

Classic/Basic Sharing Summary*

Member Households: 82,902

Bills: \$36,301,189

Shares: \$33,352,508

Samaritan™ Classic™ experienced a sharp increase in total number of bills submitted in August, causing a large increase in the total amount shared this month. Early sharing of Needs in previous months has minimized the effects of August's bill submission increase. While most likely a temporary spike, bill submissions for Samaritan Classic will continue to be closely monitored.

Conversely, Samaritan™ Basic™ enjoyed a monthly surplus, allowing Needs to be shared ahead. This surplus will help insulate Basic from large spikes in bill submissions similar to the one Samaritan Classic just experienced.

Samaritan members and staff work hard to achieve medical savings on behalf of the membership. Since its inception two years ago, the Provider Relations team has saved Samaritan members over \$50 million through direct negotiations with providers.

The fair-price reward program and Bluebook CareConnectSM service continue to save almost \$550,000 per month. Check out Healthcare Bluebook™ via your Dash account to help you achieve a fair price as well. Using this tool assists the ministry in keeping Shares lower and qualifies you for the \$250 fair-price reward!

We will continue to work diligently on cost savings, monitor bill submission trends, and pray for God's provision and wisdom.

*The monthly sharing summary will now include figures from all three programs, as all active members who were former participants of Samaritan™ Given™ are now in Samaritan™ Classic or Samaritan™ Basic. Due to differences in sharing timelines, these numbers combine Given's sharing for August with Classic's and Basic's sharing for September. The Shares amount also includes managed sharing between programs.

Win a copy of *Heart Scribe Vibes*

Win a copy of Micah Dillon's latest book *Heart Scribe Vibes* by going to bit.ly/heartscribebook or scanning the QR code at right. Micah is featured in this month's Member Spotlight. Entries are open until noon CDT October 14. Samaritan Ministries staffers and members of their immediate household are not eligible to win.



This Month's Newsletter

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We're hiring at Samaritan Ministries!

Samaritan has open positions—from working with other members and helping potential members to creating material, developing solutions, and more! Join our nearly 400 staff members in our mission to redeem health care by helping the Body of Christ love one another through sharing each other's health care burdens. If you're interested in pursuing a career at a Best Christian Workplace, go to SamaritanMinistries.org/Careers to learn more about our open onsite and remote opportunities.

Member Connect is being discontinued

In 2017, we launched Member Connect, a forum in the Samaritan Dashboard to help fulfill our mission by connecting members all over the world.

However, we believe Member Connect is no longer serving Samaritan members well. Utilization continues to decrease and, as the technical platform that Member Connect is built on is nearing end of life, we have decided that, rather than spend resources finding a replacement platform, we will discontinue Member Connect.

Therefore, Member Connect will no longer be available in your Dashboard as of November 1, 2022. We hope to provide an improved communication platform for members to connect with each other in the future.

While Member Connect is going away soon, we are hopeful that Samaritan members will continue to encourage one another, pray for one another, and provide helpful input in navigating health care as Samaritan members through the Samaritan Ministries Community Facebook Group (facebook.com/groups/samaritanmin). Why Facebook? Our research has shown that Facebook is a social media platform that members are most likely to use to interact with one another, so we are glad to provide this Facebook Group as a way to facilitate member-to-member connections through the services that Facebook already offers to any individual.

Don't forget to vote in the Board of Directors election!

We're electing two members this year. Please take time to read the candidates' bios and answers to questions as well as encouragement from Founder and Chairman of the Board Ted Pittenger here: samaritanministries.org/candidates

Please also be aware that the link to vote was sent to the email address you use to log into Dash and is from vote@samaritanministries.org. Be sure to add vote@samaritanministries.org to your contact list so that messages from this address reach your inbox and to check your spam folder if you do not see the email in your inbox.

Online voting concludes October 14.

October 2022 Save to Share™ Needs

- **Morgan** (7), son of Scott and Julie, was treated in the ICU for burns on 30 percent of his body, including his face and upper body. The skin grafting is nearly complete.
- **Homer** had triple-bypass surgery to treat several blocked arteries.
- **Kelly** is being treated for stage 4 breast cancer and fluid around her heart.
- **Susan** is being treated for kidney failure that was caused by abnormally high calcium levels. Please pray that a transplant will not be required.
- **Valerie** is being treated for breast cancer.
- **Tammy** was diagnosed with breast cancer.
- **Tawnya** is being treated for acute lymphoblastic leukemia.
- **James** was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer after they found a tumor that was blocking liver function.

These Needs were assigned to members who participate in Save to Share™ for Needs greater than \$250,000. They have already been shared, so no additional giving is necessary. They are listed to encourage all members to pray.

OCTOBER 2022

Christian Health Care Newsletter



(David Nielsen/Samaritan Ministries)

Prices: powerful new tools for health care cost containment

by Steve Bassett, Director of Strategic Services

Last in a series. To read the first three installments of this cost-containment series, see bit.ly/smi-cost-1, bit.ly/smi-cost-2, and bit.ly/smi-cost-3.

WE HAVE ANOTHER powerful cost-containment tool to share from a surprising source—the federal government.

It's turning out to be a challenging year to be a hospital CFO. Too many costs and not enough revenue are setting the stage for prices to resume their steep, upward trend in the season ahead. Hospitals are absorbing the highest level of general price inflation in more than 40 years while also granting significant pay increases to nurses due to staffing shortages. In addition, overall inflation, which briefly was higher than health care inflation, is now set to start affecting the health care sector.¹ Given the

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Samaritan™
MINISTRIES

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Member Letter:

'GRATEFUL TO EACH MEMBER'

Samaritan Ministries has been a blessing from the start of our membership six years ago. Our second daughter was born with Down syndrome. This was a surprise and was initially devastating news. I was fearful for my daughter's health condition. When on the phone with a Samaritan staff person discussing our medical bills, the team member stopped to pray with me, for me, and for my daughter. Tears began to fall from the love and comfort felt at that moment. At the sweet age of 2, our daughter fills our hearts with hope and joy. Thank you!

Holly
NORTH CAROLINA

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Noteworthy | From the Editors

This month's newsletter offers yet more wisdom and insight for Samaritan Ministries members as we navigate health care, especially in inflationary times.

Starting on page 1, Steve Bassett, Samaritan's Office of Strategic Services director, pulls together a variety of outside resources that we as members can use to get fair pricing on health care. These resources are from a surprising source, too: the federal government.

Further, on page 12, Chief Purpose Officer Anthony Hopp's devotional on "Feeding the 5,000" helps us to see health care needs through a spiritual perspective. Ultimately, we must depend on the Lord to guide and provide for us in everything, whether it's health care, food, family needs, or the very air we breathe.

Let's be sure to do everything we can under God's guidance. "The steps of a man are established by the LORD, when He delights in his way ..." (Psalm 37:23).

Michael Miller
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](https://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

emerging pressure on hospitals, the information in this series is turning out to be even more timely than originally thought. We want to help you weather the storms of these economic times, which is why we are offering guidance to help you keep your Share costs down. And so, this month, we're sharing a tool that comes from an unusual source: federal law.

The government can help?

Ronald Reagan famously quipped, "The nine most terrifying words in the English language are, 'I'm from the government and I'm here to help.'" Many of us would generally agree with Reagan's remark, but we're now living in a moment where particular government actions actually do help the Samaritan Ministries family redeem health care.

If you go to a mechanic—at least a reputable one—you would expect to get an estimate of the cost of repair before he starts the work. He would tell you the work that he was going to perform and how much it would cost. That way, you could decide if you wanted to pay him to do the work before he started doing anything. Seems like common sense, right?

But the business of health care isn't known for common sense. Instead, for years, the way it worked was that you would go into the hospital for a procedure, but the cost would all be guesswork. After the procedure, you would wait and wince while the hospital calculated the price and billed you. If you asked for a price beforehand, the hospital would just shrug.

That's no longer allowed due to several federal actions.



First, under an executive order known as the Hospital Price Transparency² rule, all hospitals must publish cash-pay and other prices on their website as of January 1, 2021. Also, under the No Surprises Act,³ as of January 1, 2022, hospitals must provide patients an estimate of the cost of their procedure upon request and are then required by law to bill a final price within \$400 of that original estimate. Now you can find prices ahead of time and make an informed purchasing decision.

How to use the Hospital Price Transparency Rule

You might think, "Now, why didn't hospitals publish their prices before?" Well, that's a rather long story for another day. Suffice it to

say that compliance has been slow since the rule was implemented. Still, it is steadily improving due to increased federal noncompliance penalties and even states considering laws to add to the penalties.

But won't it be a lot of work to hunt down the cash pay prices? You may be pleasantly surprised at how easy it can be to now find a consumer-friendly display of a minimum 300 shoppable services on hospital websites as required by the rule. Hospitals are also required to publish machine-readable data files on their websites. As these files are published, data aggregators have begun to develop tools to help consumers compare prices.

It's not unusual for cash-pay

Continued on page 4

prices to vary by a factor of 10 or more for the same service in the same geographic area, and, as stewards of other members' Shares, you and your family can make good use of this rule for non-emergency care. Also, be aware that as a cash-pay patient you can submit complaints⁴ if you find hospitals to be noncompliant, which may even help enforce the transparency rule.

How to use the No Surprises Act

Now that you know what the cash-pay price is and feel confident that this will be high-quality care, you can confirm costs in advance⁵ with a good-faith estimate. Will it be a complicated, bureaucratic process to get an estimate? Thankfully, it's not!

As part of the No Surprises Act, hospitals must post instructions on how to get these estimates on their websites. Many have created online tools where you can enter the procedure that you are considering and get an estimate created on the spot. If the online tool doesn't list your procedure, the hospital should have instructions on whom to call to get your estimate.

If you find that a hospital is giving you trouble with getting an estimate, feel free to reach out to our Provider Relations team. For assertions that any final billed prices were substantially in excess of the good faith estimate, a dispute resolution process⁷ is available in which you can respond to hospital non-compliance identifying yourself as a self-pay patient. The good news is that you probably won't have to do this because hospitals

are on notice that they need to abide by these new rules.

Focusing on price and quality

As we discussed in September's article (bit.ly/smi-cost-3), price does not always correlate to the quality of care, but as you consider the best quality care for you and your loved ones, recent government actions that force the exposure of hospital prices can help you discover the best value in the market. Here are some points to remember to help you find high-value care out of recent government actions:

- Use the estimate tool on your local hospital's website for an upfront price.
- Comparison shop among hospitals.
- Choose the right hospital for you and get a good faith estimate.
- Reach out to the Samaritan Ministries Provider Relations team if you need help!

This series has highlighted rising health care costs and what we can do about it. We discussed how our Provider Relations team is addressing the challenge. We also offered tips and tools for you to continue to be good stewards of health care sharing dollars.

In coming months, we'll increase our focus on price and quality. The newsletter will offer further guidance and program improvements that focus on making high-value care easier to find and, thus, keep Shares affordable. ◆◆◆

Steve Bassett is director of Samaritan

Ministries' Office of Strategic Services.

¹ Overall inflation has not yet flowed through to the health sector. (2022, August 24). Peterson-KFF Health System Tracker. Retrieved September 6, 2022, from <https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/brief/overall-inflation-has-not-yet-flowed-through-to-the-health-sector>

² Hospital Price Transparency | CMS. (n.d.). Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. <https://www.cms.gov/hospital-price-transparency>

³ Understanding costs in advance | CMS. (n.d.). Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/gfe-and-ppdr-requirements-slides.pdf>

⁴ CMS PT Complaint Intake Submission Form. (2022). Instructions for Submitting a Complaint. https://cms.gov1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_b2fAQwrDLIC7lyx

⁵ Understanding costs in advance | CMS. (2022). Understanding Costs in Advance. <https://www.cms.gov/nosurprises/consumers/understanding-costs-in-advance>

⁶ Medical bill disagreements if you're uninsured | CMS. (n.d.). Retrieved September 6, 2022, from <https://www.cms.gov/nosurprises/consumers/medical-bill-disagreements-if-you-are-uninsured>

⁷ Medical bill disagreements if you're uninsured | CMS. (n.d.). Retrieved September 6, 2022, from <https://www.cms.gov/nosurprises/consumers/medical-bill-disagreements-if-you-are-uninsured>



Encouragement

Messages from our members

We hope you find it uplifting to hear how God is working in the lives of our members.



Timothy of Pennsylvania



I fell off my chair on January 18 this year while at a meeting in Harrisburg (an hour from home) and those around me called for an ambulance, thinking I was suffering a stroke. At the Hershey Medical Center ER, the doctor who was called in to read the MRI immediately recognized that I was in the midst of an "aortic dissection" and started a 7-hour surgery to repair my aorta! I had never heard of that condition before, but evidently only about 1 to 3% of people who experience it survive, and only if they get surgery by a thoracic surgeon skilled in that area. I was connected to life support machines for 10 days and was in an induced coma. My poor family had no idea if I would survive, or how much quality of life I would have if I did. PRAISE THE LORD that MANY were praying for me, and God not only spared my life, but after 8 weeks of ICU and Rehab I was able to go home, continue to strengthen, and am now 99% "back to normal"! It is truly a miracle!

The other miracle is the way that Samaritan Ministries had my back and has worked with us to pay the bill. The care came to \$2.2 million, but the hospital took off 66% for "cash payment." Over the six months since the 42-page bill was uploaded, 99% of the bill has been paid in full :-) I am so thankful that we chose to be part of the optional Save to Share program. Your participation in this ministry with Shares and cards and prayers is so much appreciated!!!



Mark & Shelby of Oklahoma

We have been members of Samaritan for only a short time. When my wife left her job, we knew money would be tight, but decided that this would be an active way to grow our faith. While looking into various health insurance possibilities, several of our friends mentioned they were a part of Samaritan Ministries, and all of them had very positive things to say about it. After examining Samaritan's programs, we decided to become members. We love the fact that our monthly Share goes to help real people with tangible needs and that we have a direct part in helping and encouraging them. Recently, we had a baby, and we are receiving the blessing of gifts, cards, and prayers coming our way. Samaritan has relieved the financial burden along with their prompt, friendly help, easy process, and constant encouragement. God is amazing in showing His love and provision. Through it all, God has made sure we have never lacked what we need. Samaritan Ministries has encouraged us to become good stewards through helping our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Share your blessings in our Facebook Group at facebook.com/groups/samaritanmin

Member Spotlight

Micah Dillon: My Mended Heart

by Kathryn Nielson



Member Micah Dillon

SendingAndMending.com

[Twitter @MyMendedHeart](https://twitter.com/MyMendedHeart)

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

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

[YouTube: bit.ly/HeartScribeVibesYT](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbitlyHeartScribeVibesYT)

[Pinterest: Sending_Mending](https://www.pinterest.com/Sending_Mending)

MICAH DILLON UNEXPECTEDLY lost her husband to a heart attack after only 13 years of marriage in 2017. Her faith, however, helped her turn grief and loss into blessings for others through writing and music. She has written two books to date, *My Mended Heart* and, recently, *Heart Scribe Vibes*. She also writes weekly on her blog, “Mondays with Micah” (SendingAndMending.com/Mondays-with-Micah). Her debut album, which complements *Heart Scribe Vibes*, will be released this fall.

Heart Scribe Vibes will include links to her first album of the same name as a way to turn her loss into an offering and give glory to God as well as a healing balm for others who are hurting.

Upside down: Micah’s world turned upside down when she woke up on June 12, 2017, to find her husband of 13 years, Ben, unconscious in the shower. Despite prayers for a miracle, Ben died after four days in a coma. He had had a “widow maker” heart attack. At the time, his death did not make sense, but blessings would flow from it.

Suddenly Micah, then 36, was raising two young children alone. She stepped away from the real

estate business she had built in order to focus on her family. She also suspended her church singing due to voice loss from overuse.

Everything that had defined her—wife, business owner, singer—had disappeared and left her questioning her identity.

Micah’s story reminds us that

God’s love is not an abstract concept or just another phrase that’s part of the Christian vernacular. It is deeply personal. God used three distinct steps to move Micah through her grief to who she is today—a mom, a thriving business owner, a singer/songwriter, and an author.

Why Samaritan Ministries?

One of the things Micah Dillon liked about Samaritan Ministries when she and her husband, Ben, joined in 2011 was sending a note to other members along with their Share.

“It’s a beautiful thing,” Micah says. “It’s a God thing. It’s an eternal thing.”

After Ben died in 2017, Micah was on the receiving end of that beautiful thing. She received notes not only from members assigned to the Need but also from other members who had read about it in the Samaritan Prayer Guide.

“Y’all are very compassionate, well-versed communicators, basically probably counselors in your own right when you’re taking these calls,” Micah says. “I’m very thankful for what Samaritan has been,” she says. “It’s the simple things, like the notes, but it has a personal touch. It has a soft touch. You don’t get that with insurance.” ♦♦♦

Community helps: Micah had a solid base at her home congregation of 25 years, Rock Church in Franklin, Virginia, as well family there. Her father- and mother-in-law, David and Patty Dillon, had founded Rock Church in 1975 and transitioned the church to her brother- and sister-in-law, Danny and Jill Dillon, in 2015. Ben was principal at the Rock Church School for 20 years. Micah has been leading worship there for seven years.

Members of the church played a significant role in her healing following Ben's death, meeting for an hour of worship every evening for 17 days.

"It transitioned how we grieved," Micah says. "One of the gifts I received in this was an eternal perspective, and part of that eternal perspective for me is that we praise our way through things."

Micah's use of music to deal with grief comes naturally. She is from a long line of musicians.

"Music is my inheritance, and I'm very thankful for that," Micah says.

But it wasn't just her church that stepped in. Ben had served their small community his whole life. He was a barber, having 10 men over weekly for a fresh cut and word of encouragement. He also helped paint friends' houses, cut grass, and performed many other small but memorable services for friends and neighbors. When he died, residents in turn stepped up and helped Micah and the children for the next two years in practical ways like cutting the grass.

As a newly single mother, Micah felt the need to step down from her job as a real estate agent to



Micah Dillon (supplied photo)

tend to her children for the rest of that year. God provided there, too: Another agent handled her business, which helped to catapult that co-worker to where she wanted to be in her own career. Micah is now back working as a Realtor.

Mending her heart: A few months before Ben's death, a friend had approached Micah after a worship concert and told her she needed to start writing music. Two days later, God gave her the words to a song she titled "Joy of the

Lord" (available at bit.ly/micahjoy):

I look to you for help

For the pressure of this life bears down on me

I look to you for help

So, let your presence come and blow through me

Let your presence come until I am free

For the joy of the Lord renews my strength

Continued on page 8

She led her congregation in that song during worship at her church's anniversary celebration service two months later. Two days after that, Ben suffered his heart attack. At his funeral, Micah led the crowd of over 800 in this song. In her pain, God had provided a song that would be the first of many she would write and record.

Crisis leads to "aha": The sudden trauma of being widowed left Micah with an identity crisis and led to questions like "Who am I?" and "What do I have left?" Then Micah's sister-in-law reminded her that she is a daughter of the King. That understanding hit like a ton of bricks.

"I had that 'aha' moment," Micah remembers. "I am a daughter of the King. That is it. It does not matter what I do. It does not matter if I am no longer working as a real estate agent. It does not matter if I am remarried. I am a daughter of the King."

She even wrote a song about it, available to hear at bit.ly/micah-daughter.

That "aha" moment started a barrage of words and music that became songs, the first of which she titled "Daughter of the King." She believes the Lord gave her five adjectives: A daughter of the King is real, raw, royal, righteous, and regal. There is a balance of praise and rawness. The realization brought her to a place where she was able to tell the Lord that He could take away everything, like He did with Job, and she would not deny Him. No matter what.

Besides finding the truth of who she is, God also revealed the truth of who He is.

"I love talking to widows and finding ways for them to engage in a newfound treasure within."— Micah Dillon

She writes,

For too long, I assumed I knew my Creator; I built the story of God and His character in my head without actually seeking and surrendering to Him.

Micah refers to it as "stinking thinking."

With these new revelations, she moved into the last phase of her grief recovery: action.

"You have to move," Micah says. "There has to be action."

My Mended Heart: The newfound truth of her identity and the truth of God changed something in Micah, and she had an insatiable desire to share what the Lord was teaching her. She started journaling during her quiet time, writing down what she felt God was telling her. The head knowledge moved to her heart. When that happens, Micah says, everything changes.

Eventually, journaling turned to writing on her blog (sendingand-mending.com/mondays-with-micah) and then writing books to help others who may be going through a loss of their own. *My Mended Heart*, her first book, is filled with 100 quotes from Micah's writings, with each quote followed by an appropriate Bible verse.

"With trauma, the brain goes in a lot of different places," Micah says. "The practical part of the book is that it is just one nugget a day, which, for someone in trauma, is all they can take.

"I love talking to widows and finding ways for them to engage in a newfound treasure within. God did not leave us here to drown in our tears but to let our tears be the new current that propels us to the blessed life He has awaiting all of us."

Heart Scribe Vibes: Her second book, *Heart Scribe Vibes*, tells the story of each of the 12 songs on her worship album of the same title. At the end of each chapter is a QR code that takes the reader to a private page within her website and gives a simple prerecorded prayer tied to the chapter. There is also a link to the song with lyrics and pages for journaling. Six of those songs are available on her YouTube channel (youtube.com/c/HeartScribeswithMicahNDillon). The full album will be released this fall.

Gifts from heaven: Besides writing books and music, Micah takes a break from leading worship at church each summer and travels to other churches to share her message of hope and to help others experience the truth of God and what He wants to say to them.

Micah says the past five years have been ones of sorting through her spiritual deficiencies, finding her identity, and moving on, something that was particularly important for her children, Stone and Stella.

"When their daddy died in human form, but was raised to life spir-



Micah Dillon, with her husband, Ben, and their two children, Stone and Stella, in 2012. (Supplied photo)

itually, I had to make a decision," Micah says about her children. "Mommy wasn't going to die spiritually and physically. I needed to make changes for my own health. I started exercising more consistently and eating better instead of choosing to allow food to become my comfort. Jesus truly became my comfort. But I had to take steps towards hope."

Instead, Micah has surrendered to God, gotten perspective, and exchanged the hopelessness for hope.

"I believe that God is good,"

Micah says. "I've been living in the fruitfulness of His goodness for the last five years. My husband was gifted with heaven, and Jesus did not stop loving me or my children and family, for I've been receiving gifts from heaven ever since."

Prayer requests

- "New opportunities to serve and grow the widow Kingdom for Jesus."
- "Good health for my children and me."

- "As the book and music are released, for Jesus to find the hearts that need to be mended by the Great Mender, our Heavenly Father." ♦♦♦

Kathryn Nielson is a Communications Specialist at Samaritan Ministries.

Resources for parents of children who may be delayed in talking

Whether you want to know 'what's normal' or actively need support, websites and organizations are able to help



by Amanda Owens,
speech language
pathologist

Second in a series.

NOTICING A CHILD is not talking yet or is hard to understand is often the first thing that makes a parent think "speech therapy."

Whether a 2-year-old is primarily pointing at things to get their needs met or a first-grader is still struggling to make the "L" sound, a parent naturally may wonder if their child needs speech therapy.

Parents concerned about their child's speech and language development can take different routes to address the issue. They may ask a doctor whether the child is on track with milestones, cruise the internet looking for which speech and language skills are expected for their child's age, or seek information on how to support their child at home in the place of or in addition to speech therapy.

As a speech-language pathologist (SLP) who focuses on parent training and coaching, I have several resources that I love to share with parents.

When you want to know 'what's normal'

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association website (ASHA.org) is the first place I send parents, teachers, caregiving staff, and even developmental pediatricians when they have general questions about speech therapy and "what's normal" for a child's speech and language development.

ASHA is the most reliable place to find accurate milestones that reflect speech and language development research by professionals in that field. While milestone guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control are most commonly used by government agencies, pediatricians, daycare facilities, and preschools, ASHA questions the accuracy of the CDC milestones.

Parents concerned about their child's speech and language development can take different routes to address the issue.

When a child isn't talking (yet!)

One of the internet's best and most extensive resources for child speech concerns is Teach Me to Talk! at TeachMeToTalk.com. Pediatric speech-language pathologist Laura Mize has poured information and practical help into free podcasts, videos, and printouts.

The site also has a variety of parent-training courses by SLPs. The courses provide a walkthrough of milestones, introductory-level understanding of techniques to support language learning, and more. They are usually formatted as e-books, videos, and occasionally cohort-style learning experiences. In the last course, you learn with a group and can ask questions within the class community.

When a child is hard to understand

There are many great videos that SLPs share freely on YouTube or within Facebook groups using a kid-friendly way to show the mechanics of how sounds are made. Videos can be a great way to see if a child can make a sound when they are given detailed placement cues or instructions on where to put their articulators (parts of the body that make



(iStock)

speech sounds). Peachie Speechie (youtube.com/c/PeachieSpeechie) is one YouTube channel with a full range of videos of how English sounds are made.

If you are looking for printable activities and games to practice making sounds, downloadable resources from SLPs are available on sites like Teachers Pay Teachers (teacherspayteachers.com) and Mommy Speech Therapy (MommySpeechTherapy.com). The sites have stellar lists of words to practice for the child who might be struggling with speech.

Some of these printable tools are built with SLPs in mind, but others are very parent-friendly and can be used for supplemental at-home practice.

When you need support

You don't have to go at it alone. Many support groups exist online for sharing questions, fun and practical activities, and resources for parents with speech and language

concerns about their child.

It can be encouraging to know that you aren't the only parent who has to attend individualized education program (IEP) meetings, attend speech therapy sessions, advocate for your child on the playground, or otherwise walk through the speech therapy journey with your child.

Besides the courses mentioned earlier, other resources to support parents include:

- Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA.org).
- Parental-advocacy site The IEP Lab, for when you want to advocate for your child's special education without being known as "that mom" (TheIEPLab.com).
- Homeschool OT, for support incorporating sensory and executive functioning needs into a family homeschool routine (HomeschoolOT.com).

- Local universities, which sometimes have speech-language pathology programs and clinics and may offer support groups if you prefer to meet in person.

When in doubt

You don't always have to have a doctor's referral to receive support from an SLP. If you have questions, you can go right to a speech and language expert you trust.

Many private practice SLPs offer free or low-priced screenings to see if a child is on track before scheduling an evaluation. There are also state-based resources for early intervention and school-based speech therapy that are often government-funded.

You have many options to choose from to support your family as you walk your speech therapy journey. Tools and resources exist to help you find a good fit. If you need inspiration to start gathering the resources you need, consider that earlier intervention in speech and language concerns can lead to less time needed in speech therapy and better outcomes in communication and reading. Getting resources sooner rather than later may be worth the effort in the long run. So, pick one thing to do today to take that next step in supporting your child's speech and language.



Samaritan Ministries member Amanda Owens equips families to confidently get their children talking—and talking clearly—at Illuminate Communicate (IlluminateCommunicate.com).

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 professional.

Feeding of the 5,000 takes spiritual equations to a new level

by Anthony Hopp, Chief Purpose Officer

Five applications as we ponder what Jesus did with His disciples to give sustenance to those hungry for His Word

When Jesus heard what had happened, He withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed Him on foot from the towns. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them and healed their sick.

As evening approached, the disciples came to Him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

"We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

"Bring them here to me," He said. And He directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, He gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

MATTHEW 14:13-21 (NIV)

DO YOU REMEMBER learning your multiplication tables? Decades later, we're able to (for the most part!) quickly recall familiar equations such as 8×2 or 7×6 .

There's a really familiar "Biblical multiplication equation" that goes something like this: $5 \text{ loaves} + 2 \text{ fish} \times \text{Jesus' power} = 5,000\text{-plus people fed!}$

With the exception of the Resurrection, Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 is the only miracle that's recorded in all four Gospels. Some of the purposes of this and every miracle that Jesus ever did were to authenticate His identity as God, to demonstrate His power, and to reveal His heart of compassion. But there's another wonder-

ful purpose and reason Jesus performed miracles: to teach us.

We turn our attention to this well-known miracle for the purpose of allowing His Spirit to teach us and, consequently, change our hearts and our minds to be more like Him. While the feeding of the 5,000 no doubt is rich with many applications of His truth, here are five applications for us to consider.

1. Compassion when it's easy, compassion when it's hard. This account occurs right after Jesus finds out that His cousin and friend, John the Baptist, had been beheaded by Herod.

Jesus has got to be exhaust-

ed, emotionally and physically, both from hearing the news of John's death and from the large, demanding crowds that have been following Him. And now He's going off to a deserted place, most likely to commune with His Father, and perhaps to find rest.

You know what's immediately remarkable about our Savior in this story? Verse 14 says that Jesus had compassion on the people who followed Him and that He also healed their sick. So even in the midst of His weariness and grief, here's Jesus serving, loving, and fulfilling His mission to seek and save the lost. What a humbling example. What a beautiful Savior.



(David Nielsen/Samaritan Ministries)

2. Stay mission-focused, even when you find yourself in the desert and the hour is late. In verse 15, the disciples suggested they call it a night and send the people away so the people could get food because they were in a remote place and it was getting late. Jesus, however, stayed mission-focused.

The people were following Jesus because their hearts were empty. He knows that even though the people were physically hungry, they were spiritually starving to death. Feeding them physically would give Jesus the opportunity to declare Who He is and to increase His disciples' faith, to stay on mission.

Instead of "remote place," some

translations say a "desolate place" or "desert." Metaphorically, being in a remote place or in the desert may involve unfamiliarity or difficulty. Right now, it might feel like we are in a desolate place. All the cultural and political uncertainty, disruption, and rapid change is a

Continued on page 14

bit disorienting. It can feel like a desolate place. And the normal responsibilities of life and the limited amount of time we have to handle them makes the hour feel late, like we're running out of time. Yet, we're trusting that God gives us His grace to stay faithful to the mission He's called us to, even though it might feel like we're in the desert and that the hour is late.

3. There's work for us to do. When Jesus performed this miracle, the disciples were not idle spectators; they were participants.

Jesus told the disciples in verse 16, "You give them something to eat." Then in verses 17 and 18, when they said they only had the five loaves and two fish, Jesus told them to bring what they had to Him.

Mark's and Luke's accounts say that Jesus directed the disciples to have all the people sit down in groups of hundreds or fifties. Then, in verse 19 of this account in Matthew, Jesus tells the disciples to distribute the food. Finally, in verse 20, the disciples pick up the 12 basketfuls of leftovers.

Jesus had a lot of assignments and work for the disciples when He fed the 5,000 and He has a lot of assignments and work for us as He uses Samaritan Ministries to accomplish His purposes. May God strengthen us for the work He's given us to do and may we readily obey as He directs us.

4. Stewardship matters. In John's account, Jesus tells the disciples to "gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost."

Even though Jesus is able to command an increase of supply at



any time, He directs that nothing be wasted. So it should be with us. We recognize that, while He has unlimited resources, we are to wisely steward the resources He gives us and not waste anything. This doesn't mean we're to have a stingy and hoarding mentality—Jesus provided plenty for everyone to eat and He told the disciples to gather up the leftovers after everyone had their fill. So God provides enough, yet we should guard against being sloppy, casual, and thoughtless with His resources. May God enable us to prudently stretch what He's given us and waste nothing.

5. Jesus does the multiplying.

The disciples played a role in this miracle, but we don't think for a second that the miracle was the disciples' doing; Jesus did the miracle.

Even though God graciously involves us in His work, it is still His work. He is the One Who brings about the miracle. No amount of human striving would've fed the crowds. And the disciples were well aware of their limitations. In verse 17, they say, "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish"—

essentially, "We can't do this." And then Jesus steps in and does the seemingly impossible.

By miraculously feeding and satisfying this enormous crowd, Jesus clearly shows His divinity, power, and compassion. Additionally, He intends for us to learn and grow as we consider the lessons present in this dramatic and astonishing event. Jesus uses this multiplication miracle to model sacrificial compassion during suffering and mission-mindedness amidst time and space constraints. He shows us that there's plenty of meaningful work for us and that our stewardship while doing that work is of great importance.

Finally, Jesus teaches us that when we obediently bring our finite and limited resources to Him, He, in His unlimited and infinite power, multiplies it into immeasurably more than we could ask or imagine.



Anthony Hopp is Chief Purpose Officer at Samaritan Ministries. This article was adapted from a talk he gave to staff in September 2021.



Prayer for the Persecuted Church

Chinese church harassment increases

House churches are being increasingly challenged in China, ministries report. At least five were raided in mid-August with several leaders being detained. Abundant Church, Linfen Holy Covenant Church, Early Rain Covenant Church, Beijing Zion Church, and House of Light Church were each raided. Besides leaders being taken away and, in some cases, injured, church members also were harassed and questioned. Observers say these actions could be the result of a shift in government policy, possibly connected to upcoming presidential elections. *Pray for members and leaders of these and other churches as they determine the best way to respond to the harassment. Pray also for a heart change in China's national and local leaders.*

Christians forced to work dangerous jobs in Pakistan

Christians and members of other religious minorities in Pakistan make up about 90 percent of Islamabad's sanitation workers and are often forced to work in dangerous and unsanitary conditions, International Christian Concern reports. These non-Muslims seem targeted for such jobs, and often receive little to no salary, sometimes waiting weeks for a paycheck. *Pray that these workers will be safe, for the families of those who have been killed on the job, and for employers to provide safe working conditions and a steady income.*

Potential riot defused by Pakistani police

Praise God that a potential riot against Christians was defused by Pakistani police in Lahore on August 7, Voice of the Martyrs-Canada reports. Christian families saw a large mob marching toward a church building, apparently caused by a youth seminar on "False Prophets," which Muslims mistakenly thought addressed their faith. By the end of the incident, Muslim and Christian leaders had signed an agreement promising to maintain peace in the area.

Ugandan evangelist killed after event

Ugandan extremists killed a Christian evangelist in late July, Mission News Network reports. The evangelist had recently held an open-air Gospel event. *Pray for the evangelist's family and fellow church members. Pray also for his killers to be held accountable and for the government to extend justice to Christians.* ♦♦♦



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

Say not, "Why were the former days better than these?"

Ecclesiastes 7:10a

✂ Detach and place on your refrigerator

THE DOORPOST

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



Say not, "Why were the former days better than these?"

For it is not from wisdom that you ask this.

ECCLESIASTES 7:10

Remember the "good old days"?

When we face cares and concerns in our lives, we often seem to suffer nostalgic amnesia. "What is the world coming to?" we ask, fondly remembering the supposed good in the past and forgetting the many problems.

The writer of Ecclesiastes warns that this is not wise.

In the third chapter of Philipians, Paul tells what he thought about his considerable past achievements and how he approached the future, even though he was in jail.

Verses 7 and 8 say, "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord ..."

Verses 13 and 14 say, "... But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Regardless of our past accomplishments or status, our top priority as we confront challenges must be knowing Christ, straining in everything toward the goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.



For The Kingdom,
Ray King

A stylized, handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Ray King".