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Eternal Perspective Ministries

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A. W. Tozer on Spiritual Warfare and Sin . . .

Be Ye Holy

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying “Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.’”
—Leviticus 19:1-2

No one whose senses have been exercised to know good and evil but must grieve over the sight of zealous souls seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit while they are yet living in a state of moral carelessness or borderline sin. Such a thing is a moral contradiction. Whoever would be filled and indwelt by the Spirit should first judge his life for any hidden iniquities; he should courageously expel from his heart everything which is out of accord with the character of God as revealed by the Holy Scriptures.

At the base of all true Christian experience must lie a sound and sane morality. No joys are valid, no delights legitimate where sin is allowed to live in life or conduct. No transgression of pure righteousness dare excuse itself on the ground of superior religious experience. To seek high emotional states while living in sin is to throw our whole life open to self deception and the judgment of God. “Be ye holy” is not a mere motto to be framed and hung on the wall. It is a serious commandment from the Lord of the whole earth.
The Pursuit of Man, 102.

Seek God’s Remedy

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.
—1 John 2:1

I wish it were possible to anoint the head of every Christian preacher so that he would never sin again while the world stands. Perhaps some would consider that a happy way to deal with the subject. But, in fact, if any person can be removed from the possibility of sin, he or she can only be some kind of

a robot run by pulleys, wheels and push-buttons. A person morally incapable of doing evil would be, by the same token, morally incapable of doing good. A free human will is necessary to the concept of morality. I repeat: If our wills are not free to do evil, neither are they free to do good....

But what was the sinning priest to do? Should he give up to discouragement? Should he resign himself to failure? No! There was a remedy. And what about ministers and all of God’s servants today? In a time of temptation and failure, should they simply quit? Should they write a letter of resignation and walk out, saying, “I am not an Augustine or a Wesley; therefore, I give up”? No, if they are aware of what the Word of God says, they will seek God’s remedy.

Tragedy in the Church: The Missing Gifts, 75-76.

Victory Assured

“Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob’s hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him.”

— Genesis 32:24-25

The enemy never quite knows how to deal with a humble man; he is so used to dealing with proud, stubborn people that a meek man upsets his timetable. And furthermore, the man of true humility has God fighting on his side—who can win against God?

Strange as it may seem we often win over our enemies only after we have first been soundly defeated by the Lord Himself. God often conquers our enemies by conquering us....When God foresees that we must meet a deadly opponent, he assures our victory by bringing us down in humbleness at His own feet. After that, everything is easy. We have put ourselves in a position where God can fight for us, and in a situation like that, the outcome is decided from eternity.
We Travel an Appointed Way, 14.

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Eternal Perspectives

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

Is This the Day? by Randy Alcorn

Is this the day I die? He’d asked himself the question since he was a child.

This was Sunday. It was on Sunday that Quan’s great-grandfather had been beheaded. And it was Sunday his father died in prison after a beating.

“It is time?” Ming whispered, her voice a feather falling upon silk. Candle flame dancing in her brown eyes, she looked just as she had ten years ago, at their wedding in Shanghai.

Quan kissed her delicate forehead. Already in this short night he’d dreamed again he held her wounded body—Ming’s blood running red through his fingers in a dark rain.

They moved swiftly, silently, performing their 2:00 a.m. Sunday ritual. Ming fed Shen two crackers, holding up his wobbly head. Quan wrapped a gray blanket around his neck, then squeezed into his dark green parka. Stuffing money into his trouser pocket, Quan stepped outside and strapped a bundle to the back of his old ashen bicycle. He tied and knotted the bundle, double-tying and double-checking the knots. Ming and sleepy-eyed Shen followed, coats bulging like overstuffed cushions.

Quan positioned Shen on the seat in front of him. Ming peddled beside them, a silent shadow. They wished there was no moon—it made the ride easier but more dangerous. He preferred safety over ease.

An unnatural silvery dust floated on the wind. Quan bounced over hard ruts, pressing tightly against Shen. Seeing shadows ahead, he instinctively began the rehearsal. “*Our son is sick,*” he said to the wind. “*We are taking him to my brother’s for medicine.*”

After four kilometers, dark clouds rolled in as an artist suddenly changing his mood on a canvas. The moon hid from the coming storm. They’d have to ride home in it. But that might be better—storms kept eyes off the streets.

At seven kilometers, he saw white wisps of smoke rising from a chimney. A welcome sight, yet if he could see it, so could others. He pushed down his fear to that hollow place inside.

They got off their bicycles in deathly stillness and walked them behind Ling Ho’s house. They leaned

them against the dark side, by the chicken coop. Quan brushed his hand over other bicycles, counting them. Fourteen.

He walked to the back door knowing they’d crossed the line of no return. From this moment all explanations for being out in the night were futile.

As they entered, Quan nodded and returned shy smiles to the twenty others. He regretted that, as usual, his smiles were forced and nervous. The family sat on a backless bench, coats on, leaning into each other’s warmth.

The dull luminescence cast an eerie hue over the one-room house, bare but for a bench, some chairs and a bed. When the church was smaller, with ten of them, they’d sat in a circle, but now they had four small rows, the last being the edge of the bed.

Jin stood up. Eyelids heavy, but eyes alert, his upper teeth protruded in a yellow smile. The draft was a wind upon Jin’s wispy hair, a wind that stirred the room, then the words came out the old man’s lips.

“Lord, we give you thanks for your abundant blessings.”

Jin gazed at the church, his children. “Today we speak of light and momentary troubles, which achieve in us an eternal weight of glory.”

As he said the word *glory*, lightning flashed in the eastern sky. Moments later God’s voice shook the earth, then his tears fell from heaven.

Quan felt a hand on his shoulder, chilling him. He turned to see Eng Lok, who’d been coming only six weeks. Quan didn’t know him. He smiled nervously as Lok’s palsied fingers passed forward a worn hymnal, paper so thin Quan could read the words two pages back. The church sang, too loudly Quan thought, “Yesu Jidu, we praise your name forever...”

Is this the day?

“Unless a kernel of wheat fall into the ground and die, it remains a single seed. But if it dies it produces many seeds.”

Craggy-faced Jin was seated now, in an old wicker chair, reading the verse slowly, leaning forward. Specters from the flickering candles cut across his ancient brow. He spoke each word with the gentle obstinacy of



a long obedience. “Whoever serves me must follow me...my Father will honor the one who serves me.”

Jin reminded Quan of his father. The old man raised his arms, exposing red callused wrists. The sight stabbed Quan with the memory of the shame he’d felt at his father’s imprisonment. Teachers and students in the communist school had taunted him because

his father’s faith made him a “public enemy.”

A younger Quan had worked to disbelieve in God. He had tried to embrace the ideals of the party, to believe the words of his teachers. He didn’t want to stand out, didn’t want to be noticed. He’d longed to blend into the dark green background of modern China. To this day, he wouldn’t wear reds and yellows and bright colors. He was no rebel. He’d even joined the student Red Guards.

Quan had tried hard not to be a Christian. But somehow the wind herded him back. In college, the faith that had been his father’s became his own.

Jin went on. “No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

It was still coal black outside, 3:15 a.m. Curtains were drawn. In some towns unregistered churches met while police looked the other way, but here the Chief always searched for enemies of the state, those he could make an example of.

Quan rubbed the rough scar on his neck. Church must end before the prying eyes of sunrise.

“Stand and we will worship our Lord.” The old one began singing a hymn Quan had heard and reluctantly sung many times since childhood: “One day I’ll die for the Lord.”

Is this the day?

As the church sang, Jin raised his hands again. Quan knew every scar on his father’s back and arms, the scars he used to run his fingers over, before Father went to prison the last time. His father would be Jin’s age. If only...

“Bie dong!”

Quan stiffened at the shout behind him. The voice rang with the authority of a captain of the Public Security Bureau.

Quan swept his left arm over Shen, pulling him close against him and Ming. “Look down, be quiet, don’t move.” Quan had learned the drill long ago, hiding in house church under his mother’s skirt. To his left he saw two green uniforms. To his right two more.

“Do not move,” a harsh baritone voice commanded from the back.

At the front right a young policeman held out a Type 54 pistol. Quan had seen one close-up. It had been waved in his face, then struck against his skull. Quan’s right elbow was banged by the heavy butt of a Type 56 assault rifle, the PSB’s version of the Russian AK-47. Quan often contemplated the irony that China’s politics and weapons had come from a “despised foreign power.”

Quan’s head remained bowed but he peeked up so he could barely see the PSB captain standing just three feet in front of him. The man stared at the twenty-four believers with the pinched eyes of cold assessment. A two-inch scar, rough-sewn in his burlap skin, hung over his right eyebrow. Quan didn’t recognize him.

Hands tight, with fingers pointing inward like gray claws, the captain was dressed sharply in a green uniform, straight black necktie, pants neatly creased, cap exactly positioned. The only imperfection was the slight tilt of his shoulder badge. This minor flaw comforted Quan, a reminder the government machinery was not so perfect after all.

The captain took his place in front of the hushed room. His smoked-glass eyes raked the assembly.

“This is an illegal jiaotang!”

Quan detected an accent that suggested the villages over the mountains, where he’d probably transferred from.

“This church is not registered with the Bureau of Religious Affairs,” he said, stretching his voice as if this were the ultimate offense. “You are not part of the Three Self Patriotic Movement!” He’d spoken the truth—it was against the law to gather for religious

purposes except at approved locations.

“You meet in the night like the criminals you are.”

He walked across the front of the room like walking it made it his. His gait was arrogant and sure, like an ac-

tor posturing onstage. He looked like he’d walked on the necks of a thousand peasants.

“You have been distributing illegal foreign propaganda.”

With dramatic flourish, he waved a thin flat brown object, covering his palm, gripped tightly by the ends of his gray fingers. Though unmarked, Quan knew what it was—a compact disk container, and inside, no doubt, the movie. Quan had passed out dozens himself. Last month he and Ming brought eighteen



Quan knew every scar on his father’s back and arms, the scars he used to run his fingers over, before Father went to prison the last time.

just wouldn’t be fair to deny me this little bit of pleasure.” This type of thinking may be what causes us to retreat into lust when we’re angry or we’ve experienced rejection. A grateful heart, on the other hand, knows we really don’t deserve anything. All we have—including our talents—are gifts from God. I don’t need to reward myself because God has already given me so much more than I deserve. In a grateful heart, there is no room for pride.

A grateful heart is not going to pity itself or need self-comforting. Facing troubles or difficult times, it is able to put its problems in perspective. Out of a grateful heart comes a view of life that recognizes we are not entitled to a life free of problems. Self-pity doesn’t even enter the picture.

Most of us seem quite able to bounce back and forth between pride and self-pity, giving ourselves all kinds of justification for plunging into the polluted pool of lust. The heart is deceitful. In order to win the war against lust, we’re going to have to find some ways to change our hearts.

Seeking to develop a grateful heart is something far more profound than seeking an antidote to lust or finding a new way to resist temptation. It requires a major change in our heart, one so deep it will change the way we live. Such change will cause us to respond differently when confronted with the temptation to lust. Such a change is so deep that it can only be experienced in a life devoted daily to seeking a closer walk with the Lord.

The means whereby we can gain a more grateful heart are fairly obvious if we think about them. Here are just three that anyone can try:

1. Let prayers of thanksgiving be a central part of your quiet times. When I am down or irritable, sometimes I will thank God for every blessing I can think of: every part of my body, every

gift I have, every relationship, every possession, and of course the most precious things of all—life, salvation, Jesus himself. Words of thanksgiving have the power to change us.

2. Expand your intercessions to include prayers for the needy. I just received

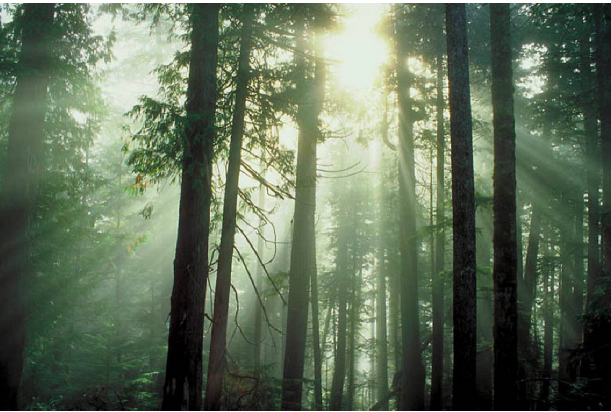
an e-mail message relaying a request from a bishop in Rwanda asking for prayers for the terrible suffering occurring among people in his area. How can we not gain a truer perspective on life when we pray for people whose sufferings are so much greater than ours?

3. Prayerfully seek to uncover your attitudes of self-pity or pride and repent of them. For me, discovering my deeper sins and repenting of them has probably done more to change the person I am than anything else I have done.

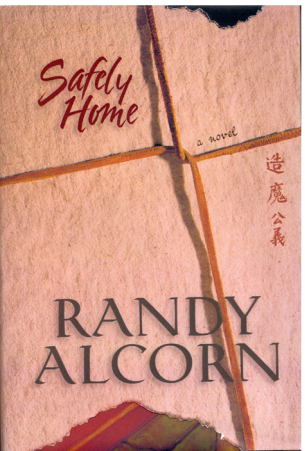
The Holy Spirit will cooperate with you on this. God wants you to have a grateful heart because he wants each of his sons and daughters to have a victorious life. And he has revealed to us that our sacrifice of thanksgiving is pleasing to him.

An ungrateful heart draws us into ourselves and therein lie our difficulties. A grateful heart connects us with God, our source of all things that are good.

Alan Medinger is director of Regeneration, an ex-gay ministry. ©Copyright 1997 Regeneration, P.O. Box 9830, Baltimore, MD 21284-9830, 410-661-0284, www.RegenerationMinistries.org. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



Seeking to develop a grateful heart is something far more profound than seeking an antidote to lust or finding a new way to resist temptation.

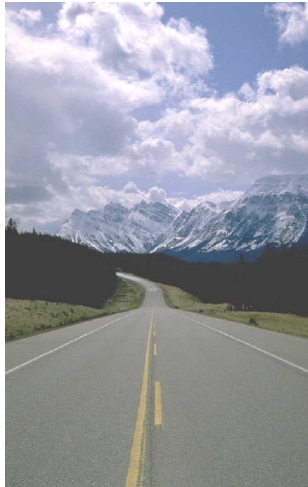


Safely Home Impacts a Family in Nairobi . . .

One day a young philosophy student from the University of Nairobi came into the shop and asked for a book that was a good read, and not the usual religious stuff. He wanted something stimulating.

After asking a few questions, the young Kenyan who was tending the shop suggested *Safely Home*, guaranteeing that he would be captivated, challenged, and have lots to think about. So the student bought the book, came back within 2 weeks saying he had gone to church the following Sunday after reading that book, and had met Jesus Christ personally. He was thrilled and wanted another book. He had passed *Safely Home* on to his parents and siblings. Within a month or two he returned to say that his whole family had come to Christ and were growing, having involved themselves in an alive evangelical church.

The manager of the Keswick Book Stores in Nairobi



Out of a grateful heart comes a view of life that recognizes we are not entitled to a life free of problems.

Grateful Heart: An Antidote to Lust by Alan P. Medinger

Did you ever wonder why your struggles with lust seem to come in cycles? For some reason you seem to struggle mightily with lust for a number of days or weeks and then, for no apparent reason, the struggle subsides. You go through a relatively easy time, but then, almost inevitably the powerful temptations return and the struggles start all over again.

When I was acting out homosexually—before I was a Christian—I used to wonder about this. I remember wondering if it had something to do with the phases of the moon. At times it seemed that regular.

With women such heightened feelings of sexual desire could correlate with their monthly cycle. There is some evidence of this, although this is probably not the whole answer. But what about men? We don't have anything that corresponds to a menstrual cycle. The closest thing to it would be that there is a build-up of semen that creates a physical desire for release. But, if this were the case, masturbation would release it and the pressure would go away. In actuality, the opposite seems to occur. Give in to masturbation today, and you are more likely to masturbate tomorrow. In fact, for many men the times of intense struggle can go on for days or weeks. "Release" does not change the cycle.

With what then can we correlate these cycles? What goes on inside (or outside) of us that causes us to go through periods of intense struggle with lust? And if we find out, is there something we can do to make the struggles less intense or their occurrence less frequent?

There is probably no single answer to these questions, but in examining my own struggles, I have come up with a correlation which I believe may have some fairly broad applications. Very briefly, **my struggle with lust seems to intensify when I have an ungrateful heart.** Certainly this will take some explanation.

Let me begin by commenting on the basic nature of lust. Lust is not the same thing as sexual desire. We are apt to feel sexual desire at any time. Lust occurs when we decide to take our sexual desire and apply it to fantasies, memories or specific images. I believe at the very instant that we have a sexual thought, we are presented with the choice of either entertaining that thought or of rejecting it. This is the critical point in regards to lust. One time we'll say, "I'll pursue this pleasure for just a little bit." Of course the "little bit" is in reality a big bit of self-deception. Once we invite lust in it becomes a difficult guest to get rid of. At other times we say, "No, I'm not going to do that," and the desire is

gone without any real struggle. The fact that we can respond in such totally opposite ways indicates that something different is going on inside of us in the two situations.

What I am saying is that our battle with lust depends to a great extent on how we respond when temptation first hits, and that something inside of us helps guide that first response. This is where I believe having either a grateful or an ungrateful heart has its impact.

In ministry, as well as in my own life, I have seen two attitudes creep into strugglers that precede giving in to lust; two voices, if you will. One says, "I deserve something." The other says, "I shouldn't have to go through this." The names of the two voices are pride and self-pity. They are the antithesis of a grateful heart. Both pride and self-pity are common responses to low self-esteem, a condition seen by many as one of the most common roots of homosexuality—especially in men.



Pride exalts self. Pride tells me I deserve good things. Pride tells me I have earned good things. Pride tells me I am the real judge of what is good for me.

Sexual pleasure is a good thing. "I deserve some sexual pleasure. With what I've been doing recently, I've earned it. Really, I'm the one who should determine whether or not I should have this good thing." These rationalizations may be what can cause temptation to come on so strongly after we've experienced a significant success. In my life, if I've given a talk that went especially well or completed a project that came out quite successfully, a voice inside sometimes tells me I deserve a reward.

Self-pity is the other side of pride. Self-pity tells me what a poor thing I am. Self-pity tells me I haven't received a fair shake in life. Self-pity tells me I deserve some comfort.

"I deserve the right to comfort myself considering what I have to put up with in life. I shouldn't have to deal with sexual struggles along with everything else that's laid on me. God, it

neighbors into their little house, where they watched it. Five became Christians. Three were here this morning. Quan had seen them in the back. Already he'd gotten them into trouble—he longed to turn his neck to see them, but dared not.

"Criminals!"

Shen's pudgy face scrunched. The dour-mouthed captain lowered his gaze and stared at the boy. Shen's upper lip quivered. He started to cry.

Slowly, Ming took off her silk scarf, blood-red, and gently pressed it against Shen's lips. Quan peered into his only son's eyes, pleading for quiet, making unspoken promises, knowing he couldn't keep them.

"It is against our law to teach religion to children under eighteen! Brainwashing children! You are a disgrace—traitors to the Republic."

Shame was familiar—ancient, but still effective. When his father was arrested, a teacher fashioned paper and strings, and hung a sign on Quan that read, "Quan is a criminal." He'd cried uncontrollably. Even now he felt the humiliation.

"You are cultists, devious and immoral," the captain said. "Do you think you are above the law? If you must worship foreign gods, there is a registered church!"

The nearest registered church was fourteen kilometers away. Three legal meeting places for a half million people. Quan's family had only their two bicycles. But even if they could get there, the pastor had been trained at seminary to censor his messages to the Bureau's liking. Some of the registered pastors were faithful—not this one. There were many infiltrators in the church, who watched and reported. Spies and informants were well rewarded.

"China is built on the backbone of hard-working citizens loyal to the superior socialist system."

As always, propaganda followed shame. Spoken with passionate seriousness, the words were formula. Quan could have recited them in his sleep. Sometimes he did.

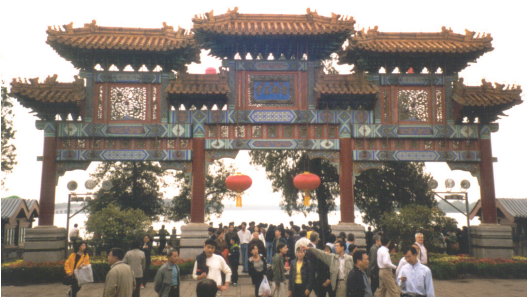
With a rigid swagger, the captain took three steps to the side then turned suddenly like an owl's head.

"Traitors!"

Is this the day?

Quan looked back at the book on the bench, the precious cargo he'd strapped to his bicycle. He was one of only three in this church who owned a whole Bible.

"By assembling unlawfully you are subject to imprisonment. But what you deserve is much worse!"



Quan recalled his visits to his father. They were permitted to see him once a month for thirty minutes. He was often in solitary confinement.

Each month Quan watched Father waste away. Eventually the face that stared back at him was misshapen from beatings, crusted with scabs, puffy with infections. At the beginning of his ten-year imprisonment his face looked mottled and leathery, like the sole of an army boot. Eventually it became a chalky mask. But the eyes peering through the mask's eye-holes, though hollowed and jaundiced, were still his father's, full of determination and joy. Yes, joy, welling up from some subterranean reservoir.

"What is that?" The captain pointed at the Bible. Quan swallowed hard. The worst had happened—being singled out of a crowd. Would he have to explain why his shenjing didn't have the government seal?

"What is it?" the man shouted.

"It is...a message from God." He heard his own voice, surprised at its steadiness.

The captain pulled from his pocket a little red volume. "This is China's book—not your western imperialist Bible."

The captain was a Mao-quoter, from the old school. How many times had Quan been told Christianity was a western religion? Didn't they understand Jidu wasn't American? He needed to watch that movie in his hand so he could understand the world of Zhu Jidu was more like rural China than America.

"Our revered father Mao Zedong said, 'The communist party is the core of the Chinese people.'"

Mao was "the Great Savior," his picture once hung everywhere. But his experiment failed miserably, leaving under-producing collective farms and a commerce greased

by bribes and corruption. But the failure was shrouded under a canopy of words, upheld by professional thugs and a network of gulags, some of which held ten percent of their inmates simply for living out Christian convictions. There was endless pushing and herding and reminding of how the state cared for them and protected them from their enemies. Conflicting ideology, Christian faith in particular, was not tolerated.



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His eloquence frightened Quan. Educated evil was always the worst. Something terrible was coming.

Since the economic reforms of Deng, Mao’s successor, many said it was different. But Quan’s nephew was killed in Six Four, the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. And Quan had been in a house church raided the next week, and two more since. The scars and aches in his neck, and inside his head, reminded him things were never what they appeared. *“This world is not my home,”* he reminded himself.

“Do you think we will stand by and allow what happened in Russia and Eastern Europe?”

He’d heard it before—Christianity was blamed for creating the demand for freedom, leading to the regime’s loss of control. China now had twice as many Christians as communist party members. A great wall of repression had been built to prevent Christianity from spreading.

There was much good in China, Quan knew—beauty, history, nobility, and decency, and now economic progress. But the chains of prisoners and free alike had choked this great land, strangled his father and his great-grandfather. Quan sensed that, one day, they would strangle him.

Is this the day?

The captain waved his rifle. “We must crack down on all lawbreaking activities to safeguard social stability.” *Code words for crushing Christians.*

“The Chairman said, ‘If you don’t hit it, it won’t fall. Like sweeping the floor, where the broom does not reach, the dust will not vanish of itself.’”

He paused, then squared his shoulders, eyes aflame. “Today we come with brooms!” In concert, every man in uniform lifted his weapon high.

What’s happening?

“We must kill the baby while it is still in the manger. You do not deserve to live!”

Quan had been threatened, strong-armed and jailed, and he’d heard the “kill the baby” line, but never had he sensed such impending doom. He



felt his heart throbbing in the tips of his ears. He’d assumed they’d be given warnings, marks would be made on their records, and perhaps he and the other men would be taken to jail and beaten. This had happened to him before. But these soldiers were different. *“Something*

else is happening here,” he thought.

Ming trembled beside him, a tear on her downy cheek. Even Jin, who had spent over twenty years in prison, seemed to shake.

“With these brooms we will sweep away the dirt and filth that threatens China.”

The captain stared at every person in the room, one by one, studying them. His eloquence frightened Quan. Educated evil was always the worst. Something terrible was coming.

“There are two sides to this room. All those loyal to the party and people must prove it by moving to the left side, and out the door. In doing so, they will declare there is no God, and they do not believe in Jidu. They are free to go and will not be punished. Those who

choose Jidu will step to the right side.”

Quan looked at Ming, a tempest in her eyes. For a long five seconds no one moved. Then one man stepped to the left, toward the door. Immediately, stoop-shouldered Jin walked to the right. Quan tried to budge his legs, but they felt wobbly, like rusted rain gutters.

“In three minutes,” the captain said matter-of-factly, “we will shoot every man and woman—and child—who does not declare himself loyal to the people rather than foreign devils.”

Soft groans erupted across the room. Quan had never heard of such a thing. Killings, yes, of course, one or two at a time, but not this!

The captain looked at his watch, stepped aside, leaned against the wall and observed, as if guessing who would be left for him to execute.

Ling Ho and Mei came forward and joined Jin on the right side of their home.

“Will they really kill us?” Ming whispered feebly.

“I...think so,” Quan said.

Eng Lok, eyes down, walked out the door, his wife two steps behind.

“Two minutes,” The captain said, with a machine’s voice. Clearly this man knew what he was going to do. The only question was, what would the people do?

Quan looked toward the right.

“We cannot let Shen die,” Ming whispered.

“He is Jidu’s gift to us,” Quan said. “No, not a gift, a loan. God is his father. He will care for him.”

“We cannot lose our only son.”

“God lost his only son. He buried his son in a foreign land.”

“I am willing to die,” Ming said, voice cracking, “but I cannot bear to think of them killing Shen.

heart will be also. Put the treasures of money and time into helping the needy, and getting the gospel out, and God will bless you for it. My wife and I couldn’t be happier about where those book royalties go. What an incredible joy.

I hope you’re involved in a good Bible-teaching church. Perhaps you are involved with something you volunteer your time to. Maybe you already have a missions connection. If you don’t, I’d recommend you find something. Stay close to godly men, surround yourself with people who love you enough to tell you the truth...even when it hurts.

I help coach a high school tennis team. I see the Christian young men on the team who are making wise and godly choices. They are able to find joy. Then I see some who are nominal Christians, but making unwise choices, hanging out with the wrong people. I see the shadow of misery hanging over their lives. One of the things I say in several of my books is that what is right is always smart, and what is

wrong is always stupid. That which is for God’s glory is also always for our good.

God wants to use the next years of your life, while you’re in college, to send your roots deeper into His Word, deeper into a walk with Christ. He wants you to draw from the reservoir of a solid Christian life, with strong personal accountability to godly men, and from that reservoir to stand strong for Jesus. Satan, on the other hand, wants to mess you up with pride, sexual impurity, and every other thing he can do to discredit your testimony for Christ and derail you from serving Him.

I encourage you to walk with Him, excited to be His son and His servant. You are those first, and an athlete second. Remember who you are, and *whose* you are.

Investing in Eternity, Randy Alcorn



Glen Eyrie Conference Center

Randy Alcorn, Speaking on Heaven

June 2-4, 2006

Colorado Springs, Colorado

For more information or to register, visit their website (www.GlenEyrieGroup.org) or call toll free 1-800-944-4536



Specific Need for Troutdale/Gresham/Boring, Oregon area:

Eternal Perspective Ministries is losing some storage space that was once volunteered and is now becoming unavailable because the home is being sold. We’re in need of some space in a garage or barn (200-300 sq. ft.) that we could use to store books (preferably in the Troutdale or Gresham area). It would mean having large quantities of books delivered by truck perhaps as often as once a month and picked up by us a couple of times a month. There would need to be easy access for large truck delivery. We would normally know in advance the day of deliveries or pickups. If you want to volunteer for this ministry, please call Rick Campbell at 503-669-7727 or email him at orders@epm.org.



Put the treasures of money and time into helping the needy, and getting the gospel out, and God will bless you for it.



Advice for a Young Athlete by Randy Alcorn

Hi Brandon (*name changed to protect identity*),

I appreciate your clear love for Christ, and your desire to serve Him. I congratulate you on your great success as an athlete, but especially for your desire to follow Jesus wholeheartedly. I'm 50 now, but I remember like it was yesterday being 18 and eager to go where God wanted me to go and do what He'd called me to do. I guess that's why I want to take the time to write you, even though time is scarce these days.

God has given you your physical and mental and spiritual gifts, to provide you a platform from which to draw attention to Him and bring Him glory.

Over the years God has given me some strong relationships with several professional athletes, especially NFL players. Some of them call me on the cell phone periodically, and we talk and pray together. I've spoken in various NFL chapels (www.epm.org/articles/packers.html). Another article that relates to that is found at www.epm.org/articles/simpson.html.

A chapel message I've given to athletes develops Deuteronomy 17, a great passage that gives warnings to any future king of Israel. We need to emphasize the critical difference between fame and character. Athletes, like musicians and sometimes even we writ-

ers and speakers are respected for our abilities and images, when in fact we should only be respected for our character. We live in a culture that elevates celebrities as heroes, but Christ calls us to something much higher—he calls us to be humble servants.

Consider the Scriptures, Brandon. 1 Peter 5:5-9 says:

Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. 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.

Christ says that He opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. So if we want God to oppose us, pride will make that happen. If we want him to give us grace, we'd better choose humility. He says if we humble ourselves He will lift us up. He also warns us to be self-controlled and alert to the temptations Satan thrusts upon us.

Pride is one of the big temptations, the root of most of the others. But temptation to sexual impurity is huge as well. When you go to college, some girls will target you, for the wrong reasons.

But it is really Satan who has you on his hit list. He wants you to fall. Here's a link to several things I've written about spiritual warfare, and doing battle against Satan: www.epm.org/resources-spiritual_warfare.html

You need to have the right heroes. I hope you do. But if not, cultivate them, read their biographies. You will tend to become like the ones you admire, and those you spend time with.

I was recently asked who some of my heroes are. My response is found at www.epm.org/articles-spiritual_heroes.html. An article I wrote on Lewis Tappan and the Amistad slaves can be found at www.epm.org/articles/amistad_slaves.html. We all have different gifts and callings, but in terms of character, commitment and vision, Tappan is one of hundreds of thousands of strong role models who have gone before us.

I recently spoke at a Generous Giving Conference in Colorado Springs, along with Rick Warren and Nancy Leigh DeMoss. The room was filled with wealthy people. But many of them came to the conference because they are realizing there is a joy in serving Christ, and a joy in giving that far exceeds the joy of keeping, hoarding and spending.

I've had the privilege of knowing that joy. All the royalties from my books, close to two million dollars, have gone to feed the hungry, support missions organizations and other worthy causes. Jesus said, where your treasure is your



Still...perhaps it is the Lord's mercy for us to die together."

"I've always thought I might end like my father and great-grandfather...but not you, not Shen." Yes, he'd dreamed of holding Ming's dying body, but he hadn't really believed it would happen. Quan covered his face with his hands. He felt her small, strong grip on his arm.

"Are we not Zhu Jidu's also?" she asked. "Are we not his called and chosen? Why should we not walk the way He has chosen for you? Why should you be considered worthy and not us?"

It had always been this way. Whenever she weakened, he was strong for her. Whenever he weakened, she was strong for him. He leaned over Shen and put his arms around Ming. Then Quan got down on one knee in front of his only son.

"Do you understand what the captain said, Shen?" The child nodded his head slowly, eyes puffy.

"Will you come with us and follow Zhu Jidu?" He nodded again, face pinched and wet.

Quan started to pick Shen up, but instead held his hand, and let him walk beside him.

Wordlessly, the three turned their backs on the door and walked to those standing on the right.

"Sixty seconds," the captain called.

Three families, including three children, joined Quan and the others. Five people stood in the middle of the room, starting to move one way and then the other, as if in the center of a tug-of-war. Quan prayed hard for his three neighbors standing there—Fu Gan, Chun, and their teenage daughter Yuet.

"This is your final chance. Leave now or die!"

A woman he didn't recognize headed for the door, followed by a man. Suddenly the three neighbors walked briskly, young Yuet leading the way. They embraced Quan and Ming, holding tightly. Quan rejoiced. When the three had come to Yesu in their home only weeks before, he hadn't dreamed they would die together in church.

He counted. Eighteen people remained. Five had walked out. One last man stood inside the door, glancing back, as if looking for a third alternative. The captain pointed his weapon at the man, who turned and fled out the door into the cold darkness.

One of the officers stepped outside, weapon pointed, looking around. Reentering, he shut the door and locked it. Quan, Ming, and Shen clasped each others' hands. Quan breathed deeply and braced himself.

The captain now moved toward Jin and Quan. He put one hand on each of their shoulders. His face trembled. He dropped his weapon.

"Forgive us, brothers. I am Fu Chi. We have come from AnNing village, across the mountain. We are followers of Zhu Jidu. God is doing mighty things

among us. We have much to tell you. But we dared not put you at risk...or our brothers and families at home. Registered and house churches alike are betrayed by spies. We had to drive away the infiltrators. Now you know who they are. You can trust each other. We salute you. For you are the overcomers—more loyal to the King than to your own lives."

Quan stared blankly as his executioner embraced him. He felt the man's powerful torso quiver. Fu Chi knelt and faced Shen, hands upon his shoulders.

"Forgive us, brave one," he whispered. "We knew no other way."

Among the eighteen, confusion slowly dissolved into cautious smiles. At Jin's beckoning, the younger uniformed men, heads hung, joined them. Quan knelt down to Shen, Ming alongside. He pressed his face against theirs and felt their hot tears mingle with his.

Jin sang, "Zhu Yesu Jidu, we praise your name forever." Fu Chi's strong baritone rose. Other voices joined them.

Is this the day?

No. But it would come, Quan knew, whether at gunpoint, at work, or at home in the ease of bed. His day would come.

Quan lifted Shen into his embrace. He gazed into his brown eyes, seeing his reflection in them. But he also saw someone else looking back, eyes he'd last seen behind the holes of a mask.

Quan's insides felt as if hot tea had been poured down his throat. He believed for the first time that when his day came, he would be ready. Then, on the other side, in his true home, he would see again the face of the father he yearned to embrace, no longer hidden behind the mask. He would see his father's real face and look into those joy-filled eyes. And he would see another face, the face of One who died for him...and for Whom he knew at last he was willing to die.

"Well done, my son."

Quan didn't recognize the voice he heard.

He turned his head to search for it. He saw only Ming and Shen and the followers of Zhu Jidu.

For the first time in many years, Quan—not forcing it—smiled broadly...without fear and without shame.

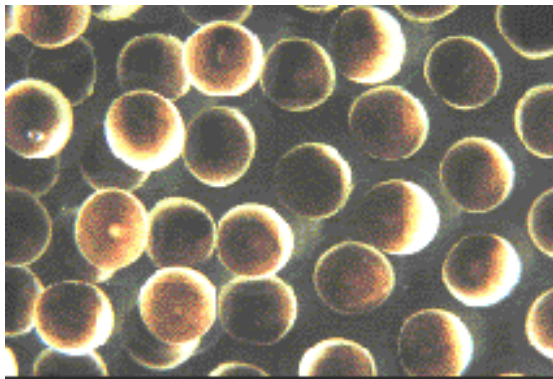
(Randy Alcorn, adapted from Safely Home [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2001])



"This is your final chance. Leave now or die!"



Language isn't just the expression of minds but the molder of minds.



What’s the Difference Between Egg, Sperm, Embryo, and Fetus?

by Randy Alcorn

Two years before abortion was legalized in America, a pro-choice advocate instructed nurses in a prominent medical journal, “Through public conditioning, use of language, concepts and laws, the idea of abortion can be separated from the idea of killing.”¹ The same year a Los Angeles symposium offered this training: “If you say, ‘Suck out the baby,’ you may easily generate or increase trauma; say instead, ‘Empty the uterus,’ or ‘We will scrape the lining of the uterus,’ but never, ‘We will scrape away the baby.’”²

Language isn’t just the expression of minds but the molder of minds. How words are used influences our receptivity to an idea—even an idea that, communicated in straightforward terms, would be abhorrent.

Words that focus on the pregnancy and the uterus draw attention away from the person residing in the uterus. But no matter how we say it, “evacuating the uterus” or “terminating a pregnancy” is taking a human life.

One pro-life feminist says, “Pro-lifers don’t object to terminating pregnancies. Pregnancies are only supposed to last a short while. We favor terminating them at around nine months. The objection is to killing children.”³

What Does *Fetus* Mean?

Like toddler and adolescent, the terms *embryo* and *fetus* don’t refer to nonhumans but to humans at particular stages of development. *Fetus* is a Latin word variously translated “offspring,” “young one,” or “little child.”

It’s scientifically inaccurate to say a human embryo or a fetus is not a human being simply because he’s at an earlier stage of development than an infant. This is like saying that a toddler isn’t a human being because he’s not yet an adolescent. One of my daughters is two years older than the other. Does this mean she’s two years better? Does someone become more human as they get bigger? If so, then adults are more human than children, and football players are more human than jockeys. Something nonhuman doesn’t become human by getting older and bigger; whatever is human is human from the beginning.

Is Egg or Sperm a Person?

Carl Sagan ridiculed the pro-life position by asking, “Why isn’t it murder to destroy a sperm or an egg?”⁴ The answer, as every scientist should know, is that there is a fundamental difference between sperm and unfertilized eggs on the one hand, and fertilized eggs or zygotes on the other.

Like cells of one’s hair or heart, neither egg nor sperm has the capacity to become other than what it is. But when egg and sperm are joined, a new, dynamic, and genetically unique human life begins. This life is neither sperm nor egg, nor a simple combination of both. A fertilized egg is a newly conceived human being. It’s a person, with a life of its own, on a rapid pace of self-directed development. From the instant of fertilization, that first single cell contains the entire genetic blueprint in all its complexity. This accounts for every detail of human development, including the child’s sex, hair and eye color, height, and skin tone.⁵ Take that single cell of the just conceived zygote, put it next to a chimpanzee cell, and “a geneticist could easily identify the human. Its humanity is already that strikingly apparent.”⁶

Product of conception, or POC, is a common depersonalization of the unborn child. In reality, the infant, the ten-year-old, and the adult are all “products of conception,” no more nor less than the fetus. As the product of a horse’s conception is always a horse, the product of human conception is always a human.

The debate about embryonic stem cells is an example of semantic power. Stem cells are versatile master cells from which a variety of tissues and organs develop. Considered prime materials for biomedical research, they’re available from benign human sources, including consenting adults, umbilical cord blood, and placentas. But many scientists are determined to use stem cells from embryonic human babies, who lose their lives in the harvesting. This ethical debate has serious implications for how we view human beings and whether they’re expendable to serve others.⁷

Interestingly, the National Institute of Health found that the public was reacting against “human embryonic stem cell research,” destroying human embryos by experimentation. So the NIH chose a new term to describe exactly the same thing: “human pluripotent stem cell research.” The new term masks the reality that human embryos are the objects of experimentation.⁸ Rather than discontinue an unethical procedure, they found another name.

Letters to EPM

Last year my daughter bought *Safely Home* for me for Christmas. What a book!

I am in charge of the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP) for my church. Using info from *Safely Home*, we had an underground house church meeting in addition to our traditional church service. We kept the meeting place secret and people had to give a “sign” to get in—either a cross or a fish. Some ladies hand-copied portions of scriptures to be read later in the meeting. Everyone received a page that was torn out of an old Bible that was falling apart (I must confess this was hard to do, but I know persecuted Christians do this to share God’s Word). They were instructed to use that as a reminder to pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters.

There were only a few chairs in the place we met so most people sat on the floor. We had a door keeper who only admitted people if they knocked three times (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost). We sang to guitar music. We had people give reports about persecution (taken from *Voice of the Martyrs* magazine) and we spent time in prayer for our persecuted brothers and sisters. We also had a project of collecting Bibles and blankets for VOM.

We concluded our service by telling about “mules” for Jesus that smuggle Bibles into lands. Our “mules” brought in the blankets and people prayed over each of them as well as the Bibles. The people who attended really felt they got a lot out of the service. I thought you might like to know about this, since the inspiration for it came from your book.

M. D.

I am 60 years old, and pastor two small rural churches in southern New Zealand. On 20th Dec last my wife of 16 years went to be with Jesus after a 7-year battle with cancer. I was shattered and did not know what to think. Then, by an amazing string of events, the book *Heaven* came into my hands. As I held it, it fell open at chapter 34. I read the chapter, almost unable to contain my excitement. I now have my own copy, and have just finished it for the second time.

I am recommending it to all my friends and colleagues, and to the people of both my churches. Thank you so much for writing such an excellent work. It encourages me through my grieving, and I am excited at the prospect of rejoining my wife in heaven when the Lord’s time for me comes. You have produced a work that needs to be read as widely as possible by Christians and unbelievers alike, and every pastor should have it on his shelf. My deeply grateful thanks again, and all glory to the Lord.

P. B.

I just wanted to drop you a line with testimonies of how the Lord is working through Randy’s inspirational books. I gave *Safely Home* to one of my parolees a couple of weeks ago. He had heard the gospel in my office and is a new Christian, attending a godly church now. I truly see the Lord’s hand on his life. He came back to my office last week, with the book, and said, “Wow, what a book! This book is so good! I thought you were just giving me a novel—IS THIS A TRUE STORY?” He had such an interest in the plight of the brethren...I just happened to have an issue of *Voice of the Martyrs* and he was so anxious to read all about it.

This morning I visited him at his home. He’s still talking about the book!

“This book is really moving me. I was reading it on the subway yesterday. I was at the part where the officer’s daughter is sick and he asks the Christian to pray for her, she’s healed and he goes to them and wants to be a Christian! Something came over me when I read that. I started crying on the train! I had to put the book down. I picked it up again and started crying again!” (This is a BIG GUY with dred locks down to his waist.)

I spoke about the Holy Spirit moving in our hearts. He agreed and shared with me about a 60-year-old woman at his AA meeting. She spent 20 years in prison and looking for hope to go on with her life. “I told her about this book and going to church...she started going to church and gets the book after me!”

What an honor to serve the Lord and how great is it when He shows us His Spirit working.

I may never see you all until we get to Heaven but I have such a joy co-laboring in the field with you.

L. S.

I just finished reading your book *Edge of Eternity*. Of the many lessons it teaches, I think the ones that mean the most to me are that there is no such thing as a private moment, that our time on earth is merely the womb of eternity, and the reminder that the things we do for the Lord in this life will become like gems in our crown to give to Him.

This may sound strange, but awhile ago I was praying that the Lord would bring along writers in our times who would be able to use allegory to paint a clearer picture of spiritual things, from a fresh perspective. I think you have achieved that in this novel, and I am so grateful. I actually came across your book on the shelves of my public library, so I am hopeful that others in my community who may be unchurched may also run across this book and read it, and be brought closer to God.

K. R.



“What an honor to serve the Lord and how great is it when He shows us His Spirit working!”



We devoutly believe in the power of effort-at-the-moment-of-action alone to accomplish what we want and completely ignore the need for character change in our lives as a whole.

The Secret of the Easy Yoke by Dallas Willard

Think of certain young people who idolize an outstanding baseball player. They want nothing so much as to pitch or run or hit as well as their idol. So what do they do? *When they are playing in a baseball game*, they all try to behave exactly as their

favorite baseball star does. The star is well known for sliding head first into bases, so the teenagers do too. The star holds his bat above his head, so the teenagers do too. These young people try anything and everything their idol does, hoping to be like him—they buy the type of shoes the star wears, the same glove he uses, the same bat.

Will they succeed in performing like the star, though? We all know the answer quite well. We know that they won't succeed if all they do is try to be like him in the game—no matter how gifted they may be in their own way. And we all understand why. The star performer himself didn't achieve his excellence by trying to behave in a certain way *only during the game*. Instead, he chose an overall life of preparation of mind and body, pouring all his energies into that total preparation, to provide a foundation in the body's automatic responses and strength for his conscious efforts during the game.

Those exquisite responses we see, the amazing timing and strength such an athlete displays, aren't produced and maintained by the short hours of the game itself. They are available to the athlete for those short and all-important hours because of a daily regimen no one sees. For example, the proper diet and rest and the exercises for specific muscles are not a part of the game itself, but without them the athlete certainly would not perform outstandingly. Some of these daily habits may even seem silly to us, but the successful athlete knows that his disciplines must be undertaken, and undertaken rightly, or all his natural talents and best efforts will go down in defeat to others who *have* disciplined themselves in preparation for game time.

What we find here is true of any human endeavor capable of giving significance to our lives. We are touching upon a general principle of human life. It's true for the public speaker or the musician, the teacher or the surgeon. A successful performance at a moment of crisis rests largely and essentially

upon the depths of a self wisely and rigorously prepared in the totality of its being—mind and body....

A baseball player who expects to excel in the game without adequate exercise of his body is no more ridiculous than the Christian who hopes to be able to act in the manner of Christ when put to the test without the appropriate exercise in godly living....

It is part of the misguided and whimsical condition of humankind that we so devoutly believe in the power of effort-at-the-moment-of-action alone to accomplish what we want and completely ignore the need for character change in our lives as a whole. The general human failing is to want what is right and important, but at the same time not to commit to the kind of life that will produce the action we know to be right and the condition we want to enjoy. This

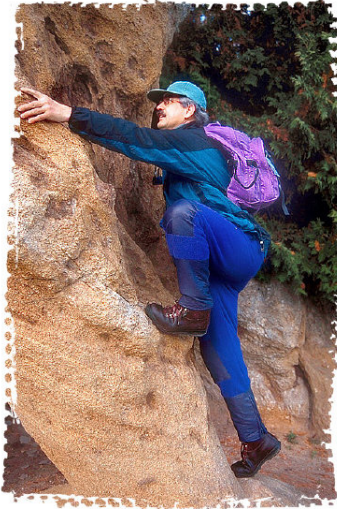
is the feature of human character that explains why the road to hell is paved with good intentions. We intend what is right, but we avoid the life that would make it reality....

So, ironically, in our efforts to avoid the necessary pains of discipline we miss the easy yoke and light burden. We then fall into the rending frustration of trying to do and be the Christian we know we ought to be without the necessary insight and strength that only discipline can provide....

No one ever says, "If you want to be a great athlete, go vault eighteen feet, run the mile under four minutes," or "If you want to be a great musician, play the Beethoven violin concerto." Instead, we advise the young artist or athlete to enter a certain kind of overall life, one involving deep associations with qualified people as well as rigorously scheduled time, diet, and activity for the mind and body....

So, if we wish to follow Christ—and to walk in the easy yoke with him—we will have to accept his overall way of life as our way of life....Then, and only then, we may reasonably expect to know by experience how easy is the yoke and how light the burden.

(Dallas Willard, adapted from The Spirit of the Disciplines [San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990, pg. 3-9].)



No Doubts

If human cloning ever succeeds, it would mean a person would enter the life continuum at a point after conception. This would do nothing to change their human status. It's a person's presence on the human life continuum, not how they arrived there, that matters.

Dr. Thomas Hilgers states, "No individual living body can 'become' a person unless it already is a person. No living being can become anything other than what it already essentially is."⁹

Abortion providers have become more direct in admitting what happens in an abortion. Dr. Warren Hern, who teaches doctors how to perform abortions, describes his work:

"I began an abortion on a young woman who was 17 weeks pregnant.... Then I inserted my forceps into the uterus and applied them to the head of the fetus, which was still alive, since fetal injection is not done at that stage of pregnancy. I closed the forceps, crushing the skull of the fetus, and withdrew the forceps. The fetus, now dead, slid out more or less intact."¹⁰

This man, who has dedicated his life to performing abortions and teaching others how to do

them, has absolutely no doubt that abortion kills a baby.

Do you know something he doesn't?

(Randy Alcorn, adapted from Why ProLife? [Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2004])

¹ Leonide M. Tanner, ed., "Developing Professional Parameters: Nursing and Social Work Roles in the Care of the Induced Abortion Patient," *Clinical Obstetrics and Gynecology* 14 (December 1971): 1271.

² Paul Marx, *The Death Peddlers: War on the Unborn* (Collegeville, MN: St. John's University Press, 1971), 21.

³ *Feminists for Life Debate Handbook* (Kansas City, MO: Feminists for Life of America, n.d.), 3.

⁴ Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan, "Is It Possible to Be Prolife and Prochoice?" *Parade*, 22 April 1990, 4.

⁵ *The First Nine Months* (Colorado Springs, CO: Focus on the Family), 3.

⁶ *Preview of a Birth* (Norcross, GA: Human Development Resource Center, 1991), 4.

⁷ See Scott Klussendorf, "Harvesting the Unborn: The Ethics of Embryo Stem Cell Research," www.str.org/free/bio-ethics/harvest.pdf.

⁸ "Deadline Extended for Comment to NIH on Stem Cells Harvesting," *Prolife Infonet*, 31 January 2000.

⁹ Thomas W. Hilgers, Dennis J. Horan and David Mall, eds., *New Perspectives on Human Abortion* (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America Inc./Aletheia Books, 1981), 351.

¹⁰ Slate: Medical Examiner, "Did I Violate the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban?" A doctor ponders a new era of prosecution, by Dr. Warren M. Hern, October 22, 2003; <http://slate.msn.com/id/2090215>.



International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church Sunday, November 13, 2005

Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

Hebrews 13:3

The International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP) is a global day of intercession for persecuted Christians worldwide. Its primary focus is the work of intercessory prayer and citizen action on behalf of persecuted communities of



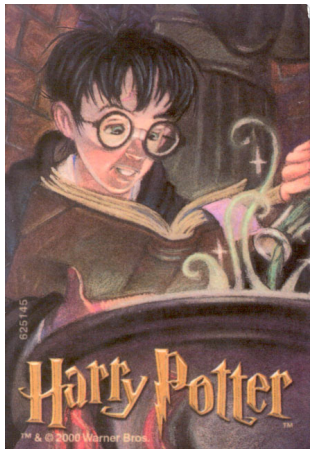
the Christian faith. We also encourage prayer for the souls of the oppressors, the nations that promote persecution, and those who ignore it.

We believe that prayer changes things. Exactly what happens is a mystery of faith. God invites us to present to Him our requests and to pray without ceasing. Persecuted Christians often plead for prayer to help them endure. The most we can do is the least we can do — pray.

We also encourage continuing prayer and educated involvement on behalf of persecuted Christians. Visit our partner Web sites to discover further ways to get involved.

To find out how you can participate, view www.persecutedchurch.org. Free IDOP pastors' kits are now available at Open Doors, 888-524-2535 or email usa@opendoors.org.

(Information excerpted from the IDOP website: www.persecutedchurch.org/about/index.cfm)



The reward with the Narnia books, is nothing less than Christian truth embedded in stories that have delighted and stirred the hearts of Christian kids for generations.

Fantasy, Fiction, and Faith: The Harry Potter Question

The series of children’s books is popular with kids around the world—but the British author was taking heat from the Christian community. People argued that since the books are full of witchcraft and wizardry, crystal balls and spell-casting, they weren’t fit for kids to read.

You may think I’m talking about J. K. Rowling, the author of the hugely popular Harry Potter books and the movie that opens today. But I’m not. I’m talking about C. S. Lewis. Fifty years ago, Christians charged that Lewis was teaching kids witchcraft. Yet today, most Christians—myself included—consider *The Chronicles of Narnia* classics and the Narnia books and movies are in most church libraries.

There are Christians who say that there’s no difference between the Narnia stories and Harry Potter. Some say both should be condemned, some say both should be praised. Other Christians love Lewis and yet have major reservations about Harry Potter. I fit into that latter category and here’s why.

There’s no denying that Lewis’s Narnia tales feature witches and werewolves; the spirits of trees, rivers, and stars; and characters who cast spells—including characters on the side of good. In this sense, there is little difference between the Narnia stories and the Harry Potter stories. And even in Lewis, these characters should not be treated lightly. Christian parents should exercise discernment with their kids.

The big differences lie in three other critical areas. **First**, Narnia is clearly not of this world. Lewis posits a wholly other world where the laws of nature are different from our world. Narnian magic is wrong and doesn’t work in England. Harry Potter’s world, by contrast, is this world. The divide is between the initiated—that is, wizards

and witches—and everyone else, who are derisively called “Muggles.”

Second, Narnia is governed by Aslan and his Father, the Emperor Beyond the Sea. Lewis makes it very clear that he’s writing allegory. Aslan is Christ and the Emperor is God the Father. Harry Potter’s world is free from any reference to God.

Finally, the Narnia stories are allegories of the great truths of the Christian faith: the atonement, resurrection, repentance, faith, justification, sanctification, creation and redemption, and Christ’s return and our heavenly home. *Book Three, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, is filled with wise insights into Christian living. Harry Potter, as has been argued by many—including my friends—is a moral tale. Okay, it’s a moral tale. But that’s all it is.

It’s a simple risk/reward calculation. Both authors include fantastic and preternatural material. Both series should be handled with care—especially if your children have an unhealthy interest in the occult. Parents need to be wise and attentive to the bent of their children.

The reward with the Harry Potter books and movie is a moral tale. The reward with the Narnia books, on the other hand, is nothing less than Christian truth embedded in stories that have delighted and stirred the hearts of Christian kids for generations.

My advice? Use all the hoopla today over Harry Potter to introduce your kids to the real thing: C. S. Lewis and *The Narnia Chronicles*.

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Will People See Jesus in Aslan? by Randy Alcorn

In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Aslan tells the children that though they must return to earth, they can find Aslan here. Aslan says, “There I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there.”

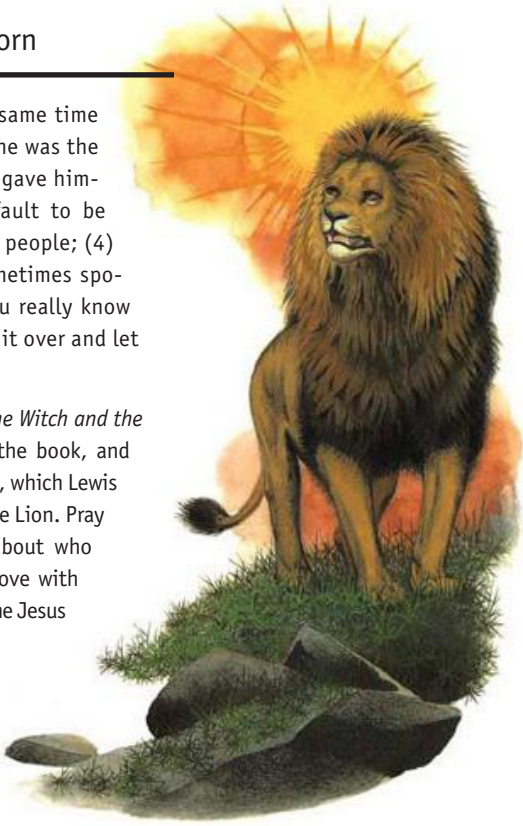
This demonstrates Lewis’s central purpose in the Narnia stories—that readers (and in the case of the movie, hopefully, viewers), may have their eyes opened, so they will look for—and hopefully find—Aslan here on earth.

An eleven-year-old American girl wrote Lewis to find out Aslan’s real name on earth. Lewis responded with a series of questions:

As to Aslan’s other name, well I want you to guess. Has there never been anyone in this

world who (1) arrived at the same time as Father Christmas; (2) said he was the son of the great Emperor; (3) gave himself up for someone else’s fault to be jeered at and killed by wicked people; (4) came to life again; (5) is sometimes spoken of as a Lamb.... Don’t you really know His name in this world? Think it over and let me know your answer!

Please pray that *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* movie will be true to the book, and thereby true to the nature of Jesus, which Lewis so beautifully portrays in Aslan the Lion. Pray that it will start a discussion about who Aslan is. And that in falling in love with Aslan, they will be drawn toward the Jesus who Aslan truly is.



C. S. Lewis on Writing *The Chronicles of Narnia*

Some people seem to think that I began by asking myself how I could say something about Christianity to children; then fixed on the fairy tale as an instrument; then collected information about child-psychology and decided what age-group I’d write for; then drew up a list of basic Christian truths and hammered out “allegories” to embody them. This is all pure moonshine. I couldn’t write in that way at all. Everything began with images; a faun carrying an umbrella, a queen on a sledge, a magnificent lion. At first there wasn’t even anything Christian about them; that element pushed itself in of its own accord. It was part of the bubbling.

Then came the Form. As these images sorted themselves into events (i.e., became a story) they seemed to demand no love interest and no close psychology. But the Form which excludes these things is the fairy tale. And the moment I thought of that I fell in love with the Form itself: its brevity, its severe restraints on description, its flexible traditionalist, its inflexible hostility to all analysis, digression, reflections and “gas.” I was now enamoured of it. Its very limitations of vocabulary became an attraction; as the hardness of the stone pleases the

sculptor or the difficulty of the sonnet delights the sonneteer. On that side (as Author) I wrote fairy tales because the Fairy Tale seemed the ideal Form for the stuff I had to say.

Then of course the Man in me began to have his turn. I thought I saw how stories of this kind could steal past a certain inhibition which had paralysed much of my own religion in childhood. Why did one find it so hard to feel as one was told one ought to feel about God or about the sufferings of Christ? I thought the chief reason was that one was told one ought to. An obligation to feel can freeze feelings. And reverence itself did harm. The whole subject was associated with lowered voices; almost as if it were something medical. But supposing that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday school associations, one could make them for the first time appear in their real potency? Could one not thus steal past those watchful dragons? I thought one could.

(From “Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What’s to Be Said,” in *On Stories and Other Essays on Literature*.)



“I wrote fairy tales because the Fairy Tale seemed the ideal Form for the stuff I had to say.”



THE CHRONICLES OF
NARNIA
THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

Opening in theaters
December 9, 2005