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“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things.”

U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop

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Murfreesboro, Tennessee.)*

I was raised in a Christian home.

My grandfather built a Baptist church with his own hands. Nevertheless, I never understood what the claims of Christ were until I was 29 years old.

I came to the intellectual aspects of understanding by hearing the preaching of Dr. Barnhouse at our church in Philadelphia. Sometime over a period of six months of his great preaching of the Word, the Spirit of God made me realize it applied to me, and I accepted Christ into my heart and life.

I was just beginning my academic career at that time, and have been in that world ever since. For 40 years I was on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania, holding two different professorships, one in pediatric surgery and the other in pediatrics.

For 35 years I was the surgeon-in-chief of Children's Hospital in Philadelphia.

In March 1981, at the call of President Reagan, I was appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health, and designated Surgeon General of the United States. In the spring of 1982 I added the job of Director of International Health.

My arrival in Washington was met by tremendous attacks against me because of my stand on abortion. I had to set about establishing credibility with those who didn't know me.

In looking back, it probably was very good. I have nothing but admiration for the Public Health Service. The people in it are remarkably expert in their fields, and compassionate.

I have found, too, here in Washington a tremendous number of committed Christians in government. I know many who feel they are called here to serve in government for this period of time. They are not trying to use government as a pulpit, but to make Christian decisions where they count.

The President's outspokenness on the Christian stand has been a source of encouragement to those in government.

So many of the questions that I have been given to solve here are considered by some to be ethical questions. I have many invitations to discuss ethical issues such as "Baby Doe."

Just the other day, I had the opportunity of spending a couple of hours

with the chaplains of the Second Army at Fort Meade. After my message, we had a good round robin discussion concerning how one could keep his integrity in a bureaucracy. Of course, this also applies to the chaplaincy.

Recently, I was asked to name America's top three medical problems. First, the greatest health problem today is smoking. It claims the lives of 350,000 a year and is extraordinarily expensive. And it is within the power of the individual to stop.

Second, there are trends down the road that are of great concern to me. In the year 2005, we will have 50 million people over 65, half of them over 75. And at the same time, we will have a huge population of children. This means the toddler of today will be called on then to do something no class of people has ever been called on to do before. And that is to support the social and health problems of a huge elderly population and a huge pediatric population at the same time.

I see a tremendous impetus coming down the road for euthanasia.

One of my deep concerns is that the Christian Church is slow to recognize social problems like abortion, infanticide and euthanasia. And when it does recognize it, it screams out against it, but doesn't do anything about it.

There are marvelous opportunities for Christian networks to support elderly people, to make them feel they still have a quality of life which is worth living.

The third major problem is understanding that prevention of disease at any age is much cheaper than curing disease when it happens.

I'm talking about smoking, drinking, poor dietary habits, failure to have exercise, not knowing how to avoid stress, etc.

Just because someone is 65 doesn't mean he is over the hill. He can still practice prevention when he is 65 as he could when he was 45.

People say you can't bring your religion into your job. I don't think you can separate your religion from yourself. Everything you do is based on your philosophy of life, your set of standards and your integrity. And that's good for government, not bad.

My wife and I start the day off with both the Old and New Testament Bible study and discussion. And at the end of the day, when I get home, we usually have some time before dinner when we discuss the problems of the day.

It's amazing how much of our discussion then ends up in putting things that have happened into a spiritual context. Really, most of them belong there.

The older I get, the more the whole Word of God means to me. As a young person, Jeremiah 33:3, was one of my favorites: *"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."*

In the fast pace of my job here in government, that verse applies more than ever. I just stand back amazed at God's sovereignty and the way He sort of pushes me along. I don't question any more, I just get shoved into position!