

# Your Call

*Keeping You Focused on God's Call for Your Life*

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## Introduction to This Issue

While reading a flight magazine recently, my eye fell on this sentence: *St. Louis [is] a city best known as the portal to dreams that happen elsewhere*—an apt description for the Global Health Missions Conference held recently in Louisville, Kentucky. Annually, it is one of God's portals to students' and residents' dreams that may come true in another place and another time. This proved to be true for first-year medical student Jen (name changed) who visits the mission booths at GHMC 2017 and by June 2018 is in a creative access country. Check out CMDA mission trip scholarships and other resources. If you missed GHMC 2018 or live west of the Mississippi, consider Remedy West planned for October 2019. You will be riveted by David Stevens' stories as well as his earnest advice on how to be a better missionary. Is your spiritual lamp in need of oil? Read the CMDA devotional. My prayer is that as you click and read, you will find portals to God's grace and plan for your life. – Judy Palpant, Editor  
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## The Pearl

*I am looking for someone to share in an adventure that I am arranging, and it's very difficult to find anyone. — Gandalf speaking to Bilbo Baggins in The Hobbit by J. R.R. Tolkien*

## GHMC 2017—Portal to Jen’s Dream: First Year Medical Student and Missions (Part 1)



Last November, I went to the Global Missions Health Conference in Kentucky with the eager intention of finding potential international clinical experiences for the summer. Still in my first year of medical school, there were not many possibilities. Most opportunities are understandably reserved for third or fourth-year students. God gently reprimanded me for my hastiness. Inspiring stories encouraged me—physicians who faithfully followed God step-by-step in their education and career paths. Many of them went to the field for long-term service after years of working here in the U.S.

Nonetheless, in the following months, I experienced God’s unexpected provision and perfect timing. Around Thanksgiving, a physician I had spoken with at GMHC

contacted me about a potential opportunity. At that point I had already begun exploring other summer options but decided to apply. Surprisingly, my application to serve with that organization was accepted!

At Christmas, I told my parents. They were skeptical and somewhat resistant. My prayer at this point was that if it was God’s will, they would support me in this endeavor. A few weeks later my dad told me about a documentary he found while flipping through TV channels. It was about the place that I was going to! He excitedly told me about the people group and what I could expect. His enthusiasm encouraged me. God also blessed me with financial help. After a difficult application process, I received both a grant from my medical school and a scholarship through the Christian Medical & Dental Association. At that point only one unresolved detail remained. Who would sub-lease my apartment for the summer months? In March, just two days before asking my classmates, I met a person whose specifications for a sub-lease matched my apartment. I was on my way! (In the next issue Jen shares a few lessons learned from her summer medical mission experience.)

### Mission Scholarships

Are you aware that scholarships are available if you wish to do an international rotation just like Jen did? There are multiple scholarships – some for medical/dental students, some for residents and some for other healthcare professionals. Yes, you have to complete an application and have your pastor write a reference but the funds can be quite helpful. You can learn more about all these at [www.cmda.org/scholarships](http://www.cmda.org/scholarships).

### Handbook for International Rotations

There will soon be an updated Handbook for International Rotations available online. This version, due to be ready this December, will have many more choices for you so be on the lookout. The current version is at [www.cmda.org/internationalrotations](http://www.cmda.org/internationalrotations). It sounds like this is just useful to medical and dental students but there is information for all healthcare professionals.

### Time to Register for Pre-field Training

It is time to register if you are nearing the time to leave for your field of ministry and you would like to attend the pre-field training designed specifically for healthcare professionals. The three and a half-day training will be March 14 - 17 with arrival on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Previous participants have evaluated the training as the most valuable medical

missionary training they've received. Whether you are a nurse, dentist, doctor, veterinarian, OT, PT, pharmacist, etc. You are welcome to be part of this training. Information can be found at [www.cmda.org/missionartraining](http://www.cmda.org/missionartraining).

## Remedy West

On October 5-6, 2019, a dream comes true. CMDA will launch its first **REMEDY West** medical missions conference at Cal Baptist University in Riverside, California.

Students, please take advantage of this remarkable event. Healthcare professionals, you will be challenged in your faith and vision no matter where you are on your career path. You will also have a delightful opportunity to meet and talk with perhaps hundreds of your future colleagues as they consider how God wants to use them to embrace the remedy for physical health and eternal life throughout their careers.

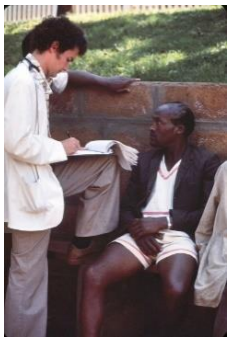
Please mark the dates on your calendars, phone, computer, pads and paper for October 5-6, 2019. We've planned this conference schedule so you can avoid SoCal Friday afternoon traffic. Plus, we've left both Saturday and Sunday evenings open for travel, other events in your life and time to study, should you feel the need.

We will send you promo videos monthly to introduce different speakers along the way.

**Watch our first video here** on our website and make plans to join us next October 5-6, 2019.

## I Could Have Been a Better Missionary

by *David Stevens, MD, MA (Ethics)*



I'm an overachiever, probably just like you and most other healthcare professionals.

OK, that is not completely accurate. I confess, I'm an over overachiever. I've always wanted to be the best of the best. I graduated AOA from medical school, not because I was smarter than most, but because I worked harder than many. I was chief resident of my 40-member family practice residency program. At the young age of 34, I was the doctor in charge and CEO of a 250-bed mission hospital. Before I was 40, I had raised millions of dollars, led the building of both a dam and a 320KW hydroelectric plant, overseen the start of a nursing school, led the design of a large community health and development program that brought as many as 15,000 people to the Lord in a year and helped start a chaplaincy training school for Africa.

I don't tell you that to boast. The Lord accomplished all of it and gave me the joy of being along for the ride. I tell you that to give you a reference point when I say, "I could have been a much better missionary."

That is my assessment now, not then. Everyone then was singing my praises, and it was nice to believe what I heard way too often. It was easy to look around and compare myself to others as we all do to measure our accomplishments. No one had accomplished as much as I had, at least in my own eyes, but I could have been a much better missionary.

I preached often. I taught staff, people in the community, church leaders and leaders from other missions. Missionaries from 24 countries came to learn from our community health program, but I could have been a much better missionary. I know because of the time that has passed and what I've seen and learned since then. I know because I'm wiser now than I was back then. Here is what I know now:

- I needed better missionary education during my training days. I was totally focused on learning medicine while I was in medical school and residency. I didn't take a missiology course or pick up a book on cross-cultural communication. I never read a book on how to share the gospel with an animist. In those days there wasn't a *Perspectives* course on world missions. If there had been, I probably wouldn't have made the effort to take it. I was more concerned about being able to treat rare tropical diseases than share the gospel.

I see now that I was working so hard preparing to be a missionary physician that I neglected getting ready to be a physician missionary. There is a huge difference.

If I was doing it over again, I would have taken the time to more intensely prepare for the most important part of what God had called me to do—effectively communicating the gospel and discipling new converts. I would have been a better missionary if I had.

- I would have gotten better orientation before I went to the field. We had two weeks of new missionary training given by our mission agency, which was about standard in those days. Most of it had to do with mission policies and procedures and how to do deputation. That training was needed, but it was totally inadequate for what lay ahead when we landed in Kenya.

Frankly, the mission couldn't have provided all of the training we needed even if they tried. For example, medicine is totally different overseas. In this country, we are taught it is unethical to do things you are not trained to do. In Africa, I had to do those things all the time. During language school in a remote rural area, I did an emergency tracheostomy, delivered breech pregnancies by lantern light, elevated a baby's head off a prolapsed cord during a wild ride in the back of a Volkswagen Beetle, treated anthrax and resuscitated three siblings with hundreds of vicious African bee stingers embedded in their bodies. I had excellent training, but it didn't cover any of those issues. During my 11 years in Africa, I frequently saw diseases and did procedures I was untrained to handle. We were so short staffed that I played God every day in just deciding which patients I would see and which ones would have to get by until the next day. I was ethically conflicted until older missionaries guided me in how to properly apply ethical principles in our situation. I had to learn to deal with the psychological tension of going against my professional training on the job. I would have been a better missionary if I had better orientation.

- I should have learned the heart language of the people better. I applied myself in language school, but Kipsigis is tonal, like Chinese, and you can put nine parts of speech in one word. It was not something you could master in the six months we had in school. When I got to the hospital, all our staff spoke English and many of the patients did as well, so I regressed instead of progressing under my heavy workload. The newspapers were in English; the signs were in English. If people didn't speak English and were outside their tribal area, they spoke Swahili. Our kids can speak English like Africans, but they never learned Kipsigis. Their playmates conversed with them in English since that was the language they used in school. So I learned medical Kipsigis to take histories with but never climbed off that plateau.

I should have made time to master the local heart language. You can't really know people well unless you speak it, and it is difficult to minister when you preach with a translator. Mastering a language sends a clear message that you love the people you have come to serve and respect their culture and traditions. It enables you to build deeper relationships. It would have allowed me to better understand the ethos and values that motivated their lives. I would have been a much better missionary if I had mastered the local language.

I encourage and challenge you to be a better missionary than I was. Set aside time during your training years to go beyond healthcare to learn the skills you will need to adapt to a new culture, communicate the gospel effectively to another people group and strategies for reaching the unreached through courses, books and conferences. There is so much more available today than there was 30 years ago. Make use of it.

Find a mission organization that provides excellent training before you head overseas. My daughter and her husband had three months of intense education in the U.S. before heading overseas, including practical applications like going into stores and initiating conversations with people from different cultures in our country with the goal of sharing the gospel. Difficult? Yes, but so essential in learning to build bridges to other people's hearts.

Join us at CMDA's [New Medical Missionary Training](#), a pre-field orientation conference for healthcare missionaries where you will learn to deal with the unique challenges and issues you will face like different cultures' views of health and healing, healthcare rationing, medical evangelism and so much more.

Determine to prioritize language acquisition. If you can learn the Krebs Cycle, you can master a different tongue. Just approach it with the same determination and attention that you give your healthcare studies and you will excel. Realize that learning a language is a lifetime endeavor and not just a year or so of focused study. You will be so glad you made the effort.

Don't make the mistakes I did. Be a better missionary!

## Where's the Oil?

*"The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them" (Matthew 25:3, NIV 1984).*

**My friend was stuck at home with a history of strokes that had left him with fair cognition but difficulty ambulating. I ran by today to check on him and had a mostly cogent time of catching up. As we looked back on the mistakes of our youth, we voiced our mutual gratitude that Jesus has forgiven us. My friend, who may be closer to heaven than I, began to talk about Jesus returning. "One day Jesus will come, and he will be sitting across this table from us. I can hear him saying, 'Didn't I tell you so?'" Then he added, "That'll be the day we should have got it right the day before."**

"Should have got it right the day before."

My 90-year-old friend was speaking true. Someday there will be a reckoning. Some day we will face the King of Creation and discuss with Him the actions of our lives and the secrets of our hearts.

I have no idea whether I will die before Christ returns or be shocked to see Him show up during morning rounds. Either way, it is clear to me that there will be a reckoning where, like my friend, I'll wish I had "got it right the day before." I'll wish I had brought my oil with me, like the wise virgins in Matthew 25. I will wish I had prepared for my first time in His presence more seriously.

I'm not afraid of punishment. I know that after the review, the Father will look to the Son and the Son will say, "He's mine." But I am afraid of the sadness that will cover my heart as I relive the ways I let my Father down: the broken people whom I selfishly avoided, the lost friends from whom I withheld the truth in silence, my acts of pride and self-centeredness—and so many more disappointments that might lead my God and my King to say, "Okay, you pass," rather than, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

*Dear Father,*

*Help me get it right now.*

*Amen*