



ETERNAL PERSPECTIVES

*We fix our eyes not on what is seen,
but on what is unseen...*

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER • FALL 2001

Nineteen Reflections on Our Current Crisis

by Randy Alcorn

Note from Randy: We had a fall newsletter ready to go, but the events of September 11 and following changed our plans. We're doing something we've never done—devoting two-thirds of this newsletter to a single subject.

It's a longer article, divided into nineteen shorter segments. I hope you'll gain perspective and encouragement through it. Most of the articles we'd originally planned for this newsletter, including an excerpt from my new book, *The Treasure Principle*, will appear in the next issue. Our eyes are on world events—but may they focus on our God, who holds the world in His hands.



Our hope should not be in America's military might, resilient economy, FBI, or even our president, as much as we should respect and pray for him. Our hope

should be in a good God who is all-powerful, and never a victim of human choices. Even when

He went to the cross He called the shots. As Jesus said to Pilate, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above" (John 19:11).

In well-meaning attempts to distance God from evil, some Christians have said things like "God didn't want this to happen" and "God has nothing to do with terrorist acts." True, He is not to blame for them, but if indeed He works all things after the counsel of His will, then obviously we can't say He has "nothing to do" with them.

Scripture says, "When disaster comes to a city, has not the LORD caused it?" (Amos 3:6). After losing all his children, Job doesn't say, "God had nothing to do with it," but "the LORD gave and the LORD has taken away" (Job 1:21). After being covered with painful sores

1. God is all-powerful, fully in control.

God was not caught by surprise on September 11, 2001. He "works all things after the counsel of his will" (Ephesians 1:11). Including those terrorist acts? Yes.

A Perspective on Halloween

7

A Mother's Memorial to Her Aborted Child

8

Letters to EPM

9

A. W. Tozer Speaks on the Church

16

(continued on page 2)

and suffering unspeakable pain, Job said, "Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" In case we're tempted to think Job didn't get it, Scripture immediately states "Job did not sin in what he said" (Job 2:10).

Rabbi Harold Kushner's best-seller, *Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?* did explicitly what many Christians have done implicitly since September 11. He attempted to "protect God," to get Him off the hook, defend Him from any accusations of impropriety. Kushner concluded God is all good but not all powerful. He said, "It's too difficult even for God to keep cruelty and chaos from claiming their innocent victims." In other words, God wins some and loses some. He's just not strong enough to stop evil.

By attempting to solve one problem, Kushner creates a bigger one. He commits heresy and leaves us with a God who is...well, not God. This completely undercuts the comfort God offers us. If evil happens outside God's control, then He is not in control at all, and we have no assurance of what Romans 8:28 tells us: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him."

Scripture presents a very different picture of God. "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted" (Job 42:1). Nations will rise and fall, terrible things may happen, but through it all, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea" (Ps. 46:1-2).

"The LORD foils the plans of the nations....But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations" (Ps. 33:10-12).

2. We are not powerful, and not in control.

We've wept for people's pain and suffering. But we've also wept because we know this: it could happen to us. Next time it could be me or my family. There is nothing I can do to guarantee it won't be. (Because God is in control, this is not fatalism.)

"No man has power over the wind to contain it; so no one has power over the day of his death" (Ec. 8:8). It is presumptuous to think otherwise.

Americans often live under the illusion that our lives are in our hands. Some of us schedule years in advance. The passengers on those four flights September 11 thought they knew what cities they would land in and what business they would conduct there. But God's Word warned otherwise:

"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.' As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil" (James 4:13-16).

Life is bigger than we are. We are needy, dependent, and vulnerable. Yes, even we proud, affluent, "independent" Americans. We are dependent upon God for our every breath. We are helpless in the face of a million different forms of disease, accidents, and attacks. We don't even have the strength to live good lives without God. Christ said, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Our life on earth is brief—"All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever" (Is. 40:6-8). Understanding this is the key to being wise rather than foolish. In the oldest psalm, Moses prayed, "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (Ps. 90:12).

It might seem that acknowledging we aren't in control would raise our level of fear. But that's not true. Recognizing God's in control should allow us to relax, resting in His sovereignty. A spirit of fear and timidity is not from God (2 Tim. 1:7).

3. Suffering in this world is normal; Americans, like everyone else, have no promise of ease or immunity.

"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (1 Pet. 4:12-13).

Our hope should not be the illusion that we won't suffer. Our hope should be that one day God will end our suffering (Rev. 21:4). Our hope should be in the fact that nothing in this world or outside it—no tragedies or accidents or terrorist attacks or anything else—shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:38-39).



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4. God owes us no explanation for this or anything else.

We are quick to value being able to make real choices, yet when men make evil choices, resulting in suffering, we are also quick to question God.

But God is the potter, we are the clay (Is. 29:16). He is infinite, we are finite. He is the Creator, we are only the creatures. He is not accountable to us. We are accountable to Him.

After Job challenged God about why He let him undergo such suffering, we're told, "Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said: 'Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!'" (Job 38:1-4).

God goes on to ask Job, "Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the shadow of death? Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all this." Then He says, with a touch of sarcasm, "Surely you know, for you were already born! You have lived so many years!"

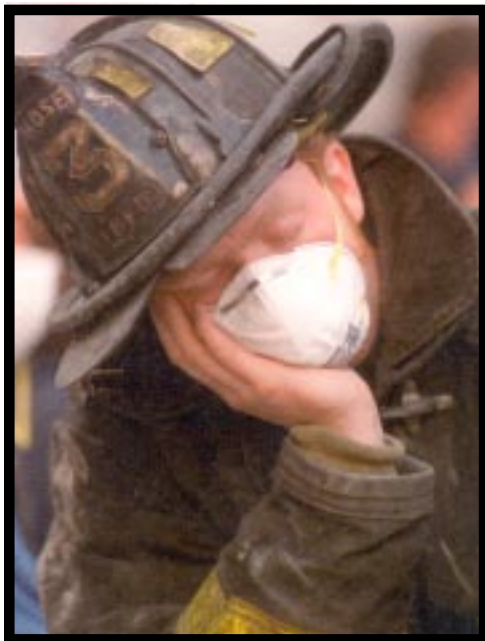
Read the last five chapters of Job. Then ask yourself if you know enough to put God before your judgment seat rather than stand before His.

Even those explanations God does give us are difficult for our tiny sin-stained minds to grab hold of. We should place more faith in God than in our reasoning powers. Isaiah 55:8 says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither

are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

5. God knows what it's like to suffer.

What should really shut our mouths is contemplating the fact that God knows *exactly* what it's like to suffer and die, and lose an innocent loved one in an act of terrible injustice.



God has never dished out any suffering He hasn't taken on Himself. As a man He suffered (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:15-16). Jesus Christ took upon Himself all the sins and evil of the world (2 Cor. 5:21). On the cross, He underwent an eternity of suffering in a time span of six hours.

Jesus was God, but for our sakes He "made himself nothing" (Phil. 2:6-8). He

came down to live in our world, to suffer our weaknesses. God knows what it's like to lose His only son. He knows what it's like to lose Him in a foreign land, a mission field called Earth. We have no choice but to suffer—He did it even though He didn't have to.

Why? Because He loves us. No act of terrorism can take that from us—nor can it undermine the certainty of eternal life in Christ for all who trust in Him (1 John 5:11-13).

Where was God September 11? Where is He when bombs are dropped, car bombs explode, and people die of anthrax and AIDS? Where He always is—exalted in the heavens, indwelling the hearts of His children, comforting the afflicted, stretching out his nail-scarred hands in the offer of a redemption that

costs us nothing, but cost Him everything. Where was God? Right there in the dust and ruins of broken planes and buildings and bodies, accomplishing a purpose that will bring Him glory (Is. 48:9-11).

6. God has brought much good out of these terrible events, and will continue to.

I was broken by the horror of what I saw on September 11. I immediately prayed that God would bring great good out of it. I was amazed to see how quickly that prayer was being answered. For two weeks or so, the spirit of America seemed revolutionized. It was a welcome transformation. I had greater hope for my country in those weeks than I've had for years. The cynicism of the late-night comedians was silenced. Professional athletes shed tears and lined up to give blood, realizing they aren't heroes, just celebrities.

Congressional leaders stood on the steps of the Capitol spontaneously singing "God Bless America." Churches set attendance records, as people sought consolation and perspective, wanting to hear from God. Thousands of prayer vigils materialized across the country, even in some areas where the soil has been hardest. Instead of "Tacos, Two for \$3," or "Oil Change 50% off," signs said "God Bless America" and "We're praying for you, New York."

Of course, if the transformation is to be deep and lasting, rather than shallow and momentary, it'll take more than crying and singing and having moments of silence here and there. When for a few decades a nation tells God He has no place in the public square or the classroom, it's fair to ask if the prayers at the Capitol and on prime time TV were all genuine. Yet I believe many of them were.

We received great inspiration from the police and firefighters in New York. We saw hearts touched, and people giving of their time and money and prayers.

God says, "See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction" (Is. 48:10).

“We rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Rom. 5:3). 2 Cor. 1:8-9 says we endure suffering “in order that we should not trust in ourselves but in God, who raises the dead.” As much as we don’t want to go through it, suffering often builds our character and strengthens our faith.

Joseph said of his brothers who sold him into slavery, “You intended it for evil, but God intended it for good” (Gen. 50:20). God is a master of turning evil on its head, and thwarting Satan’s intention by bringing about good. As much as it seemed a momentary triumph, the devil must hate to see much that has come out of the events of September 11.

If God can bring the single greatest good in human history, the redemption of mankind, out of the single most horrible event in human history, the crucifixion of Christ, then He can bring good out of everything. Jesus wept for Mary and Martha in their loss of Lazarus, and we should weep for those who suffer. But we should also recognize that good can come out of suffering, and in this case much already has.

7. God has opened up great doors for evangelism.

As a result of this fall’s events, many of us have had conversations with friends, neighbors, and coworkers on a very personal level. Doors have opened to spiritual conversation, and to building relationships. Being faced with such powerful and disturbing events

creates a desire to talk about what’s important, and brings about an urgency in conversations. Walls are broken down. People who otherwise wouldn’t have talked on commuter trains, for instance, now do so, having in common the fact that we’re Americans. We’re in the same boat, going through the same rough waters, sharing a compelling common interest. Adversity spawns camaraderie. This is a wide-open door to the gospel we should pray for boldness to walk through:

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity” (Col. 4:2-5).

Many Christians whose loved ones died September 11 shared their faith in front of cameras, unedited by the media, free to acknowledge the Lord who sustains them. Public recognition was given of the faith in Christ of various people in the airplanes and buildings, as well as firefighters and police. Church memorial services in which the gospel was shared found their way onto evening television.

The King’s College, which is housed in the Empire State Building, passed out two million beautiful booklets in New York City, a tribute to those who died in this tragedy. In it, the gospel was shared clearly. (EPM was privileged to help fund this.)

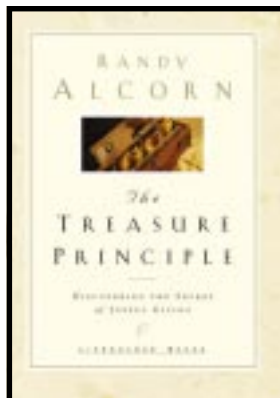


If these booklets had been passed out on the streets of New York September 10, a large percentage would have been refused, tossed, or ignored. But I believe many have and will read them, perhaps ten times more than would have before. And many who would have put the booklet down at the first mention of God will keep reading now. Why? Because these events have sensitized them to eternal needs.

Those who haven’t gone to church in years have resurfaced. It’s up to the body of Christ to do all we can to reach out to them. As events unfold in what may be years of uncertainty and periodic terrorist acts and attempts at biological warfare, we will have more opportunities to speak to our neighbors about Christ. As they face the uncertainty of this present life, many will be more receptive to turning to the certainty of eternal life.

However, we must not mistake “spirituality” for true devotion to Christ. Oprah Winfrey has advocated spirituality for years. It’s trendy for people who’ve tasted the bankruptcy of materialism. But no one is saved by attending a prayer vigil, tapping his foot to “Amazing Grace,” or “getting in touch with your inner spiritual self.” We’re only saved by placing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We say, “God bless America.” God’s Word says, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.” We shouldn’t expect God to bless us if we refuse to bow our knees to Him.



The Treasure Principle

Discover a joy more precious than gold! Priceless treasure is within your reach. And with it, liberating joy.

In Randy’s latest book (small hardcover, *Prayer of Jabez* size), *The Treasure Principle*, you’ll unearth a radical teaching of Jesus—a secret wrapped up in giving. Once you discover this secret, life will never look the same. And you won’t want it to!

You may purchase this book through your local bookstore or EPM at a retail price of \$10.00.

Just because someone refers to spirituality, God, the Bible, prayer, faith, or church doesn't mean they don't need the gospel. They desperately need to hear the gospel, so they can see the difference between self-directed, self-centered "spirituality" and God-revealed, Christ-purchased salvation. For that is the difference between hell and heaven.

8. God is speaking to us through this—we need to listen.

Many Americans are not just frightened, but angry. Certainly God gets angry, and there's a time when anger is an appropriate response for us, too. But we're warned, "In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold" (Eph. 4:26-27).

Justice and prevention of future terrorist acts are a government's responsibility (Rom. 13:1-4). But as individuals, it's not up to us to seek revenge.

"Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord" (Rom. 12:17-19).

Psalms 37 encourages us in times like this: "Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil."

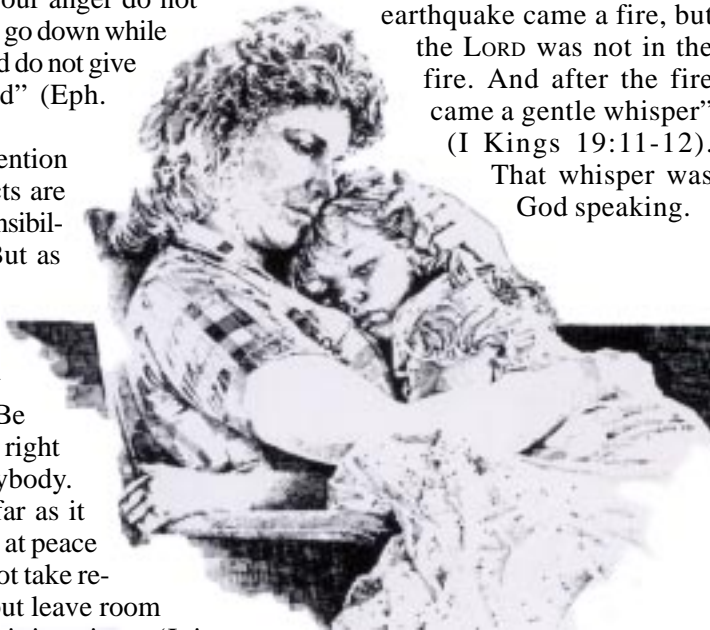
But how can we adopt such a perspective when people are getting away with evil? Because the passage assures us God will *not* let them get away with it: "For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will

inherit the land. A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found. But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace."

Sometimes anger pushes aside more godly responses. While writing this, I looked down at a report I just received, about one of 1500 church buildings destroyed in China by the Public Security Bureau. A young believer was asked if he was angry about his gathering place being leveled. He said, "No. We believe that God allowed our church building to be destroyed, because He had a lesson to teach us."

Anger sometimes keeps us from listening to God's voice. Elijah heard a great wind, "but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper" (1 Kings 19:11-12).

That whisper was God speaking.



We need to turn off the talk shows and round-table discussions and ball games long enough to listen to the still, small voice of God.

In the midst of terrible national adversity Jeremiah said, "Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD" (Lam. 3:40).

David prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23-24).

We need to seek God with all our hearts, and if we do, He promises we'll find Him:

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:11-13).

"Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment" (Heb. 9:27). Martin Luther said "there are only two days on my calendar—today and that day."

What is God saying? That this life is only a dot, but from it extends an eternal line. We should live not for the dot, but for the line.

Just as non-Christians won't have a second chance to go back and this time accept Christ, so we as Christians won't have a second chance to go back and this time serve Him. Today may be our last opportunity to represent Christ to our neighbors and to the needy.

"Only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last."

9. God, prayer, and Bible reading suddenly became acceptable in a national crisis—they should remain that way.

For a week, news anchors wiped tears from their eyes, and programs talked about God blessing people and praying for their needs and America being one nation under God. The wall between church and state fell in the earthquake of this crisis. The ACLU's usual lectures about church and state were nowhere to be heard.

How easily we dismiss God when things are going well, but how quickly we invoke His name when we're desperate. Yet if we recognized God more in times of prosperity, we would come to times of crisis far better prepared. Considering that the Christian faith has been systematically stripped from

America's public life for decades, it was refreshing to have it reappear unhindered. We'll see how long it lasts.

As grateful as I was to hear all the talk of prayer by our leaders, we should not approach prayer lightly. It's a knee-shaking request for an audience with Almighty God, the High and Holy One who inhabits eternity. God says, "When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood" (Is. 1:14).

God is not a genie we can call to our service whenever we feel the need, then bottle back up so we can go on living as we please. It's about Him, not us. We're not the point, He's the point. And the God we are asking for safety and prosperity will not overlook our wickedness and child-killing. "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows" (Gal 6:7).

The first prayer He wants to hear from our lips is one of repentance and humility.

10. Our hearts should go out to the world's poor, who suffer without resources.

We were deeply moved by what happened to the airline passengers and the people in New York and the Pentagon. But what if the same thing had happened in Calcutta, Beijing, Bangkok, or Nairobi? It would have been a lead news item for a night, but pro sports wouldn't have skipped a beat, not a single TV commercial would have been canceled, and the late-night comedians would have gone right on with their usual mocking humor (probably using the tragedy as fodder for their jokes).

Our hearts should be broken for Americans experiencing devastating loss. But they should also be broken for poor people around the world who experience great suffering each day. We need to be less selective about who we weep for.

We should weep for the poor in Afghanistan, where there are fewer Christians than almost anywhere in the world. Even before military action was taken, Christian relief workers were forced to pull out of Afghanistan, and children were dying. These people have suffered horribly under the Taliban. Ironically, now they are suffering even more. In Pakistan, the U.S. Embassy ordered all missionaries to leave the country. National believers have been left alone to face the anti-Christian fury ignited when the U.S. takes action in the Muslim world.

It was said of King Josiah, "He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?" declares the LORD (Jer. 22:16).

A nation is responsible to defend its people (Rom. 13:1-4). But surgical strikes at the real enemy are not easy. We should do all we can to keep from hurting innocent civilians, first because that is right, and second because it is smart.

If there are many civilian casualties, the call to arms in holy war against America could sweep across the Muslim world.

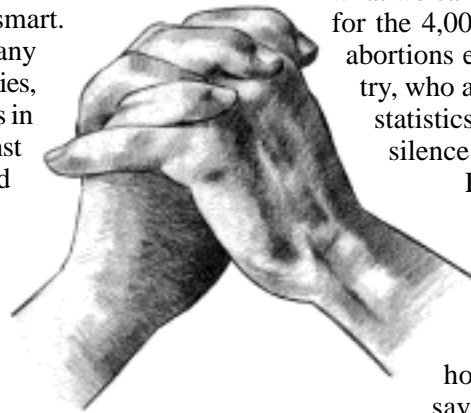
Let's pray that a minimum of innocent people will be killed. Let's pray that the Afghani and Pakistani Christians, and others throughout the Arab world, will boldly proclaim their faith in Christ. I pray they will be faithful unto death, and be given by our Lord a crown of life (Rev. 2:10). In any case, all Christians, both nationals and westerners, now living in Muslim countries definitely need our prayer.



Around 6500 died from the September 11 terrorist attacks. Add another 7,000 Americans who die on any normal day. About 150,000 people in the world die in every 24-hour period. Consider the worst statistic of all: 35,000 children under age five die of malnutrition and disease daily.

We wept for the 6500. But do we weep for those 35,000 children, and do what we can to help them? Do we weep for the 4,000 babies killed by surgical abortions every day in our own country, who are not included in the death statistics? Do we have moments of silence for those children?

People have come forward to contribute hundreds of millions of dollars to help with the disaster in New York. (We were among them, and gladly.) But how many of us are giving to save the world's needy, including children, from death? Just because we don't know their names or see any explosions on video, just because their deaths are less visible and dramatic (or because they take place under the cloaked legal terrorism of an abortion clinic), doesn't mean those dying are any less precious to our God.



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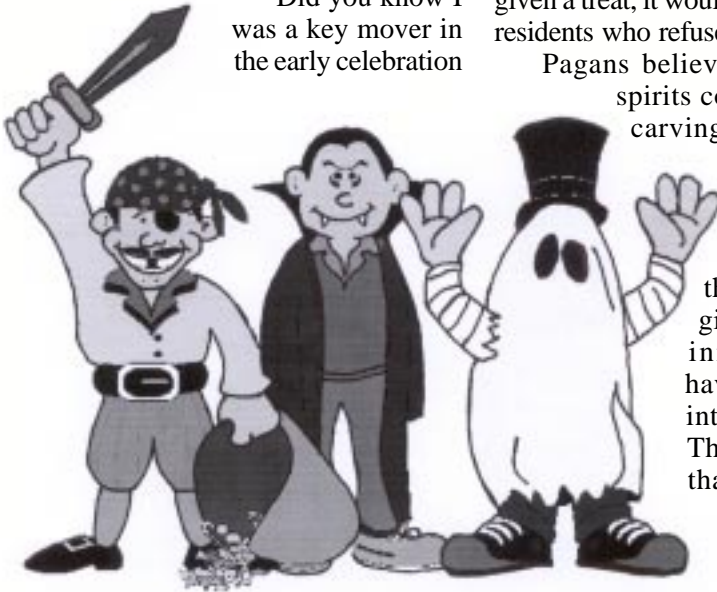
A Perspective on Halloween

(Excerpted from *The Ishbane Conspiracy* by Randy, Angela & Karina Alcorn)

Dear Foulgrin,

I'm pleased Halloween's coming up. I love the aura of invitation surrounding our favorite holiday. It's official, Foulgrin—these vermin now spend more money on this holiday than any other except Christmas! For Ian and Daniel it served as a doorway to the occult. Dressing up as little devils and bloodsucking vampires and the walking dead, looking and acting as evil as possible, may seem cute to their parents, but in some cases, it's just the foothold we need. Whether we're celebrated or mythologized makes no difference...either way furthers our purposes. And since Halloween's all about influencing children, it couldn't be more strategic.

Did you know I was a key mover in the early celebration



of Samhain from which their modern Halloween developed? (Or is yours the only résumé you've read?) An overarching theme was helping spirits of the dead find peace. Pagans believed the spirits couldn't rest peacefully until given adequate materials, food, and drink, as a payment to the god who ruled the spirit world.

Spirits were believed to roam the vicinities of their earthly lives seeking such treasures. On Samhain, the veil between the living and the dead was supposedly drawn back so these wandering souls in search of needed treasures could visit and harass the living. Spirits would go to houses during Samhain seeking the goods ("treats") needed to find final rest. If a spirit wasn't given a treat, it would "trick" or haunt the residents who refused to appease it.

Pagans believed these harassing spirits could be deterred by carving fearful grotesque faces into pumpkins or squashes.

Most of them don't understand this pagan occult origin. And elements of innocence and fun have been bootlegged into it. All the better. This obscures the fact that modern Halloween either glorifies or makes light of death.



The Enemy portrays death as the door to one of two destinations—eternal death in Hell or eternal life in Heaven. He neither glorifies death nor cowers in fear of it nor makes light of it. His portrayal of death is undermined by Halloween. It keeps these children and their parents from seeing that death is serious, that it's the ultimate result of sin, and that there's a God who offers heaven and deliverance from hell to those who will embrace the sacrifice of His Son. Halloween does not convey this message, of course. It eclipses it.

It's marvelous how year after year we've mutated this holiday into an introduction to the dark side. Razor blades hidden in apples and poison hidden in candy pale in comparison to what we've hidden inside the holiday itself.

Happy Halloween, *Prince Ishbane*

A Definition of Addiction...

Inconsolable pain, the kind that drives away every vestige of happiness and renders us incapable of fully enjoying any pleasure, can be handled only by discovering a capacity for a different kind of joy. That is the function of pain, to carry us into the inner recesses of our being that wants God. We need to let soul-pain do its work by experiencing it fully.

If we deny how badly we hurt, we remain unaware of our desire for God and aware only of lesser desires. When those lesser desires are the only ones we actually feel, they inevitably become compulsive demands. An addiction begins.

We need God. He is all we need. But until we realize that fact, we experience lesser desires as needs and devote our energy to arranging for their satisfaction. That defines addiction.

(Larry Crabb, *Shattered Dreams* [Colorado Springs, Co: WaterBrook Press, 2001], 85-86.)

A Mother's Memorial to Her Aborted Child

by Angi Courville

I am not a brave person. More often than not, when God has a difficult assignment for me, I pull a Moses: "I can't, Lord!...why me???" Recently He gave me a chance to stretch a little...

I needed a root canal. To put it mildly, I wasn't thrilled at the prospect. Yet I made the appointment, knowing I didn't really have a reasonable alternative.

A couple of days before my appointment, the receptionist called to confirm. When she gave me the address in a downtown medical building, my heart fell into my stomach: it was two floors up from the clinic where my husband and I, then unmarried, aborted our first child eight years ago.

My instant reaction was NO WAY! Despite the fact that I've been through a biblically-based support group to deal with the trauma of my abortion, this was just a little too close for comfort. I thought of approaching that building engulfed in fear, much the same way I had in the winter of 1992, within days of what should have been my child's eighth birthday. I was afraid of flashbacks, ugly memories, and reopening the emotional wounds.

After some serious prayer and the godly counsel of friends, I decided the Lord wanted me to do this. Not only would I go ahead with the dental appointment, I would create a memorial to my baby to leave outside the door of the abortion clinic.

My appointment was on Monday. I spent the weekend talking myself out of the memorial idea. I was terrified of being confronted. Scenes of hysterical abortion workers screaming at me played out in my mind's eye. I backed out a hundred times, telling myself that God wouldn't *really* mind.

Monday arrived, and I was still waffling. My husband and several close friends were praying for me. A few minutes before the babysitter arrived, I took a deep breath and

got out the art supplies. I pasted pretty floral paper to a piece of cardboard, decorated it with ribbon roses, and inscribed a message: "In memory, baby Adriel, died here 12/5/92... if I had only known."

My husband picked me up and we drove downtown. I battled fear and a strong desire to skip the memorial the entire drive. We parked the car, prayed, and headed into the building. I felt as though I should be trembling, but somehow I wasn't. I kept reminding myself that I am more than a conqueror in Christ, that He was going with and before me, and that He wanted me to do this.

Carrying my sign and our camera, we got off the elevator on the ninth floor. My heart was pounding, yet God's strong presence compelled me forward through the fear.

We came around the corner to the door of the clinic. I stood by the door holding the sign while my husband took a picture. Then I placed it next to the door, and after another picture, we returned to the elevator area.

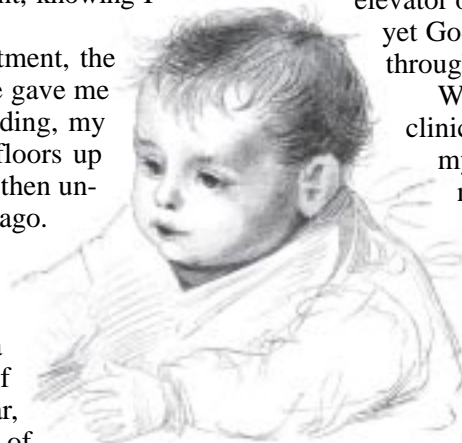
We had barely turned the corner of the hallway when the door to the clinic burst open. Our eyes were as big as saucers, wondering what we were in for. The furtive voices spoke in hushed tones, betraying tension and fear.

"They just left it... there were two of them" "It's just cardboard" "Don't touch it!" "We can't leave it here!"

The feeling of the presence of evil was so strong!

The elevator arrived to take us up to the dentist. As the doors closed, we embraced in joy, eyes filling with tears at God's goodness. The feelings of oppression and heaviness, even fear, lingered. But while they were unsettling, the sweetness of the victory in Christ was triumphant. I wanted to dance! We had just fought a mighty spiritual battle, and won!

Everyone who has experienced abortion understands this battle. It wasn't the abortion industry I was fighting, it was the fear in my heart that keeps me from speaking the truth in love about the effects of abortion. But this time, abortion didn't conquer me, I conquered it in the strength and glory of the Lord.



EPM: A Giving Alternative via United Way

For years many Christians have struggled because of the annual office pressure to have full participation in giving to The United Way. The problem is, United Way funds have gone to Planned Parenthood and similar proabortion groups, as well as prohomosexual groups

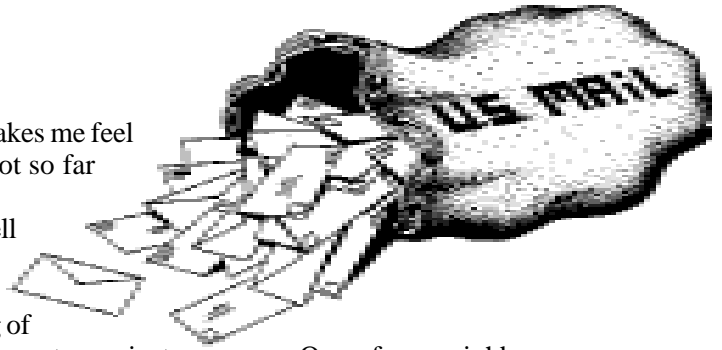
and others committed to anti-Christian beliefs and actions. Naturally, of course, Christians want to lead the way in generosity and this has presented a dilemma.

Good news—several years ago United Way set up a program by which Christians can still participate through their

place of employment, while designating the full amount to an alternative organization they do believe in. EPM is an approved organization through United Way.

If you would like your donation to go to EPM, simply provide your employer with EPM's name and address (Eternal Perspective Ministries, 2229 East Burnside #23, Gresham, OR, 97080) and the donor number 2363.

Letters to EPM



Randy,

I just finished your new book *Safely Home*, and I wanted to let you know what a blessing it has been and how it has been a great help.

How has it helped? It's hard to imagine what heaven is really like. It's one of those things that you normally don't spend much time thinking about because it involves so much conjecture.

But that picture makes it so much easier to imagine the awe of heaven and to consider what wonderful things might be there. The picture you've painted of heaven in your books makes it easier to see that the things of this world are nothing compared to an eternity with Christ in a home he has prepared.

I cried when I read, "The Carpenter put his hand on the head of his apprentice. 'To build something with you, Li Wen, is for me a great pleasure.'" My father left us when I was young. The thought that one day God might take the time to let me work with Him on a project like that, something I could never do with my own father, is astounding. And since everything Jesus spoke about heaven is so grand, perhaps He will even exceed that wild dream.

Thanks for the images of heaven!
S.B.

Dear Mr. Alcorn,

I just wanted to let you know how your books, *Deadline* and *Dominion*, blessed me. I am referring specifically to the references about death and heaven. Just this past November, my husband and the father of our six children was taken from us. I was with him in the hospital when he died, but it was very unexpected. I had always wondered about what was going on in the spiritual realm while I wept at his bedside and held his hand as his spirit left him. I realize we won't actually know how it will be until we see it with our own eyes, but what peace and comfort your words gave me, first with Finney, then with Obadiah. I love the thought that those who have gone on before are able to see what is happening with those they left

behind on earth. It makes me feel as if they're really not so far away.

I just wanted to tell you thank you for allowing our Lord to use you in the writing of these books. They came to me just in time.

K.T.

Randy,

I just wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed *The Ishbane Conspiracy*. What an awesome book. I started it yesterday and I just finished it today. I could not put it down. I cannot wait to tell all of my friends to read it.

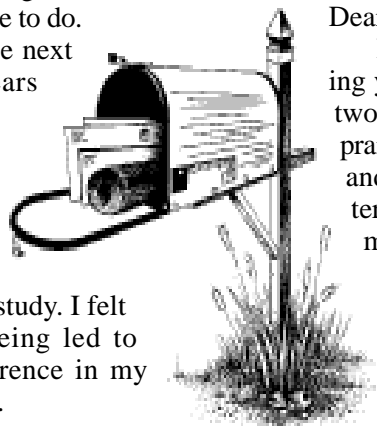
This book should be required reading for all teenagers and for all parents. (I am 35 and a mom. When my daughter gets older, I will have her sit down and read it.) I felt the same way about *Lord Foulgrin's Letters*. Every Christian (especially "baby" Christians) should be required to read these two books.

S.K.

Dear Mr. Alcorn,

A couple of years ago, I read *Edge of Eternity*. It was very convicting in the sense that although everything I was doing in my life was "good," I felt that I was missing a calling that could make a difference in God's kingdom. When I examined my works, I deduced that homeschooling my children and playing the piano at my church were part of my calling. The rest was business that kept me from fulfilling what God really wanted me to do.

I spent the next couple of years praying about what that calling was, and I determined that it was supposed to be a Bible study. I felt like I was being led to make a difference in my neighborhood.



One of my neighbors was very enthusiastic about a neighborhood study being done, but the pieces of the puzzle didn't quite fall into place. Only when talking with one of my unchurched neighbors about her daughter, did it all come together. She had had a bad experience in the church and refused to return. Her daughter is 11, and is a friend of my own. Her concern was that her daughter would have no "religious" education to prepare her for college. I suggested that perhaps a study with the girls (there are five of them from 4th-6th grade that are good friends) would be a solution. She was very enthusiastic about that and encouraged me to do it. When I asked my own daughter about it, she was excited.

To make a long story short, the next week, I began a year-long, weekly study on godly character with the girls & a weekly study using Beth Moore's *Breaking Free* for the moms. It is such a blessing to know that I am walking in God's will to make a difference in the lives around me, and my prayer is that He will use these studies to draw those that don't know Him into His kingdom.

I thank God for using you to write that book which was the catalyst for me to search for His will for my life.

Sincerely, P.C.

Dear Staff at EPM,

I wrote you about a month ago, asking you if you could send me a copy of two of the books you have written. Well, praise God! Today I received your books and a copy of your quarterly newsletter. I want to thank you. These books mean so much to me. Being in prison, you start to think that no one cares. But thanks to you, I have a new faith in God and man.

Thank you and God bless,
R.G., Deerlodge, MT

*(Nineteen Reflections on
Our Current Crisis,
continued from page 6)*

**11. We should especially
pray for and help our
brothers and sisters
in Christ suffering around
the world.**

Our hearts should be even more broken for Sudanese Christians than for those killed in New York. (And believe me, I have wept for New Yorkers.) Why? Because Scripture says that as much as I should love the people of the world, I should love my brothers above all (John 13:34-35). In Christ's body we are told to "mourn with those who mourn" (Rom. 12:15). We are told, "Let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Gal. 6:10). Jesus will say at the judgment, "If you have done it [or not done it] to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you have done it [or not done it] unto me" (Matt. 25:31-46).

By all means, let's help the needy in America. But while we help those in the richest nation in human history, let's seek to do even more to help our brothers and sisters suffering in some of the poorest places on earth. (See www.epm.org/safelyhome for worthy ministries to support.)

Sudan's ruling regime, the National Islamic Front, provided refuge to Osama bin Laden for six years. From this base, bin Laden expanded his financial empire and funded global terrorism. Sudan has relentlessly waged its own jihad, killing and enslaving black African civilians (mostly Christians) in the south.

At the end of September, in a seven-day rescue mission, Christian Solidarity International redeemed 4,041 slaves in Sudan. Interviews with 500 of the freed slaves indicate that nearly all had been physically abused, with

75% of female slaves over the age of 12 reporting gang-rape.

"They killed many people," said Anguac Lual, "including my son. My master, Bashir, stabbed me in the neck and arm when I tried to stop him from giving away my three daughters. The blood was everywhere."

At the same time such atrocities were happening, with no end in sight, at the request of the White House, Congress shelved pending economic measures against Sudan. Then the U.S. stood by as the UN lifted sanctions against Sudan. All this was done in an attempt to get this corrupt government to join with America in opposing terrorism. *The New York Post* calls the partnership a "deal with the devil." As much as I support most of what President Bush is doing, I wrote a letter protesting this action. We cannot, we dare not sacrifice our brothers and sisters on the altar of political expedience (see CSI at www.iabolish.com).



People of Afghanistan

Any American cooperation with Sudan should demand the emancipation of Sudanese slaves and the cessation of the torture of God's children.

No one should underestimate how strongly Jesus Christ feels about what is being done to His followers in Sudan, China, Libya, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and many other nations. When Paul was killing and imprisoning Christians, Jesus asked him, "Why are you persecuting

me?" Christ takes it personally when His people suffer. He does not turn His eyes away. He does not forget.

God will bring comforting grace to all those who cry out to Him in their suffering. He will also bring fiery wrath to all—whether individuals or nations—who terrorize His children...or look the other way when they are terrorized.

**12. America should take
responsibility for our past
aid to terrorists, and
sympathize with those who
live under terrorism.**

America trained Osama bin Laden and others like him to fight the Russians, but we now work with the Russians to go after bin Laden. We fought Iraq in the Gulf War, but only after we'd helped them build up their forces by supporting them in their war against Iran. This raises an important question—if these people are so terrible, why did we help them build their kingdoms of terror in the first place?

America propped up the Taliban regime, which has brought untold human rights violations and suffering to the citizens of Afghanistan. This proves that it's only when American blood is shed that we consistently oppose terrorism. For this, we should be ashamed.

One of the most frequent visitors to the White House in recent years has been Yassar Arafat. He donated blood in front of television cameras after September 11. But he also advocated the shedding of innocent blood in innumerable suicide bombings over the decades. Now Arafat seems more open to Israel's right to exist, and less favorable to terrorism. But we should understand the skepticism of many Israelis.

Before I go further, let me say that I believe Israel has made many mistakes in dealing with Palestinians. The majority of Palestinians are not terrorists, but because some are, most peaceful law-abiding Palestinians have been punished with restricted freedoms. This is unfair

and tragic. Since there is a significantly higher percentage of Christian Palestinians than Christian Israelis, many of our brothers and sisters have suffered through being lumped together with terrorists.

Nonetheless, Israel does have a God-given right to exist as a nation, and the right to defend its citizens. I heard many defend a U.S. pilot when a week after the bombings he told an Arab man (a U.S. citizen) he would not take off if the man was on board. The man missed his flight. We now have a little taste of what Israeli police face, when they know many young Palestinian males have been suicide bombers, and the police may even have relatives who have been killed in these bombings. From a distance we can say a young Arab male should not be treated as a suspect just for being who he is. Yet after only one day of terrorism hit us, it appears most of us would rather "be safe than sorry," favoring racial profiling over the possibility of terrorism.

Some of the same Americans who have condemned Israel for firing on terrorists are now crying out to wage war against terrorists. Isn't it amazing how actually being attacked can change your perspective? Some of the rest of the world is looking at America and saying, "We're sorry for you. But we hope you have a little more understanding of what's been happening to us all these years."

America was the object of extremist Muslim terrorism for a few hours on September 11. (And there is certainly more to come, some of which may have happened by the time you read this.) But others in the world have experienced this kind of oppression weekly and even daily for many years. Their buildings aren't as tall and prominent, but their casualty lists are much larger.

What's the difference between us and Sudanese Christians who are regularly bombed, beaten, killed, raped, stolen, and enslaved by radical Muslims from the North? First, they have endured far more. Second, they have no resources to rebuild or protect themselves. We have unparalleled resources, pockets deeper than any nation in history.

Even on our worst day, America needs less help than many nations do on their best day.

13. As we cry out for justice, we should remember God's mercy to us, an evil people.

If we got the justice due us, if we got what we deserve, we would go to hell for eternity. For this reason alone we should not flippantly demand justice.

The day after the attack, I heard Dan Rather say "Americans know evil when they see it...and this was evil."

He spoke a half-truth—what happened September 11 was truly evil. But it is also unspeakably evil to kill preborn children. Yet neither Dan Rather nor many Americans seem to know it. In fact, Dan Rather and his media colleagues have consistently defended abortion.

In other words, we only know *some* evils when we see them. We know it is evil for someone to take the lives of people like us. But we fail to know (or at least admit) it is evil for people like us to take the lives of preborn children.

Ironically, abortion is on the long list of America's immoralities cited by Muslims as proof of our moral degeneracy.

In 1996 Osama bin Laden declared a jihad, holy war, on the United States. He views America as the great Satan, the oppressor. He claims we are the world's leading exporter of indecency, irreligion, and corruption, contaminating many nations. Unfortunately, there's some truth to these accusations.

Devout Muslims—many of whom take their faith much more seriously than do nominal American Christians—are outraged at the immoral American television programs, such as *Baywatch*, and popular movies that daily fill the airwaves of the Middle East, tempting their people to fornication and adultery. They say we are obsessed with drugs and alcohol, wealth and entertainment, and enslaved to instant gratification. They say our eroded values make us an undisciplined, vulnerable nation, disrespectful of God and unable to take the spiritual or moral high ground.

Unfortunately, Muslims are correct in believing that America is not just a practitioner of evil, but a dispenser of it. When America's former president committed immorality with a young woman in the White House, and lied about it, he and our country became a source of shame and mockery around the world, yet his popularity ratings in America remained high. The point is not that our president was a great sinner, but that we as Americans tolerated and even embraced his sins, proving to the world our moral bankruptcy.

Of course, crashing jets into buildings is an absolutely evil response to America's sins. But with many characterizing America versus the terrorists a war of "good versus evil," we need to take a closer look at ourselves. The terrorist acts are as evil as we think. It's just that we're not as good as we think.

The sins of others are far easier to see than our own. As some Muslims are blind to their own cultural evils (e.g., violence and the oppression of women), we are blind to our cultural sins (e.g., abortion, euthanasia, and Hollywood voyeurism).

Evil lurks within the borders of America, yes, but most of that evil is not a foreign threat, it's a domestic one. Evil resides in us (Romans 3:9-19). The world is full of sinners, but our sin is what we can do the most about. We desperately need to turn to God for cleansing.

14. We should respond to this crisis with confession and repentance.

Some have said the events of September 11 were God's judgment on America. Some have said they weren't. The truth is, there's no way to know one way or another, since God doesn't tell us. But we do know Jesus referred to two tragic current events of His day:

"Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, 'Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans

because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish” (Luke 13:1-5).

Some think it's insensitive to use tragic events as a call to repentance. Clearly Jesus did not think so.

When Daniel saw the devastation of the city of Jerusalem he said, “So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: ‘O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws’” (Dan 9:3-5).

American Christians should pray the prayer of Daniel 9, confessing the sins of our nation. I have sensed in our nation true sorrow and reaching up to God for help, and this is good. Yet I have not sensed a widespread spirit of repentance.

This is not just about our nation, but the church. “For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God” (1 Pet 4:17). As Christians, we are not without blame for the moral depths to which our culture has sunk. God says not of unbelievers but of His own children, “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14).

Dare I say it? America deserves far worse than we have experienced. And we may yet face it. As individual sinners and in some cases as a nation, America has committed moral treason against a holy God. Each breath He gives us is by His mercy, not our virtue. As Daniel prayed, “We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy” (Dan. 9:18).

America will no more survive God's final judgment on the nations than any other country. Neither our wishful thinking nor our eschatology should convince us that we are immune to large scale

judgment and suffering. God's people have always suffered—He promises suffering even to the righteous, in some cases especially to them (2 Tim. 3:12).

15. We should remember that the ultimate war isn't against human beings.

“Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12).

We should declare war not just on terrorism, but on our own pride, independence and rebellion against God. And certainly we should be aware that we've been targeted for destruction by Satan, who has declared war on us. Our ultimate Commander-in-Chief has put us on alert:

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings” (1 Pet. 5:8-9).

The primary source of evil is not Osama bin Laden, but Lucifer, Son of the Morning, who turned his back on God and dragged down a third of the angels with Him (Is. 14:12-15; Rev. 12:3). If every terrorist on earth was killed, the rest of us would still be sinners, still die, and still be in desperate need of Christ every day of our lives.

I fear for America. While we are militarily powerful, we are woefully ill-equipped to wage effective spiritual warfare. What is most needed to challenge the demonic roots of our warped worldviews is God's truth and God's grace, both of which have been eclipsed—often even in our churches—by America's “it's all about us” narcissism and relativism.

Our failure to understand the spiritual realm is manifested in the repeated description of the terrorists as “madmen” and “cowardly.” A man who sacrifices his

life for what he regards as a higher cause is certainly not cowardly. Nor is he mad. He may believe something so deeply that he's willing to take radical action. As a Christian, I may disagree with his beliefs and actions, but I should be able to understand what it means to be motivated by deep spiritual convictions.

These terrorists embraced the Islamic belief that martyrs secure instant paradise at death. Some Islamic authorities teach that suicide bombers are martyrs (despite the fact that the Quran condemns suicide). This is incomprehensible to us not because we're so good, but because we disdain radical faith and people making choices based on the next life rather than this one. We consider such things extreme or insane, when in fact the problem isn't extremism or insanity. The problem is that the terrorists believed a lie.

Christians admire missionaries and faithful believers willing to sacrifice here and now to reap eternal reward later. They are willing to die for Christ. Such martyrs are not extremists or madmen—indeed, they are perfectly sane, seeing more clearly than the average person, who is unwilling to die for any spiritual belief. Indeed, the only sane people are those who recognize spiritual realities.

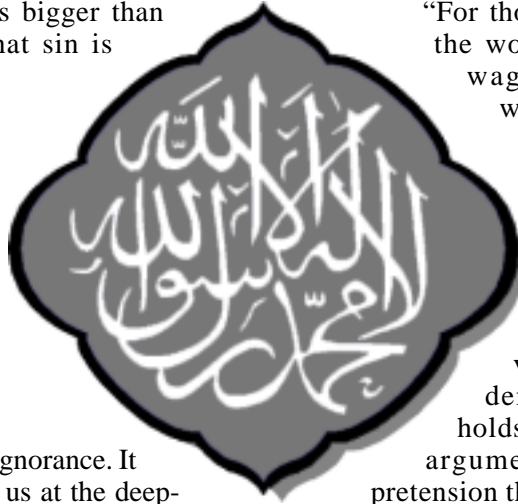
The terrorists' beliefs about God wanting them to take other lives along with their own come straight from Satan, who Jesus called a liar and a murderer (John 8:44). The devil knows how to tell the lies that motivate and rationalize murder. Many Americans believe the same lies—we just happen to apply them



to preborn children (and some elderly and disabled), not to adults working in the World Trade Center.

People express amazement that intelligent university graduates could give their lives away in acts of terrorism. The assumption is that intelligent people can't have faith in things bigger than themselves, and that sin is

Arabic writing expressing central beliefs of Islam: "No God but Allah, Mohammad is the prophet of Allah."



largely the result of ignorance. It isn't. Sin permeates us at the deepest level, in our hearts (Jer. 17:9). Education makes us more efficient in carrying out sin and more articulate in justifying it, but it does not remove our sin natures. (Surveys show that the more educated Americans are, the more likely they are to favor abortion. It's not that educated Americans don't believe Satan's lies—we just apply them to a different group of victims.)

Secular America understands self-preservation, but doesn't understand deeply held beliefs and sacrificial spiritual commitment. That's why we write these people off as madmen and cowards.

We should seek to bring such people the only thing that will free them—the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ. Christians all over the Muslim world are fighting a spiritual battle not out of hate for Muslim people, but out of love for them. These Christians, both nationals and missionaries, are not seeking their enslavement, but their liberation. And their efforts can ultimately do far more good than any military action America takes. (Indeed, if many innocent Muslims are killed in military action, an army of terrorists will likely rise up.) Our prayers for them and our sacrificial giving to ministries in the Muslim world is not our only response, but it is our highest one.

I am not opposing further military action, though I think it should be extremely reasoned and discriminate. I am simply saying that government has one job, the church has another. We need to pursue a spiritual response, in keeping with Scripture:

"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

16. We must avoid intolerance toward Muslims, or any people, but should honestly recognize that hatred and terrorism are promoted in some mosques.

Nanci and I have been troubled by anti-Arab comments we've heard Christians make over the years. We have been in Egypt, where we enjoyed our time with Arab people. We've met Palestinians we loved and appreciated. We enjoyed staying in Bethlehem, an Arab city. I spent a day with missionary friends in Gaza and saw the great needs of normal Palestinian people, including some Christians. I detest racism and religious bigotry in any form.

Having said that, I think in their attempts to combat these evils, some people are misrepresenting the truth.

There's considerable hatred for America and Israel, and for Jews and Christians, that's actively cultivated in mosques in certain parts of the world. Past crusades conducted by professing Christians have certainly fueled this hatred. Nonetheless, it's not entirely correct to say to the world, as I've heard it said repeatedly, "Islam is a religion of peace, not war; love, not hate."

Even those who believe this hatred is justified should acknowledge, as *60 Minutes* recently showed, that messages of hatred are delivered in certain mosques, in some cases frequently. Sometimes this leads to recruiting suicide bombers and other terrorists.

The Muslim holy book, the Quran (or Koran), says in Sura 9:5: "So when the sacred months have passed away, then slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captives and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush." There are other similar passages.

I'm aware you can also find Old Testament portions that Christians don't believe should be applied today, in light of Christ's teachings. But when portions of the Quran such as this are taught by those with terrorist inclinations, it's easy to see how they could result in awful violence.

Obviously, we should not conclude all Muslims are violent because some are, any more than we would want to be judged as Christians by the behavior of some who call themselves Christians. But the severe poverty and hopelessness of many Muslims has allowed their religion to be hijacked by hatred peddlers such as Osama bin Laden. (Islam seems to foster oppression. Which Muslim nations are shining examples of freedom?)

By all means let's ward off bigotry, and befriend and defend our Muslim neighbors. But let's also be honest. Categorically claiming Mohammed, Islam, and the Quran are peaceful, not violent, sounds good at ecumenical gatherings, but unfortunately it's not the whole truth. Only by admitting that some mosques routinely incite and facilitate terrorism can we encourage peaceful Muslims to take responsibility to counteract the cancer of hatred.

17. We must embrace tolerance in the right sense, while rejecting the misguided “tolerance” which sees all religious beliefs as equally valid.

I feel good about public gatherings where Christian leaders have stood beside Muslim leaders as fellow Americans, as a statement of solidarity supporting religious liberty and opposing bigotry. But I’m very concerned about some of the joint services Christians are conducting with those of other faiths. Are we diluting the exclusive saving nature and work of our Lord Jesus?

I can and should love Muslims, pray for them, defend their civil rights, reach out and help them. But I still believe their religion is false and that no matter how devoutly they practice it, without Christ they will go to hell.

The same is true of Hindus, Buddhists, and our Jewish friends who do not accept Christ as God’s only sufficient sacrifice for sins. This applies to nominal Christians also. We do no one a favor by embracing a misguided pluralism that pretends all religions are the same or are equally true. We do people a terrible disservice by withholding the gospel in the name of “tolerance.”

I recently had a conversation in Chicago with a taxi driver named Sayid. I admired his dedication to his Islamic faith. I agreed with his concerns about moral evils in America. And (not but) out of love for him I shared Christ with him, and gave him one of my books that contains the gospel. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the father but by me” (John 14:6). It is wrong to imply that any faith, or object of faith, is as good as another. This is why I cannot give praise to Allah, or speak of Mohammed as a great man.

We should never try to force conversions (nor could we anyway, since forced conversions aren’t real). But that’s very different than implying,

through glowing words about Islam, that conversion isn’t necessary to go to heaven. I must love Muslims and all people enough to tell them the truth about Jesus: “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Christians who affirm this will find that sometimes we’ll be labeled as narrow and intolerant, accused of inciting conflict and failing to embrace world peace. Indeed, we will be seen as the “fundamentalist” hateful Christians parallel to “fundamentalist” hateful Muslims.

“Fundamentalist” historically meant holding to and expressing the fundamentals of the Christian faith, in contrast to the liberal theology that undermined and contradicted Scripture. A fundamentalist didn’t advocate violence, he just believed the Bible. Now “fundamentalist” has become such a loaded word that it drips with hostility. It will be interesting to see if the civil liberties that might be curtailed in the battle against “fundamentalist” Muslims will also be used to silence and restrict those labeled as “fundamentalist” Christians.

Believers and unbelievers will share some common ground in our response to these traumatic events. But Christians shouldn’t just emulate the secular responses (e.g., by conducting joint services with those of other faiths when doing so misrepresents the gospel), but bring a biblical perspective that represents both God’s truth and His grace.

18. There’s no doubt who’s going to win the Great War.

America may or may not win *our* war. But God will certainly win *His*.

God and Satan are not equal opposites. Satan is a created being, the equal opposite not of God, but of Michael the archangel. Dualism is the religion of Zoroastrianism and Star Wars, in which there’s a cosmic battle between two equal opposites, good and evil, and it’s uncertain who will win. The Scriptures contradict dualism. We can read the end

of the last volume of the sixty-six book series called the Bible, so we know how the movie’s going to turn out. If you’re not sure, read the last nine chapters of Revelation (14-22).

Satan can’t do anything without God’s permission (Job 1:8-12). He’s a dog on a leash. “Greater is he who is in you than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

The martyrs in heaven ask “How long?” and cry out for justice (Rev. 6:9-11). God assures them they will need to wait only “a little longer.” God will make all things right. He will wipe away the tears from every eye (Rev. 21:4). All hell will not keep Him from that—or keep Him from us.

We are weak, but He is strong, and His strength is made perfect in weakness, because His grace is sufficient for us (2 Cor. 12:9).

“This is what the LORD says to you: ‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s’” (2 Chron. 20:15).

19. We should remind ourselves daily that this world is not our home.

We await not a new America, but a New Earth (Rev. 21:1).

I’m patriotic. We’ve hung a large U.S. flag (given to my father for his military service) over the deck most days since September 11. But as Christians we must never let our patriotism eclipse the reality that America is not our home.

I understand and appreciate the pride New Yorkers have for their city. I hope all of us would rise up in a time of crisis as many New Yorkers did. But Scripture says of Abraham, who had left a great earthly city, “He was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10). Like all earthly cities, New York is one day going to burn to the ground in fiery judgment from the hand of God, to make room for the new earth and its heavenly city, where righteousness will be the air we breathe (2 Peter 3:13).

I love America. Yet if this was my only country, my true country, I would despair. God has set eternity in the hearts of men (Ec. 3:11). Just as no person in this world can satisfy us, only Christ, so no place in this world can satisfy us, only heaven.

After describing them as “aliens” and “strangers,” it’s said of God’s people “They were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them” (Heb 11:16). The Bible tells us we are ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20), representing Him in this foreign land. “Our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil. 3:20).

The truth is, New York City—the center of the global financial world—and other cities of the earth will ultimately be taken down not by terrorists, but by the righteous judgment of God Almighty (Rev. 18). Uncomfortable as it may make us, Scripture says this:

“Was there ever a city like this great city? They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out ‘Woe! Woe, O great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin. Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you’ . . . With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again” (Rev. 18:16-21).

As I sat in front of the television stunned, watching the towers fall to the ground, I prayed for the suffering people, then said aloud, “This world is not my home.”

In my church, five days later, we sang “God Bless America,” which is a good prayer. But at the end, when I sang “My home, sweet home,” there was an asterisk in my heart next to the word “home.”

The Carpenter from Nazareth, my bridegroom and a builder by trade, has gone to prepare a home for me. That home is not America. Every day I move closer to the day I’ll leave this world. If America was my true home, then every day of my life I’d be headed away from home. But because heaven is my home, every day I’m not moving away from home, but toward it. (It’s a wonderful paradox that my true home is a place I’ve not yet been.)

C. S. Lewis said in *The Problem of Pain*, “Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home.” In *Mere Christianity*, he added, “I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same.”

People of the world don’t need our reassurance that America is unshakable, that democracy will prevail, that our economy will recover, that death and suffering will not touch them, or that America or any country is a safe place to live. What they need, while living in the wreckage of this sin-stained earth, is to realize that the world’s main problem is that it’s inhabited by people like us, sinners in need of redemption. These thirsty people need us to reach out our hands and extend to them, as cold water, Christ’s offer of citizenship in another world, a coming eternal home described this way at the Book’s end:

“Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’ Then he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’ He said to me: ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life’” (Rev 21:3-6).

The gates of heaven are open without cost to us. But only at the highest cost to Him.

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A. W. Tozer on *The Church* . . .

The Cure for Difficulties

But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." —1 Samuel 16:7

Indeed it may be truthfully said that everything of lasting value in the Christian life is unseen and eternal. Things seen are of little real significance in the light of God's presence. He pays small attention to the beauty of a woman or the strength of a man. With Him the heart is all that matters. The rest of the life comes into notice only because it represents the dwelling place of the eternal being. The solution to life's problems is spiritual because the essence of life is spiritual. It is astonishing how many difficulties clear up without any effort when the inner life gets straightened out....

Church difficulties are spiritual also and admit of a spiritual answer. Whatever may be wrong in the life of any church may be cleared up by recognizing the quality of the trouble and dealing with it at the root. Prayer, humility and a generous application of the Spirit of Christ will cure just about any disease in the body of believers. Yet this is usually the last thing we think about when difficulties arise. We often attempt to cure spiritual ills with carnal medicines, and the results are more than disappointing.

The Next Chapter After the Last, 82-83

100 Pianos

....that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.—John 17:21

Someone may fear that we are magnifying private religion out of all proportion, that the "us" of the New Testament is being displaced by a selfish "I." Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one

accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow. So one hundred worshippers meeting together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be were they to become "unity" conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship. Social religion is perfected when private religion is purified. The body becomes stronger as its members become healthier. The whole church of God gains when the members that compose it begin to seek a better and a higher life.

The Pursuit of God, 90

Higher Expectations

Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.—Colossians 1:28,29

The treacherous enemy facing the church of Jesus Christ today is the dictatorship of the routine, when the routine becomes "lord" in the life of the church. Programs are organized and the prevailing conditions are accepted as normal. Anyone can predict next Sunday's service and what will happen. This seems to be the most deadly threat in the church today. When we come to the place where everything can be predicted and nobody expects anything unusual from God, we are in a rut. The routine dictates, and we can tell not only what will happen next Sunday, but what will occur next month and, if things do not improve, what will take place next year. Then we have reached the place where what has been determines what is, and what is determines what will be.

That would be perfectly all right and proper for a cemetery. Nobody expects a cemetery to do anything but conform....Everyone and everything in a cemetery has accepted the routine. Nobody expects anything out of those buried in the cemetery. But the church is not a cemetery and we should expect much from it, because what has been should not be lord to tell us what is, and what is should not be ruler to tell us what will be. God's people are supposed to grow.

Rut, Rot or Revival: The Condition of the Church, 5,6

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