

Eternal Perspectives

A publication of Eternal Perspective Ministries

Spring 2009

Are you willing to be hated for speaking the gospel truth? BY RANDY ALCORN

When Gianna Jessen (*an abortion survivor*) spoke at our church recently, she said many memorable things. The one I've been thinking about most is *to be a follower of Christ you need to be willing to be hated.*

I agree.

Of course, this does NOT mean being hateful. Nor does it mean seeking to be hated. Or having a persecution complex, so you think people don't like you because you're following Christ, when they actually don't like you because of how you're acting.

I am all for graciousness, kindness, and servant-hearted love as we speak the truth. I seek to practice this with the nonchristians I'm around. But at some point the greatest kindness we can offer them, coming out of a life of humility and faithfulness to Christ, is the good news about Jesus. That good news actually involves some

very bad news about human sinfulness, which is what makes the cross an offense, meaning that it ticks people off.

The danger comes when we live in such fear of being mislabeled that we don't step forward as unapologetic and unashamed all-out followers of Jesus. They can call us Jesus freaks or ignorant or uncool or intolerant or anything they want, that's fine. We should do what we believe pleases our Lord, regardless of how it pans out in opinion polls. That includes loving others and giving radically and ministering to the down and out and addressing addictions and saying we think it's wrong to kill children of all ages and helping people find alternatives. We do such things not seeking the approval of our culture, but of our King.

If we seek our culture's approval, we'll either never get it or



get it only at the expense of failing to represent Christ. We are promised that if we "live godly lives in Christ Jesus" we "will suffer persecution." If we're not suffering persecution, at some level, then what does that suggest?

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We should certainly be nice, and it's sad when Christians aren't. But it's also sad when we imagine "niceness" has greater impact than it really does. Niceness is not the gospel. Some modern concepts of evangelism are little more than being nice to your neighbor and loaning him your hedge clipper and hoping that somehow he will come to Christ without you actually having to say the WORDS of the gospel which would run the risk of him thinking you're weird. Our good example is important, but it's not sufficient. There are actual truths that must be grappled with in surrendering to Jesus (1 Cor. 15:1-6). And these truths are expressed in words.

I'm all for audience analysis and understanding the perceptions of this generation and speaking in a way they can understand. But instead of letting the world set our agenda and the ground rules of what we can and can't say, let's ask the Lord how best to take the timeless message of the gospel to these people.

But—and I say this coming out of some of the conversations I've had with cool Christians—the answer is not altering the contents of the gospel to make

it something everyone can easily agree with. If the gospel becomes nothing more than the reflection of a worldview they already have, it has nothing to offer them. It's God's gospel. Given the price He paid on the cross to offer it, He has the right to say difficult things such as Jesus is the

only way to the Father and we are hell-bound without Him. That message is not popular and never will be. Our job isn't to edit the message, but to deliver it.

Among some believers the new definition of a good Christian is holding your beliefs privately, not challenging those who publicly share beliefs that dishonor Christ, and avoiding controversy at all costs lest we be perceived as "that kind of Christians" who hate gays, oppose abortion, favor inquisitions, and love to burn witches. We so much want the world to like us

that we end up distancing ourselves from the historic Christian faith, from biblical doctrine (including hell), and from churches (because they're all hypocrites except us). We end up making ourselves indistinguishable from the world, and therefore have nothing to offer the world.

Sometimes we assume the moral high ground by rolling our eyes at those street preachers, congratulating ourselves that we aren't like that. Street preaching's not my thing, but I can give you names of people who have come to Christ through street preaching. It's more of a stretch to name those who've come to Christ through Christians who think it's not cool to tell people the biblical truth that they need to repent of their sins (a synonym for evils; basically a big insult) and turn to Christ to be saved from hell.

It's not our job to be popular. We are not contestants on "American Idol." And we are not Christ's speech writers or PR team, airbrushing Jesus so He has greater appeal to people who don't want to hear what He said

I am a youth leader at my church. Even though I love my church and I believe it teaches the gospel without compromise, I am seeing a trend in both youth and youth workers which disturbs me. It is this: the idea that throughout history Christians have been so "judgmental" that we somehow now owe it to the world to soften our message and make it more palatable. Also, there is a great trend away from reading the Bible and only reading books—feel good books about Jesus, prayer, etc.

I realize that this temptation to change the gospel and make it fit the culture has always existed so perhaps I am amiss to say that it is much more prevalent than I ever recall. I wonder if this is just an American thing because it seems like—from my friends who live abroad—that while we are looking to make Christianity user-friendly, they are digging deeper.

(Excerpted from a letter to Randy Alcorn)

about sin and hell. He's the King, He calls the shots; we're just His ambassadors. So let's represent the real Jesus, the whole Jesus, not just the culturally acceptable one.

There is nothing new or postmodern about the gospel turning some people off. That's always been true, just as it's always been true that some people are longing to hear it and will deeply appreciate the fact you

had enough courage to tell them about Jesus. As D. L. Moody said when someone criticized his approach to evangelism, "I like the way I do it better than the way you don't do it."

It is not gracious and kind to withhold the gospel from those who, according to Jesus, are going to hell without Him. Sometimes what we imagine to be our graciousness and kindness is actually indifference or cowardice.

"All men will hate you because of me." Mark 13:13

"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first." John 15:18

This article originally appeared on Randy Alcorn's personal blog, January 28, 2009. Visit the blog at www.randyalcorn.blogspot.com to read Randy's latest thoughts on the Christian life, discipleship, books, family, and more.

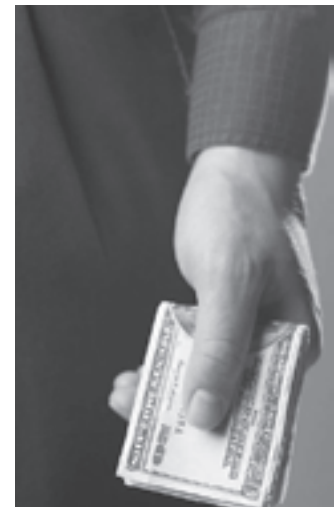
How can I tithe when I am financially strapped and have nothing extra to give? Does God expect me to still tithe?

ANSWERED BY RANDY ALCORN

When I read the Bible, it appears that tithing is the biblical minimum, the starting place, the floor of giving, not its ceiling. Tithes were to keep from stealing from God. Offerings were the beginning of giving.

I'm not trying to make anyone feel guilty, but I've been in African countries where people make well less than \$100 a year (U.S. dollars), but they wouldn't dream of giving less than the tithe, and often give considerably more. It strikes me as strange that we live in the most affluent society in human history—where what we call "poverty level" is above the standard of living of most ~~society's~~ upper class in all of history—and yet some of us think we can't give 10%. The standard of living in Old Testament Israel was way below that in America, yet the children of Israel were expected to give the minimum of the tithe. And after the work of Christ on the cross ~~His~~ Holy Spirit indwells us, His grace transforms us.

Read 2 Corinthians 8-9 on giving—this is way beyond the tithe. So, I admit, I just can't imagine that believers living in "extreme pov-



erty" can give generously, but somehow American believers can't even match the level of Old Testament Israel which didn't even have God's indwelling spirit.

I hope that doesn't sound harsh. I don't mean it to be. I realize it isn't easy.

You say, "So quite frankly, Randy, I don't have enough to tithe with, let alone give sacrificially. If

that means God is going to hold that against me come the Judgment, so be it." ~~Perhaps~~ you should tithe, and ~~then~~ trust God to provide.

If God is big enough to create and redeem you, isn't He big enough to take care of you if you step out on faith and return to Him what He says is His in the first place?

We live in the most affluent society in human history...and yet some of us think we can't give 10%.

Spiritual Heroes

BY RANDY ALCORN

I have many spiritual heroes, and discover more all the time, but here are a few of them:

Charles Spurgeon

Spurgeon who, even as a 20-year-old, spoke with an incredible depth and biblical insight and whose sermons and writings, full of grace and truth—and unsurpassed eloquence—always draw me to Christ. He led his church in building 17 homes to help care for elderly women, and a large school for hundreds of children. Spurgeon and his church built homes for orphans in London, rescuing them from starvation and vice on the streets.



Eric Liddell

Olympic champion and missionary to China Eric Liddell (*Chariots of Fire*), whose “rest of the story” was told to me by a woman in England who was a teenager in the Japanese internment camp in China, where Liddell refused to leave the children behind, and ended up dying of a brain tumor in the camp. She spoke of how Liddell kept up the children’s morale and held the camp together by his devotion to Christ and his care for the children, who after Liddell’s death were dramatically rescued by American paratroopers.



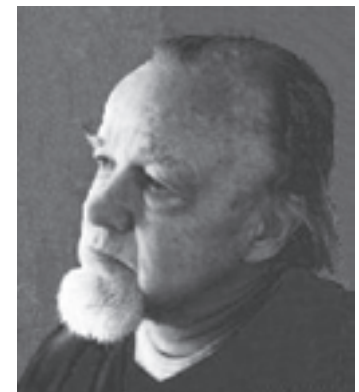
Keith Green

Keith Green, whose songs resonated with my soul as a young Christian. I can still hear him pounding on that piano and singing “There is a Redeemer.” (Thank you oh my Father, for giving us Your Son, And leaving Your Spirit, till the work on Earth is done.)



Francis Schaeffer

Francis Schaeffer, intellectual and Christ-lover, who responded with a wonderful handwritten letter to me after I wrote to him as a college student, telling him how God had shaped me through his books.



C. S. Lewis

Lewis not only wrote books that have touched me to the core, but in a spirit of humility and kindness answered letters from those who had nothing to offer him, and gave away the great majority of his royalties to the needy.



Spiritual Heroes

John Perkins

John Perkins was tortured and humiliated in a Mississippi jailhouse, for the crime of being black, but rose above the hatred to become the Voice of Calvary. I have never seen greater love coming out of a man. Except for the grace of Jesus, there is no explanation for such a life.



Joni Eareckson Tada

Joni Eareckson Tada is one modern Christian celebrity whose life resonates with Christ's joy and depth and honesty and compassion. Through adversity God has made a diamond out of her. We've made an appointment to run together in a meadow on the New Earth. I'm sure she'll have to slow down to let me catch her.



These are some of the many people whose writings and lives have shaped mine, and to whom I will repeatedly say "Thank you" in the ages to come (always thanking Christ, the Source of all joys, for them). What a pleasure to know I will live forever with my heroes. And likely many of those I will come to admire most, and ask to sit next to at dinner, are ones whose stories I don't yet know. I can't wait!



The Red Envelope Project

Join the Red Envelope Project in representing the unborn on March 31, 2009 by sending empty red envelopes from all over the nation to the White House.

On the front of your envelope, address it to:

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

On the back of your empty envelope, write the following message:

This envelope represents one child who died in abortion.
It is empty because that life was unable to offer anything to the world.
Responsibility begins with conception.

Mail your envelope(s) on March 31, 2009.

For more information, visit www.redenvelopeproject.org



Follow-up on Little John

BY KIMBERLY SMITH

EPM received many notes from readers telling us they were touched by the article "Not a Soul in This World for Little John" that appeared in the Winter 2009 issue. Below is a letter from Kimberly Smith, president of Make Way Partners, as a follow-up to her article.

I barely know where to begin. Your responses to Little John's story have been overwhelming in the very best sense of the word.

Somehow, though, it seems I failed to communicate both the depth of despair which the masses of orphans are suffering in Sudan and the height of power that we have to change their reality. Let me try again.

We have had many commitments to sponsor orphans. Our problem is that almost all of them have been in this form: "If you'll go back and find John, I'll commit to sponsor him."

That is great, for Jesus certainly teaches us to go save the "one lost sheep." However, in Jesus' story, he said that there were ninety and nine safe and one was lost. In Sudan today, it is more like we have one safe and the ninety and nine are all lost! As George Müller lamented in his memoirs, "In our world today, the numbers are nearly reversed."

Please understand that I am not calloused toward Little John. My heart still breaks for him. I spoke with James, the director of the orphanage. He is more heart broken than any of us for he looks at hundreds of "Little Johns" outside our safe orphanage walls who cry to get inside where there is a protective fence with loving teachers and good food. James is the one carrying the weight of walking by them and saying, "No little one. I am sorry, but I don't have enough money to feed all of the ones we have inside. We have no room for you, yet. I will call for you when we have met our current commitments."

Make Way Partners is the only orphanage receiving these precious Darfur refugee orphans. Currently, we have 450 orphans. Just four short years ago, everyone told us we were crazy; there was no way to build and operate an orphanage in a lawless land of rape, slavery and genocide.

God has shown us there is a way. We are His way for the impossible when we simply open ourselves to Him. There are thousands more orphans—we are not only committed, but also experienced and well positioned to build an entire orphan-care network in Sudan, but we need your help!

So many are begging to come into our safe orphanage. I cannot ask James to go get Little John, bypassing all of the little ones that he would "step over" to find Little John. However, I do commit to you that as God provides through you sponsors for each and every one of our current orphans—who we have simply taken in by faith these last four years—we will take every other one that we can find and provide for.

John is not "just" some poster child. He is real and hurting. Yet, he does represent masses of children in his exact same situation. Please help us where we are, and through your godly provision, we will save them one child at a time.



Reader Responses

Thank you for the EPM newsletter. I read the article "Not a Soul in This World for Little John." I intend to send a monthly donation for Make Way Partners. Thanks for your bookkeeping and also for checking out charities so I know they are legitimate.

I so need to be reminded of the "Little Johns" in our world. That article spoke volumes to me. Thank you.

Thank you so much for the latest newsletter. I look forward to receiving it in the mail and am encouraged and challenged by the articles. Thank you for highlighting different ministries. I support and pray for these I've learned about through you. Keep up the good work.

EPM's endorsement and article in the newsletter resulted in the following donations to Make Way Partners:

As of the end of January, 42 people have donated directly to the ministry. Of those 42, six are monthly child sponsors. The total given, including EPM's contributions to MWP, is \$35,750. Make Way Partners thanks you for your prayers and financial support.

For more information on this ministry, contact:

Make Way Partners
PO BOX 2636 • Birmingham, AL 35260
(205) 240-8597 • www.makewaypartners.org



My grace is sufficient...

BY C. H. SPURGEON

My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.
(2 Cor. 12:9)

The other evening I was riding home after a heavy day's work. I felt very wearied, and sore depressed, when swiftly, and suddenly as a lightning flash, that text came to me, "My grace is sufficient for thee." I reached home and looked it up in the original, and at last it came to me in this way, "MY grace is sufficient for thee"; and I said, "I should think it is, Lord," and burst out laughing. I never fully understood what the holy laughter of Abraham was until then. It seemed to make unbelief so absurd. It was though some little fish, being very thirsty, was troubled about drinking the river dry, and Father Thames said, "Drink away, little fish, my stream is sufficient for thee." Or, it seemed after the seven years of plenty, a mouse feared it might die of famine; and Joseph might say, "Cheer up, little mouse, my granaries are sufficient for thee." Again, I imagined a man away up yonder, in a lofty mountain, saying to himself, "I breathe so many cubic feet of air every year, I fear I shall exhaust the oxygen in the atmosphere," but the earth might say, "Breathe away, O man, and fill the lungs ever, my atmosphere is sufficient for thee." Oh, brethren, be great believers! Little faith will bring your souls to heaven, but great faith will bring heaven to your souls. — Taken from "Strengthening Words from the Saviour's Lips," preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, April 2, 1876



His grace is great enough to meet the great things—
The crashing waves that overwhelm the soul,
The roaring winds that leave us stunned and breathless,
The sudden storms beyond our life's control.

His grace is great enough to meet the small things—
The little pin-prick troubles that annoy,
The insect worries, buzzing and persistent,
The squeaking wheels that grate upon our joy.
— Annie Johnson Flint

A Real Hope of Heaven

BY STEPHANIE ANDERSON

The first time I picked up a book by Randy Alcorn was when I was a sophomore in a theology class at Corban College and we were reading *Heaven*. As we studied through the book, my view of eternity was radically challenged and altered—for the better. Little did I know that a year and half later I would be working for Randy’s ministry. Nor did I know at that time just how precious those truths about Heaven would turn out to be.

For the past two years, I’ve been the promotions director for Eternal Perspective Ministries. I update the website, oversee book promotions, help with Randy’s blog, create the monthly e-news update, and edit audio and video clips. I’ve been amazed as I see how God works in the hearts of those who come in contact with EPM. It’s a privilege to hear that a book, website article, or blog has impacted someone’s life. ~~It’s a privilege~~ to know that God, by His grace, truly is using this ministry to encourage people to live in light of eternity.

The hope of Heaven and what I’ve learned through working for EPM became so much more real to me when my only sibling, my sister Tricia, passed away last year. I discovered that when someone you love is severely disabled, your own longing for Heaven is intensified.

I discovered that when someone you love is severely disabled, your own longing for Heaven is intensified.

The promise of resurrection becomes so much more astounding. The ache for what cannot be here on earth is tempered by the joy of what will be reality in God’s presence.

For my sister’s memorial service, the pastor asked our family to express our thoughts in letters to Tricia. I hope what I wrote will encourage others who have a loved one with disabilities, or who have lost a loved one, to hold fast to the hope of Heaven.

Dear Tricia,

It seems so strange to write you a letter when we never had a conversation. It’s hard to know what to write to the sister you never talked with, never played with, never laughed with.

A part of me aches for the kind of sister relationship we couldn’t have. I could have been jealous of you when you got to do things I wasn’t allowed to because you were older; I could have borrowed your trendy shirts and pretty earrings; I could have giggled with you about your crushes. You could have been one of my bridesmaids on the day I said “I do.” Maybe all along I’ve missed the big-sister advice you could have given me and the secrets we could have shared. There is a strange kind of hurt for the things that never were.

When Mom and Dad and



I were deciding what to put on your gravestone, I helped them choose “Christ is our hope.” Just four words, but they summed up what I felt so strongly throughout the weekend of your departure (or rather, from His perspective, your homecoming). Your life here wasn’t meaningless, though some might consider it that. God had a reason for you being here just as you were. I have to remind myself of that. Maybe you’re walking with Jesus right now, and He’s helping you see so clearly what those of us here on earth still can’t fully understand.

I do know this—I will be so amazed on the day I see you again. I imagine you, my beautiful sister—dancing, smiling, running, singing the songs you loved—doing all the things you couldn’t do here on earth. I will wrap my arms around you, and together we will rejoice in our God, the God who has traded our sorrows for laughter.

I love you,

Stephanie

Stephanie is married to her college sweetheart and best friend Dan. They are expecting their first child in August.

The Power of Prayer

COMPILED BY RANDY ALCORN

None can believe how powerful prayer is, and what it is able to effect, but those who have learned it by experience. It is a great matter when in extreme need to take hold on prayer. I know, whenever I have prayed earnestly, that I have been amply heard, and have obtained more than I prayed for. — *Martin Luther*

There is no way that Christians, in a private capacity, can do so much to promote the work of God and advance the kingdom of Christ as by prayer.

— *Jonathan Edwards*

In no other way can the believer become as fully involved with God's work, especially the work of world evangelism, as in intercessory prayer...When the prayer warrior intercedes, he forgets his personal need and focuses all of his faith and prayer attention on others.

To intercede is to mediate. It is to stand between a lost being and an Almighty God, praying that this person will come to know about God and His salvation.

— *Dick Eastman, The Hour That Changes The World*

If the church would only awaken to her responsibility of intercession, we could well evangelize the world in a short time. It is not God's plan that the world be merely evangelized ultimately. It should be evangelized in every generation. There should be a constant gospel witness in every corner of the world so that no sinner need close

his eyes in death without hearing the gospel, the good news of salvation through Christ. — *T. S. Hegre*

A day without prayer is a day without blessing, and a life without prayer is a life without power. — *Edwin Harvey*

The devil is aware that one hour of close fellowship, hearty converse with God in prayer, is able to pull down what he hath been contriving and building many a year. — *Flavel*

There is no power like that of prevailing prayer—of Abraham pleading for Sodom, Jacob wrestling in the stillness of the night, Moses standing in the breach, Hannah intoxicated with sorrow, David heart-broken with remorse and grief, Jesus in sweat and blood. Add to this list from the records of the church your personal observation and experience, and always there is cost of passion unto blood. Such prayer prevails. It turns ordinary mortals into men of power. It brings power. It brings fire. It brings rain. It brings life. It brings God. — *Samuel Chadwick*

Every great movement of God can be traced to a kneeling figure. — *D. L. Moody*



National Day of Prayer

The 58th Annual National Day of Prayer will take place Thursday, May 7, 2009. Millions will unite in prayer as thousands of events will take place from coast to coast.

Some of the ways you can participate:

- *A Daily Prayer Challenge*
- *Pray Thursdays from 12:00—12:30*
- *Join an Online Prayer Community to pray with people around the globe*
- *Unite with others in a Military Ministry*
- *National Prayer Summit: October 16-18, 2009*
- *Prayer Support for Business Leaders*
- *Submit a Prayer Request*

For more information, contact:

**National Day of Prayer
Headquarters**

P.O. Box 15616
Colorado Springs, CO 80935
(719) 531-3379
www.ndptf.org

No One To Love Tonponio

BY RICK NORQUIST

I had picked up Dolores, our Mexican social worker, from her home earlier that day so that we could visit an eight-year-old boy who was living with his grandmother. His name is Jesus (nickname Chuy.) His mother had abandoned him and his father had never been involved in his life. On the way, Dolores explained that they lived in what used to be a crematory. I thought she said “creamery” so I was expecting to see a large barn surrounded by happy cows grazing in a lush green field as they prepared to give up their loving gifts of milk. I even thought perhaps we would get to sample some yogurt or ice cream!

You can imagine my surprise when we drove up to a deteriorating gray cement structure, surrounded by dirt streets and brick homes. There wasn’t a blade of green grass in sight, much less a cow.

My surprise changed to mild horror as we walked into the dimly-lit building to find a huge brick oven grinning at us. It had a large metal door over its mouth and stood as tall as the ceiling. It didn’t take long for me to realize I had misinterpreted my Spanish and that this was not a place where yogurt was made. Rather it was exactly what Dolores had said: *a crematorium*. Fortunately I was able to hide my shock as I took a minute to regroup and refocus on what had just happened.

Our visit with Chuy and his grandma went well and we

were soon headed back to Dolores’s office. However, the already eventful outing was about to take a dramatic turn and returning to the office would be the last thing on our minds for quite some time.



Chuy

As I tried to drive around large potholes in the dirt roads, Dolores told me about a call that had come into her office that morning from a very upset woman. Evidently her next-door neighbor was dying of cancer. The stricken woman was living with her mother and eight-year-old son and didn’t have long to live. While the situation was cause for concern in

and of itself, my concern turned to near-panic when I learned what Tonponio’s mother had told her neighbor. She said that before she died she was going to kill her son.

Tonponio is mentally retarded and his grandmother was elderly and infirm. His mom didn’t want to leave him behind because there was no one who wanted a child with a disability. In her mind taking his life was her only choice. She couldn’t bear the thought of leaving him on his own.

Dolores said that we should make an appointment to visit the family but the urgency of the situation demanded an urgent

response in my mind. “Where do they live?” I asked. We’re going there right now!

When we arrived we were greeted by a stark naked boy who was hitting a cardboard box that had been hung from the ceiling of their patio. Of course! It was Tonponio. He didn’t say anything as we approached the front door. He just kept smiling and hitting the tattered box.

It was Tonponio’s grandma who greeted us and invited us into her home. We explained who we were and why we had come. We asked to see her daughter, whom we found in a dark room, lying on a bed asleep. She was skin and bones and the bed had been soiled. My heart ached for this woman who was obviously close to death and whose burden was made even heavier with the knowledge that she would soon need to take her son’s life in order to “save” him.

As we spoke softly to her, she opened her eyes and looked at Dolores who explained who we were.



Tonponio

Then I began to tell her about the ranch and described to her the green lawn in front where children could run and play to their hearts content. We talked about the love and care the kids receive. But what really caught her attention was that we love *all* kids, even those with special needs like Tonponio.

After a few more minutes, I asked her if she would like us to care for Tonponio. Her pain-ridden face slowly broke into a weak smile as she nodded

“Yes.” It was obvious that she felt at peace knowing that after she was gone her precious child would be loved and well cared-for. Before she went back to a fitful sleep she asked us to take Tonponio with us right then. She didn’t want him to see her die. We said a prayer as we told her good-bye and began to gather up a few things for him to bring to the ranch.

As his grandma started putting clothes on Tonponio in preparation for his departure I couldn’t help ask, “Why is he naked?”

“We can’t get him to keep his clothes on,” she explained. “And since he doesn’t go to school we just let him do what he wants. It’s easier that way.”

A couple of weeks later Tonponio’s mother died. His father had died a couple of years before, so that made him an orphan. Fortunately he is only an orphan in title because even though he doesn’t have living parents, he does have a very large family at the ranch who loves him and enjoys watching him grow.

Today Tonponio is 13 years old, but he’s small for his age. He

goes to a special school—which he loves—and no longer removes his clothes except when it’s time to take a shower! He has a wonderful sense of humor and loves to tease and give hugs. He also loves to do his chores: mopping the floor!

As happy as he is at the ranch we believe that when at all possible kids belong in families. Tonponio needs a family to call his own. He is legally freed for adoption and is just waiting for someone to say, “Come on, son. It’s time to go home!”



Rancho de los Niños is located in El Castillo, Sinaloa, Mexico, and is a ministry of Action International. They are supported through donations from individuals and churches. It is the only orphanage in the state that accepts children with disabilities. As a result, 17 of the 27 children currently there have some level of special needs, from mild to severe. There are many opportunities to provide equipment (such as wheelchairs) for these special children.

When children arrive at the ranch, a long-range plan is developed which may include eventual return to their family or relative. If no other appropriate resource can be found, governmental officials are asked to prepare papers to allow children to be adopted. Currently only one child is ready for adoption: Tonponio. Several others are in process to be released for adoption. They have no babies or very young children available.



For more information on Rancho de los Niños, their needs, and special projects, please visit their website: www.ranchodelosninos.com or contact them by email at norquist_1@hotmail.com

You may contribute to their ministry through Action International/Operation: Children of Mexico (Norquist), PO Box 398, Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043, 1-800-755-6918 www.actionintl.org

(You may also give a financial contribution through EPM.

100% of designated contributions go directly to the ministry noted.)

Where Redemption and Justice Meet

BY JOHN PERKINS

From Randy:

John Perkins is a sharecropper's son who grew up poverty-stricken in Mississippi. Fleeing to California at age 17 after his older brother's murder at the hands of a town marshal, he vowed never to return. But after coming to Christ in 1960, he did return to Mendenhall, Mississippi, to share the gospel of Christ.

*John's leadership in civil rights demonstrations resulted in repeated harassment, beatings, and imprisonment. He's the author of many good books, but his book *Let Justice Roll Down*, first released 30 years ago, tells about the shaping events of his life. Reading of the torture he experienced at the hands of Mississippi police in the early 1970s, I wept through that book, as God spoke to me.*

I have never been more deeply touched than in my first conversation with John at lunch in 1989 in Minnesota, at a writer's conference at which we were both speaking. I saw in him a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation that gave me great hope. John dropped out of school in third grade, but he is one of the wisest and sweetest men I have ever known.

When I chose to be involved nine times in civil disobedience in 1989, it was men like John Perkins who reminded me how small the price was compared to what others have paid. Thank you, Dr. Perkins, for your faithfulness. Let me recommend John's ministry, the John M. Perkins Foundation for Reconciliation & Development, one of those we support with our book royalties.



Randy Alcorn and John Perkins

Questions asked of Dr. Perkins by Lowell Noble, retired sociologist and theologian.

How is justice central to creation? How does it flow out of creation?

Justice is the foundation of God's throne, and justice was the motivation for our redemptive process. The big question is, "How could God be just and justify you and me?" The redemptive story is the story of God coming down to bring justice for the unjust so that He might bring us back to God. Justice is inherited in the fact that He created us in His own image. It's that own image that gives us the dignity and importance of humanity. The whole redemptive process and purpose of justice go together.

The story of the little boy and his ship is a good analogy. The boy had made a toy ship, which he lost. Later he found the ship in a toy shop. After seeing how much it cost, he went home, got the money and bought the ship back. He said, "Now you belong to me. You belong to me because I made you. You belong to me because I bought you back." God made us and we sinned. Then through His death on the cross He purchased us, and now we belong to Him again. So justice is inherited in His creation of us.

Since we're in a fallen world, how must we understand oppression before we can move toward justice?

We've got to understand the importance of humanity and the Biblical idea that we are to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Justice is caring for humanity as we care for ourselves. We must use love, reconciliation and grace to uphold humanity's dignity in Christ. Anything that uses pride, greed or selfishness to crush that inherent worth of humanity is sin and oppression.

We oppress people for our own selfish interests. You have to see oppressed people as created in the image of God, see their needs, and understand how and why they're being neglected. In the story of the Good Samaritan, the priest and the Levite are the ones who ought to have had compassion, but their own self-interest was more important than the broken man. The Good Samaritan sees the situation and is moved with compassion and takes care of the person.

Exodus 6:9 talks about the children of Israel being so broken in spirit because of generations of oppression that they could not believe God when He said He was going to deliver them. How can lifelong or generations of oppression break or crush people's spirits?

The Israelites would have rather gone back to live under the Egyptians' enslavement. That shows the damage of people, and that is the misery of our people. They come to love their oppressor—in a sense—more than they love themselves. And that works itself out in our society, in terms of what we call self-hatred.

It worked itself out in black men in terms of self-hatred, of killing ourselves, of destroying ourselves. That's the ultimate oppression—killing. The solution is to come alongside someone and nurture that person in love. That's the key, but it's still hard. When we say that we are talking about a social good, a redemptive good, it is counter to what our culture says. We are supposed to be self-focused. Jesus set a new model of being "other-focused." We see this in the sacrifice of Jesus, His love for us, and the extremity of His love for us by His death on the cross. That's a miracle story, and it's that miracle power within that story that transformed my life.

We have to show people that God has an endless well of love for His creation and that no matter how long you have been oppressed, no matter the shame that you feel—you are still His child. This goes the same for whites who were slave owners. Through generations of being the oppressors they were damaged, too. The love of Jesus can break through that wall of guilt and redeem their lives.

How do love and justice fit together? Many evangelicals talk about love, but they don't tie it together with justice.

They're really tied together in our care for humanity. John in his Gospel makes it known, "By this may all men know that you're my disciples because of the love you have for each other." We love Him because He first loved us. We see real love in Jesus. If we've

been redeemed, it's our responsibility to love others as we love ourselves. If we see our brothers destitute of daily food and don't give them those things that are needed for the body, how does the love of God dwell in us? It's a love not just in tongue, but in deeds and in truth. Jesus' death on the cross was a physical demonstration of God's love.

How should personal reconciliation and social justice be brought together?

Our redemption is bringing us back to serve God. God created us to be workers, and redemption is to work together with God. That's what Paul is trying to explain—redemption. In Ephesians he says "for by grace are you saved by faith, and faith is not of yourself, but it is the gift of God. It's not of our own good works, so no one can boast."



The redemptive story was to redeem us to do good works. He's going to ask us about our good works at the end of the age. He's going to ask, "Did you feed the hungry? Did you clothe the naked?" It's almost as if we've made Christianity into doing something else. We have personalized it, for our own redemption, but we haven't applied it to the concrete society.

It is a question that we must continually ask ourselves: "Am I serving myself or God?" This leads to other questions of, "Am I an agent for justice?" "How have I been oppressive to my fellow brother and sister?" "Do I have a grateful heart to accept the grace that God has given us—that Jesus died for?" "In all things, have I loved?" We must continue to ask these questions and struggle with these ideas. As Christians isn't it our call to be the prophetic voice about these issues to our culture, country and world?

The John M. Perkins Foundation for Reconciliation & Development is a nonprofit corporation organized for the sole purpose of advancing the principles of Christian community development and racial reconciliation throughout the world. For more information on the foundation, contact:

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What turned your interests towards studying and writing about Heaven? How long have you had this interest and when did it begin? ANSWERED BY RANDY ALCORN

A close friend of mine, Greg, died when I was in high school. I was a brand new Christian and it affected me profoundly. Then after I'd been a pastor five years, my mother died in 1981.

My mother was also my dear friend, and I'd had the joy of leading her to Christ when I was a teenager, a year after I came to the Lord. I knew she was in Heaven, with the Lord, but I wondered what it was like there. The last month before she died, nearly every day I read to her from the final two chapters of the Bible, Revelation 21 and 22, which portray the eternal Heaven as centered on the New Earth. Though we had never discussed it in Bible college or seminary, I found compelling this picture of a resurrected world where people with real bodies will live in a redeemed culture forever centered on Christ the King of Kings.

As the years went on, as a pastor I was at the bedsides of many dying people, and spoke at their gravesides and memorial services. Eleven years to the day after my mother died, my best friend from childhood died, and I had the privilege of being there with Jerry when he left this world for a far better one. (I tell this story in chapter 11 of my book *In Light of Eternity*.) I even based a deathbed scene in my first novel *Deadline* on my experience with Jerry that day. I wove

Heaven scenes into that book and several subsequent novels.

After writing *Safely Home* in 2001, I decided to write a big book on Heaven, emphasizing not just the present Heaven where we go when we die, but the eternal Heaven where God promises to put His throne on the New Earth and dwell with us.

The response to the book *Heaven* has been amazing. Last I heard it had sold over 500,000 copies since its release almost five years ago. Big books with lots of

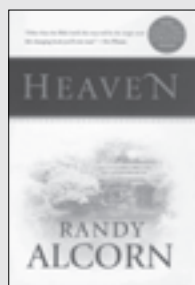
Bible and theology aren't supposed to sell like that. But I tried to write it in a way that's both true to Scripture and stimulates the imagination.

We should long for the world God promises us. As 2 Peter 3:13 says, "We are looking forward to a new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." If we're not looking forward to it, something is seriously wrong.

I'm very grateful and humbled that God seems to be using the Heaven book to get people excited about the place being built for us by the Carpenter from Nazareth. I've received hundreds of wonderful letters from people telling me this, including many who begin by saying "My husband/wife/son/granddaughter/mother died three months ago." I met the wife of a former governor of Arkansas who told me that God had used the Heaven book to bring her perspective and peace after her husband's death.



Lucille Alcorn



New Heaven Small Group DVD!

Use the DVD inside the back cover of the latest version of *Heaven* to guide your small group discussion!

*We all wonder what's next after this life ends.
Now you can discuss those questions in a
seven-week study.*

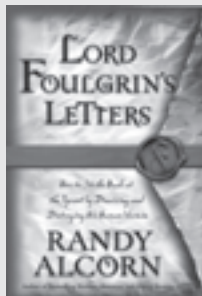
The *Heaven Small Group DVD* includes:

- seven small group sessions, presented by Randy Alcorn
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- seven "Leadership Lifters" with tips for discussion leaders
- worship songs by Terry Clark, who has performed with Maranatha Music and produces live worship events

Please Note: The DVD is not available for sale separately.

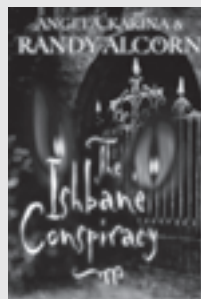
Letters to EPM

Your Spirit-led writing has caused me to really look more deeply inside myself at attitudes I didn't realize I had. I'm a Caucasian woman married to a wonderful husband who happens to be Hispanic. I never thought of myself as being prejudiced. In fact, I prided myself on being non-prejudicial...until I read *Dominion*. I will never forget the scene in your book about the African American and his friend standing in line at the fast-food restaurant, and the different ways the cashier reacted to the white man and to the black man. I do that too. It's a terrible truth, and one that burns deeply. When I talk about people, trying to describe a situation, I must struggle to consciously not bring ethnic background or skin color into the conversation. I grew up doing that, but thanks to the Lord, my husband calls me on it when I err. And thanks to your teaching which made me dig down a little further inside myself to right a wrong attitude toward my brothers and sisters. — D. H.



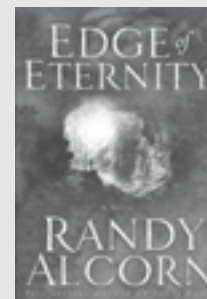
I am a youth leader for a small youth group of God-believing teens. We have witnessed a revival among them with *Lord Foulgrin's Letters* being read by one of our seniors. Now we have bought *The Ishbane Conspiracy* for the whole group.

They are hungry to witness and we have started being active in our church as well. They always remark, "We were just sitting back and letting Satan win. We were lifeless!" I had read *Screwtape Letters* and found *Lord Foulgrin's Letters* delightful as well. We can't wait to dive into the college student's lives in *The Ishbane Conspiracy*. — M. B.



My husband was given *Safely Home* last Christmas and we both devoured it. It was especially touching to me because my grandparents had been missionaries in China for 48 years. (My grandfather lost his sight in one eye because he was stoned for his beliefs.) Since then, we have read your other books,

and I am now in the middle of *Edge of Eternity*. My thanks to you for constantly reminding me of seeing things in light of eternity. It has literally changed my perspective on life—how I see my family, my church, my role in this short life. Just last night I read a quote from *Edge of Eternity* where Shad says, "The darkness doesn't need a little less darkness; what it needs is light." Thank you for shining the Light. — M. S.



The Treasure Principle is proof that good things come in small packages. This is about as power-packed as it gets in 95 pages. Alcorn challenges our cultural obsession with stuff through his call to "send it on ahead." He argues that the prospect of reward is not wrong, in and of itself, it is simply that we often aim for earthly rather than eternal rewards. We are focused on having it all here instead of using the resources God entrusts to us for others now and receiving eternal rewards later. This book provides a great argument against the prosperity gospel, especially in Alcorn's phrase, "God prospers me not to raise my standard of living, but to raise my standard of giving." This book is simply the application of logic to the truth of the Bible. If God is real and the Bible is true, and the Bible teaches that eternal life is real, then it only makes sense to live for that which will produce the most eternal good and bring the most glory to God. — J. F. (customer review posted on amazon.com)

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