

From the Archives

Moses, Joshua, AAPS, and the House of Medicine

Charles W. McDowell, Jr., M.D.

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Dr. Jordan scheduled this time for personal remarks from the president, and what I have to say to you today is indeed very personal.

AAPS has gone through an interesting year. We find ourselves embroiled in a law suit against the White House and its Justice Department [*AAPS v. Clinton*]. Physicians are awakening and looking to AAPS for direction. We are being quoted in newspapers, TV, and radio. The concept of high-deductible insurance combined with Medical Savings Accounts is actually being debated in local, state, and national forums.

Our board has been active to say the least and they have been faced with serious, soul-searching questions. They have performed willingly and admirably in my opinion. They are a credit to you who voted them this position of responsibility.

So, what do Moses, Joshua, and their relationship to God teach us about AAPS and why we find ourselves in our present position?

When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, after God had made a distinct impression on Pharaoh, he led them to the land that God had promised Abraham and his descendents.

As they were poised on the banks of the Jordan River, Moses sent out spies, a dozen men, one from each tribe of the Israelites. They came back afraid of the inhabitants but said that the land was as God promised, full of milk and honey.

Only Joshua and Caleb issued a minority report: "Surely if God is with us, no one can stand against us."

God was angry at the Israelites for not having faith in Him and declared that none but Joshua and Caleb would ever see the Promised Land. So the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years until all the elders who had disobeyed God's will for them had died. After Moses died, Joshua led the remaining Israelites across the Jordan River and captured the Promised Land.

The trip from Egypt to the Jordan River crossing takes less than two weeks, but failure to obey the principles that God had given the Israelites caused many of them to wander aimlessly for forty years and never see the land of Abraham.

As I see it, the House of Medicine is much like the spies who first looked at the Promised Land and saw a foe too great for them. We know that all of the many medical organizations except AAPS and a few others have compromised the principle of Hippocratic medicine on the altar of apathy, on the slippery slope of expediency, to the siren of power, for a seat at the table, or at worst for the monetary imperative. This may sound harsh, but no matter how you attempt to sugar coat it the facts bear it out. I believe that many, or perhaps most, physicians do not agree with their medical organizations today.

AAPS was founded 51 years ago on the principle of freedom in medicine. We embrace the Oath of Hippocrates that places patients in charge of medical decision-making, with the physician acting as advocate and ally. Most importantly, the

physician answers to no one other than the patient. This is Private Medicine.

This principle has led AAPS in the past, leads us now, and must lead us in the future. Our members join AAPS because they know where we stand. Not everyone agrees with us, but everyone, including those who actively oppose us, knows that we stand by our beliefs and will vigorously fight for them.

For me, the principles are founded in the Scriptures. Many lessons from both the Old and New Testaments serve as my guide.

When we are unsure or faint of heart, Dr. Nino Camardese [Past President AAPS] reminds us that "God and one are a majority."

Moses told the Israelites before Joshua led them across the Jordan:

If you should say in your heart, "These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?"

You shall not be afraid of them, but you shall remember well what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt (Deut 7:17-18).

God had put the big hurt on Pharaoh and gave us a very clear picture of what a mighty God he is. With God all things are possible.

The House of Medicine is floundering. It is without values and is addicted to the opiate of membership at any cost. This latter point is accentuated by the paradox that when the organization becomes more important than the profession and its principles, it is doomed to shrivel and die. The more it strives to be all things to all people, the more poorly it is defined.

AAPS articulates and fights for what we believe is right and for what, in their heart of hearts, almost all American physicians believe is right.

It is because AAPS is "different" that we find ourselves in our current position.

How are we different?

Our current lawsuit against Hillary Rodham Clinton and the Health Care Task Force is a prime example. An observer of the Washington scene felt that the Health Care Task Force, which has been conducting secret meetings behind closed doors, violated the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), also known as the "Sunshine Law."

Approximately two years ago, your board of directors voted to proceed on the course of holding the government accountable for obeying its own laws by filing a lawsuit asking that the Task Force be declared a FACA committee.

A FACA committee, by law, must open all its meetings to the public, must divulge who the committee members are, and must assure a balanced representation of differing points of view.

Our small organization, holding fast to principle, has caught the government in a snare of desperate fabrications, side-

stepping, and casual disregard of the truth, time and time again. No one could have predicted that this suit would have been so well timed and orchestrated so as to meet the needs of the health-care debate in the public and in Congress in the way that it has.

In the course of negotiations, our board was faced with an offer by the Justice Department to settle the suit. It was necessary for us to explore the possibility of settlement. The terms of the settlement offer are ordered confidential by Judge Royce Lamberth at this time. Suffice it to say your board stuck with principle and voted to not accept the government's offer, although some experts advised us to do otherwise. Present circumstances make that decision look very good. I feel without question the Hand of the Lord is guiding the way for AAPS.

I feel He blesses our principles and our dependence on Him in seeking His wisdom and discernment. However, the battle is not yet over.

This following scripture was given me by my pastor, during the most difficult moments of the settlement conferences, at a time when I most needed to hear it. The pastor was on vacation at the time when he called and said that the Holy Spirit pressed it upon his heart for me to hear it.

Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go.

This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is

written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go (Joshua 1:7-9).

We do not know where the corporate actions of the House of Medicine may lead our profession. We may wander in the wilderness before we are led across our own Jordan River. But let us join Joshua and Caleb in our "minority report" so as to be ready to lead medicine on the true path. Crossing over the Jordan was just the beginning for the Israelites as it will be for us. We will need to be vigilant, steadfast, and faithful to our cause.

The prophet Jeremiah said years ago what is so true today:

Thus says the Lord, let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches;

But let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises loving kindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things, declares the Lord (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

I leave you with one last point. For a Type-A person like me it is one of the hardest to obey. This comes from the prophet Isaiah:

Yet those who wait for the Lord
Will gain new strength;
They will mount up with wings like eagles,
They will run and not get tired,
They will walk and not become weary (Isaiah 40:31).

WILL YOUR GRANDCHILDREN BE ABLE TO SEE A PRIVATE PHYSICIAN?

The answer to that question probably depends on this one:

Will AAPS, the voice for private physicians, remain strong?

AAPS has defended private medicine for more than 60 years—since 1943.

AAPS relies on the generosity of its members to survive and thrive.

Please remember AAPS in your will or charitable annuity.

This is your opportunity to send a Final Message in support of freedom and private medicine.

Every gift helps, no matter how small.

For information on making a bequest, call or write:

Andrew Schlafly
AAPS General Counsel
939 Old Chester Rd.
Far Hills, NJ 07931
(908) 719-8608
aschlafly@aol.com