

Christian HealthCare

NEWSLETTER

MEMBER LETTERS:

I have a better understanding of my medical care

Being part of Samaritan Ministries has been an amazing blessing to us. Not only do I feel at peace about our Needs being taken care of, but working with the doctors and hospitals as a cash-paying patient for our maternity need has worked out great. We were able to get about 60 percent in discounts.

Before we joined Samaritan, I was constantly stressed about our insurance and it seemed that nothing ever went right with billing.

Amazingly, taking care of the billing ourselves has actually simplified the whole process. I feel like I have a better understanding of my medical care and have gained confidence in talking about costs and negotiating.

Adam & Kali
Indiana

We must protect medical conscience

by Wesley J. Smith

I will use treatment to help the sick according to my ability and judgment, but never with a view to injury and wrongdoing. Neither will I administer a poison to anybody when asked to do so, nor will I suggest such a course. Similarly, I will not give to a woman a pessary to cause abortion.

—The Hippocratic Oath

The screaming was so loud, you would have thought that the Trump administration had overturned *Roe v. Wade*. It hadn't, of course. But it had directed needed attention at the existing legal protection that allows doctors and nurses to refuse to participate in abortions without fear of firing or other job sanctions. This protection is sometimes called "medical conscience rights."

The occasion for the uproar? The Department of Health and Human Services announced its intention to create a new office of Conscience and Religious Freedom Division in the HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR) to enforce medical conscience. It is worth noting that this proposed action will not change the law. But it will revitalize enforcement efforts after years of the Obama administration's hostility toward religious liberty generally and medical conscience rights specifically. Indeed, the newly created enforcement office will put medical employers on notice

that the current administration considers medical conscience rights to be fundamental. As the HHS press release put it:

The creation of the new division will provide HHS with the focus it needs to more vigorously and effectively enforce existing laws protecting the rights of conscience and religious freedom, the first freedom protected in the Bill of Rights.

In a country with a long and venerable history of honoring conscientious objection and protecting the free exercise of religion, one would think this step would be met by applause. But for some, it was akin to a declaration of social war. The Massachusetts Medical Society sniffed in opposition:

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Sharing Summary from March

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------|---|
| Shares: | \$26,906,468 | 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: | \$26,904,422 | |
| Unshared Needs in Negotiation: | \$ — | |
| New Needs: | 4,279 | |
| Total Needs: | 8,400 | |
| New Rewards: | 237 | |
| Miscarriages: | 26 | Member Households: 76,546 |
| Final Rewards: | 4 | (as of 2/22/18) |

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.

Proactive members work to stretch Share dollars

The Samaritan approach worked extremely well for my Need. From my perspective, it's far better than any insurance policy. I was free to choose the doctor and hospital for my surgery.

I negotiated 60 percent discounts and was able to go ahead and pay for the surgery before my Need was shared. I received all the Shares and beautiful prayers for my recovery. This is the way health care ought to work! It was very straightforward and simple. Truly God's design.

Thank you to Samaritan and all the members for allowing me to be part of this concept. The surgery went well, and I only had to be in the hospital one night. I am fully recovered and full speed ahead. Praise the Lord!

*Philip & Katherine
Tennessee*

All praise and glory goes to my heavenly Father. He is the One Who has helped me through my heart problems and pneumonia. I believe God placed His hands on me and guided me through a time of healing.

This long journey from being in the hospital to recovering at home has been a trying time, but I can say that God was always faithful to meet my needs.

Not only did God help me, He helped my family, too. My husband took charge of the bills and started contacting providers right away to get the best discount possible. Many of them he was able to negotiate down to fractions of the original amounts. Our total bills were over a hundred thousand dollars, but we ended up paying only about \$7,000 because of discounts!

We were so excited to be able to save this money so it could go to other members' needs. When our Shares were coming in along with words of encouragement, it was such a blessing. It was a ray of sunshine in some dark days for us. It was amazing to see that Christians from all over the country were coming together to help us.

*Daniel & Cheryl
Georgia*

Following my heart attack and life flight, the financial services staff came to my hospital room to ask about insurance. We explained that we participate in Samaritan Ministries and asked if she was familiar with that. She grinned and said, "Oh yes, we are happy to work with Samaritan members." They followed through and gave us almost a 60 percent discount, and we were able to pay promptly. What a blessing.

*Ray & Starla
Colorado*

When my husband passed away after emergency heart surgery in 2016, I was devastated by the sudden loss and the additional burden of huge medical bills. Thankfully, the Lord provided discounts, and the remaining bills were entirely shared by faithful Samaritan members.

Each time after I had made a deposit, I would run home and make another payment. The people in the billing department soon knew me and were just as blessed as I was to see the massive bill come down.

The tellers at the bank also heard my Samaritan story and were awed at what ordinary believers would do for one another.

More important than all of this though were the healing touches to my broken heart. I was ministered to by the encouraging cards and letters, and above all the faithful prayers of Samaritan brothers and sisters.

I even had the joy of meeting one couple who asked if they could drive over and hand deliver their Share. They had also suffered a great loss, and we had a sweet but brief visit. We even realized our ministry paths had crossed in the past.

Praise God!

*Jill
Nevada*

Samaritan Ministries has been a wonderful blessing in my life. When my swollen foot wouldn't improve after several weeks of attempting to care for it at home, I decided I had better get medically evaluated. I had read several newsletter articles about the wisdom and importance of checking providers, not only for cost issues, but quality as well. Armed with this encouragement, I was able to find the perfect doctor. Thankfully, he was able to rule out a fracture and treat me with an orthotic and special exercises. I am doing great and am so thankful for all the gracious support from Samaritan members.

*Pamela
New York*

Bob and Robin Douglas Board of Directors

by Michael Miller

New Samaritan Ministries Board member Bob Douglas brings entrepreneurial, marketing, missionary, and ministry chops to the table.

Bob, who began serving on the Board in January after members elected him at the end of 2017, is executive pastor at Grace Bible Fellowship in Sunnyvale, California. The church of 250 ministers to residents of Silicon Valley, the tech area south of San Francisco Bay.

He became a pastor at Grace after years of marketing work for established businesses as well as startups in Silicon Valley. He first worked for a friend in the business before opening his own firm, The Hughes Group, in 1996, that worked with several tech businesses.

“We got to see some of those brand new ones make it all the way through to ‘big’ and many of them crash and burn,” Bob says. “There was a lot of aggressive marketing in the tech sector, so it was a good time and place to be.”

That firm created everything from trade-show exhibits and show rooms to logo work. The market was changing in Silicon Valley, though, so he sold The Hughes Group in 2006 and went into business with a couple of friends doing digital signage and kiosks for retail and hospitality industries. The 2008 economic crisis soon hit, though, and that firm folded.

But Bob hadn't only been busy in business. He had already been serving as a lay elder at Grace Bible



Fellowship since the church had been planted in 2006.

“That’s actually a time frame when God was working with me in my life,” he says. “God was working in my life to bring me into full-time ministry, kind of kicking and screaming from the standpoint that I didn’t feel prepared.”

After the digital signage business folded, Cliff McManis, Bob’s closest friend and the pastor-teacher at Grace Bible Fellowship, sat Bob down and asked him to join the staff as a full-time pastor.

“I was apprehensive, but he knew me,” Bob says. “For me, it required someone like him who knew me versus someone who doesn’t know me as well” to propose a big step like that.

The response of Bob’s wife, Robin,

“was the thing that really caught me.” He expected her to have the same apprehensive, doubtful reaction that he did. But it was “the complete opposite.”

“I’ve learned over the years of marriage that she has a lot better insight in certain areas than I do,” Bob says.

So Bob started praying and also talking to others who knew him and the situation well.

“Three months later, I moved into the ministry,” he says.

Bob got his Masters of Divinity degree while working as an assistant pastor, bringing into play his business and marketing acumen as he oversees church operations, finance, facilities, and various church ministries. After completing his divinity degree, Bob then stepped into the executive pastor position.

A challenge that Grace faces is ministering to the residents and workers of Silicon Valley, which Bob calls “a very spiritually dark place.”

“In my lifetime, the diversity of people backgrounds and religions coming into Silicon Valley has been huge,” Bob says. “Much of it is the type of engineering that is there now. It can be from all over the world. The biggest difficulty is people being serious about God. The atmosphere is, ‘You can believe what you can believe, take what works for you.’ Satanic blindness is just huge, so getting people to listen is a hard thing, and therefore finding good, strong Bible churches is a hard thing. That’s why we started that church in 2006.”

Bob says that one of the most valuable things he’s been able to do there is to help start several ministries.

“We didn’t have women’s ministry, we didn’t have men’s ministry,” he says. As executive pastor, he helped to put the right people in charge of the new ministries and coordinate resources.

One of the new efforts Grace Bible Fellowship has been instru-

mental in starting is Christ to India, which provides pastoral training to over 100 Indian pastors. The idea grew out of a chance meeting at a conference between Bob and two

The diversity of people, backgrounds, and religions coming into Silicon Valley is huge. That’s why we started the church.

men from India who were planting churches in southeast India, which is generally rural and poor.

“This is like the first century, where these guys go into a village, start evangelizing, then a few new believers come together,” Bob says. “They keep meeting every week at

that village, and when they start getting a large enough group of believers together, they start looking for a man who could become an elder or pastor, and a man gets raised up.”

Bob, Pastor McManis, and the two men, Johnpaul and Isaac, created a board and nonprofit, and “I did what I do”: organize, administrate and facilitate communications.

Bob also helps with GBF Press (gbfpress.com), which has three categories of books. Bob’s favorite is the Big Truth – Little Book series, books that come from the sermons of GBF’s Cliff McManis.

“You can have a great sermon series on depression, but where does that go after the sermon?” Bob says. “I can put it up on a web site for downloading, but it’s great to have some highlighted things in written form.”

Cliff and Associate Pastor Derek Brown are doing “the heavy lifting when it comes to writing,” Bob says. “It’s been a great blessing to our membership and now reaching out beyond.”

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Why SMI?

Samaritan’s newest Board member, Bob Douglas, is another pastor who found out about Samaritan Ministries from church members.

As executive pastor of Grace Bible Fellowship in the Silicon Valley area of California, Bob had to submit a Church Leader Verification form for a Samaritan member in his church.

“I’m looking at it, and it was intriguing what SMI was doing,” Bob says. “I filled it out and handed it back to them and told them I’d like to know more about it sometime. They explained everything to me.”

At the time, Bob was buying his own health insurance because his church was too small for a group plan. Instead, Grace Bible Fellowship would provide

an amount to its employees with which to buy insurance. After his encounter with the church member, Bob researched health care sharing ministries, and determined that Samaritan “was a much better choice.”

“At the time, there was just a handful of us in our church that were using it, and now our whole pastoral staff is a part of it,” Bob says.

He calls Samaritan’s process “true sharing” because members send Shares directly to someone else.

“The other ministry looked like insurance,” he says. “Everything seemed more straightforward with Samaritan.” ♦

How do you know if you got a good deal?

by Jed Stuber

One of the questions Samaritan members often ask is, “How do I know if I’m getting a good deal on health care?”

The short answer is that you should start by using Healthcare Bluebook on Dash, but let’s consider why that is so important.

Often people asking this question are looking for a percentage of discount they should aim for, which is important, but not necessarily getting to the heart of the matter.

For the sake of argument, let’s say that we all agreed that a 40 percent discount is a “good deal” and that is the percentage discount we should all go after.

But what if Provider A is charging \$15,000 for a foot surgery and Provider B is charging \$1,500 for exactly the same surgery? A 40 percent discount off Provider A’s \$15,000 price results in a bill of \$9,000, which is six times more than what you would have paid if you had gone to Provider B.

That’s a real-life example that happened to the founder of Healthcare Bluebook, Dr. Jeff Rice, when his son

needed foot surgery. The price variance occurred in a city where that minor outpatient surgery could be done by the same surgeon at two different facilities that were only three blocks apart!

Consider another example, this time for major hospital expenses.

Pricing information forces providers to compete with one another and gives you the ability to compare before your treatment.

You get a bill for \$100,000 and are offered a 40 percent discount, resulting in a bill of \$60,000. Is this a good deal? What if that discount is based on something called a “charge master” that virtually no one ever pays? What if other payers—Medicare or insurance companies—typically pay only 30 percent

of this master price? That is, they would only pay \$30,000 for the same services you are expected to pay \$60,000 for.

This very common scenario was brought to America’s attention by lawyer Steven Brill in his famous *Time* magazine article titled “Bitter Pill: Why Medical Bills Are Killing Us.”

Toby Meisenheimer, a Samaritan member and a financial adviser, described in a recent newsletter article why he would not accept a 25 percent discount from a hospital.

“I got a taste of what health care is charging these days, and how they are using the cash-payers like us to pay for their new hospital wing and landscaped courtyard,” he wrote.

Toby persisted until he got a 60 percent discount. Here’s how he summed up the experience:

“All along, I kept coming back to this thought: Is it Christian to just pay what they are asking, and be nice, or to politely pick away and have our voice be heard, whether it is our own money or shares from fellow members?

“At the end of the day, it’s all God’s, and I believe you have to feel led

Why isn’t pricing information available from health care providers to begin with, the way it is in most industries? We’ll return to that topic in future newsletters. In the meantime, here are links to few articles from previous newsletters to get you started.

1. “Anesthetized debate”
by Thomas Sowell
<bit.ly/andebate>
2. “The immorality of government mandated health care”
by Paul A. Cleveland
<bit.ly/healthim>
3. “100 years of US medical fascism”
by Dale Steinreich <bit.ly/100regs>
4. “The free market had nothing to do with our health care crisis”
by Steward Donovan
<bit.ly/fmnothing>
5. “Removing state-based obstacles to affordable health care”
by Dr. Jeffrey A. Singer
<bit.ly/remobs>
6. “The case for being uninsured”
by SMI member Dr. Jane Orient
<bit.ly/caseforun>

Bob and Robin Douglas

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to either pay with gratitude, or roll up your sleeves and risk being a bit difficult. To my fellow Samaritan members who fight, win, and turn the discounts into more Samaritan needs being met and future increases postponed, my family thanks you.”

These examples show us that thinking of good prices in terms of a percentage discount doesn't tell the whole story. The variance in prices is simply too great.

In fact, Healthcare Bluebook's research shows that it is common for the same health care services in the same area to vary in cost by as much as 400 percent! That means that a \$20,000 bill at one facility is a \$100,000 bill at another facility.

The search tool from Healthcare Bluebook, which is available to every Samaritan member on Dash, allows you to search for a procedure, doctor, or hospital in your area, and to get quality and cost ratings. That's why it is so powerful. Knowledge is power.

Pricing information forces providers to compete with one another and gives you the ability to compare them before your treatment. Members also use Healthcare Bluebook's information to negotiate with providers after service.

But what about our original question, “How do I *know* if I got a good deal?” Here's the honest answer: Because price information isn't readily available in health care, you may never know for sure, but you can know if you used the leverage available to you with Healthcare Bluebook and other tools available in the Health Resource Center.

Again, knowledge is power, but only if you put it to work. ♦

Bob's latest step has been to run for the Samaritan Board, again at the behest of Pastor Cliff.

“The Lord has blessed me with a life of diverse experience across a variety of organizations,” Bob wrote in his Board election Q&A. “I have had to address the issues of medical coverage in most of these organizations, so I believe I understand the struggles people and organizations face when evaluating options. I

have experienced the dynamics of a board working through and making tough decisions while doing their best to incorporate the concerns of all stakeholders. If that is the kind of experience needed at SMI, I would love being a part of the (Samaritan) Board and working to continue SMI's excellence.”

Now Bob has his opportunity to apply that experience on behalf of Samaritan members. ♦

Bob and Robin

A great blessing for new Samaritan Ministries Board member Bob Douglas has been his wife, Robin.

“She's a precious gift from God,” Bob says about his wife of 27 years, a third-generation chiropractor. “She is an excellent doctor and businesswoman and mother of three.”

Robin and Bob decided that she would cut back her time working outside the home when their first child, Grant, arrived, and she ended up staying at home full time after their other children, Paige and Mitch, were born.

“I know that's not the answer for everybody,” Bob says, “but for our family it was. She's just a wonderful mother and wife.”

Robin also helped Bob and the family stay balanced as he worked his way through the business world.

“I had two startups during those times, which take a long time, a lot of hours,” he says. “I was trying to balance that with taking care of a young family and she was just the perfect partner, coming alongside me, doing everything that she could to allow me to spend time in our young business and at the same helping me to keep a balance at home.”

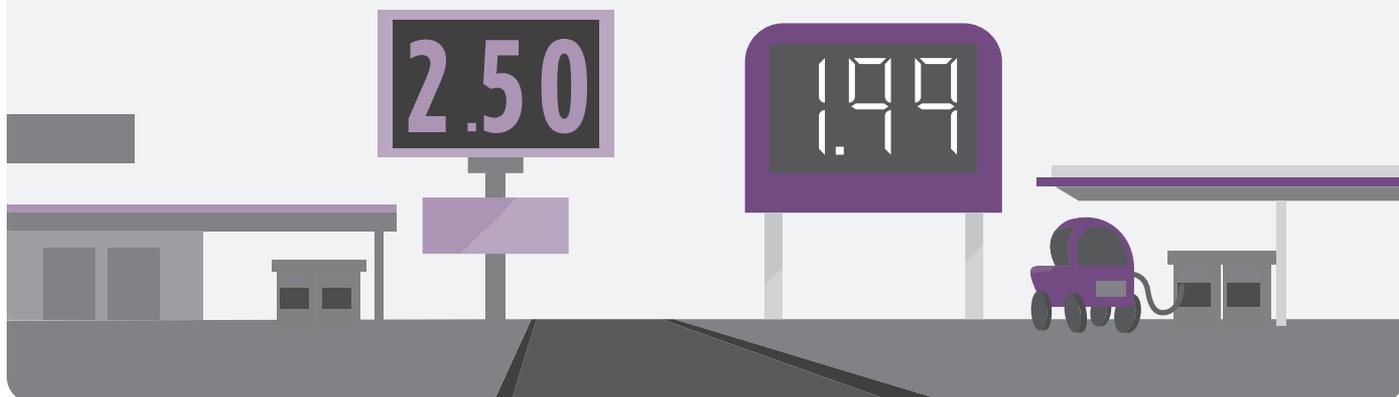
Bob and Robin, however, are also firm believers that the relationship between husband and wife is the most important thing in a family.

“Too many couples elevate other priorities above their marital relationship,” Bob says. “Many times it is the children. We see in our ministry that many families have that upside down, and it creates deeper and more intense problems. Robin has a great handle on that, making time for us, making our relationship a priority while balancing the needs of the house and children.

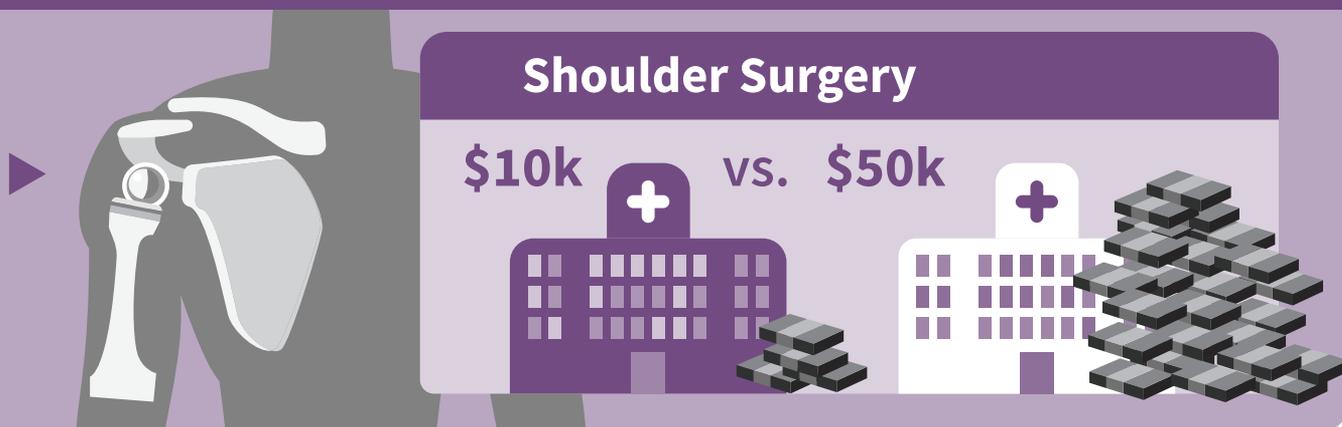
“A culmination of all those things is why she is the best wife in the world,” he says, adding, “She's still gorgeous. She's beautiful.” ♦

Are you getting a good deal?

If only health care was this transparent.



Costs can vary up to 400%.



“When my 12-year-old son needed outpatient foot surgery, I checked prices at two different facilities just three blocks apart. One of them charged **\$1500** and the other between **\$15,000 to \$25,000!** This happens every day to patients all across the United States.”

Dr. Jeff Rice

Knowledge is power.

Get the best *quality* and *price*

Knowledge is power. Connect with **independent services** that give you the information you need.



Such as...

Healthcare Bluebook

Compare quality and cost of health care in your area.



You can get there on your Dashboard:



The shocking, life-saving power of humility

by Susanne Maynes

The nervous 18-year-old girl sat close to her boyfriend, clinging to his hand as though it were a life preserver.

“If my parents find out I’m pregnant,” she said. “They’ll kill me.”

Having spent 10 years helping women as they wrestle with pregnancy decisions, I’ve heard this phrase countless times. Most women do not pursue abortion lightly. They consider it because they feel desperate.

Here are a few more dilemmas I learned about in the client room of a pregnancy center:

“My mom said she’d throw me out of the house and cut off my college money if I ever got pregnant.”

“This baby isn’t my boyfriend’s. We had a fight and I spent the night with an old friend. Now I won’t be supported by either of them.”

“I’m a single mom and I barely make ends meet for the three kids I already have. I can’t have another baby.”

“My parents have custody of my toddler. I’m afraid if they find out I’m pregnant again, they’ll never let me see him.”

“I have severe back problems. My doctor said if I have this baby, I will probably spend the rest of my life in a wheelchair.”

The circumstances surrounding unplanned pregnancies are often shockingly difficult. Ministering to those considering abortion requires a great deal of empathy.

In his January 2016 sermon on the sanctity of human life, Matt Chandler mentions a tell-tale symptom of a lack of empathy: when

we ask a question that begins with “Why don’t they just...” we demonstrate a lack of compassion.

We make judgments from a place of privilege. We don’t take into consideration the frame of reference from which the other person operates—their history, their environment, their challenges.

In other words, we fail to understand their story.

Empathy and humility help us reach out with compassion and truth to those considering abortion.

When we ask, “Why don’t they just make an adoption plan?” we don’t factor in the fear and shame a woman faces by carrying a child she plans to “give away.”

When we ask, “Why don’t they just stop sleeping around?” we fail to understand the low self-value and lack of hope for the future that so many young women experience today.

If our background is middle class suburbia, we must be careful of uttering thoughtless questions downward from the perch of privilege rather than from a graciously low position of empathy.

Here’s the thing: the young woman we are trying to help may

have been raised in generational poverty. She may not have benefited from the presence of her father in her life, let alone had a chance to observe a healthy marriage between her parents.

Given the postmodern culture which influences her, she may have little or no understanding of godly morals.

To this young woman, offering herself sexually to a man who is reasonably kind to her seems like a fair exchange for a relationship. If she’s lucky, from her perspective, he won’t hit her or go to jail too often.

Plus, her kids will have a father figure ... at least for a while.

This may not be the kind of life we know, but it is the kind of life we must come to understand if we are to minister effectively in a society that has gone off its moral rails.

Amidst this tragic madness, how can we reach out to offer compassion and truth to those considering abortion?

Jesus Himself is our example.

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. — Philippians 2:4-8

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On abortion and real love

by MargaretAnn Leithart (age 18)

I have the privilege of being able to counsel a lot of women who are seeking abortions. I can tell you that the majority of them are seeking to end their pregnancies, not because they feel like it would be a fun thing to do, but because they are scared out of their minds and feel that they have no other option.

Many of them are in situations that are incredibly difficult, and will become more so with a child involved.

I've seen drug addicts, women with abusive boy-friends and husbands, girls whose parents will kick them

to the curb if they knew they were pregnant, women who are completely alone and have no support system for raising a healthy child. In those cases, I have no idea what to tell them.

Yes, there may be a lot of resources for them out there, but many of them really won't help. They need something I cannot give them a brochure or a number for. In those cases, the only argument against ending their pregnancy is that it is murder. It is ending a baby's life. It is selfish. It is not love.

To someone who doesn't know who Jesus is, the anti-abortion argu-

ment will not make sense. They may very well go to church twice a week and read their Bible every day and know plenty about Jesus.

But that doesn't mean they know who He is. To know who Jesus is, is to know that He died for you. To know that He laid down His very life for you. To know that He set

aside all that He loved and went willingly forward to His own death.

Carrying a baby, birthing a baby, and raising a baby all involve complete forgetfulness of self. It involves losing your own body to another, giving up vanity and peace of mind.

In a culture unfamiliar with what real love looks like—the act of putting aside your own wants and needs for another—having a baby you did not plan makes no sense.

I have found in my experience with women who are seeking abortions that they almost always know it's the wrong thing to do. I think you will meet very few pregnant woman who have seen that tiny heart beating on an ultrasound screen and still say that it's perfectly okay to end that child's life. That's just not their concern in the moment.

We have a lot of facts that even people who are pro-abortion will admit are correct. But the reason that doesn't change minds or put laws in place is because we still don't know what love is.

Six ways you can contribute to the pro-life cause

- 1. Pray:** Any effective ministry must be dependent upon God.
- 2. Get involved with a Pregnancy Resource Center in your area:**
 - Donate clothing.
 - Help get the word out on social media.
 - Answer hotline calls.
 - Teach a parenting class.
- 3. Minister at an abortion clinic:**
 - Simply pray.
 - Distribute literature.
 - More than 12,000 babies have been saved as a result of peaceful campaigns. Participate in 40 Days for Life campaigns (40daysforlife.com).
- 4. Talk to your church leaders:**
 - Encourage awareness and Biblical teaching.
 - Get others from your church involved.
- 5. Contact your elected officials:** You can send an email to all your officials at once with this tool: FRCaction.org/contact-officials
 - Ask them to end government funding for abortion.
 - On the state level, ask your representatives to support measures that require ultrasounds before an abortion.
- 6. Support the Morning Center,** a ministry Samaritan launched to provide free maternity care to women in crisis pregnancies. Visit MorningCenter.org to learn more. ♦

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We appreciate so much God's provision through Samaritan. We've never felt more blessed, not only with prayers answered, healing, and encouragement, but also the confidence of knowing our financial need will be provided for. God bless each member who is a channel of His love!

With something as serious as a tumor on the pancreas, we were grateful that we were able to choose to travel to a facility where there were doctors with more expertise. They were able to determine that surgery was not advisable, because there was no malignancy. It is likely that surgeons at our local hospital would have done surgery promptly, and it would not have helped, risked very serious complications, and would have been unnecessary cost.

We were so grateful to be able to choose a facility with highly qualified experts for our situation. Although there were travel costs, it was worth it to be confident we were choosing specialists on pancreas issues, plus we saved the cost of the surgery.

Please continue to pray for a successful treatment and complete recovery.

*Jim & Marlene
Wyoming*

We are so thankful we are able to choose our doctors with Samaritan Ministries, which has never been possible in the past for us with insurance companies. We pray that Samaritan will grow and grow nationwide.

*James & Kris
California*

The shocking, life-saving power of humility
Continued from page 10

Jesus beautifully demonstrated humility. He willingly took on a human form. He willingly suffered the most humiliating and horrific death possible. He is the supreme example of setting aside social standing, rights, and privileges for the sake of others.

Jesus—Son of God, Word made Flesh, Lord and Savior—was approachable. He never asked the question, “Why don't they just...?”

Instead, he cut across traditional boundaries of race, gender and economic status to scandalously hold conversations with those considered “beneath” a Jewish rabbi's attention.

He asked good questions which allowed truth to dawn in the hearts and minds of people. He made them feel safe, yet challenged them to want something better than the sinful life where they were stuck.

Jesus came to preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God. In this Kingdom, the playing field is level. In this Kingdom, there is no perch of privilege from which to look down at others.

Here, according to Galatians 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Likewise, there is neither the girl considering abortion, nor the church lady who doesn't understand her. The same Lord died for each of them.

By the way, the pregnancy dilemmas I mentioned earlier? Every one of those mothers chose life for their

babies—and the woman with back problems did not end up in a wheelchair as she mistakenly feared.

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As we reach out to those facing pregnancy decisions, may we do so

not from a position of privilege, but out of humble empathy—just like our beautiful Savior. ♦

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More often than not, they feel that they have no other option. They feel that they will lose their own life. To someone who doesn't know Jesus well, the thought of laying down their own life for another sounds counterproductive and horrifying.

It's laid out for us perfectly in Scripture what love really is. First Corinthians 13 says that love is patient, kind, doesn't envy, does not seek its own, does not rejoice in iniquity, etc. Most of us know that passage well—it's read at weddings and people like to put it in their Instagram captions.

But that doesn't tell us the full story. We know John 3:16, which tells us that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." We put that one on phone cases and bumper stickers, but I'm not sure people realize how dark that passage really is.

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. When we think of love, we think of Jesus healing the blind and eating with sinners and comforting widows. We don't think of the most loving thing He ever did. He laid down His life for us. He went to the cross, bleeding and crying and suffering, and willingly put Himself in indescribable agony because He loves us.

That's what love looks like. Not saving the last donut for your brother or sister or spouse, but denying yourself what you really want and need so that another person can have life.

The anti-abortion argument won't work in a culture still unfamiliar with real love. There is plenty of scientific evidence telling us that unborn babies can hear and feel pain. We know there's a heartbeat at three

weeks. We have a lot of facts that even people who are pro-abortion will admit are correct.

But the reason that doesn't change minds or put laws in place is because we still don't know what love is. Because we still believe that the most important thing is our comfort, our wants, our life.

We like to focus on the happy rainbows-and-sunshine side of love. But the horrifying, gut-wrenching,

Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth

1 John 3:17

confusing reality of love is Jesus on the cross. It's our Lord suffering immense pain, and for what? So that we can live. Love isn't easy. It isn't supposed to be.

The practical response to our abortion problem (and it is our problem) is more resources, more churches with programs helping families in desperate need, more voices speaking the truth. The truth that real love is denying yourself. Not screaming in faces that abortion is murder and God's wrath will come upon them (that may be true, but it's usually not the truth they need in that moment), but rather the kind, grounding, strong love that Jesus shows us.

I don't mean Facebook posts and "don't kill your baby" bumper stickers, but action. Volunteering. Donating. Starting things. Seeking these women out and helping them.

The Lord tells us to love not in word but in deed. Stop thinking of these women as a people group who murder for fun; think of them as children who are lost and afraid and need our help.

As the people of God, we are called to live differently. To love differently. We are how these women will learn to love. This means we love them and do whatever we can for them whether they are considering abortion, have an appointment next week for one, or had the procedure months ago and don't know how to recover.

Jesus loves the women who are alone and struggling and scared out of their minds. He died for the ones sitting in waiting rooms with shaking hands and wide eyes. Be Christ to them. Die for them. You may be the only example they ever see.

"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." (1 John 3:16-17) ♦

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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.

Church loses symbols

Authorities in China’s northwest Xinjiang region, which has been particularly hard on Christians, demolished several features of a Catholic church in Yining city on February 27. Its crosses, statues, bell towers, and other religious features were removed, according to ICC. The action appears to be part of a “sini-cization” campaign to remove any non-Chinese symbols from public display. *Pray that Christian identity will remain intact in China, and that believers will continue to worship in spirit and in truth no matter how hostile authorities are.*

Church properties auctioned

Three properties owned by Huoshi Church, the largest house church in Guiyang, China, were recently secretly auctioned off, ICC reports. Proceeds went to the “state-owned enterprise” Nanming Investment Group. The auction happened after Pastor Su Tianfu received a notice to pay a fine of more than 7 million yuan (more than \$1 million U.S.) for receiving “illegal income.” Appeals failed. *Pray for Pastor Su and the*

owners of the property, and that their objection will receive a fair hearing, for believers of Huoshi Church to find safe place for worship, and for Chinese authorities to turn to Christ.

Chinese authorities ban young people from church

Chinese authorities have ordered pastors to post signs on their churches barring entry to minors, Breitbart news reports. The order is part of a new set of Communist Party-controlled regulations on religious activities that went into effect February 1. A report says that several house churches also have been closed. *Pray for boldness for missionaries and church leaders, the spread of the Gospel among the Chinese people, and for Chinese believers to have discernment while meeting together.*

Malaysian Christians denied recognition

Four Malaysians have been denied recognition as Christians, WWM says. Three of the people appealing rulings had converted from Christianity to Islam for reasons of marriage, but “now want to affirm their Christian identity again.” The other is a former Muslim who became a Christian believer and was baptized in 2009. Malaysia lists a person’s religion on national identity cards. *Pray that the four will stay strong in their faith despite this disappointment and will exemplify Christ in their day-to-day life so that all will know they are Christians because of their love.*

Hindus burn Bibles

Hindu extremists in southern India burned hundreds of Bibles being distributed by evangelists on January 21, ICC reports. The Hindus warned

the Christians that they would be attacked if they distributed Bibles in the future. The Christians had already handed out about 170 Bibles at a government-supported school and were heading toward another town when the remaining copies of Scripture were destroyed. *Pray that the Word of God can be distributed again in that area, and for a change of heart and belief among Hindu radicals in India.*

Vietnamese pastor suffering from injuries

The health of a Vietnamese pastor in jail is failing, ICC reports. Nguyen Trung Ton was arrested in July during a roundup of members of an online democracy group. He is suffering from beatings sustained last year, and is in constant pain, his wife says. Ton is still waiting to be tried. *Please pray for healing for Ton, for his release from jail, and for comfort for his wife.*

Pakistani church attacked

More than two dozen men attacked worshippers at a Pakistan Gospel Assembly church in a small Pakistani village on March 3, ICC says. The attack was apparently spurred by personal reasons. About 200 Christian families were confined to their homes out of fear of more violence. *Pray for healing for those injured, as well as for the families in the village who have been affected.* ♦

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

As physicians, we have an obligation to ensure patients are treated with dignity while accessing and receiving the best possible care to meet their clinical needs. We will not and cannot, in good conscience, compromise our responsibility to heal the sick based upon a patient's racial identification, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious affiliation, disability, immigration status, or economic status.

The *New York Times* was equally condemning. In an editorial titled, "The White House Puts the Bible Before the Hippocratic Oath," the editorialists warned hyperbolically:

The decisions may make it more difficult for teenagers wanting to get tested for sexually transmitted diseases, for gay men looking to prevent HIV and even for women seeking breast exams or pap smears.

Please. No one who supports a robust protection of medical conscience advocates compromising the physician's responsibility to "heal the sick." No one wants to prevent women from obtaining cancer screenings. Nor do supporters of medical conscience seek to authorize doctors and nurses to discriminate against individuals.

Rather, medical conscience prevents doctors and nurses from being forced to act in opposition either to

their religious beliefs—e.g., commit a grievous sin—or to their moral consciences by being forced to participate in morally objectionable procedures, such as taking innocent human life in abortion, assisted suicide, or lethal injection euthanasia. It could also protect medical professionals from being required to administer hormones to inhibit puberty in adolescents experiencing gender dysphoria—a controversial

It could also protect medical professionals from being required to administer hormones to inhibit puberty in adolescents experiencing gender dysphoria—a controversial recent innovation that the American College of Pediatricians has called "mass experimentation."

recent innovation that the American College of Pediatricians has called "mass experimentation." That opinion is becoming heterodox in the field, but surely no doctor should be forced in an elective procedure to act in a way that he believes actively harms the patient. The same goes for physicians who object to participating in sex-change surgeries based on the belief that sex is biologically determined or that it is wrong to remove healthy organs. Conscience protections should also apply to a doctor or nurse who objects to participating in infant circumcision based on a moral objection. And surely no doctor should be forced to participate in an execution, not even the administrative act of declaring the condemned prisoner dead after the execution.

People of good will can hold radi-

cally divergent moral beliefs, including about legal medical services and procedures. The stakes in this controversy are very high. As I have written before, there is a concerted effort underway to drive pro-life and Hippocratic Oath-believing doctors, nurses, and other professionals out of medicine—a lamentable potentiality. We need increased comity and tolerance for those medical professionals who object to

reigning moral paradigms and hold to sanctity-of-life ethics. The new HHS office represents a positive step toward achieving that end.

Post Script:
The best and most efficient

way to protect medical conscience would be for the states and the federal government to allow medical conscience rights to be enforced via private causes of action in civil court, which is not currently allowed generally. I will discuss that idea in a future column. ♦

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For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom He receives...

If you are left without discipline, in which you have all participated, then you illegitimate children and not sons.

Hebrews 12:6,8

When life is painful, or even just inconvenient, we tend to look for ways of escape. We don't want things to be that way. The verses above say we have it backwards.

When we are seeking to be obedient disciples of Jesus Christ, we are in a spiritual battle. We face obstacles and come under attack. We need to respond in faith. If we try to avoid them, we will

not be able to be the persons He wants us to be and accomplish the work He has for us to do.

The Lord uses difficulties and hardships to discipline us in love, just as He did Jesus. They are something good that show we are His true sons and are doing things the enemies of God oppose. If life is easy, we should be concerned.

For the Kingdom,



Ray King