

The Christian Response to the Affordable Care Act

Editor's Note: *In the March issue of Charisma, we'll address some of the biggest issues facing the church today. When word of this got to my friend Dr. Tony Dale, the founder of The Health Co-Op, he reached out to me to say, "I hope that you have included health care as one of these key issues." Actually, we had not—not because it isn't important, but because of the numerous other issues facing the body of Christ in this country that appear to be more directly related to the mission of the church. The reality is, however, that this subject has consumed more media space in recent years than all the other subjects combined. So we asked Dr. Dale to give us his perspective on the issues concerned and to follow up with future updates addressing the Christian response to the **Affordable Care Act**. —Marcus Yoars, Editor, Charisma*

Health care reform impacts every one of us. It has occupied the primary position in political debate in this country over the past four years, dominating the Obama presidency. It represents almost 20 percent of the nation's budget. It forces all of us to confront questions that we may prefer not to think about. It certainly impacts our wallets, whether through increased premiums or increased taxes. And the shaky rollout of the exchanges, along with the many changes and delays as to which part of the law are being implement when, have brought confusion to many. So how do we respond to this as believers?

I would like to suggest that a starting place is to acknowledge that **health care** in this country has needed reforming. There are genuine concerns over unequal access to quality care. There is nothing wrong with compassion. But that does not mean that we can suspend basic economic realities by waving a magic wand of "The government will take care of this." Because the government is just us, "We, the people."

For the believer, it seems to me that we want to address these serious issues from a clearly biblical foundation. I think most of us, when we have thought about this subject at all, approach it primarily from the point of view of cost and credibility: "Will my medical bills be paid?" "Will I get the quality of care that I need?"

But is this really the first question for a Christian to ask? This seems very me-centered rather than God-centered. Doesn't conscience come before cost or credibility? And I don't just mean in the dictionary!

Jesus tells us, "The Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what He sees the Father doing" (John 5:19, NLT). So what do we see our heavenly Father doing? As I look around the current spiritual landscape as it applies to health care, I see a number of things:

- Churches such as the Catholic Church, under the leadership of denominational leaders, are willing to stand up to the might of the U.S. government and say we will not violate our conscience.
- Business owners, of whom Hobby Lobby and the Green family are the best known, are standing up for what they believe is a violation of the freedom of religion as guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution.
- Individual believers in their thousands are dropping the old insurance approach and are flocking to Christian health care sharing ministries, whose members are exempted from the fines in the Affordable Care Act precisely because they are members of these organizations offering a specifically Christian approach.

Ignorance is not bliss, whatever the pundits may say. The issues before the Supreme Court are vital for all Christians to understand. The government is saying that Christians are free to have their beliefs as long as it only applies within

their places of worship. They call this freedom of worship. But once we move out of our places of worship, into the public marketplace, the government is saying in its arguments before the courts that government governs the public marketplace. Therefore, in the public marketplace, our conscience is secondary to the wishes of the government.

This is not the **freedom of religion** that is guaranteed in the Constitution. The Pilgrim Fathers wanted the freedom to come and live their lives for God 24/7, in every part of their lives. This is precisely why “those who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus shall [always] suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). Nobody minds when you keep your faith private. It is only in the public square that our message stands in contrast to what the kings of this world want. But Jesus is our King and our example, and He only did what He saw His Father doing.

We should do no other.

Dr. Tony Dale is the founder of The Health Co-Op, providing churches, companies and individuals all over the U.S. access to Christian health care sharing by Samaritan Ministries, along with a comprehensive array of other benefits. He is a leader in the Christian health care sharing environment and a pioneer of solutions for larger churches, ministries and companies that keep them in compliance with the Affordable Care Act. He will be writing an article each month to help keep the Charisma community in touch with what is happening in the health care arena as it relates to the Affordable Care Act.