Encouraging Christians in Healthcare
The Medical Strategic Network is dedicated to equipping, networking and mobilizing professionals and health students. Our Medical Evangelism Training & Strategies (METS) Conferences provide practical, hands on training to more effectively treat patients - both physically and spiritually thus treating the whole person. Learn more about earning 17 hours Category I CME or 23 hours of CEU at a METS Conference.

Meet our Board of Reference and Key Staff who endorse the Medical Strategic Network.

New issue of Fireseeds available online.

Our Whole Person Care Preceptorship (June 9–July 11, 2012) is a Health Student Summer Missions Project designed specifically to help health students integrate their faith into their professional practice.

2012 CONFERENCES

Redlands, CA - June 9–13
Whole Person Preceptorship
June 9–July 11
Payson, AZ - October 5–7
FAMILY CORNER

By Aubrey Beauchamp
Editor

When my friend, Minka, turned 100, it was celebrated in her church and duly reported by the local press. We have more than one centenarian in our community, which keeps our local reporters on their toes. However, Minka has several features that make her unique. For one, she lives alone, is healthy, and active in her church and community. She travels, alone, all over the country by plane unaided by canes or wheelchairs, and maintains her duties as an apartment manager.

Many years ago, after she retired, her son passed away, leaving a young daughter to be raised. Minka moved her into her two bedroom apartment, raised her, went back to work and retired (again) at 86.

Minka also had a secret - a secret she carefully kept for many years. Born in 1911, her parents, immigrants from Holland, arrived at a farm in South Dakota. After her birth and two siblings, her Dad died in an accident. Her Mom found another job with a farmer whom she eventually married. With no electricity, indoor plumbing or any other modern invention, every family member worked from sunrise to sunset.

When Minka graduated from her one-room grade school, she was needed to help with the never ending farm chores. High school was out of the question.

When she was 15, her Mom sent her to a sewing class. One day, on an outing, she and a friend took a walk in the woods. Suddenly, two men jumped and raped them. It was a brief but devastating encounter for both girls. They didn’t mention a word to anyone.

A few months later, Minka’s Mom found out her daughter was pregnant. (Minka still thought babies came from the stork). Arrangements were made with a Lutheran Adoption facility where Minka stayed till her baby was born. She knew a family had adopted her little girl, but had no further information.

The years went by and Minka eventually married and had two children. When her husband passed away she continued to work. She often wondered what had happened to her little one. Was she adopted by a good family? Oh Lord, she prayed, please let me know that my baby knows You. If I can just know that, I don’t have to see her.

One day the phone rang. A man asked for her name. He said he was her grandson! His Mom had some health issues and the doctor needed some medical information about her birthmother. The son contacted her Adoption Home and finally found her. His Mom, he said, had been adopted by a pastor and was raised in a wonderful Christian home. Not only that, she had six children, all highly educated. One was an astronaut, another worked for NASA. Minka almost went into orbit! When her newfound grandson brought his mom to meet her, he snapped some pictures. Mother and daughter looked alike! They even dressed alike!

At Minka’s 100th birthday the whole story appeared in a local newspaper. Then an Associated Press reporter came to her home for a 2-hour interview. His article was printed in our regional paper. From there it suddenly went viral and appeared globally in print-press and the internet. An interview with ‘Good Morning, America’ is pending.

Every time Minka is interviewed she shares her faith in Christ, and thus a world-wide audience has now heard her testimony. Way to go, Minka!

Till next time, Aubrey

PS: It looks like we may have another West Coast Conference, Oct. 9-11!

HOSPITAL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Please take a moment to let us know whether you would like to remain on our mailing list and receive A New Heart.

Your support will enable us to reach out to caregivers across the nation and assist churches and healthcare ministries in getting involved in ‘Compassionate Care’ outreaches.

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- I have moved. Enclosed my old and new addresses.
- I will pray for this ministry.
- Please remove me from your mailing list.
- ‘Compassionate Care for the Sick and Hurting’ - Master Copy $45, (See page 4 for details).
- #____ Participants handbooks $10 each. Total $______
- Please send me additional ‘Compassionate Care’ brochures.
- Please mail me some extra New Heart back issues.

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The Hospital Christian Fellowship is an interdenominational organization among caregivers, volunteers and churches. Founded in 1936, Healthcare Christian Fellowship International (HCFI) is active in over 100 countries around the world. The USA Hospital Christian Fellowship began in 1972 in Southern California. USA HCF is a non-profit incorporation, a provider of continuing education through the California BRN and a co-sponsor of the Medical Strategic Network. ‘A New Heart’ was first published in 1978 and reaches caregivers in all US states and territories. Writer's guidelines are available for unsolicited manuscripts.
I’ve been searching for a ministry such as yours. As an X-ray tech I see the sick and hurting daily. I’ve been discouraged by the lack of compassion in our facility.

So, no more wishing something would change - I am going to initiate it. Enclosed find check for the master copy of ‘Compassionate Care for the Sick and Hurting’ along with 5 handbooks. Thank you for your magazine, A New Heart.

Last week I had the courage to pray with a patient, knowing that others were doing the same. Thanks again, God bless your ministry.

Zachary I., Worland, WY

The Winter 2012 New Heart was one of the best ever! I wish to continue my subscription. We are still volunteers, though retired. Last year we once again visited Malawi where I taught a class on ‘Spiritual Care’ to the first year student nurses.

This year we will fly to India where I will also teach student nurses and employees on ‘Spiritual Care for patients’ in a small mission on the border of Burma.

My husband advises mission hospitals in India as a volunteer since he has many years as a mission hospital administrator. Please, send me your DVD, ‘HCF the First 50 Years’.

Gail S, Grand Terrace, CA

I congratulate you on the latest New Heart. I believe it’s one of the best! Your Family Corners are always inspiring. Sound like there is a real need for another retreat. With everyone being so busy – just being out in nature with believers in prayer and fellowship with devotions and talks, is so healing.

I found the article ‘Keep it to Yourself’ fascinating. It would probably be the basis for a great book. ‘What’s your destination?’ reminds me of some flights in which I was able to share with my seat partner. Georgia has a way of challenging her readers.

‘The Best Medicine’ is such an encouragement to health-care workers to be bold. Shows how the METS conferences have an impact. I was comforted by Sara’s ‘Nesting in the Storm’ about the cleansing effect of suffering. I experience much of that and continue to learn lessons.

The reader’s letters testify the New Heart is making a difference!

Denise L., Corinth, TX

Just a big ‘thank you’ for all you did to make this such a wonderful and successful retreat.

I am also grateful to God for being able to be here and enjoy the mountains and the great weather, to meet new people, and rejoice at seeing those I had not seen in a while, along with hearing some awesome, godly speakers.

I also loved the chapel time, quoting Scripture and singing praises to Him, as we admired His majestic scenery before us. If there’s a next time, I hope to send my co-workers. I know I can’t ‘hog’ this retreat to myself. Love,

Adele F., Mission Viejo, CA

One day after our HCF retreat has come to completion, I still am taking in the blessings of it and meditating on what God did and revealed. Thank you so much for all your hard work! Looking forward to future collaboration as the Lord leads,

Joana R., Redlands., CA

During this retreat God provided forgiveness not only for me, but for the entire group! So much of that baggage was left and I was incredibly nourished. May God abundantly bless you all.

Rachel G., Oceanside, CA

I received my copy of ‘A New Heart’ today and was touched to the core of my soul. Oh, thank you for sending this to me and I will promptly fill out the form and send a donation to your Christ based ministry.

Please, know that you will be added to my prayer list. I am also going to share this at our ladies missionary meeting tomorrow.

Your message in the ‘Family Corner’ inspired me also and I was especially thrilled to put a face behind the email.

Chrissy D., Rockledge, FL

I watched the ‘HCF, the first 50 Years’ DVD last weekend. It was well done and I really enjoyed it.

I also watched the video clip by Dr. Jeff Russell of the Kardia Foundation of the 75th anniversary of HCFI on your webpage and signed up for his E-Kardia-gram weekly devotionals.

I also printed off an article from ‘Fireseeds’ from the Medical Strategic Network, written by Dr. Yang Chen about 14 years ago.

I’m still reading Dr. Levy’s ‘Gray Matter’ and really enjoying it. Shalom,

Steve B., Concord, SC

Just to thank you for the New Heart. I was so blessed to see the video of the 75th anniversary conference in Manila on your website. Jeff did a great job of interviewing people and covering things. He really has a heart to encourage people. Thanks so much!

Wanda S., Minot ND

I am 70-years old and retired. I have appreciated your newsletter and support information over the past couple of years and would love to remain on your mailing list.

I would also appreciate a copy of your free DVD. I use these recourses to help train volunteers. Enclosed, please find a check to cover expenses.

Dan H., Dalton, OH

I love HCF and can’t tell you how much the retreat impacted my life.

Rebecca C., Castro Valley, CA

Thank you for your faithfulness in serving the Lord through HCF. I am so grateful that you did not cancel this

(continued on page 7)
Interruptions and the Great Physician

By David Stevens, M.D.

Jesus, M.D. Seems a little odd, doesn’t it? But should it be? The New Testament contains more than 75 references to the healing work of Christ. The four gospels record more instances of Jesus healing than of Him preaching or teaching. That is why down through the centuries one of the most cherished names for Christ has been the Great Physician.

Yet, although Christians are aware of Jesus’ focus on healing, most don’t think of Him as an M.D.

After all, Jesus didn’t go to medical school or open a doctor’s office. He didn’t collect fees, made rounds at a hospital or deal with managed care organizations.

But He did take frequent night calls.

Students wanted to join his highly rated residency program. He developed and taught better ways to properly scrub, because purity was godliness. Patients with the most difficult symptoms traveled far to see Him because He was a superb diagnostician, and His therapeutic plan never failed.

Dr. Jesus never closed His practice to new patients even though His waiting room was packed. He didn’t require an appointment. Walk-ins were always welcome.

He was incredibly busy, He couldn’t go out in public without being stopped for sidewalk consults. It happened in church, at mealtimes, and even on long walks. Yet, despite the constant pressure, He remained compassionate and ‘high touch’. And He maintained margin in His life.

Jesus, M.D. was an expert in treating impossible cases – blindness, lameness, heart failure, deafness, mental illness and even leprosy. He was an ophthalmologist, orthopedist, ENT and much more. If you had to name His specialty, calling Jesus a missionary doctor would be most accurate. He dealt with an overwhelming number of patients daily. He treated every disease. Most importantly, He had a mission, a purpose. He constantly used His encounters with sick people to share spiritual truths and bring them into a personal relationship with God.

A CLOSE EXAMINATION

A few years ago, I picked up a copy of A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23. This small volume, written in the early 70s, opened my eyes to that familiar passage as never before. The author, Phillip Keller, knew what it meant to be a shepherd. He understood the importance of ‘still waters’, how to protect the flock in the valley of death and the use of the rod and staff. The book gave me a fresh and deeper understanding of Christ and the relationship He wants to have with me. This bestseller did the same in the hearts of hundreds of thousands of people.

Dr. Jesus never forgot that people and their concerns were the purpose of His life.

I began to think, “What if Jesus was examined through the eyes of a doctor? Would that viewpoint reveal new attributes of Christ? Would it provide fresh lessons to apply to our lives? Would it bring me, and perhaps others, into a closer relationship with God?”

This began months of study, reflections, gestation, and finally the delivery of the book, Jesus M.D. – A Doctor Examines the Great Physician. Though I targeted the book towards the general public, it contains especially important lessons for every person in the healing professions.

One profound insight for me was that the Great Physician did not require an appointment. That seems inconceivable for compulsive-obsessive doctors like me, who don’t like interruptions. The physician’s daily prayer is, “Please, God, no emergencies and can the incoming phone line please malfunction?” We want our schedule to be laid out and our day to run smoothly, so we’re happy, our staff is happy and our patients get their needs met in a timely manner.

You don’t have many days like that, and neither did Dr. Jesus. Read through Mark 5. Jesus went out to preach and teach. He had an agenda. He had a plan for the day that was interrupted by a man with an evil spirit living among the tombs. At Tenwick Mission Hospital in Kenya, we referred to those patients as ‘off mental’, and they could really mess up your day.

After Jesus cast out the spirit and revolutionized that man’s life, His entourage tried to leave by boat. But the man interrupted again – like the moment when you’re halfway out the exam room, your hand on the doorknob and the patient says, “Hey, Doc, one more thing…”

When Jesus finally reached the other shore, a synagogue official wanted help for his sick daughter. So the whole group headed towards Jairus’ home. On the way, a woman with an uncontrollable hemorrhage stopped Him. By the time Dr. Jesus dealt with her, Jairus’ daughter had died.

Sounds like a typical day in your practice? And while you’re being
interrupted, patients stew in your waiting room and complain, “Why can’t this doctor be on time?”

If that isn’t enough, the same thing happens at home. The phone rings in the middle of supper. One of your kids mentions that his science project is due in a couple of days and you’ve just got to help him tonight. A friend drops by unexpectedly and supper is delayed. Soon, you become irritable and upset.

Jesus, M.D. didn’t. He had the grace of ‘interruptability’. I don’t know about you, but I’ve got to get some of that!

Where do we find it?

OPEN TO INTERRUPTIONS

If you look carefully, you will note that the Great Physician didn’t make the mistake I often do, of seeing people’s interruptions as problems. Dr. Jesus never forgot that people and their concerns were the purpose of His life.

Look at John 15. Jesus was making an important trip ‘up to Jerusalem for the feast of the Jews’. He was probably expected at a specific time and place. The trip had been on the agenda for months. He was almost there, when He encountered a man by the pool of Bethesda. Rather than hurry on, He stopped and healed the man, telling him, “Pick up your mat and walk!” If that isn’t enough, Jesus was confronted by some Jewish officials who took offense that He had told the invalid to carry his bed on the Sabbath. His schedule was further interrupted to answer His critics. Even Jesus had utilization reviews!

If you are unavailable, those divine appointments are missed.

Still, Jesus didn’t see interruptions as problems but as opportunities. Far from disrupting His personal schedule, He saw them as divine appointments to accomplish God’s purposes. They were opportunities for the most important work to be accomplished.

Healing Peter’s mother-in-law was more important than dinner. When a patient’s family couldn’t get their loved one into the building, they tore up the roof and lowered him right into the middle of the ‘grand rounds’. Jesus didn’t bawl out the receptionist. He didn’t tell the man to wait till He was done. He didn’t criticize the family for interfering with His priorities. No! He healed the man and used the entire incident as an object lesson, not about healing, but the forgiveness of sins. Would you or I act the same way?

One thing that has helped me in this area is to frequently remind myself that some of the most significant things that have happened in my life were results of interruptions. This was often the case during my eleven years at Tenwek Hospital in Kenya. The Community Health Program, started at Tenwek, now has more than 800 ‘health helpers’, treating, teaching and evangelizing almost 300,000 people. The key to its success was an interruption by an unexpected visit on a day at the hospital. I didn’t really have the time to meet with someone who didn’t make an appointment, but in retrospect, I’m so glad I did. My visitor was Dr. Mark Jacobson, an expert, subcontracted by Johns Hopkins to start three pilot Public Health pilot programs in Kenya. He already had funding through the US Agency for International Development, which ended up providing Tenwek with more than $150,000 for the first three years of the program.

Another interruption revolutionized Tenwek Hospital and saved enough money to develop one of the finest nursing schools in Kenya. It is impossible to run a hospital well without electricity, but in 1985 Tenwek had electricity only eleven hours a day. It was too expensive to run the generators constantly. I was on furlough in the US when the wife of a doctor who had visited Tenwek showed up at the door with a baby on her hip. She interrupted my breakfast to tell me that a missionary engineer who had experience building hydroelectric plants, was in town. The result? A 320 KW hydroelectric plant that now runs on the river below Tenwek.

WHOSE PRIORITIES?

Jesus graciously dealt with interruptions every day. How do we learn to do that? A close examination of His practice reveals the keys. Because His priorities were God’s priorities, Jesus had the right attitude. That made Him approachable. He constantly sent verbal and nonverbal messages letting people know that He did not resent them or their needs. He said, “Let the children come to Me,” and then pulled them into His arms.

A colleague drops by while you are reviewing charts. A friend flags you down in the parking lot when you just want to go home. Your daughter knocks on the door to say goodnight and you already have the lights off. It’s easy to put these people off, to say “Let’s talk later,” while really hoping they won’t. Do that often enough and the message comes through loud and clear, “I’m too busy for you. Don’t bother me again!”

The colleague’s marriage is heading downhill, the friend needs a word of encouragement and your daughter really wants to talk about what she should do with the rest of her life. If you are unavailable, those divine appointments are missed.

I’m also amazed at the Great Physician’s ability to refocus. If I’m reading a book or watching a close ball game, my children inform me that I’m in another world. They give up trying to get my attention, or I only half hear what they say. Jesus, M.D. was different. Despite time pressures, we see Him intently and lovingly refocus on each person who interrupts His day. It is as if each one is the only person in the world until his or her need is met. In the jostling crowd Jesus refocused on the woman who had been bleeding for
I rushed, became more hectic, had become impatient. I learned that life is precious, that God will not make a mistake. It was probably the hardest week of my life.

But because of Christ, my life is far more precious than I ever imagined it could be.

Her condition was improving, but I did need an interruption in a hectic morning. But bawling out the nurses wasn’t going to solve the problem. I laid down the chart, took off my coat, and began to clean Elizabeth up. I hadn’t gotten far before my embarrassed nurses had gloves on and were helping.

Before Elizabeth died, she accepted Christ into her heart. One day she told me why. She said, “Dr. Stevens, I accepted Christ because I saw Him in you. You took time to help me, to touch me, to care when no one else would.”

When I get too busy, too rushed, too organized and impatient with interruptions, God brings Elizabeth to mind. By God’s grace that day I got it right, and behaved like the Great Physician.

Jesus, MD doesn’t seem so odd anymore. I’ve joined His residency program, and am always learning new ways to impact my family, friends, and patients. As my attending, every day He has taught me more than I ever anticipated, using the material of my daily life. I’ve learned about commitment and true servanthood and I’ve watched how He took call. And as I’ve made rounds with Him - the greatest diagnostician that ever lived - I’ve learned that I need to treat the real pathology in people’s lives and not just the symptoms.

The more I study the Great Physician, the more I’ve learned. I’m a better doctor, spouse, parent and Christian for it. If you observe Him anew, I think you will too.

David Stevens, MD is director of the Christian Medical & Dental Association (www.CMDA.org) and author of 'Jesus, M.D.'

(continued from page 4)

(continued from page 4)

refreshing and much needed retreat. My friend and I had an amazing time with all of you.

It was our first retreat with HCF. You are a lovely and Christ-filled group. We felt such a bond of unity.

We all love our Lord and desire to share His love and finish this race well. Aubrey, I just love your wonderful sense of humor! You and the other speakers were a joy to be around. There was so much valuable information given.

Thanks be to God for using all of you to exhort and encourage us I have shared with others about this wonderful organization and the recent lessons learned at the retreat.

A couple of weeks ago I had an opportunity to share Dr. Levy’s steps in praying to forgive others with a young woman at church who struggled with addiction. She cried and was filled with so much joy after we prayed.

Please, rejoice knowing that your fruit is still bearing more fruit.

Thank you for sharing the wonderful praise in how God provided the remaining balance owed of the retreat conference. All praise be to God.

Sylvia G., Santa Ana, CA

EVENTS

WEST COAST FALL RETREAT
September 9-11, 2012
‘Total Patient Care’
Open to everyone.
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Couples welcome.
Details in future issues.
Reserve dates now!

HCF REUNION - New York City.
October 6th, 2012.
With special guest,
Rev. Kenneth Ragoonath.
Everyone welcome!
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THE BEST YEARS OF THEIR LIVES

By Aubrey Beauchamp, R.N.

A few months ago, I received a peculiar e-mail. It came from someone I didn’t know with a strange announcement. The sender claimed to have been born about a mile from my home.

Now, let me explain: I was born in a small village in Holland, at home, as were all babies. I’ve since lived in Asia, Australia, Caribbean and the US. In all those years I have never met anyone who even knew where my little village in Holland was.

And now, out of the blue, was a man who claimed he was born almost next door to me. He mentioned some streets and a popular ice-cream parlor in our town. He also wrote he’d never thought he’d meet anyone who even knew where that little village was. I could relate to that.

…and now, out of the blue, was a man who claimed he was born almost next door to me!

Where did this e-mail come from? Holland? USA? Canada? I asked the sender and, to my surprise, it came from Mexico.

He explained he had just read a copy of my autobiography. *But how did he get that and what was he doing in Mexico?*

Slowly, the story unraveled: Dirk (that’s his name) and his wife Mary work for a large Mission for orphans in Mexico, a five-hour drive from the California border. It was started by a friend of mine, Charla Pereau, about 40 years ago, and grew from the rescue of a little abandoned baby girl to one of the largest missions in Mexico. Dirk and Mary work with handicapped children. One of Charla’s assistants, Janice, had given them my book.

A brisk e-mail exchange followed. I still had many questions and wanted to meet this couple who had lived most of their earlier lives in a village next to mine in my native country.

They invited me to the Mission. I invited them to my home in California. I won, and recently, we spent a delightful weekend together. I learned that they emigrated from Holland to Canada in the ‘80s, where Dirk had a job waiting. They applied for visas, filled out countless forms, packed their larger belongings in a container to be shipped, said good-bye to family and friends and got their three small children - with another one on the way - ready to fly over to their new home.

They were ready!

The day before their departure, however, they were in for a shock! Dirk received a phone call: The job no longer existed. People had been laid off. He was one of them!

Devastated, they realized they had burned all their bridges and had no choice but to drive to the airport and take the flight into a now unknown future. Their move had become an unplanned leap of faith!

They arrived in Edmonton, in northern Alberta, where someone had temporary housing arranged. Dirk was willing to work at any job, and soon saw an ad in the paper for a job in a bicycle shop. Dirk had a degree in mechanical engineering, had never used it but was well acquainted with bicycles. After all, people in Holland are practically born on a bike. He got the job and, over the years, worked his way up to manager.

One day, someone asked for a special type of bike. It was not available.

“Could you make me one?” the customer asked. Dirk could – and did. Soon another customer wanted a specialized bike. Dirk obliged. More requests came in and eventually Dirk began his own customized bike shop. He loved the work. Life was good.

In the meantime, his spiritual life also changed. Both he and Mary were raised in church and knew the Bible. But a personal relationship with Christ had eluded them. Now they found a new church and their faith took on a deeper dimension.

Their four children grew up. One day, a daughter went on a mission trip to Mexico. She came back with heartbreaking stories about handicapped kids, abandoned and wasting away in cardboard ‘homes’.

Dirk and Mary prayed and felt they should drive down and see if they could help by creating some special wheelchairs for these children. They drove from Edmonton to the Mission in Mexico - a three day trip!

At the Mission their hearts broke. Dirk found a young boy who had fallen out of a tree and broken his back. He was paralyzed from the waist down, and had received no medical attention. He just laid in the shack he called home, while his parents worked as migrant farm workers in the fields. He didn’t move, didn’t go to school and never went outside. Additionally, he had bedsores and was filthy.

If he only had a wheelchair, Dirk thought. Then he took measurements. He looked further and found other kids and kept on measuring for specially adapted wheelchairs for each child.

Mary was appalled by the sight of a young retarded woman who had been left alone at ‘home’, then raped. She became pregnant, the baby was born.
they have added a Junior High level! Some kids, like the paralyzed boy, have healthy brains and hands that work. They are making excellent progress. All the kids have special talents and they all learn skills. Most importantly, they are no longer social outcasts!

Dirk and Mary’s charges include children of all ages with all kinds of handicaps. Some caused by accidents, some are born with spina bifida, Down’s syndrome, muscular dystrophy and other disabilities. All of them are loved, cared for and live meaningful lives.

Every morning the Mission bus picks almost thirty children from various homes or shacks. It takes an hour and a half. Then they are fed and cared for by a staff of ten. An hour of praise and worship follows with all the staff and other orphans – about 200 in all. Then they’re off to school, each to their various classes.

Dirk also met an older man at the Mission who had lost both legs and was wheelchair bound. Dirk asked him what he was doing all day. He shook his head – not much. Then Dirk taught him how to build and maintain bicycles and wheelchairs. He learned fast and enjoyed his work. Today, this man lives independently, and has his own business in a nearby village.

The Mission also has, beside the large orphanage, a church, an orchard, a Bible school, their own water wells, a medical clinic and even a fire department. Several other orphanages are spread across the country.

Dirk and Mary have come a long way. Their favorite scripture, the prayer of Jabez, used to be in front of their refrigerator door: ‘Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm.’ (1 Chr. 4:10)

Dirk laughs, “Now, it’s stuck on the side of the frig. It has proven to be more than we could even expect!”

Personally, I think Jabez needs to come back to the front...

Both Dirk and Mary admit joyfully, “These have been the best years of our lives!”

For more details www.FFHM.org

A miracle happened!
For the first time
the paralyzed boy could move by himself!

For the next few years more trips from Edmonton to the Mission followed. Each time they spent longer periods with the special needs kids. Each time there were more needs, and each time they felt tremendously blessed and excited to be able to help these precious children.

After several years, both Dirk and Mary felt led to, once again, sell all they had and move - like Abraham - to a new country, except they knew where they were going.

They arrived in 2005, and started by caring for two kids in their little kitchen at the Mission. Today, there are over twenty kids in a four-classroom school with ten teachers and helpers. This year and now attended school. But now this woman was actually locked up in her little windowless room – alone – with nothing to do.

After this first visit, Dirk and Mary, deeply moved, drove home, where Dirk went to work. As soon as they could, they drove down again (remember, three days) with their specialized cargo.

A miracle happened! For the first time the paralyzed boy could move by himself! He could feel the fresh outside air, the warmth of sun on his body! It was a milestone, and the first root of a new ministry at the Mission was planted.

And now a nurse was free to attend school, and her children’s lives were not at an end.
A HEART LIKE YOURS

By Cindy Valenti-Scinto, Spokane, WA

Cindy lives with multiple life-threatening health issues. After a heart transplant in 2005, she was given approximately five years to live – but she triumphantly passed that mark in July, 2010.

On a warm, sunny afternoon I was invited by a Christian women’s group to speak. The drive took me two hours into a dry, brown, tumbleweed-dotted area of eastern Washington. Soap Lake, a small community with one gas station, one coffee shop, one grocery store, and a handful of motels, is located in the heart of the Columbia Basin and was incorporated in 1919. Most of it still looked like 1919, but it was quaint. I arrived ahead of time to stop for coffee and set up my book table at the only restaurant in town.

When I arrived, a woman who introduced herself as Helen smiled and put her arm around me, “We’re happy to have you!” Her soft countenance assured me that I was accepted.

My book table was set, my notes on the podium, my costume hidden behind my tri-fold poster board, and I was able to sneak away to the ladies room for a few minutes with God. Speakers usually get to pray with the organizer in a group, but I always need a few minutes with the Lord to be sure the time is totally given to Him.

Lunch was served, and the wonderful afternoon began. The announcer knew I would be coming from behind my casel, after she announced me. There, I placed my hospital gown, sheer red cape, tiara, and scepter. When I share my actual testimony, I come from an undisclosed place, wearing the hospital gown over my clothing, the red cape draped on top, and the tiara placed appropriately on top of my curly hair. Once introduced, I walk around the room, asking people’s names and declaring them queen, princess, or in case of a man, sir knight. It makes a great beginning to what can be a tough testimony.

The tiara started years ago, when a friend brought it to me after my forty-fifth hospital stay. She considered me a queen for all I had endured. Another friend added the red cape to the royal array, and another presented me with the scepter. Properly outfitted, I walked the hospital halls with the title, “Queen of the Hall.”

After chuckles and smiles, the story begins and the arduous task of making my extensive testimony fit into a forty-minute slot also starts. It always works out – I have an internal timer that automatically brings me in for a landing.

Many people laugh and some cry, and always, at the end, there is triumphant applause at the fact that God has kept me alive and I still can live with joy. But the purpose of my story is to reach out and soothe the audience’s hearts. When that happens, I am sure God is in it.

The day was wonderful and complete. I noticed that one of our two attendants, a waitress who was tall and soft-spoken, grabbed tissues to wipe her tears. I hoped she was encouraged and that what I shared penetrated her painful burden.

The other, a waiter who deftly served food and drink, avoided conversation, and kept his face hidden as he went from table to table. But when I glanced at his expression, I saw years of hurt and pain which had worn his smile to a façade of complacency. Something made me want to speak with him, but the business of chatting with people and packing up my book table wedged me from making contact.

Once outside, I packed up my car, and two of the organizers remained a few minutes to speak with me. I had a radio interview to do by phone and wanted to get to the next town before it was too late. The thought of pulling over in the desert-like emptiness between Soap Lake and Moses Lake was a bit disconcerting. But I wanted to be polite.

“Thank you for having me. This was a great event.” I said to a few of the other organizers as they came by to thank me. With my head turned, I saw a figure out of the corner of my eye. I looked back, and it was the waiter, hurrying toward my car. I stopped and rolled down my window.

He looked directly at me as if no one else were there. His eyes were intent.

“I came in here today with a lot of pain and hurt. But you showed me how to get rid of it – and it’s gone now,” he said. He turned, and left as quickly as he had come.

I sat there in awe; the two ladies were frozen in disbelief.

“In the year he has been working as our waiter, he hasn’t spoken to anyone,” one of them noted.

We all looked at each other and knew the answer; he had found Jesus’ love. I had made an offer at the end of my talk for people to rid themselves of heart disease by letting Jesus take over and be their heartbeat - or to undergo a heart transplant, if they already had the Lord but needed renewal. He was listening, and his life is sealed – his fate is in the Lord’s hands, and now he has the freedom to be at peace for the rest of his earthly life.

I drove the two-hour ride home in silence, my mood reverent, and mindful of the immeasurable event that had taken place. When I see a person’s life transformed from painful to joyful, I understand God’s will for me.

From: ‘A Heart Like Yours’, by Cindy Valenti-Scinto.
For more information, visit www.AHeartLikeMine.com
MOVING BEYOND PHYSICAL HEALING

By David Levy, M.D. with MaryAnn Nguyen-Kwok

An air of tension greeted me when I entered the exam room. As a neurosurgeon who specializes in aneurysms, I am often met with distressed patients who convey their worry through coldness, impatience or rage. Today was no different.

Thalia was a thin, attractive woman wearing an exasperated, unhappy expression. Sitting next to her was her anxious husband, an equally handsome and trim man. Together, they were an active pair – the picture of upper middle class fitness. Thalia’s mother was in the room as well, and was sitting in the third chair looking apprehensive.

Two years of progressive worsening headaches brought her to me. Her primary care doctor had ordered an MRI, and the radiologist had reported an aneurysm. Sitting across from them, I turned the computer screen around so they could see the small bump on the vessel that had been labeled an aneurysm. The bump did not qualify as an aneurysm in danger of rupture, so I ordered another scan in the future. I informed her that the bulge on her vessel was neither dangerous nor was it causing her headaches. She was obviously expecting bad news and this was a surprise to her.

We discussed her headaches and symptoms. Thalia said that her two years of headaches had begun to get more serious in the last six months, so I asked if she had experienced any emotional trauma. She paused and sat back in her chair. She had come in with an idea that she would need surgery of some kind. Now the thought of dying from a bleeding aneurysm seemed remote and the visit was taking an unexpected turn. After a few moments she said, “My son Robbie died two years ago, and I don’t think I’m over it yet. The loss is so big that I doubt I will ever feel the same again.”

I probed further about the death of her son, and she told me that he diagnosed with lymphoma. Everything was done to control the disease, but the cancer continued, and he died at the tender age of eighteen. As she chronicled her story, her pain was visible.

“What do you have a faith or religion?” I asked.

She shrugged, “Christian, I guess, but I don’t go to church.”

“Did you stop going to church when your son died?” I asked.

“Yeah”, she replied, staring at the wall behind me.

I hesitated to proceed because of her coldness. The fact that her husband and mother were present also affected the atmosphere. I feared she might be less likely to open up in the presence of those closest to her.

In addition, she seemed to be an educated woman with upper class mentality – meaning that she may be less inclined toward spiritual matters. Often, I have found that those in this upper socio-economic group do not feel they need God because of the resources they have at their fingertips.

I didn’t want to offend her, knowing that she was no longer attending church. Her struggle with her faith indicated she might have been hurt by the religious establishment. Despite the risk, however, I could not ignore this shell of a woman in front of me. For in a place where there was beauty and should have been joy, there was none. While her appearance was striking, her eyes were vacant, without warmth. I couldn’t leave her like that without trying to rescue her from that place.

“Whenever a child dies before a parent, it is a tremendous blow. There is often a great sense of injustice,” I said.

“I can’t explain why Robbie died, but I can attest God gave him grace when he died two years ago.”

She nodded. I paused, and then continued slowly.

“Watching Robbie suffer, you may have taken offense at God. It is very common to become angry or take up a grudge against God when those we love go through difficult times, but when we do, we are in a dangerous and lonely place…”

“You’re right,” she said, frowning. “Robbie seemed to have a peace about it. But I’ve had a problem with it for the last two years. I don’t understand why God thought I could do this... I could actually live without Robbie.” Some fire came into her eyes.

But Thalia was stuck. Many of us remain stuck when we do not agree with God’s decisions. Thalia was stuck because she refused to move close to Him - a God Who would allow Robbie to suffer and die. She had prayed repeatedly, and the prayers were unanswered.

Although Robbie was not angry with God over his suffering, Thalia was. I have seen such anger, if unresolved, turn into resentment and bitterness. Bitterness against anyone, including God, can cause illness. We must release our resentment towards God through recognizing that He loves us, and always has the best intentions for us – even if it doesn’t appear true because of the pain we experience.

“I wonder if there are some things for which you are thankful, that happened before and after Robbie died.” I suggested, seeing if she was ready for a move towards God.
She sat back in her chair again, thinking. After a few moments, expressionless, she began naming a few things. She was thankful for her job, her daughter, and her husband. I reminded her of her resources and education, and she lifted her eyebrows in recognition of blessings she had taken for granted. Thalia smiled slightly, and she said she was thankful for those things. As she continued to give thanks, her countenance began to change. I hoped that she was softening.

At this point, I sensed that she needed affirmation. I looked into her eyes and spoke truth to her. “God is not angry with you,” I said. “He is not punishing you. He is not disappointed with you,” I paused, and then said quietly, “I know that He misses you.” Thalia gave no sign that she had received my words. She was staring straight ahead over my shoulder.

However, out of the corner of my eye, I saw her husband nod, indicating that I was on the right track. I could tell that he hoped his wife could be freed from her prison of despair.

“You have a sensitive heart and a sensitive spirit. You are still grieving the loss of your son,” I continued. “And that’s OK.”

She nodded her head slowly in agreement.

I was then prompted to tell her what God thought about her. “Do you realize who you are? You’re the daughter of the King of the universe. That’s who you are. It’s your identity. Nothing can change your identity. No matter what happens to you or to others around you. You are the daughter of the King. You are on this earth to do something special. Children are a gift from God, and you are a loving mother, but you have a calling separate from your children. You have a destiny to overcome this and then to turn around and help others who are going through similar trials.” Her eyes glazed over and I thought I lost her.

“God’s relationship is between God and Robbie, just as God’s relationship with you is just between the two of you. It may be hard for you to imagine, but God loves Robbie even more than you do.”

She blinked and moved her head backwards, indicating that she hadn’t considered God’s love for Robbie as being greater than her own.

“Unfortunately, the ‘why?’ questions rarely get answered in this life. ‘Why?’ or “Why me?” assume a victim mentality. You are not a victim, you are an overcomer. I encourage you to ask ‘What?’ or ‘How?’ questions. “What do You want me to know about You that will help me through this?” “How do You want me to move forward?” “What shall I do with my feelings of despair?” Don’t just ask these as rhetorical questions, but take time to listen for the answers. God wants to speak to you.”

She nodded but did not smile. I wanted to connect her with God – the only One who could breathe life into her joyless shell.

I asked if I could pray for her, and she said, “Yes.” I stood to the side of her with my hand on her left shoulder. I asked her husband to put his hand on her right shoulder. I asked God to bless her life with knowing how much He loved her, giving her clarity and purpose. I asked God to bless her with healing from her debilitating headaches. I blessed her marriage, sensing that it was at a breaking point because of her depression, and then I blessed her with good life choices and decisions.

Thalia nodded slightly after the prayer, but gave no indication that anything had changed. Her eyes appeared brighter than when she had come in. When she came out of the exam room she seemed tranquil, but I couldn’t tell if my words of encouragement had pierced her cocoon of grief, anger, and depression. Her husband and mother shook my hand warmly and thanked me for taking the extra time to talk with her. It was evident that they had felt as though they had lost her.

Days later, Sylvia, the physician who had treated Thalia’s son, came to my office looking bewildered. “What did you say to her?” she asked “I was the one who took care of her son. It was one of my most painful cases. What did you say?”

“I told her that God gave grace to
the son to go through this trial, but her relationship with God is separate from her son’s. God loves her son more than she does, and He always has her best interest in mind.”

“Her son was an amazing boy with lots of friends,” said Sylvia. “There were always kids in his hospital room.”

“I think that she has been angry with God. Very common when a child dies.”

“Do you know what she told me after her visit with you?” Sylvia asked.

“He healed me,” she said. “He healed me.”

A few months later, I received a letter from Thalia, indicating that the healing she experienced was more than just physical.

Thank you for choosing to listen to your heart, looking beyond the surface and really seeing ‘me’. Since Robbie died, I had convinced myself to never relinquish my grip on grief. I had confined him to a timeless loop of gone-ness, a place where it is cold – like the emptiness between planets. This space was safe because it helped me avoid terror and truth. I had locked up my heart and lost myself and Robbie in the process. That is where you came in. You recognized the death in me - but also, life – and that is what you focused on. Thank you for speaking life into the vortex of darkness because as you did, I was able to breathe my first breath since Robbie died. I’ve had many conversations with God – of sadness, anger, love, hope and joy – and have come to the conclusion that He is still with me. I am experiencing transformation, healing – and a new beginning.

Experiences like this remind me why I take the time to ask my patients spiritual questions, and see them as individuals with unique life stories. This is particularly true when I see no explanation for their physical symptoms. It can be an ‘open door’ for God to heal a broken heart and set a captive free.

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THE BIRTH OF A HYMN

As a fairly new husband, my wife, Nettie, and I were living in a little apartment on Chicago’s south side. One hot August afternoon, I had to go to St. Louis where I was to be the featured soloist at a large revival meeting. I didn’t want to go - Nettie was in the last month of her pregnancy with her first child - but a lot of people were expecting me in St. Louis. I kissed Nettie goodbye, clattered downstairs to our Model A and, in a fresh Lake Michigan breeze, chugged out of Chicago on Route 66.

Outside the city, I discovered that in my anxiety at leaving, I had forgotten my music case. I wheeled around and headed back. I found Nettie sleeping peacefully. I hesitated by her bed; something was strongly telling me to stay. But eager to get on my way, and not wanting to disturb Nettie, I shrugged off the feeling and quietly slipped out of the room with my music.

The next night, in the steaming St. Louis heat, the crowd called on me to sing again and again. When I finally sat down, a messenger boy ran up with a Western Union telegram. I ripped open the envelope. Pasted on the yellow sheet were words: your wife just died.

People were happily singing and clapping around me, but I could hardly keep from crying out. I rushed to a phone and called home. All I could hear on the other end was: “Nettie is dead. Nettie is dead.”

When I got back, I learned that Nettie had given birth to a boy. I swung between grief and joy. Yet, that same night, the baby died. I buried Nettie and our little boy together, in the same casket. Then I fell apart. For days I cloistered myself. I felt that God had done me an injustice. I didn’t want to serve Him anymore or write gospel songs. I just wanted to go back to that jazz world I once knew so well. But then as I hunched alone in that dark apartment those first sad days, I thought back to the afternoon I went to St. Louis. Something kept telling me to stay with Nettie. Was that something of God?

Oh, if I had paid more attention to Him that day, I would have stayed and been with Nettie when she died.

From that moment on, I vowed to listen more closely to Him. But still, I was lost in grief. Everyone was kind to me, especially one friend. The following Saturday, he took me up to Maloney’s Poro College, a neighborhood music school. It was quiet - the late evening sun crept through the curtained windows.

I sat down at the piano and my hands began to browse over the keys. Something happened to me then - I felt at peace. I felt as though I could reach out and touch God. I found myself playing a melody. Once in my head, they just seemed to fall into place,

“Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.
Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light, take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.”

The Lord gave me these words and melody. He also healed my spirit. I learned that when we are in our deepest grief, when we feel farthest from God, this is when He is closest, and when we are most open to His restoring power. And so, I go on living for God willingly and joyfully, until that day comes when He will take me, and gently lead me home.

Written by Tommy Dorsey in 1932. For those too young to know who he is, Tommy Dorsey was a well-known band leader in the 1930’s and 40’s.
My husband, pastor Enrique, just got out of jail! He and seven other pastors spent eight days on Islas Maria, an island prison.

“Ten thousand people live there, mostly prisoners,” he told me.

The team has driven to Mazatlan and was waiting for the police boat when he called me.

“It’s noon and they have us in a holding area until seven tonight. Then the police boat will take us to prison. Meanwhile, the guards are searching everything – luggage, clothes, our bodies, and asking a lot of questions. I’m sure they’ll hold our cell phones and cameras, so don’t expect to hear from us. I’m so excited, Ellie! God is going to do amazing things!”

Later, he described their arrival.

“The boat traveled all night. As we approached the island, it sparkled with a thousand lights! Dawn had set the sky on fire right above the prison, red and glowing, but the rest of the sky was still night, so we could see all the stars and the moon shining - something miraculous!”

“What was it like on the island?” I interviewed him later.

“Beautiful. Like when we went to Puerto Vallarta! Tropical, lots of palms trees with coconuts, small green parrots and large red ones, hundreds of cardinals and gorgeous water everywhere! But, of course, no one can go in.”

“Where do the prisoners live?”

“Nine different communities. Two were categorized ‘too dangerous’. No ministry can visit them. But we went to all the others, sometimes walking with my guitar for one hour, but with beauty everywhere! One compound houses twenty five hundred people and they farm: they have horses, cows and goats and the prison sells their cheese. Many prisoners’ families live with them in little houses.”

Sounds great. So what crime would I have to commit to live there?

“What did you do?” I asked.

“Well, we started with worship. My guitar was the only instrument in all but one community. Usually, as soon as I started to play, Christian prisoners would surround me. After the music, they’d ask for prayer and counsel. Then we’d go to the non-Christians and share the gospel - many accepted the Lord!”

He went on.

“The Director of one compound is a Christian and he makes sure the ministry in that community has what it needs. They had a piano, guitar, drums, bass and microphones, and the worship was so strong! I gave my testimony there and preached. We were hungry because the prison only gave us food in the morning and at night. But after the first day, the Christian prisoners, wherever we went, gave up their food for us.”

One time, nine of them built a raft and escaped the island, but they captured them off the coast with the raft pretty much disintegrated.

“No, there are lots of sharks in the water and the men know it. One time, nine of them built a raft and escaped the island, but they captured them off the coast with the raft pretty much disintegrated.”

“The prisoners have to line up five times a day and be accounted for. Once, while we were there, someone went missing and the guards told us to stay where we were. After three hours, they sent us back to our base quarters.

We found a dining hall where non-prisoner laborers were eating and went in. We preached and worshipped, then gave them the plan of salvation. Almost every one accepted Christ, Ellie!”

My husband’s voice got hushed as he remembered and he wiped away some tears.

“Were some murderers?” I asked.

“Oh yes! After one service a guy, about thirty-five, approached me. He had been worshipping and then asked me to pray for him. I asked him when he would get out and he answered, ‘Oh, I got a lot left.’”

“How long have you been here?” Enrique asked.

“Twenty years.”

“How much more?” The prisoner responded.

“I don’t know. A lot!”

“Why? What did you do?”

“I killed seven people.”

“Why?”

“Because they murdered my family –
my mom, my dad, my sister and brothers, nephews. I was the only one who wasn’t there or they would have killed me. When I found out, I set about and killed them all, one by one.”

“Yes” he told my husband, “I know Jesus has forgiven me, and even if I never get out of here, I’m free in Him, I’m very happy in the Lord.”

Finally, I asked my husband, “How did you feel when you were leaving the island?”

“Well, there was a time after we finished our work there, then I was thinking, *What has God done?* I felt that we could have done much more, but due to penel restrictions, we didn’t have the liberty to do all we could have. Then I listened to two men talking. One was an unbeliever, a prisoner, about to be released after twenty years of incarceration. He was talking to a friend who was also leaving. He told him, “I can’t wait to go to Carnival. We’ll go crazy!” (similar to Mardi Gras) Then he added, “Pura loquera y borrachera!” “Nothing but drugs and drinking.” “In the same ministry session, though, a Christian prisoner, with no release date in sight, expressed something different,” my husband was crying again as he spoke.

“He told me, ‘Pastor Enrique’ I am so grateful to the Lord! He’s given me a new life! I’m going forward from this point, never back! God brought you people from so far away to encourage us! Thank you!”

Two men – one changed, one the same. “When I compared them, I realized the trip was worth it,” Enrique reflected.

“God put it on my heart to come back every year, no matter if we sleep on the floor or take cold water showers or go hungry. He told me, “Go! Just do what you can and don’t worry, I’ll do the rest!”

Then I cried with my husband and knew that next year I would go with him.

“Before this faith came we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed.”

*Galatians 3:23*

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