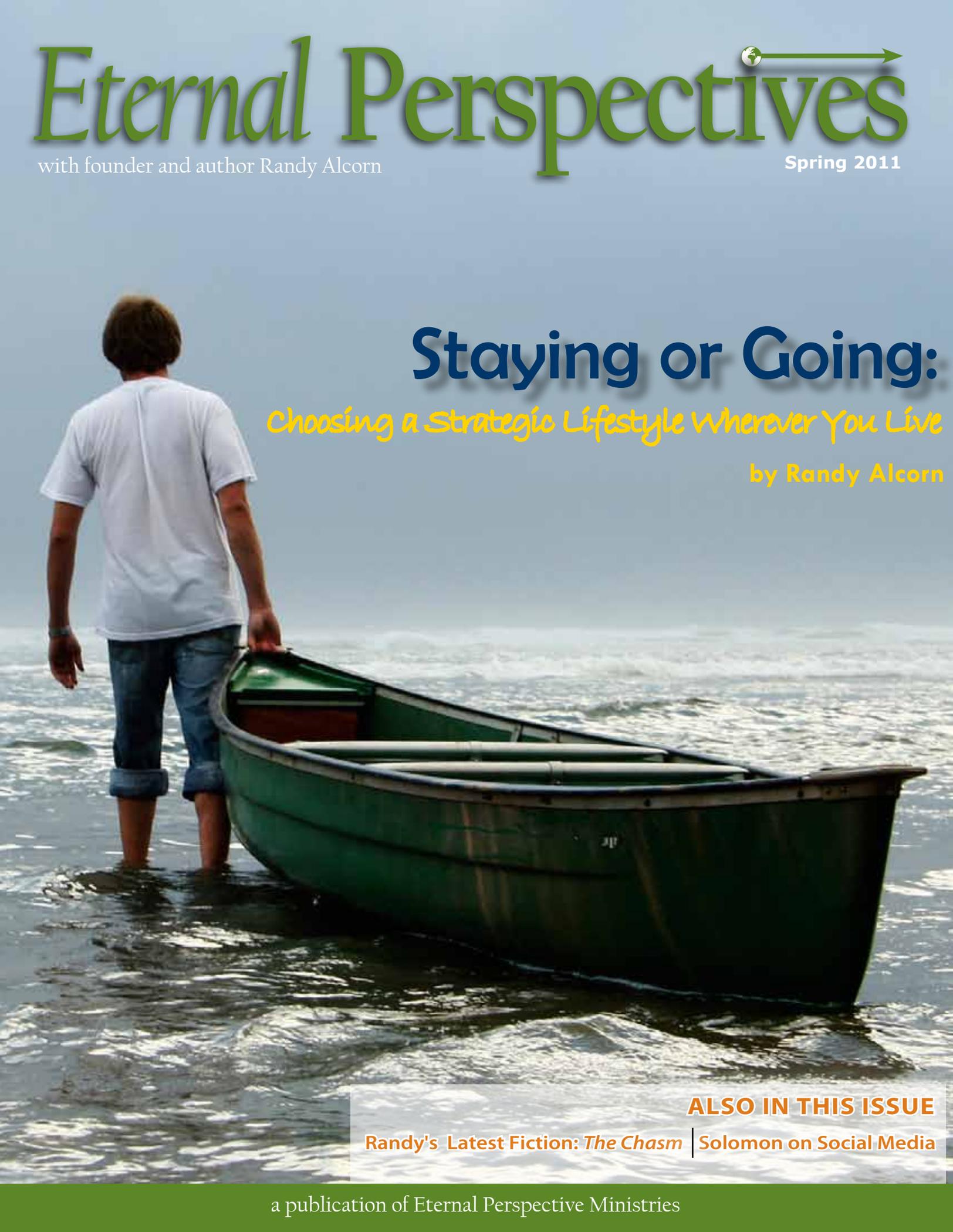


Eternal Perspectives



with founder and author Randy Alcorn

Spring 2011

Staying or Going:

Choosing a Strategic Lifestyle Wherever You Live

by Randy Alcorn

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Randy's Latest Fiction: *The Chasm* | Solomon on Social Media

a publication of Eternal Perspective Ministries

Randy speaking at Worldview Weekend

April 29-May 1, 2011
 Branson, Missouri
worldviewweekend.com/branson

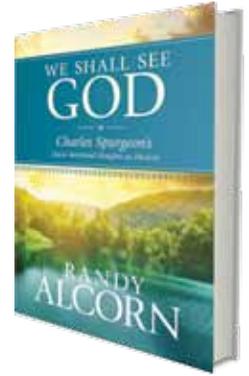
Friday, April 29: evening message, book signing
Romans 8: The God Who Will Bring Good Out of Bad

Saturday, April 30: morning Q&A, book signing

Worldview Weekend is America's largest Christian worldview conference series.

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Some of Spurgeon's most powerful sermons were those that he preached on the topic of Heaven. Up until now, however, very few of these sermons have been accessible to a mass audience. Randy Alcorn has compiled the most profound spiritual insights on the topic of eternity from these sermons and arranged them into an easily-accessible, highly inspirational format complete with his own comments and devotional thoughts.



Releases June 1, 2011; EPM Price \$10.49 (Retail \$14.99) Preorder your book from EPM and it will ship by June 1.

Introducing the EPM logo

We're pleased to introduce our readers to EPM's new logo. The incorporated infinity symbol reflects our founding verse and heart of our ministry: "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).



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In This Issue

Seven Statistics on World Needs.....page 3	Why does God allow evil to exist now?page 12
Solomon on Social Media.....page 4	From the Psalms: Who God is Toward Us.....page 13
Written into the Story.....page 7	Biography Spotlight: Robert G. LeTourneau.....page 14
Staying or Going.....page 8	Randy's Books in Other Languages.....page 15

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PRAY for upcoming movie and book:

COURAGEOUS



◀ Randy with Stephen and Alex Kendrick, creators of *Courageous*

For the past few months, Randy has been writing a novel based on the screenplay of the new movie *Courageous*. The book releases August 2011 and the movie will release on September 30, 2011. The movie is being produced by the Kendrick brothers, Stephen and Alex, creators of *Facing the Giants* and *Fireproof*, and will be distributed by Sony.

As *Fireproof* centered on fire fighters and marriage, *Courageous* will center on police officers and fatherhood and, not surprisingly, COURAGE for men in their homes and personal lives. Check out www.courageousthemovie.com for more information on the movie, and stay tuned to www.epm.org for more information about the book.

Although the manuscript was turned in the first week of February, Randy would deeply appreciate your continued prayers for the final stages of the book and for its eternal impact. Occasionally he sends out specific prayer requests by email related to his writing and speaking ministry. To sign up to be an EPM prayer partner, go to www.epm.org/signup.

Seven Statistics on World Needs

How is God calling you to make a difference as part of His story?

By Doug Nichols

- 1 There are 28 million people in slavery worldwide; many are children and victims of human trafficking. 400,000 children are in slavery in Haiti. ["Finding Slavery in My Own Backyard", by David Batstone. "Missions Frontiers", September-October 2007 29:5, p.12]
- 2 There are 3.2 million untrained or undertrained pastors throughout the world. Pray for missionary mentors and trainers to assist these needy pastors [www.topic.us].
- 3 There are 100 million Christians living in persecution throughout the world [www.persecution.com].
- 4 There are 145 million orphans worldwide. If one missionary (or one church) took responsibility for 1,000 orphans, there would, therefore, be a need for 145,000 missionaries (or individual churches) [www.viva.org; www.compassion.com; www.actioncic.org].
- 5 There are 160 million street children, especially in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. Thousands of missionaries and Christian workers are needed to take the Gospel and compassionate care to these needy children [www.actioninternational.org; www.actioncic.org].
- 6 There are 200 million people worldwide on the move (referred to as the Diaspora) in search of employment and a better education, because of persecution and natural disasters, and so forth. Many are open to kindness and hospitality which opens the door for the Gospel [www.fin-online.org].
- 7 There are three billion people worldwide with no nearby Christian or church to share the Gospel with them. They can only be reached by someone (a missionary) going to them with the Gospel. If one missionary went to 5,000 of these, there would be the need for 600,000 additional missionaries [www.actioninternational.org].



Doug is the Founder and International Director Emeritus of Action International Ministries (ACTION), a global mission agency committed to sending multi-national missionaries who treasure Jesus Christ and minister His Gospel in word and deed, primarily to the poor. Learn more at www.actionintl.org.

>> Solomon on Social Media

by Tim Challies <<

Note from Randy Alcorn: Tim Challies writes one of my favorite blogs (challies.com), and this one contains wise and much needed guidelines for all of us who post online.

There are many who doubt or downplay the relevance of the Old Testament to our times. Those people have probably never taken the time to read the book of Proverbs. I read from Proverbs almost every day and I am continually amazed at just how relevant this book is. It seems that wisdom is timeless. The lessons David taught Solomon speak to myself and my children as much as they did to the men and women of ancient Israel. The wisdom of God given to Solomon continues to ring loud and clear in my heart.

If Solomon were alive today and we were to ask him how we are to relate to one another in this digital world, if we were to ask him how we can honor God in our use of all these social media available to us today, here is how he might respond.

Count to ten before posting, sharing, sending, submitting. “Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him” (29:20).

How many arguments could be avoided and how many relationships saved if people were only a little less hasty with their words? Before posting an article or before replying to a Facebook status, it is always (always!) a good idea to re-read what you have written and consider if your words accurately express your feelings and if expressing such feelings is necessary and edifying. And while I’m on the topic, a spell-check doesn’t hurt either.

Leave the fool to his folly. “Answer not a fool according to his

folly, lest you be like him yourself” (26:4). There are times when it is best to leave a foolish person to his own devices rather than to try to change him. Sometimes it is best just to leave him alone rather than providing him more ammunition to work with. This means that it may be best to ignore the troll, to leave a rebuke unanswered, than to bait him and to suffer his wrath.

Expose folly. “Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes” (26:5). Here it is—undeniable proof that the Bible contradicts itself! Are we to answer a fool according to his folly or not? Evidently this “contradiction” is deliberate

and is in the Bible to show that there is no absolute law in this situation. There are times when folly must be exposed, either if the fool is one you believe is honestly seeking after wisdom, or if his folly will damage others. If a fool is impacting others, drawing them into his foolishness, he must be exposed for the sake of the church’s health.

Know when to walk away. “If a wise man has an argument with a fool, the fool only rages and laughs, and there is no quiet” (29:9). There are times when you need to walk away instead of carrying on an argument. Foolish people have no real desire to learn or to be wise. Instead, they

only seek opportunities to loudly proclaim the folly. Walk away so you can have peace. Shut down, log off, erase—do what you need to.

Be careful what you read. “Like one who binds the stone in the sling is one who gives honor to a fool” (26:8). Be careful whose words you read and whose wisdom you trust. Foolish men may seem wise, but they will still lead others astray. If you give honor to a foolish man by reading and soaking in his words, you are as foolish as a person who binds his stone

>> It is always (always!) a good idea to re-read what you have written and consider if your words accurately express your feelings.

in a sling, rendering the sling useless and leaving himself defenseless.

Avoid the gossiper. “The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body” (29:22). There are many web sites, blogs and Twitter accounts dedicated almost entirely to gossip, to sharing what is dishonorable rather than what is noble. Avoid these people and their gossip!

Be humble. “Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger and not your own lips” (27:2). “One’s pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor” (29:23). Let others praise you. If you never receive praise from anyone, especially from those who are wise, it may be a good time to examine your heart and examine if you are walking in the ways of wisdom. Those who are humble and lowly in spirit will receive honor while the arrogant will be brought low.

Mind your own business. “Whoever meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a passing dog by the ears” (26:17). If you have ever grabbed a dog by the ears you know it will inevitably bring trouble. Grabbing a strange dog by the ears will bring even more trouble. Stay out of other people’s fights rather than wading into them as if they are your own. There may be times to wade into a theological dispute or to try to mediate a disagreement in the blogosphere, but wisdom would usually tell you to mind your own business.

Don’t be a troublemaker. “Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back on him who starts it rolling” (26:27). Those who exist only to bring trouble to others will pay a price. And unfortunately, on the Internet there are many of these people. Don’t be one!

Examine why you write. “A continual dripping on a rainy day and a quarrelsome wife are alike” (27:14). The proverb speaks of a quarrelsome wife, but it could as easily apply to anyone. If you are writing merely to be quarrelsome or because you enjoy an argument, perhaps it is best to find something else to do. “As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife” (26:21). Do not be the kind of person who kindles strife for his own enjoyment.

Be careful what you teach. “Whoever misleads the upright into an evil way will fall into his own pit, and the blameless will have a godly inheritance” (28:10). Those who choose to teach others accept a grave responsibility; if they mislead others, they must expect that there will be consequences. Be careful what you teach, what you share, what beliefs you express. Remember that your words are public and that they may remain available forever.

Walk with the Lord. “Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered” (28:26). And here is the key to everything else. Trust in the Lord rather than in yourself. Walk with the Lord and in the ways of wisdom taught in the pages of the Bible. Be a wise man or woman of the Word, rather than a fool who trusts in his own wisdom (or lack thereof). Arm yourself with spiritual maturity, with true wisdom, before venturing into the world of social media. •

Tim Challies is a follower of Jesus Christ, a husband to Aileen and a father to three young children. He writes books and blogs for fun while doing web consulting for a living.

>> **Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.**

Proverbs 28:26

The *Cross* You Daily Bear

by Joni Eareckson Tada

“All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering” (II Thessalonians 1:5).

When it comes to the cross you daily bear, join me in agreeing that God’s judgment is right. The cross you shoulder is not one inch too large nor one ounce too heavy, for the Lord especially hand-tailored it so that Christ’s kingdom might be advanced through you. That alone is the highest of honors. •

Joni Eareckson Tada, the founder and Chief Executive Officer of Joni and Friends International Disability Center, is an international advocate for people with disabilities. www.joniandfriends.org.

► **Browse Randy’s books on suffering at epm.org/store/suffering and find articles and media on suffering and evil at epm.org/resources/suffering.**



Now available: a new fiction title from Randy Alcorn

THE CHASM

— A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR —

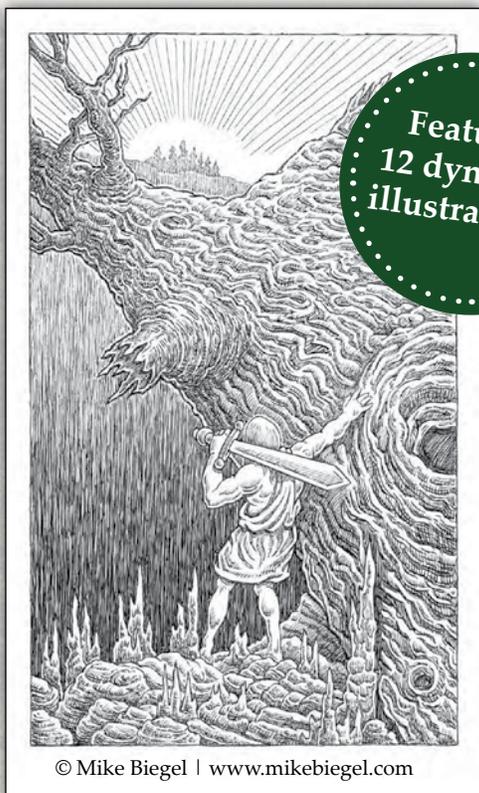
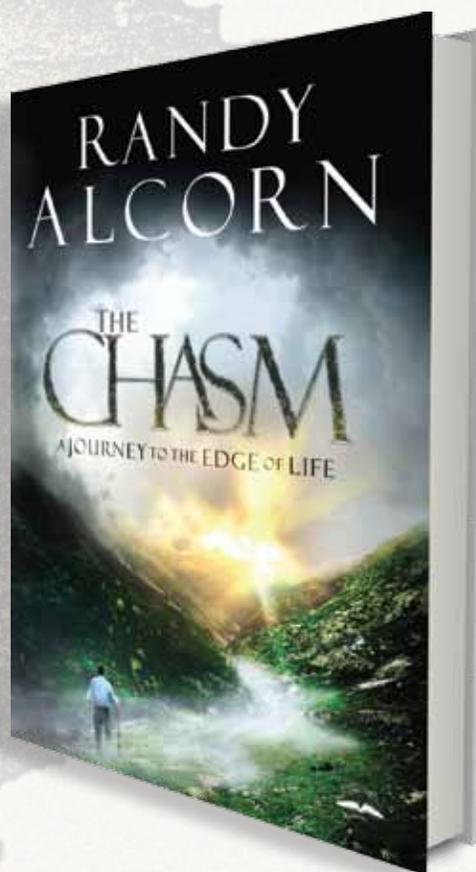
T*he Chasm: A Journey to the Edge of Life* was inspired by a few chapters in the middle of my book, *Edge of Eternity*, but is a much shorter standalone work that does not require any knowledge of the larger story. I spent a great deal of time rewriting, editing, and adding new material that makes this story fresh even to those who have read *Edge of Eternity*.

The Chasm is an otherworldly tale with an allegorical feel; a vibrant mix of movement, action, revelation, and reflection that follows the journey of one man who represents everyman. His struggle is universal. He's a real person, with a real life, a real family, and a real background, yet somehow he's been transported into another world. This other world has its own geography and substance. It's not our world, but somehow it's connected to it. In this place he sees life as it really is back in his world—our world.

This book will help readers understand that we best grasp the very world we live in when we see it through new eyes. Fiction has that power—to let you see through fresh eyes because you are thinking differently. As a reader, sometimes getting far enough away from your life allows you to look back and see yourself for the first time.

Dynamic new illustrations by artist Mike Biegel help communicate the book's message in ways that will enable both unbelievers and believers alike to appreciate the gospel's life-changing power. The artwork effectively gives the story a sense of energy, action, and introspection. It provides a window into what's happening inside the life of the main character as he gazes into the chasm and contemplates the realities before him.

I think *The Chasm* offers something for everyone—whether that person is a non-Christian, who has never heard the gospel, or a Christian who knows the gospel but needs reminders of the hope and promise of what lies ahead, and a supernatural ability to see our world with new eyes. —*Randy Alcorn*



Features
12 dynamic
illustrations

© Mike Biegel | www.mikebiegel.com

EPM price \$10.49 (retail \$14.99)

Audio book also available (read by Randy) for \$18.75 (retail \$25.00)

See more illustrations and order at epm.org/chasm

503.668.5200 | toll-free order line 1.877.376.4567

Written into the Story

I love a good story, and I bet you do too. A long time ago I heard Billy Graham in one of his telecasts say that history is really His Story. Ever since Adam and Eve, God has been writing earth's most passionate, compelling and powerful drama, a narrative from ancient past to triumphant future, a tale of redemption and hope.

Most amazing of all, God is writing you and me into His Story.

What part do you play in this narrative? Which of the Great Author's plot lines do you bring to life? What magnificent theme does your story-within-a-story highlight? How does your character affect the rest of the story?

We're all part of a greater story which the Author has not yet finished.

There's no way to know...

Consider this: Has anyone ever understood their place in history? Surely Abraham knew. God promised him he'd be the father of many nations, but all he experienced of the blessing was the miracle of a child born in his old age. About four thousand years later and after Jesus, you and I see those promises fulfilled so much better than Abraham ever did.

How about Rahab? By faith she chose the God of Israel, left her life of prostitution, married and had Boaz. I'm sure she only saw herself as a grandma who tried to help out her daughter-in-law, Ruth, by babysitting her grandson as much as possible. Who could have told her then that she would have a great grandson named King David and, even farther down the line, a great grandson who would save the world?

Of course the central theme of the Great Author's story is Jesus, but look at this drama in Luke; at most we see five minutes of this man's life:

A thief hangs on a cross erected next to Jesus. He hears soldiers, Pharisees and the other crucified criminal mock and curse. Suddenly something powerful rises in this man's heart and we hear him say, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

In his greatest moment of humiliation and shame, the thief only knows death's agony, clueless that the faith his dying words express will shout a message of hope down through the ages. Because God wrote him into the story, we believe that it's never too late to repent.

What about modern examples? Oswald Chambers traveled and lectured, never famous during his lifetime. After his death, his wife spent the rest of her life publishing her husband's spoken words which she had recorded verbatim in shorthand. *My Utmost For His Highest* was published ten years after her husband died. During his lifetime, Chambers remained unaware that he had authored a classic that God would use in countless lives.



by Ruth Wood

Ever heard of Christian Wolfkes? This godly Romanian cherished a fervent love for Jews and prayed for years that he might win one for Christ even though there were none in his village and he was too ill to travel. Around 1937 a young Jewish man and his wife arrived. The old carpenter prayed many hours for their salvation, gave them a New Testament and eventually won Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand to Christ.

This couple later stood up to the communist government, and after suffering many years in prison for their faith, Richard wrote the well-known book, *Tortured for Christ*, and founded Voice of the Martyrs.

Christian Wolfkes only saw himself as a carpenter who wanted to win a Jew to Christ. He never learned the impact his investment in the Wurmbrands had around the world.

What about you and me? We're just as ordinary and unsuspecting as these folks but our faith is as precious and powerful, and it may also reverberate down through the ages in ways we could never imagine.

I'm glad that it's up to God to decide where and how He places me into His narrative. Knowing Him as the Author of my story-within-the-greater-story quiets me. I can stop the clamor for meaning, the chase after "finding my purpose," the hand-wringing over how to be spiritually productive with my time.

Instead, I'm free to simply delight in the Lord and, as best as I understand, follow Him. After all, it's up to Him to choose from the smorgasbord of my life what parts live on, if any.

If today you're confused, troubled or perplexed by your life, should this be surprising? We're all part of a greater story which the Author has not yet finished. Before you stress too much about how your life is turning out despite your best efforts to follow Jesus, it might be a good idea to suspend your conclusions until you reach the last page of the book!

When at last all plot lines converge, all mysteries appear solved and the lovers finally wed, I'm convinced we'll let out a deep sigh of satisfaction and maybe wipe a tear or two from our eyes. Then in awe of the greatest story ever written, I imagine sinking to our knees before the Great Author of Redemption, our heads bowed in grateful praise.

Ruth Wood is the editor at Comfort Cafe, an online women's magazine bringing hope, help and healing to the hurting. See www.Comfort-Cafe.net/blog.

Staying or Choosing a Strategic

Some think we should emulate Jesus' lifestyle: "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20, niv).

Critics speak out in magazine articles, books, and sermons against today's materialistic Christians. Much of what they say is accurate, but they sometimes make faulty assumptions about the biblical texts.

There was a striking difference between the itinerant ministry of Jesus and the apostles as seen in the Gospels and the settled communities of Christians reflected in the later books of the New Testament.

Do Christ's followers have a right to own land and possessions?

Jesus called his first four disciples to leave their fishing business:

"One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" And they left their nets at once and followed him. A little farther up the shore Jesus saw Zebedee's sons, James and John, in a boat repairing their nets. He called them at once, and they also followed him, leaving their father, Zebedee, in the boat with the hired men." (Mark 1:16-20)

Abandoning their possessions was part of answering the call because Christ's ministry was itinerant, requiring regular travel on foot. To follow Christ, the disciples simply *had* to leave their boats and nets. The central point isn't that they left their boats but that they followed Jesus.

But even these apostles didn't irreversibly divest themselves of all possessions. In Mark 1:29, just ten verses after they've left their nets, "they went to Simon and Andrew's home." These disciples who left their home to follow Jesus still had a home.

The Gospels repeatedly refer to Jesus and the disciples traveling by boat on the Sea of Galilee. Most likely, the boat belonged to one of the fishermen-turned-apostles.

Peter says to Jesus, "We have left everything to follow you!" (Mark 10:28, niv). He doesn't say, "We have *sold* everything," though they may have liquidated many of their possessions (Luke 12:32-33). When Jesus entrusted his mother, Mary, to the care of John the apostle, John himself writes, "From that time on, this disciple took her into his home" (John 19:26-27, niv). After three years of following Jesus, John still had a home, and Jesus' mother went to live with him there.

Levi the tax collector represents the kind of disciple who utilizes possessions for Kingdom causes rather than walking away from them. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him (Mark 2:14). In the very next verse, a dinner party in Levi's house is used to introduce people to Jesus. Given his profession and the number of people at the party, Levi's house was undoubtedly nicer and larger than average. We're never told that Jesus called Levi to sell his house. Maybe he did; maybe he didn't.

Although large crowds followed Jesus, he chose only twelve apostles to join him in his itinerant ministry, traveling and preaching (Mark 3:13-19). Others from the crowd also followed Jesus. They weren't chosen as apostles but served as disciples. When they weren't with Jesus, where did these disciples go? Back to their families,

Going:

Lifestyle Wherever You Live

by Randy Alcorn

homes, fields, livestock, and jobs. Just as for most of his life Jesus had served God working as a carpenter and living in a house on a piece of land, so most of his disciples served God as faithful stewards, raising their families and working in their own communities.

Clearly, the majority of Christ's followers never divested themselves of all their possessions, nor did he expect them to.

Should we go out, leaving possessions behind, or stay home and support others?

When Jesus chose the Twelve, he did so carefully, after much prayer. "Afterward Jesus went up on a mountain and called out the ones he wanted to go with him. And they came to him. Then he appointed twelve of them and called them his apostles. They were to accompany him, and he would send them out to preach, giving them authority to cast out demons" (Mark 3:13-15). Undoubtedly others would have been delighted to be chosen. They may have been disappointed at having to return to their houses and jobs to serve Christ in a "normal" life. But it was his choice, not theirs.

After Jesus healed him, the Gerasene demoniac wanted desperately to leave everything and follow Christ. "As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon possessed begged to go with him" (Mark 5:18). The next verse is significant: "Jesus said, 'No, go home to your family, and tell them everything the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been.'" Although Christ called some to *leave* their homes, he instructed this man to *go* to his home. Christ knew that God's Kingdom could be better served if this man made his home his base for serving God.

Was this an inferior calling? Judge by the results: "So the man started off to visit the Ten Towns of that region and began to proclaim the great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed" (verse 20). Christ called this transformed man to settle back in his own community, steward what possessions he had, and be a powerful witness there.

When Jesus sent his twelve disciples out two by two to minister in villages, he told them to take nothing for their journey except a walking stick—no food, no traveler's bag, no money. He allowed them to wear sandals but not to take a change of clothes. "'Wherever you go,' he said, 'stay in the same house until you leave town'" (Mark 6:10). Traveling missionaries take nothing except what facilitates their travels (in the case of the twelve disciples, this included only a staff, sandals, and the clothes on their backs). Others are "settled-in" disciples who provide shelter, food, and supplies for traveling missionaries. In order for the first type of disciple to survive and succeed, the second type of disciple must possess and provide.

There are two callings: one to leave behind family and possessions to further the cause in full-time ministry, and the other to serve Christ's cause in a home and community and to earn an income to support those whose calling means they can no longer generate sufficient income on their own. To determine which calling of God is ours, we should ask him for wisdom and guidance (James 1:5), realizing that he intends for us to know what his will is for us (Ephesians 5:17). We should seek wise counsel, knowing that the most important aspect of our lives is our closeness to our Master, not the specific places we go.



Both callings serve exactly the same purpose: glorifying God and furthering His Kingdom. Just because they have different lifestyles, one kind of disciple is neither more nor less spiritual than the other. (We should be careful not to discourage one another from *either* of these callings.)

Nowhere in Scripture, however, do we see a *third* kind of disciple who hoards and uses money and possessions as he pleases instead of for God's glory and Kingdom purposes.

What is expected of both goers and stayers?

Those who choose to follow Jesus aren't choosing an easy path: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:34-37, niv).

The number of economic terms Jesus uses here is striking: *save, lose, gain, forfeit, give, and exchange*. All disciples of Christ receive a radical call to view and handle our money and possessions with an eternal perspective.

We shouldn't be preoccupied with God's plan for others. When Peter asks Jesus about his plans for John, Jesus tells him, "If I want [John] to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? As for you, follow me" (John 21:22).

Nor should we make unhealthy comparisons. Paul made this clear: "Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else. For we are each responsible for our own conduct" (Galatians 6:4-5).

In God's Kingdom, there's no room for comparing and judging others. We should recognize that God leads his children into differing spheres of Kingdom influence.

How much can we safely keep?

There are some things that no Christian should do—such as hoard money, live in opulence, or fail to give generously. But there are other things that some Christians can freely do that others may sense God's leading not to do, such as own land, a home, a car, or a business; go on certain vacations; or set aside significant retirement funds.

How much money and how many possessions can we safely keep? Enough to care for our basic needs and some wants, but not so much that large amounts of money are kept from higher Kingdom causes. Not so much that we become proud and independent of the Lord. Not so much that it distracts us from our purpose or leaves us with the illusion that we are owners rather than managers of what God owns.

Those who *happen* to be rich—simply as a result of circumstances, hard work, or wisdom—have done nothing wrong. They need not feel guilty—*unless* they withhold their riches (which are really God's) from Kingdom causes, including helping the needy, or their lifestyles are self-centered and excessive.

John Piper says in *Desiring God*, "The issue is not how much a person makes. Big industry and big salaries are a fact of our times, and they are not necessarily evil. The evil is in being deceived into thinking a \$100,000 salary must be accompanied by a \$100,000 lifestyle. God has made us to be conduits of his grace. The danger is in thinking the conduit should be lined with gold. It shouldn't. Copper will do."

What's the difference between a simple lifestyle and a strategic one?

Scripture says we're at war—it's a spiritual battle against unseen but very real enemies. "We are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

With this in mind, we should adopt lifestyles and make sacrifices commensurate to this crisis, so we may win the war.

Ralph Winter, founder of the U.S. Center for World Mission, used the term "wartime lifestyle." We might also call it a "strategic" lifestyle. I find that description more helpful and precise than "simple" lifestyle. If I'm devoted to "simple living," I might reject a computer because it's modern and nonessential. But if I live a wartime



or strategic lifestyle, the computer may serve as a tool for Kingdom purposes. In my case, I use it daily to serve God in my writing. A microwave oven isn't essential. But it's handy and labor saving and can free up time to engage in Kingdom causes. Simple living may be self-centered. Strategic living is Kingdom centered.

Is it alright to own certain possessions for personal enjoyment?

A wartime mentality can be taken to such an extreme that we feel it's unfaithful to enjoy any possessions, pleasures, or special activities. I'm thankful that in the midst of his command that the rich be generous, Paul tells them to put their hope in God, "who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment" (1 Timothy 6:17). Even in wartime, soldiers take leave when possible.

Our battle lasts a lifetime, so I'm grateful to have recreational items, including a bicycle and a tennis racket. Our family spends money on vacations that aren't "necessary" but serve to renew us. My wife and I sometimes go out to dinner, enriching our relationship. These things aren't essential, yet they contribute to physical health and mental and emotional refreshment. By God's grace, we've found that we can give away most of our income yet still have breathing room for legitimate recreational spending.

With a wartime mentality, we will not look at our income as God's call to spend more but rather as his provision to invest more in the cause. Why not set a financial "finish line," determining to live on a certain amount of money each year, an amount that allows some room for discretionary or recreational spending and reasonable saving? Then why not give all income beyond that to God's Kingdom purposes?

Nanci and I have sought, for the most part, to live that way the past twenty years. I know others who have made similar choices, while yet others have made far greater sacrifices. What may strike us as radical, when compared to those around us, even in our Christian culture, seems not to be radical at all when compared to the teaching of Scripture.

The above article is an excerpt from Randy's new book Managing God's Money. Scripture quoted from the New Living Translation unless otherwise noted.



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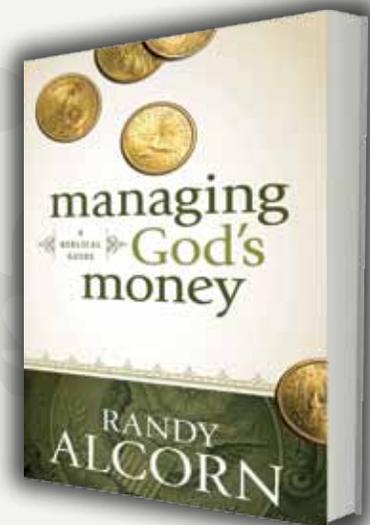
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Q: IF GOD WILL ULTIMATELY DESTROY EVIL WHY DOES HE ALLOW IT TO EXIST NOW ?

answer

Evil's reality, quantity, and extremes have long perplexed Christians. Why does God permit evil? And why so much? And why in its most hideous forms? Why, God's people have wondered, would a sovereign and loving God not immediately rid the universe of evil? People and prophets alike ask, "How long, O LORD?" (as in Psalm 6:3; 13:1).

Remarkably, not just God's saints on Earth, but martyrs in Heaven—morally perfect but still finite—cry out, "How long, Sovereign Lord?" (Revelation 6:10). The books of Job and Ecclesiastes both raise the problem of evil and the apparent randomness of life.

The problem of evil lies at the very heart of the biblical account and serves as the crux of the unfolding drama of redemption.

Barely have the first two chapters of the Bible described the original creation before a terrible shadow falls—evil and suffering burst into the world. Adam and Eve's fall, Cain's murder of Abel, Noah's flood, the tower of Babel, the patriarchs' sins, Job's tragedies, Egypt's oppression of Israel, David's psalms of lament, Israel's rebellion and exile, the suffering of the prophets, and the long, lonely wait for Messiah—it goes on relentlessly, so that when Jesus finally comes as the Lamb of God, he comes not a moment too soon.

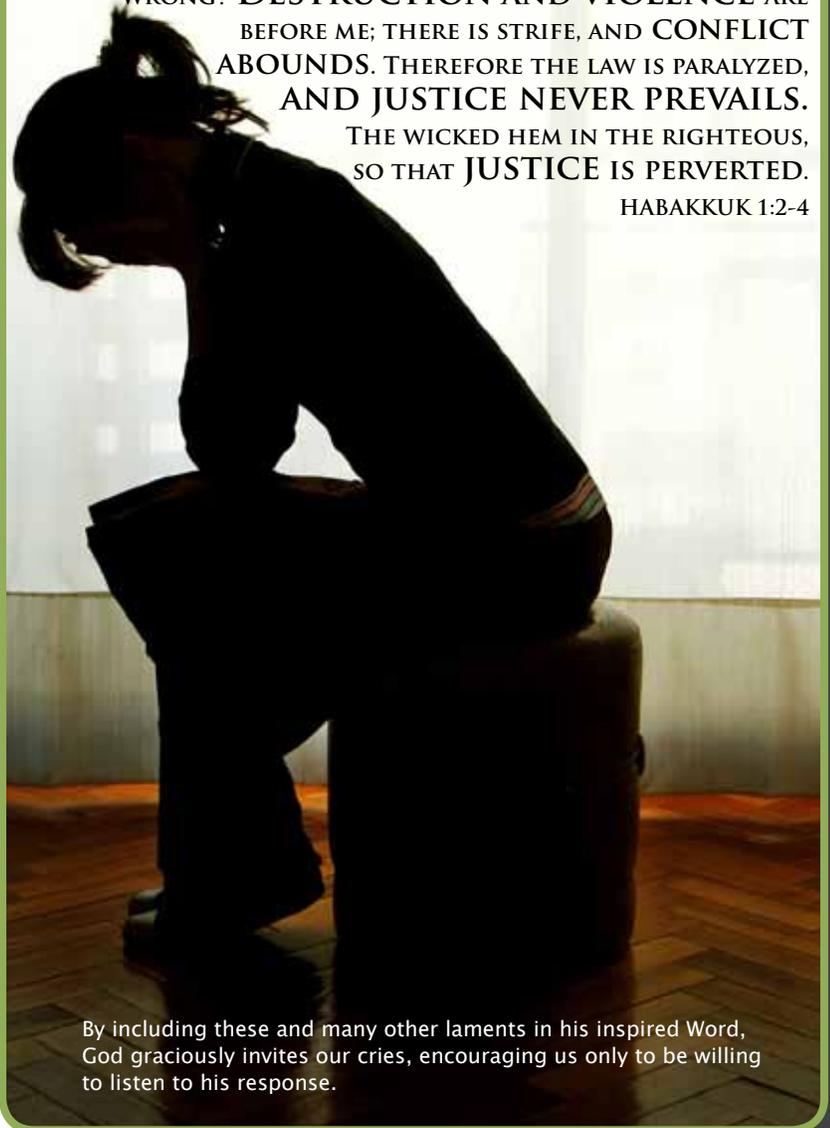
The first act of human evil moved God to bring decisive judgment while simultaneously unveiling his master plan. To complete our redemption—as well as that of the entire fallen creation—he sets in motion his strategy of incarnation, atoning death, resurrection, and ultimate return. And when he returns as the Lion, again it will be neither a moment too soon, nor too late.

The Bible never sugarcoats evil. Its Author presents both the manifestations and consequences of evil and invites our honest questions and emotions.

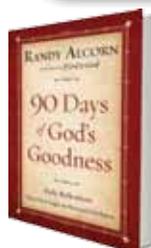
Thank you, Lord, for accomplishing a million things invisible to me for everything I see and understand. Thank you for always being on the job, usually behind the scenes where it takes faith for me to believe it. And thanks for proving yourself worthy of my faith, not only as my Creator, but as my Savior. ☩

HOW LONG, O LORD, MUST I CALL FOR HELP, BUT YOU DO NOT LISTEN? OR CRY OUT TO YOU, "VIOLENCE!" BUT YOU DO NOT SAVE? WHY DO YOU MAKE ME LOOK AT INJUSTICE? WHY DO YOU TOLERATE WRONG? DESTRUCTION AND VIOLENCE ARE BEFORE ME; THERE IS STRIFE, AND CONFLICT ABOUNDS. THEREFORE THE LAW IS PARALYZED, AND JUSTICE NEVER PREVAILS. THE WICKED HEM IN THE RIGHTEOUS, SO THAT JUSTICE IS PERVERTED.

HABAKKUK 1:2-4



By including these and many other laments in his inspired Word, God graciously invites our cries, encouraging us only to be willing to listen to his response.



Answer excerpted from Randy's book *90 Days of God's Goodness*, a devotional with 90 daily reflections dealing with virtually every aspect of the biggest question that hinders people's faith in God: *If God is good, why is there so much evil and suffering?* Available from EPM for \$10.49 (retail \$14.99). Audio book also available for \$18.74 (retail \$24.98)

✨ ✨ ✨ ✨ **refuge for the oppressed** ✨ watches over the way of the righteous ✨ made known to me the path of life ✨ my rock ✨ my fortress ✨ Turns my darkness into light ✨ my shepherd ✨ **Restores my soul** ✨ Strong tower against the foe ✨ hears my voice ✨ fulfills his purpose for me ✨ teaches me wisdom in the inmost place ✨ an ever-present help in trouble ✨ Will redeem my life ✨ **will take me to himself** ✨ breaks the power of the wicked ✨ upholds the cause of the righteous ✨ lifted me out of the mud and mire ✨ teaches me his decrees ✨ set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand ✨ **put a new song in my mouth** ✨ Preserves both man and beast ✨ with him is the fountain of life ✨ my hiding place ✨ surrounds me with songs of deliverance ✨ my shield ✨ blesses his people with peace ✨ **turned my wailing into dancing** ✨ lifts up those who are bowed down ✨ sustains the humble ✨ casts the wicked to the ground ✨ gracious ✨ surrounds the man who trusts in him with unfailing love ✨ compassionate ✨ slow to anger ✨ **rich in love** ✨ faithful to all his promises ✨ loving to all he has made ✨ created my inmost being ✨ **my father** ✨ knit me together in my mother's womb ✨ perceives my thoughts from afar ✨ familiar with all my ways ✨ preserves my life ✨ makes me bold and stouthearted ✨ my sun ✨ my shade ✨ **sets my heart free** ✨ good and what he does is good ✨ his faithfulness continues through all generations ✨ great is his love toward us ✨ my helper ✨ my salvation ✨ made his light shine upon us ✨ settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children ✨ **turns his ear to me** ✨ delivered my soul ✨ **protects the simple-hearted** ✨ sits enthroned on high ✨ stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth ✨ raises the poor from the dust ✨ lifts the needy from the ash heap ✨ satisfies the thirsty ✨ brings us out of darkness and the deepest gloom ✨ breaks away our chains ✨ his love is higher than the heavens ✨ **forgives all our sins** ✨ heals all our diseases ✨ redeems my life from the pit ✨ crowns me with love and compassion ✨ **helper of the fatherless** ✨ satisfies my desires with good things ✨ will not reject his people ✨ works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed ✨ as far as the east is from the west he removed our transgressions from us ✨ sheds light and joy upon us ✨ hems me in ✨ has compassion on those who fear him ✨ will command his angels concerning me to guard me in all my ways ✨ **the strength of my heart** ✨ my portion forever ✨ abounding in love to all who call ✨ brings joy to my soul ✨ **daily bears our burdens** ✨ ✨ ✨ ✨

From the
Psalms:



Who God is
Toward Us

Robert G. LeTourneau

Compiled by Wendy Jeffries

Robert G. (Gilmour) LeTourneau (1888-1969) was a Christian industrialist who had dedicated himself to being “a businessman for God.” Though his mother and father were Christians, LeTourneau resisted the gospel until the age of 16, when his parents’ prayers prevailed, and he chose to follow Christ. Since the age of 14, LeTourneau traveled to different parts of the United States, taking apprentice jobs in metal working, machining, and electrical work—learning as he went. He also studied mechanics through a correspondence course. More moves and new jobs brought experience in welding, woodcutting, carpentry, mining, and vehicle mechanics.

All this, along with LeTourneau’s ingenuity, culminated in a lucrative manufacturing business and many new designs of earthmoving vehicles. The imagination with which LeTourneau pursued his love for designing new machines is often recalled by others as having transcended that of “ordinary men”. He had hundreds of patents during his lifetime. He was the maker of almost 300 inventions. He introduced the rubber tire into the earth-moving industry, invented and developed the Electric Wheel, pioneered the welding of several metals, and built large mobile offshore drilling platforms. He even made cranes to move crashed fighters and bombers on aircraft carriers and on land. LeTourneau’s machines accounted for nearly three quarters of the earthmoving machines during WWII.

During his growing success, LeTourneau’s dedication to the Lord did not wane. The fire that drove him creatively in industry also compelled him in evangelism and discipleship. He travelled the world as both businessman and Christian witness. He employed three full-time chaplains and established regular chapel services in his manufacturing plants. LeTourneau and his wife, Evelyn also founded what is now known as LeTourneau University (www.letu.edu). LeTourneau also founded and funded missionary ministries in Liberia, West Africa and Peru, South America.



“The only difference between can and can’t, is a little extra effort.”



WANT TO
KNOW
MORE

READ: His best-selling autobiography, *Mover of Men and Mountains*
BROWSE: Photos of his inventions (bit.ly/letourneau-photos)
VISIT: The University and Museum (www.letu.edu)

A Lesson on Priorities from R.G. LeTourneau by Randy Alcorn

R. G. Letourneau understood God’s purpose for blessing him financially. An inventor of earth-moving machines, Letourneau reached the point of giving 90 percent of his income to the Lord. As he puts it, “I shovel out the money, and God shovels it back—but God has a bigger shovel.”

My family has experienced God’s “bigger shovel,” his abundant material provision to the giver.

In some cases it’s obvious—such as an unexpected check in the mail or being given something just when we thought we’d have to buy it. One time when we really needed it, it came in the form of discovering an error we had made in the figuring of our bank balance.

In other cases, God’s provision is less obvious but equally real. A washing machine that should have stopped a decade ago keeps on working. A car with 200,000 miles on it runs for two years without so much as a tune-up. A checking account that should have dried up long before the end of the month somehow makes it through. As God miraculously stretched the oil and bread of the widow in Elisha’s day, and as he made the clothes and sandals of the children of Israel last forty years in the

wilderness, I’m convinced he sometimes graciously extends the life of things that would normally have to be replaced.

We often thank God for his behind-the-scenes provision, including preventing accidents and incidents that would have been costly. God provides not only in what he gives us, but at times in what he keeps from us. Have you ever noticed that excess money just seems to dissipate in a multitude of directions? When the Israelites were building their paneled houses and God’s house was in ruins, God says to them, “Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. . . . You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it” (Haggai 1:5-6). God explains that because the nation of Israel had given to themselves and

not to him, he had minimized and dissipated their profits so they didn’t come out ahead (Haggai 1:9-11). We need to give careful thought to our ways, asking ourselves if we’d do better to give more to the Lord and ask him to maximize what we keep. That’s so much better than trying to hang on to more, only to watch it leak out of our pockets.

(Excerpt from *Money, Possessions and Eternity*)

“I shovel out the money, and God shovels it back—but God has a bigger shovel.”
-LeTourneau

LeTourneau’s Life Verse: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.” -Matthew 6:33

IN MANY TONGUES

Randy's books in other languages

Randy writes:

One thing I really enjoy as an author is getting to see my books translated into languages around the world and hear how the Lord is using them. It's a great joy to open the boxes when these translated books arrive at my door. Usually I can't understand a word (English is my first and second language), but it's so fun to know that they're being read by people in Indonesia, China, Korea, Kenya, Brazil, the Netherlands, Germany, South Africa, Vietnam, Norway, Russia, Romania, Poland and... more. *R*

"You [Lord] are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation." (Revelation 5:9 NIV)

Letter from a Russian reader:

We want you to know that the book In Light of Eternity, which was translated into Russian and we are reading as a church during our 40 days of fast and prayer chain, became very very special for our family.

My husband and I love every bit of it. We also read some chapters from the book together with our kids. They are 10, 8 and 5 years of age. One evening we read and discussed the chapter about what the Kingdom of Heaven will look like, and talked about God creating a unique home in Heaven for each believer, doing it with so much love, since He wants every believer to be there and be special in His eyes. At the end of our conversation our two oldest kids said they really wanted to accept Jesus into their hearts. They were moved and encouraged to do that by the amazing Biblical facts so clearly presented in the book.

We are thanking God for you, for your joyful sacrificial labor in God's harvest. We also thank Him for using this book to bring two of our children to salvation and relationship with Jesus.



BROWSE Translated titles listed at <http://www.epm.org/store/books-other-languages/>



VIDEO

Go to [epm.org/translated-video](http://www.epm.org/translated-video) to watch a video about Randy's translated books.

EPM has limited quantities of some of Randy's translated books available for purchase. For more information, email info@epm.org.

Eternal Perspectives

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

In this issue

Staying or Going: *Choosing a Strategic Lifestyle Wherever You Live*

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Solomon on Social Media

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