

Eternal Perspectives

with founder and author Randy Alcorn

Fall 2010



Protecting Purity in a
TECHNOLOGICAL Corinth

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Reaching the Next Generation | Living a Life of Grace and Truth

a publication of Eternal Perspective Ministries

New products available from EPM

The Goodness of God | A specially focused condensation of *If God Is Good*, which also includes some new material. Hardcover, 117 pages. **EPM price \$9.10 (retail \$12.99)**

***The Goodness of God* audio book** | Unabridged; read by Randy Alcorn. **EPM price \$13.49 (retail \$17.99)**

If God Is Good Study Guide | Designed for both individual and group use. Can be used as a four-week overview, an exploratory eight-week journey, or an intensive thirteen-week course. Softcover, 188 pages. **EPM price \$7.99 (retail \$9.99)**



Order online at www.epm.org or call 503-668-5200 or our toll-free order line 1-877-376-4567

Randy's speaking highlights

Desiring God 2010 National Conference

October 1-3, 2010

(Randy will be a workshop speaker on Friday, Oct. 1)

Minneapolis, Minnesota

www.desiringGod.org/natcon

C. S. Lewis SW Regional Retreat & Writers Workshop

October 28-31, 2010

Navasota, Texas

www.cslewis.org/programs/regional/index.html

For a complete list of speaking events, see

www.epm.org/events.

Follow Randy's blog, Facebook, and Twitter

Read Randy's blog on our website, www.epm.org/blog. Sign up to follow him on Facebook and Twitter and receive daily devotional thoughts and keep up with the latest from Randy and EPM.

Asked on Facebook >> Do you have a favorite character in your books? Is there one most like you?

Randy answered >> Favorite characters: Little Finn in *Deadline*, Obadiah Abernathy in *Dominion*, Li Quan in *Safely Home*, and Ollie Chandler in *Deception*. Other than the fact that he's an unbeliever, the one most like me is Ollie Chandler. I keep a toaster on the back porch because I like to burn my toast.



www.facebook.com/randyalcorn



www.twitter.com/randyalcorn

Would you like to receive occasional emails from EPM with special offers and sales?

>> **SIGN UP** at www.epm.org/newsletters for our **EPM E-News Update**. You'll receive monthly emails with the latest news about Randy's books, projects, radio and speaking appearances, as well as special promotions and book sales from EPM.



In This Issue

Q & A: Biblical Perspective on Life Change	page 3	Challenge Them with Truth	page 10
<i>The Promise of Heaven</i> and Medical Facilities	page 4	Living a Life of Grace and Truth	page 12
Protecting Purity in a Technological Corinth	page 6	Great Is Thy Faithfulness	page 14

Q: I recently lost my job and my family may have to move. What is a biblical perspective on trusting God with these life changes?

A: Acts 17:24-27 says, "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth....From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him..."

God has a perfect time and place for all of us. He knows and has planned our circumstances, and while human choice is taken into account, God is not bound by the decisions of people. He makes his own calls, and He truly does work all things together for good for his people (Romans 8:28).

Organizations, ministries, and people come and go. But as long as His children are here, God has determined the "times set for them" and "the exact [not just general, but exact] places they should live."

So the One in control of the universe has His time and place for all of us. Knowing this should help us walk by faith as we seek His face about what to do and where to go next. He is sovereign, and is not taken by surprise by any of this. He is the God of providence who raises up not just Esther, but each of us for just such a time as this. *RA*



Do you plan to have a sequel to *Deception* featuring Ollie Chandler?

A: I hope to, eventually. If I do, Ollie will be the first main character I've ever used in more than one novel. I've always known it would be easier to reuse the main character in that role because I wouldn't have to start over with a new one, or take the additional time to get into the head of a minor character from an earlier novel, as I've done a few times.

But after *Deadline* I thought Jake Woods didn't need another book as the main character. After *Dominion* Clarence Abernathy could serve



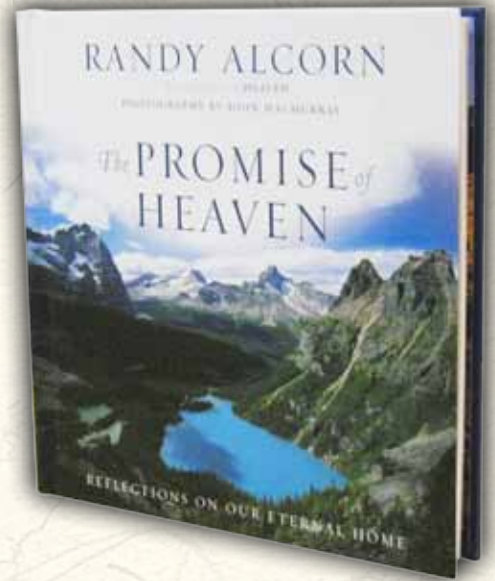
as a support character, but his story had been told. A number of people wanted me to finish Nick Seagrave's story after *Edge of Eternity* and the stories of Jordan Fletcher from *Lord Foulgrin's Letters* and Jillian and her friends from *The Ishbane Conspiracy* and Ben Fielding from *Safely Home*.

In each case I'd invested a lot in the development of the main characters, but didn't feel like I wanted to go further with them. Ollie Chandler is my first exception. I like him, I'm in his head (or he's in mine), and I could see one or more books with Ollie. It would sure be fun to start with a main character who already seems like a good friend. Ollie's full of surprises, and I enjoy his company. *RA*

The PROMISE of HEAVEN

share the hope of eternity with those in medical facilities

Eternal Perspective Ministries is offering *The Promise of Heaven* for **\$5.00 each plus shipping (a 70% discount off the \$16.99 retail price)** to those who would like to make it available in medical facilities such as doctor and dental offices, hospitals, retirement homes, nursing homes, and more. It's also a wonderful gift book for use by chaplains or those ministering to someone facing a medical crisis.



1

Are you a medical provider?

Purchase *The Promise of Heaven* to place in the waiting room of your office or clinic.

2

Not a doctor, but you would like to share a book with a medical facility or use it to minister to someone in need?

EPM is encouraging our readers to purchase a book and donate it to a local medical facility (hospital, nursing home, assisted living home, doctor's office, etc.)

For more information or to place an order, email linda@EPM.org or call (503) 668-5200 or our toll-free order line 1-877-376-4567.



How is *The Promise of Heaven* different from Randy's other books on Heaven?

It is distinctly different in size, scope, and layout. John MacMurray's stunning photographs give *The Promise of Heaven* the look and feel of a gift book, easily passed on to believers and unbelievers alike. It is very succinct and focuses on key questions about Heaven, and most importantly, contains a clear presentation of the gospel and the hope of eternal life in Jesus Christ.

Randy shares a story about *The Promise of Heaven*

Right after the book came out in 2009, I was in a hospital waiting room and watched a forty-year-old woman read *The Promise of Heaven*. She had seen it on a chair where I had set it down, and when I was temporarily out of the waiting room she picked it up. She didn't take her eyes off the pages until her husband came out of surgery, and then I introduced myself. She told me how much she liked it, and I gave it to her. Because I quote a lot of Scripture in the book, I trust God was speaking to her heart. What a joy to be able to share the hope of eternity with those who are facing medical difficulties. —Randy Alcorn

"Heaven is a place worth thinking and talking and dreaming about.

Go to www.epm.org/promiseofheaven to watch videos of Randy Alcorn and John MacMurray sharing about the book.

CONGRATS

to the winner of the Book Library Giveaway

Pastor Rex Beresford received a complete Randy Alcorn library, a retail value of \$340.76, as a result of our 20th anniversary giveaway contest which appeared in the spring edition of *Eternal Perspectives*.

"Here's my photograph, holding a few of the books and grinning broadly," Rex writes. "Since I've received the box of your collected works, I've watched my 13-year-old daughter devour *Why Pro-Life?* and *ProLife Answers to ProChoice Arguments...* I've also watched my 90-year-old mother as she read for the first time one of your books, *Deadline*, and seen her weep to realize the full impact of abortion for the first time in her life."



Randy Alcorn's book titles

- 50 Days of Heaven
- Deadline
- Deception
- Does the Birth Control Pill Cause Abortions?
- Dominion
- Edge of Eternity
- The Goodness of God
- Grace and Truth Paradox
- Heaven
- Heaven Booklets—20 pack
- Heaven Tracts—25 pack
- Heaven for Kids
- If God is Good
- In Light of Eternity
- The Ishbane Conspiracy
- The Law of Rewards
- Lord Foulgrin's Letters
- Money, Possessions, and Eternity
- ProLife Answers to ProChoice Arguments
- The Promise of Heaven
- The Purity Principle
- Safely Home
- Tell Me About Heaven
- TouchPoints: Heaven
- The Treasure Principle
- Wait Until Then
- Why Pro-Life?



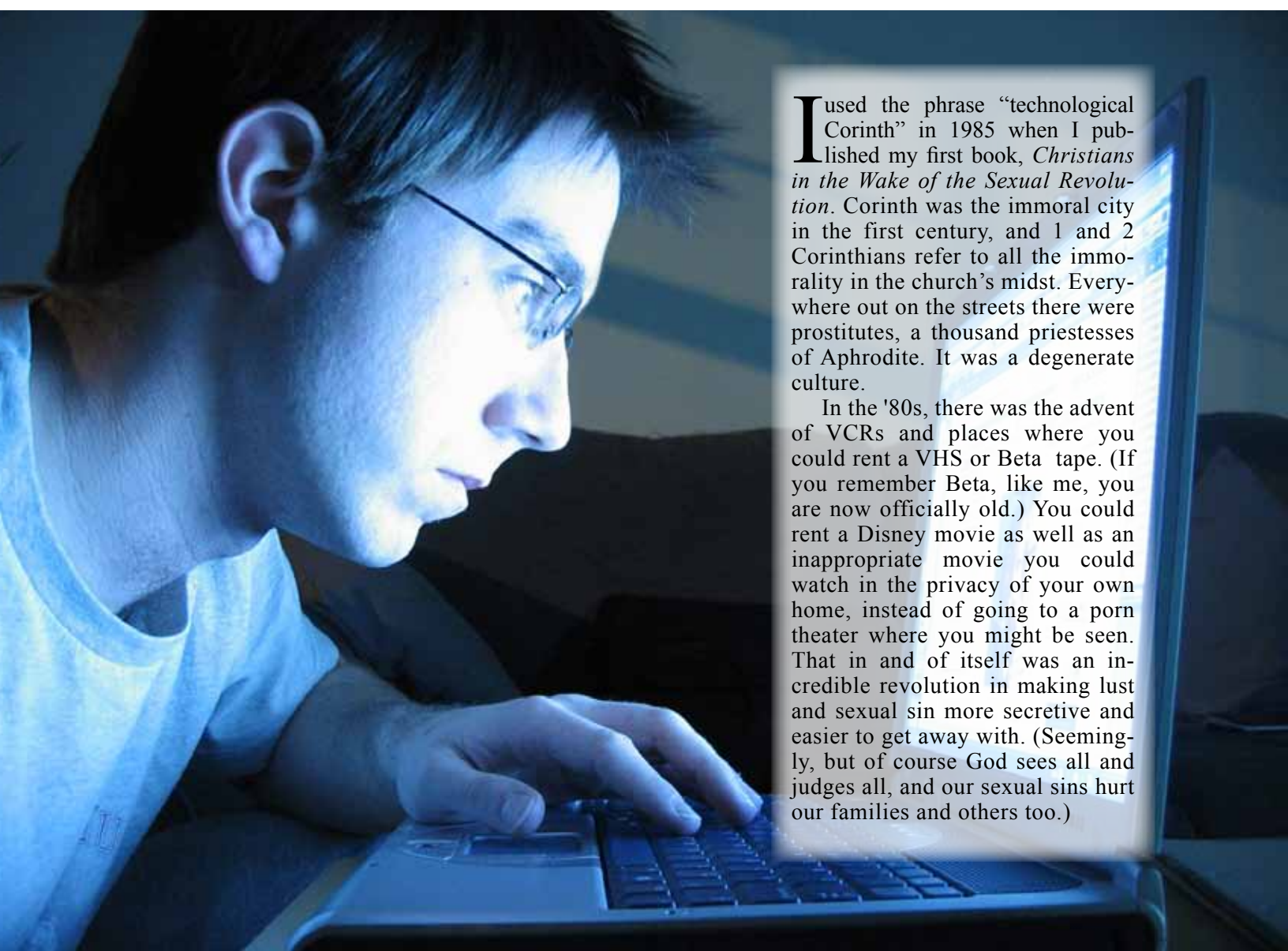
Visit www.epm.org for more info about Randy's books.

Read *Eternal Perspectives* in FULL COLOR

You can view the full color version of the quarterly newsletter online before it even gets to your mailbox! Go to www.epm.org/newsletters.html to download our current newsletter and any past issues. We're happy to send it to you by mail, but if viewed online, you have the added benefit of seeing it in beautiful color. It also saves EPM printing and mailing costs.

If you currently receive a newsletter in the mail, but would prefer to read it online, email info@epm.org. You'll be sent an email notification when a new issue is available.

Protecting Purity in a Technological Corinth



I used the phrase “technological Corinth” in 1985 when I published my first book, *Christians in the Wake of the Sexual Revolution*. Corinth was the immoral city in the first century, and 1 and 2 Corinthians refer to all the immorality in the church’s midst. Everywhere out on the streets there were prostitutes, a thousand priestesses of Aphrodite. It was a degenerate culture.

In the '80s, there was the advent of VCRs and places where you could rent a VHS or Beta tape. (If you remember Beta, like me, you are now officially old.) You could rent a Disney movie as well as an inappropriate movie you could watch in the privacy of your own home, instead of going to a porn theater where you might be seen. That in and of itself was an incredible revolution in making lust and sexual sin more secretive and easier to get away with. (Seemingly, but of course God sees all and judges all, and our sexual sins hurt our families and others too.)

Fast forward 25 plus years. We are now living in a more far-reaching technological Corinth. I recently read some statistics dealing with the problem of “sexting.” Studies show that 22% of teen girls and 18% of teen boys have shared nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves, either attached to a text message or by posting them online; 33% of young adults aged 20-26 have posted or sent nude pictures of themselves—one in three—from phones and computers. 51% of the girls who have done sexting—including both explicit text messages and nude photos of themselves—say they were under pressure from a boy. (When you talk about actual explicit text messages—using words that are sexual—the number of people participating is of course much higher.)

A police officer friend told me that hardly a week goes by when he doesn’t get a call from a distraught parent who has discovered that nude pictures of their daughter are being sent all over the school and across the country because she posed for her boyfriend or took the picture herself. Those images cannot be recalled, nor the shame erased from memory.

A few years ago a man in our church was standing next to his son, who received a text message with a photo attached. He was looking over his son’s shoulder, and recognized a church girl who attends the same high school. She was naked. The boy said he didn’t know it was coming, and his friend just sent it to him. Maybe he was telling the truth. But all it takes is a cell phone. Christian parents would have been stunned if you had told them 25 years ago that today most kids would be carrying around a miniature television screen that would allow them access to pornography and on which they could receive images of naked people while the young person is doing homework or sitting in church.

We’re in a battle—big time. Tragically, most Christian homes are losing this battle. Scripture says that Satan goes around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, and sadly, we are losing our daughters and our sons.

It’s not just boys who are looking at pornography; young girls are too. And some of them are going to online chat rooms to be flirted with by strangers who are often not what they claim to be.

As a parent you might wonder, “Well, do I have the right to interfere? Isn’t that being nosey?” Your job is to interfere and to be nosey. Your job is to know what is going on in the life of your child and protect them, just as if you were standing next to a freeway and would feel an obligation to put your arms around your child and say, “Stay off that freeway.” That is your responsibility as a parent. This is a battle

!! 22% of teen girls and 18% of teen boys have shared nude or semi-nude pictures of !! themselves...

for our children with their lives and futures at stake.

Proverbs 5:1-5 says, “My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding, that you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge. For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death.”

Notice that these words talk about body parts and where body parts go. It’s all about feet and eyes and ears and hands and mouths. What we do with our bodies will determine the condition of our lives, including whether we move that finger to double-click on an image or go to a website, or whether we take our hands and pick up the Word of God, or turn off the television with a remote control. The spiritual life is lived out by what we do with our bodies.

This is why Romans 6:13 says we yield our body parts—our body members—to the Holy Spirit of God.

Proverbs 5:5-6 says, “Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol; She does not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it.” Notice the clear choice between life and death. In Deuteronomy 28 through 30 God says he sets before us life and death, blessings and curses. “Now choose life.” There are blessings that will come from right choices. There are curses that will come from wrong choices.

I know there are many Christians who are not trying to be corrupt. Their life goal is not to entice and seduce other people. Yet I see the way many young (and even older) women dress, and how they look at teen magazines and follow current fashions, and I think, “They don’t know. They don’t understand.” I would encourage Christian parents, and even grandparents, to intervene kindly and graciously. It is appropriate to firmly say, “No. You can’t leave the house dressed this way” and graciously tell them why they can’t.

Verse 7 says, “And now, O sons, listen to me, and do not depart from the words of my mouth.” Take counsel from those in authority. I’ve coached



tennis at a local high school, and the players who ultimately live up to their potential are the ones who listen to instruction and accept coaching. Those who are convinced they are going to do it their way don't do nearly as well as they would have if they had listened to those in authority.

In my book *The Purity Principle* I write that God has given us guardrails through His commandments. Why do the guardrails exist? Have you ever been driving late at night on a mountain pass knowing that if you went off this road, you would plunge to your death? Suppose you are driving along in the fog on a treacherous mountain road with a cliff below you, and you know people have gone off that cliff to their destruction. All of a sudden you hit something. You get out of the car with a flashlight and see a guardrail and your dented fender and bumper. Would you look at it and say, "I hate that guardrail. Look what it did to my car!" No. You would thank God for the guardrail, because it saved your life.

The young man in Proverbs 5 is told, "Don't go near the door of her house." Just like in real estate, it is all about location, location, location. Where do you put yourself? If you're on a diet and you decide, "I'm just going to stop somewhere for a cup of coffee" and choose Krispy Kreme as the destination, that's not a wise choice.

But it's not just about the physical places, even though there are places physically you should not go. There's also wisdom in saying, "Don't go anywhere near that book or magazine or website or have it in your home." If you have a history of struggling with impurity on the internet, where in the Bible does it say, "You must have a computer. You must have internet access. You must have a cell phone. You must have a cell phone with internet access"? Where does it say "You must have a television"? Look up television and internet in a Bible concordance. They aren't there. If you have a history of having a problem with something, remove it, restrict it. Do not keep putting yourself back at the source of temptation. Run from it—do not go to it.

Do you know what it does say we must do? Be sexually pure. 1 Thessalonians 4:3 tells us that it is God's will that we abstain from sexual immorality. We do not have to wonder what the will of God is in this area—He tells us.

Proverbs 5:11-12 goes on to say "And at the end of your life you will groan, when your flesh and body are consumed. And you will say, 'How I hated discipline and my heart despised reproof!'" There will be regret for those who have ignored God's guardrails. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." If someone is going to poison the stream, they poison it at its source. And if you are going to clean it up, you clean it up at its source. We are called upon

to clean our hearts and minds by filling them with the things of God (things that are good and pure as Philippians 4 says) and by putting off and turning away from those things that corrupt our hearts.

Verses 13 through 15 say, "I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to my instructors. I am at the brink of utter ruin in the assembled congregation. Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well." This is a figure of speech related to marriage. Verses 16-18: "Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone, [Do not be promiscuous. Do not be unfaithful] and not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth."

Who created sex? Was it Satan? No. It was God. Think about two of the most powerful things God has created: fire and water. What would we do without fire and water? But have you ever seen water out of control? A flood, a tidal wave, a tsunami? It is devastating. Have you ever seen fire out of control—a forest fire or a house burning to the ground? Have you seen somebody's body covered with burns? It is absolutely horrific. The things that are the best become the worst when taken out of their God-

intended boundaries. Sex is one of the best things God has made, but it becomes the very worst—the most devastating—when it is taken out of its God-given context.

Verses 20 and 21 say: "Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress? For a man's ways are before the eyes of the LORD, and he ponders all his paths." God sees everything, and we will be accountable to Him.

Verses 22 and 23 say: "The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin. He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray." The right choice is always the smart choice. The wrong choice is always the stupid choice.

In Proverbs 6:20-22, it tells us, "My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching. Bind them on your heart always; tie them around your neck. When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you."

Deuteronomy 6 commands parents to not only inscribe or engrave on the hearts of our children the Word of God, but also to talk about and model the principles and truths of God's Word as you rise in the morning, as you go to bed at night, and all throughout the day.

Our children will sometimes not listen to us, but they will seldom fail to imitate us. You might think you are trying to cultivate some sense of purity in the home, but Dad or Mom, are



!! Our children will sometimes not listen to us, but they will seldom fail to imitate us. !!

you watching shows on television that feed impurity? There are many homes in which parents do not want their girls to become pregnant, or their boys to become sexually active, and yet they are watching programs like **Desperate Housewives** or **Grey's Anatomy** or **The Bachelor**, and even old reruns of things like **Friends** and **Seinfeld** that have sexually-explicit jokes and allusions and situations. Are you laughing at dirty jokes? Not just are you telling dirty jokes, but are you laughing at dirty jokes? Laughter is a form of approval.

Ephesians 5:3-4 says, "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity... because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place."

Use this passage as a standard by which you measure a sitcom, drama,

soap opera, movie, reality TV, novel, website, You name it. Does it have:

- Even a hint of sexual immorality?
- Any kind of impurity?
- Obscenity?
- Foolish talk?
- Coarse joking?

If it does, then the inspired Word of God decisively tells us, it should not be present among you because it is "improper" and "out of place" for God's children, who are to be holy and Christ-centered.

If you say, "Well, really, what's so wrong with those things?" it's because you have become desensitized to what you've been watching. But those things are feeding immorality, and all the more because you've let down your guard against them. And parents, don't try to cultivate a shallow sense of morality in your home, when you're modeling and bringing immorality into it—for example, when the kids see Dad gazing at the sports cheerleaders on television. You are training your children to think in sexualized ways.

I would suggest that many of us should go to our children, confess, repent, and say, "I'm sorry. We're not going to be watching these things any more. They're not pleasing to God and they're not good for you. We want to protect you, and we need to guard our hearts as

well as yours."

That models something—admitting you are wrong and asking for forgiveness. The best part is that when you get that junk out of your home, you now have time on your hands to get into the Word of God and cultivate superior, higher pleasures—such as reading great Christian books individually and as a family, and listening to wonderful stories on Focus on the Family radio theater. Do not be satisfied with the lesser things of this world that distract us from the better things.

"Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (Philippians 4:8).

Fill your heart with these things. Fill your home with these things and watch God bless you.

I beg you. Protect your own life. Protect your children. Protect your grandchildren. Then watch and enjoy the blessings and rewards of purity in your life and theirs. *RA*

Guidelines for Dating Couples

The following guidelines are excerpted from a sixteen-page handout on purity I wrote for my daughters and the young men desiring to spend time with them. (See www.epm.org/purityguidelines) My wife and I went through it with both, point by point each time. While this material is specifically geared to teenagers and those in potential dating relationships, the biblical principles apply to people of all ages, and the practical guidelines are helpful for many people in different life situations as well.

- If you're a Christian, date only Christians (see 2 Corinthians 6:14).
- If you're a committed disciple, date only committed disciples.
- Christ is with you all evening—wherever you go and whatever you do.
- Remember your date is your brother or sister, not your "lover" (see 1 Timothy 5:1-2).
- Go out in groups, not alone.
- Focus on talk, not touch; conversation, not contact.
- Avoid fast-moving relationships or instant intimacy.
- Plan the entire evening in advance, with no gaps.
- Avoid setups—never be alone: on a couch, in a car late at night, in a house or bedroom.
- Be accountable to someone about your purity.
- Imagine your parents and church leaders watching you through the window. God is watching (see Jeremiah 16:17).
- Write out your own standards and enforce them yourself—never depend on someone else.
- Don't do anything with your date you wouldn't want someone else doing with your future mate.
- Beware of the "moral wear down" of long dating relationships and long engagements. Once young people and parents agree on marriage, it's dangerous to wait longer than necessary (see 1 Corinthians 7: 8-9).

Reaching the Next Generation:

CHALLENGE THEM WITH TRUTH

BY KEVIN DEYOUNG

In the church growth heyday, scholars and pastors were wrestling with how to reach out without dumbing down. Today I would argue that we reach out precisely by *not* dumbing down. The door is open like never before to challenge people with good Bible teaching. People want to learn doctrine. They really do, even non-Christians. Whether they accept it all or not, they want to know what Christians actually believe. Young people will not put up with feel good pablum. They want the truth straight up, unvarnished, and unashamed.

Thom Rainer did a study a number of years ago asking formerly unchurched people the open ended question, "What factors led you to choose this church?" A lot of surveys had been done asking the unchurched what they would like in a church. But this study asked the *formerly* unchurched why they *actually* were now in a church. The results were surprising: 11% said worship style led them to their church; 25% said children's/youth ministry; 37% said they sensed God's presence at their church; 41% said someone had witnessed to them from the church; and 49% mentioned friendliness as the reason for choosing their church. Can you guess the top two responses? Doctrine and preaching—88% said the doctrine led them to their church and 90% said the preaching led them there, in particular, pastors who preached with certitude and conviction. One woman remarked, "We attended a lot of different churches for different reasons before we became Christians. I tell you, so many of the preachers spoke with little authority; they hardly ever dealt with tough issues of Scripture, and they soft-sold the other issues. Frank and I know now that we were hungry for the truth. Why can't preachers learn that shallow and superficial preaching

doesn't help anybody, including people like us who weren't Christians?" When it comes to reaching outsiders, bold, deep, biblical preaching is not the problem. It's part of the solution.

The next generation *in* our churches needs to be challenged too. In his book on the religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers, Christian Smith coined the phrase "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism" to describe the spirituality of American youth. They believe in being a good moral person. They believe religion should give you peace, happiness, and security. They believe God exists and made the world, but is not particularly involved in the day-to-day stuff of life. We are naïve if we think this is not the faith of some of the best and brightest in our churches, or even those reading this article!

Church people are not stupid. They are not incapable of learning. For the most part, they simply haven't been taught. No one has challenged them to think a deep thought or read a difficult book. No one has asked them to articulate their faith in biblical and theological categories. We expect almost nothing out of our young people, so that's what we get. A couple generations ago 20 year olds were getting married, starting a family, working at a real job or off somewhere fighting Nazis.

Today 35 year olds are hanging out on Facebook, looking for direction, and trying to find themselves. We have been coddled when we should have been challenged.

Challenging the next generation with truth starts with

“MANY CHRISTIANS
NEED TO
REALIZE THAT
THEY DON'T
REALLY KNOW
WHAT THEY
BELIEVE OR WHY
THEY BELIEVE IT.”

honest self-examination. We must ask, “Do I know the plotline of the Bible? Do I know Christian theology? Do I read any serious Christian books? Do I know anything about justification, redemption, original sin, propitiation, and progressive sanctification? Do I really understand the gospel?” We cannot challenge others until we have first challenged ourselves. The “average” churchgoer must think more deeply about his faith. Many Christians need to realize, like I did one night in college when confronted with some of my own ignorance, that they don’t really know what they believe or why they believe it.

You’ve heard it said that Christianity in America is a mile wide and an inch deep. Well, it’s more like half a mile wide now. Christian influence is not as pervasive as it once was. I’m convinced that if Christianity is to be a mile wide again in America, it will first have to find a way to be a mile deep. Shallow Christianity will not last in the coming generation and it will not grow. Cultural Christianity is fading. The church in the 21st century must go big on truth or go home. •

Kevin DeYoung is the Senior Pastor at University Reformed Church in East Lansing, Michigan. He is the co-author of Why We’re Not Emergent: By Two Guys Who Should Be and Why We Love the Church: In Praise of Institutions and Organized Religion.

You can read Kevin’s blog at <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung>.

RECOMMENDED BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES

GRASPING THE BIBLE’S REDEMPITIVE DRAMA

- *God’s Big Picture: Tracing the Story Line of the Bible* by Vaughn Roberts

INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE CORRECTLY

- *Getting the Message: a Plan for Interpreting and Applying the Bible* by Daniel Doriani

LEARNING BIBLICAL DOCTRINES

- *Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know* by Wayne Grudem
- *Dug Down Deep* by Joshua Harris

LARGER RESOURCES FOR LEARNING DOCTRINE

- *Bible Doctrine* by Wayne Grudem
- *Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem

LISTENING TO SCRIPTURE

- NIV Dramatized Audio Bible

BIBLE READING PLANS

- www.bibleplan.org
- www.biblegateway.com/resources/readingplans

PASSING ON A PASSION FOR GOD’S WORD

By Randy Alcorn

Tragically, Christian adults, including many current church leaders and even some pastors, are so immersed in popular culture and so undisciplined that they do not turn off the television and devote themselves to daily study of God’s Word and reading of Christian books centered on God’s Word. What kind of role model are we being to the next generation? What are we doing to motivate them and help them unplug the distractions, silence the cell phones, and become passionate students of God’s Word, listening to the still, small voice of God that will otherwise be drowned out by our incessant cultural noise?

QUESTIONS FOR US TO ASK

- Are we memorizing Scripture?
- Are we encouraging our children to memorize Scripture, and doing it with them?
- Do we have a systematic plan of verses to memorize and review with our children, covering basic areas of theology?
- How can we expect our children to cultivate and persevere in a Christian worldview without helping them hide God’s Word in their hearts?

MORE
ONLINE
RESOURCES
AT EPM.ORG



Read more from Randy Alcorn’s blog post, “The Problem of Biblical Illiteracy”: www.epm.org/blog/illiteracy



Video and audio resource of Randy answering the question, “How important is good theology?”: www.epm.org/resources/goodtheology

Living a life of Grace and Truth for the Audience of One by Randy Alcorn

What distinguished the first Christians from the world around them? It certainly wasn't their buildings—they had none. It wasn't their programs—they had none. It wasn't their political power—they had none.

Read Acts 2 and Acts 4 and you see a radical difference in the church, a profound transformation in the way people treated each other. Christians were different in the way they behaved, in the way they lived. They were characterized by visible acts of love and generosity and joyous sacrifice for the good of others.

Acts 4:32-33 says, "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all." The truth of the resurrection and the grace of generous living—truth was what they believed and spoke and grace was how they lived. After the similar description in Acts 2, where we're told the believers sold their possessions to help the needy, it says "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

The grace they gave was an echo of the grace they received. As thunder follows lightning, our grace to others follows God's grace to us.

Two ingredients combined to make this impact on the world: truth and grace. The truth, the teachings and doctrines of the church, was the ethical foundation of right and wrong. And the grace of God, which granted them forgiveness and empowered them to forgive others, enabled them to embrace what was good and turn away from what was bad. That is the heart of ethics—discerning and living out what is good while rejecting what is bad.

When the world heard and saw the distinctive ethics of the early Christians—what they believed and how they lived truth and grace—people were drawn to the living God.

Colossians 1:6 says "All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth."

The gospel is characterized by grace and truth. But grace and truth are not just part of a religious system. They are both embodied in Jesus Christ. John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

The word translated "made his dwelling" is the word for "tabernacled." Christ tabernacled among us, picturing him as the dwelling place of God on earth. God's glory no longer dwelt in a building, the temple, but in Christ. He was the holy of holies. But when he ascended he deposited the shekinah glory of God in us—we became the living temples, the holy of holies, both corporately as churches (1 Cor. 3:16-17) and individually as Christians (1 Cor. 6:19).

God's essence, his shekinah glory, was visibly manifested in two things: grace and truth. To be Christlike is to be full of what he was full of: grace and truth. Is the world seeing Christ in us? If we are vessels of his glory, we have a very short biblical checklist of what we should be full of: grace and truth.

John tells us, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

The law was righteous but it had no power to transform us. It was necessary, but not sufficient. Jesus brought us what no law, no list of rules—no matter how righteous—could bring us. He brought us grace and truth.

The world today is desperately hungry for two things—truth and grace. It is not enough for us to offer them one—if we are to be true Christians, we must offer them both. Today you can make a case that the church is simultaneously too hostile

to the world and too friendly to it. Sinners wanted to be around Jesus, but today they don't want to be around the followers of Jesus. Why?

On the other hand, when the church tries to make itself a place where sinners are comfortable, the distinctives of Christianity are sacrificed. The church becomes one more social club that helps people feel good but fails to help them be good. Why? Because in the one case Christians emphasize truth but neglect grace. In the other case they emphasize grace but neglect truth.

Some churches are strong on truth but weak on grace. Some are strong on grace but weak on truth. Truth is not complete without grace and grace is not complete without truth. Grace without truth deceives people. Truth without grace crushes people.

Martin Luther said the devil doesn't care which side of the horse we fall off of as long as we don't stay in the saddle. A saddle has two stirrups. To stay in the saddle, the church needs to mount the horse with one foot solidly in the stirrup of truth and the other solidly in the stirrup of grace.

Now, finding this balance isn't easy. In the past I've intervened on behalf of children at abortion clinics and been arrested and gone to jail for peaceful nonviolent civil disobedience. One of the consequences of that was having to step out of pastoral ministry when one of the clinics tried to garnish my wages from the church. I believed and still believe the truth that unborn children are created in the image of God and that truth has compelled me to say and do things that are not popular not only among non-Christians but many Christians. I've always tried to represent the truth in a spirit of grace, but not everyone sees it that way.

Years ago my church, Good Shepherd Community Church, was picketed by thirty protestors because some of our people went down to Lovejoy abortion clinic and sidewalk counseled. We offered women alternatives to abortion and shared the gospel with them and sometimes held up signs encouraging them to reconsider their decision and let their babies live. So three pro-abortion groups decided to combine forces and give us a taste of our own medicine. (The groups were Radical Women for Choice, Rock for Choice and Lesbian Avengers.)

We heard they were coming so we set out donuts and coffee for them and tried to strike up conversations. I spent an hour

and a half talking with a man named Charles who was holding a sign saying "Keep Abortion Legal." I gave him coffee and when it started raining I held an umbrella over him. We talked a bit about abortion, but most of the conversation was about Christ. I shared the gospel with him start to finish, he gave me his address and I sent him a couple of my books and some other gospel material.

Now, I really liked Charles. But when you believe as strongly as I do that abortion is the killing of a child, it's a bit awkward serving coffee and holding an umbrella for someone who is holding a pro-abortion sign—imagine if they were holding a sign saying "Legalize rape" or "Let's kill black people." To me, it's the same thing. Yet, because of the opportunity to share the love of Christ, his truth and his grace, I felt it was the right thing to do. As truth sometimes puts us in awkward situations, so does grace.

The morning we were being picketed, some brothers had heard about it and showed up wearing sandwich boards that talked about sin and hell. Their message content was biblical. However, there was a bit of a philosophical difference. One of the street preachers barged between my daughter and me and a few of the Lesbian Avengers just as I thought we had a chance to open a conversation with them. Several of us spoke with the street preachers; most cooperated but a few decided we were compromisers waffling on the truth and that it was an abomination for us to be giving donuts to people who needed to be confronted with their sin.

A few letters were exchanged that week and the following Sunday two street preachers came to our church and picketed us.

When you stand for truth you get picketed by some non-Christians, and when you try to demonstrate grace you get picketed by some Christians. With some you may be way too radical, with others not nearly radical enough. So you have to decide you're not going to live for the applause of one particular group, but live out your life before the Audience of One, your only final and ultimate Judge. *R*

**"As truth
sometimes
puts us in
awkward
situations,
so does
grace."**

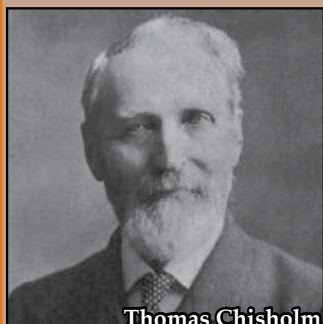


Excerpt from the article "Truth and Grace in the Age of Lies" For more on this subject, see Randy's book *The Grace and Truth Paradox*, www.epm.org/graceandtruthparadox.

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

A Hymn for Ordinary Christians

by Bob Kauflin



Thomas Chisholm

THE STORY

behind "Great is Thy Faithfulness" should encourage every Christian who thinks of their life as ordinary. There's no tragic story (think "It Is Well" by Horatio Spafford) associated with this hymn. It's just the fruit of a faithful man with a simple faith in a faithful God.

Thomas Chisholm, who sometimes described himself as "just an old shoe," was born in a Kentucky log cabin in 1866. He was converted when he was 27, became a pastor at 36, but had to retire one year later due to poor health. He spent the majority of the rest of his life as a life insurance agent in New Jersey. He died in 1960 at the age of 93. During his life he wrote over 1200 poems, most of which no one will ever hear.

But back in 1923, at the "beyond his prime" age of 57, Thomas Chisholm sent a few of his poems to William Runyan at the Hope Publishing Company. One of them was "Great is Thy Faithfulness", based on Lamentations 3:22-23: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; 23 they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Runyan was particularly moved by "Great is Thy Faithfulness" and sought to set it to a melody that would reflect the response of wonder and gratefulness to God's faithfulness conveyed in the lyrics. Apparently, he succeeded.

The song quickly became a favorite at Moody Bible Institute, and later George Beverly Shea sang it at Billy Graham crusades. Now it's known all over the world and has

been used to encourage millions of Christians to trust in a faithful God.

Pretty impressive spiritual fruit from a life insurance agent.

When Chisholm was 75, he wrote in a letter: "My income has not been large at any time due to impaired health in the earlier years which has followed me on until now. Although I must not fail to record here the unfailing faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God and that He has given me many wonderful displays of His providing care, for which I am filled with astonishing gratefulness."

The hymn has three verses and a chorus. Verse 1 speaks of God's faithfulness revealed in his Word, and is adapted from James 1:17: Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

Verse 2 tells us of God's faithfulness revealed in creation. The seasons, the sun, moon, and stars all continue on their courses perfectly, orderly, quietly—guided by God's faithful hand, without any help from us.

Verse 3 reminds us of God's faithfulness revealed in our lives. He pardons all our sins, fills us with his peace, assures us of his presence, gives us strength, hope, and blessings too numerous to count!

Whatever challenge trials, or disappointments you might be facing right now, this hymn reminds us that God's promises are true, that he never changes, that his compassions never fail, and that his faithfulness to us in Christ Jesus is more than good—it's GREAT!

God doesn't need incredibly gifted or wildly famous people to proclaim those truths from his Word.

Just faithful ones. ●

Originally posted by Bob Kauflin on his blog, www.worshipmatters.com. Bob serves as director of worship development for Sovereign Grace Ministries (www.sovgracemin.org) and is author of *Worship Matters*, published by Crossway. <http://www.worshipmatters.com>.

WELCOME -----> to the new EPM website

Stay updated on new resources as they are added to the site, through Facebook, Twitter, Vimeo, email updates, and RSS feeds.

Make an account to keep track of your comments, favorite resources, purchases, and more.

Access thousands of articles, videos, audio files, and more in the Resource library. Highly searchable including by topic, title, author, or date added. Tag clouds add to the rich browsing experience.

Watch a welcome message from Randy.

WWW.
EPM.
ORG

Take advantage of product sales, and special EPM pricing on Randy's books.

Sign up to receive the *Eternal Perspectives* newsletter online in FULL COLOR! You can also sign up to receive the newsletter in print as well as our monthly E-news Update.

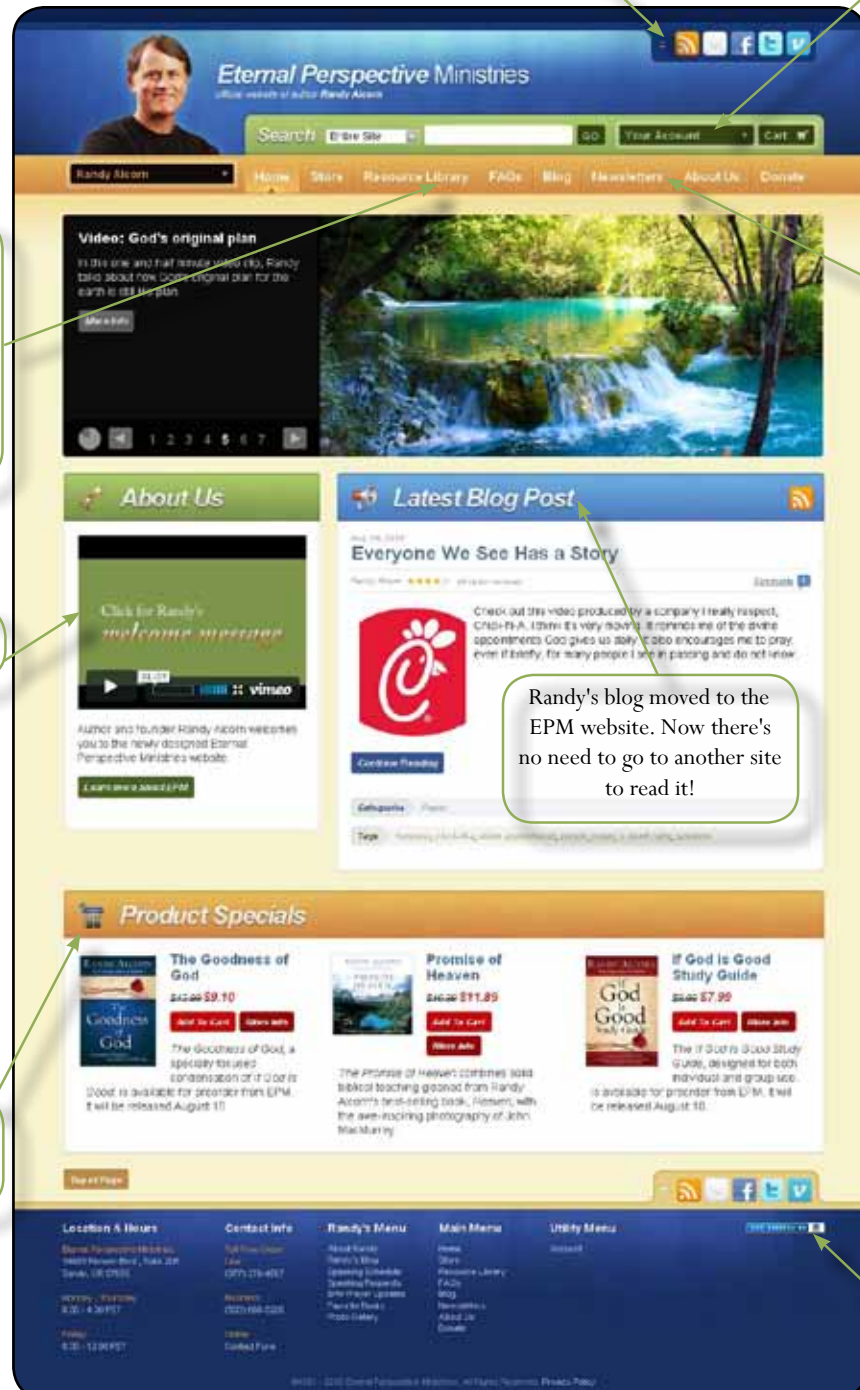
○ Leave comments on any resources.

○ Get answers to frequently asked questions (or if you can't find your answer, use the contact form).

○ Share articles, videos, and more on Facebook, Twitter, Digg, and over 300 other social network sites with the click of a button.

○ There's even more, come check it out!

Thanks to 5Q's website creation skills and their heart for Christian ministries!
www.5qcommunications.com



Eternal Perspective Ministries

39085 Pioneer Blvd., Suite 206

Sandy, OR 97055

Change Service Request

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...

Special Note

You may have noticed that you did not receive a summer issue of *Eternal Perspectives*. Due to the launch of our newly designed website (see pg. 15), as well as staffing and health issues, we were not able to produce a summer edition. However, we always encourage you to check out the newsletter archives on our website (www.epm.org/newsletters/quarterly/) to read some great articles in past issues.

Read online at www.epm.org

View the full color version of the quarterly newsletter online before it even gets to your mailbox!

If you currently receive a print newsletter in the mail, but would prefer to read it online in color, email info@epm.org.

About this publication

Eternal Perspectives is a quarterly publication of Eternal Perspective Ministries, 39085 Pioneer Blvd., Suite 206, Sandy, OR 97055, 503-668-5200. Toll-Free Order Line: 1-877-376-4567. 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 is our desire to spread this information, not protect or restrict it.



www.facebook.com/randyalcorn



www.twitter.com/randyalcorn



www.epm.org/blog