

Interview with Dr. Chuck Paine

(Missionary to India, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Short-term in Haiti. Interviewed by Jim Vermilya.)

Let's talk about your call to missionary service. When and how did it happen in your life?

When I was a boy, 8-years-old, I came close to death three different times. And my girlfriend (this was in fifth grade), died of appendicitis. First funeral I had ever been to. That fall at the District camp meeting in Houghton, NY, that had sawdust and saw chips around the mourner's bench, I sat in the back of the auditorium and felt the call to go forward and give my heart to the Lord. Then later that fall, a missionary came through and spoke at the College Church there at Houghton. He had been in India and stopped in Africa to be with a friend he had been in school with. So, he had been in both places. That evening, I was nine years old, I went home and told my mother I was going to be a missionary doctor. And I didn't vary from that, since that time.

You served in three different countries. How did these transitions come about?

We served for five years serving the leprosy hospital in the middle of India. At the end of that time, I felt the Lord didn't need us there any longer and was not calling us to go back. I told that to the board of Wesleyan World Missions, and when I came home, I felt led to go into pathology. I called up one of the most prestigious places in America, the University of Chicago. Somebody had dropped out of their program, and they gave me that spot. So, that was of the Lord. The Lord opened the door. I spent six years there in pathology and they put me on the faculty. I specialized in surgical pathology. At the end of the six years, I had done the work for a PhD but didn't write a dissertation and never did any research that was worth writing about. So, I went across the Midway to a ghetto hospital, Woodlawn Hospital. They asked me to be the pathologist there and that's where I was for the next eight years. (A pathologist helps doctors find out what's wrong with their patients. We do laboratories, autopsies, and surgeons give me tissue to study and I tell them what is wrong with their patients. The pathologist has no interaction with the patients and, since I was an introvert, I wasn't too interested in that, thinking I did not have a good "bedside manner." I tended to tell people why they were sick. Ha! Ha! Which 70% of the time was due to them – bad choices they had made.) After 4 years I stopped being the pathologist and they asked me to be the administrator for the next 4 years. And I worked my way out of that job. Wesleyan World Missions contacted me and said that they needed me in Sierra Leone in West Africa and Kamakwe. Grace and I prayed about. We had wanted to go to that hospital back in 1959. We applied to go there, and they already had 3 doctors. Now there was one doctor, and he was overdue for furlough. It was Chuck and Ruth Pierson. So, we agreed to go over and replace Chuck. When we got there (I am a pathologist, and they don't do surgery on living patients) Chuck said, "you are going to have to learn surgery." He was a surgeon and he had been in Vietnam for 18 months. He said in the Army, "they see one, they do one, they teach one." So, the first time he did a C-section I scrubbed with him. The second time he scrubbed with me. After that I was on my own. (Ha! Ha!). So, that's how I learned surgery, sort of "by the seat of my pants, if you will." He was there with me for six months, praise the Lord, and was a big help. I was able to scrub with him on other surgeries. We spent 3 years and came home for a year and then went back for 3 years and then we came home again. Because our youngest was in high

school at Lakeview and Grace did not want to leave him at home, we stayed at home for a term and Dr. Storer Emmett went out and served in my place. Then after those 3 years we went back for another term. 1991-1994. The war in Sierra Leone was in full swing there and the Mission pulled everyone out. The Mission asked us to go back to India. So, we applied to go there back to the leprosy hospital. But we could not get a visa. We spent a little time there trying to get a visa. Storer Emmett was then in Zambia all by himself and he begged me to come out and help him out. We told the mission we would go to Zambia, while we were waiting for word on our 2nd visa application for India. While we were there, 1996-98, the visa came through. So in 1998 we went back to India from 1998-2000. This time I was there not as a doctor but as a builder. Rebecca Bibbee was building a school there for 2000 students. So, we handled the funds for that and oversaw the building (3 big 3-story buildings).

Could you share some blessings or high points in your missionary ministry?

The high points in my life were the fact that God helped me learn surgery. I did over 400 C-sections, which I was there in Africa and other surgery that you would never think of here in America. It was very different. And that was sort of the high point. Hundreds of lives were saved. The other high point was that my children got to go to boarding school first in Sierra Leone and then in Ivory Coast. And God helped them in that, so they came out with a positive, God-fearing attitude. So those are probably the highest points. There are more.

What were some of the challenges you faced?

When we got out to India, the first challenge was trying to get along with somebody there that was not happy with us. Ha! Ha! And that happened out in Sierra Leone, too. So, there were dips in the road and the Lord helped us through all of them. Down in Zambia, that was a strange one. Actually, the personnel in the hospital were government-paid employees. So, your relationship had to be "very acute." Let's put it that way. Or maybe "delicate." The times that we went to Haiti were a challenge, too. Edna Taylor went as an interpreter for us and that was a big help. There were some "dips" there, too.

Was missionary life in the places you served a positive experience for your children or was it difficult for them?

Well, praise the Lord, the Lord helped. We had two families, and the two older children went up to a school in the foothills of the Himalayas. They enjoyed it. They loved it there. They loved the food. The family did very well in India. Then, when we went to Africa, we took our four youngest, including Rachel, who was born in India, and sent them off to boarding school. That was not easy. They were 4th, 6th, 8th and 10th graders. But the Lord blessed. They had good house parents, solid, God-fearing people. And they ended up flying over to Ivory Coast, when they got past 9th grade and two of our children graduated from 12th grade there. The Lord blessed them. They all came out of it with a positive approach and that is not true of all the missionary kids that we saw, unfortunately.

How has your life in Third World countries affected your values or worldview?

Well, you have to start out from where I started out in the original Wesleyan Methodist Church, very conservative, very restricted in thinking. When I got to India, I discovered there will be some people in heaven I did not expect. So, my world view really expanded tremendously by going there. We loved the Indian people. When we went to Africa and worked with the staff here, we loved them. They were great and so it really made a big difference from where I started to where I ended. I praise the Lord. It's good to recognize there are good people. I can remember sitting in the third-class coach from Bombay to Rajnandgaon and there were three postulantes preparing to be nuns. They were youngsters and I was sitting next to them in this compartment, and I got to talking with them. They loved Jesus. And I said, you know something – they may be in heaven, too! And I would have never thought that, the way I was brought up. I was brought up to think that they were not part of God's family. We were raised in America, and we think in certain ways, but what makes the difference is the Bible, God's Word. If you are trained to believe that God's Word is the truth, and you go overseas, if they don't believe that same way, there still is a disconnect, if you will, because the truth of God's Word has to be part of a Christian's lifestyle, world view, and thinking. Jesus died for the whole world, and people we never thought we would see, will be in heaven. That's the way it is.

Could you share about the importance of prayer in your life as a missionary and now in retirement years?

When I retired from Zambia to Wesleyan Village, one of the things I made a priority in my life was, whenever people met for prayer, I wanted to be there. There's a men's prayer meeting for missionaries, there's prayer meeting for revival, there's missionary prayer meeting, there's a Gideon prayer meeting...whenever people meet together for prayer, I felt like I wanted to be there. Prayer is very important. What is prayer? Prayer is communication with our Father. I pray when I walk around the village every day. I talk with God as I go. You can't put Him in a box. The Spirit of God is there. You need to have a spirit of prayer no matter where you are. When I go by a house and I know there is a problem there, I'll pray for that person. That's important. When I operated on someone as a doctor, we prayed for that person in their own language. We might have 6 to 8 different languages in a hospital at the same time. But we would have somebody who could speak that language to pray for that individual each time. There were times when I really cried out to God, occasionally in tears, at two in the morning in a situation that's not in the books. You've never seen it before. And you cry out to God. What am I going to do? This lady is going to die on the table. And God, "boom" – what I did might not meet protocol in the States but it ended up saving that woman's life. I praise the Lord!

As far as you know, were you ever used of God to influence someone else to consider serving on the mission field?

When we got back from India in 1965, one of the places we were asked to speak at a missionary weekend, if you will, was up in Michigan. Don Bray and his wife, Joy, were pastoring that church. That was their first missionary conference or weekend. And they had been praying that out of that conference, someone would be called to go to the mission field. It turned out on

Sunday, Dr. Marilyn Hunter came there. She was in a pediatric residency in Grand Rapids, I think. It turned out that the ones that God called out of that church were Don and Joy. They felt called to go and ended up going to Papua New Guinea.

Do you have a “life verse” or promise in God’s Word that has been special to you across the years?

The one that was impressed on me coming home from Africa probably or India even, was Philippians 3:10, “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering, being made conformable unto His death...” That has stuck with me, since that time. I would guess that you could call that my “life verse.”