



Eternal Perspectives

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

Fall 2006

Heaven: Home of Laughter by Randy Alcorn



Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.
Luke 6:21

*And as I knelt beside the brook
To drink eternal life, I took
A glance across the golden grass,
And saw my dog, old Blackie, fast
As she could come. She leaped the stream—
Almost—and what a happy gleam
Was in her eye. I knelt to drink,
And knew that I was on the brink
Of endless joy. And everywhere
I turned I saw a wonder there.¹— John Piper*

Who said, “If you’re not allowed to laugh in heaven, I don’t want to go there”? (Hint: It wasn’t Mark Twain.) It was Martin Luther.

In Heaven, I believe our joy will often erupt in laughter. When laughter is prompted by what’s appropriate, God always takes pleasure in it. I think Christ will laugh with us, and his wit and fun-loving nature will be our greatest sources of endless laughter.

Where did humor originate? Not with people, angels, or Satan. God created all good things, including good humor. If God didn’t have a sense of humor, human beings, as his image-bearers wouldn’t either. Of course, if God didn’t have a sense of humor, we probably also wouldn’t have aardvarks, baboons, platypuses, and giraffes, just to name a few. You have to smile when you picture one of these, don’t you?

There’s nothing like the laughter of dear friends. The Bible often portrays us around the dinner table in God’s coming kingdom. What sound do you hear when friends gather to eat and talk? The sound of laughter.

My wife, Nanci, loves football. She opens our home to family and friends for Monday night football. Right now there are five toddlers in the group, and they keep us laughing. If you came to our house on Monday nights, you’d hear cheers and groans for the football teams, but the dominant sound in the room, week after week, is laughter. There are stories from family and work, and heart-to-heart talks, and pausing to pray—all surrounded by laughter. God made us to laugh and to love to laugh.

The new universe will ring with laughter. Am I just speculating about this? No. I can point to Scripture worth memorizing. Jesus says, “Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh” (Luke 6:21). *You will laugh.*

Where will we be satisfied? In Heaven. Where will we laugh? In Heaven. Can we be certain of that? Yes, because Jesus, just two verses later, tells us precisely where this promise will be fulfilled: “Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven” (Luke 6:23).

Just as Jesus promises satisfaction as a reward in Heaven, he also promises laughter as a reward. Anticipating the laughter to come, Jesus says we should “leap for joy” now. Can you imagine someone

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leaping with joy in utter silence, without laughter? Take any group of rejoicing people, and what do you hear? Laughter. There may be hugging, backslapping, playful wrestling, singing, storytelling. *But always there is laughter.* It is God's gift to humanity, which will only be raised to new levels at the resurrection.

The reward of those who mourn now will be laughter later. Passages such as Luke 6 gave the early Christians strength to endure persecution in "an understanding of heaven as the compensation for lost earthly privileges."² In early Christian Greek tradition, Easter Monday was a "day of joy and laughter," called Bright Monday. Only the followers of Christ can laugh in the face of persecution and death because they know that their present trouble isn't all there is. They know that someday they will laugh.

By God's grace, we can laugh right now, even under death's shadow. Jesus doesn't say, "If you weep, soon things on Earth will take a better turn, and then you'll laugh." Things won't always take a better turn on an Earth under the curse. Sickness, loss, grief, and death will find us. Just as our reward will come in Heaven, laughter (itself one of our rewards) will come in Heaven, compensating for our present sorrow. God won't only wipe away all our tears, he'll fill our hearts with joy and our mouths with laughter.

Those who are poor, diseased, and grieving experience therapeutic laughter. At memorial services, people laugh quickly. The best carefree moments on Earth bring laughter. And if we can laugh hard now—in a world full of poverty, disease, and disasters—then surely what awaits us in Heaven is far greater laughter.

One of Satan's great lies is that God—and goodness—is joyless and humorless, whereas Satan—and evil—bring pleasure and satisfaction. In fact, it's Satan who's humorless. Sin didn't bring him joy; it forever stripped him of joy. In contrast, envision Jesus with his disciples. If you cannot picture Jesus teasing them and laughing with them, you need to re-evaluate your theology of Creation and Incarnation.

We need a biblical theology of humor that prepares us for an eternity of celebration, spontaneous laughter, and overflowing joy.

C. S. Lewis depicts laughter in Heaven when his characters attend the Great Reunion on the New Narnia: "And there was greeting and kissing and handshaking



and old jokes revived (you've no idea how good an old joke sounds after you take it out again after a rest of five or six hundred years)."³

Who's the most intelligent, creative, witty, and joyful human being in the universe? Jesus Christ. Whose laughter will be loudest and most contagious on the New Earth? Jesus Christ's.

When you face difficulty and discouragement, keep your eyes on joy's source. Recite Christ's promise for the new world, a promise that echoes off the far reaches of the universe: "*You will laugh.*"

Do you look forward to laughter in Heaven? Are you experiencing the joy of Christ so that there is plenty of laughter in your life now?

Father, today, right now, feeling as I do, with deadlines and health issues and friends who are hurting and world events in flux, I need to hear your promise that in Heaven we will laugh. I picture Jesus, laughing with his disciples, and I can't wait to hear his laugh in person. I look forward to laughing with him at banquets and on walks and in conversations. Thank you for the gift of laughter. Thank you that you invented it. Thank you that we do not have to wait until Heaven to laugh, but that laughter can carry us on its back through difficult times. I think of the release that laughter brings at memorial services for people who have followed you faithfully, people who are already laughing on death's other side. I have enjoyed rich laughter, mingled with tears, with friends and family in difficult days. When we weep now, Father, remind us that in Heaven, partaking of your joy, we will laugh.

Excerpted from Randy Alcorn's book, 50 Days of Heaven (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers), 2006, Day 43.

¹ Piper, *Future Grace*, 381.

² McDannell and Lang, *Heaven: A History*, 47.

³ C. S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (New York: Collier, 1956), 179.



A 12 Point Cure for Complaining by Bill Izard

Complaining is unbecoming of the true Christian and yet we are proficient at it. The cure is found in these verses. In Christ we are never hopeless or forsaken. Every trial has meaning. Meditate on this cure in order to change both your language and your heart.

1. God commands me never to complain.

"Do all things without complaining and disputing" (Philippians 2:14, NAS).

2. God commands me to give thanks in every circumstance.

"In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

3. God commands me to rejoice always, and especially in times of trial.

"Rejoice in the Lord always" (Philippians 4:4); "Rejoice always" (1 Thessalonians 5:16); "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials" (James 1:2).

4. I always deserve much worse than what I am suffering now—in fact, I deserve hell.

"Why should any living mortal, or any man, offer complaint in view of his sins?" (Lamentations 3:39)

"Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:2-3).

5. In light of the eternal happiness and glory that I will experience in Heaven, this present trial is extremely brief and insignificant, even if it were to last a lifetime.

"The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18); "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:19).

6. My suffering is far less than that which Christ suffered, and He did not complain.

"Who when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when he suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:23).

7. To complain is to say God is not just.

"Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25)

8. Faith and prayer exclude complaining.

"I sought the Lord, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears" (Psalm 34:4).

9. This difficulty is being used by God for my good and it is foolish for me to complain against it.

"And we know that all things work together for the good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

10. Those more faithful than I have suffered far worse than I, and did so without complaint.

"...and others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. All these, having gained approval through their faith..." (Hebrews 11:35-39)

11. Complaining denies that God's grace is entirely sufficient.

"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

12. The greatest suffering, the worst trial or difficulty, can never rob me of that which is of greatest value to me and my greatest joy, namely the love of Christ.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through

Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the

love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39).

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What Makes a Human Life “Meaningful”?

by Randy Alcorn

Please Note: In order to conserve space, footnotes are not included in this article but are marked with an asterisk and may be found in Why ProLife? by Randy Alcorn, Chapter 7, pages 48-53.

Dr. William Harrison, a pro-choice advocate, argues, “The real issue in the abortion debate today is not when life begins, but is it morally meaningful life.”*

But who determines which lives are meaningful and which aren’t? The answer, always, is that powerful people decide whether weaker people’s lives are meaningful.

A Double Standard

Peter Singer, the Princeton ethics professor, wrote, “The life of a fetus is of no greater value than the life of a nonhuman animal at a similar level of rationality, self-consciousness, awareness, capacity to feel, etc.”* (Parents paying for their children to attend Singer’s classes might want to consider that he also believes there’s moral justification for killing the elderly.)

A Portland, Oregon, abortionist, Jim Newhall, said, “Not everybody is meant to be born. I believe, for a baby, life begins when his mother wants him.”* So a human life becomes real and meaningful when another person wants it to be?

In the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision the Supreme Court questioned whether the unborn had “meaningful” lives. But *meaningful to whom?* Doesn’t every human being regard as meaningful the life he had in the womb, since if it had been terminated, he would not now be alive?

Whites decided that blacks were less human. Men decided women had fewer rights. Nazis decided Jews’ lives weren’t meaningful. Now big people have decided that little people aren’t meaningful enough to have rights.

Personhood isn’t something to be bestowed on human beings by Ivy League professors intent on ridding society of “undesirables.” Personhood has an inherent value that comes from being a member of

the human race. According to the Bible, this is part of being created in God’s image.

What Science Says of “Meaning”

What constitutes “meaningful” life? It’s a scientific fact that there are thought processes at work in unborn babies. The Associated Press reported a study showing “babies start learning about their language-to-be before they are born.” Studies show that while in their mothers’ wombs, “fetuses heard, perceived, listened and learned something about the acoustic structure of American English.”*

Newsweek states, “Life in the womb represents the next frontier for studies of human development, and the early explorations of the frontier...have yielded startling discoveries.”* The article says,

“With no hype at all, the fetus can rightly be called a marvel of cognition, consciousness and sentience.” It also says that scientists have already detected sentience (self-awareness) in the second trimester.* The extraordinary capacities of preborn children have been well documented by scientific studies for years.*

By early in the second trimester the baby moves his hands to shield his eyes from bright light coming in through his mother’s body. “The fetus also responds to sounds in frequencies so high or low that they cannot be heard by the human adult ear.”* He hears loud music and covers his ears at loud noises from the outside world. At seventeen weeks, the child experiences Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep, indicating that he’s not only sleeping but dreaming.* Can we say that someone capable of dreaming is incapable of thinking?

Undoubtedly, later abortions kill a sentient, thinking human being. By the end of the second trimester the “brain’s neural circuits are as advanced as a newborn’s.”* It seems unthinkable that anyone aware of the facts could defend the current legality of abortions in the second and third trimesters. Yet pro-choice advocates adamantly defend such abortions.



“Not everybody is meant to be born. I believe, for a baby, life begins when his mother wants him.”

*Jim Newhall
Portland, OR abortionist*

But are earlier abortions any better than later ones? Even in the case of early chemical abortions, which take life before there's capacity for thought, death is just as real and significant. A living child who would've had a name, family, and life will now have none of these.

A Flawed Ethic

Singer says, "If we compare a severely defective human infant with a nonhuman animal, a dog or a pig, for example, we will often find the nonhuman to have superior capacities, both actual and potential, for rationality, self-consciousness, communication and anything else that can plausibly be considered morally significant."*

Singer suggests that individual human worth is based on its usefulness to others: "When the death of a disabled infant will lead to the birth of another infant with better prospects of a happy life, the total amount of happiness will be greater if the disabled infant is killed. The loss of happy life for the first infant is outweighed by the gain of a happier life for the second. Therefore, if killing the hemophilic infant has no adverse effect on others, it would, according to the total view, be right to kill him."*

When Singer came to teach at Princeton, he was protested by *Not Dead Yet*, a disabilities rights group. They took offense at Singer's books, which say it should be legal to kill disabled infants, as well as children and adults with severe cognitive disabilities.

Pro-choice logic started with abortion, but it hasn't stopped there. Once it's acceptable to kill unborn children, no one who's weak or vulnerable can be safe. Do the handicapped have a meaningful life? How about the elderly? If those who cannot think don't deserve to live, what about those who think incorrectly?

Dr. Charles Hartshorne of the University of Texas echoes Singer's ethic: "Of course, an infant is not fully human.... I have little sympathy with the idea that infanticide is just another form of murder. Persons who are already functionally persons in the full sense have more important rights even than infants."*

Is Anyone Safe?

David Boonin argues that abortion is "morally criticizable" yet "morally permissible." It's permissible, he says, because abortion may potentially produce

"overall happiness."* Like Singer, Boonin overlooks the fact that the same subjective sense of happiness (as measured by convenience and relief of stress or financial hardship) can be achieved by taking the lives of other people, not just the unborn. Once something is regarded as morally permissible because it seems to produce happiness, there's nothing that can't qualify.

Hidden beneath much of the discussion of what constitutes meaningful life is utilitarianism. Are mentally and physically disabled or disadvantaged people useful to the healthy and powerful, or are they a burden to us?

As one feminist group points out, if unborn children are not safe, no one is safe:



If we take any living member of the species homo sapiens and put them outside the realm of legal protection, we undercut the case against discrimination for everyone else. The basis for equal treatment under the law is that being a member of the species is sufficient to be a member of the human community, without consideration for race, gender, disability, age, stage of development, state of dependency, place of residence or amount of property ownership.*

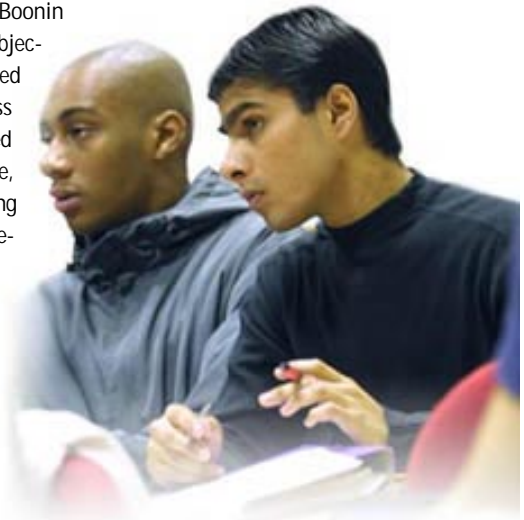
Abortion has set us on a dangerous course. We may come to our senses and back away from the slippery slope. Or we may follow it to its inescapable conclusion—a society in which the powerful, for their own self-interest, determine which human beings will live and which will die.

University of Chicago biologist Dr. Leon Kass says, with the direction of modern science and medicine, "we are already witnessing the erosion of our idea of man as something splendid or divine, as a creature with freedom and dignity. And clearly, if we come to see ourselves as meat, then meat we shall become."*

This is the world being shaped by the rhetoric of the abortion rights movement.

Is it the world you want to live in?

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



"Persons who are already functionally persons in the full sense have more important rights even than infants."

*Dr. Charles Hartshorne
University of Texas*



Randy, Age 6

Randy Alcorn's Interview with FaithfulReader.com

Please note: We thought you might enjoy the more personal touch of an inside look at the background and life of Randy Alcorn through an interview with FaithfulReader.com

Q FaithfulReader.com: *What kind of testimony to your faith are you demonstrating in your book, Heaven? Is your goal to demonstrate your faith in your writing? Do you seek to do this in your fiction also?*

A Randy Alcorn: I've written 17 nonfiction books and seven novels. The novels, while different in style from nonfiction, are nonetheless touched by a biblical worldview and can reach some people who won't be reached by nonfiction. (Fiction can have a Trojan Horse effect, where it moves inside the mind when the reader's defenses are down.)

I hope to shift readers to a more biblical perspective, partially by showing the positive consequences of right thinking and choices, and the negative consequences of wrong thinking and choices.

Everything I write is to further an eternal perspective: "We look not at the things which are seen, but the things which are unseen; for the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18).

My book *Heaven* is in some ways the most important book I've written, and certainly it is the most direct and thorough treatment of the biblical subject of Heaven. I emphasize looking forward to the New Earth, as 2 Peter 3:13 tells us we're supposed to be doing...but which, due to our misconceptions about Heaven as a nonmaterial realm where we'll live in a disembodied state, we don't. We're made to live as physical beings, not just spiritual, and on a real earth, which is exactly what the Bible says we'll do after the resurrection, and after the millennium. Somehow we've failed to grasp this clear biblical teaching, and our view of eternal life has been distorted and impoverished.

Q *When did you come to a saving knowledge of Jesus? Where are you today in your walk? Is your faith an important part of what you do?*

A I was raised in an unbelieving home, and came to Christ as a high school student. My walk with

Christ is more important to me than anything, and by his grace I have enjoyed the presence of Jesus ever since high school. That he would use me, with all my faults and weaknesses, is a testimony to his kindness and power. My faith in Christ is central to my writing and—I hope—to every part of my life.

Q *Tell us about your church experiences, how you grew up (or maybe didn't grow up) in the church, where you attend now, your involvement in your local assembly, etc.*

A I grew up without Christ and without the church. When I was in high school I attended a church for the wrong reason—to see a girl I'd met. But God can use even our wrong motives for his right purposes. (In fact, years later that girl became my wife!)

At that church and in the youth group there, I heard the gospel for the first time, and after a few months or so of attending, I was reading the Bible regularly, at home in my bedroom. It fascinated me, and it had the ring of truth. One day I realized I believed what it said about Jesus and everything else. I dropped to my knees, by myself in our basement, confessed my sins and gave my life to Christ. I have never once regretted it.



Randy & Nanci Alcorn

Nanci's my best friend and wife. We're part of Good Shepherd Community Church (www.goodshepherdcc.org),

where I was a pastor for thirteen years, before the Lord directed me into full-time writing. One of our sons-in-law is now our church's college pastor, and our daughter helps him in ministry. The other is a Jr. High teacher, and our younger daughter, his wife, is an emergency room nurse. We're proud of both our daughters and both our sons, and it's wonderful to have them close by.

Q *Tell us about your current church family/fellowship. How does it influence your work?*

A We love our church and it regularly and significantly influences our lives. We've led a small group Bible study in our neighborhood, coming out of our church ministry. We've been involved in many Bible study groups over the years. Nanci leads a women's Bible study, I often teach different classes

and occasionally preach, and we both mentor young people. I direct a parachurch ministry, but the local church is where it's at.

Q *Who are your spiritual mentors? Your professional mentors?*

A My first youth pastor, Paul Siwick and my second, Stu Weber, both had a great influence on me. Stu and I were the original pastors of our church, where he still serves as lead pastor. Steve Keels, another of my pastors who was in the college group I led many years ago, is my closest friend besides Jesus and Nanci. Steve and I talk honestly and check on each other's spiritual lives. Stu, Steve, and I meet on Wednesday mornings for Bible study, fellowship and prayer, and it's a highlight of my week. I guess I don't have a professional mentor per se. But I have sat at the feet of many great thinkers, writers, and God-lovers, including C. S. Lewis, Francis Schaeffer, A. W. Tozer, and John Piper.

Q *Discuss your calling/mission—as a writer, and as a Christian.*

A My calling is first to find my purpose and joy in Christ, and second to transfer that purpose and joy to others. I want my life and writing to be full of what Jesus came full of—grace and truth. My desire is that He would so permeate my life as to flow over to others and draw them toward Him. My life calling and my calling as a writer are the same. I want my imagination to be baptized by and grounded in God's Word, which has a power and authority my own words don't have. (He says His Word won't return to Him without accomplishing their intended purpose—if my words are to make an eternal impact, they must conform to His.)

Q *What are your Scripture reading habits?*

A I seek to spend time each morning in Scripture, though occasionally that time comes later in the day. Throughout most days I open my Bible periodically, to reference and meditate. Sometimes I use a Bible program to search for and study a certain text, etc.

Q *What books have most influenced your work?*

A **Nonfiction:** *The Knowledge of the Holy* by A. W. Tozer, *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis, *Knowing God* by J. I. Packer, *Desiring God* by John Piper, *He Is There And He Is Not Silent* by Francis Schaeffer.

Fiction: *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis, *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy by J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis's Space trilogy, especially *Perelandra*, *The Singer* trilogy (including *The Song* and *The Finale*) by Calvin Miller.

Q *Do you read secular fiction at all? If so, who are your favorite authors, and why?*

A I've read and enjoyed John Grisham. My tastes are eclectic, but I have a special love for Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, and the Nero Wolfe mysteries by Rex Stout. I've read or listened on audio to most of the forty-seven Nero Wolfe books. I sort of pay tribute to these books in my new novel *Deception*, which is due out in March.

Q *What are your other media habits—television, movies, music, etc.?*

A Nanci and I enjoy good movies, but finding ones that don't violate biblical principles is difficult. We do almost all our movie renting through companies that provide filtering of profanity and sexually inappropriate scenes removed. We like the old Sherlock Holmes series with Jeremy Brett, and the A&E Nero Wolfe programs (with one notable exception that was blatantly immoral). I'm an old science fiction fan, so "Star Trek," "Stargate" and Star Wars are appealing, and as long as you filter out their worldviews, they can teach some valuable lessons in an enjoyable way. I'm glad we don't have cable TV, or I'd be tempted to watch the SciFi channel too much!

Our most regular television event is football, and our whole family gathers for Sunday night football each week. Nanci is a great football fan, and we've been able to meet players and go to games when I've been asked to speak in NFL pre-game chapels. That's been a lot of fun.

Q *Do you and your family have any special faith-based traditions?*

A We enjoy a number of things centered on Thanksgiving and Christmas, including sharing times where each family member expresses his or her gratitude for God's faithfulness over the previous years.

Q *Tell us about your prayer life and habits.*

A It has always been difficult for me to spend great lengths of time in prayer, and sometimes it's been a cause of discouragement. On the other hand, God has graciously taught me about prayer and dependence on him throughout the day. I often get on

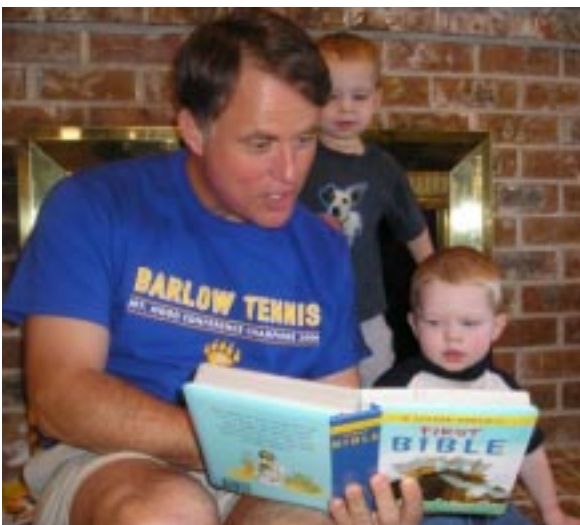


Randy at his work station

My calling is first to find my purpose and joy in Christ, and second to transfer that purpose and joy to others.

God is an author. The universe itself is his book. Each person is a chapter. History really is his story.

Randy reading to two of his grandchildren, Matthew & Jake



my knees for brief periods in my office throughout the day. I pray as I hear of needs. Nanci and I stop and pray together various times throughout the day. I ask God to help me see prayer as an adventure in which I come into his presence and behold Him, and become so absorbed with Him that I don't want to do anything else. I've had tastes of that, but long for more.

I often think about how wonderful it will be on the New Earth, as resurrected beings, to see God's face, to consciously delight in everything around me as a direct extension of God's magnificence. I will never have to guard my eyes, restrain my thoughts, question my motives, or wonder what else I need to confess. In short, I'll be free of my sin-tainted self, and fully free to be the Christ-empowered righteous self God designed me to be, in continual conscious recognition of Him. This is at the heart of prayer, I think, and I ask God to help me taste that not only in the short sessions throughout the day, but in longer prayer times as well.

Q Describe what you believe is the role of writing in the Christian life.

A God is an author. The universe itself is his book. Each person is a chapter. History really is his story. Christ is the Word, the very essence of God, and expression of God. We are created in God's image, and made to be sub-creators, authors who create and weave together both nonfiction and marvelous stories on which our imaginations can soar. When we write and read such works, He is pleased. As an author, I am very aware that I'm a steward of words, and I labor to get them right.

Books and bookstores have had an enormous influence on my own life. My first youth pastor did me a huge favor—he gave me a key to his office, so I could go in any time and read his books, hundreds of them. I read everything I could get my hands on. There was an elderly couple in our church, named Bill and Martha Kuntz. They had a Christian bookstore in their house

in Gresham, Oregon, my hometown. I would go there several days a week, for hours at a time. They would point out books for me to read. They introduced me to Lewis, Schaeffer, and Tozer, and books such as *Tortured for Christ*, *God's Smuggler*, *Through Gates of Splendor*, and *The Cross and the Switchblade*.

Over the years I bought and read portions or all of thousands of good books, many of which are now in our church library.

I cannot divorce God's works of grace in my life from good books. In my book *Heaven*, I talk about books the Bible says are now in Heaven, and I give arguments for believing other books will be written and read on the New Earth.

Q Tell us about one or more of your favorite encounters with readers.

A I met a young man who told me he was going to commit suicide. Then God put one of my novels into his hands and he read it, and the Lord turned his life around. Another man told me that his wife was also suicidal, and she too had her life changed by reading one of my nonfiction books. One of the most touching things I've experienced is receiving videos of memorial services where my books have been read from and passed out. Some have been teenagers, and their photos are enclosed with notes from their parents saying something like, "*Deadline* and *Edge of Eternity* and *Safely Home* were his favorite books." I can't wait to meet these people in Heaven.

Q Would you share a story about someone you've brought to Christ or share how your writing has helped someone?

A God has graciously given me many of these stories, but here's a short one. Once on a flight back from the East Coast I engaged a young man in conversation who said he was of Persian descent. He was coming out to attend the University of Oregon, a school not known for its Christian commitment. I spoke briefly of my faith in Christ, and then gave him one of my novels, *Deadline*. I prayed for him for a few weeks and then didn't think much more about him.

Five years later, just a few years ago now, I was speaking in a church somewhere and a young woman came up to me and asked if I remembered this young man. I did. She said, "He said he never contacted you to tell you this, but when he got to college he sat down and read your novel cover to cover. And when the skeptic in the book finally confessed his sins and gave his life to Christ, this young man prayed along with him." Then she told me, to my surprise and delight, "I want you to know, this is the most godly man I've ever met."

I have the privilege of daily receiving letters from people—prisoners, pastors, homemakers, business CEOs, students, teenagers—who tell me they've been changed by reading one or more of my books. But in eternity it will be great to hear more stories, and great for me to come to innumerable people who've written books—and done far more important things—that have shaped me. I look forward to saying "Thank you," then having a great discussion over the best dinner we've ever tasted!

Getting Water Was Never So Much Fun!

Recently EPM was privileged to help pay for digging a well for the Home of Love in Gulu, Uganda. Action International missionaries Jerry and Candis Bingham work with war-torn, traumatized people, especially children.

The children in their Home of Love had been walking close to 1/2 a mile to haul the water. For 26 children and staff, that was a daily chore for all of them to help with. This is such an easy well that even the 3-year-old, disabled Second, can pump it and feel he is really helping. It gives the children more time to do school work, play, and work in the Home's garden. Everyone rejoiced! Even neighbors have been glad for the children.



“How Readest Thou?": *An Urgent Appeal to Search the Scriptures* by J. C. Ryle

...we must never forget that all the education a man's head can receive will not save his soul from hell, unless he knows the truths of the Bible.

A man *may have prodigious learning, and yet never be saved*. He may be master of half the languages spoken round the globe. He may be acquainted with the highest and deepest things in heaven and earth. He may have read books till he is like a walking encyclopedia. He may be familiar with the stars of heaven, the birds of the air, the beasts of the earth, and the fishes of the sea. He may be able, like Solomon, to “speak of trees, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows on the wall, of beasts also, and fowls, and creeping things, and fishes” (1 Kings 4:33). He may be able to discourse of all the secrets of fire, air, earth, and water. And yet, if he dies ignorant of Bible truths, he dies a miserable man. Chemistry never silenced a guilty conscience. Mathematics never healed a broken heart. All the sciences in the world never smoothed down a dying pillow. No earthly philosophy ever supplied hope in death. No natural theology ever gave peace in the prospect of meeting a holy God. All these things are of the earth, earthy, and can never raise a man above the earth's level. They may enable a man to strut and fret his little season here below with a more dignified gait than his fellow mortals, but they can never give him wings, and enable him to soar towards heaven. He that has the largest share of them will find at length that without Bible knowledge he has got no lasting possession. Death will make an end of all his attainments, and after death they will do him no good at all.

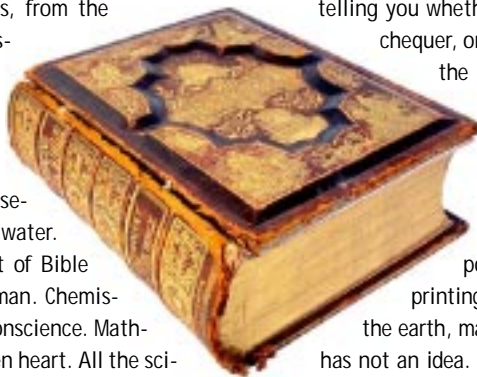
A man *may be a very ignorant man, and yet be saved*. He may be unable to read a word, or write a letter. He may know nothing of geography beyond

the bounds of his own parish, and be utterly unable to say which is nearest, Paris or New York. He may know nothing of arithmetic, and not see any difference between a million and a thousand. He may know nothing of history, not even of his own land, and be quite ignorant whether his country owes most to Semiramis [a legendary ninth-century B.C. Assyrian queen], Broadicea [an ancient British queen, d. A.D. 60], or Queen Elizabeth [the first Protestant Queen of England, 1533-1603]. He may know nothing of the affairs of his own times, and be incapable of telling you whether the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or the Commander-in-Chief, or the Archbishop of Canterbury is managing the national finances. He may know nothing of science and its discoveries: and whether Julius Caesar won his victories by gunpowder, or the apostles had a printing press, or the sun goes round the earth, may be matters about which he has not an idea. And yet if that very man has heard Bible truth with his ears, and believed it with his heart, he knows enough to save his soul. He will be found at last with Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, while his scientific fellow-creature, who has died unconverted, is lost forever.

Knowledge of the Bible, in short, is the one knowledge that is needful. A man may get to heaven without money, learning, health, or friends—but without Bible knowledge he will never get there at all. A man may have the mightiest of minds, and a memory stored with all that mighty mind can grasp—and yet, if he does not know the things of the Bible, he will make shipwreck of his soul forever. Woe! Woe! Woe to the man who dies in ignorance of the Bible!

Excerpt from the booklet “How Readest Thou” by J. C. Ryle, (Moscow, ID: Charles Nolan Publishers, 2001), pages 4-5.

A man may get to heaven without money, learning, health, or friends—but without Bible knowledge he will never get there at all.





World Watch List 2006 — The Top 10 Persecuted Countries

1. North Korea

Violations of human rights are the order of the day in the Stalinist country of North Korea, including many breaches of religious rights. North Korea has entered its fourth year as the worst violator of religious rights for Christians. Christianity is observed as a dangerous foreign influence which stimulated the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and therefore poses one of the greatest threats to the regime's power. As a result, the North Korean authorities are making harsh efforts to root out Christianity. It is believed that tens of thousands of Christians are currently suffering in North Korean prison camps where they face cruel abuses. The hermit regime is suspected of detaining more political and religious prisoners than any other country in the world. Several North Koreans became Christians after crossing the border with China and entering into contact with local Christians. Many among these were exposed as believers when they returned to North Korea, and they were specially targeted for arrest. Many of them were tortured and killed. Though no exact figures can be given, Open Doors' staff estimates that hundreds of Christians were killed by the regime in 2005. Amidst all of this, North Korea is trying to keep up a facade of religious freedom, trying to cover the complete lack of this inalienable human right, by—among others—organizing government-sponsored religious services in show churches in the capital of Pyongyang, which foreigners are allowed to attend.

2. Saudi Arabia

Also this year, Saudi Arabia remains high in the top 10 of the World Watch List. Religious freedom does not exist in the Wahhabist kingdom where citizens are only allowed to adhere to one religion: Islam. No legal protection is provided for freedom of religion, neither does this protection exist in practice. The legal system is based on Islamic law (Shariah). Apostasy—conversion to another religion—is punishable by death. Although the government recognizes the right of non-Muslims to worship in private, the public practice of non-Muslim worship is prohibited. However, more than 70 expatriate Christians were arrested in 2005 during worship in private homes in what has been called Saudi Arabia's largest crackdown on Christians in a decade. Most of the arrested Christians were eventually released.

3. Iran

Islam is the official religion in Iran, and all laws and regulations must be consistent with the official interpretation of Shariah law. Whereas the deterioration of religious freedom for Christians started with the victory of conservative parties at the beginning of 2004, a new wave of persecution of Christians followed the election of a hard-line conservative president in June 2005, bringing the country to position No. 3 on the World Watch List. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad hailed his election triumph as a new Islamic revolution that could spread throughout the world and pledged to restore an "Islamic government" in Iran, implying that the previous administrations were not sufficiently Islamic. Since 2005's election, many Christians have not only been rounded up for harassment, but many have been arrested and beaten. One house church pastor was killed in November. Ethnic Christians are still allowed to express their faith within their own church walls, but those who come from a Muslim background face tremendous risk because the government wants them to return to Islam. Allegedly, local authorities throughout the na-



tion have been given the order to crack down on all Christian cell groups. Because the churches are forbidden to assist any Muslim background believers, many ethnic churches removed their support from their brothers and sisters of Muslim origin. The new policy threatens evangelism and discipleship efforts. Muslim background believer cell groups are now meeting in secret.

4. Somalia

In Somalia, there is no constitution or any legal provision for the protection of religious freedom. The federal government is very weak as the warlords still have some control in different parts of Somalia. Islam is the official religion and social pressure is strong to respect Islamic tradition, especially in certain rural parts of the country. Most regions make use of local forms of conflict resolution, either secular, traditional clan-based arbitration, or Islamic (Shariah)

law. Less than 1 percent of ethnic Somalis are Christian, practicing their faith in secret. In some parts of Somalia, underground believers from a Muslim background find themselves in a worse situation in 2005. Five of these believers were killed by fundamentalist Muslims. As a result, many others became afraid and fled to Kenya and other parts of the world.

5. Maldives

In the archipelago of the Maldives, Islam is the official state religion and all citizens must be Muslims. Shariah law is observed, which prohibits the conversion from Islam to another religion. A convert could lose citizenship as a result. It is prohibited to practice any other religion than Islam, which is considered to be an important tool in stimulating national unity and maintenance of the government's power. Thus it is impossible to open any churches, though foreigners are allowed to practice their religion in private if they don't encourage citizens to participate. The Bible and other Christian materials cannot be imported apart from a copy for personal use. In the country—one of the least evangelized countries on earth—there are only a handful of indigenous believers, and they live their faith in complete secrecy. The lack of respect for religious freedom in the Maldives remained the same during 2005.



6. Bhutan

Mahayana Buddhism is the state religion in the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan. Officially, the Christian faith does not exist and Christians are not allowed to pray or celebrate in public. Also, the government forbids Christian house gatherings that involve several families. Priests are denied visas to enter the country. Christians are being deprived of their rights, such as children's education, government jobs and setting up private businesses. The import of printed religious matter is restricted, and only Buddhist religious texts are allowed in the country. Society exerts strong pressure to comply with Buddhist norms. Christians are regularly arrested, as the local police often use arrests as a pressure tactic to make believers refrain from witnessing. Believers are not only experiencing pressure from the authorities but also from Buddhist clerics, sometimes experiencing physical assaults.

7. Vietnam

Vietnam is one of the last communist-ruled countries in the world. Although the constitution

provides for religious freedom, the atheist regime tries to keep religion under strict control with a system of obligatory registrations. Many believers escape this by not registering. From time to time the Vietnamese government holds campaigns and closes churches, especially in the highlands. Vietnam drops a few places on the list, as Christians have expressed that their situation has improved in 2005, compared to previous years. In November 2004, a new ordinance was implemented in Vietnam to regulate religion. Though many feared this would lead to increasing oppression, it seems that the new ordinance has in fact resulted in slight improvements. The Evangelical Church of Vietnam was allowed to build and renovate church buildings and conduct trainings. For Roman Catholics, the situation improved dramatically: they were allowed to open a new diocese and ordain 57 new priests. Though arrests and beatings of Christians continued during 2005, they seem to take place to a lesser extent than in 2004, when more than 100 Christians were imprisoned and maltreated and an unknown number killed during Easter demonstrations against religious rights.

8. Yemen

The Yemeni constitution guarantees freedom of religion but it also declares that Islam is the state religion and that Shariah is the source of all legislation. The Yemeni government allows expatriates some freedom to live out their faith, but Yemeni citizens are not allowed to convert. There are a handful of converts from Islamic background who face the death penalty if they are discovered. During the past year, several Christian converts were arrested and beaten for their faith. Nearly all those arrested were released after paying a fine/bribe.

9. Laos

Together with Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam and China, Laos is one of the remaining communist-ruled countries in the world. Laos' constitution provides for religious freedom. However, the absence of rule of law and specific regulation on religious matters allows local officials to interpret and implement the constitutional provisions as they choose. The Lao-tian authorities allow limited presence of Christianity and put believers under strict surveillance. The regime limits the number of open churches and regularly closes churches, especially in the countryside.

January 2006:

1. N. Korea
2. Saudi Arabia
3. Iran
4. Somalia
5. Maldives
6. Bhutan
7. Vietnam
8. Yemen
9. Laos
10. China
11. Afghanistan
12. Uzbekistan
13. Turkmenistan
14. Eritrea
15. Comoros
16. Pakistan
17. Egypt
18. Myanmar (Burma)
19. Azerbaijan
20. Morocco
21. Brunei
22. Libya
23. Iraq
24. Cuba
25. Djibouti
26. India
27. Sudan
28. Nigeria (N)
29. Tajikistan
30. Sri Lanka
31. Russia (Muslim Rep)
32. Tunisia
33. Qatar
34. Nepal
35. Indonesia
36. Turkey
37. Algeria
38. Ethiopia
39. Bangladesh
40. Mauritania
41. Kuwait
42. United Arab Emirates
43. Belarus
44. Colombia (Conflict Areas)
45. Oman
46. Jordan
47. Syria
48. Mexico (S)
49. Philippines (S)
50. Kenya (NE)



The biggest challenges to the church in Laos are societal pressure against converts who renounce evil spirit worship. But still there are many unregistered activities and the church seems to be growing despite persecution. Our staff in the region report that the situation for Christians has improved over 2005, particularly in the southern part of the country. The situation has especially improved at

the grassroots level. Christian leaders in the south have expressed that they are able to undertake many church activities with no or little government interference, and training of leaders by major local leaders has increased. What particularly has changed in the last three years is the increasing ability of church leaders or individual Christians to bring cases of persecution and abuse by local government leaders to the respective national offices. When abuses were reported to the national government, local officials were reprimanded and removed from office or transferred to

other locations. However, the main group of Christians in the north continues to face difficulties and persecution. Though to a lesser extent than in previous years, Christians continued to be arrested for their faith and put under pressure to renounce their faith in 2005. Bible imports were cancelled in August as the regime stepped up monitoring the provinces that were used to transport the materials.

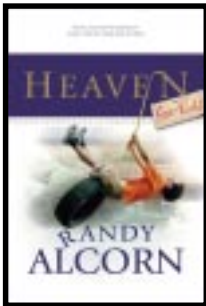
10. China

In China, the constitution provides for freedom of religious belief and the freedom not to believe. New comprehensive regulations on religious affairs passed on March 1. The most significant change is that a church can register directly under the Religious Affairs department instead of under the Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM). There seems to be no real change compared to the old religion law though and it appears that the government is using the new regulations to pressure unregistered house churches to register and extend control over them. During 2005, a massive crackdown took place on house churches throughout China in which thousands of Christians were arrested. Most of them were released after a few days.

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Now Available!

Heaven for Kids



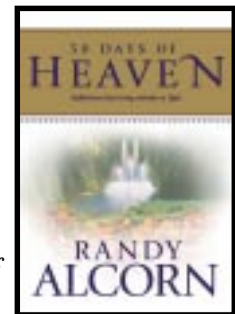
Enjoy exploring life in Heaven. After all, it's a place where you can live forever someday—a place without fear, anger, sadness, or sickness. It's a place where you can live with the wonderful and fascinating God who created you. And it's a place where you can hang out with all sorts of kind and interesting people who will be your friends forever.

This book has many questions and answers people have asked about life after death, and it's especially geared to children ages 8-12.

50 Days of Heaven: Reflections that bring eternity to light

50 Days of Heaven contains stand-alone meditations to be read one at a time, including questions of self-examination as well as prayer.

For those who haven't read the original *Heaven* book, and may never, *50 Days of Heaven* is an alternative that reflects the *Heaven* book's heart and soul.



You may order at your local bookstore or online at www.epm.org/orderform.html

Watch for *Deception*, the spin-off of Randy's first two novels, *Deadline & Dominion*, coming Spring 2007!

Letters to EPM

I wish I could even begin to tell you what a blessing each and every one of Randy's books has meant to my husband and to me. They have truly helped to change our lives and our walk with the Lord. They have encouraged us to be in the Word daily. More than anything...his books have put in my heart a yearning and a JOY about all that the Lord has for us eternally...and I don't deserve a single bit of any of it. This has helped me just want to serve my Lord Jesus every day, trying to be where He wants me to be.

I just finished reading *The Grace and Truth Paradox*. Honestly, the Lord gave me that book at the exact time I needed to read it. I had just shared with my husband and prayed about that very struggle that I have and found this little book that we had not yet read before. It really will help change my life and how I will witness to others.

E. K., Lakeland, FL

I wanted to let you know how eternally (no pun intended) grateful I am for your book on Heaven.

It came at a very trying time in my life spiritually (our daughter with major medical issues—not being healed though we believed she would be).

Heaven has become as real as tomorrow to me. I know of some of the things that I'm looking forward to tomorrow—but I won't know all it will hold until it's the present. And of course tomorrow certainly won't be as glorious as Heaven (unless Jesus comes back tomorrow). Knowing more about Heaven has given me a clearer perspective and hope and joy in my daily life.

So thank you very much for your writings. I am looking forward to meeting you in Heaven.

A. N.

I just completed *Dominion*.

I serve in the US Navy and have for the better part of nearly seventeen years now. You may or may not know that the military goes through great lengths to teach us how to interact with each other (meaning all of us from different ethnic and race backgrounds). You can imagine taking young men straight out of high school from all over the USA and grouping them together to live, eat, shower, study, exercise, etc., and work together as a cohesive unit; a team. Many of today's white sailors have not been raised to accept black men. And although these men will spend the next four years together, some never will come to accept black men.

Many of the points you make in *Dominion* are issues that I have recently been dealing with. As God always works, He's always right on time. This book along with other influences have shown me just how prejudiced I am.

Furthermore, I have now learned that it's okay to acknowledge and talk about these prejudices. In the past few months I have looked at and acted around my black brothers as that, brothers. Whether believers or not, your book stretched my "white" thinking into right thinking. Although I never thought of myself as prejudiced in the past or responsible for discrimination, slavery, or any other issues raised in *Dominion*, I now see myself differently. I now recognize I have a role and responsibility to myself, to my Lord, and to my shipmates.

Continue down this course, please. This message must reach the church and all believers. I'll do what I can. I may not be able to change our Navy but I can impact the small groups that God gives me the authority to lead.

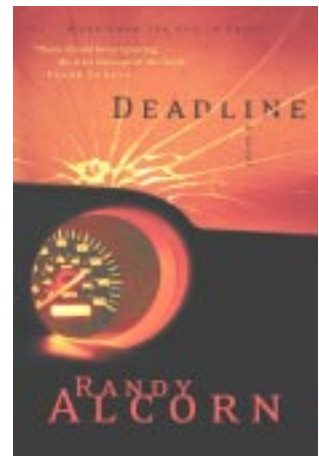
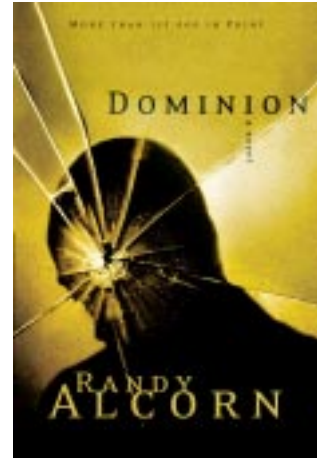
D. D.

I do not write to authors but I had to write you in regards to your wonderful books. I was privileged to find one right after Hurricane Katrina (I lost everything I owned and am now living in a FEMA travel trailer). I was "shopping" in one of our disaster stores and found one of your books. It was most enjoyable and inspiring at times like these.

In my hometown life is not easy. We are still trying to pick up after Katrina. But reading your words brought such quietness and peace to my life. Your book reminded me that God is still on His throne and looking lovingly at each of His children. It reminded me that although our lives may be changed, God never changes and He keeps us safe and that we will not be here always. There is a home on the other side much better than we can ever imagine.

I just finished reading *Deadline* and it was just astounding. I have always enjoyed reading but now must read according to my uptime. I am a disabled mother with Narcolepsy. As I read *Deadline*, I found so much joy and harmony in your words. I realize you call your books fiction, but there's so much heart and inspiration in them, staying within biblical truth. Your books are so needed today with the way the world appears to forget that there is only one God. Thank you so much.

E. W., Mississippi





What Is the New Earth? What Will It Be Like?

by Randy Alcorn

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. . . . And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "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. . . ." [Jesus] said, "I am making everything new."

(Revelation 21:1, 3, 5, NIV)

*Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight,
At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more,
When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death,
And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again.*

C. S. Lewis,
The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

Is God going to destroy Earth and make a different one from scratch?

For some, the destruction of the Earth is something in science-fiction books and movies. But Peter, one of Jesus' twelve disciples, wrote about what will really happen someday: "The heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment" (2 Peter 3:10). Sounds scary, huh? (But if you know Jesus, you can relax, because "the end" will be followed by a fantastic new beginning of an exciting life that will never end!)

Some Bible teachers think that the Earth will be completely destroyed and a different earth will be made from scratch. But the Bible teaches us that while the Earth will be destroyed for a while, it will be restored. God will make the same old earth into the "New Earth," which will be better than it ever was!

Think about the Flood that happened during the time of Noah. Although the earth seemed "destroyed," it really wasn't. It continued to exist.

We know the Bible says our bodies will die, but God will bring the same bodies back to life in a much better condition. In the same

way, the Earth will die, but God will bring it back in a much better condition. That will be the New Earth.

You could compare the Earth's future changes to that of a caterpillar. As you know, major changes happen to a caterpillar after it goes into a chrysalis. It comes out a new creature—a butterfly. It hasn't stopped existing. It's the same, yet transformed. And it's a real, lasting transformation. Though transformer action figures can be changed back and forth, the butterfly can't be changed back to a caterpillar (nor would it want to be). Likewise, the New Earth will never change back to the old Earth.

When God fashions this earth so that it's new again, we're going to live with him on it. Remember, Jesus is a carpenter. What do carpenters do? They *make* things, and they *fix* things that are broken. This earth is broken. It's far from perfect now, because of sin. But Jesus is going to fix it, just like he's going to fix us. We will be the same people made new, and we will live on the same earth made new.

Pretty exciting, don't you think?



Will the New Earth be like our Earth was in the beginning?

What's the most beautiful place you've ever seen or hope to see? What made it beautiful to you? The Garden of Eden was probably the most beautiful place that ever existed. After all, the first people God created lived there in the days before pollution or earthquakes or wars or poverty or crime. We can only imagine what it was like.

Every beautiful place on earth—the Grand Canyon, the Alps, the Amazon rain forests, the Serengeti Plain in Tanzania (where lions roam)—is just a small taste of what New Earth will be like. It's like when your mom or dad lets you have a tiny piece of turkey or dressing to sample just before the Thanksgiving



meal. It's not enough to satisfy you. But it's good enough to help you think about how delicious the whole meal will be!

All our lives, even if we don't know it, we've been dreaming of the New Earth—the Heaven that will last forever. Whenever we see beauty in water, wind, flower, animal, man, woman, or child, we see just a sample of what Heaven will be like.

We should expect this New Earth to be like the Garden of Eden, only better. That's exactly what the Bible promises: "The LORD will comfort Israel again. Her desert will blossom like Eden, her barren wilderness like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be found there. Songs of thanksgiving will fill the air" (Isaiah 51:3, NLT).

Will places like the Grand Canyon actually be on the New Earth?

Ever see an old house, car, or painting fixed up to look the way it used to be (before age and wear and tear messed it up)? Some of the paintings by famous artists from centuries ago have been restored. What's that all about? Well, an artist or a team of artists cleans and (if necessary) uses new paint to brighten the faded colors of a painting. Although the painting is still the same, it looks once again like it was meant to look.



The New Earth will still be Earth just as we, in our new bodies, will still be ourselves. So we can expect New Earth's sky to be blue and its grass green. Lake Louise (in Alberta, Canada) will likely become New Lake Louise.

In *The Last Battle*, when the children enter Aslan's Country from Narnia, though they don't yet know it's Heaven, they see not only familiar sights from Narnia, but from their earth. Suddenly Peter says, "It's England. And that's the house itself—Professor Kirk's old home in the country where all our adventures began!"

Edmund says that house had been destroyed. But then he's told, "So it was. . . . But you are now looking at the England within England, the real England just as this is the real Narnia. And in that inner England no good thing is destroyed."

Then Peter, Edmund, and Lucy gasp and shout and wave because across a valley they see their father and mother!

We will meet all kinds of new people and see all kinds of new places—but we will also see familiar people and familiar places, because we will be with resurrected people we love on the resurrected Earth we love.

Based on what the Bible says, I think we'll not only see things the way they are now, but we'll see things the way they were meant to be. On the New Earth, no good thing will be destroyed. Everything we love about the old Earth will be ours on the New Earth—either in the same form or another. Once we understand this, we won't regret leaving all the cool places we've seen or wish we'd seen. *Why? Because we know we'll see many of them on the New Earth—and they will be better than ever!*

Excerpted from Randy Alcorn's book, Heaven for Kids (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers), 2006, p. 51-57.



Disturbing the hornet's nest? by F. W. Krummacher

The world feels that **the teachings of Christ...**
destroy their false peace,
condemn their carnality, and
demand the sacrifice of their idols.

Hence they are averse to, and incensed against Him.

The Christian religion disturbs the hornet's nest, tears away the plasters and coverings from secret wounds, and awakens conscience, which had been rendered lethargic by a variety of magic potions.

Hence their hatred and animosity to it.

(Excerpted from F. W. Krummacher's book, The Suffering Savior [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers], 2002)





A. W. Tozer on Prayer . . .

Overcome Distractions

But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

—Matthew 6:6

Among the enemies to devotion none is so harmful as distractions.

Whatever excites the curiosity, scatters the thoughts, disquiets the heart, absorbs the interests or shifts our life focus from the kingdom of God within us to the world around us—that is a distraction; and the world is full of them. Our science-based civilization has given us many benefits but it has multiplied our distractions and so taken away far more than it has given....

The remedy for distractions is the same now as it was in earlier and simpler times, viz., prayer, meditation and the cultivation of the inner life. The psalmist said "Be still, and know," and Christ told us to enter into our closet, shut the door and pray unto the Father.

It still works....

Distractions must be conquered or they will conquer us. So let us cultivate simplicity; let us want fewer things; let us walk in the Spirit; let us fill our minds with the Word of God and our hearts with praise. In that way we can live in peace even in such a distraught world as this. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."

The Set of the Sail,
pp. 129-132



Prayer Changes the Man

And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

—John 14:13-14

In all our praying, however, it is important that we keep in mind that God will not alter His eternal purposes at the word of a man.

We do not pray in order to persuade God to change His mind. Prayer is not an assault upon the reluctance of God, nor an effort to secure a suspension of His will for us or for those for whom we pray. Prayer is not intended to overcome God and "move His arm."

God will never be other than Himself, no matter how many people pray, nor how long nor how earnestly.

God's love desires the best for all of us, and He desires to give us the best at any cost. He will open rivers in desert places, still turbulent waves, quiet the wind, bring water from the rock, send an angel to release an apostle from prison, feed an orphanage, open a land long closed to the gospel. All these things and a thousand others He has done and will do in answer to prayer, but only because it had been His will to do it from the beginning.

No one persuades Him.

What the praying man does is to bring his will into line with the will of God so God can do what He has all along been willing to do. Thus prayer changes the man and enables God to change things in answer to man's prayer.

The Price of Neglect,
pp. 51-52

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