

DECEMBER 2021

Christian Health Care Newsletter

You were made for Christmas

By David Mathis of DesiringGod.org



(David Nielsen/Samaritan Ministries)

FEW THINGS ARE more tragic than taking Christmas in stride. Its spirit and magic, that alluring sense of supernatural goodness, are not just for children but even for the grownups. Especially for the grownups. God forbid that we ever get used to Christmas.

There is something here so remarkable that pagan astrologers take to flight for the long, arduous journey westward. Something so good is in the offing that a wicked king commands the slaughter of innocents. Something so unusual that blue-collar workers, who thought they'd seen it all, are filled with great fear, then leave their flocks in haste to find this newborn—and then can't keep quiet. "And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them" (Luke 2:18).

Christ the Lord

This great first-century wonder, worth announcing with angelic host, and telling everyone who will listen, finds its heart in this: "... unto you is born

continued on page 3

Samaritan™
MINISTRIES

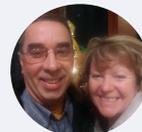
In This Issue

- 2 Noteworthy
- 4 Member Spotlight:
Brad Hopp, Teshuah Tea
- 6 Bury me in white, and other
advance care planning
- 10 Book review: *The Scalpel
and the Cross*
- 13 Member letters
- 15 Prayer for the Persecuted Church
- 16 The Doorpost
He emptied Himself

Member Letters:

'GREAT TO KNOW WE COULD
CHOOSE OUR DOCTORS'

When Scott needed shoulder surgery, we were so glad we could go to a surgery center rather than a hospital. Although he had some complications, it was great to know we could choose our doctors and that other Samaritan members were praying for us. The kind words that came in the mail along with the Shares to pay for his surgery were such an encouragement to us! It is so much better than medical insurance. We love knowing our hard-earned money goes directly to another family to help them. Thanks for all you do!



Scott and Denise
IOWA

Christian Health Care Newsletter

Rob Waldo
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Michael Miller
EDITOR

Ray King
EDITOR EMERITUS

Julia Ekstrom
MANAGING EDITOR

Andie Dill, Brittany Klaus,
and Kathryn Nielson
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Nan Doud, Tim Krahn,
and Holly Kuntz
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Ben Hawkins
DESIGN

David Nielsen
ILLUSTRATION

Follow us

 @samaritanministries

 @samaritanmin

 @samaritanmin

Contact us

newsletter@samaritanministries.org
PO Box 3618, Peoria, IL 61612
telephone: 309-689-0442
telephone (toll free): 877-764-2426

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

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Capitalization of deity pronouns was approved by permission of Crossway.

Noteworthy | From the Editors

"And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:18-19).

For many, it's been a long year. Or two. Or more. So much weighs on us from so many directions, as the cares of the world keep piling up. Sometimes it just seems like too much, no end in sight, with even our best efforts unable to sustain hearts pressed with such heavy burdens.

So, Advent comes along, reminding us that God has not forgotten us. That we're not left to our best—or worst!—efforts. That we need Jesus to rescue us and not just show us the way, but be our Way.

We're reminded of wonder. Of things worth treasuring, pondering, and telling to one another.

There's still hope. God's not done with any of us, and He is here to carry all those burdens.

May you have that sense of wonder and hope in Him this Advent.
Merry Christmas!



Rob Waldo
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Helpful Resources

► Facebook.com/groups/samaritanmin

Reach out to other members in our Facebook Group.

► Important emails

Medical Needs: needs@samaritanministries.org

Sending or receiving Shares: membership@samaritanministries.org

Your membership: membership@samaritanministries.org

► Health Resources App | Dash.SamaritanMinistries.org

- 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.

► Writers guidelines: samaritanministries.org/writers-guidelines

this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

Not only is this the advent of the long-awaited Christ, the Messiah, the specially Anointed One for whom God's people have pined and about whom prophets opined, but this is "the Lord." God Himself has come. Here, finally, after centuries of waiting, is the true Immanuel. Here is "God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

It is news too spectacular to say all at once. Day after day will pour forth speech in the life of this child. Act after act will reveal piece by piece that this human somehow shares the divine identity of Yahweh, "the Lord" of Israel and the nations. Page after page in the Gospels, story after story, will show us progressively more, that this one who is so manifestly man is also truly God.

This Word who "became flesh" (John 1:14) is one and the same Word who was in the beginning with God, and was God, and all things were made through Him (John 1:1-3). This is the great spectacle for those shepherds and magi, and it is the wonder we ourselves, who have lived our



blessed lives knowing this truth, should aspire to taste again each Christmas.

But He is not just God with us; it gets better. He has come to rescue us.

Christ the Savior

God is with us in this Christ, and it is no circus stunt for mere entertainment. This is no raw demonstration that the creator can be a creature if He wants. Rather, this marvel is for us, for our rescue from sin and all its pervasive effects, entanglements, and ruin.

"Unto you is born this day ... a Savior," heralds the angel (Luke 2:11). "You shall call His name Jesus," the messenger says to Joseph, "for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Jesus, in Hebrew "Yeshua," means "Yahweh saves." This same God sent Moses as His instrument to save His people from Egypt. He sent Joshua, and the judges, and the kings as His instruments of rescue at points in the past. And now He Himself comes, and He comes to save.

But there is more yet to be said. It gets even better.

Christ the Treasure

God Himself arrives not only to save us from sin and death but to rescue us to Himself. Christ comes, and will pay the ultimate price in suffering and death, "that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18), that risen He would be our exceeding joy (Psalm 43:4) at the bottom of this good news of great joy (Luke 2:10).

There are "higher ends," according to Puritan Thomas Goodwin, than His being God-in-the-flesh



and His coming to save God's people. All the benefits achieved by His life and death "are all far inferior to the gift of His person unto us, and much more the glory of His person itself. His person is of infinite more worth than they all can be of" (quoted in *Jesus Christ*, 3).

Jesus Himself is the Great Joy that makes all the attendant joys of our salvation so great. The risen Christ is the treasure hidden in the field (Matthew 13:44). He is the pearl of great price (Matthew 13:45-46). He is not just God with us, here to save us, but He Himself is our greatest joy, the preeminent Treasure, who will satisfy our human souls forever like only the divine-human Christ can.

Christ the Glory

But Christmas doesn't terminate on our enjoyments. The herald is joined by the heavenly host: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!" (Luke 2:14).

Call it Christmas Hedonism, if you will. The Joy He came to bring in His own person as the God-man

continued on page 14

Member Spotlight

Brad Hopp: Teshuah Tea

by Kathryn Nielson



Member Brad Hopp

TeshuahTea.com
[Twitter @Teshuahtea](https://twitter.com/Teshuahtea)
[Facebook @teshuahtecompany](https://facebook.com/teshuahtecompany)

[Pinterest bradleyhopp](https://pinterest.com/bradleyhopp)
[Instagram @teshuahtecompany](https://instagram.com/teshuahtecompany)
[YouTube Teshuah Tea Company](https://youtube.com/TeshuahTeaCompany)

ENTREPRENEUR BRAD HOPP of Lawton, Iowa, is on a mission to help rescue girls from sex trafficking in Asian countries through his online shop, Teshuah Tea. So far, 63 have been rescued.

What he does: Available through Teshuah Tea are coffee, tea, bracelets, and accessories—products Brad has purchased from the rescued girls outright. The teas offered are world-class Pu'er teas in loose-leaf, ball, and cake form, with rare Thai and Pu'er coffees also available. The handmade bracelets are stunning.

And the rescued girls creating the products are the ones who benefit.

"We don't negotiate with the girls," Brad says, "Whatever price they want is what we pay."

Brad then turns around, sells the products, and gives 50 percent of the proceeds back to Teshuah House to help cover the cost of caring for the girls.

Before Teshuah Tea: Before starting Teshuah Tea, Brad was a small-scale farmer and delivered fire trucks. In 2017, he was in a serious tractor accident that crushed his pelvis and pinned



Brad Hopp (Supplied photo)

him under the tractor (see "Why Samaritan Ministries" on page 5).

Once recovered, he was back on the road driving and delivering fire trucks, but he had also become aware of the plight of human trafficking victims. The constant reminders through signage at truck stops offering help for victims only

fueled his desire to help in some way. Coupled with the stories he had heard from a friend named Andrew, a missionary working to rescue trafficking victims in Asia, was enough to lead him to leave the fire truck delivery business and start one that would benefit these victims in some way.

Brad had met Andrew several years earlier when the latter spoke at Brad's church about his mission work with the underground church and leper villages. Andrew had started a restaurant in Asia next to a university and began teaching English with the Bible as his textbook. Eventually he needed help running his restaurant and hired two girls. Those two came to Christ, and both had a heart for seeing girls freed from sex trafficking.

How it works: Through a well-orchestrated strategy, Andrew and his team go into karaoke clubs, a common location for sex trafficking, and rescue those victims willing to

go, which, when the escape is offered, is 100 percent. Through the years, Andrew has also led brothel owners to Christ. They in turn not only free the girls they had enslaved but also help rescue victims they know through their networks.

Rescue is just one part. The cost of a rescue mission, in which Andrew's team goes in and frees the girls from their captors, is \$500. Once the girls are rescued, immediate aftercare is required at a cost of \$2,000 for clothes, toiletries, and medical exams.

Because foster children typically age out of the system in that region at 14 years old, many of them find

themselves trafficked at a young age, some as young as 11. When they come to Teshuah House, they're in it for the long haul, anywhere from eight to 10 years.

Currently, between two houses, 41 girls are being cared for at a cost of over \$20,000 a month or just under \$250,000 a year, which includes rent on the house, salaries for the two women who run the homes, utilities, food, ongoing toiletries, education, and medical and travel expenses.

Teshuah's support: Part of the healing process is to educate and teach the girls skills to be able to

continued on page 14

Why Samaritan Ministries?

Brad and Megan Hopp chose Samaritan Ministries for their health care needs in 2014 because of the uniqueness of the ministry's member-to-member sharing.

A farmer and truck driver before starting Teshuah Tea, which sells products to support the rescue of trafficked women in Asia, Brad got firsthand experience receiving Shares in 2017 after a tractor accident that he describes as a series of miracles.

After the tractor tipped over with Brad on it, he was pinned underneath with a rear tire turning on his pelvis. Despite this, he was able to blindly find the axle, push it off his body, and crawl out from under 7,800 pounds of tractor, moving about 7 or 8 feet away from the sparking battery that was threatening to turn into a full-blown fire, all with a broken pelvis.

Not the least of the miracles involved was a substantial discount he received—over

\$131,000—and Samaritan members were there to help with the balance of the bills.

"I really appreciated how Samaritan helped us negotiate the bills down and navigate the maze of hospital finance," Brad says. "Another thing I really appreciate about Samaritan is how they ask to pray with you at the end of calls."

The Hopps, with their six children, originally were members of another health care sharing ministry. They joined Samaritan because 11 out of 12 months' Shares "go directly to a member," Brad says.

"That was the biggest thing."

The member-to-member connection also struck a chord with Brad.

"I like the whole card and letter thing. It's really cool," he says, recalling the "basket full of notes" he received with Shares from fellow members. ♦♦♦

Bury me in white, and other advance care planning

Making end-of-life decisions before they're necessary helps our loved ones to have the information they need as they make decisions for us



by Kristina Twitty
of Decision Care
Advocates

PLANNING FOR CARE at the end of our lives due to old age, illness, or accident is often something overlooked until it is necessary. Unless death comes suddenly, many end-of-life decisions are made while coping with the crushing grief that comes with facing the imminent loss of a beloved family member.

As believers, we can face death with a deep and peaceful hope. We can anticipate seeing our Lord Jesus face to face and trading our earthly bodies made of dust for our heavenly bodies that will never wear out, get sick, hurt, break down, or die. Jesus promised to never leave us—ever, not in sickness or death—but assured us that He has gone to prepare a place for us (John 14:2-3). Though death is still an enemy, it has been defeated. Jesus is coming again for us, His bride, just as He promised: “I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (John 14:3). In the tenderness of saying goodbye,

we must remind ourselves of this truth so that we may feel the peace of God that passes understanding, which guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, especially in those last months, weeks, or days (Philippians 4:7).

We typically approach end-of-life care by thinking about medical realities before spiritual ones. But it is our theology that determines how we live and how we die, how we should use medicine, and when we can decline further treatment, doing “medicine in a theological context rather than doing theology in a medical context.”¹

End-of-life care thus begins in the day-to-day life of the Christian community and not simply within the hustle and bustle and technical expertise of the medical ward at the end of our lives. End-of-life care begins where we are right now. As we concentrate on our spiritual formation in the present time, we begin to prepare ourselves for that time when suffering and pain form the tragic garland that crowns our final experience.²

Those spiritual considerations give shape to practical consid-

erations, which allow us to give guidance to our loved ones as they make decisions for our care or as they give us guidance for their care. The following recommendations may help you organize your thoughts and make your wishes known. Doing so will bless those overseeing your care.

Do first

Staying organized is always helpful in bringing peace of mind to all concerned. Contacts, important policies, bank accounts, assets, and prepaid arrangements for funeral and burial should be collected into a notebook as they become part of life.

Start now. This is one task that you will not want your loved ones to have to manage later when they are in the middle of making end-of-life decisions or when you face a difficult diagnosis.

Three-ring binders are great, with a table of contents to note which divided section holds what. This should also include a list of contacts to be notified in case of emergency or death, subscriptions for magazines, newspapers, account numbers and passwords, workplace contacts, pet care information, and the name of the



(iStock)

attorney who holds your will (if you have one).

You first

Before you attempt to help someone else make their plans for end-of-life care, set aside time to think through your own wishes and answers to the questions provided in these resources. Not only will this make you more familiar with the decisions that need to be made, you will also find yourself more tender-hearted toward those you wish to assist.

Questions to ask

Critical medical decisions are often made in a rush at the end of our lives by people who barely know us. Discussing our wishes with

loved ones ahead of time provides the best opportunity for the care we desire. Some decisions are technical, and some are not. The following questions are good to ask yourself and/or your loved ones when beginning an end-of-life plan:

- Who will be your health care advocate?
- What are the most important things to you about your care?
- If your heart stops, do you want cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)?
- Under what circumstances would you want a feeding tube and for how long?
- Under what circumstances

would you agree to be put on a ventilator?

- Do you want to be an organ donor?
- Would you like to be at home for your last weeks or days?
- How would you like to spend your last weeks or days?
- Who do you want with you if you are in critical condition?
- What will your plans for burial and funeral be?

Naming your advocate

Choosing your health care advo-

continued on page 8

cate will be the most important decision you make. Your health care advocate or surrogate will be responsible for carrying out your decisions related to these situations, so it's important to spend some time discussing them. All the wishes you have can be insisted upon by your advocate when you are unable to advocate for yourself. This is not the person you designate to care for your personal effects and belongings, such as your home, car, bank account, and pets. That's your "power of attorney." It is best to select two different people to handle health care decisions and financial affairs. Choose one for each responsibility. For example, asking two or more siblings to share a responsibility will complicate your care and their relationship.

Do you want a DNR?

A "do-not-resuscitate" (DNR) or "do not attempt resuscitation" (DNAR) order directs your care should your heart stop for any reason. This decision begins a "conveyor belt"³ of more decisions to be made. If CPR is successful, and you decide to be "full code" and have everything possible done for your condition, you will likely be placed in an intensive care unit. Depending on your circumstances and location, you may wish to be given all help available to keep you breathing and keep your heart beating.

However, if you instead decide that you wish for your family and physicians to "let you go" if you go into cardiac arrest, you will need to sign a DNR order.

It will take courage to ask your doctor to be clear with you about

You can begin end-of-life care right now and bless those who will be overseeing that care.

what you can expect if you sign a DNR and if you do not. It's always best to make these decisions ahead of time for the sake of all involved.

Tools to help

There are many conversation starters to choose from when making advance care plans. Whether you are the one making plans, or the one encouraging a discussion, time is a gift and these decisions even more so as they can prevent distraction from the precious last moments you spend with your loved one. Considering the complexity of your current or future circumstances, outlining the specifics for your medical wishes may seem impossible. Speaking rather of what is important to you, who you want with you, where you want to be, and how you want to live your last days will give direction to those supporting you at that time.

Patty Webster with The Conversation Project notes that speaking of "what matters to you" instead of "what's the matter with you" will lead to a better-quality care plan.⁴ The success of such a plan begins with when and where to have that conversation. This is not just about having a legal document, Webster reminds us. Conversations carry

far more value than words in black and white as you or your loved one advocates for care.

Here are some specific tools that can help guide your planning:

Prepare for Your Care (PrepareForYourCare.org): Using this tool, you will be able to designate your Medical Decision Maker and note your preferences for treatment, location of your last days, who you desire to be with you, and what kinds of decisions you would like made for you in case of an emergency. For example, would you want CPR administered if your heart stopped, or would you want a DNR order? Specific wishes can be noted within these pages, and they offer rules by state for how to legalize your written wishes. (Note of caution: "Right-to-die" laws are different in each state. While Prepare for Your Care does not directly advocate for the option of physician-assisted suicide, it recommends that you write your wishes on page 10 of the Directive and let your loved ones and medical provider know what you would consider a "not-good quality of life" for you.)

The Conversation Project (TheConversationProject.org): As mentioned above, quality of life is the focus of this tool, setting aside the technical complexity of medical and clinical wishes. A big-picture plan rather than a specific medical scenario is the approach for what matters to you. Once begun, this is meant to be a tool that encourages updates over the years with changing circumstances. Anyone age 18 and older should have a plan in place in case of accident or illness. You will find guides to selecting

or serving as a medical advocate and tools for having an organized conversation through a small workbook called “What Matters to Me” to help navigate serious illness. “The Conversation Starter Guide” is also very helpful to begin a conversation with mom or dad. Their quick guide for what to do now has been updated to include a little information about COVID-19. (Keep in mind, their recommendations follow CDC guidelines for masks and distancing.)

Five Wishes (FiveWishes.org):

With two pages of introduction available on their website, Five Wishes at Home is a project of Aging with Dignity. Their tools begin with an assumption of compliance for “stay-at-home” orders and compliance with “social distancing” as well. They begin by asking who you trust to make your decisions for you and what treatments you want for life support or comfort. This is a more specific tool to navigate important aspects of the process of wrapping up a life on earth. Not only does it encourage discussion of your treatment, it also asks who you want with you and what items bring you comfort, what conversations you want to have, and important things loved ones need to know from you—last words, forgiveness, words of love.

Good To Go: A Guide to Preparing for the End of Life: Jo Myers’ book outlines “The ABCs of Death and Dying” in a practical and humorous way. With a refreshing perspective on the normal things people face when helping loved ones say goodbye, she provides a thoughtful, step-by-step guide.

Saving your documents

Once you have created advance-planning documents, you’ll need to make sure they’re saved and accessible. Here are two practical solutions for that.

- Make copies and give to your physician and family members and tape a well-marked one to an obvious place (like your fridge).
- Select an online service such as MyDirectives.com to upload your paperwork to. Provide the login information to the appropriate loved ones. Revisit this document once a year. Make sure it still reflects your wishes or those of mom or dad. Be sure to share any updates and changes with physicians, loved ones, and those most likely to be with you in the case of an emergency.

As you plan and prepare for the inevitable, no matter what brings your last days to pass, many things will be unimportant in the end. Little things may matter more than

you realize. The bride of Christ must be ready for His return or His calling us home.

Faithfulness to Him is most important. As for me, please bury me in white. ♦♦♦

1Swinton, J., Payne, R., & Hauerwas, S. (2009). *Living Well and Dying Faithfully: Christian Practices for End-of-Life Care* (1st ed.). Eerdmans.

2Ibid, xxiv

3A fabulous book on this subject is *Extreme Measures, Finding a Better Path to the End of Life*, by Dr. Jessica Nutik Zitter. Spanning two decades of work in the intensive care unit and then palliative care, after realizing she was overtreating patients to the point of abusing them. With a kindness toward her patients, their stories, and her profession, she gives an inside look at the medical mindset to “cure no matter what” she often found in the ICU.

4“Psychology of Aging” podcast with Dr. Regina Koepp, (Accessed August 24, 2021).

Kristina Twitty is a member of Samaritan Ministries. Founder of Decision Care Advocates, she offers support and advocacy for those navigating medical treatment and care planning. Her degrees are from Covenant Theological Seminary and Trinity Graduate School. Contact Kristina at DecisionCareAdvocates.com for customized care.



(iStock)

‘The Scalpel and the Cross: A Theology of Surgery’

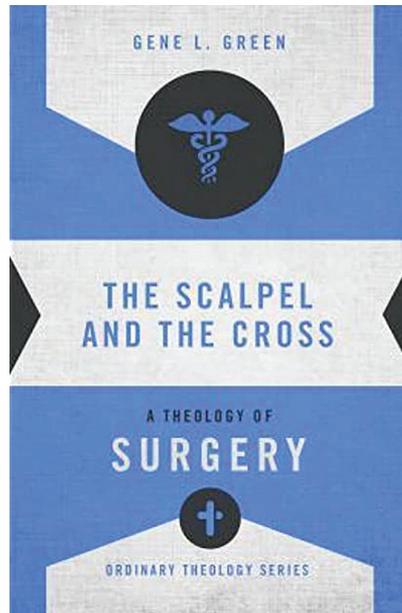
Reviewed by Greg Feulner

The Scalpel and the Cross: A Theology of Surgery by Gene L. Green (Zondervan, 96 pages)

SOME PEOPLE ARE unnerved when they hear the word “theology.” Isn’t theology hopelessly involved and distant, a technical discipline irrelevant to everyday life appropriately reserved for out-of-touch academics who like to argue over how many angels can dance on the head of a pin?

Theology, many conclude, takes a personal and living God and reduces Him to cold, sterile concepts. Nothing could be further from the truth. Theology is simply “words that express thoughts about God,” writes New Testament scholar and former missionary Gene L. Green in *The Scalpel and the Cross: A Theology of Surgery*. In fact, “[f]or the Christian, life and theology cannot be separated” as all Christians have thoughts about God. Green explores what God’s Word has to say about surgery and why that should matter to us as God’s people. Green brings not only his expertise in the New Testament to the table but also his own personal reflections on having open-heart surgery and how that relates to our faith.

Surgery and theology are not two ideas we typically think of



together, but the Bible really has much to say about the terrifying, sometimes routine event of surgery, and we would do well to consider it. Surgery reminds us of our own frailty and brokenness in a fallen world and of our desperate need for something beyond temporary physical healing: spiritual healing and the ultimate renewal of all things. Surgery affords us

Christ’s Body recognizes when one of its members is in need.

opportunity for reflection on the hope of the resurrection when our bodies will no longer suffer under the curse of sin.

The structure of Green’s book follows the progression of the surgical process, from the day before surgery all the way through to recovery.

In the first chapter, “Reflections From the Day Before,” Green begins with this straightforward declaration: “Tomorrow they cut.”

Despite being an avid cyclist and an otherwise healthy individual, Green’s aortic valve has a calcium buildup, and it needs to be replaced. Numerous practical considerations flood his mind going into surgery: Who will take care of things while I’m in the hospital? How long will the recovery time be and what will be needed after surgery? Is my will in order in the event things do not turn out as planned? Did I make the right decision going with the bioprosthetic valve or should I have chosen the mechanical valve instead?

The approaching surgery arouses consideration of everyday things we easily overlook such as the vital importance of community and our dependence on others. The prayers of others are a great encouragement in times of uncertainty and distress. Meals, offers of

help with chores around the house, the kindness (or unkindness) of the hospital staff, and the assurance the surgeon offers through his knowledge and years of experience all work together to contribute to the experience the patient has.

Here we see the particular importance of being part of a local church. God does not save us into a vacuum. He transfers us from the kingdom of darkness into a life-giving, Spirit-filled community of believers who exist to glorify God by encouraging and edifying one another as Christ's Body. Just as one among us undergoes surgery to find healing for their earthly body, Christ's Body recognizes when one of its members is in need and comes alongside to be the conduits of the life-giving Spirit we all share. Interwoven throughout Green's book is this idea of community as the outworking of the Gospel. The witness of Christ's Church is on glorious display when

she loves her own in obedience to the Great King who is sovereign over life and death. Theology has much to say about surgery.

At some point, it's important to note that in reflecting upon ordinary life and theology, we are not forcing connections between Scripture and everyday life where connections do not truly exist. The purpose of such an exercise is to explore further what God has to say about every aspect of our lives, as His creatures, and to receive instruction and encouragement from that. In the surgeon, for instance, we see that he has very specific instructions for the patient going into surgery, instructions which promote life and reduce risk based on his wisdom and expertise. In the same way, we are called to trust the Great Physician and to obey His instruction for our lives. The difference here is that this instruction finds its source not in the wisdom of an expert in

his field but in the infinite wisdom of an Almighty God laid out for us in the pages of Scripture. Even when we do not fully understand (or understand at all!), we listen to the surgeon. How much more should we trust in the wisdom of an all-knowing Creator? The surgeon brings healing and restoration to a broken body, and we praise God for the abilities and resources which make that possible. But the healing the surgeon offers is only physical and temporary. This reminds us of the greatness of God's healing work when He takes a person who is dead in his sin and makes him alive eternally.

The surgeon has compassion on the one suffering as Jesus had compassion on us. In turn, we are reminded to have compassion for others. Here, the surgery itself reminds us of the cross. "Surgery is a violent act carried out in compas-

continued on page 12



(iStock)

sion." In this violent and intrusive act (the cutting of a knife into flesh), the goal is not destruction but restoration. Much like the Gospel, the means of bringing healing and restoration entails suffering (Isaiah 53:5, John 18:11). As such, surgery "offers a glimmer of the good things to come with the final advent of His Kingdom that rules over all creation," Green writes.

Further reflection takes us beyond the basic elements of surgeon and surgery. It can be easy to overlook, but should not be forgotten, that there is an entire medical team working with the surgeon to ensure the surgery is successful, a hospital staff scheduling appointments, working hard to keep rooms and utensils clean for use and everything in order. We could consider the town that wanted a hospital in the first place and made the surgery possible to the individuals who designed and built the hospital; all these things are at play in every surgery that happens in every hospital around the world. "Each surgery enjoys the support of countless people who facilitate this specialized endeavor." We could go further back to the beginning of the hospital as a concept which came about through the early Church seeking to live out the teachings of Jesus. Surgery involves more than a surgeon and a patient.

Surgery, unfortunately, does not always go as planned. Green devotes a chapter of reflection on surgeries that end in the worsening of the condition or even death. Here the importance of community is most crucial, especially in the simple but tangible act of being

Surgery and theology are not two ideas we typically think of together, but the Bible really has much to say about the terrifying, sometimes routine event of surgery, and we would do well to consider it. Surgery reminds us of our own frailty and brokenness in a fallen world and of our desperate need for something beyond temporary physical healing: spiritual healing and the ultimate renewal of all things.

present with those who suffer. Jesus asked that His disciples stay awake with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane before His trial and execution (Matthew 26:38). Luke was a comfort to Paul simply by being present with him (2 Timothy 4:11).

The patient undergoing surgery needs the prayer of others and the support of his church, family, and friends—even just their presence can be a blessing. Green cites research to show that "[s]ocial support in all its aspects contributes to a person's recovery after surgery. Solitude is crushing, while in community we are strong." Helping a patient's family with a task or errand, for instance, relieves stress for that family member and frees them to devote more direct attention to a loved one. Sending an encouraging card brightens one's day. Surgery can be intimidating. Helping a loved one think through different options can turn an overwhelming problem into something more manageable. This is why we as the Church exist. Everyone's

gifts can and should be used to lift up the Body for God's glory.

Not all readers will agree with some of Green's views. In his chapter on surgery and justice, for instance, he praises the Affordable Care Act. But the uniqueness of a book that offers a theological perspective on surgery from a New Testament scholar with his own personal experience can be useful for anyone wanting to consider ways surgery might intersect with our faith.

Surgery and theology. These and other "ordinary" things are not topics we normally put together, but if God calls us to take every thought captive and to devote all of ourselves to Him, maybe that needs to change. ♦♦♦

Greg Feulner is a Communications Specialist for Samaritan Ministries.

Member Letters

Carolyn **SOUTH CAROLINA**



My words might fail to adequately convey my robust enthusiasm for this model of health care provision! I am so thankful for the courage and vision of Ted Pittenger and the others who founded Samaritan Ministries. Having the freedom to spend our resources for health care as we deem best is not only vital to encouraging financial responsibility for our choices but also encourages us to make better and healthier choices! I would rather spend my monthly budget on the routine things that promote health than on outrageous health insurance premiums from which I rarely received any commensurate benefit.

The process of directly giving and receiving help from each other is quite remarkable, and yet so simple! This year I have benefitted from receiving, and I am humbled and grateful. It takes courage to step away from that broken system as we all fear some unexpected expensive health care bill. It has been freeing to no longer be part of health insurance. Our God promised to provide for our needs before insurance was anybody's idea. I have learned to have courage and peace in this health care model as I trust Him to work it out.

One of my favorite quotes is from George Mueller: "God has 10,000 different ways at 10,000 different times to provide what you need. Always hope in the Lord." I have found that to be 100% true. It gives God such joy and glory when we trust Him—and what a testimony to the world around us! The old health care system is broken. I am so grateful each month to read in the Newsletter about the godly men and women who are implementing God's solutions so that we have better choices! Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of the Samaritan Ministries family.

Rhonda **OREGON**



I have been a member of Samaritan Ministries for several years now and I would be in a very sad way had I not joined. My husband is on disability and I am retired with a pension, so medical insurance is too expensive to fit our budget. We would be financially strapped if not for Samaritan Ministries. Regular, routine stuff isn't too bad, but sudden ones are killers! Thanks to Samaritan Ministries, their wonderful members, and their many prayers, I can live my retirement years with less stress.

is the joy that aligns with, and fulfills, the great purpose of all creation. Christmas brings the electricity of joy that runs along the grid of all reality.

Goodwin continues: God's "chief end was not to bring Christ into the world for us, but us for Christ ... and God contrived all things that do fall out, and even redemption itself, for the setting forth of Christ's glory." Mark Jones spells out so helpfully what it means that Jesus is not just Lord and Savior, but also Treasure:

The glory of Christ is not an appendix. ... As it is the culmination of all we can say about his person and work, so his glory provides the most basic



reason for saying it, in that it is the basis for and the fullness of our eternal enjoyment of Him. ... we are not speaking the whole truth if we make Christ's personal glory subservient to our salvation. (*Jesus Christ*)

This child of Christmas is more than Lord. He is even more than Savior. He is our great Treasure, and in "our eternal enjoyment of Him" is His glory and the end for which God created the world. Christmas is not finally about His birth for our salvation, but our existence for His glory.

You were made for the Great Joy of Christmas. ♦♦♦

David Mathis is executive editor for DesiringGod.org and pastor at Cities Church. He is a husband, father of four, and author of *Humbled: Welcoming the Uncomfortable Work of God* (2021). Article originally posted at desiringgod.org/articles/you-were-made-for-christmas. ©2014 DesiringGod.org. Reprinted by permission.

support themselves. Through working at a teahouse that the team opened for them to run, they learn business skills. They also learn to engrave, create jewelry, and harvest tea and coffee. The proceeds from the products the girls create and sell in the teahouse are theirs to keep. Some have saved it up and used it to further their education, buy their own place to live, and move on with their lives after graduating from the program.

One former brothel operator owns tea and coffee farms and allows the girls to come harvest on his farms and keep what they harvest for sale. He also matches Teshuah Tea Co. profits and donations.

Growth in the Lord: The original

Teshuah House has overflowed. There are now two homes housing approximately 20 girls each who have been rescued from trafficking. Each home is run by a house mom—the two girls Andrew hired to work in his restaurant years ago. The assistant house moms are themselves rescued trafficking victims.

"The thing that thrills me the most," Brad says, "is to know the hell and torture these girls went through is over and to know the power of the Gospel—and that they know the power of the Gospel—because they've seen it firsthand through the transformation in their own lives and of those in the house. They've experienced that dynamite power, and the power released on this country

through these 40-plus girls is going to be amazing."

To date, 63 girls have been rescued through Teshuah House. "Sixty-three souls that are important to God that can turn around and be that dynamite power," Brad says. "They're going to be world changers."

It's almost impossible to track the actual numbers of human trafficking victims, but it is believed that 40.3 million people are trapped in modern-day slavery, according to the International Labour Organization.

"We can make a difference," Brad says. ♦♦♦

Kathryn Nielson is a Communications Specialist for Samaritan Ministries.

Prayer for the Persecuted Church



Morteza Mashhoudkari and Ahmad Sarparas were among three arrested during a prayer meeting in Iran. (ChristianResponse.org)

Iranian agents arrest three during prayer meeting

Three Christian converts were arrested during a prayer meeting in the Iranian city of Rasht on September 5, International Christian Concern (ICC) reports. Intelligence agents detained Morteza Mashhoudkari, Ayoub Poor Rezazade, and Ahmad Sarparas for interrogation. Morteza and Ahmad were transferred to Lakan Prison on September 18, then released on bail three days later. However, Ayoub's whereabouts are unknown to his family and friends. *Pray for Ayoub's well-being and dismissal of charges against the three men.*

Hindu priest calls for beheadings of Christians

A Hindu priest called for the beheading of Christians recently, ICC says. During a rally, the swami urged targeted killings of Christians involved in alleged forced conversions of Hindus. Many Christians fear the comments will spark a new wave of anti-Christian violence in the Chhattisgarh state. *Pray for safety and vigilance among Christians in that area of India and for the conversion of Hindus and others.*

Persecution increase predicted for Sahel region of Africa

Christian organizations are concerned that persecution is going to increase in the Sahel region of Western Africa. Voice of the Martyrs-Canada CEO Floyd Brobbel warned that the Islamic State and al-Qaeda are gaining strength in the region, putting Christians at risk. *Pray for protection of Christ followers in the Sahel and that many will choose to stay in the region.*



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

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 and action.

Each month, we will provide updates and offer prayer points gleaned from a variety of sources. Please use them in your prayer time and possibly to seek other ways, small or large to supplement our prayers with action.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE PERSECUTED CHURCH:

International Christian Concern
persecution.org
800-422-5441

World Watch Monitor
worldwatchmonitor.org

... though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped ... **Philippians 2:6**

THE DOORPOST

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9; 11:18-21



... Who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

PHILIPPIANS 2:6-7

Pause, and think about it.

God the Son, in full agreement with His heavenly Father, chose to set aside His rightful advantages as the Creator and Sustainer of everything and lowered Himself to become a mere human being. Some of us have heard the Christmas story so often that we may fail to remember how astonishing this is.

Shortly after Creation, our original parents chose to disobey our Creator, bringing condemnation on themselves and all their descendants, and every one of us has continued in this rebellion. God would have been justified in immediately condemning and destroying us all, but He chose instead to offer us, His rebellious creatures, a way to be rescued.

God the Father chose to offer His Beloved Son, who lowered Himself to become one of us so He could make a way for us to be reconciled to Him. God the Son, the Creator of everything (Colossians 1:5-20), became a humble baby in a humble family in humble circumstances. As we celebrate the birth of our great Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, pause—and think about it.



For The Kingdom,
Ray King

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