

Eternal Perspectives

with founder and author Randy Alcorn

Winter 2011

A Letter from Jail (21 years ago)

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

A Prayer of Weariness | A Personal Liturgy of Confession

a publication of Eternal Perspective Ministries

"Countdown to Christmas" Specials

You won't want to miss EPM's book specials this season—we'll be featuring three weeks of super sale prices on several of Randy's books. They're perfect for gifts this Christmas. Stay tuned to www.epm.org.



And if you don't receive our monthly Enews Update, go to www.epm.org/newsletters to sign up. It's a great way to get the latest news from EPM about sales, new products, Randy's speaking engagements, and more.

VISIT www.epm.org/videos to watch dozens of videos of Randy addressing suffering, Heaven, giving, and more.

Thomas Watson said, "Whatever change or trouble a child of God meets with, it is all the Hell he shall have."


For Christians, this present life is the closest they will come to Hell. For unbelievers, it is the closest they will come to Heaven.

"Nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39).

—Randy's Facebook post, October 14, 2010

 www.facebook.com/randyalcorn

 www.twitter.com/randyalcorn

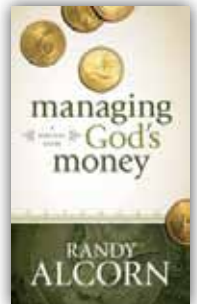
 www.epm.org/blog

New books from Randy coming soon

Randy has written several books that are slated for release in 2011. EPM is offering two of them, *Managing God's Money* and *The Chasm* as preorders. (Preorder online at www.epm.org, or call 503.668-5200 or toll-free 1.877.376.4567.) To see the latest info about Randy's coming books, go to www.epm.org/comingsoon.

Preorder *Managing God's Money: A Biblical Guide*

In *Managing God's Money*, Randy Alcorn breaks down exactly what the Bible has to say about how we are to handle our money and possessions in a simple, easy-to-follow format. *Managing God's Money* includes the best of *Money*, *Possessions and Eternity* and a substantial amount of new material. Filled with Scripture references, *Managing God's Money* is the perfect reference tool for anyone who is interested in gaining a solid biblical understanding of money, possessions, and eternity. **Releases March 1, 2011; EPM Price \$4.79 (retail \$5.99).**



Preorder your book from EPM and it will ship by March 1.

Preorder *The Chasm: A Journey to the Edge of Life*

In his first illustrated novel (artwork by Mike Biegel), Randy Alcorn weaves a supernatural interplay of wills and motives, lusts and longings, love and sacrifice. It's a potent mix that leaves every reader wondering: *Do I really understand this world I live in? Do I really understand myself? Is there more to all this than I've ever dared hope?* **Releases February 8, 2011; EPM Price \$11.99 (retail \$14.99).**



Preorder your book from EPM and it will ship by February 8.

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Will we celebrate Christ's birth in Heaven?

I think we will celebrate the birth of Christ in Heaven for all eternity. How could we not celebrate His incarnation? Certainly we will celebrate—though celebrate doesn't seem quite the right word—the triumph of the resurrection of Christ. We will also rejoice in His crucifixion by thanking and praising God for the love He demonstrated by going to the cross for us.

There could have been no atonement without the incarnation. It wasn't as if Christ, the second member of the triune God, could have appeared out of Heaven as a full-grown adult, died on the cross, and gone right back to Heaven. The incarnation tells us He became a man in the fullest sense. Christ lived a fully human life—He had struggles and difficulties, He understood pain, and He even underwent temptation but never sinned. We are going to experience the marvel and wonder of that for all eternity.

“God so loved the world that He sent His only Son” (John 3:16). “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). That is the true meaning of Christmas. So do I think we will celebrate Christmas in Heaven? Yes! Christmas is the incarnation.

I believe when Ephesians 2:7 says, “so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus,” that means we’ll be celebrating the entire unfolding drama of redemption—including His incarnation, His atoning work, His resurrection, His triumphant return, and His establishment of the New Heavens and the New Earth. Our very best Christmases here on earth are just a pale shadow—a foretaste of the reality—of what we're going to experience for all eternity in the presence of Christ in Heaven, where every day will be the enjoyment of Christmas.

Q: What are your favorite Christmas memories?

I remember when I was growing up in the Orient area, near Gresham Oregon, just two miles from where I live now. I enjoyed sledding and especially loved those Christmases when it was snowing (which was a number of them, though not as many as I would have liked).

But mainly when I think about Christmas, I think of my mom. Although she was not a Christian when I was growing up, she embodied the spirit of Christmas. She decorated the whole house, top to bottom, and to this day there are many things I experience around Christmas time that remind me of her.

My family celebrated on Christmas Eve and that was also when we had our big meal. Our Christmas dinners were a Thanksgiving-like meal complete with turkey, mashed potatoes, dressing, gravy, homemade rolls dripping with butter and strawberry jam, and big glasses of cold milk. My mom loved to play Pinochle, so often after we ate, we would play Pinochle and board games like Monopoly and Parcheesi.

On Christmas morning, we would open our stockings and have all the candy, including malted milk balls, Butterfinger candy bars, and always Whitman's Samplers, which came in little Christmassy boxes with four chocolates in them. My brother Lance and I would

trade with each other for the ones we really liked.

All of that was wonderful, but I didn't know much—if anything—about the true meaning of Christmas. Yet it's interesting how, when I later came to know Jesus and for the first time understood what Christmas was all about, I could still look back at those years with a sense of awe and delight. There was something so good and right and fun about Christmas that allowed me to almost retroactively read the meaning of the incarnation back into my childhood, even though the gospel wasn't part of my life or home then.

One of the greatest joys of my life was having the privilege of leading my mom to faith in Christ, within the first year after I became a Christian as a teenager. After that, Christmas—including the years my wife Nanci and I had with our daughters Karina and Angela as they were growing up—had the meaning it should have always had. As a family we were able to experience many of the same traditions I had experienced as a kid, but with the real meaning behind them. Seeing my daughters praying and knowing that Christmas was really about Jesus made all the difference. Now, we get to experience this with our four grandsons, and every year Christmas is even more delightful than the year before.

Should I speak up for the unborn?

By Randy Alcorn

Proverbs 31:8-9 says, “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; defend the rights of the poor and needy.” Who is more poor and needy, more incapable of speaking up for themselves than these unborn children, created in the image of God? Who in our country has been stripped of legal protection and is being killed at the rate of over one million per year? And who will speak up for them if not us?

This issue will not leave us as long as we live, and we will surely face it, when all is said and done, at the judgment seat of Christ. We must realize that we’ll be held accountable, both in this life and in eternity, for how we deal with it. The desire to be popular and avoid people’s disapproval is a common reason to hold back in pro-life efforts. But for every reason we have, we must be ready to answer a question on the last day: “Was that reason more important than the lives of all those children I created in my image?”

Nearly thirty years ago Nanci and I opened our home to a pregnant teenage girl who had been kicked out by her non-christian parents. We helped her place the child for adoption, and had the joy of seeing her come to Christ. She had two abortions, one before and one after the child born when she was with us. Today she remains a dear friend. She is also a passionate advocate of the unborn, and goes into prisons telling women about Christ and leading Bible studies to help them find forgiveness and healing from their abortions.

(Diane told her story during a message I shared for the 2010 Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. Go to www.epm.org/2010prolifemessage to watch her story and hear the message.)

Who will speak up for them if not us?



After what we learned from having her in our home, Nanci and I knew we had to do something about helping other girls in crisis pregnancies. I joined the board of the first crisis pregnancy center in the Pacific Northwest. It was only later that I became involved in civil disobedience on behalf of unborn children. We started with a concern for the women, and have never lost our commitment to helping women in these pregnancies—financially, medically, legally, psychologically, and in any way we can.

When you have stood outside an abortion clinic every week for years, as my wife did, talking to women who have been lied to and told they’re not really carrying a child, and that an abortion will solve their problems, it changes you. When you have held in your hands the remains of an aborted child, as I have, it brands you deep in your heart. When you have seen the world of abortion on the inside, it is, I suppose, like touring a slave ship. You will vomit and weep and never forget it. It will wake you up in the night and you will find yourself crying for the innocent. Forgive me if I do not sound

dispassionate about this issue. I am not. Even as I typed this, I had to wipe away the tears to see the words.

How I long for our Lord to bring to us a New Earth, without war, racism, and hatred, without suffering, evil, holocausts, the exploitation of women, and the killing of children!

“Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” (Revelation 21:3-5) •

Wondering how you can help the unborn? Go to www.epm.org/helpunborn to find practical ways for everyone—not just pastors and church leaders—to get involved and make a difference.

Prolife Resources and Books

Sanctity of Human Life Sunday is January 23, 2011, and we want to help churches share the truth about the unborn with compassion and conviction.

Prolife Pastors' Kit—EPM offers a free kit to pastors that includes a resource brochure, a copy of Randy's book *Why-ProLife?*, and a DVD of his 2010 Sanctity of Human Life message. To order a kit, email info@epm.org or call our office at 503.668.5200.

Pastors and church leaders can also access many free resources, including Randy's articles and Q&As, audio and video, links to some recommended prolife organizations, and more at www.epm.org/resources/prolifepastors.

Quantity Discount on *Why Pro-Life?* — To equip churches and prolife organizations sharing the truth about the unborn, EPM offers case quantities of Randy's book *Why Pro-Life?* to churches for \$1.00 per copy (an over 80% discount from the \$7.99 retail price) when you purchase 50 books or more.

Order online at www.epm.org, or call our office at 503-668-5200 or toll-free at 1-877-376-4567 (customer service Monday-Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. PT, and Friday 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. PT). *We recommend ordering by December 31, 2010 to receive your books in time for Sanctity of Human Life Sunday.*

Other prolife books by Randy, available from EPM are *ProLife Answers to ProChoice Arguments* and *Does the Birth Control Pill Cause Abortions?*



Steadily Following Christ

Oh that Christians, the very best of them, were not so slack in following! Some stop to trifle with the perishable things of earth. Some stop to pick up the gaudy, scentless flowers by the wayside. Some stop to sleep, forgetting this is not our rest, it is enchanted ground. Some stop to pick holes and find fault with their fellow-travelers. Few of Christ's sheep do hold on their way as steadily as they might. But still, compared with the world, they are following Christ Jesus.

Oh that they would only remember, those who follow Him most fully, shall follow Him most comfortably! They are following Christ Jesus, and they know where they are going; and even in the dark river, in the valley of the shadow of death, they feel a confidence that their Shepherd will be with them, and His rod and His staff will comfort them. They would all tell you they are poor wandering sheep, less than the least of all God's mercies, ashamed of the little fruit they bear—but still, weak as they are, they are determined to follow on to the end, and to say, "None but Christ, in life and in death, in time and in eternity."

—J.C. Ryle, from *The Christian Race & Other Sermons*, "The Character of the True Christian", [Moscow, ID: Charles Nolan Publishing, 2002], 100. Read more quotes from J.C. Ryle at jcrylequotes.com.



A Letter from Jail

by Randy Alcorn



2010 marked the 20th anniversary of Eternal Perspective Ministries, the nonprofit ministry I founded in 1990.

During the years leading up to 1990, by God's grace, Nanci and I and our daughters learned a lot about what's close to His heart and became more active in advocating for unborn children and their moms. In 1989 I had been a pastor of a large growing church for twelve years. I made a very good salary, and also received book royalties. Having been a pastor since the church began, and loving the ministry, I had no desire to leave.

But then something happened. It troubled me deeply that year after year preborn babies kept dying. After soul-searching, Scripture-searching, prayer and counsel, I participated in a number of peaceful nonviolent rescues (civil disobedience, blocking entry) at abortion clinics.

Like many others, I was arrested on a number of occasions and went to jail for a couple days.

Following is a letter (previously unpublished) I wrote during that time. I have never made this public before, until now. It hasn't been on our website, but I was encouraged by one of our staff members to share it, for what it may be worth :



7:00 a.m. August 25, 1989

I'm guessing at the time and trying to remember the date—strange to be without a watch and unable to see a clock or calendar. The light in my cell hasn't come on, so I'm by the window getting the dim glow of morning. Someone is already waterskiing on the Willamette, while I'm scratching this out with a tiny pencil stub.

Jail is a fascinating experience! I'm trying to project what it would be like to be here long term, rather than just for the two days Judge Brown gave me for rescuing. In the twenty-one hours I've been here I think I can already make that projection. Lonely. Hopeless. Useless. Not for me, of course, because of the short duration, though I am already a bit lonely. It's not just being away from loved ones—I've often been away much longer than this—it's knowing that I can't talk to Nanci or the girls except inside two one-hour windows each day, and I don't know in advance when that will be.

This "correctional facility" doesn't tell new inmates what's happening. I read through a rule book in my cell but much of the information seems dated or inaccurate.

Judge Brown was a man under conviction yesterday. I appreciate his spirit and his repeated "you have the right to protest, you just have to be willing to pay the consequences." I don't doubt that his constant fidgeting indicated discomfort with putting "good people" in jail. As an African American who understands the critical role of civil disobedience in the civil rights movement, I think he was really torn up inside. He did not seem to share the contempt for me I've gotten from others, including the media.

After I read my statement before the court about why I was standing up for the rights of the unborn children, I shared a quote from Martin Luther King, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," I loved his statement to me made in front of that packed court room: "You don't know what my own beliefs are about this. You don't know whether one day I might join you at a protest. But today I am a judge, and I must punish you for breaking the law."

It took guts to say that in a room full of county employees and reporters. I don't know Judge Brown, but I love the guy. Restores my faith in judges, as I have not been impressed with the self-importance and arrogance of the others I've stood before.

What a privilege, Lord, to stand before this earthly authority and testify to you, as you said your followers would in Luke 21:12ff—“all on account of my name.” And, as much as it breaks my heart for eight and ten year old Karina and Angela to know their father’s in jail, how good to have them know their parents think something is worth going to jail for. That there are causes and purposes higher than convenience, comfort and conformity. I think we’ve shown them that before, but this was pretty graphic. Thanks, too, Lord, for the many months of preparation for this time.

What interesting people here! I was in a holding cell with a guy in for attempted murder, at least one gang member, auto theft and a few guys who looked like psychopaths. Most of the guys, though, are “normal,” nice guys when you get to know them. For instance, Giovanni, aka Joe Foster, in for the white collar crimes of computer fraud and forgery—“I have this habit of playing with other peoples’ computers and switching their funds to different accounts.” A Sylvester Stallone look-alike, Giovanni has kicked the cocaine habit that drove him. I wished him well and he warmly shook my hand when we parted.



And then there was the nurse! Wow. Easily the most cantankerous person I’ve ever met. It’s clear she thinks all inmates are worse than dirt. When I was sinking down in the cell due to a low blood sugar, the guys asked me what was wrong. I explained and told them I was probably good for ten more minutes, but I could tell from experience the blood sugar was going lower and lower by the minute. (I always have a couple of granola bars with me, but of course those were confiscated along with my blood test equipment.)

One of the guys pounded on the door and said, “This guy needs a doctor!” Assuming I was faking it, the irritated guard pulled me out and hauled me to the nurse, who was disgusted with me from the beginning. She stabbed something into my finger to take a blood test on me, waited far too long to wipe off the blood (she obviously doesn’t do these often), then announced I was NOT having an insulin reaction and she would NOT give me sugar! She didn’t even believe I was a diabetic; I suggested she look at the possessions I had on hand while arrested, which included insulin, needles and blood test equipment. She didn’t bother. After all, she knew I was a liar.

It’s a funny thing about insulin reactions; I can almost always remember later how I felt, what was said to me, and even the stupid things I’ve said, now fully realizing how stupid they were! Even things that people said to me that I didn’t understand at the time, I now, remembering them, understand perfectly.

Anyway, the nurse told me to stop humming (a praise song) because it irritated her. She demanded to know what I was in for, and when I told her it was peaceful nonviolent civil disobedience at an abortion clinic, this is exactly what she said: “Don’t tell me that—armed robbery or attempted murder, okay, but not that—it really makes me mad.” I said, “So you think murder and armed robbery are better than trying to save the life of an innocent child about to be killed?”

“Yes, I do” she said. Makes me think of John 8, how Jesus said Satan is a liar and a murderer. He murders, and he lies to

cover his murders. This woman, like countless others, believes the devil’s lies.

When I told her nicely there must be a mistake and would she take the blood test again, she was outraged and asked if I thought she didn’t have better things to do. Finally, when I think she could see that I was getting weaker, I made clear—even in my clouded state—that I would pass out if I didn’t get sugar soon. So finally she stalked over by a coffee pot, picked out two packets of sugar, and actually threw them at me. I got down on the floor, opened them up and swallowed the sugar.

She yelled at me, “your blood sugar can go up to 400, I don’t care.” Then she pointed to the door and said “get out”. Honestly, if this was in a novel, I’d say it was way too extreme, and the author wasn’t being realistic. But that’s exactly what happened. Finally, I let her know I didn’t appreciate her attitude. Not that she cared what I thought.

I met dozens of others, some who were at least civil, but most seemed to have an automatic contempt of anyone going in jail. What a lesson. God, preserve me from such callousness to a fellow human being, created in your image. How easily we can feed our own sense of superiority by labeling those around us as inferior, even “dirt balls” that are sub-human.

The disregard for the value of the preborn fits perfectly with the attitudes I have seen here. The lead guard who oversaw the strip search was an example. I’ll never forget his patronizing tone as the six of us men who didn’t know each other were told to strip down to nothing, bend over and go through other motions I won’t mention. He was more professional than the nurse, but his love of power and his sense of contempt was clear. The tone of voice reflected an attitude of intimidation and humiliation, whether deliberate or just unthinking. And when you’re standing there naked and being stared at and inspected, you really don’t need additional intimidation and humiliation.



A shining exception to all this was one particular officer, Steve, who does not appear to be a Christian but is a really decent guy. He whispered to me that he supported what I had done. He lives near Gresham and gave me his phone number, written backwards on the back of my prison inventory. He wants me to call him when I get out. I sure will—to thank him for his exceptional kindness and share the gospel with him in more detail.

Right when it looked like I was “on my own” with my diabetes, Steve told me he was an insulin-dependent diabetic also, and slipped me some glucose tablets in my cell. I’d been searched twice already, so I was able to keep these till the strip search four hours later, when they were confiscated.

Steve also let me take my Bible with me, which I was able to hang onto, all the way to where I am, which is my sixth and presumably final destination here! Two cells at the court house, then transferred “chain gang” style in a van to the correctional facility, then in two holding cells with some fascinating guys. (Being chained on both wrists and both ankles, and led out of the courthouse, with camera strobes flashing at me, did seem a little much for a guy whose crime was second degree criminal trespass, blocking entrance to an abortion clinic. I guess the fact that I’m a pastor was of interest.)

The one highlight was when I was in a tiny cell by myself

where they brought in a telephone, and I talked to Nanci for an hour. That was great. I tried not to describe it too fully, because the small closed-in claustrophobic conditions would drive her nuts, but it was okay for me. The change from being crowded into a room with a group of guys to total isolation was striking. Both had their advantages.

It was 5:00 p.m. or so when I made it to where I am now. Very interesting place. There's a window looking out to a parking garage and the Willamette and what I think is the Hawthorne bridge. I appear to be on about the eighth floor, judging by the buildings around me, at second and Madison. How strange to see the city alive now with cars and joggers. A gray overcast morning, very appropriate to the atmosphere here.

It's been nearly an hour since the nurse gave me my injection. I was already at 100, and sinking, so if it's another fifteen minutes until breakfast I'll be in real trouble. The other three nurses have been quite kind, but there's a lot they don't understand about diabetics—like, you don't give them insulin over an hour before a meal! I'm getting shaky and it's hard to concentrate.

During our one hour release from the cell last night I checked over the "bookshelf"—pathetic offerings. I must donate some decent books that can get the gospel in here. Talked at length and shared the gospel with one inmate who "tried Christianity" but "turned my back on it." Father, touch this needy man. All around are those who desperately need you, Lord. Touch them, please. Use me to touch them. They are needy, desperately needy, and there are fewer insulating layers between them and their need for you than in the business executive who thinks he has what he needs, or tries to find it in anything but you.

Even this brief time here gives me a much greater heart for prison ministries like Chuck Colson's Prison Fellowship.

What great potential to minister to men and women who are the chaff of life, but who are so valuable to you that you shed divine blood for them. Thank you for your grace, and the privilege of being with these men. Thank you for the freedom in Christ that would not allow me to be a prisoner, even if I was here for years. Thank you for Joseph, Jeremiah, Paul and Jesus himself, men who went to jail. My understanding is deepened, my empathy increased, my trust in the sovereign need-meeter confirmed. Lord, bring freedom to prisoners and officers and nurses alike—those who come and go here are just as much in bondage as those who cannot leave. Do a work of grace in them, Father, and use me to play a small role in it.

Breakfast at last! Thanks for sustaining me!

False alarm. It was Steve, the friendly officer at the door, on break. But that was better than breakfast. We talked for fifteen minutes. He couldn't bring me food, even knowing I needed it. I'm going numb, but I'm holding on. Shouldn't be long. But Steve is really interested in church and shared some tremendous stuff with me about his convictions about rescuing and his role here. You have your hand on this man, Lord.

Note written later: At breakfast, a three hundred pound prisoner seated next to me asked if I would trade my bacon for one of his pancakes. "Sure," I said. Some of the guys were talking about what they were in for. I kept quiet at first, waiting for my blood sugar to come up, and not wanting to say "second degree criminal trespass." Didn't think that would send the message, "This guy's really tough; stay away from him!" Then when they asked, I explained why I'd been arrested. A few were confused, but several guys said they believed that abortion was killing an innocent child, and people should stick up for little kids. "Yeah, that's right," somebody said. A tough scary guy said to me, "Good for you for doing this." Interesting to get more support at that table than I've gotten from some fellow Christians.

More of the Story

WATCH a video of Randy talking about the trial and related events at: www.epm.org/blog/difficult
READ Randy's court statement (referenced in the above letter) at www.epm.org/resources/statement

"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matt. 25:35-36, 40).

Shortly after EPM started, inmates began writing to request Randy's books. Over the years thousands of books have been given away. They are often shared with other inmates, so one book may be read by several people. Books are also requested for the chapel libraries. With each order, EPM encloses an enrollment form for Bible courses through the Mount Zion Bible Institute (www.mountzion.org), which are offered without charge. EPM ministers to a wide range of inmates, from those who are serving sentences for drug-related crimes to those who are on death row.

Many have experienced:



- Salvation in Christ
- Enhanced Biblical knowledge
- Growth in their relationship with Christ
- Great hope and encouragement
- God's truth connecting their head to their heart
- An eternal perspective beyond their earthly experience



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

Where the book royalties go ▶▶

A Note from Randy Alcorn

I want to thank the people who have supported Eternal Perspective Ministries over the years. It's a strange concept, isn't it? The royalties from my books far exceed the amount our ministry spends to operate. So, instead of giving them all away, why don't we just hold on to them and pay our own way, so no one needs to support us? Because we believe we need to depend on God, and on his people.

Your prayers and your kind gifts allow us to continue giving all the royalties away to God's kingdom, so that every time a book is sold, it not only touches lives through its words, but also through the income it generates. Meanwhile EPM and its staff, including Nanci and me, have the benefit of people's hearts being where they've put their treasure—so we receive not only financial support, but prayer.

We'd like to share with you just a few of the ways the book royalties have been used to make a difference in the world—and for eternity. To date, we've had the privilege of giving away close to \$5.5 million. These pages highlight some of our special funds and the ministries they've helped support.

“ But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? **Everything comes from you,** and we have given you *only* what comes from *your* hand.

1 Chronicles 29:14



Elque Languages Bible Translation ▶▶ East Asia: unnamed island

Through the work of one of our ministry partners, EPM helps support the translation of the Gospel into two languages, the L and Q languages. Translation has never before been attempted in these languages, which represent about 700,000 people living on a Southeast Asian island where believers make up less than 1% of the population.



Missions Fund



◀◀ Shalom Birth Center ACTION International Southeast Asia: The Philippines

The Shalom Birthing Center provides quality prenatal care and Christian love to women living in poverty in the surrounding community. What makes Shalom distinct from other birthing homes is that each patient hears the Gospel and is prayed for by the center's team.



Relief Fund

◀ **Maternal/Child Health Programs**
World Relief
Africa: Darfur

The people in this arid region face violent militia attacks and severe food and water shortages. Mothers bring their children to 13 feeding centers where the children are weighed, examined and given supplementary food as needed. World Relief then teaches these mothers how to fend off malnutrition by preparing nutritious meals.

>> **Did you know?** We offer the option of giving through EPM's nine special funds, and our ministry will make the choice of where specifically to send the resources. Some people prefer not to get on multiple mailing lists of organizations, but would rather EPM do their homework and select the best ministry in a particular area. We give 100% of what is designated to special funds, nothing is withheld. Check out the different funds and donate online at epm.org/donate.

Prolife Fund

Choose Life!
Pregnancy Resource Center
Europe: Serbia

An estimated 200,000 abortions are performed each year in Serbia compared to only 90,000 births. EPM sent support for their first pregnancy resource center, which helped fund the printing of Randy's book *The Purity Principle* in Serbian, buy equipment for their educational programs in schools, and bring on a much-needed additional worker.

>> **Want more?**

Find links to more organizations we support and/or recommend at epm.org/recommended.

“Gaze upon Christ long enough, and you'll become more of a giver. Give long enough, and you'll become more like Christ. — Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*”

Family Fund

Weekend to Remember Conferences
FamilyLife
North America: The United States

These conferences, which provide couples with marriage-changing principles, have transformed thousands of marriages and lives. One woman who attended wrote, “My highlight was when my husband said he was now ready to accept God into his life... Because we came this weekend we have the tools to work things out.”

Handicapped Fund

Wheels for the World ▶
Joni and Friends
Worldwide, in countries like El Salvador



Wheels for the World provides a free wheelchair, along with the Gospel of Jesus Christ to thousands of children and adults affected by disability worldwide, like this girl in the picture from El Salvador. Their teams share the love of Jesus Christ, extended through the gift of mobility, bringing hope, joy, and salvation.

Suffering Church Fund

Help for Persecuted Christians
Open Doors
Worldwide, in countries like Iran

Around the globe, 100 million Christians are currently suffering persecution. Open Doors serves to strengthen persecuted believers, in countries like Iran and North Korea, through community development, ministries of prayer and advocacy, Bible and literature distribution, and leadership training and education.

The Local Church: Training You for Ministry

By Jeff Lacine © Desiring God. Website: desiringGod.org



"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:11-12)

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the

habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:24-25)

It is God's will that you be active in life-long ministry, in your church. You are called to edify, build up and encourage a local body of believers by utilizing your own unique giftings by the power of the Spirit. How are you to be equipped for this ministry? Through the ministry of the local church itself.

The role of the local church leaders is to equip the members for ministry by teaching and shepherding. Then, the ministry of each member collectively builds up the church. Hosting small groups, evangelistically engaging your city, equipping

younger men in trades that will provide for their families and serve the community, encouraging and helping mothers of young children, assisting in practical needs by working with your hands, teaching Sunday School, facilitating fellowship through hospitality, nurturing the young, caring for the old, practicing intercessory prayer, etc.

One of the reasons the local church exists is so that we might learn to serve one another, according to the various capacities and gifts we have been given, under the gospel of God's amazing grace in Christ. Dig in to your local church to be equipped and serve in the ministry God has for you! •

The Love Gift



By Stephanie
Anderson

Not long ago I read a booklet, "Knowing Aslan," that spoke profoundly to me about God's love: "Every time you snuggle under a warm blanket on a cold night, God is loving you. Every time your daughter hugs you, she is passing on God's love. You find his love in the taste of a hot breakfast, the caress of a breeze..."

It's easy to see the wonderful, amazing things in life as love gifts. But let me tell you, it's much harder to see the difficult and downright horrible things in life as gifts. I have heard of people referring to their cancer as a love-gift from God, and I've been skeptical. After all, if I could zap into oblivion every renegade mutant cell from my body, I would gladly do so.

But one Sunday, I realized I am (closer) to the point of being able to say, "Lord, if my cancer is a tool you have used to draw me closer to you, than I am willing to see it as a gift from your hand." How could I see something in my life that brought me closer to Him, and made me seek my identity and comfort in Him, as anything less than a gift from my gracious Father? No, cancer isn't a gift that comes wrapped in pretty paper and a shiny bow, the kind you just can't wait to open. Instead, it's been wrapped in doctor visits, needle pokes, tears, and a lot of fear. Yet despite this, I'm still in awe of all the reminders of His love.

Can I encourage you that if you don't have a personal relationship with the Father, you will seriously consider His offer to make you His own? No, He doesn't promise that things in this life will be easy. But He does promise to never leave you or forsake you. He does promise that one day He will make all things right. He promises to one day wipe away every last tear from your eyes. He loves you so much He sent His only Son to die for you. He's made every ray of sunshine, every star-lit night, every good thing in your life, to be a reminder of that love. All you have to do is accept the gift. •

Note from EPM

Thanks to those of you who have prayed for and inquired about our two EPM staff members experiencing serious health issues. In April 2010, Stephanie Anderson, our promotions director, was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma. In late July, Catherine Simons, one of our receptionists, contracted a life-threatening "C diff" infection, requiring months of hospitalization and ongoing rehabilitation. We are so grateful to the Lord for how he has brought them both through this season of suffering. Stephanie has completed her six months of chemotherapy (though still faces radiation treatments) and has been able to return to work. Catherine is still at home in long term recovery.

A Prayer of Weariness

By Randy Alcorn

I AM WEARY, Lord....bone tired.

Weary to the point of tears, and past them.

Your Word says you never grow weary;

But I know you understand weariness

Because once you drug a heavy cross
up a long lonely hill.

Many times you had nowhere to lay your head—

And people who needed you pressed upon you
by day and by night.

My reservoir is depleted, almost dry.

For longer than I can remember I've been

Dredging from its sludgy underside
Giving myself and my loved ones the leftovers
Of a life occupied with endless tasks.

The elastic of my life is so stretched out of shape
that it doesn't snap back anymore.

Just once I'd like to say "It is finished," like you did.

But you said it just before you died.

I guess my job won't be over till my life is
and that's OK Lord,

if you'll just give me strength to live it.

Deliver me from this limbo of half-life;

Not just surviving, but thriving.

You who know all, You who know me

Far better than I know myself—

Deposit to my account that as I spend myself

There may be always more to draw from.

Give me strength

To rest without guilt...

To run without frenzy...

To soar like an eagle

Over the broad breathless canyons of the life

you still have for me both here and beyond.

Originally Published in 1986 in *Women Under Stress* by Randy and Nanci Alcorn. This book is currently out of print. However, new and/or used copies may be purchased through www.addall.com or www.amazon.com.



A Personal Liturgy of Confession

BY DAVID POWLISON

W

hen I counsel with people who struggle with deep feelings of shame, guilt, and regret, I sometimes suggest that they design a personalized liturgy. In what follows, I walk through the example of a woman who has had an abortion, and all

that led up to that choice, and all that follows in someone whose conscience is alive. But you can tailor it to whatever struggle you or another person needs to deal with. God welcomes all who are weary with sin.

Designing your own liturgy of confession will help you to think through exactly what you need to bring to God, and what you need from God. It will lead you by the hand to God's mercy and to his washing away of your sin and guilt. The parts of this liturgy in italics are taken and adapted from the General Confession of Sin in *The Book of Common Prayer*. Even when your thoughts and feelings are chaotic, these words can serve as your guide. Instead of wallowing in misery and failure, these words help you to plan how you will walk in the direction of honesty, mercy, gratitude, and freedom.

I suggest that you pray out loud. It helps you to remember that you are talking with Someone who is listening. Remind yourself out loud that God's mercies are deeper than what you did or failed to do.

Almighty and most merciful Father,

Notice that you are talking with someone who is both all powerful and most merciful. The God and Father of Jesus Christ is the God of comfort and Father of mercies.

God becomes your Father, our Father who art in heaven, through Jesus. He loved you in the exact way you most need help and rescue from outside yourself. He died in your place. He laid down his life for you. He is alive. He pursues you. Someday you will see him face to face. He comes to you in person, giving his Holy Spirit, who makes you childlike towards him: "Abba, Father!" You need this Father of life, this living Savior, this life-giving Spirit. Turn to him. Call on him for help.

I have erred and strayed from your ways like a lost sheep.

Fill in the specific ways you have strayed from God's ways. Because he is both strong and merciful, you can be honest.

I have followed too much the devices and desires of my own heart.

You can confess to God all the excuses and "reasons" that were once used to convince yourself that it was OK to do something that is wrong.

I have offended against your holy law.

Which laws of God have you offended? Think about the will of God that calls us to love the helpless, to be faithful to those in our care, to protect life, and especially to protect innocent, helpless persons. A gestating child is the most helpless and most dependent human being of all. For help in seeing clearly, look at these Bible passages: Romans 13:9–10; Isaiah 49:14–16.

I have left undone those things which I ought to have done, and I

have done those things which I ought not to have done. And there is no health in me.

The General Confession leads you to take seriously what is wrong—but not so you wallow in feeling bad. By becoming deeply honest, you see your need for help, and can receive the mercy and help you actually need.

But you, O Lord, have mercy upon me, miserable offender. Spare me, O God, I who confess my faults. Restore me when I turn to you according to your promises that you have declared to me in Christ Jesus, my Lord.

The beauty of the gospel is that our confession is always linked with God's promise of good. Guilt and regret make you miserable: unhappy, in dire need of mercy. Mercy is not something anyone deserves; it is something undeserved that someone else gives. What are God's promises to you? Here are a few specifics to take to heart. Stop and think over each promise.

- **I will never leave you or forsake you.**
- **The Lord bless you and keep you.**
- **The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.**
- **The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.**
- **The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.**
- **For your name's sake, pardon my iniquity, for it is very great.**
- **All the promises of God are YES in Jesus Christ.**

Jesus fulfills all these promises and more. Your hope centers on a Person, not a feeling, not an idea, not something you do. Jesus is and does what God promises. Because Jesus loved you to the uttermost, you have true hope, not "I hope so..." or "Maybe ..." or "If only..." Jesus went to his death on a cross for your wrongs, not for his own. The innocent died for the guilty. He personally took your shame and guilt onto himself. He died so you would not die for your sins. He is alive forever, so you will live in him and with him. He personally fulfills and embodies each and every one of the promises you have been considering. Because of Jesus' death for you and because of his resurrection to life, you can bring your darkest sins into his bright light.

[These bold-print promises come from Deuteronomy 31:6-8, Numbers 6:24-26, Exodus 34:6-7, Psalm 25:11, and 2 Corinthians 1:20.]

Grant, O most merciful Father, for Jesus' sake, that I may hereafter live a godly and righteous and sober life to the glory of your holy name.

You not only ask God for forgiveness, you honestly ask for his power to change you in the hard places of life. Ask

him to make you a different kind of person. Here are some of the ways he says this.

• **Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

Notice that he promises mercy and help in the very places where you most struggle, in your times of greatest need.

• **He died for all so that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.**

It cost Jesus his life to give you life. He who has truly loved you now calls you to give your life to him.

• **He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.**

Even when the road seems hard, God will keep working in you.

[These bold-print promises come from Hebrews 4:16; 2 Corinthians 5:15; Philippians 1:6.]

So think now: how might God's love transform you?

How does heartfelt gratitude for God's forgiveness change you, so that you become forgiving? How might your life become different by his power? Ask him for this. Ask him every day.

As you pray, remember that God promises mercy when you confess your sins. God desires that you turn to him and then, in the words of the liturgy that follow the Confession,

He pardons and absolves all those who truly repent.

To 'pardon' means to truly forgive. To 'absolve' means to release you, to set you free. To 'repent' simply means to turn to God. He says, "If you seek me, you will find me." He makes you free and forgiven.

Come to God. He will take away what grieves and burdens you. He will wash you in fresh, clean water. Heartache and regret don't disappear, but he will take the sting and despair away. They will no longer torture you. He will heal you. He gives you a fresh start. God says, "I have seen your ways, but I will heal you. I will guide you and restore comfort to you" (Isaiah 57:18 paraphrase). Your faith will find it true that "His mercies are new every morning" (Lamentations 3:22-24). Let this very day be a day on which you find brand new mercies. •

David Powlison, M.Div., Ph.D. is a counselor, author and faculty member of the Christian Counseling Education Foundation (CCEF). CCEF's mission is "To restore Christ to counseling, and counseling to the church" and strives to achieve this mission by providing a wide range of training, publications, an annual national conference, and a variety of resources for counselors and pastors at its website, www.ccef.org. A complete version of this article is available at www.ccef.org/personal-liturgy-confession.

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