

Christian HealthCare

NEWSLETTER

MEMBER LETTER:

We could no longer afford insurance

My husband and I are self-employed with a growing family. We struggled for years to afford health insurance premiums, and then the ever rising deductibles became impossible. Finally our insurance company informed us that our plan would be canceled. The replacement offered would not even be accepted by most providers in our area!

We prayed for an answer to our problem and joined Samaritan. What a blessing!

Our Needs have been met both financially AND spiritually. We no longer feel the panic of how we would pay for a large medical Need. We now feel peace where there was so much stress.

I have shared my experience with so many people, and a couple of my siblings have joined. The cards and prayers are so wonderful. It's amazing to know people across the country are praying for you.

*Philip and Amanda Reiter
Gainesville, Texas*

Health insurance becoming unaffordable for middle class

by Betsy McCaughey

Editor's Note: We are publishing this article to encourage you to tell friends who are experiencing loss of health insurance plans or unaffordable rate increases about Samaritan's non-insurance health care sharing option.

Samaritan is non-partisan. We agree with the author that regulation is the primary problem, no matter which part of the economy it targets, no matter which political party proposes it.

Brace yourself for the next health insurance crisis: the uninsured middle class. The Affordable Care Act added millions of mostly poor people to the insurance rolls. But the law is driving premiums so high that middle-class people can no longer afford insurance. Several million are expected to drop coverage in 2018.

After Republicans reneged on the promise to repeal and replace ObamaCare, Senators Patty Murray, D-Wash., and Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., swooped in with another plan to keep the floundering health law afloat. The senators cloak themselves in the mantle of bipartisan reasonableness, but don't be fooled. There's nothing reasonable about their proposal. The big losers are middle-class buyers priced out of the individual insurance market and taxpayers footing the bill for the billions in extra spending these fixers are proposing.

The winners are insurance companies.

Insurers are demanding another \$8 billion this year in taxpayer funds to compensate them for giving breaks on deductibles and copays to low-income customers. A federal court ruled insurers

aren't entitled to the money, but funds have been diverted to them anyway. Meanwhile, the insurers have been dropping many plans and leaving entire states, and now they are threatening to drop even more plans if they don't get the latest round of bailouts. The Senate's fixers are only too willing to cave.

Murray has already laid down the ground rules, demanding that any "fix"

Continued on page 10

In This Issue...

3 Member Spotlight

Rural Home Missionary Association

4,5 The Nashville Statement

Al Mohler: An expression of love for same-sex attracted people

Rosaria Butterfield: The issue is trusting God to tell you who you are

Member Letter: My husband is transitioning into a woman

6 What causes carb cravings? Is sugar 'addictive'?

7 Eat and celebrate well over the holidays

8 Book Review: *The Case Against Sugar*

16 The Doorpost

Our privileged ambassadorships

CONTENTS

- 1 **Health insurance is becoming unaffordable for the middle class**
by Betsy McCaughey
- 3 **Member Spotlight**
Rural Home Missionary Association
Ron and Roxy Klassen
- 4 **The Nashville Statement: An expression of love for same-sex attracted people**
by Al Mohler
- 5 **The Nashville Statement: The issue is whether you can trust God to tell you who you are**
by Rosaria Butterfield
- 5 **Member Letter**
My husband is transitioning into a woman
- 6 **What causes carb cravings? Is sugar 'addictive'?**
by Gary Taubes
- 7 **Eat and celebrate well over the holidays**
by Jaclyn Lewis
- 8 **Book Review: The Case Against Sugar**
by Gary Taubes
reviewed by Jed Stuber
- 14 **Prayer for the Persecuted Church**
- 16 **The Doorpost**
Our privileged ambassadorships
by Ray King

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Sharing Summary from September

Shares:	\$25,380,510	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:	\$25,375,299	
Unshared Needs in Negotiation:	\$ —	
New Needs:	3,588	
Total Needs:	7,476	Member Households: 69,885 (as of 8/24/17)
New Rewards:	228	
Miscarriages:	49	
Final Rewards:	13	

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	membership@samaritanministries.org	1 - 2
Your membership	membership@samaritanministries.org	1 - 3



Health Resources

Have a Need? Use the Health Resources app on Dash.

- Compare quality and cost of health care services in your area using Healthcare Bluebook.
- Use Medibid to receive bids from doctors for tests or treatments you are seeking.
- Email a medical professional or call a nurse (free), or call a doctor who can write a prescription (\$25).
- Access discount tools for prescriptions and lab tests.

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.

Ron and Roxy Klassen Rural Home Missionary Association

by Michael Miller

Ron Klassen's office looks out on corn and soybean fields, but it's the mission field of town and country that concerns him as executive director of Rural Home Missionary Association.

Ron and his RHMA staff coordinate 35 missionary couples serving churches in small towns and rural areas around the country. Those pastors and their wives either plant new churches or come alongside struggling churches to steer them in a better direction.

The 75-year-old ministry, which has many Samaritan members in the home office and in the field, serves "town and country" congregations in a variety of other ways as well.

- Holding conferences for pastors of small-town or country churches.
- Offering annual, intensive courses on small-town ministry for seminary students about to head into pastoral work.
- Visiting Christian colleges, universities, and seminaries to let students know about country ministry and how RHMA can help them thrive in it.
- Holding one-day seminars.

Ron has also helped small-church pastors through the 1996 book *No Little Places: The Untapped Potential of the Small-Town Church*.

Rural ministry is not a niche calling. About 75 percent of new evangelical seminary graduates who are seeking pastorates end up in a small-town or rural church. The problem is that



many of them are not ready for it, Ron says, having assumed during school that they would serve in a city congregation after graduating. The frequent result is frustration for both church and pastor, sometimes leading to rupture.

RHMA tries to head that off or heal it. But it also tries to get the word out that megachurches are a very small minority of congregations in the nation, and that lost sheep are in the small towns and countryside, too.

"There's certainly always a propensity for people to look at what's big, what's out in front of everybody, the big splash," Ron says. "Those places tend to get a lot of attention."

But smaller churches are actually the norm. For example there are 46,000 churches in the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest U.S. Protestant denomination. Ninety-six percent of churches have fewer than 400 people on a typical Sunday

morning, while only about 150 to 180 churches have more than 2,000 at services.

Continued on page 10



The Nashville Statement: An expression of love for same-sex attracted people

by Al Mohler

Recently I was part of an effort that put America's theological and moral fault lines fully in view. I was a signer of something called the Nashville Statement, a document adopted by a group of evangelical Christians seeking to reaffirm traditional Christian values on sexuality.¹

Within hours, the vitriol in response to our document showed why such clarification is necessary.

One of the most intense lines of criticism was that we, signers of the document, dismiss the pain and suffering of those who live outside those historic Biblical sexual norms. That we weren't acknowledging the rejection they feel in the church and were making their sins appear more significant than our own.

To be clear: Christians understand the brokenness of the world. We signers know ourselves, like all humanity, to be broken by sin. We have no right to face the world from a claim of moral superiority. We know and confess that Christians have often failed to speak the truth in love.

In releasing the Nashville Statement, we in fact are acting out of love and concern for people who are increasingly confused about what God has clarified in Holy Scripture.

Evangelical Christians believe that God has spoken in the Bible, and that obedience to what He has spoken is both true and essential for human wholeness, freedom, and fulfillment—or human flourishing.

We fully understand that our culture is increasingly influenced by the

promise that human flourishing can come by what is styled as sexual liberation and the overthrowing of historic Christianity's witness to God's purpose in making us as sexual beings—even making us as male and female.

Loving our neighbor requires us to speak clearly and very specifically. We are in fact acting out of love and concern for people confused about what God has clarified in Holy Scripture.

The statement was carefully written. Love of neighbor requires us to speak clearly and very specifically to the truths affirmed and the errors denied in the document.

It would be much easier to be quiet, to let the moral revolution proceed unanswered, and to seek some kind of refuge in silence or ambiguity. For the sake of same-sex attracted people and others, we did not believe we could remain silent—or unclear—and be faithful.

The backlash to the document

shows why it is so needed: While the Christian church has held to a normative understanding of Biblical sexuality for over two millennia, we now face challenges to Biblical teaching that require an unprecedented level of specificity. It affirmed what would have been universally acknowledged as the historic Christian faith without question or controversy until just the last several years.

We understand that we live in an increasingly post-Christian world, and that a vast revolution in sexual morality is now fundamentally reshaping the landscape. Churches and pastors, Christian institutions and individual Christians, are now under intense pressure to adopt this new sexual morality, along with its redefinition of marriage and gender.

The "Nashville Statement," like many other doctrinal declarations common to Christian history, seeks to summarize, clarify, and affirm what Holy Scripture reveals. In this case, we find ourselves clarifying what no previous generation of Christians has been called upon to clarify. We must now clarify and specify what the Bible teaches about human sexuality, marriage, and what it means to be made male and female.

The Nashville Statement affirms God's design for marriage as "a covenantal, sexual, procreative, lifelong union of one man and one woman." Those are the very purposes of marriage affirmed, for example, in the historic Book of Common Prayer. Chastity outside of marriage and

Continued on page 12

The Nashville Statement: The issue is whether you can trust God to tell you who you are

by Rosaria Butterfield

Great battles in theology faced by the church over the centuries have been caused by the introduction of unbiblical categories about the nature of people and the nature of God, and the imprecise language that emerges from this. Are we justified by faith or are we justified by faith alone? Does the Bible contain the Word of God or is the Bible the Word of God?

Should we refuse to bake cakes for gay weddings because marriage is a creation-mandated institution and not a social privilege that can be repackaged as the world whims? Or should we bake two cakes

because sexual orientation as a category of personhood erases sexual sin without the blood of Christ?

The issue is not primarily homosexuality; it's Scripture.

The issue is not primarily gay marriage; it's whether "the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

The issue is not whether people are good-intentioned and sincere in desiring things that God forbids.

The issue is whether we all bear the sin of Adam, inheriting an unchosen moral deformity, an ener-

gy of opposition to God, a rebellion that bequeaths to us a sin nature that we cannot erase on our own terms and by our own hands.

The issue is whether Jesus rose from the grave, is alive today, and whether His blood and love and resurrection makes any wit of difference in how you fight the original sin that distorts you, the actual sin that distracts you, and the indwell-

ing sin that manipulates you.

The issue is whether you can trust the Bible to tell you who you are, Who God is, and which way is up.

Twenty years ago, I lived as a lesbian. I delighted in my lover,

our home on one of the Finger Lakes, our Golden Retrievers, and our careers. When Christ claimed me for His own, I did not stop feeling like a lesbian. I did not fall out of love with women. I was not converted out of homosexuality. I was converted out of unbelief.

Conversion to Christ did not initially change my sexual attraction for women. What conversion did change immediately was my heart and mind. My mind was on fire for the Bible and I could not read enough of it or enough about it. The Gospel gave me a light that was ruinous. It ruined me for the life I had loved. The Lord's light

I was not converted out of homosexuality. I was converted out of unbelief.

Member Letter

I was shocked when my husband said he planned to transition into a woman

Thank you, thank you, Samaritan and Dan Phillips for the articles in the June newsletter about responding Biblically to LGBTQ family members.

I was blindsided last year when my husband of 27 years told me that he has had a life-long struggle with feeling like he was born the wrong gender, and that he planned to transition into a woman and live the rest of his life as a female.

I was shocked, mortified, and completely broken. I didn't know where to turn or who to talk to. I could barely speak words audibly at all. I finally confided in my pastor, and he lovingly and compassionately began an email ministry to me to help me through until I was finally able to speak about it.

We see the LGBTQ community on TV shouting for their rights and magazine covers of Bruce Jenner at the supermarket, but when it happens to you, it's very different. I felt so alone and didn't know where to turn for help. There is such a need for Christian counseling in this area for parents and spouses. Thank you to Dan Phillips for speaking the Truth in love.

I still struggle even as I sit here at my desk filling out divorce paperwork. Divorce... something that I never imagined would happen to me, and I certainly could have never imagined the reason for it.

Thank you, Samaritan Ministries, for being about so much more than health care. I shared the articles with my mother-in-law and brothers-in-law with whom I am (and always will be) very close. They too are devastated by my husband's decision.

Keep up the good work. Tackle those difficult issues. ♦

Continued on page 13

What causes carb cravings? Is sugar ‘addictive’?

Nutrition science offers explanations

by Gary Taubes

I’ve been eating a high-fat, carb-restricted diet for almost 20 years, since I started as an experiment when investigating nutrition research for the journal *Science*. I find it’s easy for me to maintain a healthy weight when I eat this way. But even after two decades, the sensation of being on the edge of a slippery slope is ever-present.

The holidays and family vacations are a particular problem. Desserts and sweets, it seems, will appear after every lunch and dinner, and I’m not particularly good at saying no when everyone else is partaking. The more sweets I eat, the more we eat as a family, the longer it takes upon returning home before that expectation of a daily treat fades away.

What I’ve realized is that eating a little of a tasty dessert or a little pasta or bread fails to satisfy me. Rather it ignites a fierce craving for more, to eat it all and then some. I find it easier to avoid sugar, grains, and starches entirely, rather than to try to eat them in moderation. The question is *why*.

To begin to answer that question requires understanding that researchers are generally divided not only on what causes obesity, but also why we have cravings and often fail to stay on diets.

The conventional thinking, held by the large proportion of the many researchers and clinicians I’ve interviewed over the years, is that obesity is caused by caloric excess. They refer to it as an “energy balance” disorder, and so the treatment is to consume less energy (fewer calories)

and expend more. When we fail to maintain this prescription, the implication is that we simply lack will power or self-discipline.

“It’s viewed as a psychological issue or even a question of character,” says Dr. David Ludwig, who studies and treats obesity at Harvard Medical School.

Carbs and sweets have profound effects on our hormones and neurotransmitters in the brain.

The minority position in this field—one that Dr. Ludwig holds, as do I after years of reporting—is that obesity is actually a hormonal regulatory disorder, and the hormone that dominates this process is insulin. It directly links what we eat to the accumulation of excess fat and that, in turn, is tied to the foods we crave and the hunger we experience. It’s been known since the 1960s that insulin signals fat cells to accumulate fat, while telling the other cells in our body to burn carbohydrates for fuel. By this thinking these carbohydrates are uniquely fattening.

Since insulin levels after meals are determined largely by the carbohydrates we eat—particularly easily digestible grains and starches, known

as high glycemic index carbohydrates, as well as sugars like sucrose and high-fructose corn syrup—diets based on this approach specifically target these carbohydrates. If we don’t want to stay fat or get fatter, we don’t eat them.

This effect of insulin on fat and carbohydrate metabolism offers an explanation for why these same carbohydrates, as Dr. Ludwig says, are typically the foods we crave most; why a little “slip,” as addiction specialists would call it, could so easily lead to a binge.

Elevate insulin levels even a little, says Dr. Robert Lustig, a pediatric endocrinologist at the University of California, San Francisco, and the body switches over from burning fat for fuel to burning carbohydrates, by necessity.

“The more insulin you release, the more you crave carbs,” he said. “Once you’re exposed to a little carbohydrate, and you get an insulin rise from it, that forces energy into fat cells and that deprives your other cells of the energy they would otherwise have utilized—in essence, starvation. So you compensate by getting hungry, particularly for more carbohydrate. High insulin drives carb-craving.”

The result is that even a bite or a taste of carbohydrate-rich foods can stimulate insulin and create a hunger—a craving—for even more carbohydrates. “There’s no question in my mind,” says Dr. Lustig, “that once people who are ‘carboholics’ get their insulin levels down, they

Continued on page 15

Eat and celebrate well over the holidays

by Jaclyn Lewis

Holiday celebrations bring the year's greatest temptations to neglect—or procrastinate on—your healthy eating goals. But there is hope! Here are five tips to both celebrate and eat well this season:

1. Focus on thinking “Eat this!” instead of “Don’t eat that!”

We know our Heavenly Father gave Adam and Eve an entire garden of fruit trees to eat that were “pleasant to the sight and good for food” (Genesis 2:9). Viewing wholesome food as God’s gift to our bodies for nourishment, healing, and enjoyment will not only get us eating healthy food, but give us a healthy and sustainable perspective on eating.

In fact, a recent analysis of public health campaigns shows that it’s better to think in terms of the “good foods” you can eat, and the many good things they do for your body.¹ Nutritious food is that which best meets our bodies needs!

2. Commit now to a healthy eating strategy

A recent study shows that only a few of us ever manage to lose the weight gained over the holidays, and it takes many months even for the few who do succeed.² This can contribute to declining health that worsens year after year.

When it comes to weight gain, Cornell University researcher Dr. Brian Wansink explains, “It’s easier to avoid

holiday pounds altogether than to lose them after they happen.”

Whether your health goals involve losing weight, putting on muscle, or overcoming an illness, make a plan and begin implementing it now, before temptation arrives.

3. Form realistic expectations

While trying to eat better, we may be too hard on ourselves, or we may give up completely. Neither of these tendencies is helpful, but there is a way to avoid them.

Long term diet surveys show that simple, sustainable changes are most productive.³

Nutrition consultant Angela Johnson suggests “making one small change to your eating or drinking habits a week, and maintain this as you add other small changes in subsequent weeks.”

4. Eat “real” food

Two Yale researchers compared six popular healthy eating styles, and found they all featured “real” food.⁴

- Plenty of good quality meats, eggs, and dairy
- Plenty of whole fruits and vegetables
- Limited added sugars (i.e. nearly all packaged food!)
- Limited refined starches (i.e. white bread or pasta)
- Limited processed foods (i.e. breakfast cereal, fruit snacks, chips)

Practically speaking, stick mostly to the outside aisles of the grocery store.

5. Plan how to handle sweets

If Gary Taubes is right (see opposite page) many of us are carboholics, and sugar is actually addictive. We should all realize it may be very difficult to indulge just a little bit and then stop.

- Consider drawing a hard line and avoiding sweets altogether.
- Enjoy a carefully chosen dessert, like fruit dipped in dark chocolate or lavished in homemade whipped cream.
- At Thanksgiving, plan to fill up on generous helpings of turkey and real food homemade sides. Keep in mind that nutritious food is also satisfying. Think of sweets as something offering only fleeting pleasure.
- At Christmas parties, snack off the cheese, fruit, or veggie platters. Go for the deviled eggs and appetizers wrapped in bacon.

Whatever your strategy, the holidays are joyous, God-given occasions of feasting and merriment.⁵ Go ahead and celebrate, but without undermining your God-given health. ♦

1. bit.ly/notdntd

2. bit.ly/octres

3. bit.ly/lilbiteachmeal

4. bit.ly/justeatreal

5. bit.ly/gooverb

The Case Against Sugar

by Gary Taubes

reviewed by Jed Stuber

Sugar is bad. *Really* bad. Most of us intuitively understand that sugar is problematic... probably best avoided... for the most part. *The Case Against Sugar* by Gary Taubes argues that it is much more serious than that.

- Sugar, even a little bit, dramatically affects our hormones, metabolism, digestion, and brain. Consumed regularly, it will wreak havoc on our health, bring on nasty diseases, and take us to an early grave.
- We consume massive amounts, but not just in the form of sweet treats we know are bad. Most processed and packaged foods are now laced with sugar and high fructose corn syrup. Soft drinks and juices are loaded. The average American consumes 150 pounds per year according to some estimates.
- Overwhelming evidence points to it as the cause of obesity and diabetes, and more researchers are becoming convinced it also drives heart disease, cancer, and dementia.
- Amazingly, a scientific consensus laying the blame on sugar has never emerged.

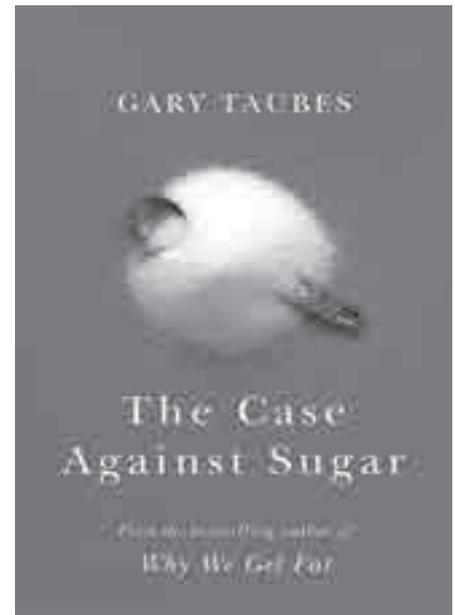
In the opening chapter Taubes makes an attention getting claim: there is a credible case to be made that sugar deserves to be classified as a drug. Anthropologists observe that societies have viewed it as similar to a drug. It is a highly refined substance. Although the science of the brain is only beginning

to develop, we do know that sugar affects the region known as the “reward center” in much the same way as nicotine, cocaine, heroin, and alcohol. And yet health authorities will blame modern health problems on any other aspect of diet or environment before conceding that it’s even possible that sugar played a unique role.

The reviews of history in this book are alone worth the price, even though Taubes is mostly known for explaining science in a way that is accessible to everyone. Wars have been fought over sugar, and empires rose and fell with the industry. Historians say it was once as significant in world affairs as oil is today. It drove the slave trade for a couple centuries. The first American law protecting politically connected sugar producers from competition dates back to 1789.

A little known historical episode is the tobacco-sugar connection. The key ingredient that makes tobacco produce smoke that is slightly acidic rather than alkaline, allowing it to be more easily inhaled so that more nicotine can be absorbed is—you guessed it—sugar. Tobacco is marinated in sugar sauce as part of the production process and often ends up as high as 22 percent sugar by volume. This story is a minor side-light for Taubes, so he points readers to *Golden Holocaust* by Stanford researcher Robert Proctor for more.

Sugar is connected to many of the developments of the 20th century. The technology to produce and distribute candy, ice cream, and



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soft drinks became available. The number of products in a supermarket ballooned to tens of thousands. Wartime disruptions in the sugar supply were considered a national crisis. On the other hand, there were sometimes gluts caused by overproduction. Suppliers were considered too big to fail, so import quotas and subsidies bailed them out. *The New York Times* reported that FDR called the sugar lobby “the most powerful pressure group that had descended on the national capital.” In 1945 *Time* inveighed against “unhealthy economics and unholy politics” of sugar. Coca-Cola became a key military contractor and a multinational corporation. Breakfasts were radically transformed with the introduction of frozen fruit juice concentrate and cereal, which hooked unsuspecting millions on unprecedented sugar levels. Frozen TV dinners sold by the millions and became the topic of a

Seinfeld routine. Food science, done in chemistry labs, became a field in its own right.

Taubes devotes much of the book to explaining how the academic and medical communities have managed to miss or reject the idea that sugar is so detrimental to our health. It is not controversial that the incidence of diabetes took off in the late 1800s as sugar consumption rose, and both have increased dramatically and concurrently ever since. In the early 20th century it was not uncommon for some medical journals, doctors, and news reports to pin the blame on sugar for obesity and diabetes. Why didn't this notion ever catch on?

Ever since the 1860s, when German scientists figured out how to measure energy precisely, the paradigm of energy—essentially the concept of the calorie—has dominated. Nutrients are only evaluated in terms of how much energy they provide, and obesity is considered a matter of taking in more calories than we expend. Consequently, the quality of certain macronutrients in our diet—protein, fat, carbohydrates—and their potentially different effects on our metabolism and health is given little attention, or worse, considered totally irrelevant.

It wasn't until the 1960s that radioimmunoassay technology was developed so that certain molecules in the blood could be detected and the effects of nutrients on the hormones in the body could be studied. Part of the problem was researchers studying metabolism never actually practiced medicine. Doctors who were actually treating people were disconnected from the research community. The European medical community did take an interest in sugar and insulin resistance as a major cause of obesity and diabetes in the first half of the 20th century,

but their influence greatly diminished during World War II, then virtually disappeared.

Taubes explains another problem: “One of the common themes in the history of medical research is that a small number of influential authorities, often only a single individual, can sway an entire field of thought.” The first doctor in America to specialize in diabetes, Elliot Joslin, wrote a textbook first published in 1916 that is still in use today. After initially considering dietary sugar and carbohydrates as the primary cause of diabetes, he instead concluded it was overeating and dietary fat. His view won the day, and we are still suffering for it.

Taubes also tells the story of how the sugar industry, at every turn, prevented a consensus against sugar from emerging. Millions of dollars were spent attempting to throw the scent off sugar and onto anything else. At first it was the idea that a calorie of sugar is no different than any other. Then it was that sugar provides “quick energy” that helps us not eat too much of other things. Another tactic was to point the blame at artificial sweeteners as potentially carcinogenic, to distract from research implicating sugar in diabetes. Another was to beat the drum that disease is “multifactorial” and “complex,” so sugar shouldn't ever be considered a main cause of chronic degenerative disease. Most of all, it was supporting the notion that dietary fat is where all the focus should be.

A significant minority of researchers and doctors have always maintained that the majority has gotten the story terribly wrong. They maintain that counting calories tells us nothing about the quality of the calories, and how different nutrients affect our health. Obesity isn't

caused by overeating. In fact, it's caused by not getting enough nutrition. Obesity doesn't cause diabetes and heart disease. In fact, a diet high in sugar and carbs causes all three. As insulin resistance develops, wrecking our metabolism, obesity is the natural consequence and eventually, diabetes and heart disease. The fats in our diet aren't a problem. The sugars and carbs are. Even small amounts, given time, will ruin our health. This is familiar territory for readers of Taubes' previous books.

The final chapters of *The Case Against Sugar* are downright scary. There is very good evidence, based on Native American populations, that insulin resistance is passed from generation to generation, and each successive generation is more susceptible to diabetes. It's happening to America right before our eyes. Our grandparents and parents died mostly from heart disease, a much preferred way to go than the nasty complications of diabetes, cancer, or dementia. We are farther along the insulin resistance continuum now.

If this thesis is correct, what is to be done? Taubes is brutally honest. There's no science to give us hope that the trend is reversible, even if we were willing to radically change our diets, which we clearly aren't. This matter deserves more attention from the medical community, but it would be costly, and there's very little interest in doing anything more than handing out drugs to manage symptoms.

Taubes has started a national conversation. See his previous books,¹ article on page 6, and a companion documentary² for his advice on facing the challenge. ♦

1. *Good Calories, Bad Calories*. (Review: bit.ly/taubesgcbc) *Why We Get Fat and What to Do About It* (Review: bit.ly/taubes2)

2. *Sugar Coated* (Review: bit.ly/sugrev)

This article is for educational purposes and not meant as medical advice.

can't change the Affordable Care Act's one-size-fits-all coverage requirement. That continues to force single men to pay for maternity coverage and childless couples to pay for pediatric dental care. Murray also forbids changing the ACA regulation that makes the healthy pay the same premiums as people with pre-existing conditions—community pricing. She's barring the very changes needed to lower premiums.

Also backing the \$8 billion payout to insurers is a group of more than 40 Republican and Democratic House members who call themselves the Problem Solvers Caucus. Trouble is, the regulations are the problem, and they're proposing more of the same.

The ACA is actually two boondoggles glued together: a vast Medicaid expansion to cover the poor and a federal takeover of individual insurance markets, previously regulated by states. Since that takeover, individual premiums have more than doubled, and they're predicted to rise another 25 to 35 percent next year. The mandatory benefit package and community pricing regulations makes these plans unsustainable, according to actuarial experts. Premiums will never go down until regulations are repealed. That would liberate the middle class to buy affordable insurance without hurting the poor on Medicaid.

The law's defenders insist premium hikes are not a problem because whenever premiums go up, so do subsidies for low-income buyers. They pay the same year after year, regardless of how premiums soar.

These apologists never mention buyers who don't qualify for subsidies. No compassion for them.

Not to mention the 6.9 million people who buy coverage outside the ACA exchanges, where there are no subsidies. In 2017, the average premium for a family of four buying on eHealth reached \$14,300 with a whopping \$8,322 deductible. That means shelling out more than \$22,600 before seeing a penny from insurance. You can pay your mortgage for that.

In 2018, many buyers will conclude they can't afford insurance, because it would consume up to a quarter of their pre-tax income, according to University of Houston health law professor Seth Chandler.

Those defending the status quo are also ignoring who pays for these ever-rising subsidies: taxpayers. And taxpayers are hurting. In 2016, the average household paid 41 percent more taxes than just three years earlier. Any proposal that merely tweaks regulations instead of rolling them back won't address the impact of soaring premiums on taxpayers, and is no "fix."

Expect a lot of self-promoting bipartisanship from the politicians but no real help for middle-class insurance buyers and taxpayers, the forgotten victims of ObamaCare. ♦

Betsy McCaughey (betsymccaughey.com) is a constitutional scholar with a Ph.D. from Columbia University, and former Lt. governor of New York.

McCaughey founded the Committee to Reduce Infection Deaths (also known as RID), a nationwide educational campaign to stop hospital-acquired infections. RID has won legislation in over 34 states for public reporting of infection rates.

Despite facts like these, Ron says rural places are frequently overlooked.

"It's hard to find ministry organizations or even church denominations that give much attention to especially remote rural places," Ron says. "Folks say, 'You're out in the middle of nowhere.' We like to say, 'It's not nowhere if there are people there. Then it's somewhere.'"

Finding those people and enabling the Gospel to be preached to them is RHMA's calling. That's why the parable of the Good Shepherd leaving the 99 sheep to look for the one lost sheep resonates with RHMA.

"It's not that the 99 aren't important, but what about the one?" Ron says. "So we kind of go after the 'ones.'"

That includes endeavoring to have a permanent Christian presence in rural areas through church planting, one of founder C.J. Rediger's desires. Rediger saw ministries like camp revivals, concerts, or vacation Bible school come and go in small towns, with no follow-up. He sought to plant churches and plant pastors who would remain part of the community and sustain the fruit of ministries that passed through.

Serving a town-and-country church, though, is different than serving a city congregation.

"Contextualization needs to happen," Ron says. "There are things that are true in rural communities that need to be factored in."

For instance, how a pastor or church leadership would put a vision together would be different in a rural setting.

"Farmers by nature kind of resist a lot of long-range planning," Ron points out. "We don't even know if

we're going to have a crop,' that kind of thing. They're more subtle, more private, more flexible about it. Not as overt. I think that has to be factored into the process."

Small groups is another trend that would have to be handled differently in a rural church.

"What do you do about small groups when your church is almost a small group?" Ron says.

And pushing "transparency" doesn't work well in small towns.

"If they become transparent, that's a great thing," he says. "I just wouldn't push it. Let it happen organically, if it's going to happen at all."

Ron had to learn all of this along

with his wife, Roxy, after he graduated from Dallas Seminary.

"I anticipated I would end up in a ministry not unlike what I grew up in in Phoenix," Ron says. "We had told the Lord we were willing to go anywhere, so He put us to the test. We ended up in rural Nebraska, rural Oklahoma. That exposed us to the spiritual needs that were out there. We kind of thought that spiritual needs were all in the cities and, once you get beyond the city limits, the needs diminish. We found that wasn't true. At the same time, the Lord gave us just a real love and a heart for it. It wasn't anything we expected. It just happened."

Ron started writing and speaking on rural ministry. When RHMA needed a new executive director 28 years ago, they were given his name as a possibility. RHMA contacted the Klassens, and hired him.

"The hardest thing we've ever had to do in our lives was to leave that church (in Corn, Oklahoma) and come to RHMA," Ron says. "It was a wonderful church there."

After a challenging first couple of years at RHMA, the Klassens now consider it a privilege to be there.

"People sometimes say, 'What are you going to do when you grow up?' And I say, 'I hope nothing different than what I'm doing right now.'" ♦

Why SMI?

Since Rural Home Missionary Association staff and missionaries are self-supporting, they need to arrange for their own health care.

That has led more than a dozen of them, including executive director Ron Klassen and associate director Gary Roseboom, to health care sharing through Samaritan Ministries.

Gary signed on in 2011 a few years after going full time with RHMA. He originally had bought health insurance through a local company, but they stopped offering it. After being with another health care sharing ministry for a while, he switched to SMI.

"We knew enough about Samaritan," he says, and praised it to others. "It was time to put our money where our mouth was."

Gary says he and his wife, Judy, have "no regrets" turning to health care sharing.

"We've had nothing but positive experiences," he says.

So positive, that his son, Adam, and daughter-in-law, Allison, who work for a church in Malaysia, have joined as well, with Judy handling their Samaritan paperwork from the U.S.

Ron and his wife, Roxy, joined in 2016 after wit-

nessing staff members' positive experiences and becoming "intrigued" by this different way of doing health care.

Both the Klassens and Rosebooms have had positive experiences with having Needs met by Samaritan members.

"It was flawless, like clockwork, like you had hoped it would happen," Ron says of their experience. "We agreed the biggest difference is it's personal. You're not sending money to a company. It's ingenious, really. We're not even sending money to Samaritan. We're sending money to real people. So you get a sense that we're helping brothers and sisters in Christ. This is about people."

Plus, Ron says, the health care sharing model "makes us eager to help."

"With insurance, you're always trying to get by with giving them as little money as you can," he says. "Now, with the option of giving more money to Samaritan, just to help with Special Prayer Needs, it's like, 'Well, we want to do that.' And it's not burdensome for us, like an insurance payment would be burdensome.

"It's an opportunity to help somebody." ♦

fidelity within marriage are affirmed as the clear teaching of the Bible. We deny that God designed marriage “to be a homosexual, polygamous, or polyamorous relationship.” The Christian church—in all of its major branches—has joined in this denial for 2,000 years.

We affirm that God created Adam and Eve as the first human beings, as the statement says, “in His own image, equal before God as persons, and distinct as male and female.” Further, we affirm that God calls His human creatures “to accept the God-ordained link between one’s biological sex and one’s self-conception as male or female.”

The statement denies that same-sex attraction “is part of the natural goodness of God’s original creation, or that it puts a person outside the hope of the gospel.”

Pastors, parents, and individual Christians are asking for clear answers to what they see as new questions. We have attempted to provide them. Churches and Christian institutions have asked for a statement to which they can point for reference and affirmation. We have sought to assist them.

Many of the responses to the “Nashville Statement” have underlined the urgency and the necessity of the document. One response, offered as the “Denver Statement,” released by a church in Colorado, specifically affirms “that the glorious variety of gender and sexual expression is a reflection of God’s original creation design and are aspects of human flourishing.”

That affirmation is certainly in keeping with the moral revolution, but intellectual honesty requires the admission that it cannot be squared

with the Bible’s account of creation. The “Denver Statement” denies “that sexual attraction for the same sex is outside the natural goodness of God’s original creation.” That fits the new sexual morality quite well, but runs counter to the consistent teaching of Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments.

With all our hearts, we believe that the sexual revolution cannot deliver on its promises, but that Christ always delivers on His.

Several of the responses have been quite candid in celebrating the overthrow of two thousand years of Christian moral teaching. Fair enough, but such a celebration acknowledges a severe break with historic Christianity. The “Denver Statement” makes this point clearly: “Christians at the dawn of the twenty-first century find themselves living in an exciting, beautiful, liberating, and holy period of historic transition.”

In less than one week, the

“Nashville Statement” has marked an ironic achievement. It has incited those who would replace Christianity with a new religion teaching a new morality to be explicit in their rejection of the historic Christian faith.

The main goal of the “Nashville Statement” is to point all persons, regardless of the form of our struggles over sexuality or self-identity, to salvation and wholeness in Christ. With all our hearts, we believe that the sexual revolution cannot deliver on its promises, but that Christ always delivers on His.

The very fact that the statement made headlines and was greeted with shock and surprise in some quarters underlines why it was needed. We believe that human dignity, human flourishing, and true human freedom are at stake. We know that two rival visions of what it means to be human are now fully apparent. We stand by the vision affirmed in the historic Christian faith. ♦

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Al Mohler is the president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is the author of many books including We Cannot Be Silent: Speaking Truth to A Culture Redefining Sex, Marriage, and the Very Meaning of Right and Wrong.

1. Visit cbmw.org/nashville-statement to read the statement and view the list of signatories.

illuminated my sin through the law and illuminated my hope through Jesus and the Gospel. The Gospel destroyed me before the Lord built me back up. In saying “yes” to Jesus and “no” to the desires of my flesh, I learned that the only way to peace with my God was through the Cross—the one that Jesus died on and the one that I was called, with the help of Jesus, to carry.

In this crucible I wondered how this could be so. How could that which I loved be sin? How could I hate my sin without hating myself? How could I both hate my sin and feel drawn into it simultaneously?

I learned that sin does not lose its character as sin because I loved it. I learned that my homosexuality was a logical consequence of the fall of man, the thumbprint of original sin on some of us. It is true that some of us are born this way. It is also true that we are all born in sin, in one way or another. We can hate our sin without hating ourselves because we who have committed our lives to Christ stand in His righteousness and not our own. Our real identity is not in the sin we battle but in the Savior we embrace.

Christ’s salvation is definitive and decisive. Christ rescues His people, growing us in union with Christ, establishing us in God’s family, the Church, and setting us apart to bear the image of God in knowledge (of God’s Word), holiness (in God’s justification of His people), and righteousness (through sanctification, also called growth in Christ).

We gain more than we lose when we pick up our cross and follow Jesus. But pick up our cross we must. And for many of us, our cross

demands forsaking the sexual sin that calls us by name.

We live now in a world that has no use for the God of the Bible, for Jesus, the Savior of His people and of the world. The terms are shifting quickly. Calling people like me to forsake sexual sin is no longer considered a first step toward walking with Jesus in liberty and in new life. Today, some influential people who claim to know Christ no longer believe that God hates sin. Sin is in the eyes of the beholder, they say.

Just a few years ago, these people blamed sin on the devil, saying “the devil made me do it.” Now these same people—some of them leaders in the church—blame sin on the Holy Spirit, declaring that He is blessing what the Bible condemns. In a few short years, blame shifting has morphed into blasphemy. And this blasphemy is coming from people who claim to have Christ’s salvation and from the pulpits and blogs that they wield.

When blasphemy comes from the Church, the Bible gives us ways to understand how prophets become lions and wolves. First Peter 5:8 issues the warning for today’s church climate: “Be sober-minded. Be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” Matthew 7:15 shows us what to do: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits.” Christian fruit grows you in holiness, like Christ. Christian fruit grows you in grace—which is bought by the blood of Christ, the ransom price for my sin and yours. Grace leads you to love and desire the moral law of God, and

not to despise it. Christian fruit has no measure but the Word of God.

I signed the Nashville Statement because I stand with Biblical orthodoxy, which is inseparable from God’s creation mandate and definition of gendered personhood found in Genesis 1:27: “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female, He created them.” The soul is God’s fingerprint on humanity, but the gendered body—essentially and ontologically male or female—will also, for the believer in Jesus Christ, be glorified and resurrected in the New Jerusalem.

I signed the Nashville Statement because my conscience compels me so, because the promises of liberty on the world’s terms are false and deceptive, and because many who currently claim to have Christ’s forgiveness and salvation must be called to account for leading good people astray with false promises and filthy lies.

I signed the Nashville Statement because the wolves are prowling, and the lions are roaring, and because they are bold and proud of their heresy, and because you must be warned.

By God, through the merit and power of Jesus Christ, here I stand. ♦

Reprinted from the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (cbmw.org).

This article is part of a series in which signatories of the Nashville Statement offer their own perspectives on it.

Rosaria Butterfield, former professor of English at Syracuse University, is the author of The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: An English Professor’s Journey into Christian Faith.

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, we will provide updates and offer prayer points gleaned from such sources as World Watch Monitor and International Christian Concern. Please use them in your personal or group prayer time.

Villagers take Christian Indian man to police

A 63-year-old Christian was taken to a police station on August 26 by fellow village residents in south-west India after being accused of attempting to force others to convert to Christianity, International Christian Concern reports. Dorairaju has been indicted on charges of forced conversions in the past. He regularly visits the homes of “untouchables” and offers prayers. *Pray that charges will be dropped against Dorairaju, that he will be able to share the Gospel unhindered, and that hostile villagers will also be converted.*

Turkey adds charges against pastor

Turkish authorities have added new charges against American pastor Andrew Brunson, World Watch Monitor says. They are demanding four consecutive life sentences. Brunson was jailed in October without charges, eventually being accused of membership in an unnamed terrorist organization. The

new charges are spying and insurgency. The pastor is being denied access to information about the charges and alleged evidence against him. Brunson denies all charges. “My aim is to tell about Jesus Christ,” Brunson has said. *Pray for Pastor Brunson’s release and the dropping of all charges against him, for encouragement for those he disciples, and for his family. Pray also for Christians throughout Turkey trying to bring the Good News to one of the earliest bastions of Christianity.*

Coptic Christians blocked from church

Egyptian Coptic Christians were forced to hold an annual celebration in the streets after local authorities prevented them from using a residence as a church in August, WWM says. Police said the Copts didn’t have the necessary permit. Action was taken after Muslims claimed the Christians were meeting in the home illegally, which led to clashes. An area bishop said 15 churches in his parish have been closed and 70 small towns have no church or place to hold Christian worship. *Pray that the Copts will have access to places of worship soon, and that they will remain strong in the face of efforts to weaken their faith.*

Pakistan boy beaten by mob

A 16-year-old Pakistani boy was reportedly forced to confess to burning a page of the Quran in August, WWM says. He was almost killed by a mob in the process. The boy, Asif Masih, is reportedly illiterate and slightly mentally challenged, reports say. Testimony and evidence appear to be inconsistent. *Pray that charges will be dropped against*

Asif, and that he will be able to move to a safe area. Pray also that blasphemy laws in Pakistan will be repealed.

Sudan church leader arrested

A Sudan Church of Christ leader who had already spent 19 days in prison in 2015-16 was re-arrested for a day, along with five other fellow leaders, WWM reports. Kuwa Shamal is the SCOC’s head of missions. This is the third time he has been arrested. This arrest came on the heels of the group’s refusal to hand over church offices to the government. *Pray for Kuwa and the others to remain strong in the face of government pressure against their faith, and to be able to continue their ministry to believers in Sudan.*

Law hurts Christian agencies

The Bangladesh government has indirectly closed down 200 Christian organizations through a law passed last year, ICC reports. The law was meant to stop terrorist cells receiving funds from outside the country, but the Foreign Donations Regulation Bill affected legitimate activities, like ministries, as well. The law requires non-governmental organizations to register with a Bangladeshi agency, which decides whether it can receive funding. Language in the law gives the agency a great deal of leeway in deciding who gets funding. *Pray that the law will be removed or restructured to be more favorable to funding of Christian organizations trying to help those in Bangladesh.* ♦

For more information on the persecuted church, contact International Christian Concern (www.persecution.org, 800-422-5441) or World Watch Monitor (world-watchmonitor.org)

become less carboholic. And if they go off the wagon and start eating carbs, they go right back to where they were before. I've seen that in numerous patients."

Sugar and sweets might be a particular problem because of several physiological responses that may be unique to sugar. Sugar cravings appear to be mediated through the brain reward center that is triggered by other addictive substances. Both sugar and addictive substances stimulate the release of a neurotransmitter called dopamine, producing an intensely pleasurable sensation that our brains crave to repeat. Whether this really is a significant player in sugar cravings is one of many areas of controversy in the field.

Researchers like Dr. Ludwig and Dr. Lustig who also see patients, and physicians, nutritionists and dietitians who promote carb-restricted diets, believe that a person can minimize these carbohydrate cravings by eating lots of healthful fats instead. Fat is satiating, says Dr. Ludwig, and it's the one macronutrient that doesn't stimulate insulin secretion. Eating fat-rich foods, "helps extinguish binge behavior," Dr. Ludwig says, "as opposed to high-carb foods which exacerbate it." (Although the definition of a "healthful" fat is another topic of debate.)

Whatever the mechanism involved, if the goal is to avoid the kind of slip that leads from a single forkful of rice to a doughnut binge or falling off your diet for good, then the same techniques that have been pioneered in the field of drug addiction for avoiding relapses also should work in this scenario as well. These basic principles have been

developed over decades, says Laura Schmidt, an addiction specialist at the University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine who now studies sugar as well. They can "work for anyone who's gotten clean and sober and wants to stay that way."

Techniques pioneered in drug addiction should work here. The first and most obvious strategy is stay away from the trigger.

The first and most obvious strategy is to stay away from the trigger. "Alcoholics who care about staying sober won't get a job in a bar or even walk down the alcohol aisle in a grocery store," says Dr. Schmidt. "It's harder to avoid junk foods in the food environment around us, but we can certainly clean up our home environment and avoid situations where sugar and other treats are easily available."

Changing our social networks may be necessary as well—convincing our families and our communities to be invested in eschewing these foods, just as they would help if we were trying to quit cigarettes or alcohol or a harder drug.

Another valuable technique is to learn to identify, plan for, and avoid situations that weaken resolve or increase cravings. "If I know that at 3 p.m. I have a little slump and will want to go to the vending machine, then I can have food available that's the equivalent, but that won't trigger a binge," says Dr. Schmidt. "Instead of sugary soda, I can drink sparkling water with a lime in it."

Ultimately, any successful diet is by definition a long-term commitment. We tend to think of diets as something we go on and off. And if we fall off, we think the diet failed. But if we buy into the logic of carb-restricted diets, then it implies acceptance of a lifetime of abstinence. As with cigarettes or alcohol, if we fall off the wagon, we don't give up; we get back on.

"It's a very powerful system that has to be undone, whether it's addiction or metabolic disease," says Dr. Schmidt. "It is knitted into the body and mind over years, and getting healthy requires taking the long view as well." ♦

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Gary Taubes (garytaubes.com) is the best selling author of The Case Against Sugar, Good Calories Bad Calories, Why We Get Fat and What to Do About It, and Bad Science: The Short Life and Weird Times of Cold Fusion. He has won the Science in Society Journalism Award three times. He studied applied physics at Harvard (BS), aerospace engineering at Stanford (MS), and journalism at Columbia University (MS).

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 5:20

An ambassador is one who has agreed to dedicate himself to representing someone else. Everything he says and everything he does must be consistent with the interests of the one he is representing—every day, any time of day, everywhere he goes. He must subordinate his own interests.

We are ambassadors for Christ. Our lives should be lived for Him, not for ourselves. Romans 12:2 says that we should present our bodies as living sacrifices. Everything we think, say, and do should be an offering to Him.

Jesus has a unique ambassadorship in His Kingdom for each of us that is individually designed for us to fill. No matter how difficult, no matter who may be against us, whether by life or by death, He causes all things to work together for the good of those who love Him, as we fulfill His purpose (Romans 8:28).

What privileged ambassadorships!

For the Kingdom,



Ray King