

Christian HealthCare

NEWSLETTER

MEMBER LETTER:

Online tools helped me
save money

When my husband ended up in intensive care, we feared the medical bills. After some discounts the total came to about \$30,000!

As of March we've received the shares and paid the bills in full. We are so thankful!

I also wanted to let members know about two ways I saved money. MDsave.com helped me get significantly lower prices on a mammogram and breast ultrasound. I also needed a prescription that was going to cost \$208, but by searching for a discount plan online I ended up only paying \$37.99

*Steve and
Cynthia Patterson,
Kansas City, Missouri*

Responding Biblically and lovingly to LGBTQ family members

by Dan Phillips

Our Lord was once asked to single out the most important of the over six hundred laws of Moses (Matthew 22:36). Without hesitation, He replied,

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.

How could it be otherwise? The Lord God is the Creator and Lord of all. He pre-existed the universe; He created it, sustains it, guides it. He alone is worthy of our ultimate devotion. All else is the Creator's creation, deserving only the value He assigns to it—never the reverse.

When a person becomes a Christian, he abnegates the throne he'd attempted to usurp. He denies himself, embracing death to self-worship, and he embraces Jesus Christ as Lord (cf. Matthew 16:24).

The break is decisive, radical, and final. Jesus is now his Lord (Romans 10:9), to the exclusion of all competitors. Jesus expressed this very vividly: "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26). The closest and dearest human relations, and the ardent love

that binds them to us, must so pale in contrast to our love for Christ that they look more like hatred than love.

In a contest between Christ's Lordship and any human's opposing will, there can be no contest.

As with every aspect of our devotion and faith, we should expect our love for God to be tested. Trials come in thousands of forms, and when we respond in faith they always mature and strengthen us (James 1:2ff). Of these tests, surely the sharpest and most painful arise from loved ones—from friends and relatives.

In these instances, the Bible has always spoken with one voice. No one of any rank or relation can be allowed to draw us away from loyalty, love, and obedience toward God. It makes no differ-

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Sharing Summary from May

Shares:	\$25,111,517	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:	\$25,100,012	
In Negotiation:	\$ —	
New Needs:	3,914	
Total Needs:	7,122	
New Rewards:	270	
Miscarriages:	50	Member Households: 69,306
Final Rewards:	11	(as of 4/25/17)

Contact Us: 877-764-2426 Dash.SamaritanMinistries.org

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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Rob Waldo
Member Services Director

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.

The pornification of society, part 1

by Rob Slane

The facts on porn are appalling. Science is only beginning to study it, but we know that pornography can literally restructure and shrink the brain. FightTheNewDrug.com, founded to publish research and raise awareness, says porn is a public health issue that transcends mere religion.

Studies show that two thirds of Christian men regularly use porn and more than half of pastors view it.

The average age of exposure to pornography is 11. There's a new sexting scandal at a school every week.

Here's some irony for you. Playboy magazine quit publishing nude photos because it can't compete with ubiquitous porn online. The porn production industry is in decline because so many amateurs now produce and share it for free.

"Sex week" at several elite universities features "workshops" by porn stars specifically themed around certain perversions. Course credit is often available.

Recent horror stories in the news include the busting of a child porn ring that resulted in 200 prosecutions, and live streamed gang rapes on Facebook.

The latest article on this topic to catch my eye came from Rod Dreher on *The American Conservative* website. You can almost hear him weep in sorrow:

This society has a death wish. I wish I had some idea how it could be saved. What concerns me most of all right now is the horrifying complicity of conservative, even conservative Christian, parents in the spiritual, moral, and emotional

ruin of their children and of their moral ecology because they, the parents, are too damn afraid to say no, my kids will not have a smartphone, I don't care what they and society think of me.

The issue of pornography is a difficult one to even talk about, but we must.

I hope that all Christians reading these words share his sorrow, and that it will induce some parents who have perhaps been blasé to take a long, hard look at their situation and take whatever action they can to protect their children's innocence.

The issue of pornography is a difficult one to even talk about, but we must. This month I'll consider the societal phenomenon, addressing what I believe is one major way we are being deceived and then briefly looking at why pornography is so destructive. Next month I'll look at the issue more at the individual level, first asking what the root of the problem is and then looking at some possible remedies.

The new default position

An article by Conor Friedersdorf in *The Atlantic* quotes one of the world's biggest "porn stars" expressing concern that we're not doing enough to stop pornography getting in front of children. Yet the same

article states that "accessing hard core porn is (properly) legal." This now seems to be the default position: pornography is fine for adults, but we just need to keep it from children.

Now it is of course true that pornography filtering down to children is a very great evil. Young minds are more susceptible to habit-forming from new stimuli in ways which adult minds are perhaps not. Nevertheless, if we concentrate all our efforts on simply stopping pornography getting into the hands of children, we miss the point completely. The problem is not primarily that pornography is falling into the hands of children, but rather that as a society we have opened the floodgates to allow porn in and we have normalized it.

It is absurd to think that it is possible to normalize something like this and for it not to filter down to children. Children, by their very nature, want to grow up to be adults, and they often want to do adult things before their time. So if we have largely normalized pornography among adults—and we have—then no amount of paywalls and banning of smartphones or anything else is going to make much difference. We have become a pornographic society, and children, who aspire to do what adults do, will generally find ways of getting their hands on it by hook or by crook.

Look at it like this. There are two types of activity that adults seek to protect children from. First, there are perfectly good activities that

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Paul and Robin Pennington

Hope for Orphans

by Amy Sauder

Paul and Robin Pennington, standing third and fourth from right, with adopted and natural children and grandchildren. Five of their six children are adopted.

Paul Pennington had only traveled to Korea to adopt Ethan. He hadn't planned on also equipping thousands of churches for orphan ministry.

That changed when he came face-to-face with orphans, many of whom were not even adoptable for a variety of reasons, in their closest equivalent to "home."

An unadoptable 3-year-old Korean girl trailed him through the orphanage and tugged at his leg. She kept repeating the Korean word for "daddy."

"That's the day I realized there's something here that the Church has really missed," Paul says.

Paul called his wife, Robin, to tell her that God would use them in orphan ministry beyond adoption. Paul and Robin now have six children, five of them adopted, but their ministry extends past their family. In 2001, they started Hope for Orphans with a vision for Biblically based adoption education in the local church.

Paul and Robin's skills and personalities have complemented each other in this ministry from the start.

"Paul sees more globally," Robin says, "and I see individuals."

Paul agrees, describing his role as macro work and business strategy, while Robin's heart is in coming alongside families during crisis.

"We're working in Cuba partnering with the Gospel Coalition," Paul says. "I build those sorts of business partnerships, whereas we'll probably have a call in the next few days from a family that's struggling, and Robin would be more effective in ministering to that."

"We're not an adoption agency, but we try to bring tools and vision for a sustainable ministry. We believe from a Biblical worldview that Christians are supposed to care for—not necessarily adopt—orphans, widows, and strangers."

Scripture gives this mandate over 40 times. The Dave Thomas Foundation found that 48 percent of those who considered adoption would look to their local church to learn more. However, most churches are not prepared to meet that need, so Hope for Orphans produced resources such as a book/DVD set



Launching Orphan Ministry in your Church. Another resource, *If You Were Mine*, is a video-based workshop for families considering adoption for the first time.

Hope for Orphans also recently launched *Rooted*, an online parenting resource geared toward families post-adoption. Agencies are starting to use this Gospel-rooted training pre-adoption as well.

“We are seeing families take children who never would have found homes before,” Robin says. “And there’s a very difficult component to that, like going to the mission field.”

Rooted provides a framework for parenting at-risk kids. Pastor Halim Suh speaks on spiritual warfare in adoption, a topic overlooked at

most adoption events. There are also complementary sections on the father being a leader in the home and on the role of a mother. The course features a variety of speakers, including Dr. Voddie Baucham, Association of Biblical Counselors’ Jeremy Lelek, Mayo Clinic’s Dr. Larry Bergstrom, and play therapy expert Dr. Mary Bennett.

Orphan ministry isn’t only for the parents.

“We believe the Bible teaches that you don’t have to be 22 before God begins to use you in Kingdom work,” Paul says. “Most children very much identify with orphans, because they can imagine what it would be like without a mom and dad to care for them.”

Hope for Orphans plans to launch Project Lionheart in the fall, a video resource that introduces orphan ministry to children through the lens of the Gospel, connecting the concepts of spiritual and physical orphans. A group of fifth-graders beta tested the program and held a read-a-thon that raised thousands of dollars to build a school for orphans in Africa.

“Not only do the orphans get help, but children are introduced to evangelism, to missions, and to the truth that God can use anybody,” Paul says.

Paul and Robin are careful to reiterate that the way to care for orphans isn’t necessarily to adopt. In fact, most orphans are not adopt-

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Why SMI?

Health insurance bothered Robin Pennington.

For instance, a pharmacy once told her that a prescription with a \$35 co-pay would only cost \$12 if she didn’t use their insurance.

That didn’t make sense. Nor did other charges.

“Our daughter had to have lab work,” Robin says. “They’re charging \$1,600 if we have insurance, yet if we don’t, they’re charging \$150. We don’t see that this is a game that we’re playing.”

Then there was the cost factor for Robin and her husband, Paul. When faced with planning their own health care expenses after Hope for Orphans became an independent 501(c)(3) ministry, the escalated insurance payments became “overwhelming.”

A Hope for Orphans Board member recommended Samaritan Ministries, so Paul and Robin researched the ministry and joined.

Giving to a person in need instead of an insurance company was a refreshing change for Robin.

“It was like knowing in the Spirit that this is the way it’s supposed to be,” Robin says. “Being able to

send a check to someone individually and be a part of God’s provision was just overwhelming. Even though we didn’t know them from church, it felt like we did.”

The community aspect of Samaritan also impresses them.

In September 2016, their daughter, Hope, had a nine-hour open-heart surgery to repair two heart valves and replace a pacemaker.

“We started getting the cards and the letters,” Robin says. “She got gifts from people, and children who drew pictures of her in the hospital, and we were just overwhelmed.”

“You begin to realize how powerful the Body of Christ is when we work together the way we were meant to work together,” Paul says. “That’s been the real blessing to me, is to see the Church in a way you could never see just through your own local church. It’s an amazing feeling that believers, part of our family that we don’t exactly know personally, helped provide for her rather than a corporation.” ♦

Tips for talking to your doctor about treatment options

from Healthcare Bluebook

It can be difficult to understand complex medical issues and terms. However, it is important to understand your medical condition and the treatment options your doctor recommends.

When meeting with your doctor, ensure you understand:

- What is my condition or diagnosis?
- What treatment is recommended?
 - ◊ Inpatient or outpatient surgery
 - ◊ A laboratory test or diagnostic imaging (such as X-ray or MRI)
 - ◊ A medication
 - ◊ A therapy
- Why do you recommend the treatment?

Write down your diagnosis and recommended treatment. You may not know how to spell the medical terms, so be sure to ask. This

will help you when you look for information or need to discuss your health with other doctors or family members.

What are my other treatment options?

Discuss available care with your doctor. In most cases you will have several treatment options to consider that may make a big difference how much your care will cost. This is true for outpatient surgeries, diagnostic tests, and medications.

Treatment options will depend on your personal situation, but there are several questions that you should always discuss with your doctor or care provider:

- Do I need a particular treatment right away or are there less intense therapies that can be tried first?
 - ◊ In many instances, there are low risk alternatives that can be tried before choos-

ing intense medical interventions, such as surgery.

- ◊ For example, there are many different treatments for low back pain, only some of which require surgery. You may want to try rest, medications, or physical therapy before having surgery. Your doctor will determine whether or not you are a candidate for a more conservative treatment option based on your symptoms and medical condition.
- Are there lifestyle changes that may help my condition?
 - ◊ There are non-medical options for care in some instances. For example, making lifestyle and diet changes may save you from taking medications for high cholesterol or blood pressure. Your doctor can tell you if non-medical options will help your condition.

Healthcare Bluebook

Compare quality and cost of health care on your Dashboard.



- What alternative approaches are there for my treatment?
 - ◊ In many cases there will be several different medical options for your treatment. For example, if you need surgery, ask if it can be done laproscopically or as an outpatient. If you need medications, ask if there are less expensive drugs that will work. You should discuss the benefits and limitations of different options with your doctor before deciding which is best for you.

Questions to ask your doctor

Some medical tests, treatments, and procedures provide little benefit. And, in some cases, they may even cause harm. Talk to your doctor regarding the need for care to make sure you end up with the right amount of care—not too much and not too little.

How do I choose the right care for my needs and pocketbook?

Be sure to tell your doctor that cost is an important consideration to you.

Things to consider when deciding on different treatment options:

- Does it matter where I receive a treatment (inpatient, outpatient, or at an ambulatory surgical center)?
 - ◊ Cost will vary widely based upon where you receive treatment. In many cases, the outpatient setting is not only less expensive

but also higher quality, less crowded, and quicker. Your physician often has privileges at multiple locations and can schedule your care in the most appropriate setting for your needs.

- ◊ For example, many surgeries can be performed as an outpatient at an Ambulatory Surgery Center (least expensive), outpatient at a hospital, or as an inpatient in the hospital (most expensive).
 - ◊ Another good example is diagnostic tests, such as X-rays or MRIs. Patients may choose to have an MRI at the hospital, the doctor's office, or a free-standing MRI clinic. The free-standing MRI clinic is usually the best value for the same quality test with often the same radiologist reading the results.
- What options do I have to save money on prescription drugs?

The most common options to save money on medications include:

- ◊ Use generic medications when available.
- ◊ Use alternative medications that are less expensive but will work just as well (often called a “class substitution”).
- ◊ Ask if pill splitting would be OK with your particular medication. Pill splitting is

a common technique that allows you to buy a higher dose of your medication at lower cost, and then split the pills into smaller pieces in order to get the right dose for your needs. Only use pill splitting if approved by your doctor.

- Do I go to my doctor's office for all of my care?

For basic medical care like ear infections, influenza, sore throats or shots, there are alternatives to a physician office visit that provide high quality care at an equal or lower price. Examples include:

- ◊ Walk-in clinics such as CVS MinuteClinic, Walgreens Take Care Clinic, or RediClinic are examples of retail locations that are often open longer hours and on weekends.
- ◊ If your work location offers an onsite clinic, these can also handle many of the minor illnesses listed above.

There are many studies that show higher cost in healthcare does not necessarily mean higher quality or value. There are many clinical and personal preferences that go into each individual's choice of treatment, but all health care consumers have a right to make cost-conscious decisions when it comes to their care. ♦

Read this article online: <http://bit.ly/hcbbguide>

Update on recent Board activities

by Jed Stuber and Michael Miller

In an effort to foster increased direct, personal interaction with and among Samaritan members, the Samaritan Board of Directors has begun holding member appreciation banquets in conjunction with its meetings.

Last summer the Board met in Traverse City, Michigan, where 131 members participated in a banquet. More than 300 came out to two banquets held in January near Samaritan's Peoria, Illinois, headquarters.

"It was a great time getting to know people and more about Samaritan," member Christine Litwiller said. "We love being part of this community and knowing that it is Biblically oriented."

Executive Vice President James Lansberry said the banquets are a way of getting increased face-to-face feedback.

"It's the members who are doing the ministry," he said. "As leaders, we have the privilege of serving the members by helping coordinate the ministry. We've really enjoyed spending more time with the members and receiving their feedback and suggestions at these banquets."

Changes on the Board

Newly elected Director Ben Boyd attended the January meeting to become acquainted with the other Directors and with the Board's processes. He began serving at the most recent meeting in April, replacing outgoing Director Joe Musser. We appreciate Joe's faithful service to the ministry.

Action at the January meeting also included adding a new appointed Director. Under the Samaritan

bylaws, Samaritan founder and President Ted Pittenger holds a permanent seat on the Board and he can name two additional Directors. The remaining six Directors, who are not allowed to have a financial or employment interest in the ministry, are elected by the members, making a nine-member Board.

The Board continued discussions about Biblical foundations for the ministry.

Ted appointed Chris Hogan to replace Keith Bradshaw, who is now working as Samaritan's interim Chief Information Officer.

Chris is president of Noble Call Institute, a multifaceted ministry that includes coaching for marriages, individuals, and organizations as well as discipleship training. "I'm looking forward to Chris's input because of his unique blend of ministry and business experience," Ted said. "This is an important balance we seek to walk every day at Samaritan Ministries."

Biblical foundations

The Board also continued discussing Biblical foundations for the ministry and how to implement recommendations designed to help protect religious freedom for churches and Christian organizations.

The Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) urges Christian organizations to make sure theological convictions

are clearly spelled out in important documents, such as a Statement of Faith, bylaws, and job descriptions. ADF provides both a free booklet download and a video series called *Protecting Your Ministry from Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Lawsuits*.¹

Samaritan's Board has spent many years developing detailed doctrinal positions on important matters like divorce and remarriage, the historicity of Genesis, sexual orientation, gender identity, and Biblical roles of men and women. A copy of the doctrinal positions, which Directors must affirm to qualify to serve on the Board, can be found in the Member Connect App on the Dashboard.

Over the last few years the Board has discussed the topic of the roles of men and women, which led to the Board incorporating *The Danvers Statement* into Samaritan's doctrinal positions. *The Danvers Statement* was developed by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, and is intended as a "theological articulation of complementarianism, the Biblically derived view that men and women are complementary, possessing equal dignity and worth as the image of God, and called to different roles that each glorify Him."

The statement was written in 1987 and has since been adopted by many churches. John Piper of Desiring God Ministries and theologian Wayne Grudem led the group that developed the statement. *The Danvers Statement* begins by noting some developments in the culture and the Church that were already cause for concern when it

was written 30 years ago, including the following:

- Confusion about the complementary differences between masculinity and femininity.
- The unraveling of the fabric of marriage.
- The growing claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships, which have Biblically and historically been considered illicit or perverse.
- The prevalence of pornography.
- The upsurge of physical and emotional abuse in the family.
- The increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of Biblical texts.

The Danvers Statement goes on to lay out a detailed understanding and affirmation of Biblical teaching. A book expanding on it, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, was named book of the year by *Christianity Today* in 1992. The statement, book, and many supporting resources can be found at cbmw.org.

Health care providers

Another topic that is frequently discussed at Board meetings is the

relationship between health care providers and cash-pay patients, such as Samaritan members.

Director Ron Drummond, a software consultant who helps hospitals with charging processes, developed



Samaritan Founder, Ted Pittenger, and his wife, Shari, chat with members at the January banquet.

a spreadsheet showing the discounts offered by the major providers in his home area of Kansas City. He found that they differ substantially.

Many providers will give a 75 percent discount, although a patient may have to ask for it persistently, until they are talking to someone

with the right authority to give it. Other providers only allow 25 percent discounts.

The information Ron put together has been provided to members in the Kansas City area to aid them

in choosing a provider.

The Board has made it a priority to develop this kind of information for all members, starting with metro areas where there are high concentrations of members.

The Board also approved a proposal to provide Healthcare Bluebook to members on Dash. It allows you to compare quality and cost of health care treatments in your area.

The cost for the same procedure often varies by 400 percent, but the prices are hidden from consumers. Healthcare Bluebook levels the playing field, allowing you to have key information at your fingertips.

Please pray that these efforts will result in members receiving quality care at competitive prices and that God will grant the

Board wisdom to lead the ministry well. ♦

1. Booklet: bit.ly/ADFbooklet
Videos: bit.ly/ADFvids

Judge grants man “right” to be genderless. But did she ... really?

by Dan Phillips

Mainstream media outlets pride themselves on being the gatekeepers of the truth—not nutty ideologues like all those bloggers in their jammies. They are objective.

Or this is what they keep telling us.

Then I read this title on the NBC News website: “Judge Grants Oregon Resident the Right to Be Genderless”¹ ... and my eyebrow rises.

The article is a feature in a subsection called “NBC OUT.” The rainbow banner suggests this is news catering to LGBTQ devotees, as all the titles seem to share that sad theme. A search for any subsection titled NBC BIBLICAL, or CHRISTIAN, or CHURCH, or even RELIGIOUS turned up nothing. But I digress.

This article is the sad tale of a man named Patrick Abbatiello (one must look elsewhere to find his actual name and sex²), afflicted with broken feelings about his sex, who made those feelings a legal issue.

A situation like this might challenge any judge aware of the limitations of his role. Consider: what if someone tried to get the court to rule that he had three arms, or was a unicorn, or was not subject to the law of gravity, or was 800 years old? Surely no judge would enable such delusions.

Yet right now, one particular delusion has achieved a different status. So, the headline on this MSM site tells us, this judge granted Abbatiello the right to become genderless.

Except of course that the judge did no such thing.

I take it as axiomatic that no one can do what he cannot do. Not even a judge. No one can grant a right that cannot exist, a right that defies created reality. So no judge can grant the right to ignore the law of gravity, or to live a reverse chronology, or to draw a square circle.

So Patrick is still what God made him, as far as I can find reported: a man.³

What if someone tried to get the court to rule that he had three arms, or was a unicorn, or was not subject to the law of gravity, or was 800 years old?

“But the judge granted the right to be genderless,” someone replies. Except she did no such thing, for she could not. In such cases, what judges are actually doing are taking away rights.

For instance, no judge—nor any bank of judges—can grant the right of two men to marry. It’s an impossibility. What they do in all such cases, as we have seen, is take away rights. That is, they deny the rights of others to live according to created reality. No judge can grant Biff and Cletus the right to marry each

other. So instead they negate the God-given right of others not to march in step with the delusion.

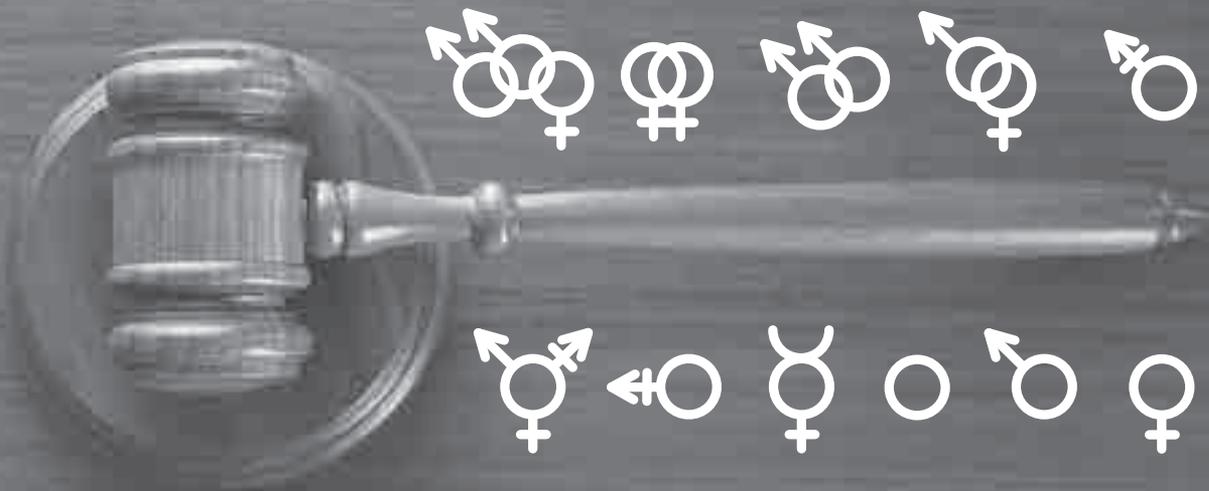
So when Biff and Cletus wish to force business owners to play along, the latter are denied their God-given rights to decline the invitation.

I suspect the same will unfold if this new spectacle spreads. The Patricks of the world will remain men or women, but everyone around them will be denied their God-given right to acknowledge reality. If a business or agency requires Patrick to pick “Male” or “Female” on a form, this judge’s ruling would seem to deny it that right.

What has happened, then? Patrick has not been granted the right to be neither male nor female. That cannot be done. Patrick’s maleness is an immutable, created given. Instead, others will now be denied the God-given right to treat him as what God made him.

This brings us to the great truth that our society keeps bumping its head against: we are not actually God; we just want to play Him on TV—and we want the whole world to be our TV show!

The reality is that God is God, creation is His, and it comes to us pre-defined. This is, as I explained in a previous article,⁴ the most offensive truth in the Bible. God created the heavens and the earth, and in so doing He defined them. They do not mean what we want them to mean; they mean what God says they mean. They existed by His command (Psalm 33:6, 9), He made them all in wisdom (Psalm 104:24),



and He still owns (Genesis 14:19) and rules (Psalm 115:3; 119:91) them all.

So, specifically, in creating our species, He created us male and female (Genesis 1:27). He still sees us as such (Matthew 19:4). To this, every cell in our body says “Amen.” No surgeon’s knife or judge’s gavel can change that reality.

This ruinous drive we have to pretend that we are God had its birth in the Tempter’s lie (Genesis 3:5). We still grimly pursue that lie, and in that pursuit suppress every last witness to God’s truth and reality (Romans 1:18). So doing, we commit both spiritual and intellectual suicide. Its effects extend even to such undeniable truths such as our created sexuality (Romans 1:21-28).

This is why many moderns become infuriated even at such vapid theories as “Intelligent Design.” Why? That word: design! We hate it, we don’t want to think we’re designed by Another. We want to create our own reality—even our own sexuality, or lack thereof.

Powerless to force creation to cooperate, we find judges willing to issue decrees fabricating “rights” for us by denying God-given rights to others.

This is why the only course to wisdom begins with the fear of God (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10). We must do the very thing we hate: renounce our faux godhood, bow our knee to the Lordship of God. We must confess Jesus as Lord, and submit to His gracious salvation, reconciliation, and redemption (Romans 10).

We all have broken desires and maladaptive thinking. I do, and you do, too. Salvation and wholeness do not lie in trying to force creation to adapt itself to our brokenness. They lie in reconciliation to our Creator, which we can find only through the person and work of Jesus Christ (John 14:6; Romans 3:21-31; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Titus 2:11-3:7).

If you’d like to read how to know God yourself, I lay it out briefly in a very low-tech web page,⁵ and more fully in a book.⁶ ♦

Dan Phillips earned his MDiv in Old Testament at Talbot Theological Seminary. He pastors Copperfield Bible Church in Houston, Texas, where he lives with his wife, Valerie, and two of their four children.

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Sources

1. <nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/judge-grants-oregon-resident-right-be-genderless-n736971>
2. <oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2017/03/judge_allows_portlander_to_bec.html>
3. Nothing in this article refers to the statistically rare cases where there is genuine biological ambiguity.
4. <pjmedia.com/faith/2017/01/09/twenty-six-reasons-why-genesis-11-is-the-most-offensive-verse-in-the-bible/>
5. <bibchr.com/hcikg.html>
6. *World-Tilting Gospel: Embracing a Biblical Worldview and Hanging on Tight*, Kregel Publications 2011.

ence whether it's "your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or your daughter or the wife you embrace or your friend who is as your own soul" (Deuteronomy 13:6).

Do you love God as God deserves, as He merits, as He commands? Do I? It's easy enough to say so. Talk has always had the same market value—cheap.

So what happens when your son announces that he is "gay"? Or your daughter tells you she's decided she really wants to be a boy? What if it's presented very emotionally, and you learn that your dear child has experienced great pain in this conflict? Of course your heart naturally goes out, and you want to ease the suffering.

What if, in addition, there's an implied (or stated) ultimatum? You're told, "Accept my decision to embrace same-sex cravings, accept my decision to deny my body's created sex, or I will disown you, and you may never see me again."

This is where we find out what we really believe, and who we really love with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength.

For in this case there is no middle path. God says unequivocally that the embrace and pursuit of homosexual desires is the way of death and destruction (Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:8-11). God created male and female, as reflected in our bodies' design—not an infinite sliding scale of subjectively determined variety (Genesis 1:27; Romans 1:26-27). God identifies the embrace of such broken cravings as sin, and sin invariably merits His eternal wrath (Romans 6:23).

So what do we do? We want to help our broken, miserable child.

The easiest way—the way the world approves—is to affirm him or her in the world's imitation of real love, "unconditional [i.e. amoral] love." We become enablers, aiding and abetting our child in the direction his passions are pushing him.

In so doing, we are making our child our lord, and accepting his self-interpretation and self-prescription as our law. And we're doing it with the best of intentions.

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But the one thing we are not doing is this: We are not actually loving our child, much less loving God.

Love is intelligent and purposeful, and it is devoted to the other's good. If we are Christians, we start with the conviction that no one knows anything better than God does (Proverbs 1:7). So no one knows better what is best for our child than God does—and God is crystal-clear on these matters.

So we point our child to God's truth: the way of life is in repentance and faith in Christ. Our hearts are completely unreliable guides (Jeremiah 17:9), only God's Word has the wisdom we need (2 Timothy 3:15-17). Christ can wash away all sins, and He makes us new within,

enabling us to walk God's way of life and healing, of genuine love and hope (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Our child needs to know God in Christ (John 14:6)—and if we love him, we'll tell him so.

This situation, as I say, is an ultimate test: Do I view God through the lens of a superior love for my child? Do my child's choices dictate how I love and serve God? Or is it the reverse?

If I believe God, my love for Him will always point me to His Word to see how best to love my child. This is the only real way to love God and love my child. ♦

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we want them to grow up into, but for which they need to come of age before we allow it. For instance, driving a car. Then there are activities which are bad in and of themselves, and which we try to protect them from not just because they aren't old enough to do them, but because we don't ever want them to do them. Taking heroin would fall into this category.

So which category does porn fit into? Is it like driving? Or is it like heroin? Is it something a child should one day be able to do, only not just now? Or is it like heroin; something that no sane parent would ever want their children to get into, no matter how old? If our culture puts it in the same category as driving a car, something to be avoided as a child, but something that is perfectly normal once you turn a certain age, then it can be safely said that we have lost all moral compass and are quite sick. If, on the other hand, we see it in the same category as heroin, then at least we would be acknowledging it as a problem to be dealt with.

Just so you know, in 2004 an expert psychiatrist testified before Congress, "Modern science allows us to understand that the underlying nature of an addiction to pornography is chemically nearly identical to a heroin addiction."

Sadly, I would say that we have moved in the last ten years from treating it in the heroin category to the driving category. "We don't want you to touch it now, but of course there will come a time when it becomes your right to consume as much of it as you like," is essentially the message. And yet the schizophrenic nature of this is obvious

when you think about why it is we don't want children seeing it. Isn't it because we know it pollutes their minds? Isn't it because we instinctively know that it demeans and degrades them? Isn't it because we are well aware that it will give them a terribly unhealthy and warped view of the opposite sex? Of course it is, but are we really naïve enough

Pornography desensitizes us, not just to sex itself, but to people in general.

to think that it doesn't have the same sorts of effects on adults?

But they're adults, and we can't stop their rights, can we? Well, I am not suggesting that we suddenly enact a law that bans it all. Such a law at the point we currently find ourselves at would be as effective as King Canute commanding the sea to go back. But I am suggesting that our culture urgently needs to stop looking at the main problem as preventing pornography falling into the hands of children, which is in reality a byproduct of a much larger problem. Instead we need to focus on the acceptance and normalization of pornography among adults.

Why it's so destructive

A Christian culture would understand the problem instinctively. It would see that pornography, by its very nature, cannot be anything other than dehumanizing, not just for the people making it, but for

the viewer and—crucially—for the whole of society. We would understand that just as the continual watching of extremely violent films or computer games is bound to desensitize people (no matter how much the makers of such things try to convince us otherwise), so too pornography cannot fail to desensitize us, not just to sex itself, but to people in general. We would understand that you cannot have people watching this stuff, which objectifies and commoditizes people, and expect them to come away from it with a view of people which does not at some level objectify and commoditize other people.

In other words, a society that normalizes pornography has already sown the seeds of its own destruction. If we defend the rights of people to view this stuff, ultimately all we are doing is defending the rights of people to destroy society, since the health of that society very much depends in the long run on people not objectifying and commoditizing one another.

Of course none of this gets to the root of the problem or suggests remedies for individuals who have fallen into the grip of pornography. The fact is that it has an astonishingly magnetic lure, and is a notoriously difficult vice to overcome. I hope to return to this next month. ♦

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* The online version of this article includes sources: bit.ly/pornification1

able. Even when adoption is not an option, the Church is still called to care for orphans. Paul provides many ideas for orphan ministry, starting with being a safe church for families who do adopt.

Robin encourages the local church to come alongside families who have adopted and are struggling.

“It may make the difference between the family surviving with that child or not,” Robin says. “There’s this huge opportunity for fellow believers to step into the lives of those taking kids who are really, really difficult and loving them well.”

Paul lists respite care, supporting families financially, and watching the other children during doctor visits as only a few of “a thousand practical ways” to help adoptive families.

Another way to care for orphans is through being an advocate for children in foster care. One example is becoming a court-appointed special advocate volunteer, who goes before the judge to advocate specifically on behalf of the foster care child.

Members of one church, made up mostly of senior citizens, cared for orphans by requesting pictures of children waiting for families, and then carrying the pictures in their billfolds or purses. They prayed for and shared the stories of the children with others. Because of the congregation’s commitment to advocate for these orphans, many of them were adopted.

Churches can also minister to foster-care children in practical ways. Many orphans don’t have a suitcase and instead pack their belongings in a large trash bag as they’re sent from house to house. Some churches

choose a ministry of providing suitcases to those kids.

Other churches may choose to minister to orphans in another country. With Hope for Orphans’ recent partnership in Cuba, they dream of local churches in America serving local churches in Cuba to meet the needs of orphans and at-risk children.

“There are many practical ways to support orphans and families in orphan ministry, and they’re all a part of what we call the visible Gospel.”

“There are many practical ways to support orphans and families in orphan ministry,” Paul says, “and they’re all a part of what we call the visible Gospel.”

Because many orphans internationally are not adoptable and 99 percent will never set foot in the United States, the Church in those countries needs to step in to provide food, clothing, and the Gospel. The good news is that most places with orphans have a local church that could meet the need—but they need to have the vision to do so.

For instance, while there are thousands of evangelical churches in

Guatemala, only 27 children were adopted domestically a few years ago. Similarly, in South Korea, there are millions of Christians, but adoption isn’t normal in their culture. The need there is great, as thousands of North Korean orphans are escaping through China and into South Korea. Hope for Orphans is bringing a vision to countries like these for the Church to bring children into their families or to serve them in the orphanages.

“When the local church is available for God to use, then we have the ability for sustainable orphan ministry to those kids where they live,” Paul says.

Paul sees a common chord between Hope for Orphans and Samaritan Ministries, equipping the Church for ministry to the vulnerable, whether in orphan ministry or health care ministry.

“We’ve always believed that the way to care for 150 million orphans is the mass mobilization of the Church,” he says. “Samaritan Ministries actually accomplishes the mass mobilization of the Church for the benefit of the vulnerable. As a parachurch ministry, we’re at best a bridesmaid and this story has always been about the bride, the Church.” ♦

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.

Pastor charged, then attacked

Police accused church members in Sri Lanka of “disturbing the peace” in March after a Buddhist monk led 50 people into their church building and demanded that the Christians there stop worshipping, Voice of the Martyrs reports. Pastor “Ishara” was ordered to go to the police station for an interview, but never met the officer in charge. He later received a letter stating that the church needed to register with the government. On a second visit to the police station, he was “met by a mob of about 200 people.” Police demanded that all religious activities stop at the church and charged him with disturbing the peace. Villagers have also attacked the pastor’s house with rocks. *Pray for Pastor Ishara’s strength and peace, and that he will find a way to continue worship. Pray also for members of his church, and for the conversion of those attacking him.*

Hmong families have impact

Four Hmong Christian families driven out of their village in Laos because of their faith continued to share the Gospel while camping in a rice field, VOM says. The families were expelled in February after refusing to renounce their faith. The nearly 30 men, women, and children in the camp were soon visited by a nearby Khmu family curious about them. After the Hmongs shared the Gospel with them, the Khmu family became believers. Recently government officials said the Hmong families may believe whatever they wish. *Pray for provision for the Hmong families and for their witness. Pray also for effectiveness as they share the Gospel with other Laotians.*

5 Chinese Christians sentenced

A Chinese court sentenced five Christians for meeting as part of an underground church, International Christian Concern reports. Sentenced on April 18 were Pastor Yang Zhaocun, 38, to five years; Pastor Wang Lulu, 28, to five years; Cheng Yajie, 26, to four years; Liu Yan, 40, to three years; and Zheng Lan, 68, to three years. They were tried on charges of “gathering a crowd to disrupt the social order.” *Pray for the well-being of the five believers in prison, and for their families and congregations. Pray also for their witness.*

2 Christian men stabbed

Two Christian men were stabbed on April 3 while defending other Christians being attacked after a protest over church-owned property in Sudan, VOM says. A group of Christians had gathered at the Evangelical School near Khartoum

to protest proposed government appropriation of property owned by the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church. After police arrested the men involved in the protest, a group of about 20 people armed with knives began to beat women still at the school. Men from a nearby church rushed over to protect them, with two being stabbed. Younan Abdullah, a church elder, died from the injuries. The other man, Ayoub Kumama, was treated and released. *Pray for Younan’s wife and children as they mourn his loss. Pray also for complete recovery for Ayoub and the women who were beaten. Pray also against government appropriation of the church’s property.*

Christian doctor helps wounded ISIS members

A Christian doctor and his wife remain in the Plain of Nineveh in Iraq to help sick and wounded civilians as well as wounded ISIS militants, ICC reports. Dr. Bashar Alsaqat and his wife, Nabeela Jahola, also serve 50 refugees they house in their own home. They work through the Focolare movement. Some physicians, Dr. Alsaqat says, refuse to work on wounded ISIS members. *Pray for the safety of Dr. Alsaqat and Nabeela, for the effectiveness of their ministry, and for their example of God’s love to have an impact on war-torn Iraq.* ♦

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).

These things I have
spoken to you,
that My joy may
be in you, and that
your joy may be full.

John 15:11

Jesus wants us to be full of His joy. That means we can be sure that anything He tells us will be for our good, even if it appears that something else would be better.

The first sin in history happened when our first ancestors believed the lie that they would be happier if they disobeyed what God told them to do. Ever since then, seeking joy by disobeying God has been the default setting from birth of every one of us—their descendants. Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty we deserve to pay for not trusting Him.

Every day, we still face having to make choices about whether to believe what God has told us

or to rely on our own wisdom and strength. Jesus spoke His words to us because He loves us and wants us to have in us the joy that only He can give. We need to believe that whatever He says is true and good, and obey Him, no matter what anyone else may say.

Jesus wants us to be full of His joy. His words show us the way.

For the Kingdom,



Ray King