

May 30, 1996

Re: A Personal Note

To: The Partners and Employees of SETMA, LLP

From: Larry Holly, MD (Not as the Managing Partner, but as a co-worker)

Last night, as the associates and executive management team of SETMA, LLP met to review the state of the corporation, each one of us was overwhelmed with how far we have come in a very short time. As I sat and enjoyed the report of our achievement, I realized that I faced a great personal danger, a danger each man and woman faces when they look into the face of success and achievement. That danger is the pride of believing they deserve what they have received, which pride will produce either greed for more or a grasping to “hold on to what you have.”

This morning, as I was awakened at 3:00 AM while on call, I laid in bed thinking about our business – yours and mine – and thinking about why we have achieved what we have. As I prayed and thanked God for His blessing, I meditated upon Deuteronomy 8. I realized that the prosperity which SETMA, LLP has experienced is not an occasion for pride, but for humility. That humility is borne of the reality that many people have contributed to the growth and success of SETMA, LLP. Without each one of them -- many employees of the corporation, many consultants to the corporation, others simply friends who have wished us well, and others who have diligently prayed for God’s blessings upon this business – SETMA, LLP would not be what it is. I humbly and gratefully acknowledge the contribution of each one of you to this success.

That humility is also borne of the reality that it is ultimately the Sovereign God of the Universe Who promotes one or another. Psalm 75 opens with the statement: “Unto Thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto Thee do we give thanks: for that Thy Name is near Thy wondrous works declare.” The Psalmist then warns against the epitome of wickedness, which is pride; he said, “I said unto the fools, „Deal not foolishly“: and to the wicked, „Lift not up the horn: Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck.”” “Lifting up the horn” and “a stiff neck” are both Hebrew metaphors for pride and arrogance. Avoiding pride, the Psalmist concludes in verses 6 and 7, is based on the reality that, “...promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the Judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another.” We can be grateful that God has chosen us for promotion. We can work hard, and we should. We should be diligent and disciplined in our work, but then we must humbly acknowledge that it is He Who gives the blessings we enjoy. And, we must humbly defer the praise of our accomplishment to the dozens of people who have materially and significantly contributed to that success.

Deuteronomy 8 was a favorite passage of our Lord Jesus Christ, as was the entire book of Deuteronomy. In verses 2 and 3, chapter eight addresses the importance of humility on the part of men. Verse 3 declares that that humility will lead men to understand the central place which the Word of God has in the life of the believer. But, Deuteronomy 8 principally reminds us that it is God Who gives us the power to “get money.” Verses 11-17 state:

“Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: Lest *when* thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt *therein*; And *when* thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, *wherein were* fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where *there was* no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end; And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of *mine* hand hath gotten me this wealth.”

Here is the beginning of the corruption of what any man has received, the pride of believing that he achieved it by himself, and the arrogance of believing that he deserved it to begin with. Deuteronomy 8 concludes with the solution to this pride, which is humility. It states:

“But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for *it is He* that giveth thee power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He sware unto thy fathers, as *it is* this day. And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.”

I personally wish to affirm that it is God Who has blessed me and my participation in SETMA, LLP, and to remember that it is “He that gives us power to get wealth.” And, I wish to acknowledge that the purpose of that wealth is that through God’s blessings others might see that living by God’s rules is good.

As I have often told you, this is not a religious organization and you do not have to believe what I have said in order to be a part of this organization. Nevertheless, I do want you to know that the benefits which you are receiving through SETMA, LLP are a product of God’s blessing. I also want you to know that I believe that those benefits and blessings will continue as long as we do not forget the Lord in not keeping His commandments. For SETMA, LLP “keeping His commandments” means:

1. Being true to the founding principles which the associates wrote into the corporate documents.
2. Being true to our motto of “Health Care Where Your Health is the Only Care.”
3. Being true to the associates commitment to “do good while we are doing well.”
4. Humbly acknowledging all of those who have made us successful, and that particularly being God Himself.
5. Treating everyone with whom we deal, whether colleague, co-worker, client, customer or company, with dignity, courtesy and kindness.
6. Avoiding profanity in both our language and in our “use” of others.

In SETMA, LLP, we have an opportunity to do something really important, which is much more than just making money. We have the opportunity to show Southeast Texas that respect for the dignity of every individual and a desire to do good for others are not inconsistent with prosperity. At strategic moments in this corporation’s life, we have

prayed for God's wisdom and favor. He has abundantly given both, for which we give Him thanks, and publicly acknowledge His grace and mercy.

In a recent letter to the President of the Southern Baptist Convention, I said:

“As a Christian business man, I am very sensitive to maintaining biblical standards in my medical practice. As the managing partner of the largest, private, primary health care group in Southeast Texas, I am careful to make certain that no activity of this partnership violates God's standards, to the best of my ability. Our corporate documents include prohibitions preventing anyone in this practice from ever performing an abortion, referring a patient for an abortion, or recommending an abortion. We also have prohibitions against beverage alcohol being used in any meeting, gathering, dinner, luncheon, banquet, picnic, or barbecue sponsored by, paid for by or associated with Southeast Texas Medical Associates, LLP.

Southeast Texas Medical Associates, LLP maintains three standards of measuring any decision, all three must be met before we undertake any action. First, we ask the question, „Is it legal?“ – this involves ethics. If an action is not legal, we need go no further in our evaluation; we will not do it. But, even if an action is legal, we are not yet at the point of decision; we move to the second step of our evaluation, which applies a higher standard. We ask the question, „Is it right?“ – this involves equity, i.e., is it fair to all parties. However, even if a decision is right, this does not get us to a final decision. Before we decide anything, we go one step further and ask the question, „Is it righteous,“ – this involves eternity. If it is not righteous, no matter how legal and right an action may be, Christians should not be involved in it. If an action is not ethical, equitable and eternally acceptable, we do not enter into any business agreement. Thus far, God has blessed our practice beyond our comprehension.”

I pledge to you not to forget from whence our blessing comes. I pledge to you that I personally will continue to seek to conduct myself ethically, equitably and eternally, as I pursue the goals which we have established together. I pledge to you to bring no destruction upon your livelihood by forgetting that it is God Who allows me to be a part of what we are doing, and that it is He Who allows us to succeed.

In conclusion, may I say, this is a very personal note. That is why I have signed it personally and not as the managing partner of SETMA, LLP. I will never attempt to force my faith upon you. But, I would be negligent, if I did not tell each of you that no matter what you face, no matter who you are, Jesus Christ, God Himself, has the power and desire to give you eternal life, which includes victory over the trials of your life, hope for the future, and joy in all circumstances. Incredibly, all of this is available by the same act to which God has led me in these past few hours. It is available by humbling yourself, acknowledging Who God is, and asking Him to make a difference in your life.

God bless you. It is my prayer today, as it is each time I sign your pay check, that your association with SETMA, LLP will be the best occupational experience of your life, and that it will be an experience which will encourage you “to come to Jesus.”

Larry Holly, MD
Proverbs 22:17-21