, Bob added some spice and excitement to his life by signing up for a short-term mission trip to Southeast Asia. He had been lured into this by a desire for adventure and the opportunity to do something, well, different. Vacation with a purpose! What could be better than that? Besides, this would look good on his resume.

Pity Patty. Patty couldn't stop crying when she heard the missionary talk about the sex trafficking of children in Calcutta. The images haunted her in the night. "Oh those poor babies," she kept saying. "Somebody ought to do something." Finally, she mailed a generous check to the missionary's organization and promised to pray. This helped her feel better.

Guilty Gus. Gus came across Luke 12:48 one morning in his devotions. Everyone to whom much is given, of him much will be required. These words of Jesus made him feel terrible! Not only did he have plenty of food, clothes, education and money, he also had the gospel! His conscience troubled him so much that he finally called the church office and volunteered for the refugee ministry the church was sponsoring.

Dutiful Doug. The sermon hit Doug like a ton of bricks. "Some of you are waiting for a mystical call before you get involved," the preacher said. "Christ has already called you. You don't need a call. You need a kick in the seat of your pants!" Doug always responded to sermons like this. When the invitation was given, he went forward and signed a card that indicated his readiness to help wherever he was needed.

Perhaps you have met some of these people too. Maybe you are one of these people! The truth is that many of us are involved in ministry for selfish reasons. We feel better when we serve, or go, or give. But think about this a moment! That means ministry is all about me. And when service to others is all about me, then service to others is not service to others. Rather, it becomes a smoke screen for meeting my own needs!

The New Testament ultimately gives only one motivation for ministry that pleases God and has a redemptive impact on those we serve: love. It was love that motivated the Father to send the Son into the world (John 3:16), and it was love that motivated the Son to give His life for others (John 15:13). If we are His followers, regardless of what secondary reasons we may have for wanting to serve, the primary motivation must ultimately be love.

"If we are uncertain of which of two paths to take, choose the one on which the shadow of the cross falls."
-Bishop Walpole

Point to Ponder: What is your motivation for wanting to serve others?

Prayer Focus: That God would pour his agape love into your heart!

Remedy Medical Missions Conference

A new CMDA medical missions conference will be held in Orlando, Florida at First Baptist Orlando on March 23-24, 2018. This inaugural event's plenary speakers will be Michael D. Johnson, MD, FACS; Rebekah Naylor, MD, FACS; Val Tramonte, MD; and David Stevens, MD, MA (Ethics). In addition to our lineup of plenary speakers, we've gathered together a variety of breakout sessions with some of today's foremost leaders in healthcare missions-both domestic and international.

Visit www.cmda.org/remedy to learn more and to register.

Book: *God Knows What I'm Doing Here*

by Sheila Leech

The inspiring story of how God took a rebellious and lost young woman, gave her purpose and a passion to live for Him, and led her to serve as a missionary nurse in the Ecuadorian rainforest.

Becoming a Christian missionary was definitely not on the agenda for teenager Sheila Leech. Far from God, she was taking drugs until Jesus broke into her life and gradually called her into His purposes.

Called to be a missionary nurse, she has served amongst an indigenous tribe in the Ecuadorian rainforest and, more recently, as a health worker being sent to some of the major natural disaster zones such as the Haitian earthquake and the tsunami. She has served those affected by war, earthquakes, volcanoes and floods, and it shows that anyone can be the voice and hands of Jesus even in the most inhospitable places in the planet.

Despite her many amazing adventures of faith, Sheila is clear that this is not the story of a super saint, but a very honest account of an ordinary person who serves an extraordinary God. The overriding themes of Sheila's story are God's grace and protection, His power and provision, and that God can use anyone who trusts in Him-whatever their start in life.

This book is published by Authentic Media and can be purchased at: Eden.co.uk, Amazon, and Christian bookstores.

Note from Susan: I found it hard to put this book down. Sheila is an excellent writer who has followed the Lord on an incredible journey that has been anything but boring. Readers will be challenged as well as encouraged to take a step into what is sure to be an adventure greater than anything dreamed. It's all about saying "yes" when the Lord calls! My own missionary journey echoes both God's faithfulness and a journey far greater than I ever imagined. Is that what God is asking of you?

Global Missions Health Conference (GMHC)

November 9-11, 2017 at Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky

Have you registered for the GMHC? It is not too late and, in fact, you can register onsite, but it is to your advantage to register in advance. There are people in the church who open their homes to student attendees, so you will want to get on that list as soon as possible. You can go here to sign up for that: <https://www.medicalmissions.com/gmhchosthousing>.

More info and registration is at <https://www.medicalmissions.com>.

Be sure to stop by the CMDA area in the exhibit area. We will be located in the middle aisle of the main floor exhibit area.

You can't miss us with the red curtain backdrop.

Pre-field Training for New Medical Missionaries

March 14-18, 2018 at Jubilee House Retreat Center in Abingdon, Virginia

All the information you need to learn about and sign up for the next Pre-field Training for Medical Missionaries is available at www.cmda.org/missionarytraining. If you are almost ready to head to the field for the first time, this is a training you will not want to miss.

We can't teach everything you will need to know in three and a half days, but this training will expose you to many of the non-medical issues you will face as a medical missionary and encourage you with things you can do to prepare for the hard times. There will be medical missionaries fresh from the field who will share lessons learned as well as be available as resources throughout the training. The training includes extra time during breaks and meals to facilitate Q&A time. Non-medical spouses should plan to participate as well, as there will be things specifically for them, including a Q&A on the medical missionary family.

10 Tips For Cross-Cultural Living

by Ashley Felder on August 15, 2017

From Velvet Ashes Blog. www.velvetashes.com

Cross-cultural living encapsulates so many areas! Daily life, language, creating a comfortable living space, making local friends and helping our family adapt to a new culture. I have tidbits of advice in a lot of these areas, so I'm going with a list. I like lists.

10 Tips on Cross-Cultural Living

- 1. Lower Expectations** Last week, Lauren wrote about keeping your high expectations as you move abroad-bringing new perspectives to us "oldies" on the field. I agree 100%! I would, however, say to lower your expectations a smidge when it comes to your living space, where you buy your food, and other local places. I know it will look different for everyone, but for us, it was a hard landing. We knew we'd be living in a hotel the first month with our then one-year-old, but we didn't know there wouldn't be a bathtub or that we'd have to wash all our clothes by hand. HELLO, privileged people. I know. I'm keenly aware of that now. When we arrived at our apartment, it was loads better, but we still had to get used to using cold water to wash dishes and clothes, killing ants and roaches, and not letting the toddler toddle too far, afraid he'd bust up something on the hard tile floors. Now, all of these things are completely normal to us, but it sure would've been nice to have known some of those norms our first few months! I also wish I would've given myself a few pep talks before and along the way that we signed up to move abroad! He called us! So, girl, let go of your wealthy (compared to the world) upbringing and gain a new perspective.
- 2. Daily Life Changes** Your daily life may look *completely different* than when you lived in your home country, that's a given. How different, you won't know until you arrive, get your feet wet, and establish a routine of where to buy food, find what restaurants are good, etc. Although sometimes I long to get in a car and drive to Target to mosey around, when I'm back in the States, I long to walk or ride my bike places. Although I miss friends and family, I love the community culture on a summer evening when everyone comes out to walk, chat with neighbors, and watch the kids play.
- 3. Learn That Language!** I'm a huge proponent for language learning because of how it **so drastically changed my heart and attitude for living here**. I didn't love living here the first few years-I was here out of obedience. But since learning (and still learning) the language, I can see much, much deeper into the culture and begin to understand some of the reasons they do the things they do...so, so opposite of my culture! People approach language learning in many different ways; my only encouragement is to study at whatever pace you can handle, and don't stop! What a blessing it is to have deep, meaningful conversations with locals in their own language. When they know they can express their hearts without having to fumble over English words, they will dive in fast.
- 4. Make A Home** I remember various veterans telling us during training, and for the first few years in, to be sure to take time to make a comfortable living space. Decorate, have someone show you where to buy the things you need, and even a few wants. Aren't we more likely to invite others over if we have a space where we ourselves are comfortable? I struggled with this the first several years. We moved 3 times in 4 years. That doesn't make a mama of young kiddos want to put anything on the walls or shelves when she'll just have to pack it up in a few months. But, I encourage you to do it anyway. I was always embarrassed when anyone would come over at how empty it looked. There are several posts on VA from past writers about how to decorate well, on a low budget, and that's portable. Go check them out!
- 5. Beware of the Foreign Ghetto** Again, all of our countries and teams will look different. You may be all on your own,

or you may live in the same stairwell with your 13 teammates (our current situation). My advice is to not get caught up with living every day where you spend the majority of the time with other foreigners. If we are called to serve the locals, we need to spend a lot of time with them, right? There is definitely a balance-just be aware that being with those similar to your culture is way easier than being with those of an opposite culture. So go on and clash those cultures...in love!

6. **Befriending Locals** Depending on your country of service, language may be a huge barrier in making new friends. I get it. I lived like that for over two years. But we still made great friends. Thankfully, several people around us spoke decent enough English to hold some conversations. Once we learned how to interpret Chinglish, we enjoyed inviting students and neighbors over for a meal, tea, coffee, playing games, or just to hang out with our kids. Even if we didn't understand everything being said, we still had fun!
7. **Food Love** Two vastly different cultures can really connect over food; it's a deep root in every culture. I would advise doing a bit of research before feeding locals something from your home culture. I quickly learned a lot of Chinese literally get sick from so much cheese (sad, I know!) or dairy (fettucine alfredo, I'll save you for a family night) and that my go-to one pot meals and casseroles are so anti-Chinese, they just don't know what to do. So I've adapted my meals to fit their multiple-dish traditions, but still kept the American/Italian/Mexican/Indian/Thai-ness originality. Because, isn't the point to introduce something new? I mean, that's what my friend's family did with me last week when they served whole crabs (I couldn't handle it when they told me the little yellow balls-the crab's eggs-were the best part!), shrimp with eyes and legs, and a whole-and I mean **whole**-roasted chicken "standing" on a skewer. I also have learned to tell them profusely that if they don't like something, to not eat it. It's tough eating new things, and I sure wish they'd reciprocate that gesture sometimes instead of being astonished at how we couldn't possibly love the same things they do.
8. **Kids Are Adaptable** Kids are amazing to watch in other cultures. If they want to play, they will! Language barriers, what language barriers? Charades and mimicking go a long way in kids' games! I would encourage you to get your kids into the culture as quickly as possible. That could mean attending a local school or making sure to be at the playground when the local kiddos are there, or having them join a sports team with locals. Language may be an issue in each of these, but as we know, kids' minds grow and adapt much faster, so take advantage of that window of opportunity!
9. **Remember Your Calling** When you hit a rough spot-and you will-think back to the excitement you felt before moving overseas. What brought you to this place? If it was a specific calling, hang onto that. Tell others about it so they can hold you accountable and pray for you during the hard, uncomfortable, culture-clashing times. God has a plan for us, we know that, but *knowing* that is a new level. Dig into His word, listen to His voice, and shed your tears with Him.
10. **Do What They Do** The longer you spend in a different culture, the more you will want to become like them. And they love that. We all think we doing things the "right" way, right? I never, ever thought I'd be one to drink hot water. In fact, in the beginning, I resisted it by making fun of it. It makes you warmer, really? But why would you want to be warmer when it's summer? Although I don't drink hot water in the summer, it's now a staple during the cold winter months-especially when the heat isn't on yet, but there is snow on the ground. When we imitate the locals, in little or small ways, we build yet another bridge between hearts. And bridges lead to deeper, more trusting relationships that may just listen to why you are so kind, loving, and compassionate.

Note: The blog Velvet Ashes describes itself as a community of women doing life together across the globe.

On the Altar

by David Stevens, MD, MA (Ethics)

It was 1980, and there was a lot of talk going on at our house as Jody and I began to focus on preparing to leave residency and start deputation. We had worked hard to keep un-entangled. We were still driving an old orange VW bug I had bought secondhand from my brother-in-law. We already had two children (Hey! Deliveries were free in our residency so we got two in - Jason my first year and Jessica during my last.), so there were two car seats in the back and I had to buy the largest top carrier I could find for the diaper bags, stroller and other baby paraphernalia that went along with two children.

We had lived very simply and had no debt. We were glad we had rented a house near the medical center instead of buying, because interest rates had skyrocketed to 12 percent, and none of my friends were having any success in selling their homes. Our furniture was early Goodwill and repainted. We lived on my salary and had gotten through medical school with Jody teaching and the help of some scholarships.

Of course that is almost impossible to do now, but the principles are the same. Keep yourself un-entangled so you "can run the race well." Live simply. You are going to be doing that as a missionary, so now is a great time to practice. For school debt, [MedSend](#) has a great program to pay back your school loans while you are serving overseas. Do not let debt or similar things prevent you from following God's call.

But there were other entanglements that almost tripped us up. One was our children's education. The routine at Tenwek Hospital, where we were going to serve, was to send your child off to Rift Valley Academy boarding school at age seven. It was a great school, but it was six hours away over difficult muddy roads. Jody and I used to talk for hours about other options. The homeschool movement was just starting, so maybe we could do that? Jody had taught junior high but wasn't confident that she had the background to teach elementary. Would the mission allow us to do that? We talked about coming back to the U.S. when it was time for the children to go to high school so we could still be with them. Like most parents, we wanted to nurture our children, make sure they had a good education and not do anything stupid that could harm them.

The more we talked, the bigger the issue grew in our minds. We even went so far as to question whether we should follow God's call. Weren't our kids our first responsibility? If we didn't take care of them, no one else would. We even knew some missionary children who resented their boarding school experiences. A few of them hadn't turned out so well.

And then there were snakes.

Jody had a snake-a-phobia, but for good reason. Kenya has the black mamba, the green mamba, puff adders and spitting cobras that shoot their venom into your eyes from three or four feet away. It blinds you and then the neurotoxin kills you over the next few days. Jody had this picture in her mind of Jason or Jessica dying in her arms after they innocently got too close to one of these deadly vipers. Just the thought was terrifying.

Then there was family. Our parents lived just around the corner from each other and were good friends. They were wonderful with the children. My parents were "Grandpa and Grandma," and Jody's were "Papa and Mema" to the kids. We visited them or they visited us as often as we could. Our family was close, and we loved it when all of us got together for Christmas, Thanksgiving and family vacations. They were godly grandparents who would have a wonderful influence on our children's character and spiritual growth as they grew up. Taking them overseas would prevent much of that relationship from happening. It was bad enough that we would miss the influence of our families, but surely God wouldn't want that for our children?

Like Gideon, we wrestled with God. As young parents, we worried, talked and put forward lots of "what if" scenarios. These vibrant young lives that God had entrusted to us were an awesome responsibility, and we didn't want to mess it up. We needed to have a firm hand on the steering wheel to ensure they turned out okay.

Or so we thought, until God said, "Do you think you can trust me with everything except your children?"

He took us to the story of Abraham who followed God's call into a land he did not know and believed God's promise of making him a great nation though he was childless. When Isaac was born, he was the apple of his father's eye. I'm sure he doted on him until, one day, God told him to put him on the altar. It was the ultimate test of his commitment. Isaac had become more precious to Abraham than what God had called him to do.

For Christians, it is the good things that become idols—anything more important to us than our relationship with God—that the devil uses to separate us from our intimacy with our Heavenly Father. Good things, when they become the most important thing, become our god. For singles it can be marriage: "I'll follow God's call when He gives me my life partner. If I go now, I will never get married. I'm sure He wouldn't want me to go alone." For others it is their families: "It would kill my mom if I took her grandchildren overseas!" And for some it is financial security: "When I get our debts paid and our retirement funded, then we will go."

We finally realized that God loved our children more than we ever could and He could take care of them much better than we were capable of doing. He had called us and would give us the wisdom to know how to educate our children. He could keep them safe, but even if He allowed something bad to happen to them, He would give us the grace to handle it. Unless we were willing to leave mother and father and family, we were not really His disciples.

So we went, and God was faithful to not only meet our needs but to shower us with blessings we never anticipated.

How many physicians do you know who have lunch with their children almost every day? Barring an emergency, I went down to the house for an hour—lunch at 1 p.m. If I was late for supper, Jody might send the kids up to the hospital to find out when I would be home. More often than not, they would end up putting on a mask to watch me finish a procedure.

The other missionaries were their "uncles" and "aunts" to them and had more involvement in their lives than their real uncles and aunts ever would have. Older missionaries were surrogate grandparents—baking them cookies, attending their birthday parties, influencing their lives.

As a bonus we didn't have to worry about what they would see on TV or who would give them drugs at the mall. They matured faster, were comfortable relating to all age groups and had a big worldview. They were comfortable with other

cultures and loved people. I still laugh when I remember flying back to the U.S. when Jason was about four. We had a layover in Spain and Jason wandered over to a Spanish couple sitting nearby, but out of earshot, and began talking to them. A few minutes later he came back and told me, "Dad, they don't speak English or Kipsigis. You are going to have to talk Swahili to them."

God took care of their education as well. We were the first missionaries at the hospital to homeschool, and it was so successful that it soon turned into a one-room schoolhouse for five other children on our compound. Jody still sees that time as one of the most enjoyable in her life. We had so many books, computers and other tools given to teach the children to the extent that their classroom was better equipped than almost any in the U.S.

We told the children they could go to boarding school when they wanted to, so they made the decision to go together when they were in fourth and fifth grade. They were more ready than we were. We cried as we drove away after helping them settle into their rooms. They loved it and still consider it the best school they ever attended. They were at school for three months, followed by a month at home, and they couldn't wait to get back to school after these breaks. The balance of education, social opportunities, sports and spiritual influence was superb. We saw phenomenal growth in all areas of their lives during their boarding school days. They were far ahead of children their age who were in the U.S.

I guess God has a sense of humor. Our greatest fear going to the mission field was sending our kids off to boarding school. When God called us back to work at Samaritan's Purse, our greatest fear was that they could no longer go to boarding school.

As you follow God's call on your life, the path is going to have many branches heading off in the wrong direction. Each path will have an alluring idol to entice you down the wrong way, and it is going to promise you what you hold most dear. Before you turn aside, remember this: There is no place more secure or more fulfilling than the center of God's will. Just as for Abraham, everything else has to be put on the altar.

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