

News, Views & Commentary

"God makes three requests of his children: Do the best you can, where you are, with what you have, now." African American folklore

Health Notes

Studies Look at Health Benefits of Male Circumcision in Black, African Men

Dr. George T. Rowan

HIV risk appears to be lower among U.S. Black men who have been circumcised and are considered at high risk of contracting the virus than among Black men who have not been circumcised, according to a study published on Wednesday in the Journal of Infectious Diseases, Reuters reports. Two other studies in the journal also examine the benefits of male circumcision to prevent the spread of disease and infection.



For one of the studies, CDC researcher Lee Warner and colleagues looked at Black men living in Baltimore and found that 10% of those who were at high risk of HIV and were circumcised had the virus, compared with 22% of those who were not circumcised. According to the report, "Circumcision was associated with substantially reduced HIV risk in patients with known HIV exposure, suggesting that results of other studies demonstrating reduced HIV risk for circumcision among heterosexual men likely can be generalized to the U.S. context."

Ronald Gray of Johns Hopkins University and colleagues in an editorial accompanying the study noted that in the U.S., circumcision is less common among Blacks and Hispanics. However, Blacks and Hispanics are the most at-risk of groups for contracting the virus. "Thus, circumcision may afford an additional means of protection from HIV in these at-risk minorities," they wrote.

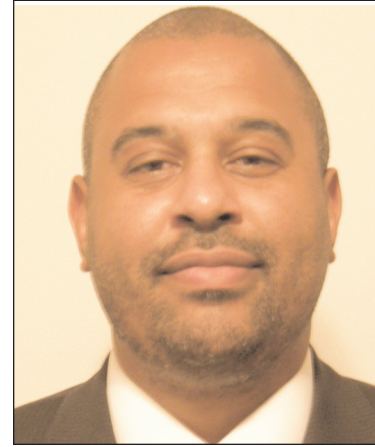
The American Academy of Pediatrics does not recommend routine circumcision for infants, and as a result, Medicaid does not cover the procedure, according to the editorial. The editorial adds that "this is particularly disadvantageous for poorer African-American and Hispanic boys who, as adults, may face high HIV exposure risk" (Fox, Reuters Health, 12/17).

Kaiser Weekly News Report. December 2008

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Money Walk

By Rev. Randy E. Parlor



This column deals with the biblical principles needed to obtain freedom from financial bondage.

Some are teaching that the government has no right to collect taxes. One argument is that Christians do not have to pay taxes because they are free from the law of man. A similar argument is your allegiance is to God only and therefore you don't owe the government anything you didn't borrow from it. Another argument is our elected officials have no right to enact laws requiring taxes because the constitution does not allow it. Another argument is taxes oppress citizens and therefore must be fought against at all costs and left unpaid if thrust upon you.

These arguments can seem rational to a carnal minded person, however when compared against bible

instruction they are invalid. Jesus answered them all by saying, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and render unto God what is God's." He also instructed Peter to pay taxes for both of them and provided for the payment through miraculous means. Later the Apostles Paul and Peter, in their writings inspired by the Holy Spirit, instructed Christians to obey government rulers and to pay taxes because the government provides some important benefits for the welfare of the people.

Obeying government regulations applies to each situation that does not result in disobeying God's commandment to worship Him, disciple believers, and evangelize the unsaved. It is true that a government could raise the amount of taxation to such an enormous level that it causes people to rebel against it. One of the early fights of our American forefathers was against taxation without representation. Yet, for the believer God is sure to provide those who follow His financial principles more than enough to pay taxes charged by the government.

Let's be clear, it is not unpatriotic to take advantage of every legal option to reduce your taxes to the lowest possible level. Finding an honest accountant to complete your tax forms can help you in that endeavor and may help make sure that you

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Witness for Justice

Obama Gets It, But Needs Our Help

By Edith Rasell
 Minister for Workplace Justice

Obama gets it. The State of the Union message showed he understands the problems faced by millions of Americans. He knows that nearly one in five people who want to work can't find a job or can only find part-time work. He knows that one in nine families cannot make the minimum payment on their credit cards, that one in seven mortgages is either in default or foreclosure, and that one in eight Americans is on food stamps.

The speech also showed that President Obama is continuing to mobilize his administration to tackle the nation's severe problems. He proposed a number of measures to create jobs, his first priority. He also proposed a new fee on big banks, a revised program to prevent foreclosures, and other measures that will speed the end of the economic crisis and make life easier for many who are suffering.

But the speech also showed that Obama is still too influenced by advisors who promote the failed policies of the past. Currently the most heated debate in Washington is over the size of the federal budget deficit. With sky-

high unemployment and interest rates essentially at zero, a large deficit is the only tool that can repair the economy. Once things are somewhat back to normal, which probably won't be for two to three years, then we can worry about reducing the deficit.

“Money to reduce the deficit should come from ending the tax cuts and bringing the wars in the Middle East to an end, not from programs that cost relatively little and serve so many.”

But Obama is already proposing budget cuts starting in the fall of this year. Not only are the cuts premature but what he proposes to cut -- non-security discretionary spending -- is also wrong-headed. This category of spending comprises only 14% of the budget but it pays for many things people care about deeply, from education and the environment to air traffic control, nutrition, and the national parks. Entirely excluded from the proposed cuts are the military and homeland security.

Over the next 11 years (2009-2019), the federal

government deficit will total an estimated \$11.8 trillion. The Stimulus Bill and costs of the bailout are just 14% of this, while 26% is due to the higher costs and lost revenue associated with the economic downturn. But fully 45% of the total is due to the Bush tax cuts of 2001 and 2003, and 15% is the cost of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Money to reduce the deficit should come from ending the tax cuts and bringing the wars in the Middle East to an end, not from programs that cost relatively little and serve so many.

For the next few years, the nation and especially the unemployed need a large budget deficit and the jobs it will create. In later years, the burden of reducing the budget deficit should fall on those who benefited from the excesses of recent years.

Obama gets it. But that's not enough. As he said in his speech Wednesday night, democracy can be noisy, messy, and complicated. Well, it's time for caring people to get very noisy, jump into the mess, and make life in Washington very complicated. The health of our nation is at stake, as well as the well-being of millions of our friends and neighbors around the country.

Witness for Justice

Our Common Humanity

By M. Linda Jaramillo
 Executive Minister

Like many of you, I was stunned at what I saw on last Tuesday's evening news. The devastation in Haiti following a tragic earthquake looked like a scene in a science fiction movie. Only this one is real, it is very real. Port-au-Prince, the nation's capital in which thousands of people worked and lived is the site of crumbled buildings. Government buildings where thousands worked were leveled with the only saving grace being that workers had left for the day. The National Palace is a pile of rubble. The U.N. Peacekeepers Compound, a five story building where international partners worked for peace has collapsed.

I cannot even imagine the terror felt by thousands of men, women, and children when this 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck their communities. There was nowhere to run, nowhere to hide from the cracking landscape causing walls to crash down around them in the darkness of the day. On Tuesday night, anticipation of what the morning would bring loomed heavy. A clear view of reality was evident on Wednesday morning.

United Nations officials and countries all over the world are mobilizing to provide assistance, working out ways in which to land supply airplanes at an airport that is unstable. These kinds of disasters have a way of bringing together the people of the world. Hostilities seem to fall away, or do they?

In the midst of this terrible tragedy, we can't seem to help ourselves from hostile attacks on one another. Electronic media is a wonderful thing. We can read up to the minute reports of events occurring in every part of the world by just going to the internet. I went there early Wednesday morning to read the latest news. The response blogs to these stories were filled with compassion, but many filled with anger, resentment, and disrespect.

The exchange of messages going back and forth was disheartening to me. I fully advocate for every person's right to his or her opinion; however, I was stunned by the cold detachment expressed by some. The most troubling of the blog messages were those who complained about our tax dollars going to help those from another country. One said, "Americans first. When we have what we need, then we can help those in other nations." Really?

Our most important mission right now is to do all we can to support the rescue efforts. We must put our hostilities and resentments aside and step up to the task of helping our neighbors in their recovery efforts. Haitian brothers and sisters need us now. Those who suffered the devastating earthquake need food and water. Their families living there and in other parts of the world, searching for their loved ones, need our support and prayers. Rescue workers need our prayers. Even if just for a few days, let's concentrate on the urgent need right now. We can talk about the other stuff later.

We must claim our common humanity regardless of our national heritage. We are citizens of the world together. We are bound together as children of God, who is loving, generous, and just.

You can make a secure donation by going to <http://www.ucc.org/disaster>.