

## *The Safety Net*

### **National Church Growth Research Center**

P. O. Box 368 · Mt. Hood OR 97041 · 541-352-7636 · sishot@aol.com · www.liftedhands.org

---

Silas Shotwell, Regional Director

September 1, 2006

*“A Drug-Free Alternative to Depression”*

Dear ones,

I never know quite where my mind is going to take me. I face enough unusual situations (and interesting people) that it is difficult to predict what fascinating things will come through my thought process.

One day last month I saw an interesting list online as a part of AOL's daily news. It was a listing of the eleven most popular prescription drugs in the U. S. A. I knew most of them by name and have even taken one or two.

Let me list them for you. And I'll stay with brand names, which are often long enough, and not try to get into the actual names that would be known by physicians and pharmacists.

The top eleven prescription drugs in the U. S. A. are: Lexapro, Paxil, Zoloft, Wellbutrin, Xanax, Phentermine, Neurontin, Vioxx, Effexor, Bextra, and Viagra. In that order.

A fascinating list, to say the least. I have no intention in this letter of recommending or condemning any of these manufactured substances. I am more fascinated by the conditions that prompt them.

The top five, and six overall, are anti-depressants. They deal in various and similar ways with depression, anxiety, and mood swings.

One is a drug that helps with weight-loss. Two are painkillers that are intended to relieve arthritis, one is for seizures, and Viagra is for something else. The two-arthritis treatments are illegal in this country, but are still in the top eleven of prescription drugs taken. I guess that says something about the pain of arthritis.

You can buy them all in Canada or Mexico and you can find them all online.

I don't doubt that all these drugs have their place. And I certainly would not condemn people who are in conditions that make them necessary.

But doesn't it make you feel a bit sad about the medical needs of our country? What happened to penicillin, and the Salk vaccine, and sulfa? Oh, they are still around, and used widely, but the health needs of our country have shifted considerably.

And so have prescription drugs. We can't even buy pseudafedrine in Oregon without a doctor's prescription because of its use in the manufacture of meth.

In our prosperous, enlightened, sophisticated society, we struggle with more pain in our spirits than in our bodies. And we think that pills can solve it! (And again, I'm not trying to make someone feel guilty who is taking an anti-depressant or other medication.)

The Bible talks about a number of medicines that apparently had a place in man's coping with illness: myrrh, mandrakes, garlic, pomegranates, nettle, tamarisks, etc. Paul thought there was even a place for a "little wine for the stomach's sake." And, as the old hymn says (based on Jeremiah 46), "There is a Balm in Gilead."

But it seems to me that health should be the norm, and illness the exception. When there is illness, there is need for doctors, and medicines, and treatment. The modern list of "America's Eleven" disturbs me because there are many today who see illness as the norm and health as the exception. They don't really expect to get better, they just try to cope.

I am really thankful to feel better and be healthier than I was a year ago. A part of that is caused by a better diet, more sleep, and more exercise. But a lot of it is also caused by a yearlong meditation on Philippians 4. In that beautiful passage, Paul extols "rejoicing in the Lord," "being anxious about nothing," "thinking on good things," and "learning to be content." He says that all of these things result from focusing on the Lord and allowing His peace to supercede other thought processes. No pill can be so effective.

Would you accept a challenge? There are four months left in 2006 (unless the Lord decides to come sooner.) Would you join me in Philippians 4 during those four months? Read it, absorb it, memorize it, live it? The joy and peace that Paul celebrates are not based on wonderful circumstances. He was in jail! But the Lord was with him, he knew it, and he had peace. All that and no Lexapro!

Again, I'm not telling you to throw away your pills. But I am telling you that there is a supplemental treatment that surpasses anything that can be concocted by man. Will you try it and see?

Yours in Christ,  
Silas