



Spring 2008

Dual Citizenship by Randy Alcorn



Inside this issue:

EPM'S Prison Ministry

5

Needed:

A Counter-Revolution

6

Fences and Freedom

8

Learn to Want What is Best

10

Eternal Perspective Ministries

39085 Pioneer Blvd., Suite 206

Sandy, OR 97055

503-668-5200

www.epm.org

As Christians we carry one passport that says Earth and another that says Heaven. How should we live now in a world that will die, yet will be raised to exist again forever?

Some Christians believe that with prayer and hard work—including political mobilization—we can reclaim our country's Christian distinctives, make abortion illegal again, and limit legalized marriage to a man and woman.

Other Christians question not only whether this is possible, but also whether it's desirable. Why devote so much time, money and energy to improving a world that's going to hell in a handbasket? When you know the ship's sinking you don't keep trying to fix it; you herd people into the lifeboats! So, they argue, let's just preach the gospel and pray, and stay away from social reform.

The first viewpoint says we should do everything possible, including politically, to Christianize this nation. The other says that Jesus calls us to be apolitical, and bring change by being committed disciples in our neighborhoods, communities, and workplaces. We don't need, they say, to make our beliefs a mandate that we foist on a world that already thinks of Christians as intolerant.

Others add—and I hope we can all agree on this one—that we should help the poor and needy, since Christ clearly commanded that.

Twenty-four years ago, as a young pastor, my wife and I opened our home to a pregnant teenager, who we had the

joy of seeing come to Christ. Soon afterward I served on the board of the first pregnancy center in our area. Fifteen years ago I participated in peaceful, nonviolent activities at abortion clinics. I was sued for \$8.2 million and had to resign as a pastor to keep my wages from being garnished by an abortion clinic.

Additionally, I helped try to stop the attempts to legalize physician-assisted suicide in Oregon. (We lost that battle.) I was sued by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) because I refused to obey a court order demanding that we not gather to pray, on the National Day of Prayer, at our City Hall, which we had received official permission to do.

While it might appear, because of my past activities, that I fall clearly into one camp on the issues I've raised, in fact, I do not. I still wrestle with what we should do, and not do, as Christians in this culture.

Rather than come up with a checklist, examining the pros and cons on both sides, I think it's better to consider what Scripture tells us not only about ourselves, but also the Earth we inhabit. If our thinking is right, it will give us principles to draw from as we determine what we should do—and not do—as Christ's followers concerned about the future of our culture.

Not Our Home

As Christians we have a dual citizenship. Just as He promises to make





men and women new, God also promises to renew the Earth itself. Scripture calls this the New Earth, an Earth where “there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain” and “no longer will there be any curse” (Rev. 21:1, 4, 22:3, NIV).

The saying goes, “This world is not our home.” We should qualify that to say “This world—as it now is, under the curse—is not our home.” But we should also add, “This world—as it will be, delivered from the curse—will be our home.”

God’s perfect plan is one day “to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ” (Eph. 1:10). The wall of separation between God and mankind will be brought down: “Now [on the New Earth] 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” (Rev. 21:3).

God will come down to live with us on the New Earth, which will be Heaven, His central dwelling place. Then we’ll have a single passport that says “New Earth.” One day as heirs of Heaven’s King, we will enter into full possession and stewardship of our native land: “His servants will serve him.... And they will reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 22:3,5).

Genesis 1-2 tells us that God made us to be rulers of the Earth, and His plan has never changed. Revelation 21-22 reclaims God’s original intent for righteous humanity to rule the Earth forever, to God’s glory. (Shouldn’t that knowledge motivate us to take active stewardship of what God has entrusted to us on this present Earth?)

In my book *Heaven*, I develop biblically why I believe on the New Earth there will be natural wonders, animals, trees, rivers, cities, houses, and architecture. We will laugh and eat and drink and tell stories, make crafts, build, garden, care for animals, play, enjoy sports and physically demanding activities, tend and manage and rule the Earth.

We will collaborate, research, invent, read books and write them, create and perform dramas, compose music and perform it, all to God’s glory. Why? Because we will still be physical beings created in God’s image, which means we are creative and intelligent. And we will be restored to a New Earth without sin and death, to fulfill God’s original plan of stewarding the material universe to His eternal glory.

Peter tells us: “In keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:13). Yet, strangely, most Christians are not looking forward to a New Earth where we, as resurrected people, will live and rule and serve with our Lord Jesus. At best, they anticipate—and sometimes, frankly, dread—a disembodied or angelic state where they will be less than human.

Paul reminded the Philippians, who were proud of their Roman citizenship, “Our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil. 3:20). We are ambassadors for Christ, representing our King and the policies of His kingdom in this world where—due to sin and curse—such policies are countercultural. As His ambassadors we must be careful not to be absorbed into this culture, lest we cease to represent and further His kingdom.

God’s people are called to live on the current Earth, in our current country, while looking forward to a New Earth and “longing for a better country” (Heb. 11:16).

So who is right? Those who believe this world is our home, and we should do all we can to care for the Earth, to steward it and relieve what suffering we can? Or, those who believe this world is not our home, and we need to focus on bringing the gospel to people so they can become citizens of a realm that will last forever? Biblically, both are right to a degree ... but both can easily slide into imbalance if they fail to consider the larger biblical picture.

All Things New

Mankind was designed to live on the Earth to God’s glory. That’s exactly what Christ’s incarnation, death and resurrection secured—a renewed humanity upon a renewed Earth.

God has never given up on His original creation. Yet, somehow we’ve managed to overlook an entire biblical vocabulary that makes this point clear. Reconcile. Redeem. Restore. Recover. Return. Renew. Regenerate. Resurrect. Each of these biblical words begins with the “re” prefix, suggesting a return to an original condition that was ruined or lost.

But doesn’t Scripture say the Earth will be destroyed? Yes. But the bodies of people who died hundreds of years ago are likewise destroyed. Yet, those same bodies (via their atoms or molecules or DNA) will be raised. Likewise, the same Earth destined for destruction is also destined for restoration.

Four ways you can live as a “Dual Citizen”

- Be heavenly minded.
- Be a good steward of the Earth—your home, your work, your finances.
- Love people—relationships are eternal.
- Work to improve society—help the needy, confront injustice, do your job well, create to God’s glory.

Romans 8:19-23 inseparably links the destinies of mankind and Earth. As such, the Earth will be raised to new life in the same way our bodies will be raised to new life.

The Earth's death will be no more final than our own. The destruction of the old Earth in God's purifying judgment will immediately be followed by its resurrection to new life. Earth's fiery "end" will open straight into a glorious new beginning. As C.S. Lewis put it at the end of *The Chronicles of Narnia, The Last Battle*: "Now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before."

No Earthly Good?

Some warn of those who are "so heavenly minded they're of no earthly good." Relax—we have nothing to worry about! On the contrary, many of us are so earthly minded we are of no heavenly or earthly good.

C.S. Lewis observed: "If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven."

In fact, Scripture commands us, "Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is....Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" (Col. 3:1-2). That's a direct command to be heavenly minded, isn't it? So, how should we live now in a world that will die, yet will be raised to exist again forever?

Some say that trying to improve the world is just rearranging the deck furniture on the Titanic. If the Earth will be finally destroyed, why do anything to make it better?

But if we realize we are stewards of God's creation, and our job is to be managers of the Earth and lovers of people, then we will do what we can to help people and improve culture and be righteous stewards of God's Earth. We will not have a lifeboat theology, but an ark theology that recognizes much that is in

this world will continue forever, resurrected by Christ in the form of a New Earth. Hence, we should not act as if our stewardship of this Earth or our bodies or our gifts or businesses don't matter. They do.

Why? Because in eternity we will have bodies, these *same* bodies resurrected, and relationships with the *same* people who have lived on this Earth. We will live in a redeemed society in which we will exercise our gifts and creativity to rule a real Earth, this *same* Earth resurrected. The belief that only people's souls will last forever, and therefore our only concern should be for souls, is a false doctrine.

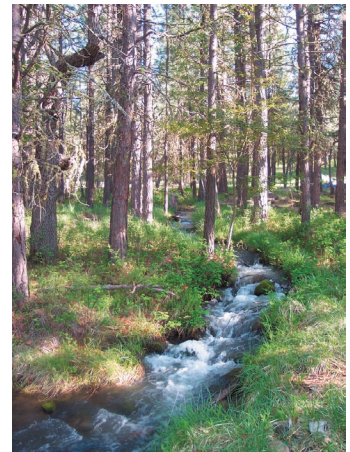
If we realize the continuity between our present lives and the afterlife, we will recognize God cares about our character and our moral choices, and that how we live will make a difference after we die.

After saying "we are looking forward to a New Heaven and a New Earth, the home of righteousness," Peter immediately adds, "So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him" (2 Pet. 3:13-14).

Knowing we will live forever as resurrected people on a New Earth will make us realize that the choices we make today, including our choices of personal holiness—and how we act toward others—will make an indelible mark on eternity. God is watching. He is keeping track. Jesus said that in Heaven He'll reward us for our acts of faithfulness to Him, right down to every cup of cold water we've given to the needy in His name (see Mark 9:41).

Whether it's coaching a team, mentoring young people, mowing a widow's lawn, standing up for unborn children, working for racial reconciliation, going on short-term missions trips, or giving a large portion of your income to missions or inner-city work—what are you doing to bring a vision of the coming New Earth to this current, hurting Earth?

Our answers will vary. There is no checklist. But we should not forget the compelling reality that we are citizens of two realms, which will one day be consolidated into one—a New Heaven and a New Earth, indivisible and under the eternal rule of Christ. On that Earth, we will look back with satisfaction and gratitude at the difference, by God's grace, we were able to make on this Earth.



Many of us
are so earthly
minded we
are of no
heavenly or
earthly good.



Heavenly-Minded Men

Throughout history, Christians who did the most for this present world thought most of the next. Following are examples of men who lived as dual citizens of Heaven and Earth, who weren't afraid to challenge the moral, social, and political issues of their day.

John Wesley
(1703-1791)

Co-founder of Methodism, opposed slavery and encouraged mineworkers to resist inhumane treatment by their employers.



William Wilberforce
(1759-1833)

British parliamentarian who sought to rid England of the slave trade.



William Carey
(1761-1834)

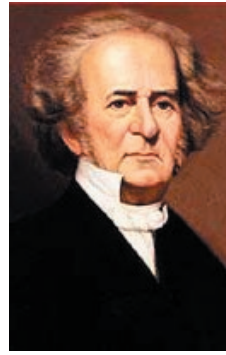
Pioneer missionary to India took infants into his home when they were left to die and gave medical care to the abandoned sick and lepers.

Fought to make illegal the detestable practice of burning widows alive on their husbands' funeral pyres.



Charles G. Finney
(1792-1875)

The father of modern revivalism, he had a major role in the illegal underground railroad, breaking unjust laws to gain freedom and save the lives of many slaves.



Lewis Tappan
(1788-1873)

Successful businessman founded the Magdalene Society, which ministered to unwed mothers in New York City. Also helped found the American Anti-Slavery Society. Also established Dun & Bradstreet.

Dwight L. Moody
(1837-1899)

Noted American evangelist who opened homes for underprivileged girls, rescuing them from exploitation.



Charles H. Spurgeon
(1834-1892)

The famed author and Baptist preacher built 17 homes to help care for elderly women and homes for orphans in London, rescuing them from starvation and vice on the streets.

Robert G. LeTourneau (1888-1969)

Father of modern earth-moving equipment, LeTourneau was among the few men who amassed a fortune during the Great Depression. He gave away 90 percent of company profits and 90 percent of his personal income.



EPM's Ministry to Prisoners By Sharon Misenhimer

By age nineteen, things at home looked hopeless for Jason.* His father was an alcoholic, verbally abusive, and physically violent. His mother could do little about it, so he left home and headed west.

He met a group of people who offered free sex and drugs. He joined their group as it gave him a sense of acceptance and belonging that substituted for the love and respect he craved. As time passed, the group turned into one of racism and violence. With members of the group, Jason became involved in robberies and a murder. He was indicted and decided to become a fugitive. After months on the run he surrendered to authorities. The trial went on for months and the judge pronounced the sentence of "life in prison."

In his second year at Folsom Prison, God began to deal with him in a powerful way. He finally agreed that God's way was better than his own and embraced the truth that, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

God began a work of transformation in Jason's heart. He testifies to what God's Word says, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). Jason began to consume the Bible and anything related to it. He has been in prison now for 37 years. He teaches at the School of the Bible in the men's prison he's in and recently contacted EPM about using Randy's *Heaven* book for one of their classes.

Shortly after EPM started, inmates began writing to request Randy's books. Over the years Randy has generously given away thousands of books. In 2007 alone nearly 1,000 books were mailed out. As the number of requests increased, the need for someone to respond became apparent...and so as a volunteer for EPM, that became one of my responsibilities. The books are often shared with other inmates, so one book may be read by several people. Books are also requested for the chapel libraries and are often so popular that they are checked out all the time. With each order, we enclose an enrollment form for Bible courses through the Mount Zion Bible Institute (www.mountzion.org), which are offered without charge. We minister to a wide range of inmates, from those who are serving sentences for drug-related crimes to those

who are on death row.

One of EPM's goals is to reach the needy in the name of Christ, and one of the groups of people God calls us to minister to are prisoners.

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison, and you came to visit me...I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matt. 25:35-36, 40).

An exciting part of this ministry is hearing the many ways the Lord has used Randy's books to powerfully impact the lives of men and women. Many have experienced:

- Salvation in Christ
- Renewed spiritual interest
- Enhanced Biblical knowledge and growth in their relationship with Christ
- Awareness of spiritual warfare and how to stand against it
- A clearer vision of themselves and the Lord
- Great hope and encouragement
- God's truth connecting their head to their heart
- Increased faith
- An eternal perspective beyond their earthly experience

I consider it a gift of God's grace to have been involved with EPM for the last six years. It is a tremendous privilege and honor now as a part-time employee to be a part of what God is doing through Randy and the ministry here. I love my job! My favorite responsibility is reaching out to some of the most needy people of our society, not only prisoners but also the hungry, the abused, and the persecuted. To have even a small part in helping others see that Jesus Christ, our Savior, is the answer to all their needs—and to help them grow in their relationship with Him is a passion of mine and brings me great joy.

I have a wonderful husband and best friend, Joe, and two great kids: a daughter, Erin, who is in her senior year of college and a son, Seth, who just started high school. We have a friendly yellow lab dog named Jaci. I love spending time with family and friends, being involved in mission work and Bible studies, reading, and eating chocolate.



If you desire to donate to the prison ministry, feel free to send your check to EPM, with "Prison Ministry" noted.

**Name changed and some details withheld to protect identity*



Needed: A Counter-Revolution by Nancy Leigh DeMoss

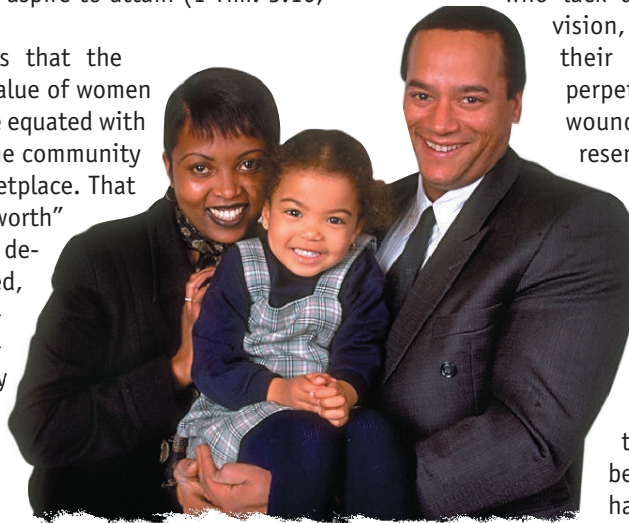
No bouquets were handed out to women for being reverent and temperate or modest and chaste or gentle and quiet, for loving their husbands and children.

In 1990 *Time* magazine devoted an entire special issue to the subject of women. The eighty-six-page special issue chronicled the feminist revolution of the past generation; it included articles on such revolutionary developments as “the road to equality,” the psychology of growing up female, the changing roles of women in the workforce, women as consumers, changing views on marriage and family, and the hurdles women face in pursuing political careers.

One section featured profiles of “10 tough-minded women” who have combined “talent and drive” to become “successful” in their careers—everything from a police chief to a rap artist.

Not surprisingly, no bouquets were handed out to women for being reverent and temperate or modest and chaste or gentle and quiet, for loving their husbands and children, for keeping a clean, well-ordered home, for caring for elderly parents, for providing hospitality, for acts of kindness, service, and mercy, or for demonstrating compassion for the poor and needy—the kind of success that, according to the Word of God, is what women should aspire to attain (1 Tim. 5:10; Titus 2:3–5).

It appears that the identity and value of women has come to be equated with their role in the community or in the marketplace. That is how their “worth” is generally defined, measured, and experienced. By contrast, relatively little priority or value is assigned to their role in the home.



Fruit of the Revolution

The feminist revolution was supposed to bring women greater fulfillment and freedom. But I can’t help but feel a sense of sadness over what has been forfeited in the midst of this upheaval—the beauty, the wonder, and the treasure of the distinctive makeup, calling, and mission of women.

It should come as no huge surprise that the secular world is confused and off base about the identity and calling of women. But what I find distressing is the extent to which the revolution described above has taken hold even within the evangelical world. We see the fruit of the revolution as prominent Christian speakers, authors, and leaders promote an agenda, whether subtly or overtly, that encourages women to define and discover their worth in the workplace, in society or at church, while minimizing (or even at the expense of) their distinctive roles in the home as daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers—as bearers and nurturers of life, as caregivers, as those privileged and responsible to shape the heart and character of the next generation.

We see the fruit of the revolution in the eyes and cries of women who are drowning in the quagmire of serial divorce and remarriage and wayward children; women who are utterly exhausted from the demands of trying to juggle one or more jobs, function as single parents, and be active at church; women who are disoriented and confused, who lack a sense of mission, vision, and purpose for their lives and who are perpetually shrouded in woundedness, self-doubt, resentment, and guilt.

Yes, the revolution has come to the church. And when you add up all the gains and losses, there is no question in my mind that women have been the losers—as have their husbands and their children and grandchildren, as has the entire church, as has our lost, unbelieving culture.

A Counter-Revolutionary Call

Some years ago a fresh sense of mission began to stir within my heart. Since that time, the sense of pessimism and hopelessness, of being swallowed up by the revolution, has been replaced by rich hope and excitement.

A study of the development of modern feminism (feminism itself actually dates back to the Garden of Eden) impressed me with the fact that this massive revolution did not begin as a massive revolution.

It started in the hearts of a relatively small handful of women with an agenda, women who were determined and intentional in their efforts.

As I considered the growth of modern feminism, I began to wonder what might happen in our day if even a small number of devoted, intentional women would begin to pray and believe God for a revolution of a different kind—a counter-revolution—within the evangelical world.



What would happen if a “remnant” of women were willing to return to the authority of God’s Word, to embrace God’s priorities and purpose for their lives and homes, and to live out the beauty and the wonder of womanhood as God created it to be?

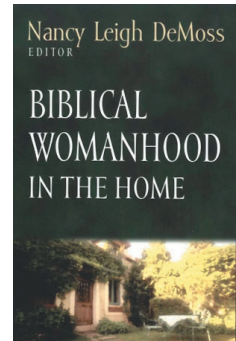
This burden is what gave birth to Revive Our Hearts and is a core part of our mission of revival and biblical womanhood.

Unlike most revolutions, this counter-revolution does not require that we march in the streets or send letters to Congress or join yet another organization. It does not require us to leave our homes—in fact, for many women, it calls them back into their homes. It requires only that we humble ourselves, that we learn, affirm, and live out the biblical pattern of womanhood, and that we teach the ways of God to the next generation.

It is a revolution that will take place on our knees. I want to invite you to become a part of this counter-revolution—waged not with the weapons of anger, discontent, rebellion, and rancor, but with humility, obedience, love, and prayer—believing that in God’s time, the changes that result will be more profound and on a higher order than any of the massive socio-political changes our world has experienced in this generation.

Adapted from Biblical Womanhood in the Home, © 2001, Crossway Books, edited by Nancy Leigh DeMoss. Used by permission of Crossway Books, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois 60187, www.crossway.com

A call to embrace and express our role as women in God’s grand, redemptive plan.



Revive Our Hearts
P.O. Box 2000
Niles, MI 49120
1-800-569-5959
www.ReviveOurHearts.com

True Woman '08—Now Is The Time

A National Women’s Conference

October 9-11, 2008
Chicago, Illinois

Speakers:

John Piper
Nancy Leigh DeMoss
Joni Eareckson Tada
Janet Parshall
Mary Kassian
Fern Nichols
Karen Loritts

Worship Leaders:

Keith & Kristyn Getty

Go to: www.reviveourhearts.com/truewomanconference/ to get more information and to sign up to receive conference updates via email (provide your name and email address and they will let you know important details).



Ty & Jake Stump

Fences and Freedom by Randy Alcorn

When the summer started, our grandsons weren't having all that much fun in our big side yard. Why? Because there's a road on the north side of our yard, and these days the cars present a real danger to careless children chasing balls. And our grandsons love to chase balls.

So we would hover over them and tell them to stay in the middle of the yard and not go to the edge by the road. When they made a move toward the road, they sensed the tension in our voices. None of us were free. Nanci and I decided we needed to get a fence.

Jake and Tyler were happy when we decided to put up the fence. It gave them something to sit on. Ty was eager to help us put it up. (After lifting this bunch of fence and throwing it around the yard, he was ready to eat something. Anything. Everything.)

There are a lot of people who think that Scripture's warnings and commands are restrictive, hampering our freedom. We want to be free to do whatever feels best to us.

But as a loving father, God builds fences to protect us. And if we stay within the fences He has put up for us, we experience not frustration, but joy. Not bondage, but freedom.

God tells us to build fences, too. He says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life" (Proverbs 4:23). To guard your heart, you build fences to keep dangerous influences away from you, and keep yourself away from them.

In my book *The Purity Principle* I wrote,

"But we really love each other" has no bearing on the ethics of sexual intimacy. Sex does not become permissible through subjective feelings, but only through the objective, lifelong commitment of marriage. Those

are God's rules, God's guardrails. There's nothing we can do to change them. The rules are always enforced. When we break them they always break us.

A smart traveler doesn't curse the guardrails. He doesn't whine, "That guardrail dented my fender!" He looks over the cliff, sees demolished autos, and thanks God for guardrails.

Once the fence was up, Matthew learned we could hit balls against it, and they wouldn't get out. Until he learned to hit them over the fence, which took at least five minutes. But even then, he wouldn't be tempted to run out to the road to get them. The fence is his best friend. (Well, Elmo is his best friend, but the fence is a close second.)



Matthew Franklin



God's guardrails are his moral laws. They stand between us and destruction. They are there not to punish or deprive us but to protect us.

Our fence has not made my grandsons miserable. It's allowed them to be happy. They think it's great. They can actually do a lot more in the side yard without being worried, or us being worried. Now they have a great big side yard to play in. They have much more freedom with the fence than without it.

Thank you, Lord, for loving us enough to put up fences.

This article originally appeared on Randy Alcorn's personal blog. Visit the blog at www.randyalcorn.blogspot.com to read Randy's latest thoughts on the Christian life, discipleship, books, family, and more.



Heaven & Hell

2008 Resolved Conference

June 13-16, 2008 • Palm Springs, CA

Speakers: Randy Alcorn C. J. Mahaney Rick Holland
Steve Lawson John MacArthur John Piper

What is Resolved?

Resolved means what it sounds like: it's a deliberate, committed disposition.

As a 19-year-old in the mid-1700s, Jonathan Edwards became serious about the direction of his life. He began to understand the nature of God, and what he discovered was both delightful and disturbing. The more he investigated the infinite tributaries of God's nature, the more he unearthed his own sinfulness. From then on, the weight of God's glory became the gravity of his life. He was compelled to respond.

So he sat down with a quill and paper and wrote out a series of commitments. These were simple statements, conclusions, and commitments forged in the immensity of God and the trauma of His holiness. All of them began with the same word—"Resolved."

The Resolved conference is a call for a new generation to live with the same resolve.

Resolved is something special. Describing it is easier than defining it. It is a four-day conference, but it is much more than an event. Resolved is a long weekend when you can push pause on the pressures of life and push fast-forward on your understanding of God—at the same time. Picture a room with over 3,000 people: think of heart-pounding singing accompanied by studio-quality music and gospel-saturated lyrics; imagine 10 hours of expository preaching from some of the most gifted preachers in our generation; envision the spiritual momentum that can result from this much gospel inertia...this is what Resolved is like.

Resolved is hosted by Grace Community Church. Our goals are simple: to equip believers for greater faithfulness to Jesus Christ, to proclaim the gospel to unbelievers, to affirm the Bible's authority over the life of every person, and to point people back to their local churches for growth and accountability.

Resolved

Phone: 818-909-5563 (8:00-4:00 PST)

Email: coordinator@resolved.org

Website: www.resolved.org

Grace Community Church

13248 Roscoe Blvd.

Sun Valley, CA 91352

www.gracechurch.org

If you'd like to view our newsletter in beautiful color, all issues (past and present) can be accessed online at: www.epm.org/newsletters.html

If you are currently on our mailing list, and would like to be removed, please call the EPM office (503-668-5200) or email us (bonnie@epm.org). This will help EPM save mailing expenses.



Learn to Want What is Best by Randy Alcorn

(This article originated from an email sent by Randy to a group of men he was meeting with who were studying through Dallas Willard's book, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*.)

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me [not "wants to lose his life"] will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? Luke 9:24-25

What strikes me about this passage is that Jesus recognizes our tendency to want the wrong thing. Or, rather, to want the right thing (saving our lives), but believing in the wrong way to obtain what we want.

Notice He doesn't *first* appeal to us to *want* to "lose" our lives. He just tells us to go ahead and lose them, in acts of obedience.

However, once we do that, we will see the rewards, the outcomes of this obedience. These positive outcomes, which bring us joy and freedom, will move our hearts and heads to start *wanting* to do the right thing. In other words, acts of obedience can transform our *desires*, so we start wanting what we didn't want before, and (except in moments of temptation), stop wanting what we used to want.

There is great hope in knowing that what we want can really change. We can actually learn to *want* to do what is right because it is such a better way to live (not only for God's glory but for our good). We will realize how insane it was to live the way we used to. For instance, what man in his right mind would not want to spend daily time with God, be faithful to his wife, give generously to the needy and share his faith in Christ? Only a fool wouldn't want these things, because once you've tasted the joy in them, once you've come to realize what God wants for you is always best for you, how can you settle for less?

Now, how do you learn to want what is best for you? By doing it. Again, Jesus doesn't expect us to

begin with wishing to lose our lives. But he expects us to lose them anyway, in obedience, for his sake. But once we do this and learn this path we discover its benefits, that it actually saves our lives rather than losing or forfeiting them.

Then we learn a new desire, to desire the very thing he has commanded, so that we then truly want to lose our lives for his sake, so we can find them. This is the discovery: that our loving Father always commands us to do what is truly in our best interests, even if it seems a sacrifice at the time.

So our ultimate goal should be to retrain ourselves, by God's grace and with His empowerment, to want to do what is best. Our goal is to be the kind of men who can learn to want what we should want, and then *live the way we want to live*.

But we cannot sit around and wait to want what is best. If we wait, our desires—which relate to our habits, as Willard says, what we do with our bodies—won't change. Rather, we step out in faith and obedience and lose our lives, denying ourselves. And then we discover the joy of that life, the freedom and release, the finding of ourselves that we thought we were losing. And we discover that when we said no to the temptation we were saying yes to what our regenerate self really wants.

So we could say that we should, "Do what you want, provided you want what is best."

Or, "Learn to want what is best, then do what you want."

This is in stark contrast to the alternatives:

- 1) Do whatever you want, even if it's wrong (the world's way), OR
- 2) You'll never really want to do what you should do, but you should just keep doing it anyway, going against your desires.

This second way is often the church's approach; and notice how poorly it has worked!

So when we follow Christ, denying ourselves and taking up the cross and losing ourselves, the sacrifice is real, and yet...in another way it isn't. It's like the man who sells everything he has to buy the treasure in the field. His sacrifice was real, yet what he gained through it was vastly greater than what he gave for it. And hence, in the long run, the sacrifice was only temporary, not



permanent. In the larger sense, it was not a sacrifice at all...for who could call it "sacrifice" when what is gained is so much greater than what was lost?

God's alternative is to do what you may not at first want to do, and do it out of faith and obedience and dependence, and then what you want will be changed, as you see that what you wanted will bring death and what you chose instead is bringing you life.

Now, your wants get transformed, so you can say with Augustine, "Love God and do as you please." Because if you really love God, you will want what He wants; what pleases Him will please you; and what displeases him will make you miserable. And no one wants what makes him miserable, as long as he knows it will make him miserable. (Except when, as in addictions, our bodies have become so trained to do what makes us miserable, we think we cannot resist them.)

So our right choices bring with them positive reinforcement. Temptation will then consist of those things which we want but have not yet learned that they will kill us. They will rob us of peace and joy, and if we were in our right minds, we would not want to do them. As we learn to want what is really good for us, we will begin to see through those temptations, realizing them for the lies they are. This will not eliminate temptation, but it will certainly reduce it.

The following are some additional thoughts that relate from my book *The Treasure Principle*.

This story is captured by Jesus in a single verse: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field" (Matthew 13:44).

Consider what the man must have thought upon discovering the treasure: *What a find! Unbelievable! I've got to have that treasure! But I can't just take it—that would be stealing. Whoever owns the field owns what's in it. But how can I afford it? I'll sell my farm...and crops...all my tools...my prize oxen. Yes, if I sell everything, that should be enough.*

From the moment of discovery, his life

changes. The treasure captures his imagination, becomes the stuff of his dreams. It's his reference point, his new center of gravity. Our traveler takes every new step with this treasure in mind. He experiences a radical paradigm shift.

Contrast this with the rich young man who pressed Jesus about how to gain eternal life. Jesus told him, "Sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (Matthew 19:21). The man was obsessed with earthly treasures. Jesus called him to something higher—heavenly treasures.

Jesus knew money and possessions were the man's god. He realized the man wouldn't serve him unless he dethroned his money idol. But the man considered the price too great. Sadly, he walked away from real treasures.

This young man wasn't willing to give up everything for a greater treasure. But go back to our traveler who found the treasure in the field, who was eager to give up all he had. Why? Because he clearly saw what it would gain him.

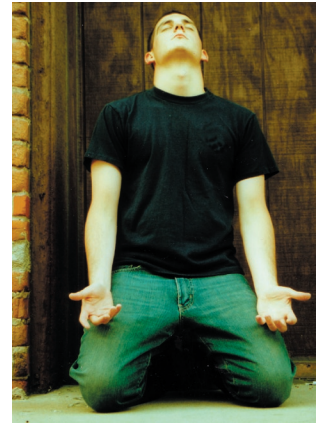
Do you feel sorry for the traveler? After all, his discovery cost him everything! But we aren't to pity this man—we're to envy him! His sacrifice pales in comparison to his reward. Consider the costs/benefits ratio. The benefits far outweighed the costs.

The travelers made short-term sacrifices to obtain long-term rewards. "It cost him everything he owned, someone might lament." Yes—but it gained him everything that mattered.

If we miss the phrase "in his joy," we miss everything. The man wasn't exchanging lesser treasures for greater treasures out of dutiful drudgery but out of joyful exhilaration. He'd have been a fool not to do exactly what he did.

Christ's story about treasure in the field is an object lesson concerning heavenly treasure. Of course, no matter how great the value of that earthly fortune, it would be worthless in eternity. In fact, it's exactly this kind of treasure that people waste their lives pursuing. But Jesus is appealing to what we do value—temporary, earthly treasure—in order to make an analogy to what we should value—eternal, heavenly treasure.

When we see things clearly, with an eternal perspective, what we value and what we want radically changes.



Our right choices bring with them positive reinforcement. Temptations will then consist of those things which will rob us of peace and joy.



Is there really persecution of Christians in China? by Randy Alcorn

Many readers ask me whether Christians in China continue to suffer persecution. Often they've been told it's a thing of the past.

Compared to earlier decades, religious persecution in China is less extreme. In some places there is little or no persecution. Local officials may look the other way even if they suspect Christians are meeting illegally (as most Christians in China do).

In other cases, where Christians were once jailed for assembling without permission, they may now be

ostracized, and not permitted to hold significant positions of influence in government, education, or business.

In other places, Chinese Christians continue to experience extreme persecution. In fact, it is likely that more Christians in China are currently in prison for their faith than in any other country. Reports from unregistered churches continue to confirm that thousands of Chinese Christians are still imprisoned for following Jesus, and many are still beaten and abused in prison. I have seen recent photographs of tortured believers and have wept at their stories.

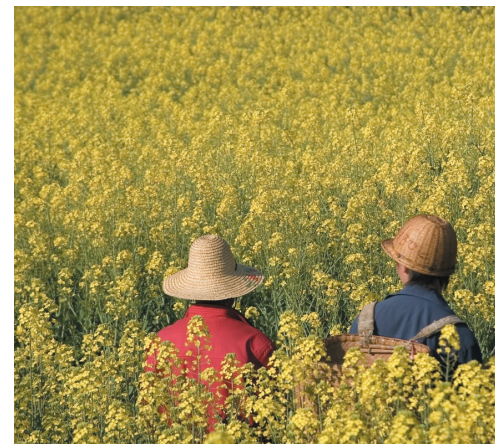
It is still illegal to teach children under 18 about God and Jesus. It is still illegal for three or more believers to gather for religious purposes without government approval. Eighty percent of Chinese Christians are part of unregistered illegal churches, because they say Christ is Lord, and they cannot allow an atheistic government to control their churches. Some western Christians have naively criticized unregistered churches, without understanding that they cannot in good conscience bow their knees to a government whose hands have long been stained by the blood of Christians.

In 2001, when *Safely Home* was published, Ling was producing Christian materials. He was interrogated in his home by police officers. He refused to lead officials to his Christian co-workers so they placed each hand on a table and held it down, pulling out his fingernails, one by one. He was then forced to spend three years in a "re-education through labor" camp. Though beaten and burned with cigarettes, he refused to deny his faith.

A major crackdown in 2004 against unregistered church groups resulted in the arrest of hundreds of Christians. A 28-year-old Christian teacher and a 34-year-old female evangelist were among those beaten to death while in police custody.

In 2005, 100 security officers from five Chinese government agencies raided a conference of 140 house-church leaders and ten guest pastors in northeastern China. The police, accompanied by the Religious Affairs Bureau, seized Bibles and Christian study materials, and arrested many attendees, including two American pastors who were detained, questioned and deported.

In 2007, a Beijing house church leader, Hua Huiqi, served six months in prison. According to China Aid Association (CAA), Hua and his 76-year-old mother were arrested after being attacked by seven police officers. While walking on a public street, they were kicked to the ground and taken to the Olympic police station for questioning. Hua's mother was later sentenced to two years in prison.



For more information on how to help our persecuted brothers and sisters, contact:

Voice of the Martyrs

PO Box 443
Bartlesville, OK 74005
918-337-8015 or
1-800-747-0085

Email:

thevoice@vom-usa.org

Website:

www.persecution.com

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

Bob Fu, a Chinese national, now labors in the US to call attention to millions of persecuted countrymen. I encourage readers to examine Fu's website and listen to these stories: www.chinaaid.org. Fu claims that to this day "Christians in churches unrecognized by the socialist regime in Beijing continue to be harassed, oppressed, arrested, imprisoned, tortured and murdered for their faith in Jesus Christ. Most of these abuses are cloaked in secrecy for fear of offending Western trading partners and jeopardizing China's fragile economy."



Readers of *Safely Home* in China concur. A missionary in China recently wrote: "*Safely Home* was very, very accurate." She knows a Chinese woman who couldn't read it because it reminds her of close friends suffering persecution.

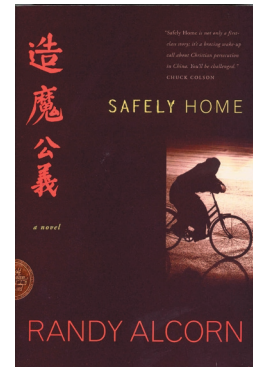
Those who deny persecution often say they visited China and saw Bibles for sale in a store, or a registered church. (That's true; registered churches are permitted to have Bibles.) An American Christian leader assured me that he and his ministry preached the gospel in China and had cordial meetings with

communist government leaders. I rejoice in this. But he then spoke of the "misconception" that Christians are still persecuted in China. Unfortunately, the documented incidents demonstrate it's not a misconception, but a reality.

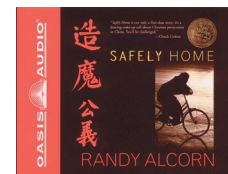
A Chinese Christian told me "somewhere in China the sun is always shining, and somewhere the snow is always falling." In other words, there's always freedom somewhere and persecution somewhere else. Visitors to China rarely go to the countryside where much persecution takes place. They will not be given an audience with persecuted Christians. Believers will not step forward to share their stories with visitors who are escorted by or traveling under the favor of government officials!

It is irresponsible to claim that Christians are no longer in prison or beaten or discriminated against, simply because the visitor doesn't see this happening, or because Chinese officials and government tour guides say it doesn't happen. Should we believe the government (who denied persecution even under Mao), or the actual Chinese Christians, most of whom remain in unregistered churches, despite the great cost of their doing so?

China Aid (www.chinaaid.org), Asia Harvest (www.asiaharvest.org), and Voice of the Martyrs (www.persecution.com) provide current information about persecution in China. We encourage you to stay informed about—and to intercede for—our Chinese brothers and sisters. While we should rejoice that persecution has lessened significantly in some places, let's be careful not to perpetuate the lie that Christians are no longer persecuted in China.



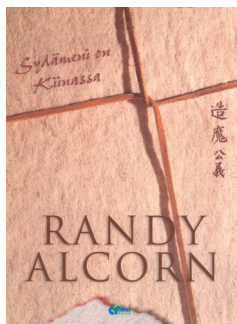
Safely Home
available in book
and audio CDs



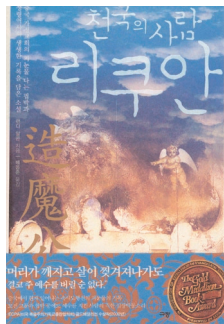
Foreign translations of *Safely Home*:

(Links to where to purchase are on EPM's website: www.epm.org/foreign.html)

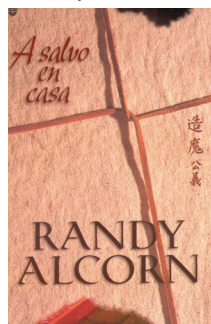
Finnish



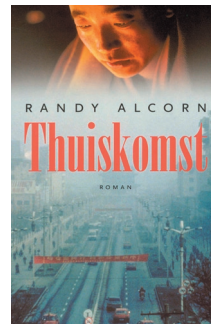
Korean



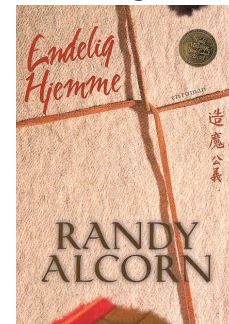
Spanish



Dutch

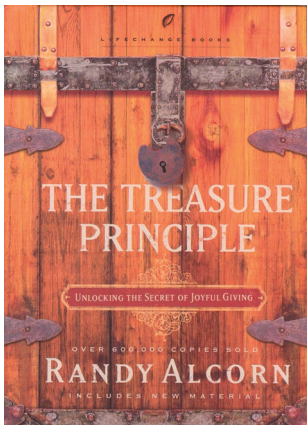


Norwegian



Translations in process: German, Romanian, Russian

The Treasure Principle reaches 1 million in print!



The Treasure Principle:

You can't take it with you—but you can send it on ahead.



The Six Treasure Principle Keys:

***God owns everything.
I'm His money manager.***

We are the managers
of the assets God
has entrusted—
not given—to us.

***I should live not for the dot
but for the line.***

From the dot—our present life
on Earth—extends a line
that goes on forever,
which is eternity in Heaven.

***My heart always goes
where I put God's money.***

Watch what happens when you
reallocate your money
from temporal things to
eternal things.

***Giving is the only antidote to
materialism.***

Giving is a joyful surrender
to a greater person and
a greater agenda. It dethrones
me and exalts Him.

***Heaven,
not Earth,
is my home.***

We are citizens of
"a better country—
a heavenly one"
(Hebrews 11:16).

***God prospers me not to
raise my standard.
of living, but to raise my
standard of giving.***

God gives us more money
than we need
so we can give—generously.

You may purchase The Treasure Principle at your local bookstore or by contacting EPM at www.epm.org or 503-668-5200. Substantial discounts are offered for bulk purchases.

Letters to EPM

I want to thank you for the many hours of careful compilation of research in *Does the Birth Control Pill Cause Abortions?* I am a 29-year-old mother of two and can honestly say that I believe the Lord brought me to your booklet.

Last year after the birth of my son, I began the pill for the first time in my life and took it for one month, when I stopped due to the physical side effects. I carefully began reviewing the insert I had previously ignored.

I consider myself pretty well-informed. Having been in the medical field as a paramedic for 8 years before motherhood, I have read a lot and seen a lot—but I have never heard of the pill doing anything but suppressing ovulation. The insert said my pill worked by suppressing ovulation, thickening cervical mucus and if these fail, it thins the endometrium in order to prevent implantation.

I knew immediately the implications and was absolutely stunned. Why had no one advised me of this? To make things worse, the insert suggested my pill only prevents ovulation 50% of the time! Because of my firmly-rooted convictions, I immediately began to weep. Was it possible I was making my womb such a place?

I read every last stitch of your booklet. How can I ever thank you enough? My emotions have gone from shock to conviction to repentance to absolute outrage at the lack of knowledge. You're right—what about informed consent?! Needless to say, I have stopped my pills.

I believe the pharmaceutical companies have a lot at stake. If every convicted woman stopped the pill today, it would be a substantial loss for them. If they can keep us in the dark or simply deny the evidence—they gain. What convinced me most in your booklet was the reference to the thickness of the endometrium while on the pill (1mm or less, when the normal is 5-13mm). I am

sure there are other women like myself who would be appalled if they knew they were jeopardizing their own children.

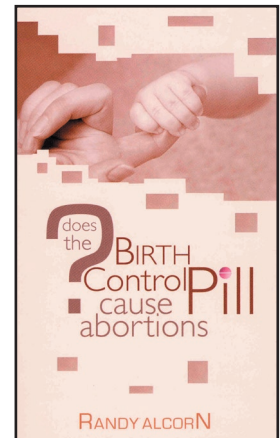
I am very busy right now with my two little ones—but I'd rather have 10 children than to jeopardize even one by interfering with his or her implantation. The evidence points to the pill acting as an abortive agent.



I thank God for leading me into the light. He used you as an instrument of knowledge. It has been my desire always to seek the truth and being led down this path was surely an answer to prayer (James 1:5). I would have certainly taken the pill for the next 2-3 years, until we plan to have another child. This booklet may have prevented five silent abortions. It may have prevented three. But if it prevented just one—wasn't it worth your effort? - S. K.

I have received *Eternal Perspectives* by mail for a number of years. I would like you to know this paper brought me back to church after not attending for about 4 years in the late 90's. I would devour the paper when it would arrive and finally returned to church. - D. M.

Just recently "discovered" you; read *Deception*, then ordered *Dominion* and *Deadline*, then read *Safely Home*, now am into *The Ishbane Conspiracy*. What these books have done for me is: cause me to fall to my knees, renew my dedication and submission to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, emboldened me to open my hitherto too timid mouth and speak the gospel to people, and begin praying earnestly to live a more meaningful and productive life and stop wasting my time... basically, your writings have changed my life for the better—all within the past 2 weeks! I praise God and give Him the glory. Thank you so much. He brought you into my life at exactly the right time (imagine that). - L. P.



Does the Birth Control Pill Cause Abortions?

Now a book!

Same great prices:

1 copy:

\$3.00 each

2-9 copies:

\$2.50 each

10-99 copies:

\$2.25 each

100-499 copies:

\$2.00 each

500 + copies:

\$1.75 each

Eternal Perspective Ministries
39085 Pioneer Blvd., Suite 206
Sandy, OR 97055

Address Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.

U.S. Postage

PAID

Portland, OR
Permit No. 1388



Eternal Perspectives

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

In this issue . . .

Dual Citizenship

EPM's Prison Ministry

Needed: A Counter-Revolution

Fences and Freedom

Learn to Want What is Best

**Is there really persecution of
Christians in China?**

EPM Information:

Eternal Perspectives is a quarterly publication of Eternal Perspective Ministries, 39085 Pioneer Blvd., Suite 206, Sandy, OR 97055, 503-668-5200. Fax: 503-668-

5252. Website: www.epm.org. Blog: randyalcorn.blogspot.com. E-News: www.epm.org/enews.html. EPM is a nonprofit organization with 501(c)3 tax-exempt status. All contributions are tax-deductible.

This newsletter is sent free to all who request it. Articles in this publication (and at our website) written by Randy Alcorn may be freely quoted or copied, in part or in whole, provided EPM's name, address, and website are placed on the copy. Feel free to reproduce this newsletter, and pass it on to individuals, churches, or groups. It's our desire to spread this information, not protect or restrict it.

