

Christian HealthCare

NEWSLETTER

MEMBER LETTER:

**You strengthened my faith
when I was weak**

We had our first need and were curious to see how well it all worked. Wow! We are amazed. Not only was our need met financially, but we were also encouraged by the sweet notes members have written to us. We will shout from the rooftops how wonderful it is to be part of a sharing ministry.

*Caleb and Morgan Ingram
Covington, Ohio*

We had “good” insurance with the birth of our first two children. Our out of pocket expenses were \$7,000-10,000. With our third child we joined Samaritan. We were able to keep the total bill around \$10,000 and Samaritan member shared it all! It is also amazing to know members are praying for our pregnancy and life of our new daughter.

*Michael and Sara Parks
Bayard, Nebraska*

The State of the Ministry

by Ted Pittenger

In January 2014, we had the largest monthly growth in new members in our history (2,770) until this past January, when we had 3,604 new members. As we are going to press, it appears likely that this month will set another new record.

We started last year with more than 39,000 member households. Today we have more than 53,000. At the beginning of last year, members were sharing more than \$10 million each month. This month it is more \$15 million.

From the beginning of Samaritan Ministries more than 21 years ago, one of the foundational principles of the ministry has been that God is the only One Who has enough, in fact more than enough, to provide for the needs of everyone. He created everything. He sustains everything. All things belong to Him. No one else—no person, no company, no government—has the resources He has. No matter how big, they are puny compared to God. Yet from the beginning of the world, humans have resisted depending on God, seeking protection in many other places.

Our desire at Samaritan Ministries is that every person, beginning with the Body of Christ, trust in Jesus Christ for everything, including medical needs. We also want every believer to fulfill their God-given responsibility to love and care for others, especially fellow believers (Galatians 6:10).

The way we have approached this objective with regard to health care is fairly simple. Every month, every one of our members is asked to help care for the medical need of one other member. They do this by sending a gift and a note of encouragement directly to the member with the need and praying for them. That's it. It's really that simple.

None of us are able to provide for all of the medical needs of everyone, even of all believers, in the country or in the world. Only God can do that. But we all can do something. And the first step Samaritan members take is to share in the medical need of one other believer every month. Of course, that doesn't mean that we shouldn't also care for the needs of others around us as God enables us. But it is a good first step.

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Sharing Summary from December

Shares:	\$14,847,946	Personalized prayer requests of the members with Needs are in the Prayer Guide. Please use your version of the Prayer Guide to support the members assigned to you.
Needs:	\$16,866,575	
In Negotiation:	\$ —	
New Needs:	2,293	
Total Needs:	3,976	
New Rewards:	190	Member Households: 51,305 (as of 11/19/15)
Miscarriages:	38	
Final Rewards:	7	

Contact Us: 877-764-2426 samaritanministries.org/members

Questions about?

Email

Phone Menu

Your medical need

needs@samaritanministries.org

1 - 1

Shares you are sending or receiving

shares@samaritanministries.org

1 - 2

Your membership

membership@samaritanministries.org

1 - 3

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Cameron Easley
Member Services Manager

Remember:



SEND A NOTE—

Burdens can be lightened emotionally as we encourage one another in the Lord.



PAY YOUR SHARE—

Burdens can be lightened physically as we do our part to financially meet others' needs as they would in our time of need.



ALWAYS STAY ALERT IN PRAYER—

Burdens can be lightened spiritually as we unite to call upon the God of the impossible.

God, terrorism, and the question of evil

by Rob Slane

A prominent church leader recently made headlines by admitting that the terrorist attacks in Paris in November caused him to doubt God:

I was out and as I was walking I was praying and saying: 'God why—why is this happening? Where are you in all this?' and then engaging and talking to God. Yes, I doubt.¹

Christians often doubt, but the problem with his comments is not so much the airing of doubts, but rather in not following them up with coherent reasons as to why he, or any other Christian out there, should not go the whole hog and reject God altogether.

It has to be said that there is a peculiar West-o-centric feel to his comments. In the weeks preceding the attacks in Paris, there were multiple terrorist atrocities in Beirut, Sinai, and Nigeria. Did they make him doubt? But why confine ourselves to atrocities? There are around 150,000 deaths every day on Earth, and so the question is not so much how we process death on the streets of Paris, but how we process death anywhere.

I want to deal first with the idea that “no God” can give us answers, before going on to the question of why God allows evil. To do the first part, I want you to come with me on a journey. I’m walking along and I come to a fork in the road. I look down and see someone killed by terrorists in Paris. “Why did this person have to die?” I wonder. I am filled with moral outrage and a longing for justice. There’s a God and He

let this happen? Why didn’t He stop it? And why doesn’t He do something about the rest of the evil in the world?

The two roads ahead have signs. The first says “There is no God,” and the second says, “Emmanuel: God with us.” I start to walk down the first and for a while it feels like a good place to be. I get to retain my sense of moral outrage, not only

We rebel against God, and then turn around to castigate him for not dealing with evil. Yet God does promise to deal with evil.

with the perpetrators, but also with God, or perhaps the idea of God. But as I continue, I begin to get the uncomfortable feeling that removing God hasn’t actually answered my questions at all.

Why did people die in Paris? Was it an inherent part of a Universe based on chance, or built into a Universe governed by fate? Those are my two choices on this road, right? And whichever it is, it is nevertheless one of blind, pitiless indifference, as Richard Dawkins once put it. Either way, there’s nothing that I or anyone else could do to stop such things, is there? They just happen!

I carry on and some more disquieting questions arise: Why am I grieving? If I myself am a product of the Universe of Randomness or Fate, where did I get my sense of sorrow from? Furthermore, if there’s nothing but annihilation at the end of the road, why do I feel like I need an explanation? This Universe won’t ever explain to me why these people died. How could it? Do impersonal machines care about their cogs?

What is more, it dawns on me that even though I have a longing for justice and mercy, neither will be served. They can’t. The perpetrators and victims suffered the same fate, didn’t they? Good luck seeking justice out of that! As for mercy, this Universe doesn’t have mercy built into it as a feature.

Then there’s the moral outrage. Where did I get that? On this road, my book starts and finishes with “In the beginning there was nothing”; “In the end there is nothing.” So I have this sense of moral outrage, but the Universe could not care less!

It isn’t just that the Godless road fails to answer my questions; worse than that, it can’t even explain why I have the questions in the first place. I am back to square one, but the original question still remains: “How does a God who is good and omnipotent appear to be impotent or apathetic when it comes to dealing with evil?”

We can be very loose in our definitions, but here is a place that we can’t afford to be. What do we mean by evil? The Paris atrocities?

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Ken and Deborah Raney

Clashentertainment.com

by Michael Miller

Ken and Deborah Raney share the message of Christ in image and word from their home in the middle of America.

He is a graphic artist who illustrates books and runs a Christian entertainment website. She is an award-winning writer with 30 published novels to her credit, such as *A Vow to Cherish*, *Winter Brides*, and the current “Chicory Inn Novels” series.

The Samaritan Ministries members conduct their creative careers from their Wichita, Kansas, home in the same region where they both grew up and met.

Deborah started writing on January 1, 1994, as part of a New Year’s resolution. She started writing in an effort to both bring in some money for their older children’s college tuition and to be able to stay at home after giving birth to their

youngest daughter, Tavia.

A Vow to Cherish, which was later turned into a movie, was published two years later.

“Writing was something I had always wanted to do and it just seemed like the right time,” Deborah says. “The miracle of it all really is that the offer I ended up taking was a two-book contract

from Bethany House. I hadn’t even written the second book nor did I have an idea for it, but they still wanted the second book.”

Even more encouraging and affirming to the Raney family that this was the direction God wanted Deborah to take was the advance on royalties they offered. “It was to the penny what we had just been told four years of college for our son was going to be,” Deborah says. “It was just an exact answer to prayer on a silver platter that God gave us. Best of all, it allowed me to stay home with our daughter, which was the goal in the first place.”

The idea for that second novel, *In the Still of the Night*, came soon enough “and ideas have been coming fast and furious ever since.”

While that was going on, Ken was careering as an advertising manager “for a pretty large manufacturer.” After surreptitiously decorating



several desktops in high school, Ken majored in commercial art in college and wanted to be an illustrator but found it “hard to make a living at that.” While working a desk job, though, he managed to illustrate two children’s picture books, some Sunday school materials, and a few issues of *National Geographic Traveler* besides “various and sundry other freelance jobs.”

In the mid-2000s, though, Ken started feeling a divine nudge. He went to a Gideon Media Arts Conference, “a bunch of Christian creatives who want to use their gifts for the Lord’s kingdom.” Even though he had a corporate job at a good salary, he felt the Lord telling him, “Ken, you won’t be retiring from this company; I’ve got something else for you to do.”

“The Lord did not tell me any of this,” Deborah inserts.

Then Ken was laid off in 2009, and “it seemed like a good time to get



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Why SMI?

When Ken Raney was laid off in 2009 from his advertising job, he needed to figure out how to handle health care for his family.

A severance package allowed him to keep his health insurance for a while, but when that period was up he started asking fellow artists what they did for insurance.

By that point, insurance rates “started going through the roof,” Ken says.

“All the stuff we tried to check on was going to be way, way higher than what we had been used to paying.”

Then Ken and Deborah heard about Samaritan Ministries. He contacted the ministry, then called up several references from Kansas.

“Everybody was positive about it,” he says. “They said, ‘Yeah, it works.’ When the time came, to be honest with you, we couldn’t afford anything else. But it sounded like it would do the job, so we went for it. We’ve been very happy with it.”

“The thing we love the most and that surprised us the most about it was that we send our check each month directly to another person,” Deborah says. “It’s truly a pleasure to write that check knowing that it’s going to help someone meet their needs rather than we’re sending that check to a big corporation that doesn’t know us

from Adam and doesn’t care.”

Samaritan membership has been a family affair. Two of their daughters, Tobi and Tavia, have been members as well.

The Raney family has only had to submit one need in nearly six years of membership, but they “had just a great experience with it, no problems,” Deborah says.

“Everything you said you would share you shared,” she says.

The only problem encountered in the need-sharing process was with hospitals sending late bills, Ken says, but even that was worked out in their favor.

“One thing that opened our eyes was that because we were with Samaritan, we told providers that we had no insurance and asked them ahead of time how much the bill would be,” Deborah says. “It was so interesting they would be willing to cut the bill in half if we were willing to pay in 30 days. It was very eye-opening to how they inflate prices when they know insurance will pick it up. The late bills they waived because they had not told us about those. It was a long, drawn-out process, but we didn’t have to pay anything beyond what Samaritan shared. We like the whole concept of it and we told a lot of friends about it.” ♦

serious about it.” He made plans to start his own business, although Deborah wasn’t on the same page with him “for quite some time.” That period turned out to be a growth phase for their marriage.

“I’m a big believer in wives submitting to their husbands,” Deborah says. “But it’s a lot easier said than done. Once I finally submitted to my husband and to the Lord, however, it was just amazing how things

came together.”

Ken started going to writers conferences where Deborah was teaching and, when they discovered he was an illustrator, asked him to teach at the same conferences.

“As a result of that,” Deborah says, “we both work from home and we get working vacations, but they’re paid vacations because we travel and teach at the same conferences. It’s just been really neat to see how the Lord intertwined both of our careers into something brand new.”

Ken hasn’t had trouble finding work. He has done book covers for

several of Deborah’s friends who are writers, and has been working on middle-reader books, including one called *Dino Hunters*. Two orphaned, creationist teens go to live with an uncle who teaches biology and is a Darwinian. The culture clash results in Uncle Dave going on jaunts with his two charges to check out evidence of dinosaurs living within human memory, and Uncle Dave’s views

start to change. A trilogy is planned.

He also has been working on an allegorical fantasy called *Forever Quest*, which Deborah has done some writing for as well, although the project is on hold.

Another result of Ken’s attendance at the Gideon conferences is Clash Entertainment (clashentertainment.com), a web portal aimed at providing entertainment and cultural

Novelist Deborah Raney on writing

Deborah Raney started writing by reading.

“I found by being a voracious reader, I had learned a lot about writing,” says the author of 30 published novels and a teacher at writers’ conferences. “I read all the time. I used to read a book a week, if not more than that. I really don’t see how a writer cannot continue to be a reader. Part of my research is just to know what else is out there. It’s also still the most enjoyable thing I do. If I have an eight-hour day and I don’t have to do anything else, reading is still what I choose to do.”

That’s one of several insights on the writing process that Deborah, who is married to illustrator Ken Raney, offered in a recent interview.

Here are others:

Have somebody else read your stuff. “I remember writing what turned out to be the prologue for my first novel and typing it out and handing it to Ken, just to ask his opinion, and he read it and looked at me and said, ‘Honey this is good, keep writing,’ and that was all the encouragement that I needed to keep going.”

As part of somebody else reading her work, she has a critique partner—fellow Christian author Tamera Alexander. “She and I have been critique partners for going on 12 years now. We read everything the other one writes and do kind of a pre-edit before our actual editors get hold of the book. It’s been great to be able to have that kind of feedback, from a person who knows writing well. I know several other people have partners or part of a group. It’s uncommon but not unusual.”

She thrives on deadlines. As she begins work on a new novel, “I do the math and figure how many words I need to write each day to make that deadline, then I procrastinate for six months, write frantically and make everyone around me miserable for the following three months before the book is finally turned in.”

She doesn’t outline her novels. “For me knowing how it’s going to end takes all the fun out of writing. I want to discover it as I write just the way the reader will as she reads. I think that’s part of the reason that I’m such a procrastinator.”

Deborah also says that the Christian fiction market has changed drastically, mainly because of e-books.

“Publishers are really struggling,” says Deborah, who serves on the board of American Christian Fiction Writers. “For a long time we (the ACFW) strongly recommended that writers not self-publish, that they wait until they’re writing well enough to get a publisher. But that has all changed even within the last five years because of e-books and because Amazon now allows a person to write a book and offer it on Amazon the following week if they want to.”

It’s also less expensive now to self-publish, she says.

“It used to cost you anywhere from \$4,000 to \$10,000, even up to \$20,000, to get that book published, and your chances to make that money back were slim to none,” Deborah says. “Now it costs very little. All you really need is someone to design a cover—and that’s one of the things that Ken does in his graphic design work—and then hopefully have an editor for the book.” ♦

information for adolescents and young adults.

“We post information on movies, books, comics, music, video games, all of it from a Christian perspective, most of the information actually produced by Christian creatives,” he says. “It’s aimed at the teenage market.”

Deborah’s books appeal to a different market, mostly Christian women, although Ken testifies that men are perfectly capable of enjoying them as well. The author wasn’t sure which market her books would appeal to when she started; *A Vow to Cherish* was written in a Christian version and a secular version.

“I wasn’t sure if I wanted to preach to the choir or be a light in the darkness,” she says.

In the end, the only difference was characters praying in Jesus’s name, and she “realized I could not tell the story without the freedom to use Jesus’s name.”

The Christian market it was.

“Of course, I hoped that I would have nonbelievers reading the book and hearing that message,” she says. “I wanted in my book to be able to share the difference that Christ makes in the life of a family. They have all the same problems that the world has, but there’s a huge difference in Who we have to support us and carry us through.”

That’s part of what makes her writing a ministry.

“I write to entertain,” Deborah says. “I want my stories to be interesting and fun and sometimes tragic. I want them to make people feel, to laugh or cry or get angry. But at the same time, I hope that by telling a good story, I am demonstrating the difference that Christ can make in a person’s life.”

She has received letters from readers telling her that a marriage was healed or that salvation occurred as a result of reading one of her novels.

“That’s just a seed I planted,” Deborah says. “I’m certainly not the one to harvest that. But it’s neat to have the work that I do to provide for our family also be a ministry.”

Her newest books focus on family, but she says she has had to struggle to keep her family out of them. The *Chicory Inn* novels are “probably the closest to my real life as anything else I’ve written,” Deborah says.

In the books, an empty nest couple who have turned their family home into a bed-and-breakfast have their children, one at a time, one to a book, end up back home “for whatever reason.”

“I’ve had to struggle not to put too much of my real family in the books because the premise sounds a lot like our own family,” she says.

Three of the novels in the series—*Home to Chicory Lane*, *Two Roads Home*, and *Another Way Home*—have been published. *Close to Home* is in rewrites and is due out in June. The final, installment, *Home at Last*, is planned for February 2017.

Future plans for the couple include republishing some of Deborah’s earlier works with Ken doing some of the cover illustrations.

“We are in the process of starting our own small press to get some of my older books out and some of the books I have rights for again,” Deborah says. “Actually my favorite cover of all time, *Because of the Rain*, is one that Ken designed. So I’m excited about having him put together some of my other books.” ♦

We became members about 10 years ago, and my daughter’s family became members at the same time. They were missionaries and with Samaritan, it didn’t matter where on the earth you were.

We finally had a need a couple years ago. Larry had knee replacement surgery so he could walk normally again. A year later he had a ruptured disc that was so painful he could not get out of bed. After many treatments failed, he finally had surgery.

We have always been self-employed and not had insurance. We traded with our local doctor for treatment, but he has recently retired. Being members of Samaritan made it possible for our family to have major medical procedures that we could never have paid for on our own.

We are so grateful for all our Samaritan family members. It is amazing how the Lord has enabled the Samaritan team to bring us all together in the loving relationship of trusting and helping one another.

The kindness and helpfulness of the Samaritan staff when I called has always been wonderful. I want to be faithful too, in praying for one another, since I know I will meet the members in heaven. I’m looking forward to meeting all the babies whose births we prayed for, all the people who were hurt or sick.

Larry and Kathlyn Robinson,
Independence, Oregon

How should I respond to the shedding of innocent blood?

by James McGarvey

Last year, Pastor Rusty Lee Thomas in his pamphlet, *Field Manual for Abortion Ministry*, raised two questions:

What does Christianity look like in a nation that murders its own children?"

Has the church failed to be prolific or have we failed to be Christian when it comes to rescuing our neighbors scheduled to be dismembered?

I'm reminded of God's disbelief as His people persisted in the sacrifice of their children to the pagan demon god Molech as recorded by Jeremiah, "...they have filled this place with the blood of innocent children. They have built pagan shrines to Baal, and there they burn their sons as sacrifices to Baal. I have never commanded such a horrible deed; it never even crossed My mind to command such a thing!" (Jeremiah 19:4b-5 NLT)

Pastor Thomas again writes, "...I believe this cruel act is so foreign to God's commandments, character, and will that He refuses to acknowledge it. In other words, this despicable practice is so far off the charts, so beyond the pale, that God will not dignify it with any sense of rationality. For parents to sacrifice their own children in order to obtain a better life is unthinkable in the mind of God." (*Abortion Violation*, pg. 28)

Shedding innocent blood is the Biblical term for the unjustified taking of human life. It is the Biblical term that best describes abortion. On January 22, 1973, two

U.S. Supreme Court decisions, *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*, legalized abortion in all 50 states during all nine months of pregnancy for virtually any reason. This plunged America into a national tragedy that is unparalleled in American history, as the abortion death toll in America now exceeds 58 million preborn children.

Understanding the creation account is critical to knowing how to respond to the shedding of innocent blood. According to the Biblical record, God created man. "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..." (Genesis 1:26a ESV) "...then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature." (Genesis 2:7 ESV) The consistent declaration of Scripture is that God created man in His image and likeness.

The Apostle Paul identified the premise of the two competing worldviews when he wrote, "...they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen." (Romans 1:25 ESV) In other words there are ultimately only two worldviews. One denies there is a Creator and worships the creation. The other acknowledges the Creator and worships the Creator. The Biblical creation account is the foundation of a Biblical worldview.

Those who deny a Creator postulate that man was the product of a meaningless, random evolutionary process over billions of years, the result of a cosmic accident. Man

therefore becomes just another animal who has risen to the top of the evolutionary chain having succeeded in the survival of the fittest, having no intrinsic value by virtue of his origin. Denying the Creator man becomes his own god, accountable to no one but himself. This is the prevailing worldview of 21st century Western civilization. It is the worldview that makes room for the shedding of innocent blood.

This is illustrated by Mary Elizabeth Williams in her article entitled, "So what if abortion ends a life? I believe that life starts at conception. And it's never stopped me from being pro-choice." She writes, "All life is not equal...a fetus can be a human life without having the same rights as the woman in whose body it resides. She's the boss. Her life and what is right for her circumstances and her health should automatically trump the rights of the non-autonomous entity inside of her. Always." (Salon.com)

Williams defends the right to kill preborn children simply because the mother has the power to do so, a classic example of the survival of the fittest, the basic tenant of atheistic Darwinian evolutionary theory. When you deny the existence of a Creator, man is longer accountable to transcendent moral truth.

The Biblical evidence is clear. Man is created by God and for God. Man is created in His image and likeness. God recognizes the preborn to be distinct and unique persons from the moment of conception (e.g. Jeremiah 1:5). This truth is critical in forming a Biblical worldview that informs and shapes our response to

the shedding of innocent blood. The Biblical creation account provides us with the foundation for cherishing and protecting human life from the moment of conception.

The doctrine of “blood guilt” emerges very early in history. Genesis chapter four records the first crime in human history, the murder of Abel by his brother, Cain. “Cain spoke to his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said, ‘Where is Abel your brother?’ He said, ‘I don’t know, am I my brother’s keeper?’” (Genesis 4:8-9 ESV)

The story continues in verse 10, “And the Lord said, ‘What have you done?’ The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to *me* from the ground.” (Emphasis mine) The shed blood of Abel had a voice that cried out to God! This passage established the doctrine of blood guilt. The German commentator F. Delitzsch writes, “Innocent blood has no voice, it may be, that is discernible by human ears, but it has one that reaches God, as the cry of a wicked deed demanding vengeance.”

Bible commentator H. C. Luepold writes, “That a voice should be attributed to blood is not strange inasmuch as the soul is regarded as lodged in the blood of the man (Leviticus. 17:11) and the death of God’s saints is precious in His sight (Psalms 116:15)...God requires blood, that is, seeks out and avenges all instances of unjust shedding of blood....Men may esteem souls or blood lightly. Not so God.” (*Genesis*, pg. 205)

Similarly, John Ensor writes, “Blood guilt’ is a blunt, almost vulgar term. It hits rudely, like a slap in the face. It is

God’s chosen term to arouse godly fear and compel decisive action. It is a word awakening, forcing us to recognize an unbreakable linkage: God’s image is debased and his wrath justly incited every time a person made in God’s image is unjustly destroyed. There is no debasing of God’s image without consequences. Blood guilt requires God’s vengeance and vindication. It stands as an indictment against the sin of shedding innocent blood, but it is also a promise, of sorts, to victims.” (*Innocent Blood*, pg. 39-40)

After the flood, God gave Noah these instructions, “And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of a man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.” (Genesis 9:5,6 ESV)

God formally announces His demand for an accounting for the shedding of innocent blood. If a man takes another man’s life, God said, “I will require a reckoning.” In other words, God saw the need to restrain evil behavior so he instituted civil government to act as the protector of human life. Martin Luther writes, “This was the first command having reference to the temporal sword. By these words temporal government was established, and the sword placed in its hands by God.”

Theologically, the depravity of man provides the moral necessity for government. Therefore, God instituted government to restrain evil. The governing authority is God’s servant responsible to restrain evil, “...God’s servant for your good. But

if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer.” (Romans 13:4 ESV)

We have a problem in America at this point. Our government has failed to protect the innocent from being murdered in the womb. Government has betrayed our trust. Civil authorities, mayors, judges, congressmen, senators, and presidents, have denied preborn children their right to life.

Similarly the psalmist describes our leaders when he asked a rhetorical question of God. “Can wicked rulers be allied with you, those who frame injustice by statute? They band together against the life of the righteous and condemn the innocent to death.” (94:20-21 ESV) Those words could have been written of our day. They describe what the Supreme Court has done in legalizing the killing of preborn children.

Isaiah gave this warning: “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.” (5:20 ESV)

Back to Genesis 9:6. Notice the reason God demands justice for the shedding of innocent blood. “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.” The preservation and protection of innocent human life is necessary because human life bears the image of its Creator. The shedding of innocent blood is a personal affront to a Holy and Righteous God. It is in essence killing God in effigy.

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How should I respond to the shedding of innocent blood?

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God revealed to Adam and Eve and their offspring a plan to atone for man's sin. After calling Abram to leave his home and go to an unfamiliar land, God makes this remarkable promise, "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing, I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." (Genesis 12:2-3 ESV)

Through Abram's offspring, a Savior would come through whom the families of the earth would be blessed. God the Creator has intricately and purposefully bound Himself to His creation. We see His love message woven into His dealings with mankind from the very beginning.

Blood atonement was the central principle of God's plan of redemption. Leviticus 17:11: "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life." (ESV) This truth is central to the Biblical doctrines of both incarnation and atonement. Jesus' incarnation was the prerequisite to His work of atonement. The writer to the Hebrews understood this, writing, "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." (9:22 ESV)

Theologically you cannot separate salvation through atonement from the sanctity of human life because the life, the soul of man, is in the blood. John Ensor writes, "Is there anything more valuable than human life and the redemption of human life? By virtue of our salvation, Christians have inherited from God a

profound commitment to the sanctity of life and a devotion to make Christ known. Both come from holding blood (life) precious." (*Innocent Blood*, pg. 32)

With the incarnation we come full circle. The God who created human life in His own image, becomes a man so that through an act of love He could bear our sin on the cross so we could live in fellowship with Him for eternity. That is the Gospel of Life. That is the greatest reason there is to be prolife.

How should I respond to the shedding of innocent blood?

In Deuteronomy 21: 1-9, instruction is given to Israel regarding what to do when innocent blood is shed in the land. The body of a murdered man was found in a field, and no one knew who murdered him. The elders and judges were instructed to determine by measurement what town was located nearest the body. Then the leaders of that town were to lead the community in a process of atonement for the shedding of the innocent blood. Since the unknown murderer could not be punished, a heifer or young cow was killed to atone for the blood guiltiness in the land. The elders of the town washed their hands over the heifer declaring that "Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it shed. Accept atonement, O Lord, for your people Israel, whom you have redeemed, and do not set the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of your people Israel, so that their blood guilt be atoned for." (Deuteronomy 21:7-8 ESV)

Notice the result in verse nine, "So you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood, from your midst, when you

do what is right in the sight of the Lord." How should we respond to the shedding of innocent blood? We cannot ignore the shedding of innocent blood in our community or nation. In other words, we dare not go day after day, business as usual when innocent blood is being shed down the street from where we live, work, and worship. The county where I live has 23 abortion clinics, with three more just to the north and six just to the south of the county line. Can we say, as the elders of Deuteronomy, "Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it shed.?"

There is a role leadership must play in the effort to end the killing of the unborn. John Ensor writes, "Whenever the innocent are killed, no matter who they are, known or unknown, big or small, the Deuteronomic law instructs the spiritual leaders of the community to rearticulate the pro-life ethic. The people are to hear that the taking of innocent life or the passive acceptance of the death of the innocent is horrifyingly unacceptable." (*Answering the Call*, pg. 75)

A recent survey of women who have had an abortion found that "More than 1 in 3 (36 percent) women were attending a Christian church once or more times a month at the time of their first abortion." (LifeWay Research, May 2015). In 2005 it was reported that "...one in six women who have had abortions are evangelical Christians....This means 250,000 evangelical Christian women could choose to abort a child this year." (Heartlink.org, 2005) I wonder what role the silent pulpits of the Church have played in this tragedy.

Each of us can respond in some way to the bloodshed in our land. Michael Spielman has a website called abort73.com and produces prolife booklets. He writes, "It is unreasonable to suggest that everyone in the Church should be working relentlessly to end abortion, but it is not unreasonable to suggest that everyone in the Church should be doing something to end abortion." (*A Biblical Mandate to do Something About Abortion*)

You can volunteer at a crisis pregnancy center in your community. You can give financially to keep their doors open. You can pray for those at risk for abortion. And you can pray for the post-abortive, that they will come to know the forgiveness and healing available in the gospel. You can pray outside the abortion clinics, standing against the spiritual forces of darkness at work within. You can provide sidewalk counseling at abortion clinics for those being misled by the deceptive message of the abortion industry. You can support and vote for judges and political candidates who value human life. In one of the recent presidential elections around 25 percent of voting evangelicals voted for the pro-abortion candidate, and millions did not even bother to vote!

In Luke chapter ten, Jesus helped a lawyer understand what it meant to love his neighbor. The lawyer was evidently hung up on exactly what that looked like, so he asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus then tells him the story of a man on his way to Jericho from Jerusalem who was robbed and beaten and left half dead alongside the road. Three different individuals had the opportunity to come to his rescue,

in all likelihood to save his life. Two of the three did not respond to the needs of the man bleeding by the side of the road. Those two were the church leaders of that day, a priest and a Levite, responsible for the spiritual care of their nation. And Jesus points out that not only did they fail to respond but they "passed by on the other side." In other words, they consciously and deliberately distanced themselves from the needs of the man dying by the side of the road. Jesus then pointed out that the one who proved to be the neighbor to the dying man was the one who showed mercy to the badly beaten traveller. He then said, "Go and do likewise."

In his book *Innocent Life*, John Ensor defines "Samaritan compassion" this way, "Doing right in the sight of the Lord means acting to stop the shedding of innocent blood. The only person in Jesus' parable who is pro-life according to the demands of love is the Samaritan. Only he was willing to make the nearly dead man's problem his own. Only he was willing to see the victim's suffering as his own. Only he was willing to act according to what he would cry out for if their positions had been reversed." (pg. 25-37)

The Church in America is struggling in its response to America's abortion crisis. We have failed to expose the shedding of innocent blood and proclaim that repentance brings full pardon through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. We have failed to grasp the implications of the Gospel with regard to the killing of over 3,300 preborn children each day. According to Jesus' parable, salvation has a moral imperative built into it with regard to the needs of

those around us, our neighbors, including the unborn whose lives are threatened by abortion. Again, John Ensor writes, "Loving my neighbor will occasionally arrest me, and maybe even require me to help prevent someone from being murdered."

The writer of Proverbs said something very similar. It's as though he wrote these words for our day, which of course he did. "Save those who are being led to their death; rescue those who are about to be killed. If you say, 'We don't know anything about this,' God, Who knows what's in your mind, will notice. He is watching you, and He will know. He will reward each person for what He has done." (Proverbs 24:10-12 NCV) ♦

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Rev. James (Jim) McGarvey is a Samaritan Ministries member. Through *The Church for Life* Jim serves the church in its response to America's abortion crisis as it:

- leads the nation in prayer to end abortion;
- communicates the message of the sanctity of human life;
- ministers healing and restoration to the post-abortive;
- provides compassionate and practical help to those at risk for abortion.
- He has spoken in churches, colleges, pregnancy center fund raising banquets,
- staff and volunteer trainings and to pastors and youth.

You will find many of his messages and other resources online at churchforlife.blogspot.com and Facebook.com/churchforlife.

Contact Jim at parson02@bellsouth.net and 954-235-3482

See the member spotlight on Jim at samaritanministries.org/mcgarvey.

The State of the Ministry*Continued from page 1*

In the past few years it has been encouraging to see more and more believers join together through Samaritan Ministries to bear one another's health care burdens spiritually, emotionally, and financially, but this rapid growth also brings challenges. We have been aggressively working to expand and upgrade our facilities and our technical capabilities. I continue to be grateful to God for all of His provision in so many ways, including the faithful, determined effort of our staff.

When we purchased our current office building in 2011, we thought it would enable us to serve 50,000 members. But we didn't expect to reach that number so soon. As we saw how rapidly our membership was growing, we began looking for additional office space we could lease or purchase at other locations. We couldn't find anything that was suitable, so after much thought and prayer, we began preparing to seek bids on constructing a second building on our current property.

Just before we actually sought any bids, we learned of the availability of a building about 10 minutes from our current location that would provide needed space for about half of the cost of new construction. It had a large, free-span main room that would give us a lot of flexibility in installing a cubicle system to meet our needs.

In early December, we were able to purchase this building using funds we were able to save from growth in new memberships, continuing our commitment to remaining debt free.

We are thankful to God for this answer to prayer. Please pray that we will have wisdom as we do needed renovations and install the

computer, telephone, and electrical networks. If you would like to help with the cost of the renovations, you can contribute to the building fund using the form at the bottom of your share slip in this mailing.

We are excited that more Christians are deciding to depend on God and on fellow believers for their health care needs. We believe it is important for all of us, and for our country, to have more health care freedom for all citizens. We appreciate your part in this ministry of faith, seeking to build the Kingdom of God.

We are encouraged daily by the cards, notes, and letters of encouragement so many of you send to us. We pass them around to all of our staff members so they can be strengthened by them. We have a bulletin board full of your letters on the wall in a main hallway near our lunch room for everyone to read. Thank you to all of you.

I continue to be grateful for the prayers of all of you Samaritan members for the Board and staff, and for all of our members. We see evidence daily that He is answering your prayers. We are helpless without Him.

Please continue to pray that God will provide staff members who love Him above everything else and have the gifts and abilities needed to manage this rapidly growing ministry. Pray that we would be able to maintain personal caring and sharing, while establishing efficiencies where possible. ♦

For The Kingdom!



Ted A. Pittenger
International President

I am amazed at the notes I received. I had always just sent my check, but now I have personally seen how much of a ministry this truly is. I so appreciate the prayer, and I truly believe they have been a major reason why I have returned to health. God answers prayers. Thank for your devotion to this ministry.

*Dr. Scott Martin
Waynesville, North Carolina*

Health issues bring a lot of stress and worry. We try to trust God but it can be hard. When we recently lost our insurance because of a job change, it became clear that it was time to step out in faith and finally try Samaritan. Easy enough until our first need—an emergency surgery. But even though we had only been members a few months, we felt peace about the process, and it all went very smoothly. We would recommend Samaritan to any believers who are ready for a change.

*David and Lacy Carter
Denton, Texas*

Since becoming Samaritan members in January 2014 our family has had three needs. Each time God has blessed us. The financial needs were taken care of completely. We no longer have a \$7,000 deductible. This ministry has allowed our family to save thousands of dollars in health care costs.

It is a huge blessing to have our needs provided for by the body of Christ. We love that each month we are able to send our share to a family in need, not a big corporation.

We love to know people are praying for our needs and we do the same in return. Praying over the needs and Special Prayer Needs

has become a great addition to our prayer time. We look forward to continuing to share in the needs of others.

*Kyle and Michelle Skinner
Kennewick, Washington*

I can hardly put into words what it felt like to receive an encouraging letter from a complete stranger across the country congratulating us on the birth of our child. Someone saw our name in the prayer guide and took the time to handwrite us a letter. They have no idea how much that simple gesture blessed us.

Maternity felt like a rather large expense, but thanks to other members' shares providing for our need, all our bills were paid. What a blessing and what an experience to see God's people come together in such a broken world.

*Sarah Kaeb
Sabetha, Kansas*

It has been a great blessing to watch our twelve-year-old daughter personally receive God's provision. She has found His grace and love in every note, letter and prayer that each of you has sent us. Learning to accept God's gifts is just as important as learning to give them. We are grateful for this ministry opportunity.

Jenna has been personally writing each member that has given. She cannot believe how many people care about her and have prayed for her. Soon she will have oral surgery. These reminders coming in the mail have been keeping her calm and we are taking them with us to the waiting room.

We are all grateful for God's caring arms that are reaching out to us.

May this ministry always be protected and bountifully blessed.

*Jason and Cyndi Phillips
Asheville, North Carolina*

Seeing shares come in for our need has been amazing, but receiving gifts for our Special Prayer Need has been absolutely incredible. We were able to pay the equivalent of 5 months of payments on the plan we have set up with our doctor. Praise the Lord! We are humbled and challenged to give even more towards others Special Prayer Needs as well. Thank you so much for giving!

*Joshua and Kirsten Spears
Moore, Oklahoma*

Thank you so much for giving to our need. Joshua is our second baby and both have been born while we were members of Samaritan.

We are more grateful and humbled the longer we are part of this amazing ministry. It is so heartening to see such a practical, inspiring alternative to the quagmire of insurance companies and government programs. So many people complain about the current system but you all are actually doing something about it.

We love this way of taking part in the Church universal, putting hands and feet on the Biblical injunctions to care for one another. By this the world recognizes God's people, by their love. Samaritan is a beautiful expression of that.

When we joined Samaritan we really appreciated this ministry, but now we are passionate about it!

*Joseph and Hannah Garner
Johnson City, Tennessee*

Now I can list all the blessings I have received! The first note came in such a timely fashion. That particular morning I was struggling with a situation. The note was so encouraging as well as the verses that were quoted. It has been wonderful to see how this process works. My husband and I are thankful to be part of such a wonderful ministry. It has been a blessing to see the notes and financial assistance. We look forward to see how God will continue to work through His people and through us.

*Brett and Andrea Tedesco
Turner, Maine*

My wife Sally and I are constantly remarking how blessed we've been since joining Samaritan Ministries. We received so much help from the members this year. It is so comforting to know that there are many believers lifting my needs to Lord as I'm working through my illness, which is dramatically improving. The gift I received for my Special Prayer Need was quite an unexpected surprise.

More important that all of that though is the greater blessing of being able to directly help meet the needs of another member each month. It truly is more blessed to give than to receive. Your ministry makes it possible for all of us members to live this out. May God continue to bless and prosper you until the day you hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

*Tom and Sally Zito
Shelby Township, Michigan*

Prayer for the Persecuted Church

Hebrews 13:3 tells us to “Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.” Our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world are being persecuted for the sake of the Gospel. We need to remember them in prayer. Each month, the Christian Health Care Newsletter will provide updates gleaned from such sources as World Watch Monitor and The Voice of the Martyrs and offer prayer points. Please use them in your personal or group prayer time.

Christians escape arson

Four Christian families accused of witchcraft escaped being burned to death in their homes in Bangladesh, the Christian Post reports. In the past, bricks were thrown at their homes by local Muslims as well. One government official has come out in support of the families and police are searching for those responsible for the acts. *Praise God the families are OK; pray for their continued safety and an end to extremism in Bangladesh.*

Refugees returning to Vietnam

Seventeen Montagnard refugees who fled Vietnam because of religious persecution are planning to return home from Cambodia, International Christian Concern reports. Hundreds of the Christian minority group have fled the Vietnamese Central Highlands in the past few years, but their requests for refugee status have gone unfulfilled by the United Nations. *Pray for the safety of the returning refugees as*

they settle back into their home areas in Vietnam, where persecution is still practiced. Pray also that the persecution of Christians in the region will be exposed to the international community.

Indonesian church closed

An Indonesian Pentecostal church was closed on November 8 after complaints by neighbors about alleged lack of permission to operate as a church, Voice of the Martyrs reports. Indonesian law states that a church must obtain permission from 60 percent of neighbors to operate. The 200 members of Indonesia Pentecostal Agape Church in Surabaya are now worshipping at a nearby sister church. *Pray that Agape will be able to reopen and also for changes in Indonesian law regarding church locations. Pray also for the well-being of Agape's members and leadership.*

Church elder murdered

A church elder trying to help a woman being attacked outside his church in Ethiopia was killed August 30. The attackers assaulted the woman and others, including church elder Godana, 55, who was dragged back inside the church and hacked to death with machetes, VOM reports. The attackers returned two other times, wounding many more. *Pray for the family of Godana, as well as healing for those attacked. Pray also for the conversion of the attackers.*

Iraqi law requires conversion

A new Iraqi law would require the conversion of children to Islam if their father converted or mother married a Muslim man or Muslim-

background Christian, ICC reports. Changing an ID back to Christian is nearly impossible. ICC says “the long-term implications for this would be devastating.” *Pray that Iraqi President Fuad Masum would reject the proposal. Pray also for revival of the Church in Iraq and for the work of missionaries and local ministries there.*

Iran raids house church

A house church was raided in Tehran province in Iran on November 1, VOM reports. At least 14 Christian converts from Islam were arrested. Another Christian connected to the group was arrested the next day. Many members of the church are former members of a Protestant church forced to stop its Farsi-language services in 2012. Families and friends of those arrested were not told where their loved ones were being held. *Pray for the well-being and quick release of those arrested. Pray also for comfort for their loved ones and for protection for other Christians worshipping in Iran.*

Hmong house church razed

A building used by a Hmong house church in rural Laos was destroyed earlier this year. Sixty Hmong families attending the church had moved to the village after being persecuted in other areas, VOM reports. *Pray for a place for church members to assemble for worship, and that they may find ways to live out their faith in the midst of persecution.* ♦

For more information on the persecuted church, contact The Voice of the Martyrs (www.persecution.com, 877-337-0302), International Christian Concern (www.persecution.org, 800-422-5441) or World Watch Monitor (worldwatchmonitor.org).

Murders? Genocide? Of course, but since we are asking God why He doesn't deal with evil, we need to ask the following: If He does judge evil, whose moral standard will He use—his or ours?" And if the answer to that is "his", then won't it include a far longer list of evils than we would care to come up with, including our own. And we still want Him to deal with evil?

The sceptic objects: "But this just puts us all in the same category as terrorists, doesn't it?" The Biblical answer is both "No" and "Yes." No, of course all sins are not of the same magnitude. There is a hierarchy of sins and in that sense no, we are not all in the same boat. But on the other hand, the Apostle Paul says that the problem of humanity is not that some have sinned, but rather that "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). We all—terrorists and everyone else—are condemned for our sin (John 3:18).

Yet the question remains why God doesn't act to prevent evil things from happening in the first place. As Epicurus put it:

Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then He is not omnipotent. Is He able, but not willing? Then He is malevolent. Is He both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil? Is He neither able nor willing? Then why call Him God?

Clever, for sure, yet loaded with a flawed presupposition. This is the idea that to deal with evil, God must do so in the way we think he ought. And if he doesn't, we're going to tell him he doesn't exist. But the problem is that all of the ways we could come up with for God to deal with evil

would actually end up destroying not just evil, but humanity as well.

By our own reckoning, before any act of evil takes place—say terrorism—there might be three options for stopping it: God could prevent the person from doing it either by natural or miraculous means; He could destroy them either before or after the deed; or He could "reprogram" them so that they never again have such thoughts.

But with each of these "solutions" there is an insurmountable difficulty. With the first, the person's heart remains unchanged and so evil remains. With the second, not just the terrorist must be destroyed, but everyone else, too, since we are all guilty before God. And with the third, we lose our humanity and become like beasts.

So does God do nothing? On the contrary, He very much does something, though it is foolishness to the natural man. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, not only is the problem of evil dealt with, but it is done in such a way as to overcome the three problems mentioned above. It deals with the heart problem by drawing men to God through the Cross and changing their hearts. It deals with the problem of destroying all guilty humanity by offering hope of salvation to all. And it deals with the reprogramming problem by enabling us, through God's grace, to choose the good and forsake evil.

But what about Paris? Well, of course we don't have the answer to the "why Paris at that particular time," but we do have Jesus' answer to something very similar, which is his comments to those who came to tell Him of the "Galileans whose

blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices," and "the eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell" (Luke 13: 1-5).

Essentially, He refuses to answer the questions "why at Siloam," "why at that time," "why this people," and instead tells His hearers to take it as a warning to repent. No doubt He would give us the same answer today. To the natural man, His answer sounds harsh and cold, yet once we realise Who said it—the One who took nails, thorns and death willingly upon Himself in order to save those who repent—it is clear that the words are in no way harsh or cold.

The implication of His words are that such atrocities should serve as a warning to us all. We are like a rebellious teenager who despises his father and mother, and blames them when he crashes his car when drunk. We rebel against God, and then turn around to castigate Him for not dealing with evil. Yet God does promise to deal with evil. All evil that is, including yours and mine, and those who took the lives of Parisians. With the unrepentant, He will judge their evil after their deaths. But with the repentant, He has already dealt with it through the Cross, and He now offers full forgiveness, adoption into his family, and the promise of a pain-free, suffering-free, and evil-free life in the New Heavens and Earth. ♦

Rob Slane lives with his wife and six home-educated children in Salisbury, England. He is the author of The God Reality: A Critique of Richard Dawkins' The God Delusion, contributes to the Canadian magazine Reformed Perspective and blogs on cultural issues from a Biblical perspective at www.theblogmire.com.

1. <www.telegraph.co.uk/news/bbc/12009813/Paris-attacks-made-me-doubt-presence-of-God-admits-Archbishop-of-Canterbury.html>

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you.

John 16:7

We may sometimes think that it would be better to be able to see Jesus in the flesh, like His disciples did when He was on the earth. The truth is that they had something better after He left the earth—the Holy Spirit living in each of them. As believers in Jesus Christ, we have the same advantage today.

We can see Jesus at work in our lives every day. We can also see it in the believers around us. We can read or hear about what God is doing through other believers that we have no personal contact with. Yet God is doing so much more than that.

We as individuals cannot address all of the problems in the world. We cannot even handle all of the problems we know about. But as we members of the Body of Christ respond as the Holy Spirit prompts us, using what He has entrusted to us, the result will be more than what can be accomplished by all human institutions combined. It will be far more than we can even imagine.

For the Kingdom,



Ray King