



Eternal Perspectives

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

Spring 2006

Being Careful With Our Words by Randy Alcorn

Gossip and misinformation flow unceasingly in the Christian community.

Note from Randy: *In February, I dialogued extensively with those involved in the End of the Spear movie controversy. God has laid it on my heart how easy it is for Christians to believe and disseminate false information. Below is an excerpt from the response article I wrote at www.epm.org/articles/end_spear_response.html. This segment of the article applies to far more than that particular controversy.*

Gossip and misinformation flow unceasingly in the Christian community. One day, in Heaven, they will be burned to ashes by the consuming holiness of God.

To cite one of many examples of our Christian gullibility, the FCC still receives letters and phone calls from Christians who are hearing for the first time the lie circulating since 1975, that atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair is petitioning the FCC to ban religious broadcasting from America's airwaves.

Never mind that this woman died in 1995. The fact is she was never involved in such a thing even while alive! Yet the letters (I've been getting them for thirty years, most recently ten months ago) and phone calls and now emails continue to come in. Why? Because despite the fact that we complain against media bias, Christians tend to believe whatever we hear—in newspapers, websites, blogs and emails, and in personal conversation.

I have been sometimes guilty of believing the worst about my brothers without hearing their side of the story. It makes me ashamed. I confess it publicly. I repent of it. I pray I will never do it again, and if I do that I will be quick to repent.

Speaking of repentance, it is more than just saying "I made a couple of little mistakes, sorry. Okay, everything's fine now so I can move right on and get back to hammering my brother." When we wrong our brothers—I mean all of us, beginning with me—let's take it seriously.

Psalm 51 is an expression of pure repentance. Notice that there is no explanation of the extenuating circumstances, of how busy the king is, how demanding his responsibilities, how lonely the man at the top is, how irresponsible it was for Bathsheba to be naked on a rooftop, how Uriah was a neglectful husband, etc. David didn't point to others' failures. He didn't explain or rationalize or justify or qualify his sin. HE OWNED UP TO IT 100%. He didn't care how bad he looked. He just admitted he was wrong.

That's the kind of repentance we need to practice when we misrepresent our brothers and sisters and believe the worst of them. We dishonor our God and each other when we gossip and accuse and delight in our brother's alleged errors.

And when we pass them on to others who use them to attack the reputations of our brothers, it is just wrong. We need to repent. I need to repent.

I encourage you, if you have stated to other people, or said something at your church, or forwarded an email linking to a website claiming something about others that is false (e.g., that the producers of *End of the Spear* knew Chad Allen was a homosexual activist before they offered him the part), go back to them and correct what you have said. If you hear others repeat these falsehoods, please graciously correct them and point them toward what is true.



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God holds us accountable for every word we say, including the careless ones.

Life and Death, the Tongue, Forwarded Emails and Blogs

The power of the words we speak is far greater than we realize. "Life and death is in the power of the tongue." Years ago I put together a number of Scriptures on the power of our words (see pages 4-6). Their cumulative weight is stunning. I encourage you to read them and meditate on them, and examine your heart and habits. These biblical principles apply every bit as much to our written words as our spoken ones.

In fact, usually our written words assume more permanence and reach further and wider. Let me say something to my fellow writers of books and blogs and emails, words which I direct at myself as well: the blessing of reaching further and wider becomes a curse when our words are untrue and ungracious.

These powerful tools we are using, emails and the internet and blogs, can serve either God or Satan, good or evil. And make no mistake, God holds us accountable for every word we say, including the careless ones. Jesus said, "But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken" (Matthew 12:36). This means we better *think*

carefully before we pass on emails that may be false.

There is an inherent danger in blogs. Usually there is no editor. No checks and balances. Yet because you have words attractively placed on a screen, there is an illusion of credible research. Often the research is minimal and limited to internet sites.

But there are a lot of truths you can't just Google.

You've got to make the effort to go directly and privately to your brother, just like Jesus commanded us to.

Blogs have no publisher with a legal department or wise counsel to look at potentially slanderous accusations and say "Have you gone to them and asked them to respond?"

After writing more than twenty books, I know there can be inaccuracies even after a dozen people in our office and at the publishing house have looked

over manuscripts. But when it's just the lone blogger, where's the process, the give and take, the wise counsel and accountability? Where's the iron sharpening iron?

With blogs, there is often almost no gap between composition and publication. The potential result is misinformation by the truckload. If I'm cranky or tired or busy today, I can hammer on somebody without bothering to get my facts straight or allowing enough time to pass to evaluate my impulses biblically and get some wise counsel before proceeding.

In fact, some Christian blogs operate with a sort of mob behavior, where one person kicks somebody with a verbal cheap shot, emboldening others, and then a number gang up, using words instead of kicks and knives. Christians encourage Christians to beat up on other Christians, often without a full or accurate understanding of reality. Isn't all this a natural spawning ground for the "careless words" Christ says we'll have to give an account of on Judgment Day? James is right—the tongue "is a restless evil, full of deadly poison."

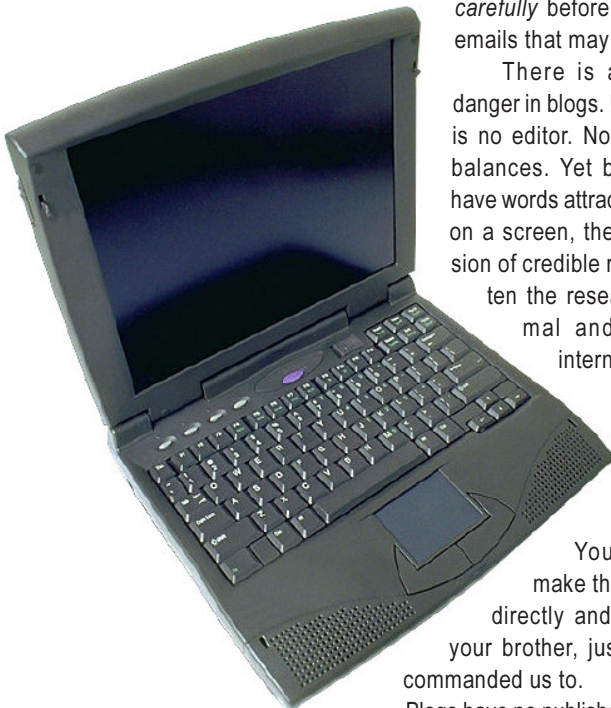
There are very good blogs, of course. But even good ones can unintentionally pass on some falsehoods. And sometimes our misspoken words are taken by others who will do something with them we never would have wanted.

The Biblical and Moral Mandate of Grace

All of us who believe Scripture agree that things such as adultery, homosexual relations, lying, and stealing are sin. But so is gossip. So is bearing false witness against your brother. So is pride and arrogance and sowing seeds of disunity.

Jesus said, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." In the case of the *End of the Spear* controversy, how would you like to be treated if you made some very difficult, gut-wrenching decisions and went to many spiritual advisors and believed God wanted you to go a certain direction, only to hear it said (by those who did not pour out their pleas for God's guidance with tear-stained faces) that you have betrayed the Christian community, and betrayed your father's heritage by doing what you believe God led you to do?

"If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (Romans 12:18). "Strive for peace with everyone" (Hebrews 12:14). Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers." God has indeed called us to battle, which takes boldness and courage. But do not mistake expressions of slander, cruelty, and verbal mob behavior as doing spiritual battle. Humility, grace, and peacemaking are often God's greatest tools in the battle for righteousness and justice.



Psalms 133:1 says, "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!"

What are we doing to cultivate this kind of unity? Sometimes we must disagree with our brothers. But are we going out of our way to assume the best rather than the worst? Are we laboring to share our opinions in a spirit of love and grace?

Proverbs 6:16-19 says there are six things God hates, seven things detestable to the Lord. "Hands that shed innocent blood" would apply to abortion. "A heart that devises wicked schemes and feet that are quick to rush into evil" could apply to both homosexual and heterosexual sin and their advocacy. But let's not stop there. The passage also includes a "false witness" and one "who stirs up dissension among brothers."

Wouldn't we all like to think that WE couldn't be guilty of any of the seven things God hates? I would. But if we say that, then we have "haughty eyes" and "lying tongues," which covers the remaining deadly sins. We all get nailed, don't we?

I would plead with the Christian community to respond to others with greater grace and humility. While "Judge not lest you be judged" is perhaps the most misused statement in Scripture, it does have its proper application, doesn't it? So does "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall," and "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall."

So too does James 2:13, which says "judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!"

Where is the mercy among evangelical Christians? Personally, I've seen a lot of it. I've also seen a lot of unmerciful condemnation of the sort that Jesus repeatedly denounced.

Now I realize that some know nothing but "mercy" and tolerance, and know nothing of truth. I am not advocating this. I am a truth-oriented person. Truth has been very important to me ever since I came to Christ as a teenager. I was brought out of lies to believe the truth, and it is sacred to me.

But Jesus often condemned the Pharisees, those whose doctrine was closest to his own. Why?

For their lack of grace. Jesus came full of grace and truth. I do not want the truth to be compromised. Our Jesus came "full of grace and truth." I think we should approach any controversy with a great measure of grace.

I have seen online a lot of questioning of motives of our brothers in Christ. This troubles me. We're told in 1 Corinthians 4:5, "Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God."

God tells us, essentially, "Don't set up your own judgment seat, because I know the motives of the heart that you don't." We lack a few important qualifications for being judges: not only holiness, but a little thing called omniscience!

Those words of our Lord are worth repeating because clearly we are not heeding them: "But I tell you that men will have to give account on the Day of Judgment for every careless word they have spoken" (Matthew 12:36).

I have sometimes spoken careless words against my brothers. I pray that God would give me the grace and humility to speak my words more carefully.

I think Titus 3:2 is a good guideline for us: God calls us "to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men."

Challenge

Wouldn't you love for those of us who are already each other's brothers and sisters to learn how to believe the best of each other? And to speak the truth to each other in love? And to be like Jesus toward each other: full of grace and truth?

One thing is certain: a world torn apart by suspicions and false accusations will never be won to Christ by a church riddled with the same.

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EPM Information:

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Biblical Principles for Godly Verbal Communication

by Randy Alcorn

◆ THE POWER OF MY WORDS

For bad:

The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. But no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison (James 3:6, 8).

With his mouth the godless man destroys his neighbor (Proverbs 11:9).

The words of a gossip are like choice morsels, they go down to a man's inmost parts (Proverbs 18:8).

For good:

A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver (Proverbs 25:11).

Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones (Proverbs 16:24).

An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up (Proverbs 12:25).

The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is of little value. The lips of the righteous nourish many, but fools die for lack of judgment (Proverbs 10: 20, 21).

For good or evil:

Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing (Proverbs 12:18).

The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit (Proverbs 15:4).

Summary:

The tongue has the power of life and death (Proverbs 18:21).

◆ LISTEN BEFORE YOU SPEAK

Listen to the counsel of others:

He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise (Proverbs 15:31).

He who ignores discipline despises himself, but whoever heeds correction gains understanding (Proverbs 15:32).

Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise (Proverbs 19:20).

Stop listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge (Proverbs 19:27).

Pay attention and listen to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach, for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your lips (Proverbs 22:17, 18).

Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is a wise man's rebuke to a listening ear (Proverbs 25:12).



For waging war you need guidance, and for victory many advisers (Proverbs 24:6).

A wise son heeds his father's instruction, but a mocker does not listen to rebuke (Proverbs 13:1).

Wise men store up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool invites ruin (Proverbs 10:14).

Listen before you respond:

He who answers before listening—that is his folly and his shame (Proverbs 18:13).

Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him (Proverbs 29:20).

Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry (James 1:19).

◆ DON'T TALK TOO MUCH

When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise (Proverbs 10:19).

A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered (Proverbs 17:27).

A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions (Proverbs 18:2).

He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise.

Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue (Proverbs 17:28).

A man of understanding holds his tongue (Proverbs 11:12).

◆ WEIGH YOUR WORDS: THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK

The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil (Proverbs 15:28).

Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing (Proverbs 12:18).

He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin (Proverbs 13:3).

He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity (Proverbs 21:23).

If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight reign on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless (James 1:26).

◆ MAKE YOUR WORDS TIMELY AND APPROPRIATE

A man finds joy in giving an apt reply—and how good is a timely word! (Proverbs 15:23)

A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver (Proverbs 25:11).

It is to a man's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel (Proverbs 20:3).

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Proverbs 15:1).

◆ DON'T TAKE TOO SERIOUSLY THE HARSH WORDS OF OTHERS

Do not pay attention to every word people say, or you may hear your servant cursing you—for you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others (Ecclesiastes 7:21, 22).

◆ SPEAK THE TRUTH

Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies (Psalm 34:13).

A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who pours out lies will not go free (Proverbs 19:5, 9).

The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful (Proverbs 12:22).

◆ SAY WHAT PEOPLE NEED TO HEAR, NOT JUST WHAT THEY WANT

Kings take pleasure in honest lips; they value a man who speaks the truth (Proverbs 16:13).

Whoever flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his feet (Proverbs 29:5).

He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor than he who has a flattering tongue (Proverbs 28:23).

Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses (Proverbs 27:5, 6).

A truthful witness saves lives, but a false witness is deceitful (Proverbs 14:25).

Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ (Ephesians 4:15-16).

Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult; whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs abuse. Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you (Proverbs 9:7, 8).

◆ USE WORDS THAT EDIFY

The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit (Proverbs 15:4).

Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones (Proverbs 16:24).

An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up (Proverbs 12:25).

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification (Romans 14:19).

... authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than pulling you down (2 Corinthians 10:8).

We have been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ; and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening (2 Corinthians 12:19).

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be



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kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you (Ephesians 4:29-32).

◆ **THE SOURCE OF MY WORDS**

For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34).

But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man “unclean” (Matthew 15:18).

The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart (Luke 6:45).

◆ **The Problem:
WHAT IS THE HEART OF
MAN LIKE?**

Every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood (Genesis 8:21).

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

◆ **The Solution:
A HEART
TRANSPLANT**

Create in me a new heart, O God (Psalm 51:10).

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone... I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws (Ezekiel 36:26, 27).

◆ **The Surgical Tool:
GOD’S WORD**

For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even

to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12, 13).

**Once the heart is changed,
the words will change:**

A wise man’s heart guides his mouth (Proverbs 16:23).

◆ **REMEMBER WE MUST
ACCOUNT TO GOD FOR
OUR WORDS**

But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken (Matthew 12:36).

So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore, let us stop passing judgment on one another... (Romans 14:12).



For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

Our newsletter can be accessed online at www.epm.org/newsletters.html. (Unfortunately, we cannot email it due to the size of the file.) If you would like to access the newsletter online instead of receiving a printed copy—saving EPM postage costs—please contact our office either by email at info@epm.org or call us at 503-663-6481 and ask to be removed from our mailing list. Thank you.

Practical Ways to Help Our Persecuted Brothers and Sisters in Christ

We receive many letters from readers asking for ways to help those being persecuted for their faith. In addition to financial contributions, the following are other opportunities for individuals, families, or church groups to help those in need.

Blankets of Love

"Blankets of Love" is an opportunity to share a blanket with a Sudanese Christian who has suffered for the cause of Christ. Many Christian families in Sudan have lost all earthly possessions as they flee from Islamic persecution.

Nights in Sudan can be cold, and many children have to sleep on the bare ground. The simple gift of a blanket can be a great encouragement to your Sudanese brothers and sisters who are persecuted for their faith.

To sponsor a blanket for Sudan:

1. Select a good quality used blanket(s) from your home. (You may purchase new blankets if you desire.) *Types of blankets:* Cotton or synthetic, full or queen. Please no quilts, afghans, comforters, army, or electric blankets.
2. Add \$2.00 per blanket for handling and shipping to Sudan.
3. Send blankets now or anytime this year to:
"Blankets of Love," The Voice of the Martyrs,
510 SW Adeline, Bartlesville, OK 74003



Bibles Unbound

Today around the world, persecuted Christians are quietly gathering names and addresses. These addresses are from their local communities, businesses, factories, universities and even government offices. Names and addresses are being gathered by believers from China to Columbia and from Cuba to the Middle East and submitted to The Voice of the Martyrs.

You can mail New Testaments from your own home directly to communities where your persecuted brothers and sisters are now courageously witnessing. Sign up at www.BiblesUnbound.com to participate in

one or more "ministry operations." (You may target your own "ministry operation," or VOM can choose one for you.) For \$30.00 per month, you will receive five or more New Testaments each month in the appropriate language, along with corresponding address labels, a description of the operation(s), packaging instructions, and the postage to mail your Bibles.

You can follow your Bibles online and see when they arrive. You can also see a record of all the individuals you have mailed a New Testament to, along with updates and testimonies as they are available. An online map displays the nations where you have sent Bibles and partnered with today's persecuted church.

Visit www.BiblesUnbound.com for updated information.

Prisoner Alert

Read about your brothers and sisters currently imprisoned for their faith at VOM's www.PrisonerAlert.com. This site enables you to write an encouraging letter and have it immediately translated in the prisoner's native language. You may also subscribe to the Web site's email alerts, and every month you will be notified of a new prisoner to write.

Action Packs

The Action Pack program is set up to help families in the U. S. bless persecuted Christian families and Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iraq. The Action Pack program consists of a specially preprinted vacuum bag with a zip-lock closure that allows air to be pushed out by simply rolling the vacuum bag. It will contain a complete list of items to put in the bag such as sweaters, T-shirts, towels, hats and other necessities to help families who have lost everything, along with five additional brochures for you to share with your church or family and friends. You can also include a photo of your family or group and an encouraging note. With each Action Pack, VOM will distribute the color Gospel storybook, *He Lived Among Us*, printed in their native language. Action Packs are available from VOM for a contribution of \$5.00 each (one vacuum bag per Action Pack) to cover shipping the packs to you and then the finished packages to Pakistan and Afghanistan.

(Information and pictures compiled from VOM magazine, Special Edition, 2006)



For more information on these and other projects to help our persecuted brothers and sisters, contact:

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(You may also give a financial contribution through EPM. 100% of designated contributions go directly to the ministry noted.)



What to Do in the Gray Areas by John MacArthur

One of my joys as a pastor is to guide people through God's Word and explain its implications on their lives. It thrills me to help others by clarifying a point of doctrine, interpreting a difficult verse, or answering any number of other questions. Among the concerns people raise, I can't remember the last time someone asked me if it was wrong to lie, to cheat, to steal, to commit murder, to commit adultery, or to covet. It's also been a long time since anyone wanted to know whether a Christian should read the Bible, pray, or tell others about salvation in Jesus Christ. The Bible is pretty clear about those things.

There is, however, one class of question that falls somewhere in the middle. These are the issues dealing with Christian freedom—things that fall in the "gray" area. What entertainment is acceptable? What kind of music is okay? What can a Christian do or not do on Sunday? What about what you wear, what you eat and drink, or how you spend your free time—does the Bible address those things?

Some would say, "No, the Bible doesn't address them. Do what you want to do—you're free in Christ!" While it is true that the Bible doesn't *specifically* list every possible decision you'll face in life, it does address all choices with *principles* that govern Christian freedom. When you run your choices in the "gray areas" through the following grid of principles from God's Word, I trust you'll find both clarity *and* true freedom to live your life to God's glory.

Will it benefit me spiritually?

All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify (1 Cor. 10:23).

A "profitable" thing is useful, helpful, or to your advantage to do; and the idea behind "edify" is to build up spiritually. So based on this verse, ask yourself, "Will doing this enhance my spiritual life? Will it cultivate godliness? Will it build me up spiritually?" If not, you should seriously question whether that behavior is the best choice.

If not, you should seriously question whether that behavior is the best choice.

Will it bring bondage?

All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things

are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything (1 Cor. 6:12).

In the second part of this verse, Paul is saying, "I will not be brought under the power of anything." If what you are considering can be habit-forming, why pursue it? Don't allow yourself to be in bondage to anything or anyone. You are a bond-servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, and Him alone.



Will it defile God's temple?

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Don't do anything that you know will harm your body or bring shame—it is the only instrument you have to glorify God. Romans 6:13 says, "Present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." How you choose to use your body should always reflect your concern to honor Jesus Christ.

Will it cause anyone to stumble?

Food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat. But take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak (1 Cor. 8:8-9).

This is the principle of love. As Romans 13:10 says: "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law." If you know that your choice—what you consider "in bounds" and approved—causes another Christian to stumble and sin, love that brother or sister enough to restrict your own freedom. That is not very popular in our self-absorbed society, but it is biblical.

Don't allow yourself to be in bondage to anything or anyone.



To continue to indulge in a legitimate freedom that causes problems for another Christian is a sin. For by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. "Therefore," Paul said, "if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that I might not cause my brother to stumble" (1 Cor. 8:12-13).

Will it further the cause of evangelism?

Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved (1 Cor. 10:32-33).

Whether you are aware of it, what you allow or disallow in your behavior affects your witness for Christ—and the world is watching. It's an issue of *testimony*—what your life says about God. Your testimony either tells the truth about God, or it tells a lie. The choices you make in the "gray" areas should reflect your concern not to bring offense to God's reputation but to bring Him praise instead.

Will it violate my conscience?

He who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin (Rom. 14:23).

First Corinthians 10:25-29 contains three references to abstaining from a certain practice "for conscience sake." Never train yourself to violate your

conscience. If your conscience is troubled by what you consider, don't do it. If you aren't sure about it, don't do it. It is hard to overstate the value of a clean conscience, but it is worth keeping your conscience clear so that your relationship to God will not be hindered. If you'll keep yourself in prayer and the study of God's Word, you will inform your conscience so you can "walk as children of light... finding out what is acceptable to the Lord" (Eph. 5:8, 10).

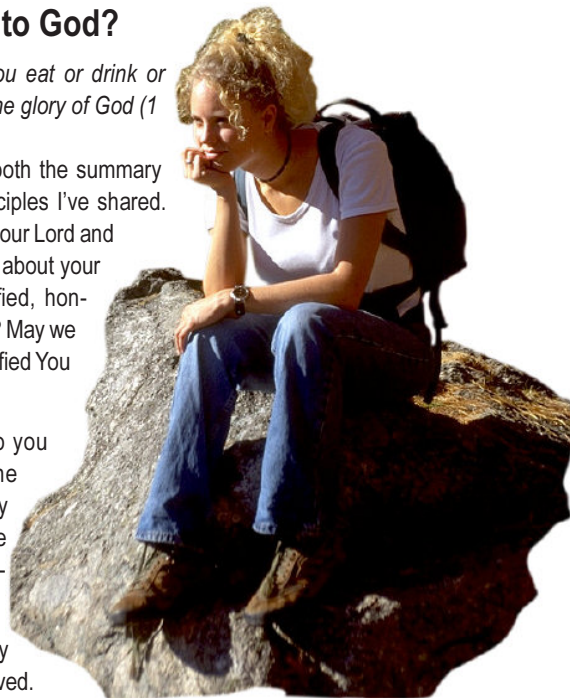
Will it bring glory to God?

Therefore, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).

That verse is clearly both the summary and the goal of all the principles I've shared. Isn't our heart's cry to glorify our Lord and Savior with our lives? Think about your decision—Will He be glorified, honored, and praised through it? May we say along with Jesus, "I glorified You on the earth" (John 17:4).

So what questions do you have? Run them through the principles above and enjoy your freedom in Christ—the freedom to be what He created you to be!

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John Wesley's Budget

"Gain all you can, save all you can, give all you can"

John Wesley was potentially one of England's most wealthy citizens. Yet, as his income sharply increased, look at what happened to his spending habits:

	Income	Living Expenses	To the Poor
1st year:	£30	£28 (93%)	£2 (7%)
2nd year:	£60	£28 (47%)	£32 (53%)
3rd year:	£90	£28 (31%)	£62 (69%)
4th year:	£120	£28 (23%)	£92 (77%)
Later:	over	over	over
	£1,400	£30 (2%)	£1,400(98%)

(From *The Accountability Connection* by Matt Friedman [Victor Books, New Man, July/August 1994], p. 12.)

Eternal Perspective Ministries' Giving Report

At EPM we desire to invest wisely in God's kingdom all that is entrusted to us, to the glory of Christ. Anything we don't need to operate, we seek to give to strategic kingdom causes. In 2005 our operating expenses were approximately \$230,000. Included in that total are wages, benefits, printing & distribution of the newsletter, travel expenses, and general office expenses.

We thank God that from book royalties and contributions you gave, we were able to give over \$900,000 in 2005 to the cause of Christ through the following funds:

Missions	\$423,728.22	Suffering Church	\$72,510.00
Prolife	\$32,846.19	Relief Agencies	\$273,105.87
Family	\$13,385.00	Racial Reconciliation	\$23,000.00
Salt & Light	\$9,500.00	Handicapped Min.	\$15,040.00

In addition, we were able to give over \$50,000 worth of books to various organizations, individuals, and prisoners.

Thank you for your part in what has been accomplished for the kingdom through Eternal Perspective Ministries.



How Can We Know That We'll Go to Heaven?

by Randy Alcorn

In my book *Heaven* I explore the beauties, wonders and adventures of resurrected living with the resurrected Jesus on the New Earth. What lies ahead for the follower of Christ is fantastic and thrilling on a cosmic scale. But as I was writing, I thought how ironic and tragic it would be for some readers to get excited about Heaven, then end up assuming they're going there when in fact they aren't.

A recent poll indicated that for every American who believes he's going to Hell, there are 120 who believe they're going to Heaven. This optimism stands in stark contrast to Christ's words in Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

The truth is that according to the Bible, we don't automatically go to Heaven. In fact, Hell—not Heaven—is our default destination. Unless our sin problem is solved once and for all, we can't enter Heaven. That's the bad news. But once that's straight in our minds we're ready to hear the good news—the gospel of Jesus Christ. The good news is that Jesus took upon himself, on the cross, the Hell we deserve so that we could experience for eternity the Heaven we don't deserve.

There are two possible destinations when we die—Heaven or Hell. Can we really know in advance where we'll go? The apostle John said, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). We can know for sure that we'll go to Heaven when we die.

Do you?

To sin means to fall short of God's holy standards. Sin is what ended Eden's paradise. And all

of us, like Adam and Eve, are sinners. You are a sinner. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Sin separates us from a relationship with God (Isaiah 59:2). Sin deceives us and makes us think that wrong is right and right is wrong (Proverbs 14:12). Sin has terrible consequences,

but God has provided a solution: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has loved us so much that he became a man to deliver us from our sin (John 3:16). He came to identify with us in our humanity and our weakness, but he did so without being tainted by our sin, self-deception, and moral failings (Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:15-16). Jesus died on the cross as the only one worthy to pay the penalty for our sins demanded by the holiness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). Being God and therefore all-powerful, Jesus Christ rose from the grave, defeating sin and conquering death (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 54-57).

When Christ died on the cross for us, he said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). The Greek word translated "it is finished" was commonly written across certificates of debt when they were canceled. It means "paid in full." Christ died so that the certificate of debt, consisting of all our sins, could once and for all be marked "paid in full."

Only when our sins are dealt with in Christ can we enter Heaven. We cannot pay our own way. Jesus said "No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). "Salvation is found in no one else [but Jesus], for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Because of Jesus Christ's sacrificial death on the cross on our behalf, God freely offers us forgiveness. "He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:10-12).

To be forgiven, we must recognize and repent of our sins. "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy" (Proverbs 28:13). Forgiveness is not automatic. It's conditioned upon confession: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Christ offers to everyone the gifts of forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. "Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" (Revelation 22:17).

There's no righteous deed we can do that will earn us a place in Heaven (Titus 3:5). We come to Christ empty-handed. We can take no credit for



salvation. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). This gift cannot be worked for, earned, or achieved. It's not dependent on our merit or effort but solely on Christ's generous sacrifice on our behalf.

Now is the time to make things right with God. Confess your sinfulness and accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on your behalf.

You are made for a person and a place. Jesus is the person, and Heaven is the place. They are a package—they come together. You cannot get Heaven without Jesus or Jesus without Heaven.

"Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near" (Isaiah 55:6).

For all eternity you'll be glad you did.

(This article has appeared most recently in a local small-town newspaper, The Mt. Hood Connection)

Tony Dungy Makes Super Bowl Stop to Speak at Athletes in Action Breakfast by John Oehser

Note from Randy: *Nanci and I attended the Athletes in Action breakfast spoken about in the following article. Tony's message was perhaps the most powerful Holy Spirit-anointed presentation by any celebrity, sports or otherwise, I have ever heard. The richness, the depth, the pain and joy of it were beyond words.*

DETROIT, Mich.—They were there for breakfast, and they were there to cheer New York Jets running back Curtis Martin.

And it was Martin who received the Athletes in Action Bart Starr Award Saturday morning, but the hundreds who gathered in the fourth-floor ballroom at the Marriott Renaissance in Detroit, Mich., on the morning before Super Bowl XL were clearly touched by the featured speaker.

That speaker was Colts Head Coach Tony Dungy.

Two hours into the breakfast, emcee Brent Jones introduced Dungy, who was welcomed with a lengthy standing ovation. Dungy thanked the crowd, shared an anecdote about Martin, then told the crowd he was going to speak for about 15 minutes.

"It's great to be here," Dungy told the crowd, then adding with a laugh, "I just wish I wasn't here in this capacity so many times of being just that close to being in the game and just being an invited speaker.

"My goal is to have our team here one day and have a couple of tables with all of our guys here. Because we have a special group of young men, a great group of Christian guys. It'd be wonderful to have them here so you could see their hearts and what they're all about.

"It hasn't quite happened yet, but we're still hoping one day it will."

He told them he was going to talk about lessons he had learned from his three sons. The crowd fell silent. Then Dungy spoke.

And although this was a breakfast—and although at many such events speakers speak over the clinking of glasses and murmurs from semi-

interested listeners—for most of the 15 minutes the room was silent except for Dungy's voice.

He spoke of his middle son, Eric, who he said shares his competitiveness and who is focused on sports "to where it's almost a problem." He spoke of his youngest son, Jordan, who has a rare congenital condition which causes him not to feel pain.

"He feels things, but he doesn't get the sensation of pain," Dungy said.

The lessons learned from Jordan, Tony Dungy said, are many.

"That sounds like it's good at the beginning, but I promise you it's not," Dungy said. "We've learned a lot about pain in the last five years we've had Jordan. We've learned some hurts are really necessary for kids. Pain is necessary for kids to find out the difference between what's good and what's harmful."

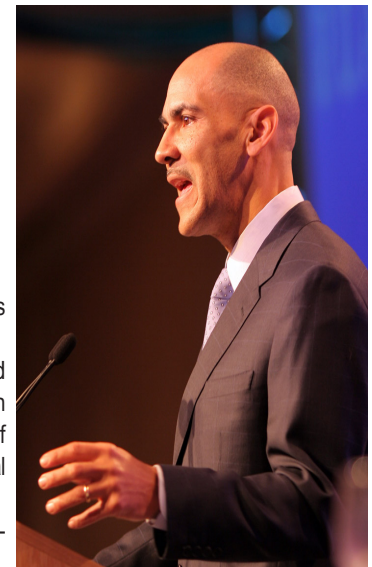
Jordan, Dungy said, loves cookies.

"Cookies are good," Dungy said, "but in Jordan's mind, if they're good out on the plate, they're even better in the oven. He will go right in the oven when my wife's not looking, reach in, take the rack out, take the pan out, burn his hands and eat the cookies and burn his tongue and never feel it. He doesn't know that's bad for him."

"Jordan," Dungy said, "has no fear of anything, so we constantly have to watch him."

The lesson learned, Dungy said, is simple.

"You get the question all the time, 'Why does the Lord allow pain in your life? Why do bad things happen to good people? If God is a God of love, why does he allow these hurtful things to happen?'" Dungy said. "We've learned that a lot of times because of



Tony Dungy

"Sometimes, pain is the only way that will turn us as kids back to the Father."

(Continued on Page 12)

“So, with all you know about heaven, if you had the power to bring him back now, would you?”

that pain, that little temporary pain, you learn what's harmful. You learn to fear the right things.

“Pain sometimes lets us know we have a condition that needs to be healed. Pain inside sometimes lets us know that spiritually we're not quite right and we need to be healed and that God will send that healing agent right to the spot.

“Sometimes, pain is the only way that will turn us as kids back to the Father.”

Finally, he spoke of James.

James Dungy, Tony Dungy's oldest son, died three days before Christmas. As he did while delivering James' eulogy in December, Dungy on Saturday spoke of him eloquently and steadily, speaking of lessons learned and of the positives taken from the experience.

“It was tough, and it was very, very painful, but as painful as it was, there were some good things that came out of it,” Dungy said.

Dungy spoke at the funeral of regretting not hugging James the last time he saw him, on Thanksgiving of last year.

“I met a guy the next day after the funeral,” Dungy said. “He said, ‘I was there. I heard you talking. I took off work today. I called my son. I told him I was taking him to the movies. We're going to spend some time and go to dinner.’ That was a real, real blessing to me.”

Dungy said he has gotten many letters since James' death relaying similar messages.

“People heard what I said and said, ‘Hey, you brought me a little closer to my son,’ or, ‘You brought me a little closer to my daughter,’” Dungy said. “That is a tremendous blessing.”

Dungy also said some of James' organs were donated through donors programs.

“We got a letter back two weeks ago that two people had received his corneas, and now they can see,” Dungy said. “That's been a tremendous blessing.”

Dungy also said he received a letter from a girl from the family's church in Tampa. She had known James for many years, Dungy said. She went to the funeral because she knew James.

“When I saw what happened at the funeral, and your family and the celebration and how it was handled, that was the first time I realized there had to



Curtis Martin & Bart Starr

be a God,” Dungy said the girl wrote. “I accepted Christ into my life and my life's been different since that day.”

Added Dungy, “That was an awesome blessing, so all of those things kind of made me realize what God's love is all about.”

Dungy also said he was asked often how he was able to return to the Colts so quickly after James' death. James died on December 22, and Dungy returned to the team one week later. Dungy said the answer was simple.

“People asked me, ‘How did you recover so quickly?’” Dungy said. “I'm not totally recovered. I don't know that I ever will be. It's still very, very painful, but I was able to come back because of something one of my good Christian friends said to me after the funeral.

“He said, ‘You know James accepted Christ into his heart, so you know he's in heaven, right?’ I said, ‘Right, I know that.’ He said, ‘So, with all you know about heaven, if you had the power to bring him back now, would you?’ When I thought about it, I said, ‘No, I wouldn't. I would not want him back with what I know about heaven.’

“That's what helped me through the grieving process. Because of Christ's Spirit in me, I had that confidence that James is there, at peace with the Lord, and I have the peace of mind in the midst of something that's very, very painful.

“That's my prayer today, that everyone in this room would know the same thing.”

(Article originally appeared Saturday, February 4, 2006, “Spreading His Message,” www.Colts.com)

Note: A DVD of the breakfast may be purchased at www.aia.com

An EPM Need: Used Laptop Computer

Sometimes people are upgrading and still have usable equipment to donate. EPM is in need of a laptop computer with Windows 2000 or XP, with wireless capabilities.

If you have a laptop computer you would like to donate to EPM, please contact Linda Jeffries at linda@epm.org or 503-663-6481. We would be happy to provide you with a “gift in kind” tax deductible receipt upon request.

Letters to EPM

I have read many Christian books, but never written to any author before. I literally devoured your books (*Deadline*, *Dominion & Edge of Eternity*). They caused me to get a glimpse of the truth—my spirit soared! The characters were so alive because they represent a bit of each of us in our daily Christian walk; our fears, doubts, and false beliefs that somehow became excess baggage.

I am going to re-read each of these books until your new ones come—because they challenge me to dig deeper into the Word for the truth. P. M.

I have just finished reading your book, *Deadline*. I wanted to thank you for writing such a wonderful novel. I'm a 32-year-old mother of one from Ohio. I lost my first child at age 15 to abortion. Through the many prayers, glorious forgiveness, and an awesome Christian counselor, the agony of that day (Sept. 21, 1983, yes I'll always remember) has lessened, and I have been able to help another woman. Thank you for writing the TRUTH. I have a list of people who would benefit from this book, and maybe even find love and salvation through Christ!

M. M., Ohio

Your book *In Light of Eternity* has really answered a lot of questions for me and has given me a different perspective about heaven. It has moved me more than any other book I have read, except for the Bible. I have been praying for some way to show my family a way to God and I think your book might help.

D. A.

I was reading one of your novels almost 5 years ago, when I read, "When we are at war with a people, we dehumanize them to do what we must do. If we want to reconcile with them, we must consciously promote them back to humanity." (That's as I remember the passage.) I read this at a time when my wife of 6 years and I had just been turned down for a China adoption and we had been told that Vietnam was our best chance.

I was on the ground outside Chu Lai in 1969. I was wounded and spent several years at Balboa Naval Hospital in San Diego, and in spika casts and a wheel chair. I graduated from San Diego State in 73 healed of my wounds, physically. It wasn't until October of 1997, when they told us we needed to adopt from Vietnam, that I realized my mind was not yet healed. I read your words in *Deadline* within days of the adoption agency's announcement and realized what I must do. I did it. All things are possible in Him.

Our son was 5 years old in April. When we arrived in Vietnam in '97, he was 6 months old; he weighed 6 pounds, and was very sick. We had lost his brother,

before we arrived. It was quite an adventure evacuating him from the Mekong Delta region. It was a time filled with miracles. F. K.

PS: Our daughter was 2 in January. She was born near Hanoi.

I have been a Christian for 23 years. In that time I've read many books, but I have *never* read a book that has brought me the kind of joy and thrill that *Heaven* has. Not ever. (God's Word is in a separate category, of course.) Our small group leader, a former accountant and total "type A" (not too emotional) person held this book up at our last meeting and said that this was the best book he'd ever read. I went out the next day and bought it. I went out the day after that and bought two more copies to give away and on Saturday I'm going out to buy 3 more copies to give to some other folks I know.

Last night I took a meal to a woman in her 40s whose husband of 32 years (they married when she was 16) has terminal bone cancer and is in the final stages of it. He accepted the Lord 3 weeks ago. I was able to share this wonderful book with her and she was going to start reading it to her husband as he waits to go HOME!!

I find myself reading a sentence or two, and having to stop and thank the Lord for what's coming and for what He took the care and love to prepare for all of us. Your mind can just not really get around that, but your heart can. Many times reading this book I find I'm in tears: tears of joy and gratitude. I just wanted to thank you for your Scripture-backed, optimistic, FUN, and realistic perspective on what we will be enjoying with Him...forever.

M. B., Lynden, WA

I just finished reading *The Purity Principle* this morning and wanted to let you know that I truly enjoyed it. It was direct and to the point. Christians should be that blunt more often, doing so makes it a lot easier to know what's truly right or wrong. The book gave very clear answers to questions that I've had. I plan to purchase a copy of this book for each of my three children. M. L.

I have just finished reading *The Grace and Truth Paradox*. Thank you for the wonderful insights on our Father's greatest attributes. I am post-abortive, and have been healed by Jesus' grace and truth. This book has such wonderful insights. Tomorrow, I am going into a women's prison with a ministry called "Healing Hearts." It is a Biblical study on our sin and God's grace for post-abortive women. I think God has put this little book in my hands in His perfect timing!

S. G.



*I have been
praying for
some way to
show my family a
way to God
and I think your
book might help.*

Randy Alcorn's Books in Other Languages

Randy's books have been translated into 19 different languages, with several others in process. The Italian version of *ProLife Answers to ProChoice Arguments* received a national book award. (A complete listing, along with links to where to purchase these books, can be found on our website, www.epm.org/foreign.html.)

Chinese

The Treasure Principle

Dutch

Deadline

Dominion

Edge of Eternity

The Grace & Truth Paradox

In Light of Eternity

Ishbane Conspiracy

Law of Rewards

Lord Foulgrin's Letters

Safely Home

The Treasure Principle

English/Tagalog (Philippines)

The Treasure Principle

Finnish

Safely Home

German

Heaven

Ishbane Conspiracy

Law of Rewards

Lord Foulgrin's Letters

The Purity Principle

Safely Home

Indonesian

The Treasure Principle

Italian

ProLife Answers

Khmer

The Treasure Principle

Korean

Heaven

The Grace & Truth Paradox

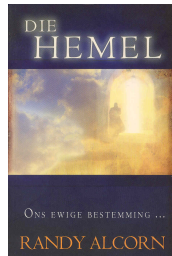
The Law of Rewards

Money, Possessions & Eternity

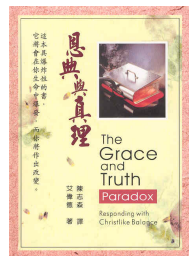
The Purity Principle

Safely Home

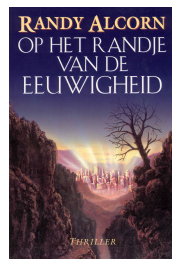
The Treasure Principle



**Afrikaans
Heaven**



**Chinese (Simplified)
The Grace & Truth
Paradox**



**Dutch
Edge of
Eternity**



**Korean
Safely Home**

Norwegian

Lord Foulgrin's Letters

Safely Home

Sexual Temptation booklet

Polish

The Treasure Principle

Portuguese-Brazilian

*The Grace & Truth Paradox
Heaven*

The Treasure Principle

Romanian

Lord Foulgrin's Letters

Safely Home

Russian

Deadline

Heaven

The Treasure Principle

South African

Afrikaans

Heaven

The Treasure Principle

English

The Grace & Truth Paradox

The Purity Principle

The Treasure Principle

Spanish

The Grace & Truth Paradox

Heaven

Lord Foulgrin's Letters

ProLife Answers

The Purity Principle

Safely Home

The Treasure Principle

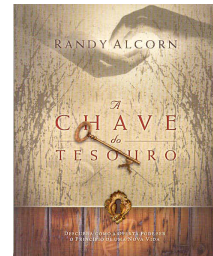
Spanish (Cuban)

The Treasure Principle

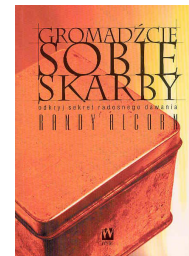
Vietnamese

The Purity Principle

The Treasure Principle



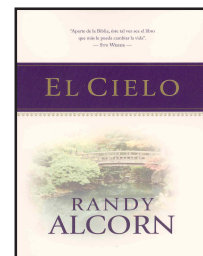
**Portuguese
The Treasure Principle**



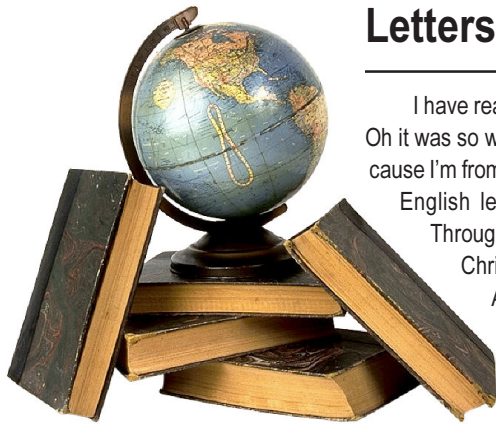
**Polish
The Treasure Principle**



**Romanian
Lord
Foulgrin's
Letters**



**Spanish
Heaven**



Letters In Response to Randy's Foreign Editions

I have read your book *The Ishbane Conspiracy*. Oh it was so wonderful! I can't say what I mean, because I'm from Germany and this is my first year with English lessons. But this book was so great. Through this book, I have learned that I was a Christian in my head, but not in my heart. After I read this, I prayed and I gave my life to Jesus once more. I cried and the Holy Spirit was with me. Sometimes, when the devil comes and wants to hurt me, I read this book as guidebook of God. And after this, I know, what He wants and I know He loves me.

J. M., 14 years old, Germany

I just finished your book *Safely Home* (I read the Dutch translation). And I just wanted to thank you. It's given me new perspectives in my prayers and I also experienced (again) that we, Christians, are part of God's plan. I feel deep love for our brothers and sisters in countries like China and they make me very ashamed. We can read God's Word freely, but many times things like television seems more important.

I pray that God shows me a way to be used in His plan.

I pray that God shows me a way in the feelings your book gave me and that I will be used in His plan.

I'm sorry for my bad English, as you see it's not my first language.

M. B., Belgium

Just wanted to tell you that I enjoyed very much your book *Safely Home*. I read it in the Dutch language and it invited me very much and strongly to give my life entirely to our dear Jesus Christ. Thank you very much.

T. C., Belgium

I've read *Deadline* in Dutch and finished last night *Edge of Eternity* in English. Your biblical vision of Heaven really helped me to think in a different way about how to live my life and the consequences in the hereafter. There is almost no attention for these kind of subjects (angels, the battle we can't see but is going on, Heaven, etc.) in the very traditional Church here in Holland of which I am a member.

The main characters in your books are so familiar to me. I must confess that I'm just like Nick walking often the opposite way on the red road, away from Charis. I thank Elyon I'm still in the world of second chances.

A. P., Holland

It is exciting to see the reaction of pastors to *The Purity Principle* in Spanish. Everyone regards the material as excellent and they are eager to get it into the hands of the young people they minister to.

S. P., Missionary

Come Thou Fount by Harry Adams

After reading *Heaven* by Randy Alcorn, Harry Adams wrote the following which was published in Dallas Seminary's *Kindred Spirit* magazine last summer (2005).

Recently my wife and daughter and I were reading Psalm 37. When we came to the fourth verse—"Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart"—I asked if this was true for me.

I am crippled by Lou Gherig's disease, ALS, which is a progressive and fatal neurological illness. In the eight years I've had ALS, it's taken my voice and robbed me of the use of my limbs. It also forced us out of our lovely home.

Is the promise of fulfilled desires true for me and for the millions of other believers who have had their plans and dreams shattered?

Yes, it's true—exceedingly so.

I desire a healthy body, and He promises me a body that is powerful, incorruptible, glorious, and spiritual.

I desire a home that is beautiful and spacious, and He is preparing such a home for me in a city whose builder is God.

I desire a world without crime, lies, or violence, and He promises me a world where righteousness dwells.

I desire to be with those I love, and He promises that I will be caught up together with them forever.

I desire an end to my sorrow, and He promises me fullness of joy in His presence.

I desire a heart so filled with love that there is no room for sin, and He promises to make me like Jesus when I am in Heaven.

I desire a ministry, and He promises I will serve Him eternally.

I desire a voice with which to praise Him, and He promises I will sing before His throne.

Most of all, I desire to see Him, and He promises I will always behold His face.

He will keep His promise to give me the desires of my heart.

A. W. Tozer on the Church . . .

Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate," says the Lord. "Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you."

—2 Corinthians 6:17



Different From the World

The church's mightiest influence is felt when she is different from the world in which she lives. Her power lies in her being different, rises with the degree in which she differs and sinks as the difference diminishes.

This is so fully and clearly taught in the Scriptures and so well illustrated in Church history that it is hard to see how we can miss it. But miss it we do, for we hear constantly that the Church must try to be as much like the world as possible, excepting, of course, where the world is too, too sinful....

Let us plant ourselves on the hill of Zion and invite the world to come over to us, but never under any circumstances will we go over to them. The cross is the symbol of Christianity, and the cross speaks of death and separation, never of compromise. No one ever compromised with a cross. The cross separated between the dead and the living. The timid and the fearful will cry "Extreme!" and they will be right. The cross is the essence of all that is extreme and final. The message of Christ is a call across a gulf from death to life, from sin to righteousness and from Satan to God.

The Set of the Sail, 35,36.

"...but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."...Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

—Acts 6:4,7

The Dry Rot of Non-Expectation

The church is afflicted by dry rot. This is best explained when the psychology of non-expectation takes over and spiritual rigidity sets in, which is an inability to visualize anything better, a lack of desire for improvement.

There are many who respond by arguing, "I know lots of evangelical churches that would like to grow, and they do their best to get the crowds in. They want to grow and have contests to make their Sunday school larger." That is true, but they are trying to get people to come and share their rut. They want people to help them celebrate the rote



and finally join in the rot. Because the Holy Spirit is not given a chance to work in our services, nobody is repenting, nobody is seeking God, nobody is spending a day in quiet waiting on God with open Bible seeking to mend his or her ways. Nobody is doing it— we just want more people. But more people for what? More people to come and repeat our dead services without feeling, without meaning,

without wonder, without surprise? More people to join us in the bondage to the rot? For the most part, spiritual rigidity that cannot bend is too weak to know just how weak it is.

Rut, Rot or Revival: The Condition of the Church, 8,9.

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