



Stewardship of the Body

“I give you thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made” (Ps. 139)

MEDICAL ALERT SYSTEMS

No doubt you have heard and seen a number of ads on TV, in the newspaper, in magazines and even in our church bulletin about medical emergency alert systems.

These are systems designed to assist a person in calling for help in an emergency when they are unable to reach a telephone or are unable to use a phone even if they could reach it. Most alert systems consist of a base unit and a button that is worn on a pendant around the neck, on a belt, or on the wrist. When the button is pushed, some systems can be programmed to call designated family members, neighbors or friends and also 911. The calls can be programmed to go from one contact to another if no one answers at the numbers called, with the last number to be called being 911, or they can be programmed to call 911 first, then the other contacts. Other systems just automatically call 911.

Some systems have an option whereby a button does not have to be pushed. The device has a built-in sensor that can detect if the user's position has changed, for example, in the event of a fall. The device will automatically activate and call for help to designated contacts or 911.

Some systems are equipped with the ability of the person to have a 2-way conversation with the responder, whether it be a designated individual or the 911 operator. A number of systems have a responder that will try to talk to the user when the button is pushed. They can give advice, obtain information, etc. from the user. If they do not get a response, they then contact the designated contacts and/or 911. The responders are often trained in emergency management.

The systems vary in the range within which they work, from 100 to 800 feet from the base unit. Therefore, most systems are designed to be used in the user's home and surrounding area. One system operated by a mobile phone company can provide service wherever the company's service is available nationwide.

The prices of the systems vary with some having monthly access fees, some requiring contracts of various lengths of time, some having set-up fees, and some being a purchase-to-own situation with no monthly fees. The type of service varies with the price. The needs of the particular user must be considered when deciding what service is needed and the cost of the specific service.

The amount of information about these systems can be confusing and the increasing numbers of companies offering medical emergency alert systems adds to the confusion. I have developed a chart detailing information about a few of the available systems to help provide some comparisons. Besides the systems listed on the chart, there are many more. Before committing to a system it would be good to research several to assure that the system chosen will meet the specific needs of the user. For senior citizens, enlisting the help of a tech-savvy child or grandchild might be useful.