



Christian HealthCare

NEWSLETTER

MEMBER LETTER:

God has blessed me in so many ways

God has blessed me in so many ways, starting with a loving family. I was also blessed to own and operate three pharmacies. Now in semi-retirement, I continue to enjoy good health and the ability to work as a consultant and set my schedule.

I also feel extremely blessed to have found Samaritan Ministries to replace an egregious Obamacare insurance policy that was draining us financially despite the poor coverage. Little did we know when we joined Samaritan that we had not only found a great way to directly share needs, but we were becoming part of a wonderful Christian community that showered us with love and prayers.

Praise God my broken wrist has healed and I'm also fully recovered from skin cancer. He blesses us in so many ways, and Samaritan has been one of those unexpected but very welcome blessings.

Gary & Ruth,
North Carolina

New study championing 'Medicare for All' is bogus

by Sally Pipes

Sen. Bernie Sanders' 2017 Medicare for All bill (S.1804)¹ would guarantee exceptional care to all Americans while reducing health spending by \$5.11 trillion. At least that's what a new study from researchers at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst's Political Economy Research Institute, which is co-directed by Professor Robert Pollin, claims.²

Sound too good to be true? It is. The study's assumptions are completely unrealistic. Medicare for All would be a disaster for patients and taxpayers alike. An analysis from the Urban Institute pegged the cost of Sen. Sanders' 2016 plan at \$32 trillion over 10 years in new federal spending.³ And Charles Blahous at the Mercatus Center analyzed his 2017 bill and estimated it would cost \$32.6 trillion over 10 years, after accounting for lower administrative and drug costs.⁴

The authors of the UMass study evidently studied economic modeling at the College of Magical Thinking. They estimate health care utilization will rise 12 percent—or \$390 billion a year—since millions of uninsured or underinsured people will gain coverage and visit health care providers more often.⁵ Yet they insist overall health care expenditures will fall 19 percent thanks to administrative savings, drug price controls, and reduced payments to doctors and hospitals.⁶

In theory, Medicare for All would streamline the insurance claims and bill-

ing process. The authors estimate hospitals, clinics, and doctor's offices would spend 65 percent less on administrative costs since they'd no longer have to deal with dozens of different insurers.

In reality, these administrative savings won't materialize. Government bureaucrats don't process claims any more efficiently than private-sector workers. In fact, Medicare spends more dollars per enrollee on administrative costs than private insurers.⁷

Drug price controls, meanwhile, could boost—not reduce—health care spending over the long-run. Here's why.

Sen. Sanders's bill calls for strict, European-style price controls. The authors estimate such measures would reduce total U.S. drug spending nearly

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Sharing Summary from January

Shares:	\$28,542,971	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:	\$28,673,823	
Unshared Needs in Negotiation:	\$ —	
New Needs:	4,325	
Total Needs:	10,041	
New Rewards:	391	
Miscarriages:	67	Member Households: 81,040
Final Rewards:	19	(as of 12/20/18)

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

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- Shares you are sending or receiving
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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:



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



2 PAY YOUR SHARE—
Burdens can be lightened physically as we do our part to financially meet others' needs as they would in our time of need.



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

You become what you eat

by Jon Bloom

Hope is to our soul what energy is to our body. Just like our bodies must have energy to keep going, our souls must have hope to keep going.

When our body needs energy, we eat food. But when our soul needs hope, what do we feed it? Promises.

Why do we feed our soul promises? Because promises have to do with our future, and hope is something we only feel about the future—about ten minutes from now, or ten months, or ten thousand years.

We're never hopeful about the past. We can be grateful for the past. The past can inspire or even guarantee a hopeful future for us. But all the wonderful things that have happened to us in the past will not fuel our hope if our future looks bleak.

However, if our future is promising, our soul will be hopeful even if our present is miserable, because hope is what keeps the soul going.

So, we “eat” promises, which our soul digests (believes) and converts to hope.

Toxic soul food

When feeding the body, there is “healthy food” and there is “junk food.” Both will, in the short run, produce energy. But healthy food provides the right kinds of energy, enhances the operation of the body's complex systems, strengthens its resilience against disease, and increases its durability and longevity. Junk food, on the other hand, has essentially the opposite effect in all these areas, and contributes to the breaking down of the body over time.

Similarly, there are “healthy promises” and “junk promises.” Both will, in the short run, produce hope. But healthy promises provide the right kind of hope and promote health throughout the complexities of the human soul. Junk promises prove ultimately toxic and lead to soul-death.

Both physical and spiritual nutrition are important because we always become what we eat. We must take greater care, though, in what we feed our souls because so much more is at stake.

The world and the devil are very aware that we feed our souls promises, which is why, like junk food, junk promises are everywhere. They are heavily marketed (notice every temptation to sin is a promise of some kind of happiness), attractively packaged, tasty (though not truly rich), convenient, and have a particular allure when you're running low on hope. They deliver a fast buzz of false hope and ruin your appetite for truly healthy promises.

But junk promises always disappoint because their buzz is followed by a hope-plunge into guilt, shame, and emptiness. They never deliver the happiness they promise because our souls are designed for a far better hope. And yet, junk promises can be addicting, because our hope-plunge can send us back seeking another fast, false buzz.

Living food

“Man does not live by bread alone, but . . . by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord” (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4). Our souls are designed to be nour-

ished by God's “precious and very great promises” (2 Peter 1:4).

But these promises are not mere human words; they are living and active (Hebrews 4:12), proceeding directly from the living Word, Jesus Christ (John 1:1). He is the Word of God (Revelation 19:13) and “all the promises of God find their Yes in him” (2 Corinthians 1:20).

What could possibly give more hope to our sinful souls than Jesus's promises to forgive all of our sins completely, to remove all of the Father's judgment and wrath against us, to always be with us (Matthew 28:20), and to give us eternal life in God's presence with full joy and pleasures forever (Psalm 16:11)? Only in him do we find “a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11).

This is why Jesus called himself the bread of life (John 6:35). The past grace of His death and resurrection guarantee a never-ending stream of hope-giving future grace for us extending into eternity. To eat these promises is to eat this living bread and live forever (John 6:51).

And Jesus has made the Bible the storehouse of nourishing, living soul food for his saints. It is stocked full of promises, and he invites us to come eat our fill for free (Isaiah 55:1)!

You can change

This living soul food is more vital to our ultimate health than bodily food. But learning to eat well for the sake of our body's well-being has valuable lessons for eating well for our soul's well-being. And one of those valuable lessons is that our

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Julaine Appling Wisconsin Family Council

by Kathryn Nielson

Julaine Appling's own adoption led her to a passion for marriage, family, and the preservation of life and religious liberty, which in turn led her to leadership of the Wisconsin Family Council and Wisconsin Family Action.

As the president of both organizations, Julaine lobbies and works directly with legislators to promote legislation that will enable fellow believers to "worship God in the freedom of their faith."

She also stays on top of news developments, interacts with the media, produces radio programs, engages in social media, hosts and produces weekly radio spots for the council, and is a regular guest on other programs.



Because IRS regulations limit how much lobbying, the 501(c)(3) Wisconsin Family Council can do, its sister organization, Wisconsin Family Action, is the advocacy arm. Both organizations, however, have the same vision, the same mission, and the same goal: "to strengthen, preserve, and promote God's plan for marriage, family, life and religious freedom."

With her "Wisconsin Family Council hat on," Julaine partners with churches, encouraging pastors to create relationships with legislators and be involved with the future policies of Wisconsin and the nation. She loves community and the gathering of people together. Every year, the organizations put on between 15 and 20 events around the state, inviting pastors and lay people from local churches to talk about the issues of the day from a Biblical perspective.

"It is so important for pastors to be informed and energized to then go and talk with their local congregations about the current issues of the day from a Biblical perspective," Julaine says. "I believe today, in the New Testament age, God's plan is primarily through the local church."

Every couple of years, Julaine also organizes an event called "Day at the Capital," when she invites people from all over the state to come to the capitol in Madison and hear various leaders, including legislators, speak on policies and laws from a Christian worldview, and also visit their elected officials in their offices. The day provides a more



personal opportunity to be involved in community and state politics.

In keeping with the principle that every life is precious and should be treated with dignity, the Wisconsin Family Council is also part of the Heal Without Harm Coalition, a pro-life group dedicated to promoting ethical research.

"We think it is absolutely wrong to trade or use the body parts and tissues of an aborted baby for research," Julaine says. "So, the Heal Without Harm Coalition works hard to promote legislation that would respect the dignity of a human child who was just brutally aborted."

Regardless of which hat she is wearing or which organization she is advocating for, Julaine is passionate about communicating to the residents of Wisconsin that "God's plan for marriage and family is irreplaceable."

"We all need to understand that when God's plan for marriage and family is the dominant institution in a culture, things are generally in a good condition, but when that family unit or those marriages either don't form or break down, then it

sets off a chain of destruction that impacts individuals and the entire society. The biggest issue today should be about marriage and family because as the family goes, so goes our entire society,” she says. “We need a rededication to building a culture of marriage and family as God designed it.”

So, for somebody who describes herself as “single, straight, never married, with no children,” how did Julaine end up devoting her life to marriage, family, the sanctity of life, and the preservation of freedom?

It began with her story of adoption.

At just 5 months old, Julaine was adopted and given a family of her own with Bob and Mary Appling. To this day, she has never found her birth parents, nor has she ever tried to look for them, but, she says, she’s grateful they placed her for adoption.

To Julaine, adoption is a beautiful image of grace.

“In a human sense, adoption is God’s grace at work,” she says. “It is taking a bad situation and making

it just about as good as it can possibly be in earthly terms. It is also an image of our spiritual adoption, in that God affords us the opportunity to be called His children and offers us adoption through His Son, Jesus Christ. That is grace. And I’m grateful every day for both my earthly and spiritual adoption.”

Julaine had one brother, who was also adopted.

Looking back on her growing up years, Julaine says she and her brother eventually realized “how blessed we were to be adopted by our parents because that’s how we came to faith in Christ.”

Education was also important to Julaine’s parents, and they made sure their children got a good one. After high school, Julaine attended Bob Jones University, where she earned two degrees in education.

Before joining the Wisconsin Family Council in 1997, Julaine taught at the junior high, high school and college levels and also was the administrator of a Christian school. Today, she says, she is “still an edu-

cator, with my classroom being the state of Wisconsin.”

While Julaine is constantly working to keep up with the issues and striving to inform others, she is quick to say that Scripture is the foundation for Wisconsin Family Council, not the latest news.

“Our source and authority in every position we take is the Word of God,” Julaine says. “Whether in principle, direct commandment, or precept, that is where we get our marching orders and our understanding of what is right and wrong and what God’s plan is. So I don’t go to bed at night or wake up in the morning guessing or fretting about what polls say or what way the political winds are going to blow. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt what God’s plan for marriage and family is and that life begins at the moment of conception. I also know how important it is that we protect religious freedom. It’s an honor and very humbling to do this work, but I believe I have the best job in the world.” ♦

Why SMI?

When Julaine Appling began her work with the Wisconsin Family Council in 1997, she had to get her own insurance policy. The organization was not large enough to qualify for group rate policies, so that meant purchasing individual plans for each of the employees. Over the next ten years, the cost of insurance continued to climb until early 2006 when Julaine was paying nearly one thousand dollars a month for her own plan alone.

It was then that Julaine decided to explore health care sharing ministries. Initially, the Wisconsin Family Council Board was not happy with her.

“They were all skeptical,” Julaine says. “Everyone

is a believer, but they had never had anything but insurance.”

Julaine persisted and the board approved and she joined Samaritan Ministries in 2007.

Just a few months into her membership, Julaine had a Special Prayer Need.

“I saw right away the value of Samaritan,” she said. “People who had never even heard of me started voluntarily sending money and I received almost \$3,000 on that need. And I thought ‘Wow!’ And all these wonderful notes. I have never looked back longingly on health insurance.” ♦

Fat Chance: Beating the Odds Against Sugar, Processed Food, Obesity, and Disease

by Dr. Robert H. Lustig, M.D.

reviewed by Jaclyn Lewis

Fat Chance argues that sugar drives obesity and disease by wrecking our hormones and destroying our ability to regulate energy.

Dr. Robert Lustig was not planning on writing a book about obesity. As a pediatric neuroendocrinologist he specialized in treating hormonal disorders in children with cancer. While working alongside leading doctors from many fields at St. Jude he came to a realization. Obesity is all about his area of expertise: hormones.

Cancer—a tumor, surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy—sometimes destroys key hormone receptors in the brain. As a result, child cancer patients often suffer from all kinds of severe hormonal disorders. Maybe they can't start puberty or will never be able to have children. And sometimes they become massively obese and sedentary, losing all interest life.

As Dr. Lustig and others struggled to help these children, they had to map out hormonal pathways and learn the biochemistry that determines whether our body stores or burns energy. They kept coming back to the hormone insulin.

According to Dr. Lustig, our body basically has two compartments. The first is our lean body mass—heart, liver, kidneys, brain, muscles—which burns energy. The second compartment is fat, which stores energy. Insulin determines which compartment the energy goes to.

When insulin levels are chronically high, there is a breakdown in the hormone pathway which signals the

brain to tell the body to stop storing energy in fat and burn it. Obesity is the result.

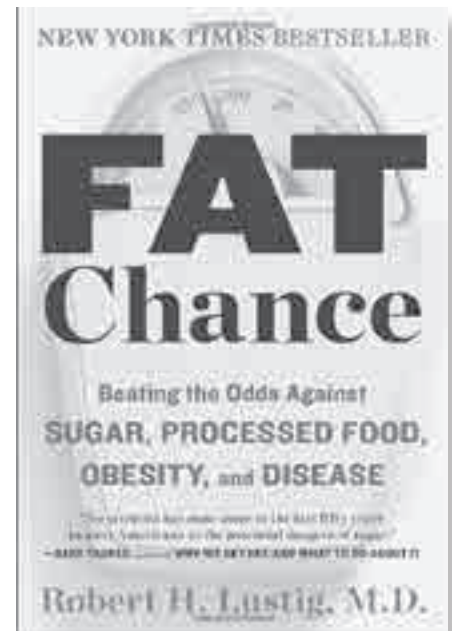
What causes insulin levels to remain high and obesity to surge out of control? It could be cancer destroying the hormone receptors. Or, in the case of millions of obese adults, it's sugar and diets without fiber. In other words, our modern diets of processed food. Therein lies the key to overcoming obesity.

“The overriding thesis of this book is that your fat is not your fate—provided you don't surrender,” Dr. Lustig says. “Because people don't die of obesity per se. They die of what happens to their organs.”

He explains that obesity is just one marker of metabolic syndrome, a cluster of diseases that also includes heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, dementia, and cirrhosis of the liver. “It's metabolic syndrome that will kill you.”

Furthermore, the idea that metabolic syndrome is caused solely by a lack of willpower to exercise and stop overeating is simplistic and misleading. Biochemical factors driving obesity must be accounted for. Dr. Lustig explains that “your caloric output is controlled by your body and is dependent on the quantity and the quality of the calories ingested.” There are not only good fats and bad fats, but also good carbohydrates and bad carbohydrates. Dr. Lustig argues that sugar is a bad carbohydrate, and the real cause of obesity and metabolic syndrome.

First, Dr. Lustig explains that, in the case of obesity, a lack of willpower



RobertLustig.com

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is actually a behavior driven by the hormones involved in storing and burning energy (a.k.a. fat), which ensure we have the energy we need to stay alive.

Multiple hormones and processes are involved in fat storing and burning. When the pancreas releases insulin, fat cells are unlocked and filled with unused energy from food. In other words, the body makes more fat. On the flipside, when insulin levels drop, fat cells break down into fatty acids and the liver burns them. The body loses fat.

Another key hormone is leptin, which signals the brain that the body has eaten enough. When leptin isn't working properly, the brain perceives starvation.

Some children have an extremely rare genetic mutation that prevents them from producing leptin,

which results in increased appetite, decreased energy, and massive weight gain. Leptin hormone replacement therapy helps them to lose fat (no muscle), and their energy increases.

But the majority of the 1.5 billion overweight or obese people in the United States do not have a rare leptin deficiency. Instead, Dr. Lustig says, leptin resistance is “the key to the obesity epidemic.”

People who are leptin resistant have brains that “think they’re starving, and will therefore try to increase energy storage (gluttony) and conserve energy usage (sloth).” As a result, their brains signal the pancreas to make extra insulin, which leads to energy storage and conservation, or fat gain and fatigue.

And while not everyone has the same problem with insulin, Dr. Lustig explains that two major causes of high insulin, and therefore obesity and metabolic syndrome, are diets high in sugar, and fat buildup in the liver which is another consequence of a high-sugar diet. “This raises insulin levels throughout the body,” says Dr. Lustig, “driving energy into fat cells everywhere, and making other organs sick as well.”

He explains that, while subcutaneous fat (the bulk on our hips and legs) can be unsightly, we should be more concerned with this liver fat (a.k.a. visceral fat). “Chronic metabolic disease starts when fat deposits itself in organs such as muscles and especially the liver,” regardless of body size or BMI.

In 1957, physiologist and nutritionist John Yudkin “was the first to show that sugar uniquely raised serum (blood) triglycerides and insulin levels” says Dr. Lustig.

But this research, he says, was rejected by American dietary policy-makers in favor of the idea that satu-

rated fat is the cause of heart disease. Beginning in the early 80s, the food industry complied with government dietary policy by producing low fat foods high in added sugar so they still tasted good. By the 90s, added sugars “devoid of their inherent fiber went through the roof.”

And now, the obesity epidemic is “a pandemic,” affecting every country in the world with an “industrial global diet” like ours.

Whether the diet is low carb or high carb, Dr. Lustig says that sugar is “the one item that’s excluded from every successful diet in the world. ... And it’s the real culprit of the global obesity and metabolic syndrome pandemic.”

“Every successful diet in history restricts sugar,” says Dr. Lustig, “Sugar is, bar none, the most successful food additive known to man. When the food industry adds it for ‘palatability,’ we buy more. And because it’s cheap, some version of sugar appears in virtually every processed foodstuff now manufactured in the world.”

When Dr. Lustig talks about the dangers of sugar, he doesn’t mean whole fruit. “The fruit is good for you,” he explains, “because it also contains fiber.”

Instead, processed foods and beverages with added sugar are the culprit in driving obesity and metabolic syndrome. Dr. Lustig says it doesn’t matter if that added sugar is white sugar, cane sugar, beet sugar, fruit sugar, brown sugar, “its cheaper cousin [high fructose corn syrup],” maple syrup, honey, or agave nectar. “It’s all the same,” he says.

High sugar consumption causes everything that drives metabolic syndrome:

- high insulin and insulin resistance
- blocked leptin signaling, leading to feeling “starved”

- non-alcoholic fatty liver

In fact, sugar’s long-term effect on the liver is no different than ethanol, the known toxin in alcohol. “We know we must limit our ethanol consumption. But sugar flies under the radar,” says Dr. Lustig.

If we can control what we allow ourselves to eat, and how we eat, Dr. Lustig says we can prevent and correct our hormone issues and recover from metabolic diseases. “The goal of obesity management is to reverse the hormonal dysfunction” Dr. Lustig explains.

He says not to worry about which diet you follow. Instead, make sure what you eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner has these characteristics:

- mostly unprocessed, or processed as little as possible
- low in sugar
- high in fiber
- low in omega-6 fats
- low in trans fats

Following these guidelines, your “commonsense” diet could be high in carbohydrate from grains like the traditional Japanese diet, or low in carbohydrate from grains like the traditional Mediterranean diet. Either way, it must be low in sugar, and include plenty of fiber.

Additionally, exercise will lower insulin and increase the energy you burn at rest (a.k.a. “speed up” your metabolism).

“This book is about the dispassionate science and logic of obesity and how it can help individual and society,” Dr. Lustig writes. “I get sick when I think of what’s happened to us, our country, and our planet. This book is my outcry for a better world for our children.” ♦

See also Dr. Lustig’s lecture, “Sugar: The Bitter Truth.” It has nearly 8 million views on Youtube: bit.ly/bittrut

The right side of history?

by Ben Zornes

A common motto of the progressive left—whether arguing for dismemberment of a child in utero, state-funded transgender surgeries, state-run health care, or homosexual marriage—is that their opponents are on the “wrong side of history.”

This sentiment plays well with society on the whole. After all, who wants to be seen with a flip phone, wearing crocs, or sporting a bucket hat? Ew, to being backwards. Ew, to dad-ishness. Our age craves being savvy. You have to be to keep up with the leaps and bounds technology has made over the last decades.

With all the technological invasion—er—innovation, we also conclude that our morality needs tinkering with as well. If ever there was a crime to the modern mind, it is the crime of being a backwards bumpkin. The virtue of the age is being up to date with all the current sentiment.

The god of our age

This reveals that our god is not the Living God of the Bible, but the god *demos*. Mankind is our god. Thus, the whims of this god dictate our morals, our values, our sentiments, and our cultural mores. When “the people” are in charge, sentiments come into and out of fashion like Fourth of July fireworks. Up they go, boom they go, into oblivion they go.

We have no underlying foundation underneath us, and so we are gullible for every new sentiment that *demos* demands that we go along with. In last year’s Miss Universe pageant, one contestant was a man,¹

claiming to represent all women; he has the testicular fortitude to do this because he’s (well a man) and he spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to look like a woman. If you can afford it, then anyone can be a woman. Then *demos* demands you applaud him as he feigns his femininity down the catwalk.

In another episode of the madness which *demos* has brought upon us, “parents” can decide to not assign their child a gender, and we are to shed a tear at the preciousness of their forward thinking. A young boy is dressed in drag, dances for a bunch of men, who throw dollar bills and catcall, and we’re told to be tolerant.

If you raise objections to these unsavory episodes in our cultural evolution to a utopia of brotherhood ... er, I mean sisterhood, cause #TheFutureIsFemale ... and peace and inclusivity, you are tsk-tsk-ed for not being on the right side of history. But this brings up an interesting question: How do we know whether we are reading history correctly?

Reading history rightly

C.S. Lewis raised this question in his essay “Historicism.” In essence, as Christians we believe that God is the author of all history, and thus all history has meaning. The problem is when we assume we can interpret that history correctly. Lewis states, “I do not dispute that History is a story written by the finger of God. But have we the text?” It is the pinnacle of our arrogance that we think we’ve got the bird’s eye view of the story that we are in. We have one

line in this great story, and we think we have the insight to understand the whole novel.

Lewis points out that while we think that history has preserved for us “important” figures, he gives the illustration of Genghis Khan. How are we sure that Khan is actually an important actor in the story God is telling? Perhaps the main character in that scene is one of his many victims and the patience they showed in the midst of their suffering. We don’t know how to read history very well.

Claiming to be on the right side of history is claiming that the gods have spoken. Since *demos* is the god of our age (thank you, Karl Marx) we should not be surprised at the use which is made of turning “current-ness” into a dividing line between the righteous and unrighteous, the woke and the broke, the open-minded and the bigots. We decided to splurge on our lusts, and any restraint on our desires will anger the god. It demands that we read history according to his authority, and he says selling baby parts is a-ok. So get with the times.

Not our story to tell

However, history isn’t the story of mankind. It is the story of God becoming a man, in order to redeem mankind. All mankind was entirely on the wrong side of everything: all of history, art, science, all the way down to academic studies of racial/gender issues of the 17th century. Every religion has sought to make history mean something. But this also means we claim to have the

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The de-sciencing of American medicine and what it means for you

by member Dr. Jane Orient

With all the talk about “evidence-based medicine,” you might think that doctors were becoming much more focused on rigorous science. But like the names attached to bills in Congress—such as the Affordable Care Act, which outlaws affordable insurance, the language used in the movement to fundamentally transform America and American medicine usually means the opposite of what it suggests.

Are older doctors uneducated in science, and do they base their treatments on opinion, intuition, or outdated dogma, while younger doctors use objective observations and analysis?

Consider the kind of medical student our prestigious medical schools are now seeking. In former years, premeds were notorious nerds, usually science majors, constantly studying to make grades in hard subjects. High scores on the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) required ability for quantitative thinking and a foundation of factual scientific knowledge.

Since 2015, the new MCAT includes “situational judgment tests.” The president of the entity that makes the test, Darrell Kirch of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), intends to redefine what makes a good doctor. “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.”

Ezekiel Emanuel asks in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA, Feb 20, 2018),

“Does Medicine Overemphasize IQ?” A high IQ is no guarantee that a physician can “lead a multidisciplinary health team or effectively help patients change their behavior in ways that tangibly improve their health outcomes.” Instead, reformers advocate eliminating “the irrelevant premed requirements of organic chemistry, physics, and calculus, while requiring training in psychology and leadership.” A model negotiating session might be included in the interview process. Of course, the physician must be able to “sensitively discuss end-of-life care preferences.” Emanuel has promoted the view that people have lived long enough at age 75.

Physicians who reveal an improper attitude are being purged.

The curriculum must now have social justice as a “core tenet of medical ethics,” teach about “unconscious racism,” and include 30 core competencies for caring for LGBT patients. Certain propositions are assumed to be true, and evidence that contradicts them is flushed down the memory hole, while supporting data is accepted without question. For example, if a “suspect group” earns less, it must be because

of discrimination.

Some can’t wait for dissenters in the older generation to retire or die. Physicians who reveal an improper attitude are being purged now. Recently, a respected physician was kicked out of leadership positions for an opinion he wrote in a “Big and Bright Ideas” feature published by the Dallas County Medical Society about the alleged “gender gap” in physician pay. He suggested there might be an explanation for differences in earnings other than bigotry, sexism, misogyny, and exploitation. Within days, he was pilloried in the Washington Post, The Hill, CNN, Fox News, and social media, and even by the American Council on Science and Health.

A scientific approach to the question of why Group A makes more money than Group B would compare the two groups for years of experience, level of responsibility, hours worked, desirability of work environment, ability to enjoy flexibility in scheduling, etc. Psychologist Jordan Peterson suggested that women might be more agreeable than men and less aggressive about demanding pay raises. But social justice demands outrage about presumed unfairness, and identification of oppressors and victims. (Of course, if men earned less, it would be fine.)

So where does this leave patients? They might lose their trusted, highly skilled physician, who was dedicated to making them well but who revealed a politically incorrect belief that is irrelevant to their care.

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Imagine if we paid for food like we do health care

by Dr. Ryan Neuhofer

Imagine if you purchased food like most Americans obtained health care.

No, I really want you to try to envision it ...

Struggling?

I am a family physician whose father worked in a grocery store and I enjoy eating at Mexican restaurants immensely, so maybe I can help:

An 'affordable' food plan

[creepy melodramatic music]

You enter the grocery store parking lot at 4:15 p.m., having taken off work early because this particular store closes at 5 p.m. This FoodMart wasn't your personal preference based on quality, service, amenities, or price. You choose it, like all of your previous food choices, because it was included in your new food management plan's network.

Thankfully, your new Green Cross Green Shield (GCGS) Bronze-Select food plan is a benefit provided by your new employer. There is some payroll deduction stuff that you don't quite understand yet. Most of the plan's \$680 monthly premium is hidden from you and drastically reduces your wages.¹ Still, you are happy that your food plan costs only (as far as you know) \$123 per paycheck.

Despite not being particularly pleased with any of your previous food plans, you always try to take full advantage of the tax-preferred option² of buying groceries and eating out as the plan allows. After all, you and most Americans haven't known a different way of eating in your lifetimes. This is how you have purchased food since your parents'

employer's food plan stopped covering you at age 26.

FoodMart's entrance is not easy to find, but you finally make your way into the store. You are first greeted by a few women sitting behind a glass-enclosed desk. By greeted, I mean they ask you for your photo ID, food plan card, and hand you a clipboard with a stack of forms to complete. The lobby is crowded, but you manage to find a seat amongst the sea of impatient shoppers.

You have completed these types of forms dozens of times previously but dutifully do so again. (You still prefer 2 percent milk, don't like more than four vegetables, and your peanut allergy is unchanged.) Forms completed, you check back in with the receptionist. After 20 minutes of waiting, she assigns you a cart and you start to shop with your list in hand.

Worried that you won't be able to afford everything on your list, you cross off any special items and opt only for the basics.³ As you scurry up and down the aisles, you see there are no prices listed on anything,⁴ nor labels telling you what is a Bronze-Select item. You suspect the delicatessen with your favorite cheeses is off limits because of the large "included with UnitedFood Platinum-Plus" sign above it but with no mention of Green Cross Green Shield. Remembering that eggs are included as a "free" GCGS wellness benefit, you get 3 dozen of those—even though you don't really need any right now.⁵

During check out, the cashier rings up the items and asks you for a \$30 copay. You are given a 6-page

receipt with indecipherable codes and then asked to sign a few other forms because some of your items will be billed to you later.

As you drive home, you remember that your monthly food deductible is \$250 and you hope that the balance of the bill isn't overly expensive. (Several months in the future you get a bill for \$276 from FoodMart. Although vaguely suspicious that you've been taken advantage of somehow, you are happy that you got a big discount on your \$18 box of Tasty Flakes cereal and have now reached your deductible.)

Overall, your experience with FoodMart was confusing, but you remain thankful that you have access to food through your GCGS plan. Some of your self-employed friends are much worse off.⁶

Rising costs

The next day, in the mood for tamales, you decide to treat yourself to a Mexican restaurant nearby that you've heard is great. (The last time you attempted homemade tamales it was a disaster, so you leave this to professionals from now on.)

Upon arrival, you are saddened to learn that Lola's Cocina is not part of your GCGS plan. You decide to go down the street to Burrito King which prominently displays "Proud to accept GCGS Bronze-Select members" in its window. They don't serve tamales but you are determined to stay in-network for lunch.

After waiting a while to be seated, the waiter takes your order. He seems distracted and you hope he heard the order correctly. Eventually, a lukewarm burrito arrives at your

table. You rush to finish it so you can get back to work on time.

Upon checkout, you present the waiter your GCGS card, and you are asked to pay a \$10 copay. (The billing statement weeks later reveals that the “plan discount” did reduce the initial charge from \$64 to \$37 and that GCGS paid Burrito King another \$27 a few months later which got applied to your deductible.) You question how a simple burrito can cost \$37, but nobody, including the majority of food policy experts, knows exactly why.

Given the escalating prices and dysfunction of the food industry in recent decades, everyone has their favorite boogeyman to blame for these high costs: Bob (the burrito shop owner), food management companies, Big Tortilla, technology, various political parties, government inaction, and, of course, the fact that profiting from food is legal. (Although many burrito makers and food management companies are designated as “not for profit.”)

But it's actually quite logical:

Burrito King, a small restaurant, employs 4 cashiers out front and 7 people in their business office in addition to the usual staff to cook and serve food. Their head chef, Bob, spends much of his time completing forms to justify why the Deluxe burrito you ordered included black beans instead of the standard pinto; he is “burned out” and ready to quit altogether.⁷ All of these hoops drastically increase the difficulty and costs of business,⁸ necessitating higher revenues and prices.

And Burrito King didn't bill you or your plan \$64 because they are

greedy. They contract with dozens of different food plans that have different contracted rates for each item determined annually by contract. To simplify their billing, they must choose a universal “chargemaster” rate that is many magnitudes above what any food plan has agreed to pay them. Nobody (except for people without a food plan) will ever actually pay the chargemaster rate.

You might ask, “If Green Cross Green Shield is paying the bills, why don't they rein in the cost of Tasty Flakes and burritos?” Well, they actually make more money when food prices are high.⁹

Government intervention

Regardless of your favorite scapegoat, most people can agree that having a good food management plan has become increasingly important. It is technically possible to buy a food plan on the private market, but the vast majority of people take whatever their employer offers. The government bestowed a big tax break on employer-purchased food plans a few generations ago.¹⁰

However, now even employers are struggling to absorb the inflation of food plan premiums.¹¹ They have started to shift more of these costs to employees, increasing both your payroll deduction each month and your out-of-pocket costs every time you actually need to eat. Gone are the days of good food plans with \$5 copays and \$50 deductibles.

If you are wondering why the federal government hasn't intervened to fix this ... they have, repeatedly.

A couple generations ago, federal

and state governments created a myriad of food management programs for various vulnerable populations, including the elderly and poor. These food management plans function much like private plans (usually administered by the same companies) and are the largest purchasers of food in the nation. But, their budgets have swelled to unsustainable levels.¹² To fix this, the government has cut rates paid to food suppliers. In reaction, many food stores and restaurants are opting out of these programs altogether;¹³ greatly limiting the choices of where poor and elderly Americans can purchase food or eat.

A few decades ago, Congress granted the private American Food Association (AFA), an already powerful, private organization of food suppliers, the authority to set the relative value (price paid) of each food item through a complex coding system.¹⁴ The AFA committee that determines pricing for federal programs has widespread impact, and most private food plans follow the same formulas. Predictably, the AFA value committee has become a source of cronyism that favors certain players in the food industry.

Despite decades of government interventions, many have still struggled to afford food. So, several years ago, Congress passed the Affordable Sustenance Act (a.k.a. ASA, or “Obamafood”). The goals of this plan were numerous, but the main gist was to expand programs for low-income people, subsidize private food plans (moderate income peo-

Continued on page 15

42 percent, or \$204 billion based on 2017 spending levels.

Those price controls would discourage drug development. As the authors acknowledge, it costs \$2.9 billion to bring a new drug to market.⁸ Pharmaceutical companies won't plow large sums into R&D if price controls make it impossible to earn a profit. Fewer drugs would be developed.

A single breakthrough medicine could save the health care system more money than all price controls combined. For instance, a treatment that delays the onset of Alzheimer's by five years would save Medicare and Medicaid \$218 billion annually by 2050.⁹ Under Medicare for All, such innovation would never occur.

The authors also anticipate savings from across-the-board reim-

bursement cuts. The government-run system that Sen. Sanders envisions would pay hospitals and doctors at current Medicare reimbursement rates, which are 22 percent below private insurance rates, on average. If Medicare for All were fully implemented, Charles Blahous

“Medicare for All” would mean rationed care, higher taxes, and a shortage of doctors.

estimates that reimbursement rates will be more than 40 percent lower than those paid by private health insurance.¹⁰

Such steep cuts are impractical. By 2019, 80 percent of hospitals will lose money treating Medicare patients, according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

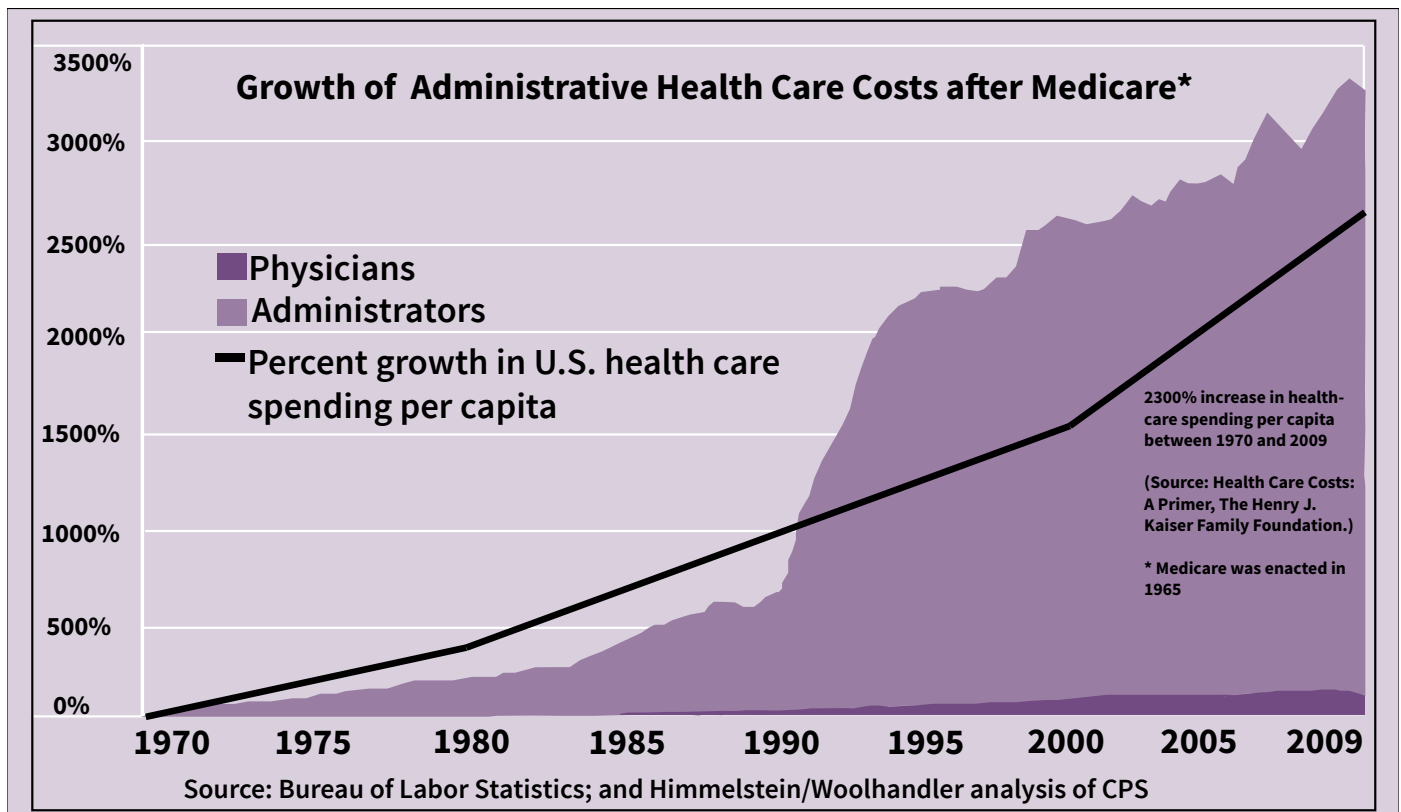
They only survive by shifting costs onto private insurers.¹¹

If every patient in America were a Medicare beneficiary, many hospitals would go out of business. The surviving institutions would be forced to lay off workers to cut costs.

Patients would receive lower-quality care—and hundreds of thousands of doctors, nurses, administrative assistants, and janitors would lose their jobs.

It's inconceivable that Congress would approve such cuts. If a Medicare for All bill ever passes, it will feature significantly higher payment rates for providers. The savings the authors envision would never occur.

In fact, the U.S. government would have to ration care to control spending—just as the British and Canadian governments do in their government-run systems. In Canada, private insur-



ance for any procedure deemed medically necessary is banned.¹²

The U.K.'s National Health Service remains in a constant state of crisis. One in seven surgeries is canceled right before it's supposed to happen, often due to staffing or bed shortages.¹³ The British Medical Association recently predicted that, this winter, more than 300,000 patients could wait four hours or more on hospital trolleys in emergency care departments before seeing a doctor.¹⁴

In Canada, wait times are horrendous. Patients waited a median of 19.8 weeks this year to receive care from specialists after securing referrals from general practitioners.¹⁵ Some patients have it even worse. Those in New Brunswick wait more than 45 weeks. On top of longer waits, Medicare for All would mean rationed care, higher taxes, and a shortage of doctors.

When Sen. Sanders promises that Medicare for All—which will ban all private coverage—will deliver great care at a low price, it's understandable. He is, after all, a politician. But it's disappointing to see professional economists join the charade. ♦

Editor's Note: We publish this article because of the important principles related to health care that are discussed and that may directly affect SMI members. SMI does not endorse candidates or parties.

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taste preferences can be changed.

Our tastes are conditioned by habits and wrong ways of thinking about food. Like eating healthy food, eating healthy promises requires more work to plan—new habits of discipline that aren't as convenient and entertaining as junk promises. And if we've become conditioned to heavily processed, sugary, empty-carb promises, artificially engineered to be addictive, we may find the taste and texture of true food less enjoyable at first.

But these habit and taste preferences will change as we stick with it and increasingly experience the benefits of substantial, hope-sustaining and deepening benefits.

The only way to break a habit of eating junk food promises is cultivating a taste for rich, nourishing, long-lasting, deeply satisfying, and true promises. It takes eating real food to develop the taste for real food. We must be patient. Old tastes do not diminish and new tastes are not acquired overnight. We might find it helpful to change some bodily food habits at the same time, and let that experience illustrate the spiritual reality. But as we press in, God will meet us and help us “taste and see” that He is good (Psalm 34:8).

“The God of hope” wants us to feast on His promises and be filled “with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit [we] may abound in hope” (Romans 15:13). ♦

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mystical insight of the gods; which is why we have sought to become as God.

A story is precisely the sort of thing that cannot be understood till you have heard the whole of it.

But if God became a man, we would know something about the story God is telling. It is a story of creation, fall, redemption, and ultimately a resurrection, either unto eternal life or eternal damnation. Christ was born, died, rose again, and this is—as Spurgeon once put it—the hinge of history. All other events must be in reference to that great event.

The secularist appeal to being on the “right side of history” is really just a recapitulation of the serpent's lie in Eden. It is an appeal to think we can tell and interpret our own story. To us this is not given. We can't even recount every last detail of the last ten minutes (let alone what it means); so who are you, oh man, to think you can interpret the trajectory of all of human history? Never be bullied into thinking you must think like the crowd, simply out of fear of being on the wrong side of history. Rather, fear being on the wrong side of the Son of Man when he comes to separate the sheep and the goats (Cf. Mt. 25). ♦

Samaritan member Ben Zornes (benzornes.com) serves on staff of Christ Church in Moscow, Idaho. He recently published a collection of essays titled Flotsam & Jetsam, which is available in Kindle & paperback at Amazon.com.

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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.

China crackdowns increase

Chinese government crackdowns are increasing as part of the Communist leadership's effort to suppress Christianity and other religions. Recent developments include:

- Many non-Chinese Christians have been deported from China recently, apparently for allowing Chinese citizens to attend services, Mission News Network reports. As a result, believers from other nations have turned away Chinese Christians from gatherings. Open Doors USA says the deportations are a way of discouraging foreign Christians introducing “non-Chinese” ways of thinking. *Pray Christians will be bold in living out their faith in all ways and for the conversion of government officials.*
- More than 100 members of Autumn Rain Covenant Church in Sichuan, China, were arrested during a December 9 crackdown, International Christian Concern reports. Pastor Wang Yi and his

wife, Jiang Rong, were detained for “inciting subversion of state power,” which carries a sentence of five to 15 years imprisonment. An elder who posted updates and prayer requests online has been detained, as well as two deacons. Also, 50 seminary students were held for 48 hours. The raid took place after local authorities raided homes of church members and blocked social media accounts. *Pray for the release of Autumn Rain Covenant's leadership, and for the courage of the church's members to continue to meet for worship.*

- A children's Bible class at Guangzhou's Rongguili Church was raided by more than 100 police and government officials on December 15, ICC reports. The names of the students were taken, their parents and staff were interrogated, cell phones were confiscated, and contact information from the church's computers was copied. Also, more than 4,000 books were confiscated in the operation, which lasted into the evening. Members of the church were prevented from entering the next day for services. A government notice says that the church is now “disbanded.” *Pray for the members of Rongguili Church to be able to find ways to worship together, for property to be returned, and for spiritual peace.*
- Chinese authorities raided a rural house church on December 2, ICC reports, removing Bibles and stools. The raid was one of several in the area. *Pray that the members of the church that meets at the house of Liao*

Hongcon will be able to gather again soon, and that they will find other ways to worship together.

Election results positive

The ruling Hindu nationalist party was thrown out of power in three central India states in recent elections, World Watch Monitor reports. Christian leaders hope that the change in power will reduce the persecution believers face in those states. *Praise God for the election results and pray that tolerance for Christians will increase throughout India as a result.*

Iran harasses dozens of Christians

More than 100 Christians were arrested by Iranian intelligence officials during November, ICC reports. Estimates are 142 were arrested. It is believed that most of those arrested spent only a few hours in detention, while leaders were held longer. Several of those arrested were reportedly told they would be charged with propaganda against the Islamic regime. *Pray for Iranian believers to stand strong against harassment by authorities.*

Brothers sentenced to death

Two Pakistani brothers arrested in 2014 have been sentenced to death for blasphemy, WWM says. Qaisar and Amoon Ayub alleged posted “disrespectful material” on their web site. The charges date back to 2011. *Pray for safety for the brothers while in prison, and for judges to overturn the sentence.* ♦

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

Their new physician will be chosen for being a social justice warrior. The doctor might not be able to understand human metabolism or drug effects (that’s biochemistry, a branch of organic chemistry), but who needs that? Doctors will be following “best practices” downloaded from their smart phones. Doctors may not have skills in independent or quantitative thinking, developed by problem-solving in disciplines like calculus, but they will be accustomed to working in groups.

There will be numerical goals to meet, related to eliminating “disparities,” but that involves simple counting, and paying attention to classification by identity politics.

Your doctor might not be dedicated to (or skilled at) finding the correct diagnosis or best treatment for you. That might even be contrary to her duty to improve population health or cosmic justice.

But the world will be fairer—in the view of our self-appointed guardians. ♦

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ple on Food.gov),¹⁵ and create a legal mandate for all Americans to purchase a “qualified” food plan. After a few years of national political disputes, including whether free-range pork should be a standard food plan benefit,¹⁶ the ASA’s mandates were eventually imposed.

The ASA has increased the number of people with food plans (from 86 percent to 92 percent), but hasn’t much alternated the trajectory of escalating food costs. Our national spending on food now stands at nearly 20 percent of GDP and those without subsidies continue to be burdened by high costs.¹⁷

Not surprisingly, Green Cross Green Shield and other private food management companies, being middlemen for most of the money Americans spend on food, have continued to make healthy profits regardless.¹⁸

Dwindling choices

You are probably thinking: “This is stupid. Nobody would stand for this. I’ll just go back to using Costco, CSAs, WholeFoods, or Blue Apron for my groceries. OpenTable and UberEats will allow me to seamlessly order food from my favorite restaurants.”

I’m sorry to inform you that those companies, services, and technologies do not exist in a world where we purchase food like this. The growing power of food plans and government has had a profound impact on the grocery store and restaurant industries.¹⁹ Food vendors’ operations are entirely geared around servicing intermediaries, not their customers. Innovation to improve quality and reduce costs is decades behind other industries. Food suppliers of all types

have consolidated and large food conglomerates, such as McWalbees, have thrived.

Politicians, regardless of their ideology and grandstanding, are lobbied heavily by a swamp of power players to preserve the status quo.²⁰ Understandably, most Americans are fed up with all of this and an increasing number now believe that the only solution is a national, federally administered “single food plan.”²¹

This dystopia won’t be easy to fix. But, don’t despair; there is a sliver of hope.

[inspiring orchestra anthem by John Williams]

In recent years there is small but growing underground movement²² bypassing this Byzantine food management managed health care system. These rebel grocers and chefs independent doctors²³ are directly providing their customers patients with quality, affordable food and meals medical care. ♦

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Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

In this passage, we are instructed not to be anxious about anything. Anything. In every circumstance, we can have the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, if we are thankful to Him. We can do this because we know He is in control and has promised to make all things work together for good (Romans 8:28).

It's possible to cry out to God and still be in turmoil if we are not confident of His goodness. But

when we ask God with a thankful heart, He will give us His peace. Praying with thankfulness for Who He is and the good He will do keeps us in God's peace beyond what we can understand, no matter what our circumstances.

For the Kingdom,



Ray King