

# FAITH & JUSTICE

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## The Protectors

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**Editor**  
Karen Kurtz

**Senior Writer**  
Chris Potts

**Art Director/Photography**  
Bruce Ellefson  
Jonathan Marshall  
Pam Risdon

**Contributors**  
Michael Farris  
Gary McCaleb  
Terry Schlossberg



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Questions or comments on this issue?  
Email [Editor@ADFlegal.org](mailto:Editor@ADFlegal.org).

15100 N. 90th Street, Scottsdale, AZ 85260  
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An activist screams insults during the Harris Funeral Homes rally, as Eddie McBride, ADF security manager, looks on.

Christian viewpoints have rarely been truly popular in my lifetime—at least among many elites in the media, Hollywood, academia, and in certain sectors of political life. These forces have often disagreed with Christian views, but

now disagreement has turned to demonizing. There is no more room for agreeing to disagree. People of faith who fail to ratify the dogma of elites will be vilified and worse.



If you believe that marriage is the union of one man and one woman, they accuse you of having hostility toward people with same-sex attraction. If you believe that human beings are created male and female, they claim you despise people who identify as transgender. If you believe that life begins at conception, you hate women — or so our accusers contend.

That faithful Christians are hated for their beliefs should come as no surprise. Jesus himself says that “you will be hated by all for my name’s sake” (Matthew 10:22).

Many Alliance Defending Freedom clients have experienced this hostility firsthand. People like Barronelle

## Minutes With Michael No Matter The Cost

By Michael Farris

Stutzman, Blaine Adamson, and Jack Phillips have felt the sting of smearing front-page headlines, Facebook comments, emails, phone calls, and more. Barronelle and Jack have even had their lives threatened.

This kind of opposition was on full

display at a rally that took place on the day of oral arguments in the *Harris Funeral Homes* case. As a group gathered to show its support for the view that “sex” should not be redefined to include “gender identity,” activists taunted supporters and cursed at children. One woman used a bullhorn to scream insults — for two hours.

The tactics used by these activists are uncivil at best. But the call to all faithful Christians is to stay true to their beliefs despite cultural — and sometimes governmental — pressure.

In Luke 14, Jesus instructs us to “count the cost” of following Him.

Similarly, ADF clients count the cost when they decide to take a stand. Many, like Blaine Adamson, say, “I will stand, no matter the cost.” In our time, we all must be prepared to do the same.

Standing will mean enduring ridicule. It may mean losing your job. It might even mean losing friends or being ostracized by your family. I fear that the repercussions may escalate even beyond all this.

In the end, we all must count which cost is greater: Following Christ, or forsaking Him? **A**

# News & Quick Takes

## Case Updates From Around The World

### Washington

The U.S. Supreme Court received **numerous friend-of-the court briefs in support of the freedom of Washington state floral artist Barronelle Stutzman** to live and work according to her faith. Seventeen states, 43 members of Congress, and an array of legal experts and religious groups submitted briefs.

Washington's attorney general and the ACLU sued Stutzman for discrimination after she declined, because of her faith, to create floral art celebrating the same-sex wedding of a longtime customer. The ACLU's case puts both her business and her life's savings at risk.

ADF attorneys representing Stutzman asked the U.S. Supreme Court last fall to take up her case after the Washington Supreme Court ruled against her a second time in June.

At press time, ADF was awaiting word on whether the U.S. Supreme Court will agree to take her case.

### Lexington, Kentucky

The Kentucky Supreme Court in October **ruled in favor of Lexington promotional print shop owner Blaine Adamson.**

The case began in 2012, when Adamson declined to print T-shirts promoting a gay pride festival, explaining that he could not print a shirt with a message that conflicts with his faith. The festival's organizers filed a discrimination complaint against Adamson and his company, Hands On Originals, even though they eventually received shirts for free from another printer.

### East Lansing, Michigan

**The case of a Michigan family farm against the city of East Lansing will proceed to trial this year.** In December, a federal district court's ruling acknowledged that East Lansing passed an ordinance with unconstitutional provisions and then excluded Country Mill Farms from the city's farmers market.

In 2016, Country Mill owner Steve Tennes was denied a vendor's license for the farmers market after posting a statement on Facebook indicating that his family-owned farm would decline to host same-sex weddings because they believe that marriage is between one man and one woman. When city officials became aware of the post, they banned Country Mills from selling its produce at the farmers market.

### Louisville, Kentucky

ADF attorneys representing a Kentucky photographer filed suit in federal court to challenge a law that could force her to use her artistic talents to celebrate events that violate her religious beliefs. Chelsey Nelson is an entrepreneur who specializes in photographing and blogging about weddings. A Louisville law **forces her to use her artistic talents to promote and participate in same-sex wedding ceremonies** if she photographs and blogs about weddings between one man and one woman.

### North Dakota

ADF is representing the world's largest affiliation of pregnancy centers to **defend a North Dakota law that ensures women are fully informed about abortion.** Under North Dakota law, abortion providers are required to tell women considering abortion that the practice terminates the life of a "separate, unique, living human being" and that the chemical abortion process may be reversible if treated quickly. But the American Medical Association is challenging these informed consent laws.

Heartbeat International, which operates the national Abortion Pill Reversal Network and has two affiliated pregnancy centers in North Dakota, filed a motion with a federal court to intervene in the lawsuit. The court granted its request in November.

### Syracuse, New York

Thanks to a court ruling, a faith-based adoption provider can continue serving children in need — for now. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit issued an emergency order in November that **temporarily halts New York officials from targeting New Hope Family Services for its religious beliefs.**

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services singled out the nonprofit for its policy of placing the children it serves in homes with a married mother and father. Calling the policy "discriminatory and impermissible," the office threatened to shut down the adoption program. ADF filed a lawsuit on New Hope's behalf.

### Strasbourg, France

The European Court of Human Rights has ruled in favor of an Afghani citizen (identified only as "A.A."), who sought asylum in Switzerland and faced deportation. ADF International had intervened to highlight the severe breaches of human rights in Afghanistan against religious minorities.

After converting from Islam to Christianity, the Swiss government denied A.A.'s request for asylum. **The individual could have faced severe persecution if deported back to Afghanistan.** In the country, conversion from Islam to another religion is illegal "apostasy," with punishments ranging from lengthy imprisonment to death.

### New York

ADF attorneys filed a lawsuit against the state of New York challenging **a new law that would force pro-life ministries and organizations to hire individuals who support abortion.** Signed by Gov. Andrew Cuomo in November, Senate Bill 660 prohibits employers from hiring and managing based on employees' reproductive health decisions.

ADF is representing CompassCare, a pregnancy care center in Rochester; First Bible Baptist Church in Hilton; and the National Institute of Family and Life Advocates (NIFLA), an association of pro-life pregnancy centers.

The lawsuit notes that SB 660 seeks to remedy a non-existent problem. The bill's proponents failed to cite any documented instances of employment discrimination based on "reproductive health decisions" in New York or anywhere else.

### Russia

Following a raid and forced closure of a house of worship, ADF International has filed an application against Russia with Europe's top human rights court, on behalf of Pastor Vitaliy Bak.

Bak is the leader of a Baptist community in Verkhnebakansky, Russia, and owner of a home used for worship services. In July 2018, **authorities raided the property during a service and forced the closure of the area used for worship.** They accused the community of unlawfully using a residential property for worship and claimed the building had not been secured in accordance with Russian anti-terror laws.

Under Russian law, religious groups cannot own property and must therefore meet in homes. The European Convention on Human Rights protects the freedom of assembly and freedom from discrimination on the basis of religion.

**Christians in the MENA region are known to be one of the most persecuted groups in the world.**

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Kelsey Zorzi, ADF International Director of Advocacy for Global Religious Freedom

### Middle East/North Africa

In November, ADF International launched the **first network of lawyers in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region committed to advancing religious freedom.**

"Christians in the MENA region are known to be one of the most persecuted groups in the world," says Kelsey Zorzi, ADF International's director of advocacy for global religious freedom. While many organizations have sought to reduce persecution through awareness raising and other efforts, there have been no coordinated efforts for legal advocacy, she says. "ADF International has taken the first critical step to fill this gap."

Fourteen lawyers representing eight countries attended the November event, where participants expressed great enthusiasm for the network's vision for expanding religious freedom, Zorzi says. "Even our professional translator (a local Arab) got caught up in the exciting dialogue and accidentally blurted out, 'I love this conversation!' in the midst of translating."



Special Feature

# Death Wishes

## Tackling The Growing Demand For Euthanasia

By Karen Kurtz

No hope.

That was the prognosis Karen Welch’s doctor delivered after she suffered a stroke in Belgium.

An American missionary serving with her husband in Brussels, she’d had surgery the day before to remove a benign tumor on her carotid artery — a generally safe procedure, with a good outcome expected. But plaque or a blood clot had dislodged during the operation, cutting the flow of blood to Karen’s brain.

Bob Welch kept vigil at his wife’s bedside. A few days later, a doctor approached with a grave expression.

“Please come,” the doctor beckoned, directing him to an MRI scan.

“There’s no hope,” the doctor declared, pointing to multiple areas of the scan that revealed dead brain cells. “Your wife will be a vegetable.”

As the conversation continued, Bob inferred that Karen’s doctor recommended ending her life. But Bob, a theology professor, refused to consider this course of action.

“I’ve shown you level after level of that scan where her brain cells are dead,” the doctor persisted, clearly frustrated. Bob stood his ground.

Then ... Karen began to improve. She moved a hand, then spoke a word. More words followed.

“I saw a *miracle*,” Bob says.

Eventually, Karen walked out of the hospital. With therapy, she began to play the piano and sing — two activities she had enjoyed since childhood. At Christmastime, she performed at the Belgium School

Chapel, where “there was not a dry eye in the whole house,” Bob says.

Recalling the doctor’s grim prognosis and troubling “solution,” he hopes that Karen’s surprising recovery will help counter the growing push for euthanasia in the country where he and his wife live and serve.

“People need to see that there are possibilities” even in difficult circumstances, he says. “Life itself is something to be magnified and to be enjoyed and cherished.”

**WATCH:** Bob and Karen Welch share their story at [ADFlegal.org/fj-Welch](http://ADFlegal.org/fj-Welch)



Bob and Karen Welch

## The inevitable effect of euthanasia laws is that what starts off as a voluntary process fast becomes involuntary.

“

Robert Clarke, Deputy Director (Advocacy)  
ADF International

More than 17,000 people have been euthanized in Belgium since the country legalized the practice in 2002. Belgium was the second country to officially adopt euthanasia, just on the heels of the Netherlands. Today, assisted suicide is also permitted in Switzerland, Luxembourg, Colombia, and Canada, along with Washington, D.C., and nine U.S. states — California, Colorado, Hawaii, Maine, Montana, New Jersey, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington.

“The threat is not going anywhere,” says Robert Clarke, Deputy Director (Advocacy) for ADF International.

“We know of laws being proposed in more than a dozen countries around the world,” he says. “And according to Death with Dignity [an Oregon-based nonprofit advocating for euthanasia laws], 18 U.S. states will consider such a law in the next year or session.”

ADF International has launched a global campaign, Affirm Dignity | End Euthanasia, to promote a better understanding of the inherent dignity of every person in response to proposals to legalize euthanasia around the world.

## A ‘Good’ Death?

Euthanasia comes from the Greek words *Eu* (good) and *Thanatos* (death) and means “good death.”

Supporters insist that “right-to-die” laws are necessary to respect the dignity of suffering people and that euthanasia is a private, individual choice.

That choice, though, comes at the expense of others. “Euthanasia is not a death with dignity,” says Joni Eareckson Tada, founder of Joni and Friends and author of

*When is it Right to Die?* “There’s nothing dignified by cutting short your life with three grams of phenobarbital in the veins. It certainly did not dignify it for you, and it’s not dignified for your loved ones.

“No decision to end your life is ever, ever private,” Tada says. “It always impacts *everyone*.”

Eric Vermeer, nursing professor and psychotherapist in Belgium, shares the story of a nurse who told him, “I had my husband euthanized.”

Though the husband was not suffering intense pain, the man asked his wife to arrange for his death — and made her promise to choose the day and time without letting him know.

“As she had promised not to say anything, on the fateful day she chose, she didn’t even have the opportunity to say to her husband, ‘Goodbye, thank you for everything. I love you,’” Vermeer says. “He was euthanized in a clear, sterile, cold, and grim manner.”

The nurse collapsed in tears as she shared her story with Vermeer. “We both died that day,” she told him. “Him physically, and me psychologically.”



Robert Clarke

## The Growing Demand

When euthanasia was first legalized, supporters claimed it would be reserved for cases involving terminal illness and “unbearable suffering.”

But today a person may request euthanasia for depression, dementia, or normal symptoms of aging such as worsening eyesight, hearing, or mobility. In Belgium, children of any age can request a lethal injection, with their parents’ permission.

**SIGN:** the charter to protect human dignity. Visit [AffirmDignity.org](http://AffirmDignity.org) and click Sign Your Support.



Wherever euthanasia has been legalized, an extension of possible reasons for euthanasia follows.



In Switzerland, a woman paid to be euthanized because she no longer felt pretty.



In Belgium, the ratio of euthanasia administered to non-terminal patients more than doubled between 2004 and 2017.



In Belgium and the Netherlands, legislative efforts to expand the availability of euthanasia suggest allowing the practice on the grounds of being “tired of life.”



The youngest child euthanized in Belgium was 9 years old.



In Oregon, loneliness is recorded as a leading factor for choosing euthanasia.



Benoit Beuselincq

**We have begun to offer death as a medical solution.**



Benoit Beuselincq  
Belgian Professor of Oncology

“Once legalized, there is no logical stopping point to euthanasia,” says Professor Theo Boer, a Dutch ethicist who supported the Netherlands’ 2002 euthanasia legislation. At the time, he was convinced that a “good euthanasia law” provided the basis for a relatively low number of euthanasia procedures.

Boer changed his position in 2014, after reviewing thousands of euthanasia cases while serving nine years on a euthanasia review committee. “We were wrong, terribly wrong,” he wrote in a public appeal to the British House of Lords. He mentioned the mounting number of euthanasia demands and the shift in patients who receive euthanasia — noting more cases of loneliness, depression, and bereavement.

“Assisted dying in the beginning was the odd exception, accepted by many — including myself — as a last resort,” he wrote. “Public opinion has shifted dramatically toward considering assisted dying a patient’s right and a physician’s duty.”

## Better Solutions

“We have begun to offer death as a medical solution,” says Benoit Beuselincq, a Belgian professor of oncology. “I have heard about people who have been offered euthanasia, although they were not even thinking about it.”

Physical suffering at the end of illness can usually be controlled through palliative care, Beuselincq says. But when euthanasia is an option, doctors are asked, more and more, to resolve their patients’ physical problems by administering death.

“There are better solutions than the direct attribution of death,” Beuselincq says. “This better solution is palliative care, which addresses every need of the human person.”

In Vermeer’s experience, most patients who are considering euthanasia no longer desire it when their physical suffering is eased and they receive emotional support — two hallmarks of palliative care. In 80% to 90% of these cases, he says, patients abandon the request for euthanasia when these two conditions are met.

## Right to Die vs. Duty to Die

The inevitable effect of euthanasia laws is that what starts off as a voluntary process fast becomes involuntary,” says Clarke. “The so-called ‘right to die’ soon becomes a duty to die for the elderly, the vulnerable, and those who feel themselves to be a burden.”

In Oregon, physician-assisted suicide was legalized in 1997 for cases of “suffering from terminal disease.” In 2018, over three-fourths of the people who died by assisted suicide considered their pain control adequate. But over half were concerned about being a burden to their family.

“Our experience is that no matter how apparently strict a euthanasia law is, it is bound to fail to protect the vulnerable,” Clarke says.

“The ultimate outcome is that human life is valued less and less, and the people we should be caring for become victims of this ‘euthanasia culture.’

“The slippery slope is not just hypothetical, but on full display.”

**VISIT:** [AffirmDignity.org](http://AffirmDignity.org)  
to learn more about the threat of euthanasia laws.



The steepest increase in euthanasia requests comes from patients who have been diagnosed with dementia.



The European Court of Human Rights has repeatedly ruled that there is no “right to die.”

**75%**

of people who died by assisted suicide in Oregon agreed that their pain was under control.

## Alliance Profile

### Alan Reinach

By Chris Potts

As early as sixth grade, Alan Reinach’s gift for arguing with his teachers prompted their suggestion that he consider becoming an attorney someday. Trouble was, by the time he grew up and the idea really interested him, he was sure it was too late. As a new Christian, he was convinced that Jesus would return long before he could finish three years of law school.



The conviction was part of his zeal as a new believer — one who came to his faith gratefully, enthusiastically, after long years of spiritual searching. Born to a Jewish family, Reinach spent his young manhood looking for answers to the meaning of life.

“I was a wanna-be hippie,” he remembers, “reading

mystics, doing yoga.” A former neighbor reached out to share his own recent salvation experience, inviting Reinach to study the Bible and attend church with him.

With his newfound faith came a growing interest in religious freedom, and, eventually, a calling to defend that quintessential American ideal.

Today, Reinach holds a unique place among the Allied Attorneys associated with Alliance Defending Freedom. As director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty for the western region of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, he specializes in defending people who have lost their jobs on account of their faith — people like Mark Armitage.

A few years ago, Armitage, a lab technician with the biology department at California State University, Northridge, was part of a Montana archaeological dig that turned up a large triceratops horn — and some soft tissue. For Armitage, a creationist, the tissue seemed evidence that the dinosaur had lived much more recently than the “millions of years ago” that most evolutionists

would suggest. He didn’t point that out when writing up the findings, but another student told a Cal State biology professor of a conversation he and Armitage had had about it. Armitage was fired.

Reinach represented Armitage in a lawsuit against the university, winning an out-of-court settlement “for considerably more than his part-time lab tech salary.” It’s still one of the very few legal cases to be decided in favor of creationists.

“We help people put their lives back together,” Reinach says. “When people lose their jobs because of their faith, it can really shake them. There’s a lot of suffering — and not just financial suffering — involved. It can affect marriage relationships. We try to just help them over the hump, support them with prayer and encouragement, and to get them squared away financially.”

**When people lose their jobs because of their faith, it can really shake them.**



Alan Reinach

A native New Yorker, Reinach came to California to work for the Seventh-day Adventists more than 25 years ago, and not long after he linked up with Alliance Defending Freedom, which he found to be — even in those early days of its existence — “a really good program and networking opportunity. It was clear they were putting together a very professional organization.”

Over the last two decades, he’s accepted many ADF referrals, benefited from its resources, cultivated friendships, and enjoyed “being part of the broader association of Christian lawyers.”

“One of the things I’ve learned, doing interfaith work, is how much larger the body of Christ is than our narrow denominational boundaries,” Reinach says. “We tend to think of the body in terms of our own denomination, but the body of Christ is much bigger than that.”



Cover Story

# The Protectors

Defending Homeless Women Puts An Alaska Shelter  
At Odds With City Officials

**I**t's 9 o'clock on a cold, wet night in downtown Anchorage ... the end, at last, of a long Friday. A weary Sherrie Laurie and her gregarious little Schnauzer, Jubilee, make their way down the stairs from her office on the second floor of Downtown Hope Center, a soup kitchen that doubles, at night, as a shelter for women.

On the first floor, about 50 women are settling in for the night in the 6,000-square-foot room where several hundred homeless souls converged a few hours earlier for hot soup and a sandwich. The kitchen closes in the early evening. By now, the outside doors are locked, the dinner tables have been moved aside, and the women are lining up to get the mats on which they'll make their beds, spreading them across broad benches spaced a couple of feet apart.

Here, among so many others who share their pain, addictions, and loneliness, they feel safe, at least, from the dangers of the streets just outside.

Sherrie and Jubilee step out a side door onto those streets, and into a driving rain. They catch sight of a woman trying to pull open another side door to the shelter. Sherrie, who for five years has served as executive director of Hope Center, asks if she can be of help. But the woman keeps tugging at the locked door.

Sherrie suggests that she move around the corner and knock at the front door. The woman doesn't want to do that. She moves instead to pet Jubilee, who is wary, growling, and barking. Sherrie takes note, but calms her dog and lets the woman pet her. Then Sherrie offers to take her inside.

The shelter director says there's room enough for one more, and so Sherrie directs the woman to the line for bedding, and tells her how to find a space and lay out her mat. She wishes the woman a good night, then asks the security guard to escort her to the dark parking area across the street.

They're halfway there when the door bursts open behind them. "Come quick!" a lady screams.

They race back. The woman has grabbed a tiny elderly lady beside her in the line, lifted her by her hair, and begun clawing her face. As Sherrie rushes in, several women tackle the attacker, bringing her down and using all their collective strength to pin her as she screams and writhes and spits and seems to go completely insane before their eyes.

The police don't respond quickly; Sherrie and the others have held the woman for more than half an hour before officers come in to relieve them. They check and find the woman has a history of violence and has spent time in psychiatric wards. They wrap her in warm blankets, and the officers take her away.

"Those kinds of things happen," Sherrie says, "and happen that fast. All of a sudden, things just come apart. And you walk away, thinking, 'God, why do I do this? Why do you have me here?'"

It's a question Sherrie knows all too well. She knows the answer, too.

## Everyone has a story

“

Sherrie Laurie

Executive Director, Downtown Hope Center

**I actually got down on the floor – it was a dirty floor – and said, ‘God, I need compassion. I can’t do this without compassion.’**

“

Sherrie Laurie, Executive Director, Downtown Hope Center

**I**t’s been 15 years since Sherrie retired from two happy decades as a FedEx pilot to spend more time with her family. Along with her family commitments, she also felt God was calling her to something new. “And so,” she says — and this tells you most of what you need to know about Sherrie — “I thought I’d conquer some of my fears.”

Among her biggest fears, as it happened, were the negatives she associated with homeless individuals. (A homeless uncle had often frightened her as a child.) From those memories, she admits, came a judgmental attitude toward drug addicts, alcoholics, and the ways of those living on the streets. Facing her fears, she decided to volunteer at Downtown Soup Kitchen.

Soon enough, they moved her from the lunch line to what was called the “shower house,” a building that offered hot showers to homeless individuals while staffers laundered their clothes.

“I remember my first day, sitting there, holding these filthy clothes,” she says. “You have no idea the stuff that’s on their clothes. I’m a germ freak, and ... it was just awful, and I’m thinking, ‘Why in the world am I here?’”

Sherrie liked to think of herself as a kind person, but watching one of her coworkers interact with the people coming in off the street, she marveled. “She was so kind to them,” she recalls. “She’d just do anything. She’d wash their feet. I was scared, sometimes, to even hug these people. And I remember thinking, ‘I’m not a very compassionate person.’”

“I actually got down on the floor — it was a dirty floor — and said, ‘God, I need compassion. I can’t do this without compassion.’ And that started a journey of learning what His compassion is. By the end of the day, I absolutely loved what I was doing, and I was thanking God all the way home, like ‘Thank You that I can do this!’ I mean, it just did something inside of me.”

The transformation grew, day by day, and with it, zeal for the work and insights into how it might be done better. Eventually, she secured a spot on the soup kitchen board — then, unexpectedly, found herself pressed to take on the job of executive director.

“It’s not often that you find a person of her sophistication who’s willing to help people at their worst,” says Richard Irwin, her then-pastor and fellow board member who nudged her to take the position. “I just felt like it was God ... that His hands were on her to do it.”

“I literally prayed and fasted for 40 days,” Sherrie laughs. “And at the end of it, I said, ‘Well, all I can do is fail.’ But I figure, if God’s asking, then He’ll help. And He has — tremendously.”

“Sherrie’s a hands-on person,” Irwin says. “She’s smart. She’s very tenacious. And a servant. There was no question about it. She was the obvious choice. It took real courage, because she’d never done that before — she didn’t have a manual on it. It’s a very different kind of leadership than flying. But when she stepped into this, [Downtown Hope Center] evolved very fast.”

**We see them come to the Lord, right and left. So many want to be baptized.**

“

Sherrie Laurie

Executive Director, Downtown Hope Center

**B**efore Sherrie came on board, there was no women’s shelter at the ministry — only the soup kitchen, showers, and laundry. But one week, back in her volunteer days, she and some friends had sponsored an evangelistic event to reach those living on the downtown streets, and put up an enormous tent in a nearby park where women could stay for a few nights.

“At night, I would stay in the tent, and the ladies would come in there, and they’d be so scared,” Sherrie says. “People would try to drag them out of the tent. I didn’t realize life was like that — that bad — at night. I was even a little scared.”

Out of those nights came the idea for a shelter ... a place where women with no place else to go could find a safe place to sleep. Sherrie began working to make such a place a reality. Five years later, she found herself the executive director of the soup kitchen (soon to be renamed Downtown

Hope Center), and she and her team were able to accommodate the urgings of a nearby shelter to open up an overnight facility for women. The first year, she took in 30; today, that number is more like 50.

“When they come in here,” Sherrie says, “if you can imagine what it’s like, being beaten to the point of death, being told you’re nothing. Held captive. Drugged, till you have no idea even who you are.” In other local shelters, opened to both men and women, “their predators are there.”

Sherrie tells of women taken from those shelters and murdered — or set on fire, or raped, or forced to sell drugs, or themselves. “The women become victims so often. Alaska’s the number one state for domestic violence in the whole nation. Four times the national average, here.”

Which is why, she says, “I absolutely love the women in the shelter, and watching them come alive, when they come in here. They start realizing there’s others sharing the same story. They start working together. Laughter comes in, friendship comes in, feelings of life come in. These deep relationships develop. They remind each other to live by their values. We see them come to the Lord, right and left. So many want to be baptized.”

“These are women who would never have even said anything before, because of how downtrodden ... how abused they were. But here, they’re getting their voices back.”



You have to have discernment, to see people hurting, and to know why they're hurting.

“

Jim Corso, Head of Security, Downtown Hope Center



Jim Corso, head of security, shares a laugh with Shelter Director Monica Martinez.

“God shows up here all the time,” he says. “It’s His house. We’re just blessed to be able to serve here.” His students are among those serving — helping prepare the sandwiches and soup that feed 450-600 men and women at lunch each day, and an evening meal for the 50 women in the shelter.

“We give them all a smile,” he says. “For some, it’s the only one they’re going to get all day.”

Those moving through the line reflect every size and shape, age, and ethnicity. Some are quick and alert, some not. Some seem tired and sullen, others sweet and cheerful ... others angry, jittery — volcanoes, waiting to erupt.

“You have to have discernment,” says Jim Corso, a retired federal agent, Vietnam veteran, and head of security for Hope Center. “To see people hurting, and to know *why* they’re hurting.” He tries to help the Center’s 160 weekly volunteers cultivate that discernment.

A self-described “people person,” Corso was drafted for the job by Sherrie, who goes to the same church he does — the church Irwin used to pastor. Many of the other Hope Center employees have experienced their own difficult pasts. For them, their own hard experiences deepen their commitment to the Center’s ministry, and their appreciation for what it means to those in the shelter and the soup lines. They encourage each other, show grace to each other, and push each other to do better — and be better — every day.

“Bottom line: we’re all just a piece of work that God is refining,” Irwin says. “And if we can’t go there, then we make really good Pharisees.” He laughs. “I’m a recovering Pharisee. I hope.”

“We’re one big happy family,” Corso says. “There really aren’t any bad days.”

Well ... maybe one.

Under Sherrie’s direction, Downtown Hope Center has also grown to include the Feed Me Hope Bakery (whose products are sold throughout the community, with all profits going to support the shelter) and a 16-week culinary school, open to select applicants from the soup lines who show that they are serious about the opportunity. The culinary school includes a life skills class that encourages those participating to take a hard, thoughtful look at their choices and consider what’s needed for them to make real, lasting changes in their lives.

“We give them back hope,” says “Chef David” Sorensen, who teaches the culinary classes, and assists with other duties in the Feed Me Hope program. “We give them back self-esteem.” And when graduation comes around, many of them stop by to say how grateful they are for the ministry at Downtown Hope Center and the love of the staff.



We give them all a smile.  
For some, it’s the only one they’re going to get all day.

“

Dave Sorensen  
Head Chef, Downtown Hope Center

Dave Sorensen prepares soup for the 450-600 people who will soon begin arriving for lunch.

Another Friday night, late and cold. Sherrie was in her office upstairs when a call came in from the shelter below — a man was at the front door, demanding admission. Not entirely knowing what to expect, she headed downstairs.

Standing there was a tall man she’d met many times before. He was a man who liked to identify as a woman, who came through the soup line fairly regularly. Tonight he was clearly intoxicated, bleeding from a gash down his face, and dressed in a pink nightgown. He repeated his demand to stay at Hope Center, with the women.

That was not an option. The other women in the room were already moving as far away from him as possible. Many had been sexually assaulted by men on the street or in other shelters. None of them were comfortable with the thought of this man — or *any* man — sleeping a few feet away.

So, Sherrie spoke with him. She called for a cab to come and take him to the hospital, where his injury could be treated. After a while, he seemed amenable to that, and even smiled and hugged Sherrie as he left for the hospital. He called her “Mother Teresa.”

The next afternoon, in her upstairs office, she got a call that he was back, suitcase in hand, trying again to gain admission to the women’s shelter. Sherrie came downstairs and explained that no one was allowed into the shelter on weekends; the women admitted on Friday evenings were locked in for the weekend, under the protection of volunteers. No one else could be admitted until the shelter opened again on Monday evening.

The man wasn’t smiling now, and Sherrie was no longer “Mother Teresa.” He insisted he be let in, but Sherrie knew she couldn’t budge. He went away angry.

But the women in the shelter, watching the confrontation, sighed with relief. They later told Sherrie that if she’d let the man in — that afternoon or the night before — many of them would have left and not come back. They couldn’t bear the uneasiness of having a man so close at hand, in a place where they would sleep or change clothes.

Two weeks later, Sherrie received a letter from the Anchorage Equal Rights Commission. The man she’d helped that night had filed a formal complaint, charging sex and gender identity discrimination.



It should go without saying, but protecting vulnerable women isn't illegal.

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Kate Anderson, ADF Senior Counsel

“No good deed goes unpunished,” says Ryan Tucker, senior counsel with the ADF Center for Christian Ministries and one of the attorneys Sherrie eventually enlisted to defend Downtown Hope Center against the complaint.

Tucker and his colleagues soon found that the city’s Equal Rights Commission was investigating Hope Center, with an eye to forcing the ministry to open its nightly shelter to biological men who identify as women. In essence, city officials demanded that the Center set aside the beliefs on which its services were based — or else close down its overnight shelter.

“The community — they know that we do a really good work here,” Sherrie says. “They know we don’t take any state money, [so] they can’t figure out how we do it and why it works. They’d like us to be more ... accommodating of their agenda. They know we make a difference — they’re just not so sure about God being involved in what we do.”

“That faith commitment is what motivates Downtown Hope Center and its duty to protect the vulnerable women it serves,” says Kate Anderson, senior counsel with the ADF Center for Conscience Initiatives. All Americans, she adds, “should be free to

live and serve others according to their faith, without fear of unjust government punishment.”

“It should go without saying, but protecting vulnerable women isn’t illegal,” Anderson says. “No woman — particularly not an abuse survivor — should be forced to sleep or disrobe next to a man. Downtown Hope Center serves everyone, but women deserve a safe place to stay overnight.”

Since Hope Center had not, in fact, violated any law, ADF filed a federal lawsuit on its behalf against the Anchorage Equal Rights Commission and the city. In September, a U.S. District Court issued an order saying Anchorage’s public accommodation law does not apply to the Center’s women’s shelter — and could not be used to force the Center to open its shelter to men who identify as women.

Soon after, the commission dropped its pursuit of the complaint.

“This [situation] is not limited solely to Anchorage,” says Tucker. “This is a broader concern for the nation as a whole, and certainly for faith-based institutions that clearly make their positions known to their community.” He cites groups like Catholic Charities of West Michigan and New Hope Family Services of New York (both being



**Top:** A shelter guest and graduate of the Feed Me Hope culinary and bakery programs **Middle:** Sherrie Laurie with Daja Scroggs, graduate of the bakery program and now bakery manager **Bottom:** Members of the Anchorage community — many without homes — line up for lunch.

pressured to support adoptions by same-sex couples) and churches like Cedar Park in Washington and Skyline Wesleyan in California (both being compelled to provide employee insurance coverage for abortions).

More than just an assault on people who live out their faith in the public square, he says, “this is an absolute war on *women*. They are not valued in these situations, where the culture says that biological ‘sex has no meaning,’ that ‘there are no differences.’”

That threat, Tucker says, “always remains, across the nation, as we delve into some uncharted legal and cultural territory.”

“This whole journey has been one of the highlights of my life,” Sherrie says. “We would never be here now but that ADF came to our defense.” More than that, she says, “ADF has a culture of honor — with each other, toward their clients, even in how they handle the people that the lawsuit is against. They’re my heroes.”

The admiration is mutual.

“There are certain people that just make an imprint on you, as a lawyer,” Anderson says, “people you’re never going to forget. And Sherrie Laurie is one of them. I’ve been so inspired by the love she has for the women she serves ... people that the rest of society has thrown away. Seeing her love for them and for what she does has inspired that kind of care in me.”

That compassion Sherrie prayed for so long ago was given, freely and in abundant measure.

“You look at the lunch line, at the number of people broken down there,” she says, “and you realize ... everyone has a story. Every single one. They didn’t get born that way. They were raised in an abusive family; they were abused as a child; they were in a bad accident and got a traumatic brain injury; they were in a domestic violence situation; they were trafficked as a child. They’re just human beings that something horrible happened to.

“If it wasn’t that I know that there’s a God who loves people, I would be hopeless for these people. I would just stop doing this, and I’d go back to flying. But because I know God loves people, I have hope for *these* people. And He has to use somebody to bring them that hope.

“That’s how I can come to work every day.” **A**

**WATCH:**

Meet some of the women of Downtown Hope Center at [ADFLegal.org/fj-Hope](http://ADFLegal.org/fj-Hope)





Gary McCaleb (back row, fifth from right) with his fire crew at Hells Canyon National Recreation Area in Oregon, in August 1986

Opinion

# Out Of The Fire And Into The Frying Pan

How A Forest Ranger Became An ADF Attorney

By Gary McCaleb

In 1992, I was busy planning timber sales and fighting wildfire while working with the U.S. Forest Service in Catron County, New Mexico. It was an unlikely place to confront American culture wars: the county was mostly Catholic and so thinly populated that there were five times more elk than people.

But spring brought a preview of an approaching cultural shift. Our regional fire manager ordered us to “value the sexual orientation” of our firefighters when on wildfire assignments. Agency officials said we had to “redefine the family” to better serve our customers and “celebrate diversity” by affirming people for choosing LGBT lifestyles.

From my cluttered office set in a dusty ranger station in the middle of nowhere, I considered the consequences if I didn't comply. As a matter of Christian conscience, I wasn't about to do it. Morality is set by the Bible, not a bureaucrat's email. I was among many who resisted — but it was clear that the assault on a biblical view of sexuality was ramping up.

Ultimately I decided that if I had to fight this fight, I should do it in court, where victories might have lasting

cultural impact. So, 1994 found me at Regent University School of Law, after which I served with the American Center for Law and Justice and the Center for Arizona Policy, until joining Alliance Defending Freedom in 2002.

Back then, ADF's battles centered on equal-access issues such as recognizing student Bible clubs at public schools and allowing religious groups the use of public meeting rooms.

I found myself suing my old high school, which had refused to recognize a student-led Bible club, and aiding a pro-life group that was denied access to a public park. I also defended a church in Washington

state that had been charged commercial rates to rent a school auditorium when non-religious groups enjoyed reduced non-profit rates.

But soon after I joined the ministry, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom brashly proclaimed that same-sex marriage was legal in his city, setting off years of pitched conflict over the meaning of marriage. A decade later, the Supreme Court legally redefined

**Morality is set by the Bible, not a bureaucrat's email.**

“

Gary McCaleb

marriage, holding that couples of the same sex have a constitutional right to wed in all 50 states.

No longer would our law protect marriage as the unique union of a man and woman that alone offers the innate potential to create and nurture the next generation. Instead, civil marriage was redefined so that any two people were entitled to its “transcendent” benefits of “nobility” and “dignity,” regardless of whether the real nature of marriage was ignored in the judicial process.

Our opponents then attacked the very nature of mankind. They insisted that we are not created as one sex or the other, but that we are “gendered” beings who can decide whether we want to be male or female, some of both, or simply something else.

Today we resist strident demands to affirm gender-identity ideology, even including laws forcing us to call a man “she” if the man says he is a “her.”

**I decided that if I had to fight this fight, I should do it in court where victories might have lasting cultural impact.**

“

Gary McCaleb

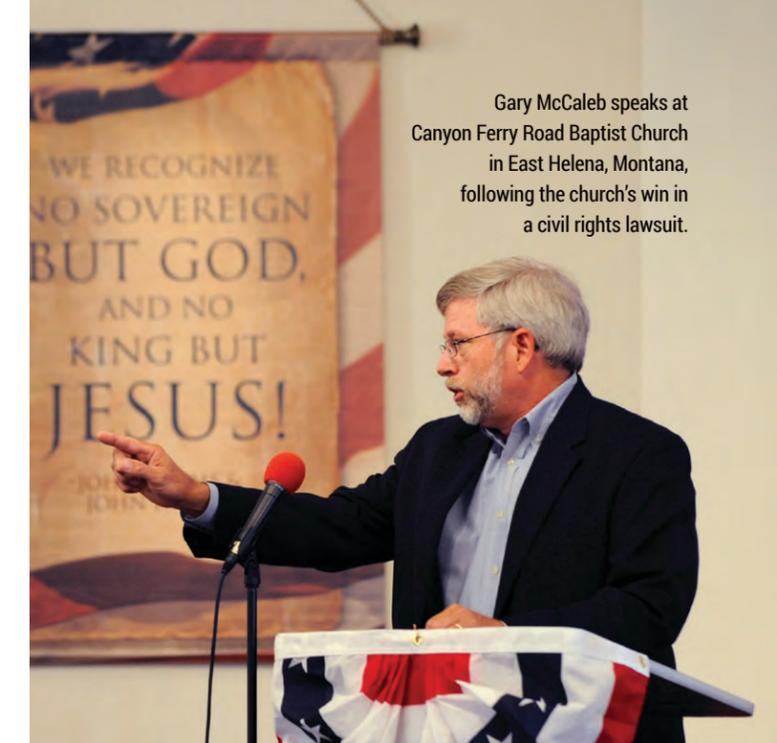
Last year, high school teacher Peter Vlaming was fired by his West Point, Virginia, school after he chose not to refer to a female student by the male pronouns the student preferred. To Peter, using the requested pronouns would be to ignore the objective reality that the student was female. ADF is representing him in a case against the school board.

Weaponizing pronouns is not new. In the late 1930s, a gangling young Englishman named Eric Blair set off to fight General Franco's fascist forces in the Spanish Civil War. He joined a communist anti-fascist group, but noted an oddity as he headed for the front: the communists had banned the use of formal Spanish pronouns, permitting only the informal pronouns that typically applied to the favored working-class proletariat.

Eric fought until severely wounded, discovering along the way communism's totalitarian nature. He returned to England as a staunch opponent of totalitarianism, so much so that today we know Eric by his pen name, George Orwell — author of *1984* and *Animal Farm*.

All this points to why I served at ADF. I love liberty, and Orwell deftly demonstrated that liberty suffers when the government enforces false realities.

Once, foreign governments posed a military threat of imposing these false doctrines on Americans by



Gary McCaleb speaks at Canyon Ferry Road Baptist Church in East Helena, Montana, following the church's win in a civil rights lawsuit.

force. Today, our own government poses cultural threats of imposing false doctrines on Americans through law. Our ability to live out our faith and act on our principles of conscience is deeply at risk.

Yet I am encouraged: in recent years ADF and the broader Alliance have forcefully defended the rights of conscience and religion, and we are seeing profound victories for men and women of faith and conscience.

Folks like Jack Phillips in *Masterpiece Cakeshop*, Angel and Carl Larsen in *Telescope Media*, and Joanna Duka and Breanna Koski in *Brush & Nib* have soldiered with their ADF attorneys through years of litigation, emerging victorious and setting key precedents to help keep the doors open for the Gospel.

To have served these good men and women and many more has been a privilege — not just for the principles established, but for the fact that every one of these victories protects freedom for every American. And that I count a worthy legacy, indeed. **A**

*Gary McCaleb served as senior counsel at Alliance Defending Freedom starting in 2002 until retiring in 2019.*

My View

## A Marriage Reflection

On Love, Loss, And The Power Of Promise

By Terry Schlossberg



**The vows we took were promises we made not only to each other, but also to God and to the society in which we were forming a new family.**

“

Terry Schlossberg

*Each year, the Alliance Defending Freedom board recommits to the ministry's Statement of Faith and Doctrinal Distinctives — biblical beliefs that provide a foundation for its legal efforts. During its October meeting, Board Chair Terry Schlossberg presented a personal reflection on the life she shared with her husband, Herb, to illustrate ADF's doctrinal distinctive on marriage — and why the ministry fights for the biblical view of the marital union.*

When Herb and I married in the 1960s, it was all the rage to write your own marriage vows. I was enamored of the idea and wanted to do it. But as our wedding date approached, I found time pressing in on us — and also knew I'd collapse from stage fright in front of all those people. So, in the end, we resorted to repeating the traditional vows.

*To have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until death do us part.*

I had no idea what Herb and I were doing in repeating these time-honored vows, except keeping me from collapse. But the vows we took were promises we made not only to each other, but also to God and to the society in which we were forming a new family.

Those vows would guide us through nearly six decades. We had almost made the 57-year mark when Herb lost his battle with cancer last May.

The first suspicion of Herb's illness came in March 2017. His diagnosis of Stage IV — terminal — pancreatic cancer came in July, after months of searching for the source of the cancer in his lungs that wasn't lung cancer. We expected him to die, so the surprise was that he lived so long.

Last April, a few days before his birthday, Herb fell in our apartment during the night and fractured his hip. He was also recovering from pneumonia. I was on the phone, calling 911, while he lay on the floor singing, “Happy birthday to me” — his humor and appreciation of life intact.

He had surgery the next day, and one day later was moved suddenly from the hospital's orthopedic unit to the heart unit. The room quickly filled with nurses and specialists, scurrying to resolve the crisis in his lungs. Eyeing the crowd, Herb asked me, “What's going on? I thought this was a private room!”

The crisis passed, but Herb continued to fight on two fronts: to walk and to breathe. Our family celebrated his birthday, Palm Sunday, and Easter in his hospital room. He made the most of every encounter with his family, the medical staff, and the many friends who came to see him — sometimes cramming that “private” room with more than 20 people.

He had been focused for a long time on reconciliation, not only in his own life but also in the lives of family members: between mother and daughter, between son and son-in-law, between wife and her sister. That became his calling, and it was not lost on us. Reconciliation became a significant part of his legacy.

**A long, loving marriage creates a depth of intimacy that can't be found in any other human relationship.**

“

Terry Schlossberg

One of our pastors remarked that a long, loving marriage creates a depth of intimacy that can't be found in any other human relationship. Herb married a naïve young woman and nurtured me into what he considered to be an able woman, wife, mother, and grandmother. He modeled character for me. He shaped my worldview. He was my spiritual leader and, in his own words, the president of my fan club.

After a month in the hospital, Herb went home, almost fully mobile and apparently recovering well from the pneumonia. Our daughter came to stay with him so that I



could attend ADF's May board meeting. When I left home, I believed Herb was on the mend, but, in fact, his lungs were not improving. He went back into the hospital on May 17 and died two weeks later.

The depth and length of the grief is a surprise to me. I'm in no hurry to end the grieving, though, because it is linked to the memories I don't want to lose and to the happiness of knowing that Herb is with his Savior. I've become aware of what a great gift it is that I knew him so well. And that I am rooted solidly in a garden, surrounded by other “trees” — children and grandchildren who are the fruit of my marriage.

ADF's doctrinal distinctive on marriage is not abstract to me: *We believe God designed marriage as a unique conjugal relationship joining one man and one woman in a single, exclusive, lifelong union, and God intends sexual intimacy only to occur within that relationship.*

Behind the distinctive is the assurance of blessing in the wisdom of God's order for our lives — a truth that was evident, year by year, in the life I shared with Herb.

Often in my marriage I remembered, unhappily and even stubbornly, the promises I made in our vows as they served to rebuke my selfish behavior. They became a form of protection for me and my family, because I resolved to keep those promises. I came to understand that it is in keeping the vows that the blessing of God's intent for marriage comes to flower.

So, I'm glad *those* were the promises we made. I'm thankful for the way the vows nurtured our single, exclusive, lifelong union. And I'm deeply grateful that our marriage survived so long and so well, and allowed me to be with my husband in sickness and in health until death parted us. So, I grieve — but I do so with joy. **A**

Q & A

## Joni Eareckson Tada

Finding ‘Splashovers Of Heaven’ In Suffering

By Karen Kurtz

*Joni Eareckson Tada is the founder and CEO of Joni and Friends, an organization accelerating Christian outreach in the disability community. In 1967, a diving accident left her a quadriplegic at age 17. After two years of rehabilitation, she emerged with new skills and a fresh determination to help others in similar situations. Today, she is considered a leading advocate for people affected by disability.*

*An acclaimed artist and popular speaker, Tada has written over 50 books, including her best-selling autobiography, Joni. She is also the author of When is it Right to Die?, which addresses end-of-life questions and the rising acceptance of euthanasia.*

*Tada received Alliance Defending Freedom’s Alan E. Sears Leadership Award at the ministry’s 2019 Summit on Religious Liberty, in recognition of her work as a champion for the sanctity of life. ADF was honored to have Tada share her thoughts during the Summit on disability, dignity, and why euthanasia is not a solution for suffering.*

**F&J: Your personal story has captivated many people. At what point did you feel called to lead an advocacy movement to help other people with disabilities?**

**JT:** When I got out of the hospital and began making my way around the community, there were people who said to me, “You can be happy in your disability, because you’ve got support of family, you’re friends with many people. You’re not like most disabled people.” And that cut to the core. I began looking around and realized — there are so many people with disabilities who are ripe targets for suicide because they are despairing of their condition. And if I’m blessed — if God has blessed me — I’m going to squeeze every ounce of ministry effort I can out of my paralyzed body to pass on the blessing to them.

**F&J: Your book *When is it Right to Die?* discusses society’s growing push for euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide. What are the dangers of this so-called solution to suffering?**

**JT:** Doctor-assisted suicide is now legal in nine states and the District of Columbia. Many other states are considering similar legislation. This spells very bad news for the elderly, for the medically fragile, for people with severe disabling conditions. Our profit-driven health care system isn’t helping, because the cry is for doing away with any heroic measures that might aid the life of somebody like me. And people who are elderly — often they are pushed in certain states to consider it their duty to die. When health care becomes a question of cost containment, it’s always going to be the weak, the vulnerable, and the medically fragile who suffer the most.

**F&J: How does the issue of euthanasia hit home for you personally?**

**JT:** When I broke my neck as a 17-year-old, I would have done anything to end my life. I couldn’t face living life without the use of my hands or an ability to walk. What I didn’t realize back then was that I was clinically depressed. My problem wasn’t so much my paralysis; it was clinical depression. And that can be treated. Thank God there were no euthanasia laws around such as there are in Belgium now, which would have given me the opportunity to kill myself. Thank God there was no

**We want to help people learn to live with suffering, not to cut it short with a final exit that is irreversible.**

“

Joni Eareckson Tada

**One on one, and just representing Christ well, helps change culture.**

“

Joni Eareckson Tada



law like that when I was young, because my depression was treated. I was able to get pulled up out of my social isolation, and I began to find reasons to live.

**F&J: Those who advocate for legalizing euthanasia often make a case for “death with dignity.” How would you respond to the presumption that there is no dignity in suffering?**

**JT:** I don’t think people — even Christians — know what to do with suffering. We want to avoid it, escape it, drug it, divorce it, institutionalize it, do anything but really learn how to live with it.

I went through cancer in 2010, and a recurrence years later. My husband was driving me home from chemotherapy one day, and I was sick. I was nauseous, my hair was falling out, I was thin, I was tired, my hip was in pain, and I was thinking, *I can’t do this*. Ken and I began talking about how suffering is like little splashovers of hell, to get us appreciating the actual hell from which Christ has rescued us. Then we wondered, *what are splashovers of heaven?* Are they those easy times when there’s no pain? No, they are finding Jesus in your splashover of hell. It is in suffering where we often find the sweetest, most beautiful revelations of our suffering Savior’s care for us.

We want to help people learn to live with suffering, not to cut it short with a final exit that is irreversible, but

treat that depression, treat that isolation, treat the pain, if that’s the issue. Let’s show despairing people what the power of Christ looks like, by being their spiritual community and ascribing positive meaning to their affliction. These are the ways that we can safeguard people’s sense of dignity when they are dying, and we can do it by demonstrating compassion — not with a lethal dose of drugs.

**F&J: Laws generally follow culture. How can our culture begin to truly value the inherent dignity of every person — people with disabilities in particular?**

**TA:** I think it happens at Starbucks. It happens with the person you sit next to on the airplane. It’s that one-on-one connection. At Joni and Friends, we want people to come to our

Family Retreats to volunteer. They might not know a thing about disability. They might feel awkward, embarrassed. They stay at an arm’s-length distance because they don’t know what to say. And I say come to Family Retreat, and be blessed, because it’s all about relationships.

Sometimes when I am out in the mainstream of life, people don’t know who Joni Eareckson Tada is. Often I’m overlooked or ignored, or the waiter will ask my husband, “Does she read?” That’s my chance to be identified with Jesus Christ, who made Himself of no reputation. I’m going to find a way to reach out and say, “Sir, you know what — I *can* read that menu. Thank you so much!” I want to commend these people for just talking to my husband — the husband of somebody in a wheelchair. One on one, and just representing Christ well, helps change culture.

Again, at Starbucks, over the backyard fence, sending a letter to the editor, finding out what laws are being considered in your state capital. There are all kinds of ways to begin to be a change agent, but it begins with relationships. 🐾

**WATCH:** Hear Joni counter arguments for euthanasia at [ADFLegal.org/fj-Joni](https://ADFLegal.org/fj-Joni)

Read more about euthanasia laws in “*Death Wishes: Tackling The Growing Demand For Euthanasia*,” p. 5.



TODAY'S  
PLAN  
is  
TOMORROW'S  
PROMISE

“My legacy gift was made in honor of my late pastor, Dr. D. James Kennedy, who was one of the founders of ADF. May God bless this gift to protect religious freedom for many years to come.”

— Zeb M.



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