

Christian HealthCare

NEWSLETTER

MEMBER LETTERS:

Samaritan is a family

We were devastated to lose our university health plan due to an employment change. After checking out insurance and other sharing ministries we went with Samaritan because of the personal touch.

Sending and receiving has become very special to us. Samaritan is a family, and we share and pray for each other.

The idea that our money goes to needs rather than profits excites us. We love the months when shares are reduced. Our insurance company never sent us cards, reduced premiums, or prayed for us on the phone.

We like belonging to a group of believers that avoid costly and sinful practices such as abortions, smoking, and abusing drugs. Giving to the Special Prayer Needs is wonderful.

I went through very costly cancer treatment—gross bills were half a million—and our brothers and sisters came through. We got 66 percent discounts, and are truly blessed.

*Terry & June
Tennessee*

Nomination period now open for Board of Directors election

The nomination period for this fall's Board of Directors election is open until August 31. Six elected members serve on the Board, along with Samaritan President Ted Pittenger and two others he designates. Elected Board members serve three-year terms, with two seats up for election each year.

The Board of Directors is extremely important to the success of Samaritan Ministries, and elected members make up a majority of the Board, providing important oversight and accountability.

Please be in prayer that God will provide excellent candidates again for this year's election. Only God knows what the ministry will face in the coming years, and what gifts, abilities, and skills will best serve Samaritan.

Board members do not receive any financial compensation other than expenses for travel, food, and lodging associated with meetings. There are four regularly scheduled Board meetings annually, often taking several days for travel and meeting time, and requiring six to 10 hours of preparation before each meeting. There can also be special meetings, usually by teleconference or email, when urgent issues arise.

Basic qualifications include:

Agreement with the Board of Directors Statement of Faith (samaritanministries.org/guidelines, Section IV.A.1); agreement with the Doctrinal Positions, which acknowledge the authority of Scripture

in all areas, including the historicity of Genesis; be at least 30 years of age; be a member in good standing for at least two years; and written verification from the candidate's local church leaders that the candidate would meet the qualifications for elder found in 1 Timothy 3.

To request more information about serving on the Board, please visit SamaritanMinistries.org/bodinfo. Information must be submitted by August 31 so there is adequate time to review the qualifications of nominees and prepare for the election.

Candidates will be answering questions in their own words for the election. If you'd like to suggest a question for the candidates to answer, visit SamaritanMinistries.org/bodquestion. ♦

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The *Christian Health Care Newsletter* is published monthly by Samaritan Ministries International, a 501(c)(3) charity. Subscriptions to the *Christian Health Care Newsletter* are available to non-members for a suggested donation of \$12 per year. The information provided is for educational purposes and is not meant as medical advice.

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Sharing Summary from June

Shares:	\$27,847,975	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:	\$27,684,044	
Unshared Needs in Negotiation:	\$ —	
New Needs:	4,013	
Total Needs:	9,157	
New Rewards:	255	Member Households: 77,811 (as of 5/23/18)
Miscarriages:	26	
Final Rewards:	10	

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

Questions about?

Your medical need

Shares you are sending or receiving

Your membership

Email

needs@samaritanministries.org

membership@samaritanministries.org

membership@samaritanministries.org

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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.

Beauty, lust, and nothing

by Toby Sumpter

Lust is hunger for nothing. Lust is the primeval, fallen instinct and demand for nothingness, nihil.

Lust or covetousness is idolatry, the worship of idols.

And idols are literally, nothing (1 Corinthians 8:4).

Lust is the worship of nothingness, blankness, emptiness, the dark, the formless, the void.

Why?

Why do we desire nothingness?

Because we desire to make reality for ourselves. We desire to make ourselves, our own meanings, our own futures, our own universe, or as Oprah might put it, our own truth.

This is why the New Testament so often warns against evil desires, lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes. Lust is not just a minor or even somewhat perverse sexual desire. One of the great tricks of the devil has been to isolate “lust” to the category of sexual desire. Of course lust happens there, but Biblically speaking, lust is something far broader and deeper and cosmic in nature. It includes sexual rebellion and anarchy, but it is actually the foundational desire for all rebellion, all anarchy, all lawlessness, all self-deification. This is why there can be no coherence or status quo for the sexual revolution. It is necessarily nihilistic. It cannot stop until there is nothing, until everything that has been made has been unmade.

Many times in the New Testament lust is tied to the flesh, desires for things, for stuff, for gratification:

And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and

the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful (Mark 4:19, KJV).

But the Bible also frequently describes lust as far more cosmic, as something reaching down into the very core of reality:

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do (John 8:44).

The sexual revolution is nihilistic. It cannot stop until everything that has been made is unmade.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of this world (1 John 2:16).

The lust of the flesh, the lust of our eyes is full of the worldly pride of the devil.

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves ... (Romans 1:24).

This lust flows directly from the rejection of God our Maker and the worship of created things (idols) in place of God. Lusts arise from that origin, the desire to displace God our Maker.

This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other... (Galatians 5:16-17, cf. Romans 6:12, 7:7-8, Ephesians 2:3, 4:22, Colossians 3:5, 1 Thessalonians 4:5, 1 Timothy 6:9).

Many of these New Testament references frame lust as the crucial point of battle for the Christian, warfare between God's Spirit and our former self or the remaining rebellion in our flesh. These lusts are not merely the desire to gratify some particular appetite, they are flash points of the deeper, ancient desire to dethrone God, to unmake and remake the world according to our own whims, to be our own maker, to be the captains of our destinies, to be gods.

Let me connect the dots a little more.

Lust for food, for sex, for wealth, for respect, for intimacy, for love—on the surface, it can be difficult to see how these can be desires for nothing. Because of course that is not at all what we think we are desiring. What we think we want is that thing, that experience.

But this is the insidiousness of lust. That thing, that precious, that experience, that pleasure does not exist. The devil holds out an image, a picture, an imaginary offer, a mirage. But you say, yes it does exist! I saw it on the commercial. I saw the joy on her face, the pleasure in his eyes. I've imagined being loved like that,

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Joshua Sheats Radical Personal Finance

by Kathryn Nielson

Samaritan member Joshua Sheats quit his job as a financial advisor and sold his house to start a podcast in 2014. Radical? Indeed, but that's what makes *Radical Personal Finance* different from many of the voices in the financial services world.

He's different as well in that personal finance didn't become his default interest after wading the murky waters of debt and/or bankruptcy as is the case for many. Rather, his interest started early. At 15 years old, he was reading books on the subject. On his 18th birthday, he opened his first Roth IRA and started regularly contributing 15 percent of his income to it.

One of the main goals of his show is to help other people also think differently about how to achieve

financial freedom.

"Everything we do is according to the standard model, and my hope is to help them get results more quickly," says Joshua.

In the world of money, the "standard model" is working a job you don't necessarily love while saving a small percentage over 40 years in the hope of accumulating some elusive figure of money thrown out by a financial advisor.

"The world of mainstream financial services is very good at serving the financial services industry, but it's not very good at serving the normal person," Joshua says.

Joshua is convinced there is more than one way to do everything, but nobody ever presented alternatives. Cases in point:

- No one told him that he could save money living in a recreational vehicle during college.
- No one told him that instead of contributing the traditional 15 percent of his income over 40 years to a Roth, he could be financially independent in less than 20 years if he contributed 50 percent.
- No one told him that Christians should view retirement differently.

"We should start by building a life we don't want to retire from rather than trying to figure out how to save millions of dollars in the bank," Joshua says.



Building that life is what his podcast is all about, showing his audience that there are options by thinking differently about where you live, how you live, what you spend, and recognizing that there is more than one way to do all of it.

"What I think most people want are choices, freedom," says Joshua. "I try to show how underneath good financial advice there are some very simple principles that are consistent, and they apply across borders, across time, and there are different ways that those are accomplished."

Despite his interest in the topic, like everyone else he has been vulnerable to mistakes, and he veered off the path a bit in college while pursuing his degree in business marketing. After working his way through his freshman year and paying cash for it, he decided he was working too hard and needed a bit of a break. So he borrowed money for his sophomore and junior years, including the expenses needed to study abroad in Central America.

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Joshua Sheats puts his money where his priorities are

Joshua Sheats put his money where his priorities were when he joined Samaritan Ministries.

“If you want to understand somebody’s morality, what they actually believe, not what they say they believe, all you need is a copy of their calendar and a copy of their spending record or bank statement,” says Joshua, host of the podcast *Radical Personal Finance*.

Joshua is all about causing change, and one of the easiest ways to do that is with our money. His intentionality with money seeps into every part of his life, and joining Samaritan Ministries was no different. He emphasizes the power of spending money wisely to promote what he values most.

Admittedly, health care is one of the most hotly debated topics out there. Joshua cautions that implementing change in the world is not by complaining or just going with the flow.

That applies to health care, too, he believes.

“It’s a complete waste of time to argue about health insurance if you’re not willing to try something else,” Joshua says. “You can’t fight against health insurance and somebody’s immoral decisions related to health insurance if you don’t have something to replace it with.”

You also don’t “just hand over your card and not get involved in the process. You roll up your sleeves, raise a stink, and ask how much things cost.”

Not only do we have the power to change the health care industry by being part of a health care sharing ministry, but we also can keep

costs down by getting involved in the negotiation process as well.

“I really think that the method of people having an incentive to negotiate diligently their health expense costs is really only one of the fundamentally powerful tools we have to lower health expense costs,” Joshua says.

“It’s a complete waste of time to argue about health insurance if you’re not willing to try something else.”

For Joshua and his family, Samaritan is a way to protect their values.

“It frees me from a little bit of the moral anguish of knowing that my money that I pay in health insurance premiums is being spent on things that I find morally offensive,” he says. “That should cause each and every one of us to stay awake at night when we’re funding something that is morally offensive.”

He appreciates Samaritan’s transparency in what they believe and their willingness to stick to those beliefs, whatever the cost.

“One of the things I appreciate about Samaritan Ministries is [it is] very clear and very upfront about ‘Here are the principles of our association. If you like and affirm these principles, we’ll invite you to be a part of them. If you don’t, we invite

you to look elsewhere.’ And I want to support that in any way I can.”

Finally, Joshua is convinced that everyone involved with Samaritan wins.

“It’s good for everyone involved,” he says. “The physician wins and my fellow members win because of the good works the organization does. I’m deeply appreciative and proud to be a member of a health care sharing organization like Samaritan Ministries.”

His personal experience with Samaritan has proved valuable beyond just the financial positives, specifically with the birth of his last child.

“I appreciated the approach that Samaritan Ministries has toward childbirth, and it was so nice to call up and talk with a representative about the pregnancy and start the Need process and have the representative gush with congratulations and be excited with us,” he says.

The freedom to choose their own health care provider only added to the experience.

“We also appreciated some of the special benefits we got from the birth path that we chose to pursue, which was really nice, using providers that we chose,” Joshua says.

He notes that in a culture that “basically despises and shuns children as the worst thing that can happen in a person’s life, it was such a blessing to get all of these notes with nice Scripture verses, people honestly congratulating and being excited for us.” ♦

Member doctor leaves hospital over transgender surgeries

by Michael Miller

Biblical teaching and medical ethics led Dr. Rod Story to leave a hospital that was asking him to violate both.

Since resigning from Pullman Regional Hospital in Washington state at the end of 2017 rather than participate in “transgender” surgeries, Dr. Story has not only started his own successful direct primary care practice, but he and his wife, Jenny, also joined Samaritan Ministries.

An award-winning physician, Dr. Story had taken care of patients including “transgender” ones for many years at Pullman Regional. When he would serve in the hospital’s emergency department, he would, of course, “take care of everyone who came in.”

“I’ve taken care of same-sex couples, one (homosexual) at their bedside when they were in their last hours of life,” Dr. Story says. “I’m not out there looking to serve transgender people to prove a point, but it has never crossed my mind that there would be anyone I wouldn’t serve. Because of the sanctity of life and the value of every soul there is no one I would not treat with ultimate respect and excellent kindness, even if I disagree with what they’ve chosen to do.”

But there are things he can’t do in good conscience as a doctor, and one of them is to cooperate in a procedure that he feels is not only harmful to the person, but also against the natural order that God has created.

When the 25-bed Pullman Regional decided last summer to allow vaginoplasties on men, cosmetic surgery that reshapes male sexual organs into something resembling a female sexual organ, Story asked to be allowed to not participate.

In his role at Pullman, Dr. Story frequently was responsible for preparing patients for surgery and caring for them afterwards. But, he said in a statement, he couldn’t take part in a surgery that involves “removing

“You’re talking about a radical surgery, the removal of healthy organs, which is contrary to the basic principles of medicine.”

healthy organs,” which he saw as a violation of medical ethics. He also cited studies that show that psychological disturbances remain for people who have surgery to change their sexual appearance.

Additionally, as a Christian he believes that “genders are God-given,” citing Jesus’s affirmation that “He who created them from the beginning made them male and female” (Matthew 19:4).

“No matter how savvy your medical skills, you cannot truly make a man into a woman,” Rod says.

“Transgender surgery is wrong.”

Hospital administrators, who did not respond to interview requests, announced the new policy less than

a week before they would allow Dr. Geoff Stiller to begin performing training surgeries on the procedure.

“It was such a shock to me that at this little hospital, where I had been involved in almost every patient interaction, that I would find out so late in the process that this was happening,” Dr. Story says. “Like this was just another procedure among many.”

That attitude of “it’s just another cosmetic surgery” is pervading the medical establishment, with “trans-

gendering” surgeries in the U.S. rising 20 percent from 2015 to 2016.

“The reality is it’s kind of in vogue right now among physicians and other providers,” Dr. Story says. “I think it does tend to come from

a heart of concern; people who are dealing with gender dysphoria are very, very troubled individuals.”

But the desire to help such people has turned into “medical decisions based on a desire to make people feel better,” Dr. Story says.

After accepting public comment, Pullman Regional went ahead with the new policy. The hospital administration told Dr. Story that it wasn’t sure it could honor his request to not participate in the surgeries.

“That was ultimately where I felt like, ‘Oh, boy, I’d better be preparing to leave,’” the physician says.

“I think we realized through the process that many minds had been made up and the things that needed

to occur to allow a hospital to be ready to do transgender surgery had already been in place for some time,” Dr. Story says.

He says he never had the chance to talk to members of the hospital board. He attended the board meeting where they made the decision, though.

“They were generally very pleased that they had had an open conversation,” Dr. Story says. “I was thinking, ‘Where was the open conversation that they had?’ They expressed open satisfaction they had heard from one physician in the community who had convinced them this was the right thing to do. I was appalled that such a remarkably important decision was based on such a small amount of information. You really have to skip over a substantial amount of things that should cause great hesitation.”

One of those things stems from objective reality: “Most of these patients are biologically clearly one gender or another. You’re having to ignore a very basic biological fact of a genetic code in every cell of the body that tells them exactly what gender they are. And a hormonal process clearly shows them to be one gender or another. It’s not a matter of ambiguity.”

In addition, studies in other countries, such as Sweden and Canada, show that transgender surgeries don’t resolve emotional struggles. A 30-year study in Sweden, for instance, reported that “The overall mortality for sex-reassigned persons was higher during follow-up than for controls of the same birth sex, particularly death from suicide.” Dr. Paul McHugh, a psychiatrist at Johns Hopkins University, derailed the university hospital from performing the surgery nearly four decades ago, although it has now resumed the practice.

Plus, Dr. Story says, “You’re talking about a radical surgery, the removal of healthy organs, which is contrary to the basic principles of medicine. You have to show you’re first not doing harm. You’re treating a psychiatric illness with a surgical procedure. That’s not the way we approach other psychiatric illnesses in this category. We don’t treat anorexia with weight loss surgery.”

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What makes Christian doctors different?

Public confidence in physicians is dropping as the medical establishment becomes more confused about gender and the value of life, Dr. Rod Story is finding. But he hopes they will continue to trust Christian doctors.

Dr. Story, now a Samaritan Ministries member, left Pullman Regional Hospital in Pullman, Washington, over conscience issues at the end of 2017. He and his wife, Jenny, started Story Family Medicine, a direct primary care practice, in Moscow, Idaho, shortly after that. Dr. Story had asked to be able to not participate in “transgender” surgeries at the hospital, but was told that request couldn’t be honored.

The prevailing acceptance among medical providers of transgender surgeries and increasing support for anti-life procedures like assisted suicide has confused patients.

“I do think that the medical physicians are finding themselves in a bad light when they have patients who are saying, ‘You don’t even know what a boy or a girl is, how can you give me sane information on my medical condition?’ It is a challenge,” Dr. Story says.

He has also discovered that “there are a remarkable number of Christians who are seeking answers to their physical ailments outside of the medical profession.”

What makes Christian physicians different?

“We’re accountable,” Dr. Story says.

Even Hippocrates, the ancient pagan physician for whom today’s medical oath is named, “knew that the oath he took he could not keep on his own,” Dr. Story says. “He had to be beholden to, in his case, what he thought was God.

“In our case, we know the one true God Who will keep us accountable for the way that we treat our brothers and sisters, and the way we behave like the Good Samaritan, the way that we show concern for the widows and orphans.”

Dr. Story is concerned about his Christian colleagues in Canada “already being told they must refer” patients for such procedures as abortion and assisted suicide, referring to a January court ruling there.

“That’s a huge thing, requiring them to refer for physician-assisted suicide and abortion,” Dr. Story says, but, he adds, “We’re running in difficult circles, where it may be increasingly difficult for believers to continue practicing medicine. Yet I think it’s worthwhile being salt and light.” ♦

New tests will vet the values of future doctors

by Mark Blocher

The test that all aspiring doctors are required to pass for admission to a U.S. medical school was expanded in 2015 from five hours to eight, the first revision in the test in 25 years.

Why should we care if the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), the only government-approved accrediting entity for medical schools, changes its Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT)?

Because the AAMC is the only government-approved accrediting entity for medical education, and its leadership appears to be weeding out applicants with Biblical viewpoints.

If you are a pro-life Christian who aspires to a career in medicine, you should care. If you want a doctor who shares your Christian beliefs and pro-life values, you should care.

Look no further than the words of Dr. Darrell Kirch, president/CEO of the AAMC, to get a sense of the threat. In a speech given at the University of California, Davis, Kirch declared, "I am a man on a mission. I believe it is critical to our future to transform health care. I am not talking about tweaking it. I am talking about true transformation."

What does he want to transform? We find part of the answer in the AAMC's "Holistic Review Project," whose goal is "redefining what makes a good doctor." Kirch explained, "The goal is to improve the medical admissions process to find the people you and I want as our doctors."

According to Kirch, this is neces-

sary to shift medical school admissions toward a new standard that weighs the "attitudes, values and experiences of applicants, to not just test what students know, but how they think." To select the right people, the MCAT and admissions process now includes "situational judgment tests," i.e., carefully craft-

Do you want a doctor who shares your Christian beliefs and pro-life values?

ed interviews in which an applicant is presented with a series of hypothetical cases involving ethical conflicts to which she gives extemporaneous responses. For instance, applicants are asked what a doctor should do if a 15-year-old patient requests assistance transitioning from female to male, or how one would counsel a pregnant adolescent about her pregnancy, or an elderly person facing the end of life. What would the applicant advise the pregnant woman whose "fetus" is likely to be born with a genetic defect?

Although Kirch claims the goal is to discern how the applicant thinks, what he really means is he wants to know *what* the applicant thinks. Knowing how someone thinks is a proper function of education. Focusing on what they think is

entirely different. This is especially alarming given that a growing movement within the medical establishment wants to jettison professional conscience protections for medical personnel. Articles in medical journals such as the *New England Journal of Medicine* and the *Journal of the American Medical Association* argue that aspiring pediatricians, obstetricians and gerontologists must be those who not only can think, but whose thinking brings them to the right conclusions.

The purpose of these "situational judgment interviews" is to screen out applicants whose attitudes and values would not be acceptable for someone Kirch would want as his doctor. Kirch's vision of transforming health care is not merely to improve the technical expertise and bedside manner of physicians. The goal is to transform medicine by populating it with only those practitioners whose attitudes and values trend leftward.

Medicine is not the only caring profession experiencing a stampede to the left. The American Psychological Association, which accredits a variety of graduate-level psychology programs, has been moving in that direction for a number of years. Christian colleges and seminaries with counseling programs have felt the pressure to conform, at the risk of losing accreditation and students losing access to federal student loans. The Council on Social Work Education travels a similar path.

What attitudes and values do Kirch and the AAMC find essential for the next generation of doctors?

Kirch insists that medical education must include social justice as a “core tenet of medical ethics.” For instance, in a 2015 essay, Kirch praised the White Coats for Black Lives Movement, a medical student organization that staged on-campus “die ins” and lobbies for medical school education reforms that would mandate teaching about the “structural racism” and “unconscious racial bias” in medical schools. He offers no praise to groups of pro-life medical students. Another example of what Kirch believes are the right attitudes and values for aspiring doctors is his leadership in the AAMC’s adoption of 30 core competencies now required in medical education directed at how doctors provide care for LGBT patients. We can assume that Christian doctors who hold Biblical views on marriage, sexuality and gender will eventually suffer the same plight as cake bakers, florists, and photographers.

Kirch’s advocacy for abortion is clear from a letter to House Speaker Paul Ryan defending Planned Parenthood’s complicity in selling fetal body parts and excoriating the House Select Investigative Committee’s investigation of their practices. The AAMC is well-known for its left-leaning political advocacy, and anyone who registers to take the MCAT automatically receives “action alerts” from the organization’s Government Affairs and Advocacy division. Kirch brags that the AAMC was the author of some of the most “vague language in the Affordable Care Act.” Is that something the head of our medical school accrediting organization should be proud of?

One would expect the leaders of a discipline that prides itself on

being a scientific, evidence-based endeavor to carefully distinguish between verifiable facts and subjective opinion, but Kirch and the AAMC blur that line. They have chosen indoctrination over education, imposing moral and political litmus tests that invariably force Christian medical school applicants to choose between fidelity to their faith and values or a career in medicine. If someone is willing to compromise her beliefs before her career even begins, is this the sort of person we would want as our doctor? And what does it say about the integrity of the only government-approved accrediting entity for American medical schools when they go to such great lengths to purge applicants deemed to have the wrong attitudes and values? If they succeed in excluding young aspiring doctors due to their life-affirming Christian values, what does that mean for the practice of medicine itself? Would we want a doctor who is willing to subordinate her beliefs and conscience to secular medical imperialism? Where does a pro-life Christian go to receive medical training if she is shut out of every U.S. medical school because her values conflict with those of the establishment? As daunting as it sounds, the time may soon arrive when Christians must create a dissident medical education system and a dissident health care system as well. ♦

Member Mark Blocher is the President/CEO of Christian Healthcare Centers (chcenters.org). He served as Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at Cornerstone University for 15 years. He is the author of The Right to Die? Caring Alternatives to Euthanasia and Vital Signs: Decisions that Determine the Quality of Life and Health.

He said it was lonely at times as a Christian when the surgery dispute was going on.

“Three churches in our area out of two dozen have been very bold and speaking against this as a wrong approach in medicine, but that means there’s a lot of churches that have not spoken up, and that’s been sad,” Dr. Story says. “I’ve had conversations with a number of believers who don’t see a problem with doing this, and they don’t see it as contrary to Scripture to support people changing their gender. That’s a real deep sadness to me.”

Dr. Story submitted his resignation from Pullman the day after the board decided to allow the surgeries. He and Jenny have since opened Story Family Medicine in Moscow, Idaho, a Direct Primary Care practice.

With 320 patients, “we’ve grown pretty fast,” Dr. Story says. “A lot of that is outpouring of support and blessing from people in the community who have been following the situation and who were urging us to stand up.”

As for the surgeries, they’re not even being done at Pullman, but at another local hospital. Dr. Story says he’s glad—for the sake of staff members, such as nurses, who shared his concerns but didn’t have his flexibility to leave.

“The surgeon’s deciding not to do this procedure at this hospital has allowed some of the support staff to be able to continue to provide the care that they’ve always given, which is excellent.” ♦

The Grace of Shame: 7 Ways the Church Has Failed to Love Homosexuals

by Tim Bayly, Joseph Bayly, and Jurgen von Hagen
reviewed by Jed Stuber

The *Grace of Shame* makes important contributions to an ongoing discussion about sexuality, perhaps the most pressing issue facing the church in our day. The coauthors include Samaritan members Tim and Joseph Bayly, father and son, who are each pastors.

The main idea of the book is that by failing to use the language God uses in His word we *equivocate*, which the dictionary defines as “using ambiguous language so as to conceal the truth or avoid committing oneself.” Our equivocation deprives people of the opportunity to hear the truth, feel appropriate shame, and find salvation in Christ.

It is a failure of courage. A failure to love. A failure to be a faithful Gospel witness.

This challenge is sure to offend some, but Tim Bayly’s perspective cannot be easily dismissed. He has spent decades in the trenches of ministry to the sexually confused, abused, and depraved, and has much wisdom to offer, learned from both his successes and failures.

The key Bible passage considered in the book is 1 Corinthians 6:9-10:

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (KJV).

There are two different Greek

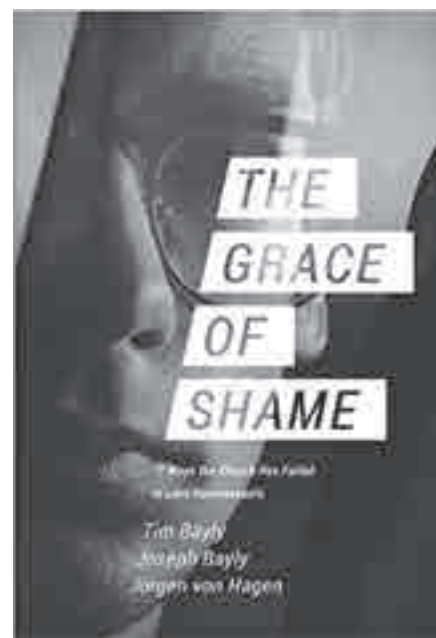
words in this passage that have always been understood and translated to refer to two different categories of sin that describe different forms of homosexuality—“effeminate” and “abusers of themselves with mankind.”

Equivocation deprives people of the opportunity to hear the truth and find salvation in Jesus Christ.

However, recent translations conflate the two terms with the phrase “those who practice homosexuality.” This error is the root cause of a host of problems, say the authors.

One of those problems is a growing movement in the church that encourages people to go ahead and embrace their homosexual identity as long as they don’t act it out. For example, the Revoice conference to be held this month in St. Louis has drawn criticism for this reason.¹

Tim Bayly shares a cautionary story about this kind of problem in the book. His church is located in a city with a very active homosexual community so his church has an active ministry to homosexuals. Many have placed their faith in Christ and been welcomed into the church family. Some have left their sin and never looked back while others



struggle for years to overcome it as the church comes alongside them through counsel and discipleship.

Bayly confesses that early in his ministry he failed to clearly counsel men struggling with being effeminate—that their behavior was sinful and that it would keep them out of the kingdom of God if they did not repent. He saw effeminate men give in to homosexuality and fall away from the faith, despite the best efforts of the church to help them. Bayly admits that he had failed them at a critical early point in their struggle, and he publicly repents for his failure in the book.

But he doesn’t let that stop him from learning from his mistakes and pressing on:

“We never stop working with the effeminate, gays, and lesbians. Some are single, some married, and some get married. They love us and we love them. We hug and kiss them—

remembering the New Testament's frequent command, 'greet one another with a holy kiss.' We are in their homes and at their tables, just as they are in ours, eating with us and our children. Those who repent and believe, we baptize and welcome to the Lord's Supper. Those who are unrepentant, we bar from the sacraments until they repent and believe. Those who go back to the pit God dug them from, we plead with them to return to Jesus" (Kindle Location 297).

Bayly has challenging questions for those who are equivocating about sin that the Bible clearly confronts. Would we tell a thief not to worry about his desire to steal as long as he refrained from swiping stuff? Would we tell a husband that his adulterous fantasies are OK as long as he doesn't act them out? Would we tell a child molester his "pedophile orientation" is acceptable as long as he doesn't commit crimes? How about an angry person contemplating murder?

Bayly's point is that we ought to be able to see that this is folly that runs counter to Scripture.

But how have we come to the point where Christians are holding conferences with this slogan: "Supporting, encouraging, and affirming gay, lesbian, same-sex-attracted, and LGBT Christians so they can experience the life-giving character of the historic Christian tradition"?

Bayly sheds light on the current dilemma by sharing his personal history. When he and his wife were first married, they accepted feminist ideas uncritically. Then when Bayly took his first church as a pastor, he found the church had ordained a sixteen-year-old girl as one of their elders. Bayly's denomination had a policy requiring equal numbers of men and women serving churches as

pastors and elders. Things became very difficult in his marriage and church and it finally dawned on him that the rejection of Biblical truth was the fundamental problem. Thankfully the Bayly's marriage and the branch of the denomination they were serving in recovered. God graciously led the church to repent and return to Biblical principles of ministry. Men admitted fault, took responsibility for the problems, and began to serve earnestly. In a few years there were no longer any women who wanted to be elders.

Bayly sees his personal experience as representative of the larger historical progression. Why are churches that we associate with strong statements of faith, such as a high view of Scripture, now falling into compromise on sexual issues? He says the church has failed a series of tests in his lifetime. We failed to recognize feminism's flattening of sexual distinctions. We failed to confront fornication and adultery becoming more common and infiltrating the church. Next the church failed to deal with rising divorce rates and went along with no-fault divorce. It is no wonder that we find ourselves unable to respond to the challenges of an increasingly decadent culture: pornography everywhere, any stigmas regarding sexual perversions gone, homosexual "marriage" the law of the land, and transgenderism flailing against the reality of God's created order by mutilating body parts and destroying health with hormone injections.

It is a desperate state of affairs but Bayly offers hope that it is not too late to correct our mistakes. The Gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, and we should not be ashamed of it. This is no time for hand wringing about the decline of culture around us,

Bayly says. It is the church that leads the culture, and the responsibility lies with us. If we are going to effectively minister to homosexuals—if we truly love them in the name of Jesus Christ—then we have to learn from our mistakes and get to work.

There are many other topics of interest addressed in the book:

- Ways Christians are falling for subtle shifts in language that have dangerous implications: "Godliness is not heterosexuality," "sexual orientation," "gay Christian," and "such *are* some of you", and "living out," etc.
- Why do Christians still believe that homosexuality is biologically or genetically determined, when even secular scientists and homosexual leaders have rejected this notion?
- Christian leaders are retreating from the idea that homosexuals can be helped to overcome sinful desires through counseling because half a dozen states have passed laws against such counseling. Freedom of speech and religion are under attack and equivocation won't help. ♦

Additional resources from previous newsletters:

"Member Letter: My husband is transitioning to a woman" <bit.ly/lettrans>

"Responding Biblically and lovingly to LGBTQ family members" <bit.ly/resbib>

"Can we thank God for the Supreme Court decision on same sex marriage?" <bit.ly/thanksup>

"Christian leaders reflect on Nashville Statement" <bit.ly/chnash>

"Recovering objective truth" <bit.ly/recovtru>

"#Hate hashtags about hate?" <bit.ly/hashhate>

"Judge grants man permission to be genderless. But did she...really?" <bit.ly/didreally>

"The pornification of society" <bit.ly/pornification1>

He came back from that trip and realized he had lost clarity on why he wanted to study business to begin with and took a semester off with no direction. Then he read Dave Ramsey's *Total Money Makeover*. His initial impression was that Ramsey didn't know what he was talking about.

He read the book three times before connecting with Dave's question: "If you had no payments, how much money would you have?"

That was the turning point.

He went back to school, at Palm Beach Atlantic University in Florida, to get his bachelor's degree in business marketing, taking a full load of senior business classes, and started working 40 hours a week as a graphics assistant. Oh, and he paid off his school loan two weeks before graduation.

"That was the year that I learned more than ever, got better grades than ever before," Joshua says. "It taught me the power of focus."

From there he worked as an entry-level analyst until he lost his job in 2008, a job he's not sure he would have had the courage to leave given the economic situation resulting from that year's bank crisis. He spent the next six years working in finance for a major company, obtaining various licenses and a master's degree in financial planning from The American College of Financial Planning in Pennsylvania.

But after six years at that company, he became frustrated with the disconnect between personal and professional finance.

"I felt like somebody should bridge the gap," says Joshua.

"Somebody who knew both should talk about both because there are tremendous opportunities available for individual people—just normal everyday people—to use good competent financial planning knowledge to improve their situation. They really should go hand in hand."

He was also frustrated with the personal finance podcasts available at the time.

"Many personal finance pundits were well-intended but technically incompetent, didn't know what they didn't know," Joshua says. "Or the content was too technical and wouldn't appeal to the lay person."

So he quit his job and sold his house to start *Radical Personal Finance* in July 2014.

"This is going to be a powerful medium for the future, and I had a hunch that I could build a business," he says.

Joshua's hunch paid off. Today his show boasts well over 500 episodes with 20,000 people listening each day. His topics run the gamut from traditional money saving tips to more think-outside-the-box suggestions: Want to save money fast? Drive a truck and live in it. Want to pay off your mortgage fast? Rent out your backyard as a lot for a tiny home. Want to create a life you love? Learn how to jump out of the rat race.

The road has been challenging but rewarding.

"I feel like I have made progress in the goal that I had, which was to bridge the gap and to really help people to understand personal finance and technical financial planning in a way that brings them together so they're not at odds with one another," he says.

While based on Christian principles, both Christians and non-Christians listen in. In fact, Joshua has found that many of his conversations about the show are with his atheist friends.

"It's not *Christian Personal Finance*," he says. "It's *Radical Personal Finance*. So the commitment that I personally have to the integration of Christianity in the marketplace is this: That anywhere there is no need to discuss Christianity, I don't intentionally discuss Christianity, and anywhere that you can't have concepts without Christianity, I never run from a hard conversation."

The youngest of seven children, Joshua grew up in a Christian home, but it wasn't until his time in Central America during college that he realized that he hadn't made his faith his own. Professors teaching from a heavily liberal worldview overwhelmed his own views. He got to work on that, and by age 20 he had made his faith his own. From that has flowed everything he has done so far, including a podcast with his dad called *Encouraging Christian Fathers*.

In addition to podcasting, Joshua offers one-on-one financial consulting as well as a course on career and income planning on his website.

For the near future, Joshua, his wife, and their three children will be living in an RV, traveling across the country, running the podcast, and meeting his listeners.

Radical? Yes. But that's Joshua. ♦

7 stages of financial independence

Financial independence, according to Joshua Sheats, is not a one-and-done thing. It's ongoing.

"The financial services industry has sold the American public a bill of goods that's basically saying that until you have millions of dollars in the bank you're not going to be financially independent," Joshua says. "That is not true."

The following seven stages form the basis of his philosophy on financial independence, and each one, he argues, is valuable and an achievement because it represents a degree of that independence:

1. Financial Solvency: We all start at financial dependence, the stage where we are dependent on other people or charitable donations. Financial solvency is the first stage after that: "Being able to support yourself on your own income without the aid of others and being current on all of your bills. This is the stage where parents are often teaching their 18-year-old children how to be financially dependent on themselves."

2. Financial Stability: Next, build a buffer. For the Dave Ramsey followers, that means creating an emergency fund. The purpose of this stage is to "insulate yourself financially from always being dependent on other people or other systems," Joshua says.

He recommends a savings of \$10,000 that is available and accessible. He believes that amount of money can make a huge difference in a person's life. It's the difference between leaving a job you dislike and taking one better suited to you; the difference between leaving the state you're in for one you prefer.

"In the U.S. about two thirds of the population, given 24 hours, could not put their hands on \$1,000 without borrowing it," says Joshua. "If we can just help people from having zero dollars accessible to them to \$10,000 accessible, that would dramatically transform most people's lives."

3. Debt Freedom: Do whatever you need to pay off your debts. Freedom from debt coupled with financial stability puts you in a completely different place. "There's no life decision that can't be made" in that situation, Joshua says.

4. Financial Security: At this stage, you can cover your basic needs with investments. The biggest mistake people make with retirement planning is starting with an ideal that isn't realistic, according to Joshua. For example, if you need \$5,000 a month to live on after you retire, but you want to live on \$8,000, the financial advisor runs the numbers and figures out you'll need \$2.7 million available by the time you retire. Because the number is so high, we end up doing nothing and saving nothing.

"I say take it in small stages," Joshua says. "Look at your basic expenses, not your ideal life, and see if you can find a way to cover those basic needs with investments."

5. Financial Independence: Now your investments can cover your current lifestyle expenses. You can now choose whether to work. "The key at this stage is simply to know that it's up to you," Joshua says.

6. Financial Freedom: You can start considering goals beyond the lifestyle you're living such as purchases or experiences you may want or even philanthropic goals. "The important thing is to clarify these goals and fund them with your investment income," Joshua says. "At that point in time, you're truly financially free in every sense of the word."

7. Financial Abundance: Joshua says that not only is this the most challenging stage of the financial journey, it's also the most important one. "You've accumulated wealth beyond the amount needed to fund your own lifestyle expenses with a comfortable margin of safety," he says. "Now you have to decide how to responsibly manage the surplus." ♦

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.

Radicals attack church

Women and children were among those assaulted by Hindu radicals in an attack on a church service in northern India recently, International Christian Concern reports. A 55-year-old man named Ram Prasad was beaten with a stick until he lay unconscious. The radicals also searched for the pastor, but church members successfully hid him. *Pray for healing for those injured in the attack, especially Ram Prasad; for healing for all of those who experienced the trauma of the attack; and for the conversion of the attackers.*

Churches face pressure

A team of Chinese officials entered a Beijing church service on May 6, taking pictures of those attending, ICC and ChinaAid report. The service was not interrupted, but two days later the Xicheng District Public Security Bureau pressured the church's landlord to revoke the congregation's lease. An elder from another Beijing church, Holy Love Fellowship, reported his congregation has been harassed as well. *Pray*

that the leadership and members of these two congregations will be able to endure the harassment with grace and faith, and for the salvation of Chinese government officials.

Pastors taken from class

Two pastors teaching a seminary class in eastern China were removed by 14 Chinese officials on May 23, ICC reports. The officials claimed the seminary didn't have proper credentials for operating a school. *Pray that the pastors will be allowed to resume teaching their students, soon, and that knowledge of Jesus will spread throughout the land of China, including its government.*

Pray for Indonesians

Pray for the healing of those wounded in the May 13 suicide bombings at three churches in Indonesia. Thirteen people were killed and more than 40 injured at St. Mary Immaculate Catholic Church, Surabaya Pentecostal Church, and Diponegoro Indonesian Christian Church. *Pray also for God's peace to reign in the hearts of Christians in Indonesia, and for safety for them.*

Pakistani believer acquitted

A Pakistani Christian named Ahmed was acquitted of charges of blasphemy in a Lahore court on May 4, Mission News Network reports. The six-month trial ended suddenly with the ruling. A second fatwa was issued by his accusers, however. *Praise God for the ruling. Pray for safety and healing for Ahmed, called a “co-laborer for the Gospel,” and for perseverance for other Christians in Pakistan.*

Orthodox church attacked

A Russian Orthodox Christian was killed and another injured in an

attack on Archangel Michael Church in Grozny, Chechnya, on May 19 by four gunmen yelling Islamic slogans, ICC says. Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack, which occurred when 10 churchgoers were gathered for services. Also killed were two police officers and all four attackers. *Pray for healing of those wounded in the attack, for the families of the victims, and for all Christians in Chechnya.*

Algerian churches closed

Algerian authorities closed two more Protestant churches in May, WWM says. The churches in the northeastern province of Kabylie, an area of significant church growth, were sealed off. The moves appear to be part of a “coordinated campaign of intensified action against churches by the governing authorities,” advocacy group Middle East Concern said. *Pray for leaders and members of the two churches closed in Kabylie, and for authorities to change course in how they treat Christians.*

Christian hostel closed

More than six dozen children have been forced to leave a Christian-run hostel in India following its seizure by a child welfare committee, WWM says. Emmanuel Mission International serves children from “under-resourced backgrounds.” To watch the children being removed, go to bit.ly/wwmhostel. *Pray for the children and the families, and that the hostel will soon be able to reopen.* ♦

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

desired like that, cherished like that. Exactly. You've imagined it. It was a picture, a movie. It isn't real. It's fabricated. You've seen an image that seems to depict joy, happiness, pleasure, but it's an image, an icon, an idol. It isn't real.

OK, you say, but I know my friend is real. I've seen her marriage, her car, her body, his job, his family, his leadership. She is real; he is real. Yes, of course they are real, and it very well may be that they truly enjoy those gifts. But lust imagines that you could steal them for yourself. Lust imagines taking what is not yours and enjoying it as though it were. But this is the thing: That's impossible. You cannot actually steal what is not yours and enjoy it as though it is. Yes, you can steal another man's car, another man's job, another man's wife, but when you have done so, you will find that you don't actually have what they had. Because it turns out that the enjoyment and pleasure in the gifts of God is all bound up in the fact that these things are gifts from God, received with joy and thankfulness.

So there we are again, recognizing that lust and covetousness is not merely desiring something that is not yours—it is actually desiring nothingness, desiring the world unmade, the gifts of God un-given, so that you can remake the world according to your own wisdom. This is why lust is not merely a little bit of foolish day-dreaming. The Bible describes it as central to the great war:

For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts ...
(2 Timothy 3:6).

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world ...
(Titus 2:11-12).

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.
(2 Timothy 4:3-4).

All of this is why when it comes to the triumvirate of virtues—truth, goodness, and beauty—Christians must always insist on a hierarchy with truth at the top, followed by goodness, and beauty as the necessary derivative of truth and goodness, but not the other way around. Men naturally want pleasures and joy without sound doctrine. This is what lust always wants: pleasure and beauty and joy without truth. Itchy ears turn away from the truth. Lust is the demand for fables.

In other words, beauty does not exist by itself. True beauty is only and always the glory and radiance of truth and goodness. But the moment beauty is divorced from the foundation of truth and goodness it is offering a false world, a mythological world, a non-existent world of beauty apart from God's truth and goodness. Of course, sin and rebellion in God's world is always parasitic. Sin and rebellion only exist by secretly drawing their strength from the truth they hate and despise. Who gave you that mind? Those hands? Those eyes? That breath in your lungs? Those

feelings throbbing in your heart? The One who made you has given you those gifts, those gifts we so quickly use to demand nothingness, that the world be unmade, and remade, according to our lusts. Talk about fables.

So then, the end of our lusts is literally nothing. There is nothing there. It is cold, dark, and utterly lonely.

But we serve the God who creates *ex nihilo*. We serve the God Who speaks light into our darkness, who speaks life into our death. We serve the God who does not leave us in our vain imaginations. We serve the God Who is the Truth, which is to say the God Who is the only foundation of all goodness and beauty. He came for us in the Person of His Son, the Truth in flesh, in order to tell the truth about our sin and folly, in order to stand in our place, to receive that deep and furious judgment due to us, in order to bring us home, in order that the truth might set us free. Seen in this light, self-control, temperance, sobriety, and modesty—these are not virtues that deny the goodness of this world in any way. Rather, they are emphatically the virtues that ground us precisely in the goodness of this world. They understand that all the false offers of pleasures and self-seeking are fables, myths, fleeting sparks that fade to black. But the truth of God, the sound doctrine of God, is the foundation of all beauty. And at His right hand are pleasures forevermore. ♦

Samaritan member Toby Sumpter serves as a minister at Trinity Reformed Church in Moscow, Idaho, and is the author of the commentary Job Through New Eyes: A Son for Glory. He is married to Jenny and they have four children.

You can find more of his writing at DesiringGod.org or on his blog at TobySumpter.com

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

Ephesians 6:10

The verse above doesn't say to be strong in ourselves. It says to be strong in the Lord. How do we do this?

The next verse says to "put on" the weapons He has provided. Later we are told to "pray in the Spirit" at all times. Galatians 5:16 tells us to "walk by the Spirit."

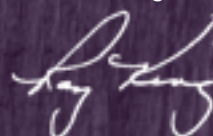
Before Jesus was crucified, He told His disciples that they would be better off when He returned to heaven, because then the Helper would come to

them (John 16:7-11). Before He returned to heaven, He told them to wait in Jerusalem until they had received this power (Acts 1:4-5).

We have a spiritual Resource that was not available to all of God's people until the day the Spirit came to live in us. Our strength comes from depending on the Lord—putting on His armor, praying in the Spirit, and walking by the Spirit.

Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

For the Kingdom,



Ray King