

Christian HealthCare

NEWSLETTER

MEMBER LETTERS:

Health Resources app on Dash is very helpful

I really appreciate the Health Resources app on the Dashboard. I've been using Healthcare Bluebook to look up prices for pregnancy ultrasounds, and it's been so helpful to compare and have a list right in front of me. Thank you for making that available!

*Ryan and Alicia Hemphill
Seattle, Washington*

Unfortunately we have experienced four different needs, and there are discouraging hurdles in our health care system. However, I appreciated the prayer support from staff and that I can go to any doctor I need, even out of state. Healthcare Bluebook on Dash was very helpful, as was Medibid. We are praying for the public policy efforts, for our lawmakers to allow greater use of HSAs and to recognize the value of health care sharing ministries.

*John and Diane Rider
Pittsfield, New Hampshire*

Spend time in front of screens? Better take lutein

The evidence is mounting: a macular degeneration crisis looms

by Bill Sardi

Enslaved by vocation or addicted by choice to hours in front of a computer monitor? You had better down a lutein pill every day.

A recently published report cites the fact that about 35 percent of people born 1965-1996 and now living in developed countries spend at least 9 hours a day in front of digital devices.¹ Such intense use of digital devices has been found to have undesirable effects on sleep quality, alertness during waking hours and also fatigue, headaches, muscular, skeletal, and visual strain.

When an eye doctor takes an ophthalmoscope in his hand and holds it close to your eyes to examine your retina, he/she can see yellow in the visual center of your eyes—called the macula. Some people have very little of this protective yellow pigment. It is derived from the diet. There is such a small amount in foods (spinach and lutein-fortified eggs provide the most), and there is so much at stake if you don't have enough of this pigment (loss of central vision for reading, driving, recognizing faces), you don't want to leave this to chance.

Insufficient macular pigment density poses an increased lifetime risk for a sight-robbing eye disease called macular degeneration.²

The pigment is lutein and its molecular cousins zeaxanthin and meso-zeaxanthin.³ This yellow pigment protects the eyes

from what is called "the blue light hazard."

Blue light exposure can induce premature aging in the retina. This can result in poor recovery from bright light (glare recovery), poor ability to visually distinguish objects under various lighting conditions (contrast sensitivity), and other measures of visual function.

Since light rays focus onto the retina of the eyes unevenly with blue light focusing in front of red light, the elimination of blue light via light filtration can improve the sharpness of vision.⁴

Another experiment shows that lutein/zeaxanthin protects the back of the eyes from chronic inflammation induced by blue light.⁵

Chronic exposure to blue light from artificial sources of indoor light may

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Sharing Summary from January

Shares: <small>(reduced 5%)</small>	\$24,150,555	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:	\$24,148,445	
Unshared Needs in Negotiation:	\$ —	
New Needs:	3,635	
Total Needs:	7,684	
New Rewards:	116	Member Households: 73,975 (as of 12/20/17)
Miscarriages:	14	
Final Rewards:	5	

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

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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:



1 SEND A NOTE—
Burdens can be lightened emotionally as we encourage one another in the Lord.



2 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.



3 ALWAYS STAY ALERT IN PRAYER—
Burdens can be lightened spiritually as we unite to call upon the God of the impossible.

Is a free-market system compatible with Biblical principles?

by Michael Thomas Hamilton

A brother in the Lord and fellow Samaritan member recently cautioned me against characterizing free-market economic principles as “Biblical” when they are best credited to modern theories, after reading my article in the December 2017 newsletter, “A Biblical defense of liberty and free markets.”

I’m thankful “iron sharpens iron” (Proverbs 27:17)—and thankful I was careful not to overreach in the article. I agree Christians need not stamp Bible verses on inventions of human reason to justify our use of those inventions. I also stand by my assertion that the “free-market” view—that justice and prosperity tend to flourish when governments seldom intrude on people’s right to trade goods and services—aligns with Biblical principles.

Having a Biblical worldview means self-consciously applying Biblical principles to all areas of life. Many such principles concern key ingredients of any economy, including our own: personal finance, work, wages, contracts, taxes, and giving.

Back to home ec.?

Aristotle’s use of the Greek word translated into English as *economics* does not refer to abstract theories of social spending, but to the rule, or law (*nomos*), of the home (*oikos*). Similarly, the Bible has much less to say about economics for the committee to award the Nobel Prize than for the common man or woman seated at the kitchen table. This is because God calls people to holiness regardless of the eras, economic systems, or forms of gov-

ernment under which He has sovereignly placed them.

Almost half of the 21 verses describing the “excellent wife ... far more precious than rubies” in Proverbs 31 praise the woman’s household management, financial planning, and anticipation of her family’s needs. Five verses show her conducting commerce (e.g., 16: “She considers a field and buys it”; 18: “She perceives that her merchandise is profitable”; 24: “She makes linen garments and sells them”). Five more praise her work ethic and provision (e.g., 15: “She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens”).

The Proverbs 31 woman’s husband, who is full of praise for his wife and is respected among the elders, is no loafer either (23). Were he lazy, the blessing of having an “excellent wife” would probably elude him, because, as Solomon wrote, “the soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied” (13:4).

Will work for food

Solomon’s rebuke of laziness and his identification of its companion, poverty, recur throughout Proverbs. “Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits lacks sense,” Solomon wrote (12:11). Instead of yielding income-generating crops, the “senseless” sluggard’s field is “overgrown with thorns ... covered with nettles, and its stone wall broken down” (24:30–31). Such dilapidation occurs gradually, following a seemingly benign habit of resting when one should work (33–34). By

contrast, even the ant “prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest” (6:7).

Almost a thousand years later, Paul carried a similar bread/work equation to the believers in Thessalonica:

“For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day. ... For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living” (1 Thessalonians 3:7–12).

Here Paul exhorts able-bodied believers to work for their sustenance instead of leeching off those who do work.

The wages of work

Employment is a two-way street. While people should work for their wages, Scripture makes equally clear employers should adequately pay their workers.

Christ told the 72 followers at the start of their mission “the laborer deserves his wages,” a maxim Paul repeated to Timothy concerning compensating elders who preach and teach (Luke 10:7, 1 Timothy 5:18). Where there are wages, there are contracts. Just as the Proverbs 31 woman is responsible to compute the value of the goods and services

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Kristopher and Katie Kimball

Kitchen Stewardship

by Kathryn Nielsen

Katie Kimball's children sharpened their fine motor skills as toddlers by learning how to cut and spread with a butter knife and pour and measure ingredients correctly.

Now other children can, too, at her website kidscookrealfood.com. Adults can get help at kitchenstewardship.com.

Katie has turned a simple desire to cook healthy food for her family into a growing business.

Early on she discovered that raw milk, homemade yogurt, and sourdough bread, then a gluten-free and occasional grain-free diet, helped her husband through some health issues.

Then, when her first child was born, she remembers thinking, "Oh my, I'm in charge of this tiny life."



It was an awakening that suddenly found her spending large amounts of time in the kitchen making baby food from scratch.

As she learned some of her own kitchen tricks, her desire to use healthier, organic food became a reality despite time and budget constraints. With a background in teaching, this naturally led to a desire to teach other moms what she was learning.

Eventually, several people suggested starting a blog to "see if there was any interest in the idea."

"I literally said, 'What's a blog?' I had no idea," Katie says.

That was 2008. By 2009, kitchenstewardship.com was born—a website where adults can find information about finding balance and being good stewards of what God has given them.

"Everything we have is from God, and we are called to be good stewards of it. For me it's very much entrenched in my faith," she says. "I so enjoy the social interaction of the blog, being able to get out there and talk to people about the ideas, back and forth in the comments."

Fast forward to 2015 and she would once again flex her teaching muscles by developing online cooking classes for kids. Her online courses are divided into three levels with eight classes per level. The first level, for the beginner, is geared to kids ages 2-5 and focuses on kitchen concepts like pouring, holding a knife correctly, spreading with a knife, blending spices, and proper measuring by measuring things flat.

Level two, the intermediate level,



Katie and Kristopher Kimball with their children, from left, Paul, Leah, Gabe, and John.

teaches stovetop safety, how to follow a recipe, an introduction to using a sharp knife, browning ground meat, and other useful skills.

For the advanced cook, level three spends the first four classes teaching sharp knife skills more in depth, ending with how to cook a white sauce and steam veggies.

Today, kidscookrealfood.com offers more than 45 training videos and 400 printables to its 5,000+ members.

When she first began, she struggled with communicating some of the measuring concepts to her students. Her then-7-year-old suggested doing what she had been doing with him and his siblings all along: teaching basic spoon sizes by using words like daddy, mommy, kid, and baby spoons. She created pictorial cards that demonstrate the different measuring sizes to kids who don't yet read or know their numbers.

Katie says her courses make kids “much more independent than they would be otherwise.”

Teaching kids to cook is Katie’s passion.

“I really want kids to learn to cook,” and have “an appreciation for real food they can make themselves, and I want them to have an understanding of basic [cooking] skills,” she says. “If they come across a recipe, I want them to think, ‘I have the skills for this.’”

To that end, her videos are skill-based rather than recipe-based.

Katie’s classes have been used by a myriad of other organizations, expanding her reach beyond the traditional home cook, including:

- Utah’s Expanded Core Curriculum to provide cooking classes for the blind.
- Youth Villages, an organization working with foster families in in Tennessee and Mississippi in which 80 memberships were gifted through a “buy one, give one” campaign.
- Amara, a nonprofit organization that works with kids in foster care, working to become incorporated into their foster care/ adoptive mentoring programs.
- Homeschool co-ops and school-to-home partnerships.
- An afterschool program in Kansas.
- A preschool program in California.
- Charter schools that pay for their students’ home study programs in California and a few other states.

Although her courses are geared specifically to kids, she often hears from parents that they are learning right along with their kids. She’s considering adding classes to her cur-

riculum for young adults who don’t know how to cook, a last-ditch effort before heading out on their own. She’d also like to develop an extension of her current classes focusing on fruits and veggies, teaching kids how to pick, wash, and cook them.

Classes aren’t the only teaching resources available. Katie has written several e-books: *The Everything Beans Book*, *Better Than a Box*, *The Healthy Lunch Box*, *The Healthy Breakfast Book*, *Smart Sweets*, *The Family Camping Handbook*, and her bestselling *Healthy Snacks to Go*, which is also available in print.

But even this cooking teacher needed help at one time.

“We used to have 40 boxes of cheap cereal in the basement and had Hamburger Helper weekly,” she says.

It’s this kind of honest encouragement coupled with tutorials on both websites that persuade even the most intimidated cooks to get in the kitchen and give it a try. And if you were fortunate enough to score an Instant Pot for Christmas, her website offers tutorials and recipes for it, including a video on how to cook macaroni and cheese with it starring her 5-year-old.

If all of her accomplishments aren’t enough, her 2018 business goal is simple: to be “nationally known as

the mom who teaches kids to cook.” When the subject of kids and real food comes up, she wants people to ask, “What does Katie Kimball have to say about it?”

She doesn’t do all of this alone though. Her husband, Kristopher, was able to leave his corporate job three years ago and start his own software business for bloggers, something born out of a need for her blog. She employs a site editor, social media manager, customer service people, administrative assistant, content auditor and executive assistant, graphic designer, photo editor, affiliate manager, four contributing writers, a video team, and her 12-year-old, who does her weekly stats. All the kids pitch in on Sundays and make pizza so she can have the freedom to be involved in other ministries.

“The bottom line is that this crazy business that grew out of a passion and conversations in my head is now part-time income for almost a dozen women,” she says.

Despite her focused pursuit on healthy organic food, she admits her family doesn’t eat healthy 100 percent of the time.

“I have to survive with the family not hating me too,” she says. ♦

Why SMI?

The growth of Katie Kimball’s business allowed her husband to leave his corporate job three years ago and work from home as a computer programmer. This created the need for a different approach to their family’s health care.

“We knew quite a few other friends who had used some of the other health care sharing ministries,” she says. “When we looked into it, between the bottom-line cost and the way it worked, it was the right choice for us. We’ve been very happy with it.”

Part of the appeal of Samaritan Ministries is that it was “very aboveboard,” Katie says. ♦

Raising an autistic child helped me see that we are all ‘spiritually autistic’

by Leslie Hughes

“**M**om, when’s now and forever?” This was the loudly voiced question that my ten-year-old autistic son asked during the Sunday worship service. As the pastor began his sermon, I whispered, “Jeffrey, you can’t speak out loud in church. Use your inside voice so that we don’t disturb others.” “OK, sorry, Mom,” he whispered back.

I was pleasantly surprised to think that he was contemplating spiritual concepts like eternity. Five minutes later, he put down his pencil and asked me in a mock whisper, “Mom, when’s now and forever?” Sensing that this was something important to him and that he would be persistent until satisfied, I answered, “Well, it means for all time. Eternity.” He got a quizzical look on his face, but went back to the drawing. Three minutes ticked by. Jeffrey tugged on my sleeve and asked, “Mom, when’s now and forever?”

Realizing that I had not communicated, I decided that I needed a definition to which he could relate, and the more visual, the better. Since Jeffrey loves video games, I decided to try a gaming word picture. Feeling smug and clever, I responded, “Now and forever is like getting endless ‘continues’ at the end of your game when the hero dies.”

Shaking his head he went back to drawing. Thirty seconds later he said, “No Mom. When’s now and forever?” Because we were being disruptive I whispered, “Jeffrey, we’ll talk about this in the car, OK?”

The sermon concluded and we sang a hymn. The pastor stood and raised his hands. His weekly bene-

diction from 2 Peter 3:18 says, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both *now and forever!* Amen.” As he spoke, it hit me. Jeffrey was not asking a deeply spiritual question about eternity. He just wanted to know when the pastor was going to say, “now and forever” signifying the end of the service. He just wanted to know when he could get some lunch!

On our best days, we are ill prepared for the task of parenting and are driven to Christ. But parents of autistic children face additional obstacles to overcome. Some autistic children have physical problems: repetitive, self-stimulating, or self-injurious behaviors. Almost all have cognitive, social, and language deficits.

Decisions are required for medications, diets, academic placements, and non-conventional intervention measures which come with fantastic anecdotal success stories and astronomical costs. In addition to practical issues, Christian parents are rightly concerned about communicating spiritual truth.

I have sought the Lord’s wisdom in these areas for almost 28 years. While not having all the answers, I share some learned lessons.

Autism is a pervasive developmental delay in which cognitive, social, and language abilities are impaired. Autism is not diagnosed through physiological symptoms and objective medical testing. Rather, diagnosis is based on observation. Behaviors are compared with a prescribed list of symptoms. Based on the number and severity of behaviors observed, diagnosis is determined.

Autistic individuals process information and “see” the world differently.” Jeffrey attended a chapel service at school shortly after 9-11-01. The speaker’s goal was to emphasize that the way we process events is related to our worldview. He displayed an overhead stating, God is N O W H E R E. One of the kids questioned, “God is nowhere?” From the back of the auditorium Jeffrey shouted, “God is now here.” The speaker exclaimed, “Yes, that is exactly my point.” The kids all turned and looked at Jeffrey with new respect. The “not so smart kid” caught what they missed. Why was he able to see what others couldn’t? Autistic individuals uniquely process the sensory input they receive.

While atypical, Jeffrey has a wonderful sense of humor. In Bible class, we read the “ites” of Canaan. The passage mentioned the Perrizites, Hittites, Hivites, Ammonites, etc. Jeffrey piped up, “Mom, what about the parasites?” After he realized he’d said something funny, he added, “And what about the websites?”

Understanding that autistics tend to be visual learners has been helpful in imparting spiritual concepts to Jeffrey. Scripture says spiritual truth must be revealed by the Spirit. We cannot “make” anyone understand spiritual concepts. We can give a stellar presentation of the Gospel message or we can badly botch the whole thing. But, unless God is at work, regenerating and illuminating, all is in vain, irrespective of intellectual ability. First Corinthians 2:12-14 says, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit Who is from God, that we might know the

things freely given to us by God, ... But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." The Spirit must work to bring understanding, yet we are still responsible for seeking the most appropriate ways of communicating truth.

Asking Jeffrey to read a Bible with words but no pictures is futile. But Jeffrey loves colorful books where the ratio of pictures to words is high. When younger, Jeffrey would read "The Comic Bible" for hours. We initially questioned the wisdom of allowing this, but concluded that any means of imparting truth and maintaining interest in the Bible was profitable. NIV verses are printed on the top of each page, and we took comfort knowing the Word of God is powerful (Hebrews 4:12).

Another example of visually presenting a spiritual concept was, "Hug for 10." This was a visual means of teaching about God's loving discipline. When Jeffrey was in need of discipline, we got our spanking stick. Because his receptive language was weak, we simply explained his disobedience. He knew the consequence was a spanking. But before it was administered, we "hugged for 10." This meant hugging as we S-L-O-W-L-Y counted to ten together. It served two important purposes for us. First, it ensured our discipline flowed out of proper motivation—loving concern for the child. The purpose was restoration, not ventilation of any anger we may have been feeling due to personal idolatry. Secondly, it provided a visual representation of God's discipline flowing out of His love. Even though Jeffrey could not have understood if I said, "Sweetie, sin is a suicidal act of your will against itself. Because God loves

you, He wants you to stop these self-destructive behaviors. He knows if unchecked they can become progressively worse, ruining your life and relationships. So, He has tasked me with lovingly disciplining you." However, I believe Jeffrey experienced that truth because I loved him and the spanking flowed from that love.

Finally, I have learned that I am usually the student. The Lord uses Jeffrey to teach me countless lessons.

The first lesson is that I am spiritually needy. I am "spiritually autistic." Many symptoms used to diagnose autism parallel our spiritual condition. Autistic children don't make or maintain eye contact. They play inappropriately with toys by obsessively lining them up. Attempts to alter the configuration are met with frustration or tantrums. Autistics are usually socially inappropriate or awkward. To communicate needs, they physically direct caregivers.

The Holy Spirit revealed that I am spiritually autistic. I am easily distracted from what is important. Just like the child who obsesses over toys, I obsess over the idols my heart worships. Idols are things to which I thoughtlessly, effortlessly and relentlessly give myself. I invest time, money, and resources to "please" them, foolishly thinking they will rescue or reward me. I refuse to lift my eyes and "look" at my Father. I act inappropriately and seek to control and manipulate others. I am spiritually needy, broken, foolish, and weak. Individuals with autism are excellent reminders of that.

Second, do I really believe God when He says He has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and the weak things of the world to shame the strong (I Corinthians 1:27-30)? Theoretically, I believe this, but in reality I don't.

Jeffrey's curriculum included building social skills. One book featured stories with illustrations and questions designed to reinforce appropriate social behaviors. "Helping Mom Cook," was the story of Nadia. While watching cartoons, Mom asks Nadia to help her cook breakfast. The first question was, "What should Nadia say to her mom?" Jeffrey replied, "She should say yes." To the next question, "Should Nadia help even if she'd rather watch TV?", he replied that she should. The third, designed to examine feelings, asked, "How will Nadia's mom feel if Nadia helps her?" This one was more difficult. But, when I asked Jeffrey the final question, "Why should Nadia help her mom?", his response delighted me. Without missing a beat Jeffrey replied, "Because God loves her."

I hugged him and said, "Excellent answer." We could quit for the day.

If Jeffrey understands the proper motivation for all we do is God's love for us, then he's learned the ultimate lesson. We don't do good deeds to earn God's love or so that others will approve of us. We seek to live righteously because God already loves us in Christ. For him to easily comprehend a concept of which I need constant reminders was amazing. God demonstrated that He can enable one with intellectual deficits to understand the deepest spiritual truths. He truly uses the foolish to shame the wise.

God is committed to seeing that His own understand the Gospel message more than we as parents ever could be. And where we are inadequate, He is able! ♦

Ron and Leslie Hughes are members from Clemson, South Carolina. Leslie is the author of The Gospel for the Visual Learner: The Fork Illustration, available from Amazon.com and on Kindle (bit.ly/hughesfork).



Member Connect

The Member Connect app on the Dashboard gives us a great way to participate in Biblical community. You can log in at Dash.SamaritanMinistries.org to join in praying for one another, exchanging tips about health issues, or sharing advice on dealing with health care providers. Here are few examples of the connections being made.

Praying for one another about biopsy results

D **Desiree:** I had a biopsy to determine if I had oral cancer, and praise God the biopsy results were “negative” for cancer. We really appreciate the support of this community.

M **Melody:** Praising God with you! I have a biopsy soon to check a lump in my chest. Praying for that too.

C **Carey:** I’m joining you Desiree and Melody in this praise and prayer! So glad to have this community. Add me to the biopsy list. I am still searching for a provider currently.

Finding a Direct Primary Care provider near you

J **James:** I just took a call to a new church. Our family would like to participate in membership

based care, sometimes called “Direct Primary Care.” Are there good ways of searching to which someone can point me? Thanks!

R **Rose:** As Samaritan Board member Ron Drummond mentioned, a good resource for locating Direct Primary Care doctors is dpcfrontier.com.

I’ve had a DPC doctor for almost a year now and wouldn’t have it any other way. He worked with me for several months to fix several health issues using primarily diet. He got me incredibly low cash prices on my lab work. I can email or text him for “minor” issues. His office called to check on me after a particular incident. I could go on and on.

Mourning the loss of a wife and mother in our young family

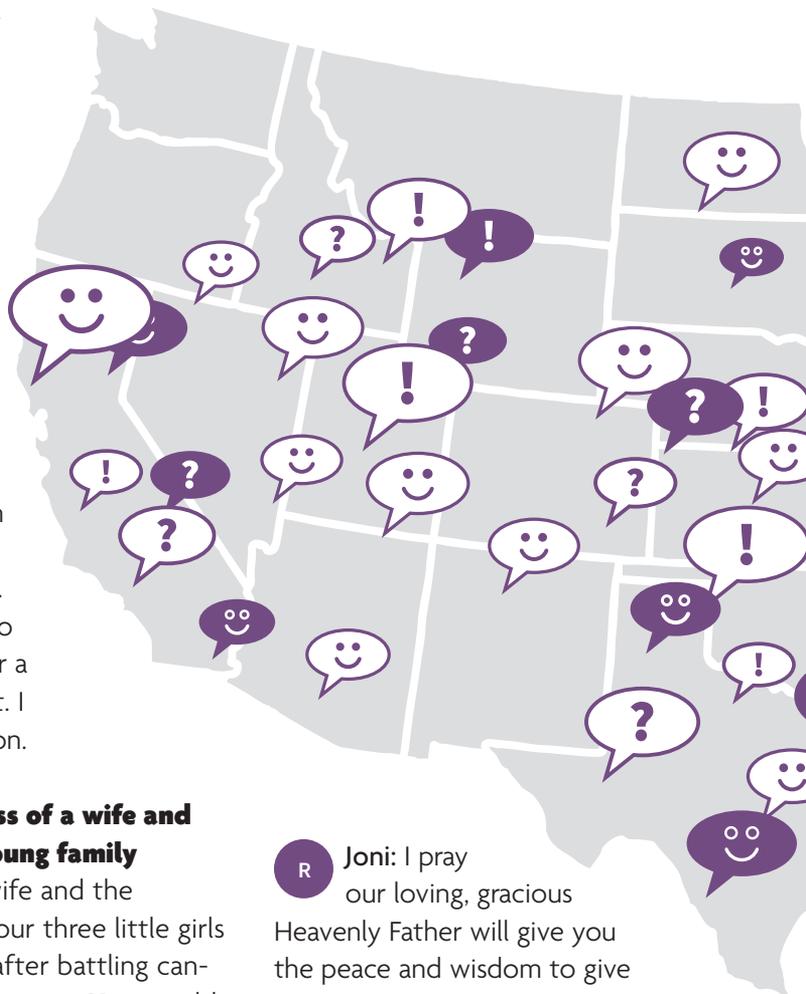
T **Tyler:** My wife and the mother of our three little girls went to Heaven after battling cancer. She was an amazing 31-year-old mother who adored Christ and her family.

Our three daughters (9, 7, & 5) keep asking questions about why Jesus took mommy away instead of healing her. Is Jesus angry with us? Why is she in Heaven instead of here? How do we go on without her?

Please pray that Jesus will give me answers to their questions. Also pray that He will bring someone

amazing into our lives to fill this huge void in our lives.

S **Steven:** My mother died when I was 4, leaving behind four children. We got through it somehow. I can’t imagine how hard it must be as the spouse. Lean on Him. Take it one day at a time.



R **Joni:** I pray our loving, gracious Heavenly Father will give you the peace and wisdom to give your girls the perfect answer and comfort beyond understanding.

A **Ashley:** Praying that you and your girls will sense His presence in a very real way and trusting God to comfort you and give wisdom in the days ahead.

Need healing for eye problems

D **Dan:** I had eye surgery and things were progressing well. Then things changed for the worse. It ended up being another tear and another surgery. Not sure of long-term prognosis. Need healing.

C **Craig:** Praying that the God Who designed and made your eye will heal it, and that you will have peace under His care. Phil 4:5b-7 and Isaiah 41:10.

Lord, guide Jeannie into Your perfect peace that passes all understanding. Protect her from the enemy who whispers anxious thoughts. Give Jeannie strength to cast her cares and anxieties on You. I pray You give Jeannie stamina and daily renew her strength for the tasks at hand. I pray You give the other children an extra measure of helpfulness and sensitivity towards their mother. I ask, in the

this baby health and vitality for the duration of the pregnancy.

May this child grow into the fullness of Your plans and be a beacon of light to all who come into contact with him/her. Lord God, thank You again for Your amazing creation. Amen.

K **Kari:** I hope this doesn't sound insensitive, but can you just find another hospital? Hardly anyone around where we live goes to the hospital that's within 10 minutes. It has such a bad reputation. My husband traveled about an hour to go to a better ER. They also offered a 90 percent discount off the bill. I guess it's like stores. We go to the ones where the merchandise we want is on sale, or pay for convenience. (I even know many people who's obstetrician is 45 minutes away. No babies born in the car, yet. Ha ha!)

P **Phil:** I'm sorry to hear that some are not providing discounts. Can you just tell the hospital: "If you will not give a discount, then we will find another health care provider who will?"

Even if they continue to say they won't give a discount I would encourage you to be patient and persistent. I think eventually the dam is going to break when enough people pay cash and ask for discounts. Prices will be forced down as hospitals have to compete with each other.

H **Heather:** I've found it depends on the hospital and doctor. The children's hospital in our city tends to not offer discounts, but I had a major need recently at a speciality hospital. When I asked for estimates they were very proactive in providing information. My bills were discounted 63 percent! ♦

Please pray for a healthy pregnancy

J **Jeannie:** We are expecting our 5th child in July. We have had miscarriages in the past, so I'm praying my stress levels as a home-schooling mom will stay low. Thank you so much!

M **Manette:** Father God, I thank You for the blessing You have created in Jeannie's womb. Lord You are wonderful and the giver of life.

Cash-pay discounts from hospitals?

L **John:** My wife and I have been with Samaritan for two years, and I have found that most providers are very open and willing to give cash-pay discounts, sometimes quite steep. I have had very little difficulty getting reductions. I'm curious about others' experience.

E **Edward:** In Washington we have watched things become very strict at our hospital. It is sad to see the change in attitude. I find it so frustrating because I know from working in the medical field that they give huge discounts to insurance companies.

20 Reasons why I am grateful for my blood clots

by Katie Tupper

Katie (age 19) wrote this Facebook post just 23 days after her pulmonary emboli. Her recovery journey continues.

As her parents, we have learned so much about God's great love and provision for our precious daughter. Thanks so much to Samaritan and the family of God for being part of that care. There is something so beautifully humbling about being cared for by "strangers."

We have also learned so many practical things about shopping around for good quality, reasonably priced medical care. We encountered kindness and discounts in many places—from the on-call PA to the local pharmacy to the hospital resource specialist to the Johnson & Johnson Foundation, and many more.

To God be the glory!

*Don and Suzie Tupper
Coshocton, OH*

20 Reasons why I am grateful for my blood clots

1. This experience gave me tangible proof that God's timing is way better than mine. Towards the beginning of the semester, there was a possibility of me going out of the country during J-term, but it didn't work out, so I was planning on staying and taking a class. Then I went to register for classes, but there weren't any I could take, so I chose to stay home.

2. I was able to interact with the medical field very hands-on and it has sparked my interest. The things that go into the practice of medicine blew my mind over and over.

3. My level of sympathy and compassion for those with health problems has skyrocketed, especially for those in college. It is a challenge to balance life and sickness.

4. I have been inspired to be more of a servant thanks to the incredible service I received at the Genesis clinic. They treated me like a princess and did everything they could to make me feel comfortable.

5. I gained a greater appreciation for my high pain tolerance thanks to the countless blood tests and the IV at the hospital and the shots I had to give myself for about 15 days following my hospital visit. I have never been more grateful that I do not have a fear of needles.

6. In the same breath, I have also gained a deeper gratefulness for God's design of pain. If I did not experience pain, I would not have pursued this problem, and this clot could have gotten even more deadly than it already was.

7. I have become a more humble human thanks to having to go in a bedpan.

8. This has caused me to slow down. I am a big go go go person, but thanks to my clot, I have learned the importance of resting and peace.

9. I have gained an even deeper appreciation for those who are close to me. My dad spent hours upon hours researching what was happening so he could be well-informed on my problems. My mom was by my side trying to do anything I

needed and being the brains behind keeping everything organized. My brother, even from a thousand miles away, kept calling and checking in to make sure I was ok. My best friends checked in on me even while being a million miles away. My boyfriend visited, listened to me rant, and held me while I cried.

10. I have realized how much I appreciate the love and compassion of countless relatives, classmates, bosses, professors, friends, and my church family. Thank you all.

11. Prayer is a connector over states and countries. I learned that people had been praying for me all over the place. God is an amazing God and He heard the prayers and responded.

12. My eyes were opened to my own mortality. I think I've been running through life with the mindset that I have at least 60 more years guaranteed to me, but I have recognized that I don't even know what is going to happen in the next minute. Life is a GIFT.

13. Throughout my life, I have surrounded myself with sports and fitness. Now I have been forced to find an identity that is not connected to sports. With that stripped away, I realized how important it is to find my identity in Christ alone.

14. I have an increased appreciation for my current place in life. This has pointed out to me how much I actually do love college and learning and spending time with my peers. I love Taylor University!

Spend time in front of screens? Better take lutein.

Continued from page 1

15. My fear has allowed Christ to shine so brightly. Late at night, when everyone else was sleeping and the pain was unbearable, God was there. I would talk to Him and cry out. “Tender whispers in the dead of night” has never been so accurate.

16. My priorities have been rearranged. Salvation is so important and I hope coming out of this, that I make that crystal clear to everyone I interact with. Life can end so quickly and it is so important to know one’s eternal future.

17. Self-care has never been so important. I have learned the importance of listening to my body and taking care of myself, and helping others do the same.

18. It was really entertaining to see people’s reactions to a 19-year-old with a blood clot.

19. I was able to meet countless people who are really good at what they do: from the nurses at Genesis, to the woman who took my blood at Coshocton, to the staff at Northern Lights, and the pharmacy workers at CVS. Thank you all for what you do every day. I cannot begin to express how much it meant to me to have a kind smile in the midst of this scary situation.

20. God is so, so, so strong. In my weakness and humanness, God’s strength and love has become so evident. It is mind-blowing that such a huge, powerful God could care so much about me to allow me to continue to be on this Earth today. I will serve Him with all that I am. ♦

The Tuppens are members from Coshocton, Ohio.

obfuscate the protective pupil closing effect in bright light. It is not uncommon for people to work in front of a computer monitor in a darkened room where the brightness from a computer monitor is not sufficient to induce the pupil to close down. More blue light may reach the retina in this manner.

So in the above mentioned study researchers provided 24 milligrams of lutein/zeaxanthin/mesozexanthin to adults who spend prolonged amounts of time in front of a digital display.⁶ The results were striking.

Sleep quality improved markedly. Headache frequency declined. Eyestrain as well as eye fatigue diminished. All of these factors improved parallel with the yellow pigment increasing in the central retina.

Chronic exposure to blue light, a spectral component of sunlight and artificial lighting, has been experimentally shown to destabilize compartments (lysosomes) within specialized cells in the retina, which are responsible for housekeeping—disposal of cellular debris (lipofuscin).⁷

Dr. Stuart Richer, OD, PhD, at the Captain James A Lovell Federal Health Care Center, North Chicago, Illinois, says the thickness of central retinal foveal pigment (comprising lutein, zeaxanthin, meso-zeaxanthin) in humans ranges from zero to 1.5 density units. The optimal density for visual performance is 0.6 but very few individuals ever reach this point unless maybe they eat gobs of spinach every day. One study of 680 subjects showed only 1 percent achieved the 0.6 level, all presumably supplement users. So essentially, nearly everyone except those who supplement their diet has less than

optimal vision due to a lack of these dietary pigments that naturally filter light rays in the central retina.

In another study, adults who consumed eggs enriched with lutein (in the yolk) experienced an improvement in visual acuity (ability to see various sizes of letters on an eye chart).⁸ But again, this was far from optimal.

The amount of carotenoid pigments consumed in this most recent study was 24 mg per day, which should be considered a loading dose to achieve rapid effect. Probably a much lower dose would be protective, maybe 6-12 mg per day. Dr. Richer conducted two studies that showed macular pigment density steadily increases over a period of one year of dietary supplementation.⁹

Dr. Richer reports that repigmentation of the retina has been demonstrated to enhance driving vision in senior adults.¹⁰

For further information visit www.eyedoctorricher.com.

Disclaimer: The information in this article is for educational purposes and not meant as medical advice.

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Bill Sardi is a consumer advocate and health care research analyst. He is a member of Light House Church in La Verne, California. Read about his latest research at knowledgeofhealth.com. ♦

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The Coconut Oil Miracle

by Bruce Fife, C.N., N.D.

reviewed by Jed Stuber

Miracle? What could be so miraculous about coconut oil? According to Bruce Fife, author of *The Coconut Oil Miracle*, “When taken as a supplement, used in cooking, or applied directly to the skin, coconut oil has been found to promote weight loss; help protect against heart disease, cancer, diabetes, arthritis, and many other degenerative diseases; prevent premature aging of the skin; strengthen the immune system; and improve digestion.”

Those claims may sound too good to be true, but Fife makes a compelling case for the amazing properties of coconut oil in this well documented yet easy to read book. Fife does not sell coconut oil and has no financial interest in the industry. His personal experience with coconut oil and professional interests in nutrition motivated him to become founder and president of the Coconut Research Center. He is well aware that coconut oil has been the target of many accusations, so he begins the book with important background information.

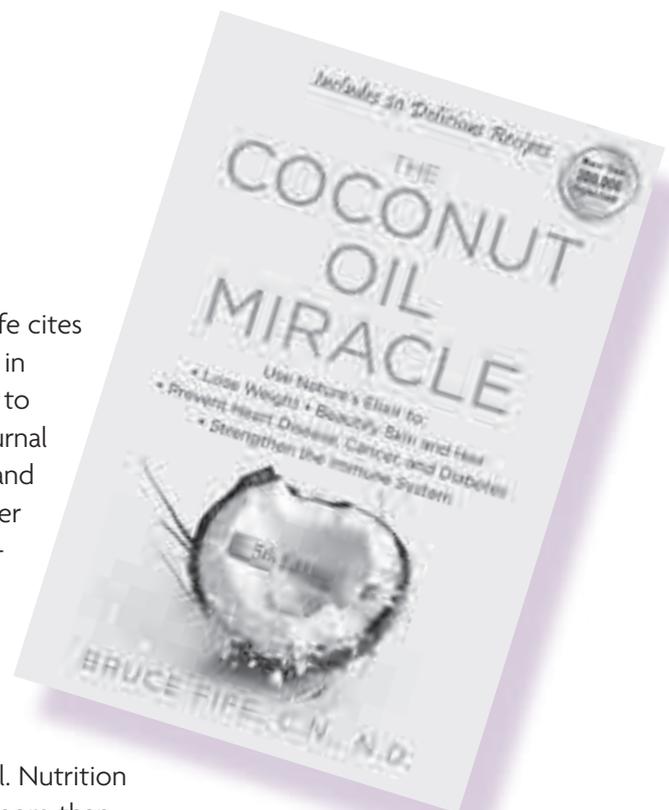
Fife recounts how in the mid-1980s the powerful and extremely well-funded soybean and vegetable oil lobbies attempted to scare people into believing that coconut and other tropical oils were linked to heart disease. They largely succeeded. Movie theaters and restaurants caved to the pressure and announced they wouldn't use the supposedly dangerous tropical oils, even though one medical study after another was coming out to

vindicate coconut oil. Fife cites overwhelming evidence in coconut oil's favor, links to 80 reviewed medical journal articles on his website, and devotes an entire chapter to the benefits of coconut oil in fighting heart disease.

Fife also spends an early chapter cutting through the confusion about fat in general. Nutrition researchers now know more than ever about the chemical structure of various fat molecules, and the new understanding has turned some of the conventional wisdom on its head.

Coconut oil is now being used to treat everything from athlete's foot to AIDS and common colds to Crohn's disease.

Fife presents evidence that the *trans* fats found in hydrogenated vegetable oil have turned out to be “the most destructive food additive in common use,” linked by studies to cancer, heart disease, and other chronic degenerative diseases. On the other hand, the allegedly dangerous coconut oil is now being used to treat everything from athlete's foot to AIDS and from com-



mon colds to Crohn's disease, with researchers discovering more of its benefits and applications every day. The notion that all fats are the same and are bad for you has certainly been dispelled.

The key to understanding coconut oil is realizing it contains medium chain fatty acids (MCFAs). The medium length of its carbon chains makes it an ideal food for the body to digest and the cells to metabolize. In other words, “coconut oil produces energy, not fat.” In his chapter “Eat Fat, Lose Weight,” Fife explains how people are having long-term success in losing weight and keeping it off using the “metabolic marvel” of coconut oil.

MCFAs from coconut oil do not circulate in the bloodstream like other fats but are converted quickly into energy for the cells to utilize. Studies show that after eating a single meal containing MCFAs, metabolism remains elevated for at least 24 hours! This increased metabolism

keeps the body burning calories and keeps people from gaining weight. There are even many new powdered sports drinks and energy bars sold at health food stores that contain MCFAs.

Not only is coconut oil a wonderful nutrient and dietary supplement, but it has many other disease fighting properties. New research is emerg-

ing on the role bacteria, infections, and viruses play in inflaming artery walls and contributing to heart disease. Coconut oil is known to kill all three of the major types of arthrogenic organisms. Research has shown that MCFAs from coconut oil can kill bacteria and viruses that cause influenza, herpes, bladder infections, gum disease, and

numerous other conditions. Coconut oil is also a powerful antioxidant that neutralizes the free radicals that contribute to heart disease and many other maladies.

The list of coconut oil's applications goes on and on. It neutralizes yeast infections, fights parasites, and boosts immune systems. Cancer patients can take it to help keep white blood cells healthy. AIDS researchers discovered that it killed HIV in lab cultures and are now using it to prolong patients' lives. Food scientists are spinning out lauric acid supplements based on coconut research. Many patients suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome credit coconut oil as the key to their recovery. Research has even shown

its effectiveness in treating epileptic seizures.

And coconut oil isn't healthful only when ingested as a supplement or used in cooking. It also produces amazing results when applied topically. It can treat blisters, cuts, athlete's foot, plantar warts, dandruff, hemorrhoids, acne, and psoriasis.

It is used in many cosmetic products and hair conditioners but is most beneficial when applied in pure form directly to hair and skin.

The most important aspect of *The Coconut Oil Miracle* is definitely the down-to-earth explanations of the nutritional and medical science of coconut oil, but an added bonus is the recipes and

resources section. It contains more than fifty recipes for using coconut oil in cooking and also tells how to find and buy the best coconut oil.

Readers will not be disappointed with this rare achievement of a nutrition book containing comprehensive and strong evidence, written at just the right level so as to be understandable yet challenging for a popular audience. Fife concludes that "the coconut is one of God's greatest health foods." ♦

Bruce Fife, C.N., N.D., a certified nutritionist and naturopathic doctor, is president of the Coconut Research Center, a non-profit organization dedicated to educating the public and the scientific community on the nutritional and health benefits of coconut oil.

Coconut oil contains medium chain fatty acids, ideal to be digested and metabolized by cells. In other words, "coconut oil produces energy, not fat."

For More Information

The Coconut Research Center
www.coconutresearchcenter.org

A comprehensive website with articles and links to medical studies about coconut oil. Start here to see how coconut oil can help with a particular condition.

Eat Fat Lose Fat
www.eatfatlosefat.com

This revolutionary, science-based food program explains why we must eat healthy saturated fats—especially coconut oil—to achieve weight loss and good health. The complete text of the first chapter is posted, along with many recipes.

The Oiling of America
www.westonaprice.org/know-yourfats/oiling.html

The amazing story of the rise of coronary heart disease and the production of hydrogenated oils and *trans* fats in the 20th century.

Tropical Traditions
www.tropicaltraditions.com

Christian-owned, highly recommended retailer of certified organic virgin coconut oil. Great resource for determining the differences between production methods of coconut oil. Also features recipes and the story of how a missionary family discovered the health benefits of coconut oil.

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 a variety of sources. Please use them in your personal or group prayer time.

Christian questioned for 10 hours

Chinese police questioned a Christian man for 10 hours on Christmas Day after neighbors of the man’s church reported the congregation for celebrating Christmas, International Christian Concern says. Lou Yuanqi, a Christian in China’s northwestern Xinjiang province, was detained as part of what appears to be a crackdown on underground churches in China. Authorities are pressuring churches to be sanctioned by the state. *Pray for Lou Yuanqi’s faith, for wisdom and encouragement for church leaders in China, and churches to stand strong against government pressure.*

Medical missionary killed

One of four British medical missionaries kidnapped in Nigeria was killed after leading the group in “Amazing Grace,” Mission Network News reports. Ian Squires provided eye care for those in rural areas of southern Nigeria. The four were abducted on October 13; the three survivors were later released. *Pray for the family of Ian Squires, and for the emotional and spiritual*

recovery of the other three missionaries who were kidnapped. Praise God for their release.

Boy killed in attack

Three Pakistanis, including a 7-year-old boy, were killed when a hand grenade was thrown at the main gate of a Christian colony in Chaman, Pakistan, ICC reports. Several others who were injured were treated at a local hospital. The attack followed a Taliban attack on a college in Pakistan that killed nine people. It is believed that both attacks stemmed from celebration of Muhammad’s birthday. *Pray for the family of the boy who was killed, the healing of those injured in the attack, and that those responsible for the attack would be brought to justice.*

Pakistan gives in to protests

The Pakistan government’s succumbing to Islamic extremists in blasphemy cases jeopardizes chances for Asia Bibi, who was sentenced to death in Pakistan in 2010 on blasphemy charges, to overturn her sentence, ICC reports. The government made its decision to facilitate registration of blasphemy cases after violent protests. Asia’s lead attorney said the reverberations of the deal signed between the government and the extremists would increase pressure to execute the mother and wife. *Pray that Asia Bibi’s death sentence will be overturned, that she will be safe and healthy in prison, and that she will be released.*

Somalian church growing

Despite intense persecution, the Church in Somalia is growing, MNN says. World Mission reports that house churches are being planted and families converted. However, Somalians exposed as Christians—

men and women—are frequently beaten. *Pray for a strong Somalian Church as it grows, and for wisdom for its leaders.*

Pakistani Christian jailed

A Pakistani Christian man with mental problems was jailed in November on a blasphemy charge, ICC reports. Nadeem reportedly was tortured after his arrest, and his brother is now being sought. *Pray for Nadeem’s release, for his faith, and for the rights of Christians in Pakistan.*

Attacks spike in India

The ICC reports that Hindu radicals launched 23 attacks on Christians during the 2017 Christmas season. The attacks were against carolers and included open threats against celebrations. Several Christians were hospitalized and imprisoned. Some of the attacks involved police participation. *Pray for the recovery of all injured in the recent attacks in India, for strong faith for all believers there, and for the Gospel to continue to spread.*

Terrorists attack Egyptian church

Terrorists attacked Mar Mina Church in Helwan City, Egypt, in late December as worshippers left services to attend Sunday school, ICC reports. Five Christians were killed during exchange of gunfire between the attackers and police, and several others wounded. One of the attackers wore a suicide vest, but police prevented him from entering the church. *Pray for comfort for the families of the deceased, healing for those injured, and spiritual and emotional healing for the church.* ♦

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

Is a free-market system compatible with Biblical Principles?

Continued from page 3

she sells, New Testament passages affirm the responsibility of employers and workers to reach a mutual price point.

For example, illustrating God's right to save souls whenever He chooses, Jesus' parable of the vineyard hinges on the master's and laborers' right to set their own terms of engagement: "But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go. I chose to give to this last worker as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?'" (Matthew 20:13–15).

The responsibility to make our own contracts is no invitation for employers to exploit workers. Nor does Scripture permit laborers or vendors to extort fellow image-bearers of God. As Solomon wrote, "A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight" (Proverbs 11:1). The proverb condemns the practice of using unequal weights to cheat someone at market.

The tax man cometh

Scripture sets the non-extortion standard equally high for government agents. During the revival preceding the beginning of Christ's ministry, tax collectors and soldiers received baptism from John. The Baptist told them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do. ... Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages" (Luke 3:12–13).

Despite John's rebuke of these agents' former life of overcollection, neither John nor Jesus nor Paul permit the evasion of lawful taxes. Christ told the Pharisees to

"render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Luke 20:25), which Paul later echoed: "Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed ..." (Romans 7:7).

The priest and the pauper

Two groups important to a Biblical worldview of economics remain: people whose work is the Lord's, and people unable to provide for themselves.

Competing views of the believer's responsibility to give to the Lord—and whether that means giving specifically to one's church or generally to the poor—are too many to enumerate here. So are the Scriptures readily marshalled for each viewpoint.

Immediately clear, though, is Paul's instruction that Timothy ensure the believers provide some form of payment for church shepherds who preach or teach, even if those shepherds also do other work to support themselves (see 1 Thessalonians and 1 Timothy, above).

Equally clear is Paul's challenge to the Corinthians: "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." II Corinthians 9:7-8.

Finally, warnings against neglecting the poor and helpless, and instruction to provide for the same, fill each testament of Scripture. Some of the earliest Jewish Christians obviously understood and fulfilled this obligation by appointing deacons to distribute goods to the needy (Acts 6:1). The church's provision for the poor aligns with the believers' sharing "everything in common" in Acts 4:32—a seminal verse for Samaritan Ministries.

Adding it up

The sum of these Biblical principles (and of other Biblical principles I hope readers will put to my attention by commenting on this article online at bit.ly/fmcompat) is deeper and broader than an economic theory, free-market or otherwise. These are standards believers are personally to keep, in all ages and under all systems invented by human reason.

The Old and New Testaments presume most individuals can and should engage in commerce, work to earn a living, make contracts, and profit. The Bible also charges Christians to pay taxes, support ministers of the Gospel, and provide for the poor. What we think about labels for modern economic theories—whether free-market, capitalist, socialist, or totalitarian—is less important than living out Biblical standards in our everyday economic dealings.

Present-day American Christians find ourselves in a happy situation. We live, work, buy, and sell in a country that has reaped the benefits of Christian culture built on Christian values. We are a self-governing people with influence over our country's economic system. Surely, we should favor one that grants individuals similar kinds and a similar level of responsibility over their property as Scripture does. ♦

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Rejoice with
those who rejoice.
Weep with those
who weep.

Romans 12:15

Why are we given the instruction above?
Apparently because we need to be told.

When we see someone who is discouraged, isn't our first inclination often to "encourage" them by telling them why things really aren't so bad? What about when we see someone who is extremely happy about something? Don't we often seem to have an inclination to point out offsetting information to "protect" them from excessive celebration or possibly even because we are secretly jealous of God's blessing on them?

When a fellow believer is rejoicing, we should support and encourage them by rejoicing with them. When they are weeping, we should support them by weeping with them. Our first reaction should not be to correct or change them.

For the Kingdom,



Ray King