

MAY 2021

# Christian Health Care Newsletter

## Spiritual mothers influenced Samaritan staff members

by Samaritan staff members



Laura and her grandmother, Maria

*IN 2 TIMOTHY, Paul mentions the faithfulness of Timothy's mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois, in raising the younger believer: "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well" (2 Timothy 1:5).*

*In honor of Mother's Day this month, we're sharing stories about the Eunices and Loises who have had a strong influence on the faith of some of our staff members. In June, we'll relate some stories about the spiritual fathers in other staff members' lives.*

### **Laura and her grandmother, Maria**

I was the youngest of four when my parents left Romania to emigrate to the United States: my brothers were 6 and 5, my sister was 3, and I was

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Samaritan™  
MINISTRIES

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Singing to one another

### Member Letter:

GOODBYE, INSURANCE!  
HELLO, HEALTH CARE JOY!

It has been so wonderful to get out of the horrible world of insurance and instead count on our brothers and sisters in Christ to meet our family's health care needs. It surprised us that it is a joy to write a check directly to our brother or sister and know about the Need it is meeting rather than writing a huge check that gives us poor coverage and wastes so much in administration. Our family gives thanks for Samaritan Ministries.

**William and Cheryl**  
**IDAHO**



## Sharing Summary\* | April 2021

### BILLS

\$27,538,146

### MEMBER HOUSEHOLDS

78,457

### SHARES

\$28,294,216

\*Classic and Basic

While we still remain ahead of schedule in sharing, in 2021 we are beginning to see more bills submitted in a month than Shares available for that month. We will continue to update these numbers every month to keep members informed.

### QUESTIONS ABOUT?

Your medical Need  
Shares you are sending or receiving  
Your membership

### EMAIL

needs@samaritanministries.org  
membership@samaritanministries.org  
membership@samaritanministries.org

## Have a Need? Use the Health Resources App on Dash

- Compare quality and cost of health care services in your area using Healthcare Bluebook. Receive a \$250 reward when you submit a screenshot showing you chose a green fair-price provider.
- 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.

**Send a note. Pay your share. Always stay alert in prayer.**

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1½. The plan was to have us on a plane to join them in six months or so after they had settled in. My paternal grandmother, Maria, said she'd care for us four young children. Six months turned into a year. A year turned into a decade ... and then some.

Every Saturday she'd get us all ready, herd us onto the bus, and take us to church. Every night, she'd have vespers with us. I still sing her songs to my little girls, and I can still recall her reciting Christian poems and psalms. Her prayers are forever engraved in my mind. My grandmother did it all and did her best just so we'd have this Christian faith embedded in our souls.

I remember her tears when she was at her wit's end and on the verge of giving up—just in time to start it all again in the morning. We weren't an easy bunch to raise, that's for sure. Somehow, through the struggles, tragic moments, and beautiful memories dear to my heart, I feel Jesus. In every sacrifice she's made, I see His love and care. I can't explain how or why; I just do. Like the breeze of spring and the smell of hyacinths, I can feel God's presence because of what she did.

I was 18 when my sister and I emigrated to the U.S. to finally reunite with my mom. I struggled to find God in the hard adjustment. I felt angry and lonely, with anxiety and depression running rampant and wreaking havoc in my young adult life. The problem of pain has been hard to disentangle, and I kept making choices like there was no God. But one thing had been embedded within me since I was a toddler: I needed to seek

Him. Thanks to my grandmother's relentlessness, I found Him again, and today I am the daughter of the King, too.

### **Carol and Grandma Carol**

My Grandma Carol (for whom I am named) raised me when my teenage parents were unable to care for me. For years, she shared the Gospel message with me through her example of selfless giving (she cleaned the church for \$30 per week and would put it ALL back in the offering on Sunday), her tenacity, and her complete and utter reliance on the Lord. Though she was widowed three times and could barely make ends meet, she never lost her faith in God. She always reminded me that He would provide for us.

I was a wild, rebellious granddaughter to her, but she never gave up on me.

After finding myself a single mother at 20 years old, I was at the end of my rope. I didn't know what to do. I knew that I wanted to be a better mother to my son than my mother had been to me. Thankfully, those years of Grandma Carol sharing God's Word and His love were planted deep in my soul, like a seed.

On Mother's Day 1999, I attended a Mother's Day banquet at a church at my grandmother's invitation. That's when I gave my heart to Jesus. He changed the trajectory of my life and the legacy of my family through the consistent prayers of my grandma.

Grandma Carol is 81 years old now. She has dementia and doesn't speak anymore, but through her eyes, I still see that deep love that

won my heart to Jesus 22 years ago.

### **Amy and Mrs. Peterman**

In my church growing up, there was a dear, precious saint named Mrs. Peterman. She was a widow, maybe in her 50s when I was little, and my dad would sometimes mow her yard or do other things to help her. We always talked with her at church, and my mom was always interested in what she was doing. As I grew, I formed my own relationship with her. God made me very sensitive to the needs of others, with a heart for those in need, so I was really interested in what she did. She was a volunteer with the Philadelphia Bible Society, and every week she drove to inner-city Philadelphia and visited at least two or three hospitals, handing out Bibles and Christian reading material.

Once I turned 16, she asked me if I'd like to go with her. Boy, did I! It was quite an experience! It was such a privilege to spend time with just her, and when we got to the first hospital in the morning, she would sit and read a psalm and a proverb, then pray, then go about her work. She just included me in what she did, and I learned so much. She was kind and attentive to each patient, and offered them God's Word to read to help bring comfort to them.

She just loved PEOPLE so much—like Jesus loved them. I'm so thankful God put Mrs. Peterman in my life. She helped to teach and train me in a unique way to love and serve the Lord. ♦♦♦

Read more at [samaritanministries.org/blog/spiritualmoms](http://samaritanministries.org/blog/spiritualmoms).

## Member Spotlight

# Jim and Jamie Choi | SoulSpace app

By Michael Miller



### Members Jim and Jamie Choi

[soulSpace.co](https://soulSpace.co)

Email: [co@chois.co](mailto:co@chois.co)

Facebook: [@appsoulSpace](https://www.facebook.com/appsoulSpace)

Instagram: [@appsoulSpace](https://www.instagram.com/appsoulSpace)

**SOULSPACE IS A** fairly recent entry into the Christian meditation app realm. Samaritan Ministries members Jim and Jamie Choi of Bend, Oregon, led the creation of the app, which features scripture-based meditations and music, to its release in 2019 with the help of fellow church members, friends, and family. SoulSpace is approaching 100,000 downloads on the iOS and Android platforms. Besides Bible-based meditation, it features bedtime stories, original music, and Bible courses. Daily meditations are free, but additional content requires a subscription. To take advantage of special pricing for Samaritan members, download the app, create an account, and go to [SoulSpace.co/samaritan](https://SoulSpace.co/samaritan) to complete the subscription process.



Jim and Jamie Choi  
(Supplied photo.)

### The idea for SoulSpace came about in 2018.

Life was “getting hectic” for the Chois, Jim says. They tried some non-Christian meditation apps to help, but the apps were “just kind of missing something.” One day they heard Bo Stern-Brady, a speaking pastor at their congregation, Westside Church, talk about

the wisdom of taking brain breaks during the day.

“I emailed Bo that day,” Jim says. “I said we were thinking of something like that except as an actual meditation app.”

Although Bo responded quickly, and the ball got rolling, it took a while to get the different parts together: scripts, code, music,

graphics. The team gave itself a soft deadline of Christmas 2019, and reached it.

### SoulSpace is a team effort.

Jim handles code for the app and serves as the “circus master” for the rest of the team. Jamie does the meditation voicing, applauded in user reviews as “soothing.”

"I have not heard one person say anything negative about her voice," Jim says. "That's so odd, because in the app space, tech and social media, there's always some naysayer, someone who doesn't like something."

Corey Parnell, a former worship leader at the Chois' church and Bo's son-in-law, does much of the singing and music. Jim's niece, Sabrina, handles a lot of the audio editing, important because it brings the background music and the speaking voice together "so that it sounds pleasing." Tess, Bo's daughter, is already a pro at emailing, so she oversees email communications for Soulspace. Finally, Andressa, Jamie's sister-in-law, has been handling both social media communications and digital artwork for the app.

"We have a different artwork each day for the meditation along with an inspirational screen statement," Jim says.

"We have a small, very tight-knit team that's really dedicated to the Lord and wants to create something beautiful and creative and have some meditation time that has a focus on God."

### **Soulspace's purpose is to draw listeners closer to Christ.**

"Our main drive is to connect people to the love of Christ and help them experience peace through that connection," Jamie says. "Our world right now is just so overwhelming. I think having a refuge or a place that they can run to, to reconnect easily, to reduce chaos and stress and anxiety is really powerful. Over time, we've kind of mocked that connection in

some ways. Being able to reconnect quickly and easily in a busy schedule is powerful.

"Our main tagline is to anchor yourself to the love of God, and that's really what we're all about."

### **Perfect pandemic timing.**

Releasing Soulspace only a couple months before the COVID-19 shutdowns started, the Chois could look at a dashboard and pinpoint in March 2020 increased usage nightly in New York City

around 10 or 11 p.m.

"It was just lighting up because people there were having a hard time going to sleep from the very stressful or very intense day," Jamie says. "It was so neat to see these people coming back night after night, to be able to help release that anxiety, release that tension, and to be able to get to a point where it was going to help them go to sleep. I can't imagine

*continued on page 6*

## **Why Samaritan Ministries?**

**JIM AND JAMIE** Choi "dipped" their toes into health care sharing through Samaritan Ministries in 2017, testing it for six months. They're still members.

### **'We went for it.'**

They were "kind of skeptical" about health care sharing.

"We had just moved and, because we're both self-employed, the health insurance rates were really expensive," Jamie says. "It was going to be like \$1,700 (per month) for four of us. We had heard about Christian health care sharing ministries. We did our research. So we went for it, and everything seems great."

### **The community aspect hooked them.**

"The thing that emotionally got us hooked is getting a note or card with the Shares," Jim says.

### **Through the fire.**

In 2018, the Chois' daughter Jane inhaled a cashew, ending up in a hospital for a week with a \$45,000 bill.

"That was where we got to see Samaritan shine," Jamie says. "That was amazing to see how people were writing notes for her. Since walking through that fire, we've been hooked ever since." ◆◆◆

what it was like living in the city at that point in time.”

### Big plans are being made.

The team is looking at developing the “devotional Bible study side,” Jim says. It may end up as a hybrid of a meditation and audio format.

“A lot of people have asked if there are ways they can get deeper into studying the Word from the meditation,” Jim says.

“Another area that our heart is into as well is that a lot of millennials have been stepping away from the church, so it’d be really nice to message and reach those people to bring them back to Jesus.”

### Striving for content unity.

“All of our content is created by our team,” Jim points out. “Everything is original and focused.” Bo writes meditations while Corey and Jamie write original kids’ stories,

for example, and Corey also writes original music.

“Simplicity is so important when you’re trying to create peace,” Jamie says.

Jim says that the team tries to “make sure the scripting is touching and reaches out to you in the right way at the right moment, and that it really gets to the issues that you have every day.” ♦♦♦

Michael Miller is editor of the Samaritan Ministries Christian Health Care Newsletter.

## What is Christian meditation?

**ONE OF THE** challenges for the creators of the Soulspace Christian meditation app is that they kept “bumping up” against the question, “What is Christian meditation?”

“When everybody thinks of meditation,” says co-founder and meditation narrator Jamie Choi, “they think of Eastern religions, and then wonder how they can be honoring God by meditating.”

Jamie and her husband, Jim Choi, say that when Jesus drew away from the crowds, He was spending time in prayer and meditation.

Soulspace co-founder Bo Stern-Brady has been writing articles and recording podcasts saying that spending time meditating on God’s Word and recognizing Him in His Word is honoring to God.

“Over time, I think we kind of all together worked on helping people understand that Christian meditation is a thing, and it’s honoring, and it’s not ‘new age-y,’” Jamie says.

Before Christian meditation apps—there are several others besides Soulspace, such as Abide and Soultime—some believers turned to non-Christian apps like Calm or Head-

space for help in relaxing.

“They were so shocked or surprised to be able to find, ‘Oh, there’s a Christian meditation option,’” Jamie says. “With Christian meditation, you’re connecting to someone, Jesus, so there was like a discovery moment.”

In a blog post at [theglorioustable.com](http://theglorioustable.com)\*, Bo Stern-Brady wrote that “Truth-based meditation teaches us to take every thought captive as we apply the Word of God to the wars that go on in our very busy minds” and offered several Bible verses about meditation:

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night ...” (Joshua 1:8).

“I will meditate on Your precepts and fix my eyes on Your ways” (Psalm 119:15).

“My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on Your promise” (Psalm 119:148). ♦♦♦

\*[theglorioustable.com/2020/08/devotional-meditate-on-gods-word](http://theglorioustable.com/2020/08/devotional-meditate-on-gods-word)

# Life after baby: 20 tips for moms with newborns

Those first weeks after birth can feel like an endless cycle, but there are steps new moms can take to deal with some of the challenges



by Chandra Lattig of  
Pregnancy By Design

*Third in a series.*

**HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY** to all the moms out there—especially to all the new moms!

This time, while precious, can also be very challenging. Those first weeks can feel like an endless cycle of feeding, sleeping, and changing diapers, made crazier by exhaustion, hormonal changes, and new parent anxiety.

You may be wondering if this is “normal” or if you’ll ever feel like yourself again. Take heart—you are not alone, and you can do this, especially with some insights.

We’re going to look at some of the more common challenges moms face after having a baby and offer some tips to help you through.

## **Hormonal and emotional changes**

During pregnancy, your body produces 10 times the normal level of estrogen and progesterone. Within three days after birth (around the time your milk comes in), these hormones drop back



(iStock)

to pre-pregnancy levels, making room for prolactin and oxytocin, the hormones that stimulate milk production.

These hormonal changes, combined with new parent-hood stressors, take a toll on your emotions in the first weeks postpartum. In fact, 80 percent of women experience the baby blues.

Baby blues occur during the early weeks after birth, usually lasting a few days or up to two weeks and include feelings of being overwhelmed, sadness, irritability,

anxiousness, or anger interspersed with feelings of happiness and contentment. The key is that your difficult emotions are mixed in with good emotions—that’s how you know it’s probably just the blues.

**(Note:** If the above symptoms persist longer than two weeks, are accompanied by intense feelings of despair, or if you have thoughts of harming yourself or your baby, you may have postpartum depression. Call your physician or the

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Postpartum Support International Hotline at 800-944-4773, or view [postpartum.net](http://postpartum.net).)

**TIPS:**

- Prioritize self-care. It's healthy to shower, leave the house alone for quick errands, etc., and ask for help so that you have time to do those things. Parenthood is sacrificial, but that doesn't mean your needs don't exist anymore. For the next few years, you will have to inconvenience someone to get your own needs met, and that's OK.
- This season is temporary and will get less intense relatively quickly even if it feels like forever while you're in it.
- After your baby is born, circle the date on your calendar that represents three weeks postpartum. By then, you should feel much better, both physically and emotionally! Circle the date another three weeks out and look

forward to how different things will be by then, too. Mentally, this helps you to not get lost in the days and to notice how quickly things change.

**New-Parent Anxiety**

Endless questions also may be running through your head: Am I swaddling my baby correctly? Is my baby eating enough? Why is my baby crying so much? Why won't my baby sleep for very long stretches?

It is normal to feel some amount of anxiety as you learn how to take care of this new little one.

**TIPS:**

- Accept that you're learning a whole new role and how to balance it all while caring for a tiny newborn and start being OK with doing it imperfectly. The way that you talk to yourself has a huge impact on mental wellness. Celebrate small victories!

- Tell someone how you're doing. If you feel like you're in over your head or you're just not yourself anymore, tell someone. Sometimes it's hard to find the words, but just saying, "I'm not OK" to your spouse, a family member, or a friend is a step toward healing and preventing things from becoming worse.

- Try to get out of the house each day. It may help burn off some pent-up, anxious energy.

**Exhaustion**

Between frequent feedings and not sleeping, it's completely natural to feel exhausted during the first few months. In fact, one survey found that 25 percent of women reported struggling with exhaustion at six months postpartum.

**TIPS:**

- Try and rest when your baby naps. This may mean leaving the dishes and laundry to pile up for a bit.

**'Life after Baby' mini-course free until May 16**

The "Life after Baby" mini-course addresses the challenges and physical changes many women experience after childbirth. Dr. Nicole Bringer, Pelvic Floor Physical Therapist and mom of two, will take you through what's normal after childbirth and what's abnormal, and will help you begin solving these problems.

The course is free until May 16!

Visit [pregnancybydesign.com/life-after-](http://pregnancybydesign.com/life-after-baby-25-tips-for-moms-with-newborns/)

[baby-25-tips-for-moms-with-newborns/](http://pregnancybydesign.com/life-after-baby-25-tips-for-moms-with-newborns/) to reserve your spot.

Other resources available at [pregnancybydesign.com](http://pregnancybydesign.com) include:

- "Beyond the Birth Plan Childbirth Course"
- "Complete Guide to Writing a Birth Plan"
- "Birth Profile Assessment"
- "40 Weeks to a Better Birth."

- Talk with your husband about sharing shifts with the baby.
- Ask for/accept help when offered.
- Eat a nutrient-dense, balanced diet.
- Limit or spread out visitors. Give yourself permission to take it easy and focus on you and your baby.

### **Breastfeeding**

Although breastfeeding is natural, it can take time to feel confident, so it's helpful to expect some challenges when you first begin.

#### **TIPS:**

- Check that your baby has a good latch. Make sure your baby's lips are fully out and his mouth is fish-faced while nursing. Usually, the cause of sore nipples is an imperfect latch.
- Be sure to let your nipples dry between feedings. Leave a little extra milk on the nipple; breast milk has natural healing properties.
- If breastfeeding hurts for more than two weeks, between feedings, or the entire time you're feeding, find a lactation consultant right away. Some LCs are more helpful than others, so it's worth trying a couple. The cost is much less than the cost of formula for a year.

### **Your post-baby body**

Many moms are shocked that they still look pregnant after delivery. It can take between six and eight weeks to return to your non-pregnant anatomy and physiology, but this doesn't mean

you will "bounce back" to your pre-pregnancy body that soon.

#### **TIPS:**

- Avoid focusing on weight loss during the first three to six months postpartum. During this time, your body requires nutrients to recover from pregnancy and childbirth.
- Be patient with your body. Eat well and exercise when you're able and you should lose the weight over time.
- It may help to think of the amazing feat you just accomplished – your body, designed by God, grew and sustained life for nine months, so it's unrealistic to expect it to "bounce back" quickly.

### **Poor bladder control**

Pregnancy puts a lot of stress on your pelvic floor muscles. These muscles stretch during delivery but afterward they may remain weak or overtighten in response.

Common pelvic floor issues include leaking urine or frequently feeling the urge to urinate (incontinence). It's such a well-known postpartum symptom that it's easy to assume it's normal and can't be remedied—but that isn't the case. Even if you aren't experiencing bladder control issues, a strong and coordinated pelvic floor may prevent incontinence down the road.

#### **TIPS:**

- You're not alone; don't feel ashamed.
- Start a bladder diary to become familiar with your toileting habits; discover trends over time and learn

what foods and drinks trigger your incontinence.

- If you continue to struggle with incontinence, seek out guidance from a pelvic floor physical therapist who will help you learn the correct exercises to strengthen and improve coordination of your pelvic floor muscles.

As new mothers, it can feel like our emotional and physical health need to take a back seat to the time-consuming work of motherhood. We believe we must simply power through so we can prove to ourselves that we are capable mothers. Some of us have waited and prayed for so long for this child to arrive that we feel selfish to be anything other than thankful. It is OK to be thankful and yet overwhelmed. Remember, your health and well-being are important and you are worth it! Take these tips to heart and make room for your recovery. ♦♦♦

Samaritan Ministries member Chandra Lattig is the creator of the Pregnancy by Design program ([pregnancybydesign.com](http://pregnancybydesign.com)) featuring many resources for expectant families. She works alongside her husband and co-creator, Ryan Lattig; Dr. Elizabeth Pearce, PsyD.; and Dr. Nicole Bringer, DPT.

The information provided in this article is for educational purposes and is not meant as medical advice. It is the opinion of the writer. The information is not meant to replace a one-on-one relationship with a qualified health care professional.

The original version of this article can be found at [pregnancybydesign.com/life-after-baby-25-tips-for-moms-with-newborns](http://pregnancybydesign.com/life-after-baby-25-tips-for-moms-with-newborns).

## Book excerpt

# Mental illness: an insider's journey

by Ruth Eleos

Samaritan member relates family's, church's, and her own struggles dealing with her bipolar disease

I had been exhibiting bizarre behavior for a few weeks, but the day I asked my husband to shoot me, he knew he had to find help.

He had two men from church drive us to a mental health treatment center. As he put his arm around me, he gently asked, "What do you see?"

Relieved he wanted to know what I was experiencing, I responded, "I see fire and brimstone raining down from Heaven, but it's bouncing off our van."

He lovingly replied, "We must have made it." I relaxed in his arms.

The peace didn't last long though. I became angry when, just before he admitted me, he said, "God will use this somehow. He is faithful."

Then, a few minutes later as I walked into my room, my new roommate yelled, "I don't like cats. Get that cat out of here!"

"That's not a cat. It's Aslan," I replied, referring to the lion from *The Chronicles of Narnia*, "and he's good. It will be OK."

She was pacified, another sign that God was with me.

### Quest for peace

It's been roughly 23 years since that experience. My husband was very patient and supportive. This

was just the beginning of a lengthy, turbulent quest for peace and stability. Over the following eight years I had to be admitted to a mental health facility three more times. The doctors first called it postpartum psychosis because it was related to giving birth. However, the condition did not go away, so they labeled it bipolar disorder.

Dealing with a mental illness is very frustrating for all involved.

One time I was standing in my parents' bedroom and thought I heard them dispatch my name over the police scanner. The police were coming to get me! I felt terrified! My mom didn't hear it, not because she wasn't in the room, but because at the time I was out of touch with reality, and it hadn't actually happened.

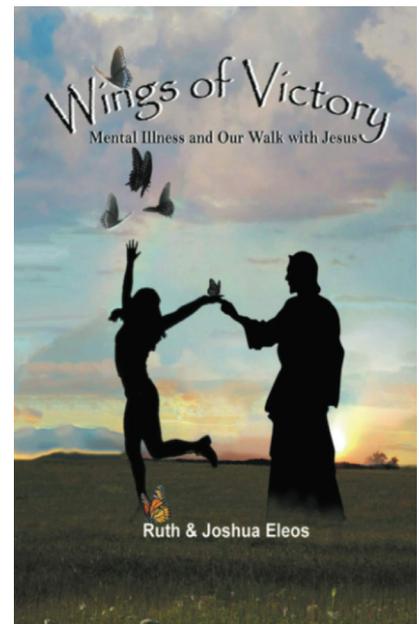
She sensed my fear and got in my face.

"You have three beautiful children who need a mother. Get better!" she said.

The next day, I was committed to a mental health facility.

If it were as easy as simply "getting better," I would have declared myself "healthy" and gone on with life. Believe me, I was trying.

In actuality, I spent the first eight



years of my illness seething with resentment, highly medicated, and angry at God and at everyone I encountered. I struggled to be a good wife and mother and wasted a lot of time playing the blame game. In one heated discussion with my husband, he blurted out in frustration, "You can't think your way out of this!"

The words stung. I had a lot of pride. Looking back, I see this as a turning point in my journey with darkness.

### Help from the Church

I was an exceptional student

when I was young and hadn't done anything to consciously destroy my body with the use of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco. In addition, I had memorized many Scripture verses in my youth. I knew God was aware of my struggle (Psalm 139:1-6), and Christ could help me face any circumstance (1 Corinthians 10:13). I was facing mental health issues and needed to deal with them. Something wasn't working well with my treatment. This is something I was struggling with and needed help for without blaming or thinking my way out.

One doctor said, "Take the medicine—the first one may not work, but we'll keep trying until something does." He even admitted it is not known why medications do or don't work, because we don't yet have enough knowledge of the brain.

Great, I got to be someone's laboratory rat!

The medicine I'm taking now helps, but it only slows down my mind so I can succeed in taking my thoughts captive. However, like most bipolar patients, consistently taking my medicine is challenging. Either life gets too boring, or I become convinced someone is out to poison me.

There have been a variety of responses from friends.

I have church friends who are on top of the health trends. They insisted my diet was partly responsible for my mental instability. I have increasingly tried to eat healthier but noticed little difference in my overall mental health.

I have other friends in the Christian community who have questioned my salvation, in essence



iStock

communicating that if I were really saved, I wouldn't be like this. Talk about feeling like Job. Seldom have I heard someone make comments that degrade the dignity of diabetics or cancer patients. Why is my condition looked down upon?

My Christian counselor learned of the sexual abuse I experienced as a child and wanted me to attend group therapy. I attended two 13-week sessions after I was first diagnosed and two more a few years ago. I learned much. Open, safe dialogue within the church community is very refreshing. Although it hasn't alleviated the war raging in my mind, it has been helpful in understanding the effects of sin on and in my life. We live in a fallen world. It stands to reason all diseases are a result of sin entering the world.

There are multitudes of variables in each person's life that make dealing with a mental condition a sensitive issue. While we must admit there is much we don't know, the Church has much it can offer: faith, hope, and love. My faith was greatly strengthened once by a man who freely admitted that life

is full of unanswered questions, but that God thought the Bible was enough to guide our actions. I don't lose sight of the hope of eternity. In Christ's presence, my whole spirit and soul and body will be blameless and at peace (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).

I still struggle with waves of mania and depression, and feel anything but "normal." But I think my husband was right and God will use this if I let Him, because I know His grace is sufficient for me and His power is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). ♦♦♦

*Wings of Victory: Mental Illness and Our Walk with Jesus* by two Samaritan Ministries members writing under the pen names of Ruth and Joshua Eleos is available online at [findusfaithful.net/wp/books](http://findusfaithful.net/wp/books).

For Ruth Eleos's suggestions on how you can respond to someone with mental illness, see [samaritanministries.org/blog/suggestions-by-samaritan-member](http://samaritanministries.org/blog/suggestions-by-samaritan-member).

Samaritan Ministries shares up to \$50,000 of bills for psychiatric care in some situations. See Guidelines VIII.B.30 for details. We also encourage those facing such situations to consider working with their local church leadership, our pastoral care team, or a certified Biblical counselor to get help. You may also want to consider seeing your medical provider or a licensed therapist.

# Foster and adoptive families can ‘shine Jesus’s light into lives’

by Kathryn Nielson, Brittany Klaus, and Michael Miller



Richard and Starla Kull and family. (Supplied photo.)

**IN JANUARY, WE** celebrated Sanctity of Human Life Month by offering some stories of adoption and fostering. This month, we share the rest of the stories.

*While these are stories of love and grace, we also realize that many situations involving adoption and foster families are full of struggles and even heartbreak. Please pray for all these situations.*

## **Richard and Starla Kull**

Missionaries Richard and Starla Kull were dealing with an empty nest when their four biological children had headed back to the States in the early 2000s from Mexico, so they decided to repopulate it. Still serving as church planters in Mexico, the Kulls adopted three children from China starting in 2004: a 1-year-old girl, then a 4-year-old boy, then a 12-year-old

girl. They moved back to the United States in 2009 when they realized the girl they had just adopted “was never going to learn English living in a Spanish-speaking country!” Starla said.

But the Kulls were just getting started taking care of children in need at that point. After settling in Casper, Wyoming, and hearing about the need for Christian foster parents, they made their home

available. Starting in 2010, they hosted 95 foster children over the next several years. Some were long term and some short term.

"One of the hardest things is sending a child on," Starla said. "We had a 2-day-old baby right out of the hospital to over a year old and would have loved to have kept her. It is hard, very hard."

But fostering and adopting have multiple rewards, too, she said.

"What God calls us to do is to stand up for the fatherless," Starla said. "It's more than being anti-abortion. 'Pro-life' means that once a mom in need has had a child, it's a huge ministry to reach out and help the mom and child."

Although the Kulls are no longer hosting foster children, they still help families that do. Starla is a court-appointed special advocate for some children. And foster families can always benefit from offers of help with meals, babysitting, or rides, depending on the circumstances.

Best of all, the Kulls were able to "shine Jesus's light into their lives." Many of their foster children went to church and AWANA and learned Bible verses. The children they adopted have grown into adults who "love the Lord and want to follow Him in everything they do."

"That's the biggest reward right there," Starla said.

### **Aaron and Sarah Cleveland**

Fostering children is something Aaron and Sarah Cleveland always felt called to do, so they did, hosting 15 children over eight years.

"We just couldn't stand the thought of kids in foster care



Aaron and Sarah Cleveland and family. (Supplied photo.)

without a good mom and dad and family life," Sarah says. "And, as Christians, we understood the command to rescue and care for the orphan. Our desire was to help local kiddos through our willingness to adopt if that's what the Lord had in store for us."

But the process has been anything but seamless as the foster care system in their state is riddled with problems, Sarah says. Foster children are often reunited with their biological families for questionable reasons by the state, she says. But those situations often can be abusive and dangerous, and children end up being taken back out of the home. A cycle of in and out of the home becomes normal.

Many of the Clevelands' foster kids were in and out of their homes and placed with Sarah and her husband on more than one occa-

sion. Because of their experience, the Clevelands have also become more involved in advocacy work and local politics, and with other foster families who have experienced some of the same challenges.

Despite the many flaws and frustrations, Sarah and Aaron have enjoyed rich blessings like the hugs the kids give them or being called mommy or daddy. They've also enjoyed watching their own children exercise compassion and mercy.

"I know we have planted seeds in their little lives for the better," Sarah says. "They have been introduced to Jesus."

### **Terry and Tricia Cooper**

Adoption was already on both of the Coopers' radars. Terry has a

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Colton Cooper holds a foster baby, with Carlee and Codee, in 2016. (Supplied photo.)

sister who had adopted and Tricia was adopted by her stepfather, who raised her. When the Coopers got married, they felt that God was leading them to adopt at some point, but they anticipated it would be “down the road,” after having biological children first.

God had different plans.

After several years of trying to have children, Terry and Tricia started bringing adoption to the forefront. They had a “very good experience” with Texas Child Protective Services, Tricia says. They were matched with 14-month-old Colton.

A few years later, they were wondering if they should adopt again when, to their doctors’ surprise, Tricia became pregnant. They were blessed with two biological children, Codee, now 15, and Carlee, now 14, in addition to Colton, who is now 22.

Even still, the desire to adopt again is there for the Coopers.

“One day we’d like to adopt a teenager,” Tricia says. “We know there’s this huge need out there for older kids to get adopted. Sometimes once they get to a certain age, it almost seems hopeless

for them because they just never connected and matched with a family.”

When a teenager is adopted, it means one less child ages out of the system, instead having a home and parents they can turn to, she adds.

“This is such a calling on our hearts, and it’s part of being pro-life,” Tricia says. “Yes, we are against abortion and we advocate human rights within the womb, but we do think there’s this huge responsibility as Christians to take care of orphans.”

### **Daniel and Stephanie Hostetler**

Daniel and Stephanie Hostetler serve as foster parents, but not with the intent to adopt. Instead, their goal is to keep a child in a relationship with his parent or parents while they get their life back on track.

“We’re not saying we would never adopt,” Stephanie says, “but right now we feel like fostering is the way we can be the hands and feet of Jesus.” She adds that one of the blessings of fostering has been that it’s something in which the entire family—they have three children, ages 9-12—participates.

In August 2020, they started fostering E., a baby boy who was 7 months old at the time.

The Hostetlers are also active in the life of E.’s mother, which is something they decided to do from the beginning, Stephanie says.

“One thing we’ve really done with E.’s mom is to encourage and affirm her in her role as a mom,” Stephanie says. One example of this is that two months after E. came to live with the Hostetlers,

they asked a photographer friend to do a “9 months old” photoshoot of E. and his mom.

“If a mom actually has a child instead of having an abortion, then we as Christians should be there to help them through the rough spots,” Stephanie says. “We’re in this for the little children that are in our home, but we’re in it for their parents, too. We can be there to help them and encourage them to make good choices if they’re willing to listen to input.

“We feel like we can be there to say, ‘Hey, you made the right choice. You had this baby. Now we’re going to help you provide a safe place for him right now so you can get your life stable, get back on your feet, and get the little guy back.’ That would be our goal—that he would be able to go back to his mom,” Stephanie adds.

One of the reasons the Hostetlers decided to foster was to say thank you to God for healing in their lives. Both Daniel and Stephanie have suffered from and then been healed of Lyme disease over the past several years.

“For us, fostering is a way of outreach that we as a family can do as a way of saying thank you to God for the blessing He has given us with our health,” Stephanie says. “It’s been so amazing for us to see how God has provided healing so that we can reach out and minister in this way in the community here.”



## Prayer for the Persecuted Church



(iStock)

### Christians sentenced for 'shaking the faith' of Muslims

Two Christians have been sentenced to two years in prison in Algeria for "shaking the faith" of Muslims, Mission Network News reports. Pastor Rachid Seighir and Nouh Hamimi are accused of making Christian literature available at the bookstore they managed. *Praise God for the opportunity for Pastor Rachid and others involved to proclaim the Gospel throughout Algeria. Pray for their safety and opportunities to evangelize.*

### Chinese Christians arrested in separate raids

Ten Christians were arrested during a March 16 raid on Renal Reformed Church in Guiyang, China, ChinaAid reports. The harassed congregation has moved to various meeting locations over the past several years after being evicted from their facility for refusing to join the state-sanctioned Three-Self Church. A house church in Chengdu was also raided on March 7 during services. *Pray for the two churches' members and any still being detained by authorities. Pray also that the congregations will be able to worship in peace.*

### Malaysian Christians allowed to use 'Allah' to refer to God

A Malaysian woman has won her 13-year fight to allow Christians the right to use the word "Allah" for "God," World Watch Monitor says. Jill Ireland started the battle when immigration officials seized eight CDs because they used the word "Allah" in a Christian context. Malaysian Christians have used the word for hundreds of years to refer to God. The ruling may allow more Bible distribution. *Thank God that Malaysian Christians have won a measure of freedom in public reference to God. Pray that it will be used to bring more Malaysians to Christ.* ♦♦



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**Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.**

**HEBREWS 13:3**

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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, and also as a reminder to encourage other believers to pray for the persecuted Church.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE PERSECUTED CHURCH:**

International Christian Concern  
[persecution.org](http://persecution.org)  
800-422-5441

World Watch Monitor  
[worldwatchmonitor.org](http://worldwatchmonitor.org)

# Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs ... **Colossians 3:16**

✂ Detach and place it on your refrigerator

## THE DOORPOST DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9; 11:18-21



Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

### COLOSSIANS 3:16

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**THERE IS A CONNECTION** between our singing and our spiritual vitality. When the Word of Christ lives in us richly, we teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Our hearts are filled with thankfulness to God, and we have power that goes beyond words alone.

We can sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to one another anytime we are with other believers—at meals, at Bible studies, with our families. We can even sing when we are alone, singing with other believers through recordings of their singing. Paul and Silas sang hymns to God in the middle of the night when they were in jail in Philippi (Acts 16:25-40). The other prisoners were listening to them and the jailer and his family became believers.

Significantly, the description of someone filled with the Holy Spirit found in Ephesians 5:18-20 is very similar to what we read in Colossians here. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit because the Word of Christ lives in us richly, we should all teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making melody with our hearts to the Lord.



For the Kingdom,  
Ray King

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Ray King". The signature is fluid and cursive.