

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



September 2014

Hi! Many of you reading this are back in school. I trust you have gotten off to a good start. I've been in training a couple times this summer - but on the other side, doing the teaching. Our two conferences for new medical missionaries went well and I believe everyone learned things that will help them serve better and with more satisfaction. We had a total of 60 new missionaries in the two conferences. I hope there will be many more ready to go in the coming months as there are still millions of people who have never heard the Good News! Medical missionaries are often welcome in the hard to reach places when people with other skills are not.

Are you asking the Lord if He can use you in the hard places? It is likely that suffering will be involved in taking the Good News to people in hard places. Has the Ebola outbreak in West Africa caused you to reconsider your call? As Dave Stevens shared with the participants in our training, if you die to self before you leave for the field, then whatever happens there cannot kill you. I know it is particularly hard to place your spouse and children on the altar of surrender. Is your God big enough for that too?

If you have not read the book *The Insanity of God* by Nik Ripken, I hope you will. You will find yourself facing these kinds of questions. I haven't read this one yet, but I'm told his second book, *The Insanity of Obedience*, is equally as challenging. I encourage you to put these books on your "to do" list, but don't delay too long. The Lord is looking for those who will say, "whatever the cost!" Will you be one?

Here is what you will find in this newsletter:

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Pee-Wees

"The Lord said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you'" (Genesis 12:1, NIV 1984).

Nik Ripken (pseudonym) is a Christian aid worker who has served in the most dangerous regions of the world. In his book *The Insanity of God*, he tells the story of his time in Somalia during the "Black Hawk Down" days. Christianity was extremely dangerous to promote and deadly for Somalians to accept as truth. Rarely would any Somalian publically accept Jesus as Lord. He tells the story in his book: "I received an invitation that led to one of the most meaningful spiritual experiences that I ever had in Somaliland." He then describes his secret meeting with four Somalis who had secretly come to Christ. They shared the Lord's Supper in a shelled-out, abandoned building and then separately melted into the night.

This was an event of hope, encouragement and fulfilled promise for Ripken's ministry; finally, he had seen the fruit of his incredibly difficult labor. Some mornings later, he received news from a colleague during a briefing with a local military commander, "I have just been informed that, this morning, four Somali believers we have worked with have, in separate incidents, been ambushed and killed on their way to work." These were the four with whom Ripken had shared the Lord's Supper.

We have no idea regarding the outcomes of life.

We are all like Abram, going to a place that God will show us, having no idea where that will be, trusting that, by following,

we will bring Him glory.

This becomes obvious in our personal lives as we make our plans and then watch life undo them for us over and over. Thank God He lets us get as far as He does on the road we plan, in order to keep us sane. We did get to be healthcare professionals at least, or students almost there. But so many plans, so many relationships, so many dreams dashing against the shore in our wake.

The same goes for our spiritual endeavors. We charge ahead for the Lord and think we see His goalpost and dive for the end zone only to drop the ball; or we make it across the line with pride only to discover we have been pushed back to the 20; or we really catch a pass for the touchdown but cannot hear the angels cheering.

We are not to know God's outcomes in this life. And thank God we do not. We are like pee-wees at football with Peyton Manning calling plays. We never truly understand the plan but know we should run the plays He calls.

God will not fail. His game is won. He asks us but to hold the line, follow His lead, trust Him with the future, obey, obey, obey and trust the outcomes to Him.

Dear God,

I cannot understand what you are doing with my life, but I know it will be glorious if I but follow your lead.

Amen

Upcoming Events

Global Missions Health Conference and www.medicalmissions.com

Have you registered for the Global Missions Health Conference which will take place in Louisville, Kentucky at Southeast Christian Church on November 6-8? If you can possibly get there, I encourage you to go. It can be life-changing and it will certainly rekindle your passion for missions if yours is growing a little dim. The members of the church are happy to offer housing to students, so cost should be minimal. I encourage you to load up your friends and head to Louisville. It is a great experience.

You will find me and all the other CMDA folks in the middle aisle of the main floor exhibit hall. Please come by and say "Hi." Daniel Tolan and I will be there to answer as many questions as you can ask. If we don't know the answer, we can probably refer you to someone who does. Hopefully I will remember to take my list of questions to ask when considering which mission agency to serve with. See you in Louisville on November 6-8, 2014.

You can learn more and register at www.medicalmissions.com/gmhc.

By the way, if you haven't already joined this free online medical mission community, I hope you will. During our conferences this summer, we heard over and over how it seems you are the only one heading toward a career in medical missions. www.medicalmissions.com offers you a huge community of others who are heading the same direction, and it facilitates you meeting others who have similar passions whether it be a specific healthcare profession, a specific country or a specific issue. I hope you will check out the welcome video found at <https://www.medicalmissions.com/#videoModal>.

Medical Missionary Training Conference March 19-22, 2015

The next medical missionary training conference will be March 19-22, 2015 at the Jubilee House Retreat Center in Abingdon, Virginia (just up the road from Bristol, Tennessee). Be watching the website www.cmda.org/cmm for more information and registration. Hopefully the information will be available soon.

The Concept of Culture

W. Philip Thornton, PhD

Cont'd from July

4. Common Interest Groups

Common interest groups are most prevalent in urban areas where family and kinship ties are less

functional. The bond holding together common interest groups can be language, tribal background, problems/needs being faced in the urban area, etc. In other words, common interest groups are utilitarian in that they solve a problem or meet a need or give identity to a group of people in an otherwise unfriendly area of the world.

5. Social Stratification

Definition: A stratified society is one that is divided into two or more groups of people and each of these groups is ranked high and low relative to the others.

All societies will stratify themselves in some form or fashion. Understanding the social structure of a society contributes significantly to successful communication with the people of that society.

Types of Social Stratification:

- **class** (*set of families with equal or nearly equal prestige according to the system of evaluation*);
- **strata-rank** (*where each individual perceives himself to be above or below others on the social ladder*);
- **caste** (*membership is fairly fixed and impermeable*).

Once in place, social **stratas are maintained** or enforced through:

- Verbal evaluation (*what people say about each other*)
- Patterns of association (*who interacts with whom and in what contexts*)
- Symbolic indicators (*possessions; occupations, dress, location*)

Social mobility is relatively easy in some societies but extremely difficult in others. When it is achieved, it normally happens in one of several ways:

- Modernization (*elimination of some discriminating category*)
- Marriage
- Education
- Occupational success or change

G. Social Integration

*Once the groups necessary for social survival have been formed, another problem arises, namely they find themselves in competition with each other. It is at this point that the forces of social integration come into play to maintain cohesiveness among the various divisions. Here are the **integrating forces**:*

1. Economic systems

Definition: an economic system may be defined as one by which goods and services are produced, distributed and consumed.

- a. In any society, production is limited by the availability of:
 - labor,
 - land,
 - capital,
 - and technology.
- b. The distribution of goods and services is achieved through:
 - Reciprocity (where the value of what is exchanged is taken into account). The most famous study in this area is the Kulu Ring by Malinowski. Among the Trobriand Islanders, all-important arm bands and shells are "traded" in systematic and well defined patterns such that no one person gains too much wealth by holding the valued objects too long.
 - Redistribution (generally done by a king or government in order to maintain public content, establish political or economic alliances, etc.
 - and market exchange (the system we know in the U.S., i.e. the buying and selling of goods and services).

2. Political organization

Definition: the system of social relationships that provides for the coordination and regulation of behavior in so far as that behavior is related to the maintenance of public order. Note the key elements of this definition. The goal is maintaining public order and only in this context is behavior controlled. The problem arises in a society such as we have in the West when individual rights conflict with the public good.

Political organization can be **uncentralized** (as with a band or tribe) or **centralized** (as with a chiefdom or state). Centralization occurs when

- a society's life becomes more complex,
- the population increases, and
- specialization of labor occurs.

One of the chief problems with any form of political organization is the need to obtain and maintain a peoples' loyalty (i.e., the right of political leaders to rule). This raises the question of **legitimacy**. Religion is one of the strongest legitimizing forces.

3. Social control

In every culture, means are developed to encourage members to behave in certain ways and not others. **Social controls** produce a level of conformity to its norms and values, thereby perpetuating its culture and maintaining its system of social relationships.

Social controls may be

- internal (*guilt, fear, shame*) or
- external (*sanctions—a reaction of the part of society to a mode of behavior which is thereby approved or disapproved*).

4. Religion

Religion will normally include four major categories:

- Gods and goddesses and/or the spirit world
- Religious leaders
- Rituals and ceremonies
- Religious symbols

Religion can be looked upon for

- What it says (doctrines, a body of beliefs)
- Or what it does (for its believers). The basic functions of religion are:
 - Provides an orderly model of the universe
 - Provides for orderly human behavior
 - Reduces fear and anxiety by explaining that which otherwise cannot be understood
 - Provides for a way of dealing with crisis
 - Transfers a degree of responsibility for important decisions to the supernatural
 - Aids in formal and cultural education

5. The Arts

Definition: any activity or kind of behavior that contributes to the well-being and helps give shape and significance to life. As such, the arts reflect the values and concerns of the people who create them. No human culture is in the world is now to be without some form of "art." From a social science perspective, the arts should not be seen as a luxury, but rather as a necessary kind of social behavior which exists to nourish and exercise our active minds with more than the business of solving the problems of daily existence. Examples: storytelling (myths, legends, tales), music, dance, drama.

H. Culture change

Without the ability to conceive new ideas and change existing behavior, no human society could survive.

Causes of culture change:

- Change in the environment

Individuals bring in change

- Contact with other groups

Mechanisms of change:

- Invention
- Diffusion (*borrowing a cultural element from another society*)
- Culture loss (*abandonment of a culture trait or practice*)
- Acculturation (*results when groups of individuals having different cultures come into intensive, firsthand contact*)
- Religion
- Modernization (*the process of change by which developing societies seek to acquire the characteristics of industrially advanced societies*)

Resources for the study of culture and society:

Cultural Anthropology: The Human Challenge by Herald Prins

Cultural Anthropology by Serena Nanda

Cultural Anthropology (12th Edition) by Carol R. Ember

Cultural Anthropology (5th Edition) by Barbara D. Miller

Cultural Anthropology: An Applied Perspective by G. P. Ferraro

Cultural Anthropology A by Marvin Harris

Valuable Resources

For the Ladies - A Blog

I recently became aware of a wonderful collective blog called [Velvet Ashes](#). It is specifically for ladies serving internationally, but I am amazed at how helpful almost every entry is. I encourage you to sign up. September 12th's posting about spiritual formation is very challenging.

For All - Another Collective Blog

[A Life Overseas: The Missions Conversation](#) blog covers a wider variety of subjects, many of them will be helpful to you. An entry from July 9 called "Why Didn't They Send a Tractor" fits well with the Concept of Culture piece above. I encourage you to sign up to receive at least one of these blogs - two if you have the time. I believe you will find them very helpful.

To unsubscribe please [click here](#).

