

Christian HealthCare

NEWSLETTER

MEMBER LETTER:

Make sure you get a cash-pay discount

Last year I had emergency surgery for a ruptured appendix. At the hospital I was told cash-pay patients are automatically given a discount of 50-75 percent if they agree to pay a minimal fee upfront. I paid less than \$200 of “good faith” money in order to seal the discount.

When I finally got the bill, however, there was no discount listed, but instead the entire amount of \$41,410 was billed to me! I had to call and remind them that I was a cash-pay patient and that they had promised me a significant discount. You need to keep an eye on your bills and make sure they're right. You have to communicate and let them know you want the discount and are willing to pay it off.

They sent me a new bill reflecting the discount, and in the end I ended up paying about \$10,000 for an initial bill of over \$41,000!

*Donna Callahan
Martinsville, Virginia*

A question churches cannot ignore

by Ardee Coolidge

If a woman in your congregation faced an unplanned pregnancy, to whom could she turn for support?

As a member of my church's leadership team, this question has bothered me for too long. I have grown up in the Church. My father is a pastor, my grandparents and great-grandparents were missionaries, and there have been 17 pastors within three generations of my family. To say that church has been a large part of my life is an understatement. I sang the songs, bought the youth camp T-shirts, and ate the pot-luck dinners.

Yet, I am not sure that I can answer this question for my current church, nor do I feel I could answer it about the church in which I grew up.

This is a problem.

If I don't know the answer, then the young woman facing a pregnancy decision in my church probably doesn't either.

Sure, I have heard plenty of pastors preach about the importance of electing a pro-life and pro-marriage candidate in the presidential election. I have seen several fundraising baby bottle campaigns for local pregnancy centers. I even remember a number of revival services where the pastor preached about the national sin of abortion and God's impending judgment. However, I can't point to anything that would indicate a conscious and concerted effort to create a culture of

life within the sanctuary. Abortion, if it came up, seemed to be discussed around November or, in more active congregations, the March For Life in January.

Why is that? Is it enough for church leaders to say, “Life begins at conception,” and “We must elect a pro-life candidate this November,” or do the women and men of our congregations need more?

The American Culture & Faith Institute recently conducted a nationwide study of spiritually active Christians. One of the goals of the survey was to discover what social issues parishioners wanted

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Sharing Summary from February

Shares: <small>(reduced 5 percent)</small>	\$21,493,116	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:	\$21,490,893	
In Negotiation:	\$ —	
New Needs:	3,634	
Total Needs:	6,617	
New Rewards:	202	Member Households: 68,368 (as of 1/24/17)
Miscarriages:	52	
Final Rewards:	11	

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

Questions about?

Your medical need

Shares you are sending or receiving

Your membership

Email

needs@samaritanministries.org

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Phone Menu

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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.

Rebuilding communities from the ashes, part 1

by Rob Slane

There have been a growing number of books on the market in recent years which touch on the themes of community and place. Some of these books have sold extraordinarily well. Just to give a couple of examples, J.D. Vance's *Hillbilly Elegy* and James Rebanks's *The Shepherd's Life* have both sold in the millions and reached the top of bestseller lists. Both books are said to be unlikely hits.

But is it so extraordinary that these sorts of books, which are, among other things, a lament for the loss of community, should be so widely read? Not long ago, it would have been surprising, and it is highly unlikely that such books would have gained anything more than a small, niche readership. Yet in 2017 it's actually not extraordinary at all. And the reason for this is that some of the themes they touch upon—that of struggling, broken, splintering communities—are now obvious to all. People see the loss of community and increasingly they realize that something has gone very wrong.

Why so? On a foundational level, it is because man is a communal creature. He was never meant to live in isolation, but meant to function as part of a community and live in fellowship with others. He is meant to have families and those families are meant to live within a community of families. Yet in Western societies we now see man failing to do this on an epic scale.

I should make clear that I'm not even speaking just about the obviously broken communities, such as the one J.D. Vance describes in *Hillbilly Elegy*. Loss of community,

although it may look very different, is found in far more affluent areas as well, where people often hardly know their neighbors, let alone live in community with them. Many explanations can be given for this

Man is a communal creature, meant to live in fellowship with others. Yet in Western societies we now see man failing to do this on an epic scale.

phenomenon, from the effects of the industrial revolution right down to the digital revolution. But at the heart of it all, standing above all other reasons, is individualism, an ideology which is intrinsically hostile to both family and community.

To a certain extent, Western individualism can be seen as a response to another hideous ideology: communism. Whereas individualism places the individual and his or her rights to pleasure as the highest value, communism falls into the other ditch, and so elevates the idea of the communal above the individual, that the person is stripped of his or her dignity, honor, and identity.

I remember walking around my wife's home town of Cieszyn in Poland back in the early 2000s, a decade or so after the fall of com-

munistism there. The main square was filled with stunning examples of Bohemian architecture, and yet while some of them were beautifully painted in light pastel colors, many others were a hideous, dull gray. This was, she told me, a hangover from the communist era. At the insistence of the authorities, they had all been sprayed the same uniform, ugly gray. The ones that were painted were simply the ones where the owners could afford it, whereas the ones that were still gray were the ones whose owners couldn't afford to paint them or hadn't seen it as a priority. I'm happy to say that the last time I went back, a couple of years ago, all the gray was gone.

That such a hideous and conformist ideology is a great evil doesn't need any further comment. Meanwhile in the West, while we were congratulating ourselves that we weren't doing all that, we were busy engaging in a far subtler experiment. Whereas communism saw only the communal, and trampled on the individual, in the West the opposite was happening. The individual was being exalted, but to such an extent that the idea of community was starting to become obsolete.

This experiment is still going, and its fruits are only starting to reveal themselves. It hasn't led to any gulags being built, and probably never will, but it has led to a whole raft of enormous evils from the sacrifice of the family at the altar of pleasures, to the prevalence of drug taking; from the explosion in pornography, to the

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Joshua Becker
Becoming Minimalist
by Jaclyn Lewis

Joshua Becker discovered how true it is that “less is more.” “I was cleaning the garage, my wife, Kim, was cleaning the bathrooms, and my then 5-year-old son, Salem, was playing alone in the

backyard,” Joshua says. “I struck up a conversation with my neighbor who commented, ‘Maybe you don’t need to own all this stuff.’

“The juxtaposition was striking,” he says. “My possessions piled up in the driveway, my son in the backyard, my day slipping away. I immediately recognized something needed to change. My belongings were not adding value to my life. Instead, they were subtracting from it.”

That was Memorial Day in 2008, when Joshua was a youth pastor in suburban Vermont. He was so convicted by the material excess that he ran upstairs to tell his wife about it. Kim agreed it was time to dramatically decrease how much they owned.

Now Joshua’s passion and full-time work is to inspire others to live more by owning less. He shares the message of “minimalism”—the idea that being intentional with what we own gives us more time, more money, more energy, less stress, and more opportunity for generosity and gratitude.

“What people are looking for they can find by deciding to own less stuff rather than chasing possessions,” Joshua says.

As he and his wife began minimizing their possessions, Joshua began documenting their experience on a blog he called *Becoming Minimalist*.

“I’ve always been familiar with Jesus’s teachings on possessions and money, such as giving to the poor. I saw it as great sacrifice to give away all my things until I started doing it and started minimizing extra coats, televisions, coffee mugs, and began actually giving them away to local charities,” Joshua says.

“I realized that everything Jesus said was not a great call to sacrifice joy on earth. Instead it was the exact prescription to find joy and freedom. He knew very well our lives are too valuable to waste, chasing and maintaining things we don’t need.”

Over the next three years, *Becoming Minimalist* readership grew, books were published, and to Joshua’s surprise, God moved Joshua out of pastoral ministry and into



writing and speaking full time about minimalism.

While certainly different from preaching on Sunday morning, God showed Joshua that encouraging people to take their focus off their things is another way of reaching people for the Kingdom.

“If I can simply help people stop pursuing happiness in possessions, I don’t know where they’re going to turn next, but eventually some of them are going to run into Jesus when they begin finding a new meaning for their life,” Joshua says.

Everything he writes about is scriptural, though not always overtly Christian, and people are drawn—like the Athenians were in Acts 17—to these Biblical themes of meaning, fulfillment, love, and serving others.

He once received a blog comment from a woman who was impressed by how “interesting, meaningful, and thoughtful” his posts were, and how they made her think. “When I looked at the commenter’s personal website, the entire page was devoted to witchcraft. Yet, she was so moved by owning less.”

On any given day, Joshua might be writing in the early morning, getting his kids—Salem, 14, and Alexa, 10—ready for school, maintaining a collaborative newsletter on minimalism, or travelling to speaking engagements across the country.

Joshua and Kim also raise money and awareness for The Hope Effect, an orphan care ministry they founded with all the extra resources they saved by becoming a minimalist family, including extra money from their most recent book, *The More of Less: Finding the Life You Want Under Everything You Own*.

“In many third world countries, kids are merely kept within four walls, not nurtured the way we would nurture our own child,” Joshua says. “We’ve known for decades that this environment is harmful for kids.”

The Hope Effect model teams up with local like-minded people to build campuses of 4 to 5 homes. Two adult caregivers live as parents in each home to a group of orphaned children.

These homes will function like families. Home parents commit to raising the children from birth to age 18, and then to continue to offer lifelong parental support to adult children. The Hope Effect even plans for homes to grow like real families by adding no more than two children to one home at a time.

The first Hope Effect home is being finished in Siguatepeque, Honduras, on the campus of La Providencia, with parents moving in later this year. A second project has begun in San Luis Río Colorado, Mexico.

You can start your own fundraising campaign for the Hope Effect campus in Mexico by visiting HopeEffect.com. All donations go directly to caring for orphans. Administrative costs are raised separately.

As busy as work and ministry keep the Becker family, Joshua uses the principles of minimalism to keep his focus on what’s most important in daily life, just like his dad did for him.

“My father worked hard at whatever he was doing,” Joshua says. “So when my dad went to work, he worked hard. He also worked hard at church, always fully committed. When he was at home, he worked hard at being with us kids. He wasn’t off watching TV or reading the news. He was playing with us, helping us with homework, playing sports.”

“When I’m doing *Becoming Minimalist*, I want my kids to see me working hard. But when I’m with them, I want them to see us serving our church and working hard as parents.” ♦

Why SMI?

At the end of 2015, Joshua Becker had been self-employed for 7½ years. The family was living in Peoria, Arizona, and needed some kind of a health care plan, as the plan they were with was pulling out of the Phoenix market. All the other policies were expensive, so he began researching another solution.

After reading a Facebook thread of self-employed friends talking about their health care plans, Joshua was shocked by how many were part of a health care sharing ministry.

“I didn’t talk to a single person who had used Samaritan Ministries that was unhappy with it. Everyone said they use it and they love it.”

Joshua says he’s “super happy” with the ministry, and, of course, glad that he hasn’t had to start a need yet. His wife, Kim, writes the monthly check to a Samaritan member, “and she loves getting to send the money to somebody and getting to put the note in there,” he says. “It’s a more meaningful experience for her than having the health premium automatically deducted from the bank.” ♦

I was battling a spiritual disease far worse than multiple sclerosis

by Karyn Finneseth

Until May 2015, I was a healthy, physically fit wife and mother of four. A month later, our family faced drastic changes when my health dramatically declined.

At first, small problems occurred. Eventually, I lost the ability to think clearly and walk. MRIs confirmed demyelination from multiple sclerosis—a loss of the sheath insulating nerve cells in my brain and spinal cord.

With a health care background, I knew the devastation of this disease. Medications and treatments offered limited effectiveness combined with a long list of negative side effects. I was unwilling to accept this prognosis, yet where was I to go?

Every aspect of my life was affected, even hindering my close relationship with Jesus. Without cognitive ability to communicate with Him, my prayers faded. Some mornings I'd wake up and could only say, "God, I just need Your help to get through this day."

I knew James 5 says to "call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil. And such a prayer in faith would heal the sick."

I knew. But I didn't want to. I was battling another disease far worse than multiple sclerosis. This disease takes different forms, some easily concealed, some blatantly obvious. I could identify it in others, yet couldn't see it in myself.

This disease is "Pride," a spiritual cancer eating up love and contentment, even common sense. My center of gravity had switched from

God to self. I made myself really big and God very, very small. And out of pride flowed a host of physical problems.

I didn't want to go before the elders because I would have to admit I needed help. I convinced myself that not bothering anyone was good somehow, that I didn't need someone going to God for me. I could ask Him for healing on my own. But I simply was unwilling to go before the Lord.

God knew what I needed and met me there. He provided mentors who came alongside our family, who sought us out by coming to our home. They talked about asking the elders for prayer and choosing to give thanks in these circumstances. I was thankful for a loving and supportive family, good friends, and for having some function left, but I couldn't truly thank God for this disease process.

I struggled over the next 2½ months. Struggled to walk, struggled to think, struggled to be a wife and a mother, things once so natural and simple for me. Finally hitting rock bottom, I decided to humble myself and do what the Bible says.

I went there hoping to gain a little function to do things I enjoyed, but the elders approached it differently. They actually prayed that at some point in my life there would be no evidence of this disease again.

While they prayed, I thought, "You have no idea about this disease. This is not one that's healed." But, thank God, they truly believed God is bigger than medical knowledge and science.

The rest of the week was horrible. I declined physically. I cried. I raved, "This just proves this whole 'going before the elders' idea is a historical thing not meant for us today. Healing doesn't happen anymore."

I got bitter. I got angry. And I got worse. The beauty of God is that you can't hide from Him. The friends and mentors He chose gave me resources about nutrition, lifestyle, and choices that were affecting me adversely.

Hearing about nutrition again and again irritated me. I felt my friends oversimplified a complex disease that doctors and scientists had spent their lives studying. I thought, "Before this happened, I was the picture of health, so who are you to tell me what to do? Who are you to tell me something the medical professionals didn't address or bring to my attention?"

Pride. I elevated the world's view of science, health, and disease. I made God smaller and smaller. My pride ran rampant, but God wouldn't leave me in that place.

Lying on the ground unable to walk, with ugliness flowing from me, I cried out to God, "I can't do this anymore. I can't live inside this body that I no longer know how to work. I can't be a wife and mother like this. It's not fair to my family." I confessed, "I've always desired to be used for Your purposes, but I don't know how to anymore."

After my brutal honesty, God pointed me to 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. "Always be joyful, never stop praying, and in all circumstances,

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New research says eat fat to prevent diabetes and heart disease

by Lucy Johnston

Current dietary advice says foods containing high levels of saturated fats such as cream, butter, red meat, eggs, and cheese should be avoided because they increase the risk of heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, and cancer.

But a study published in a leading medical journal has found the opposite is true, with a diet full of natural fats improving the health of people taking part.

Professor Sherif Sultan, a heart specialist from the University of Ireland, said: “We urgently need to overturn current dietary guidelines.

“People should not be eating high carbohydrate diets as they have been told over the past decade.

“Instead our diets should be largely based on good quality high-fat foods. This will prevent the rising epidemic of Type 2 diabetes and reverse the growing numbers of people suffering weight-related heart problems.”

The study, published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, found overweight middle-aged men who ate high levels of saturated fat and low levels of carbohydrate became slimmer and healthier.

Researchers also saw reduced blood pressure and glucose levels, which are associated with a lower risk of heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, and cancer, in the patients.

The people in the study were given unprocessed fats from natural sources, including butter, cream and cheese, along with coconut oil. Scientists believe these are “good

fats” that absorb well in the body.

They did not include manufactured fats such as margarine, highly refined oils, and trans-fats used in processed foods.

Experts say refined carbohydrates turn into sugar in our bodies, causing a spike in the energy storage hormone insulin, leading to fat accumulation in the cells.

Professor Sultan said: “High carbohydrate diets and refined sugars, both are the critical mass in cardiovascular deaths and a major disaster for the 21st century.”

Dr. Simon Dankel, associate professor at the University of Bergen in Norway, which carried out the study, said: “There is a tremendous focus on avoiding high-fat foods for weight control but this study challenges the notion that saturated fats have a strongly negative impact on health and weight.

“The men on a high fat diet not only lost weight but also became slimmer and had lower cholesterol levels.”

However, the researchers said it is very important to make the distinction between the types of fat. ♦

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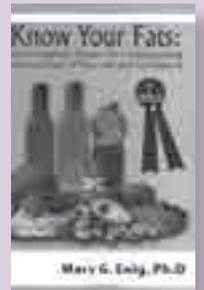
Additional resources

reviews and more available at SamaritanMinistries.org/fat

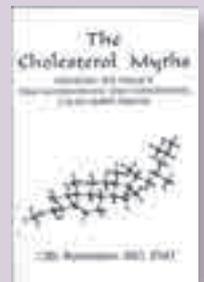
The Great Cholesterol Con: *The Truth About What Really Causes Heart Disease and How to Avoid It* by Dr. Malcom Kendrick.



Know Your Fats: *The Complete Primer for Understanding the Nutrition of Fats, Oils, and Cholesterol* by Dr. Mary G. Enig, Ph.D.



The Cholesterol Myths: *Exposing the Fallacy that Saturated Fat and Cholesterol Cause Heart Disease* by Uffe Ravnskov, MD, Ph.D.



Eat Fat, Lose Fat: *Reset Your Metabolism, Boost Energy, Banish Fatigue, Eliminate Cravings, and Fight Disease* by Dr. Mary Enig and Sally Fallon



The Miracle of Natural Hormones by Dr. David Brownstein



Patrick and the power of the Gospel

by Jed Stuber

For some, St. Patrick's Day is merely an excuse for parades, parties, and green beer. Others are only vaguely aware that the day passes.

In any case, it's a shame to miss out on a great story demonstrating the power of the Gospel.

Patrick lived in Great Britain during the fifth century when the Roman Empire was declining and Christianity was spreading. Pagan raiders from Ireland kidnapped and enslaved him. He was exposed to Druid ritual sacrifices and thrown into a dungeon when he was only 16 years old. This crisis caused him to recall his Christian upbringing, cry out to God, and be converted to Christ. Years later he escaped back to his family in Britain, but eventually God called him to return to Ireland to be a mis-

sionary to the very people who had enslaved him.

Patrick established churches, schools, and orphanages throughout Ireland, and even saw some of the nobility converted to Christ in his lifetime. That's not all. A popular book titled *How the Irish Saved Civilization* has this to say about him:

Not only did he bring Christianity to Ireland, he instilled a sense of literacy and learning that would create the conditions that allowed Ireland to become "the isle of saints and scholars"—and thus preserve Western culture while Europe was being overrun by barbarians.

There are so many lessons we can learn from Patrick's life:

- Suffering brought Patrick to a crisis of faith, forcing him to decide what he really believed.
- His parents feared for his faith but took comfort in the fact that they had prayed for him and taught him the Gospel.
- God used these means to minister to Patrick and save him out of the darkness of a dungeon and the darkness of his sins.
- The Gospel compelled him to love his enemies. It drove him to pray and prepare to go back to Ireland, risking his life.
- The Word of God was treasured in a time when most people were unable to have a copy for themselves.
- God sovereignly orchestrated

"Patrick converted a Druid, pagan hell hole into one of the first great Christian nations in the world. Ireland truly did found Western Civilization in many ways."

From *The Power of the Gospel*, with Marshall Foster



WorldHistoryInstitute.com/media



Learn the true story of St. Patrick's Day, and then throw a party

by Carla Estell

the details of Patrick's life. The story goes that Patrick's experience working with wolfhounds as a slave shepherd would later provide him a way of escape and a way to present the Gospel.

- Another story says Patrick intentionally got a king's attention by breaking the protocol of a pagan festival. He lit a bonfire before the king lit one. Patrick could have been put to death, but instead got an audience with the king, who was converted.
- Patrick's faithfulness affected an entire country and left a legacy known the world over.

Of course, there are also some unhelpful embellishments and legends that have grown up around Patrick's life, so we need to be discerning about what we read.

Did Patrick use three-leafed clovers to teach the Trinity? We don't know, but it's not a bad idea to use something common in culture as a springboard to present the truth. And we might as well take advantage of the opportunity to do the same with the day associated with Patrick.

One helpful resource that your whole family can enjoy is *The Power of the Gospel*, a 10-minute video by Christian historian Marshall Foster available at worldhistoryinstitute.com/media. It sets Patrick's story in the sweep of redemptive history, and I think you'll be encouraged and inspired by it. ♦

In our family we've looked at holidays as a natural way to get our children more engaged in learning, and as a great opportunity to share the Gospel with friends and neighbors.

So when our kids complained about missing out on a St. Patrick's Day party like the kids at school, we thought, "Why not host our own?"

We invited the neighborhood children over for backyard fun and games, complete with the green Kool-aid and cupcakes. Later that night we had a bonfire and invited the parents to come. It gave us a natural way to talk about God's amazing grace in Patrick's life.

My husband, Brian, really got into it, dressing up as Patrick to make an appearance and tell stories in first person. I developed a coloring book for children, which you can download at bit.ly/colorstpatrick.

We were accomplishing several goals at once. We were teaching our children about the Gospel and our Christian heritage, while reaching out to our neighbors. Our children saw that learning is fun, and at the same time they gained experience serving and hosting others.

We even taught about discerning fact from fiction when studying history. We know the content has stayed with them because they got involved in the story. They didn't just read about it in a textbook.

Our backyard St. Patrick's Day activities not only turned into a family tradition, but it also brought the folks in our neighborhood together for many years.

We've also done Christmas plays with parts for the neighbor children. The week before Easter we've gone on pre-dawn hikes meditating on the Gospel passages about the women discovering the empty tomb. At Thanksgiving, we've dressed up as Pilgrims and Indians.

As the years go by, we have seen even more significance to these experiences.

Romans 12 exhorts us, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." The chapter concludes, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

We don't have to give in to ignorance, misinformation, and misinterpretation of Patrick's life. We don't have to let the world get away with twisting powerful symbols and reminders of God's hand in history. We can put the "holy" back in holiday, using it as an opportunity to worship God and point others toward Him.

Of course, you don't have to go to the lengths of hosting a party to do this. You can start by learning a little bit about Patrick so you are ready when an opportunity arises in conversation. This St. Patrick's Day, simply tell some aspect of Patrick's story to your kids, co-workers, or neighbors and allow the story to illustrate the life-changing power of the Gospel. ♦

Carla Estell is the wife of Brian Estell, who works in Communications at Samaritan Ministries. Visit StonesTrueStory.org for more about their ministry.

give Me thanks.” I cried out, “Today I’m choosing to give You thanks for this disease process, even though I don’t feel thankful.”

Soon I picked up a book from my friends, skimming pages until I came to the “outlook with nutrition and lifestyle changes on brain diseases.” Should I make some changes? What did I have to lose?

Making nutritional changes was exhausting, but small changes became big changes over time. One day the mental fog and headaches disappeared. My reasoning and research ability returned. Next, my hands and feet regained mobility.

I was so excited I didn’t recognize God’s healing process until people said, “Karyn, this is the hand of God. The elders prayed, and God put you on the path to healing.”

God was transforming how we lived, what we spent money on, what our entertainment was, how I worked. These changes caused a new struggle as I questioned if I wanted to do this my whole life.

I went to the Lord. He taught me a hard-to-hear truth from 1 Corinthians 10:23, “You have the right to do anything, but not everything is good for you.” And 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, “Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, Who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for you were bought with a high price.”

These scriptures made me aware that I approached my lifestyle and nutrition as a means to pleasure, rather than a matter of stewardship. I asked Him to forgive me and free me from what had gripped me for so long.

Although these truths now held

me, I needed to embrace new tools and discipline for healing. Rudolph Virchow said, “It’s the curse of humanity that it learns to tolerate even the most horrible situations by habituation.” I had to ask for help from the very people I had belittled. And they willingly mentored me in nutrition, lifestyle changes, and great life lessons.

God used Joyce Kaping and Colleen Anderson at Farm Girl Fresh to help me know what “processed foods,” “pure foods,” and “whole foods” meant (FarmGirlFresh.com). They reset my perspective on a healthy diet, and taught my family principles to create a permanently healthy lifestyle.

This uncommon path seemed crazy at first. The results didn’t happen immediately, but it made all the difference in my journey back to health. I worked hard, took responsibility for choices within my power, and dealt with the idols of convenience and comfort.

After applying the Farm Girl Fresh principles, I experienced repair throughout my whole body. What caused dread became good and fun for my entire family. At Farm Girl Fresh, Joyce and Colleen help plant seeds to reap a harvest of physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

Looking back on this trial, I’ve learned life-changing lessons. One clear lesson is that whatever I allow into my life has consequences. Media, conversation, food—anything that infiltrates mind and body is never neutral. It has consequences.

I never intended to become sick or proud. But cumulative choices engaging in selfish pleasure over my lifetime caught up to me at 38 years old. As Jonathan Edwards wrote,

“Spiritual pride is the main spring of all other errors, and until this disease is cured, medicines are applied in vain to all other diseases.”

I’d love to say I’m over pride, but I still struggle. When discouraged, I feel I’m stuck in pride permanently. But when I am honest with God, He brings hope.

Pride is my greatest enemy, and humility is my greatest friend. I must embrace humility. Pondering the One Who came to serve, not be served, radically changes my perspective. Humility is not acquired quickly, but takes a lifetime of faith and work.

God taught me to go to the mirror of His Word and rightly see the individual staring back at me. Even when I’m replacing harmful input with wholesome, I need to consult God for wisdom, praying for the Holy Spirit to reset my perspective on what is pure in His sight.

Every time I open myself up to God, He reveals Himself to me. God could have healed me any way He wanted, but He chose a discipline process that keeps me coming to Him. He draws me closer through His Word, prayer, and repentance, an ongoing process of restoring my physical and spiritual health. He’s teaching me love and compassion for others beyond my own capacity.

I stand in awe of the Lord’s ability to change my perspective, to heal. I was so deceived by this disease. I thought it could only bring destruction. God flipped my world upside down and showed me that He gave me a gift. What seemed awful, He is using for greater good. He took my brokenness and transformed it into beauty. ♦

Karyn, her husband Robert, and their four children are members from Litchfield, Minnesota.

The Health Resources app on Dashboard saved us a trip to the doctor

by Brian Barry

When our 3 year-old daughter started acting tired and cranky one day, we did not initially have serious medical concerns.

But then, the symptoms started to pile up. She had a fever on and off for a few days.

She would cry a lot, want to be held constantly, and seemed very congested (cough, runny nose, etc.). Her eyes were continually red and watery. She refused to take any medicine. Since she

was so miserable, at one point I felt I had no choice but to pour children's acetaminophen down the hatch.

Most concerning of all was that she would hardly eat or drink anything. She only ate two pieces of cereal one day, and the next day she did not eat anything at all. We were barely able to cajole her into taking a few sips of liquid at a time. We did everything we could to get her to rest as much as possible, and we tried everything to get her more fluids (fruit juice, popsicles, etc.).

What I needed to know was: How dangerous was the situation for my little girl? I needed someone to tell me whether the symptoms were serious enough to warrant a doctor visit, or even a trip to the ER.

I doubted whether a doctor visit would help anything in this particular case (they do not administer IVs for rehydration, as far as I know); I was also fearful that an ER visit

would be traumatic for her.

I went online to try to assess the situation. I didn't want to do either one unless we had to, but also wanted to make sure we were caring for her and getting her everything she needed. The information I read

online seemed promising, but it was hard to know whether I was interpreting everything correctly.

I remembered that I could contact a doctor through my Dashboard, so I logged in, sent a message to a doctor,

and waited for a reply.

In about an hour and a half, I had an answer from an M.D., and I felt relieved to know that my daughter wasn't as bad as I thought she might be. We weren't going to have to go to the doctor or ER this time. The doctor confirmed that our daughter would be all right as long as she was still drinking fluids, and not to worry if I couldn't get her to eat. She also let me know what to watch for in case things worsened.

I had a plan of action, knew I now had an accurate assessment of my daughter's situation, and praised God to know that she wasn't in any immediate danger. ♦

Brian works in Communications at Samaritan Ministries.



Health Resources
Dash.SamaritanMinistries.org

When given the opportunity, I love to share the impact of Samaritan Ministries. Recently, it was with unbelieving neighbors we invited to a baseball game. The subject of health insurance came up. They wanted to know more about Samaritan so I mentioned the statement of faith. It was a perfect opportunity to share the message of Jesus Christ.

On another note, my daughter and her family are also members. She recently told me they were on the way to a doctor's appointment to schedule a foot surgery for my grandson, Caleb. While driving, she called Samaritan, and the representative prayed for Caleb. All the children were in the car and sat quietly and listened as prayers for him were lifted heavenward. What an impact on those children, and especially the mom, who had tears in her eyes.

*Paul and Karen Van Den Berg
Newbury, New Hampshire*

It can be frightening to get a diagnosis of cancer, even for those of us who love Jesus! I'm going through chemotherapy and radiation treatments, and have prayed for God's peace that passes understanding. I have many believers holding me up in prayer and encouraging me.

I was able to start my treatments 2-3 weeks earlier because I have Samaritan, not insurance. The doctor told me that is very important for cancer patients. Samaritan is a huge witness to the medical community also!

I can honestly say I am thankful for this trial and count it all joy, even the loss of my hair. Thank you, Lord Jesus.

*Charlotte Rodgers
Klamath Falls, Oregon*

their pastors to cover. The results couldn't be more conclusive.

Ninety-one percent of respondents wanted more information from their pastor on abortion and topics related to the "beginning of life, right to life, contraception, adoption, and unwed mothers."

It is clear that our congregations do not believe that leaders are talking about this issue enough.

As church leaders, we have heard the world's message that pastors need to stay out of issues of sexuality. No doubt, pastors often wrestle with the fear of bringing up controversial issues like contraception or unwed motherhood and decide to choose a more socially acceptable topic. However, the question of life is not in a vacuum. If churches do not actively teach on this issue, congregations will turn elsewhere. All too often, the voices they encour-

ter will point them towards a life-denying decision.

Of course it is not simply enough to preach on life. What we say as leaders is equally important as how often we say it.

36 percent of women who had an abortion were attending church at least once a month at the time of their abortion.

Growing up, most abortion sermons I heard made abortion sound like a problem "out there" in

the world, rather than within the body of Christ. Recently, Care Net inspected the relationship between abortion and the Church. Once again, the results are startling.

Our research found that as many as 36 percent of women who had an abortion were attending church at least once a month at the time of their abortion. A 2014 study conducted by the pro-choice Guttmacher Institute found that 56 percent of women who obtained abortions said they were Christians. While this percentage has decreased since their 2008 study, clearly abortion is the Church's sin just as much as it is the world's.

If women and men making pregnancy decisions feel unprepared to answer the vital questions of life and abortion, then what can we do? How can we create a culture of life within our congregations and

Planned Parenthood supporters outnumber pro-lifers at recent rally

by Michael Miller

Although no firm numbers are available, reports on the Web indicate that those gathering across the country for February 11's Defund Planned Parenthood protests were outnumbered by those "defending" the nation's largest abortion provider.

That was the case at the Peoria DefundPP protest that I attended. The counterprotest by PP supporters reportedly was in place hours earlier. The pro-PP protesters outnumbered pro-lifers at least 3-1, probably more.

The Defund Planned Parenthood protests were aimed at building support for removing federal funding of Planned Parenthood centers, which receive \$500 million a year. The half-billion dollars helps PP balance its books and stay in business as an abortion provider.

Why was the pro-life turnout so slim on February 11? Was it because an ostensibly pro-life administration is in the White House, so there's not as much motivation to act? Was it because Christians are exhausted by the pro-life move-

ment, or prefer another approach than protests? Or was it because churches no longer encourage their members to get out there and defend those who can't defend themselves, in this case, unborn babies?

We need to be out there. We need to be involved in supporting women's pregnancy centers. We need to be involved in efforts like 40 Days for Life.

We need to show up. ♦

empower them to live the abundant life Christ promises?

The first thing we can do is to affirm the blessing of life, no matter age, wealth, or circumstance.

A few weeks ago, I was speaking with some friends about children. My wife and I just celebrated the first birthday of our daughter Bethany. This other couple shared with us how encouraged they were to see a Christian couple that was happy with their children. They went on to explain that they have seen several couples in their church who have openly expressed the struggles of bringing up children and their regret at deciding to get pregnant in the first place. One Christian couple told them that they wish they had never had children. The mother told them that she went back to work as soon as possible so she could get away from her kids. Our friends confessed that the lack of positive examples in their church made them extremely reluctant to ever have children themselves.

If young men and women hear only of the struggles of childrearing and not the great joys and blessings, how can we expect them to choose life? I believe this is one of the reasons that the Apostle Paul enjoins churches to be places of cross-generational discipleship. Older couples are to mentor younger ones and help them see beyond the difficulties faced in the moment. Baby days and retirement celebrations should be part of living life in the Church.

We need to be conscious about teaching our congregations how to offer compassion, hope, and help to those facing pregnancy decisions. Care Net is about to release its *Making Life Disciples* curriculum.

This six-part DVD series is designed to train congregations on how to walk women and men through pregnancy decisions, through a ministry that will be housed in the Church. The abortion industry is proud of the fact that one in three women will have an abortion. While this number is debatable, as disciples of Christ we can't wait any longer to address this issue head on; too many lives are at stake.

Finally, we need to recognize that God has specifically called us to address this issue. When a young woman visits a pregnancy resource center and chooses to raise her child or place it for adoption, her journey is just beginning. It is the Church that can most easily support her in the long term. She can access marriage and parenting education ministries. Couples in the Church can come alongside her. Business leaders in the Church can offer her employment. Church schools can offer discounts on education. What better place to provide life-affirming support and ongoing discipleship than the Church?

Ultimately, it should be my goal as a church leader that anyone in my congregation facing a pregnancy decision would know where to turn for help. The Church can no longer "outsource" the work of ministering to women and men considering abortion. The Church cannot wait for *Roe v. Wade* to be overturned in the courts; we have to overturn it in our pews first. ♦

Ardee Coolidge is Communication Manager for Care Net. This article first appeared on the CareNet.org Abundant Life Blog.

Six ways you can contribute to the pro-life cause

1. Pray: Any effective ministry must be dependent upon God.

2. Get involved with a Pregnancy Resource Center in your area:

- Donate clothing.
- Help get the word out on social media.
- Answer hotline calls.
- Teach a parenting class.

3. Minister at an abortion clinic:

- Simply pray.
- Distribute literature.
- More than 12,000 babies have been saved as a result of peaceful campaigns. Participate in 40 Days for Life campaigns (40daysforlife.com).

4. Talk to your church leaders:

- Encourage awareness and Biblical teaching.
- Get others from your church involved.

5. Contact your elected officials: You can send an email to all your officials at once with this tool:

FRCAction.org/contact-officials

- Ask them to end government funding for abortion.
- On the state level, ask your representatives to support measures that require ultrasounds before an abortion.

6. Support the Morning Center, a ministry Samaritan launched to provide free maternity care to women in crisis pregnancies. Visit MorningCenter.org to learn more.

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.

Chinese pastor sentenced

A pastor in Guiyang, China, has been sentenced to prison for “divulging state secrets,” Voice of the Martyrs reports. Pastor Yang Hua, also known as Li Guoshi, of the Living Stone Church was sentenced to 2½ years. He was initially sentenced to two five-day detentions in December 2015. He and another pastor founded Living Stone in 2009, and its membership has rapidly expanded to more than 700 members. *Pray for Pastor Yang’s safety in prison, for the well-being of his family and congregation, and that members of Living Stone will grow in faith.*

Coptic Christians murdered

Four Coptic Christians in Egypt were murdered in a 10-day span in early January, World Watch Monitor reports. Youssef Lamei was murdered on January 3 after being threatened by Muslims. Then, on January 6, when Coptic Christians celebrate Christmas, a husband and his wife were found murdered

in their home, although no valuables were taken. Finally, Dr. Bassam Safwat Atta was found dead from a knife wound in his apartment on January 13. Again, valuables and cash were left in the apartment, indicating that robbery was not the motive. WWM says that “Copts have been terrified by the nature of the killings and believe the victims were singled out because of their faith.” *Pray for safety and encouragement for the Coptic community in Egypt and that they will remain strong in their faith.*

Mexican families living in temporary shelters

Thirty Christians kicked out of a village in the western Mexican state of Jalisco are living in a wine cellar, WWM says. The seven families were evicted from their homes when almost 2,000 residents of Tuxpan de Bolanos voted to evict them for religious reasons. They have been surviving in temporary shelters provided by the state government, with the wine cellar the latest space. Government authorities have not addressed the issue. An Open Doors analyst says that the Christians were evicted for religious reasons, “deemed incompatible” with the village’s indigenous culture. *Pray that the families will be able to return to their homes and that, until then, they will be provided with the necessities of life. Pray also for their witness to unbelievers.*

Refugees ‘struggle for survival’

Christian refugees from the destroyed city of Qaraqosh, Iraq’s largest Christian city, “continue to struggle for survival,” VOM says. The city was under control of the Islamic

State for two years, but more than 20,000 people fled the city as Iraqi and Kurdish forces fought for its liberation. A VOM worker says their suffering is “indescribable.” *Pray for the safety and needs of all those who have been left homeless by the Qaraqosh battle.*

Pakistani Christian arrested

A Pakistani Christian could be sentenced to death after torn pages from a copy of the Quran with his name written on them were found near his home, WWM reports. Babu Shabbaz Masih, from Lahore, was arrested on December 30 when a Muslim neighbor reported him to police. Police also at first held Shabbaz’s wife and children “for their own safety.” *Pray that Shabbaz will be released and that he and his family will be able to find a safe place to live.*

Pastor’s home raided

Police raided a pastor’s home during a worship service in Azerbaijan in November and took 26 people to headquarters, VOM reports. The congregation’s members were forced to write an explanation of their activities. Twenty-two of the adults were released, but others, including Pastor Hamid Shabanov, were held longer. Pastor Hamid was fined in 2013 for holding an unregistered worship service. *Pray that the pastor and his congregation will remain strong in their faith and continue to worship despite police harassment.* ♦

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).

massive increase in depression; from the huge feeling of loneliness and isolation that millions feel, to the loss of community everywhere.

What is the nub of individualism? It is the belief that I myself am king and that nobody has the right to tell me what to do, to deny me any pleasure I seek, or to stop me from doing what I want. It's my right to take drugs, and has nothing to do with you. It's my right to have latchkey kids that I leave to fend for themselves or constantly shunt off to others, because I'm doing whatever I want to do, and it's none of your business. It's my right to sit around watching hardcore porn and what's that to you. It's my business whether I sleep with someone who isn't the person I'm married to, and it's nothing to do with you. And so on.

The most common response to these attitudes is to basically shrug the shoulders and say, "Well yeah, it has nothing to do with me." It is easy to see why we might take this essentially libertarian option. We take it because we think the alternative is the overbearing, overweening state that regulates what we watch, what we ingest, what we do with our time and our bodies. In other words, the ideology of individualism is petrified that the ideology of communism will rear its ugly head and come and strip us of our rights and our pleasures.

But should I care about these things? Should I care that my neighbor is defiling himself with porn? Should I care that my neighbor is taking drugs? Should I care that my neighbor is on welfare and sits around all day doing nothing? Should I care that my neighbor is going through a divorce in a marriage that might, with

counselling, be saved? Should I care that my neighbor has chosen material gain over looking after her children? While the ideology of individualism says "no," the Biblical answer is "yes," of course I should care, although the proposed solution is not some heavy-handed, overbearing state cracking down on people.

Why should I care? For two reasons: first, because these sorts of things adversely affect my neighbor, and I should care enough about him or her and their children to grieve over it. Secondly, these sorts of things are never done in isolation. They always have some effects on those around the people who do them, whether on their immediate families, or their work colleagues, or simply in debasing and eventually splintering the community as a whole.

The godfather of the ideology of individualism is Cain, with his "Am I my brother's keeper?" retort to God. This has always struck me as the height of petulance, and his way of saying, "Get off my back. It's my life. What's Abel to do with me, and what am I to do with Abel? And what's it to you anyway?" Of course the answer was, yes, you are your brother's keeper. That's what brothers are for—looking out for one another, loving one another, and keeping one another accountable. "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity" (Psalm 133:1). And this is not confined to natural brothers and sisters, or even to brothers and sisters in Christ, but extends to my unconverted neighbor, too.

Yet the destructive ideology of individualism puts my neighbor's right to take drugs on a higher level than my duty to persuade him that this is really detrimental to him. It makes a higher virtue out of my

neighbor's right to view porn than my duty to persuade him of how defiling it is, both to him and to women. It puts on a pedestal my right to make unlimited profits, but has nothing to say about my duty to use this money to care for my community and for those less fortunate (like the bigger barn builder of Luke 12). And in doing so it destroys lives, destroys relationships, destroys families, and destroys communities.

As I said at the beginning, it seems to me that there is a growing realization that something has gone terribly wrong. But is there another way, apart from the community-crushing individualism of the West on the one hand, and the individual-crushing communism of the former Soviet bloc on the other?

One example is Samaritan Ministries. The mission is very much centered on Galatians 6:2: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." There you have the emphasis on community. But just three verses later Paul says that "Each will have to bear his own load" (or burden as some translations have it). There you have the emphasis on the individual. And so we have a brief glimpse in that passage of the Biblical balance between individual and community that has been missing in Western society for so long.

Next month, I'll develop this theme and ask what we, as individual Christians and as the Church corporately, can be doing to start rebuilding communities from the ashes. ♦

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The LORD is in His
holy temple; the LORD's
throne is in heaven;
His eyes see, His eyelids
test the children of man.

Psalm 11:4

In the previous verse of this Psalm, we read something that we commonly hear today. "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" In the first verse they are saying, "Flee like a bird to your mountain." When this kind of panic surrounds us, what should we do?

We should remember Who is in control. No matter how bad things become, the LORD is seated on His throne. He sees what is going on. We can take refuge in Him.

For the Kingdom,



Ray King