

eternal perspectives

with author Randy Alcorn

Summer Issue • 2013

It's here!

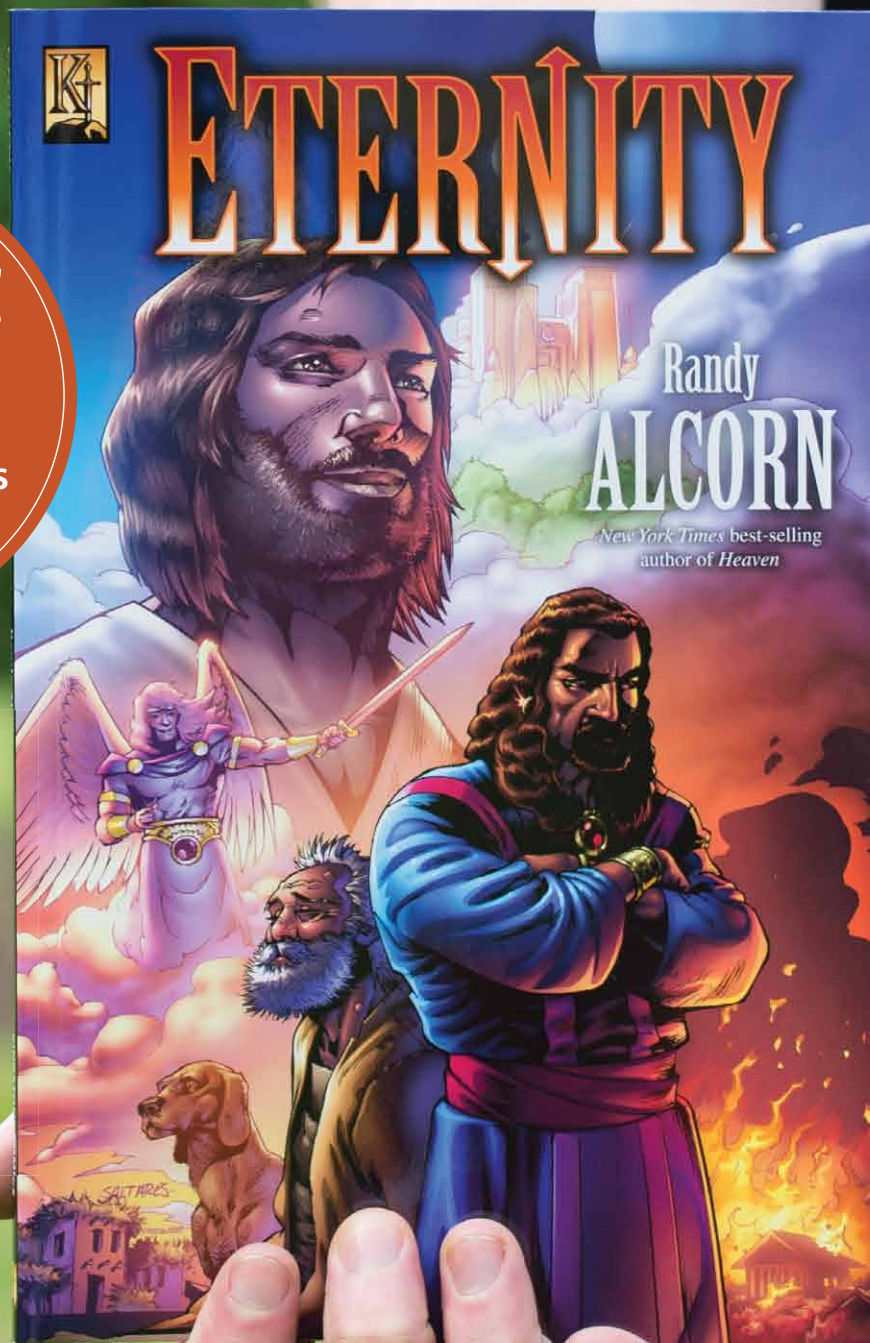
Randy shares his excitement about *Eternity*, his graphic novel

Also inside

6 Eternal Truths to Remember Each Day

Dr. Albert Mohler: No Truth Without Love, No Love Without Truth

How should a Christian guy pursue a relationship with a Christian girl?



contents

- 3 **News from EPM**
- 4 **How should a Christian guy pursue a relationship with a Christian girl?**
Randy Alcorn
- 6 **Impact: Book Royalties**
- 6 **No Truth Without Love, No Love Without Truth**
Albert Mohler



- 8 **Randy shares his excitement about his new book *Eternity***
- 10 **Six Eternity Truths to Remember Each Day**
Randy Alcorn



- 12 **For a Time of Sorrow**
Amy Carmichael



- 13 **No More Tears**
Greg Lucas
- 16 **An Invitation to the *Eternity* Facebook Party**

about

Eternal Perspectives magazine, a publication of Eternal Perspective Ministries, seeks to encourage readers to learn to live in light of eternity.

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desiringGod

Randy speaking at the 2013 Desiring God National Conference

Randy is one of the speakers at this year's Desiring God National Conference, "The Romantic Rationalist: God, Life, and Imagination in the Work of C.S. Lewis," in Minneapolis, Minnesota on September 27-29. He will share on the topics of C.S. Lewis, Heaven, and Evil & Suffering. Learn more and register at www.desiringgod.org/events/national-conferences/2013.

Run, walk, pray, give and save lives by supporting Oregon's First Ever Mobile Ultrasound Unit

EPM is enthusiastically supporting the Guardian Project to help provide the first ever mobile ultrasound unit in Oregon to reach abortion-minded moms. To fund the operating costs of the unit, on September 7, 2013, the Guardian Project will be hosting an annual run/walk called "4 Their Lives." Learn more and register at www.guardianproject.org.



We encourage you to pray for this project and to sign yourself and your family up for the walk or run if you're in the Portland area or can travel. (Feel free to tell others about this, too). If you'd like to give financially, you can donate through EPM at www.epm.org/donate. (Select "The Guardian Project" under Special Funds; 100% of the funds given will go directly to this project.)



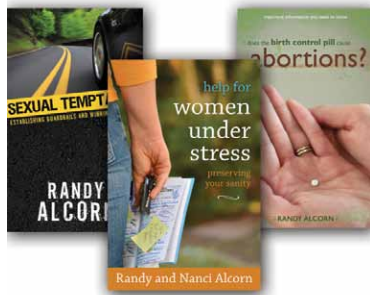
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EPM books available on Amazon.com

Randy's books published by EPM are all now available to purchase from us on Amazon.com. *Help for Women Under Stress*, *Does the Birth Control Pill Cause Abortions?*, and *Sexual Temptation: Establishing Guardrails and Winning the Battle* are offered in paperback and Kindle editions. Of course, they are still available to purchase from EPM's store, but we hope this gives more exposure to these titles through their presence there.



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HOW SHOULD A CHRISTIAN GUY PURSUE A RELATIONSHIP WITH A CHRISTIAN GIRL?

by Randy Alcorn

Brandon Andersen with The Resurgence has written great advice to men on relationships (www.epm.org/guys-dating). Here's a summary of his article with some of his quotes in italics, and then my own thoughts added in.

BE INTENTIONAL

The intentional man repeatedly and constantly goes first and takes on all of the risk of rejection. He always lets the girl know where he stands so she feels secure and isn't left guessing. (On the other hand, don't weird her out by talking about marriage on the first date.)

I agree. Male leadership wasn't the result of the Fall, but of creation (as Genesis implies and Paul makes clear in 1 Timothy 2). Loving servanthood should be a man's goal.

CLEAN YOUR ACT UP TODAY, NOT "WHEN"

The lie is that once you find the right girl, all your problems

will go away—you just need the right motivation, right? Wrong! If Jesus isn't motivation enough to grow in maturity and pursue godliness, then you are not ready to pursue a woman.

This is great advice. Joshua 1:8 says, "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it." Every man needs to realize that he will only be worth following if he follows God.

God wants to use the next years of your life to send your roots deeper into His Word, deeper into a walk with Christ. He wants you to draw from the reservoir of a solid Christian life, with strong personal accountability to godly men, and from that reservoir to stand strong for Jesus. Satan, on the other hand, wants to mess you up with pride, sexual impurity and every other thing he can do to discredit your testimony for Christ and derail you from serving Him, and from one day having a godly marriage.

PLAN AHEAD

Don't spend time with your girlfriend without a plan. Decide ahead of time the prudent time to say goodnight and where you should go.

Gaps always get filled, often with temptations to sexual impurity. Know what you're doing and either stick with the plan or go somewhere safe, where you're in the sight of others (particularly others who respect the need for purity). You can still have a private conversation even in a room full of people. But their presence will encourage you to focus on the conversation rather than on temptation to impurity.

GUARD HER HEART

A mature man knows that the person that can do the most damage to a woman's heart is him, and he takes that very seriously.

Philippians 2:3-7 says, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who...made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant."

BE VERY CAREFUL ABOUT PHYSICAL TOUCH

The Bible only outlines two categories for Christian women in relation to Christian men: either she is a sister in Christ or she is your wife. There isn't a middle ground.

I would also encourage you to read through an article I've written that contains Guidelines for Sexual Purity (www.epm.org/guidelines). It's material that I've presented to many young people and their parents over several years. When my now married daughters were teenagers, I honed it further for sharing and discussion with them and the young men who asked to date them.

One of the things I say in that article is that it's essential to realize that your date is your sister in Christ—NOT your "lover." "Treat older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity" (1 Timothy 5:2). Don't go into dating with the goal of romance, but the goal of spending time with your sister. When you begin a relationship, a rule of thumb is, don't do anything physically you wouldn't do with your sister by birth.

If a Christ-centered and positive relationship develops, then you might move to cautious displays of affection such as hand-holding. But be alert to the difference between appropriate affection and

intimacy. You must stay safely back from the line where either one is propelled toward sexual intimacy. It's very hard to move back once you've crossed a line—so don't cross it in the first place.

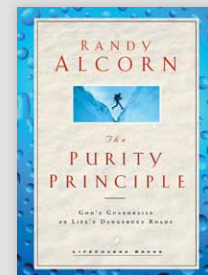
This person may end up being a lifelong friend, or married to your best friend. Don't do anything with her that would cause you to be embarrassed or self-conscious if you end up being best man at her wedding.

It's important that throughout your relationship, you stay close to godly people who can give you advice based on God's Word and who love you enough to tell you the truth...even when it hurts. One of the things I say in several of my books is that what is right is always smart, and what is wrong is always stupid. That which is for God's glory is also always for our good.

Finally, let me recommend a great book by a man I respect, Voddie Baucham Jr. It's called *What He Must Be: ...If He Wants to Marry My Daughter*. Whether or not God calls you and this woman together for the long haul, Voddie offers excellent counsel for you as you prepare for the future God has for you. ■

more

In *The Purity Principle*, Randy shows us why, in this culture of impurity, the stakes are so high—and what we can do to experience the freedom of purity. www.epm.org/purity.



Read Randy's article "Guidelines for Sexual Purity," which includes "Guidelines for Protecting Purity in Dating," at www.epm.org/guidelines.

**A MATURE MAN KNOWS
THAT THE PERSON THAT CAN DO
THE MOST DAMAGE TO A WOMAN'S
HEART IS HIM, AND HE TAKES THAT
VERY SERIOUSLY.**

—Brandon Andersen

impact: book royalties

- 100% of the royalties from Randy's books are given away to other worthy ministries (and some to help facilitate the giving away of our books to people all over the world). To date, that's over \$6 million. We'd like to share with you just one of the ways the royalties have been used to make a difference in the world—and for eternity.



Media Associates International Writer's Workshop in South Sudan

Media Associates International (MAI) is a ministry that equips and encourages talented men and women with a passion for producing Christian literature for their own people. Since its founding in 1985, MAI has equipped local Christians in 63 countries on 5 continents. As a result, they've seen budding writers developed, publishing houses grown, periodicals begun and books and magazines produced that speak to the hearts of readers in their own languages. (Learn more at www.littworld.org.)

Recently, MAI trainers held the first workshop in a three-year training program in South Sudan. The goal is to start a Christian publishing organization and equipping 15 to 20 emerging authors to write for it in this needy nation recovering from decades of civil war. One woman participant said the more she wrote the more words came from somewhere. A young man said he had just learned a secret: the more he wrote the more he wanted to write. Someone else said that writing the way he did made him think deep. MAI's prayer is that these writers in training will make a significant contribution to the development of Christian literature and reading in their new country.

No Truth Without Love No Love Without Truth



By Dr. Albert Mohler

are tottering on the brink, and without a massive conservative resistance, they are almost certain to abandon biblical truth and bless what the Bible condemns.

Within a few short years, a major dividing line has become evident—with those churches endorsing homosexuality on one side, and those stubbornly resisting the cultural tide on the other.

The church's engagement with the culture involves a host of issues, controversies, and decisions—but no issue defines our current cultural crisis as clearly as homosexuality. Some churches and denominations have capitulated to the demands of the homosexual rights movement, and now accept homosexuality as a fully valid lifestyle. Other denominations

The homosexual rights movement understands that the evangelical church is one of the last resistance movements committed to a biblical morality. Because of this, the movement has adopted a strategy of isolating Christian opposition, and forcing change by political action and cultural pressure. Can we count on evangelicals to remain steadfastly biblical on this issue?

Not hardly. Scientific surveys and informal observation reveal that we have experienced a significant loss of conviction among youth and young adults. No moral revolution can succeed without shaping and changing the minds of young people and children. Inevitably, the schools have become crucial battlegrounds for the culture war. The Christian worldview has been undermined by pervasive curricula that teach moral relativism, reduce moral commandments to personal values, and promote homosexuality as a legitimate and attractive lifestyle option.

Our churches must teach the basics of biblical morality

to Christians who will otherwise never know that the Bible prescribes a model for sexual relationships. Young people must be told the truth about homosexuality—and taught to esteem marriage as God’s intention for human sexual relatedness.

The times demand Christian courage. These days, courage means that preachers and Christian leaders must set an agenda for biblical confrontation, and not shrink from dealing with the full range of issues related to homosexuality. We must talk about what the Bible teaches about gender—what it means to be a man or a woman. We must talk about God’s gift of sex and the covenant of marriage. And we must talk honestly about what homosexuality is, and why God has condemned this sin as an abomination in His sight.

Courage is far too rare in many Christian circles. This explains the surrender of so many denominations, seminaries, and churches to the homosexual agenda. But no surrender on this issue would have been possible, if the authority of Scripture had not already been undermined.

And yet, even as courage is required, the times call for another Christian virtue as well—compassion. The tragic fact is that every congregation is almost certain to include persons struggling with homosexual desire or even involved in homosexual acts. Outside the walls of the church, homosexuals are waiting to see if the Christian church has anything more to say, after we declare that homosexuality is a sin.

Liberal churches have redefined compassion to mean that the church changes its message to meet modern demands. They argue that to tell a homosexual he is a sinner is uncompassionate and intolerant. This is like arguing that a physician is intolerant because he tells a patient she has cancer. But, in the culture of political correctness, this argument holds a powerful attraction.

Biblical Christians know that compassion requires telling the truth, and refusing to call sin something sinless. To hide or deny the sinfulness of sin is to lie, and there is no compassion in such a deadly deception.

True compassion demands speaking the truth in love—and there is the problem. Far too often, our courage is more evident than our compassion.

In far too many cases, the options seem reduced to these—liberal churches preaching love without truth, and conservative churches preaching truth without love. Evangelical Christians must ask ourselves some very hard questions, but the hardest may be this: Why is it that we have been so ineffective in reaching persons trapped in this particular pattern of sin? The Gospel is for sinners—and for homosexual sinners just as much as for heterosexual sinners. As Paul explained to the Corinthian church, “Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” [1 Corinthians 6:11].

I believe that we are failing the test of compassion. If the first requirement of compassion is that we tell the truth, the second requirement must surely be that we reach out to homosexuals with the Gospel. This means that we must develop caring ministries to make that concern concrete, and learn how to help homosexuals escape the powerful bonds of that sin—even as we help others to escape their own bonds by grace.

If we are really a Gospel people; if we really love homosexuals as other sinners; then we must reach out to them with a sincerity that makes that love tangible. We have not even approached that

requirement until we are ready to say to homosexuals, “We want you to know the fullness of God’s plan for you, to know the forgiveness of sins and the mercy of God, to receive the salvation that comes by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, to know the healing God works in sinners saved by grace, and to join us as fellow disciples of Jesus Christ, living out our obedience and growing in grace together.”

Such were some of you...The church is not a place where sinners are welcomed to remain in their sin. To the contrary, it is the Body of Christ, made up of sinners transformed by grace. Not one of us deserves to be accepted within the beloved. It is all of grace, and each one of us has come out of sin. We sin if we call homosexuality something other than sin. We also sin if we act as if this sin cannot be forgiven.

We cannot settle for truth without love nor love without truth. The Gospel settles the issue once and for all. This great moral crisis is a Gospel crisis. The genuine Body of Christ will reveal itself by courageous compassion, and compassionate courage. We will see this realized only when men and women freed by God’s grace from bondage to homosexuality feel free to stand up in our churches and declare their testimony—and when we are ready to welcome them as fellow disciples. Millions of hurting people are waiting to see if we mean what we preach. ■

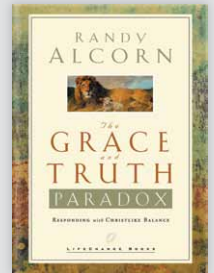
Dr. R. Albert Mohler Jr. (www.albertmohler.com) serves as president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Widely sought as a columnist and commentator, Dr. Mohler has been quoted in the nation’s leading newspapers.

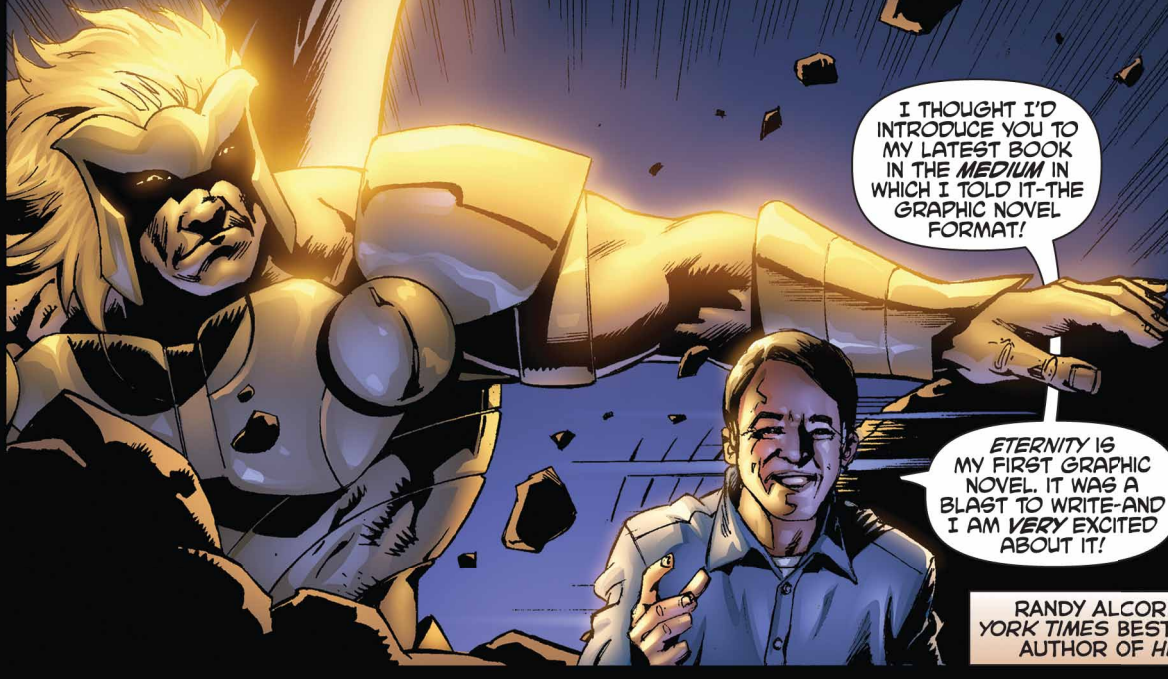


The genuine Body of Christ will reveal itself by courageous compassion, and compassionate courage.

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In *The Grace and Truth Paradox*, Randy explores how Christlikeness means living by grace and truth, and extending both to others.
www.epm.org/gandt



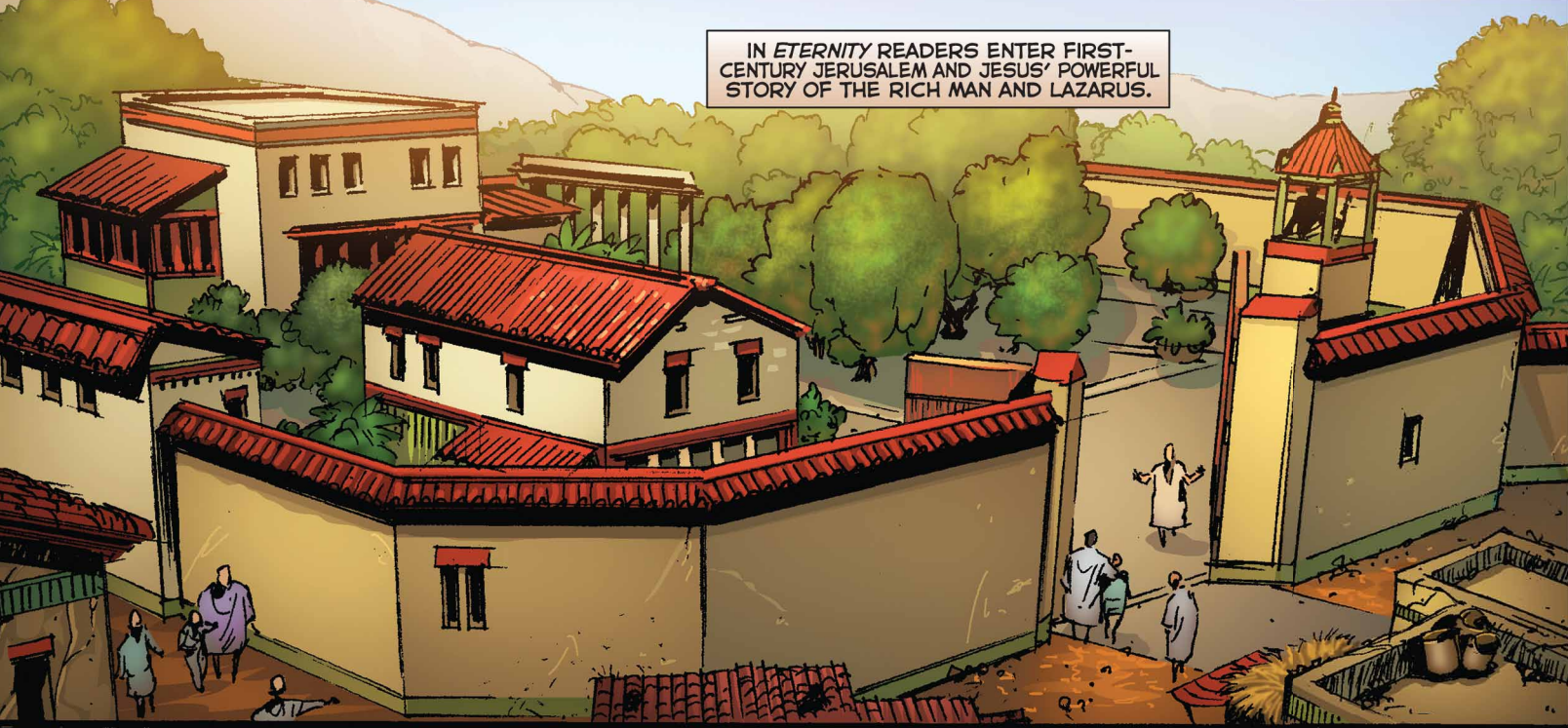


I THOUGHT I'D INTRODUCE YOU TO MY LATEST BOOK IN THE *MEDIUM* IN WHICH I TOLD IT-THE GRAPHIC NOVEL FORMAT!

ETERNITY IS MY FIRST GRAPHIC NOVEL. IT WAS A BLAST TO WRITE-AND I AM *VERY* EXCITED ABOUT IT!

RANDY ALCORN, NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF *HEAVEN*

IN *ETERNITY* READERS ENTER FIRST-CENTURY JERUSALEM AND JESUS' POWERFUL STORY OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.



DRAWN BY VETERAN COMIC ARTIST JAVIER SALTARES, *ETERNITY* DEPICTS TWO SHOCKINGLY DIFFERENT SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS...



RANDY SHARES HIS EXCITEMENT ABOUT *ETERNITY*, NOW AVAILABLE FROM EPM

I can't tell you how excited I am about my first graphic novel, *Eternity*.

In my novels, and even in my nonfiction, I try to paint vivid pictures of Heaven and Hell. But when all you have is words, they must do all the "painting." It's very different with a graphic novel (if you're not familiar with the term, that's an extended comic book form). Javier Saltares, the artist, and Ben Prenevost, the colorist, have gone above and beyond in following my descriptions and adding their innovations, producing over 600 images for the book. The quantity of art in a graphic novel is remarkable. But quantity is one thing; quality is another. And this art is quality!

In 28 years of writing, this is the first time I've felt like the final product hasn't rested, humanly speaking, 95% on my shoulders. For over a year after finishing the writing of *Eternity*, I've been enjoying looking at terrific art, based on my writing, being produced weekly!

Writing is immensely hard work. (As C. S. Lewis said, what is easy to write is usually hard to read, and what is easy to read was hard to write.) I pour my heart and soul into it. Days intended to be taken off are commandeered by writing. During bike rides and in bed and on vacations, my thoughts turn to writing. (Not a complaint, just a reality.) It means a great deal to me to know that others labored as hard as I did and used their remarkable God-given gifts to create visually what I've written. It's been moving to see in front of me what was conceived in my mind's eye and to have it not only live up to my very high expectations, but exceed them.

I love the idea of junior high, high school, and college-aged young people (and older people too) being drawn to a beautifully illustrated graphic novel that contains the gospel, based on a powerful story that Jesus told. I'm looking forward to reaching an audience that doesn't read conventional books. But if they grow or come to faith, hopefully one day they will read them! EPM plans to send thousands of them to prisons. By God's grace we'll hear stories of people turning to Christ.

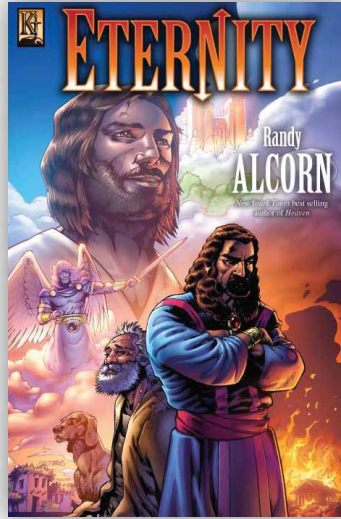
I'm convinced that through *Eternity* God will not only allow me to reach a new audience, but also—and this is my prayer—to draw others who have read my books before into this new venue of graphic novels.

A note from the lead pastor of my church, Alan Hlavka, contained these encouraging words:

"Last evening I read *Eternity*. I felt I was experiencing the vivid reality of my first months as a new believer, back in college—when the literalness of Christ's life, death, power and presence overwhelmed my life. It really fed and challenged my heart. 'First love' stuff was going on. I'm looking forward to reading this book again and again, and seeing the broad impact it's going to have in countless lives."

In the grace of Jesus,

Randy

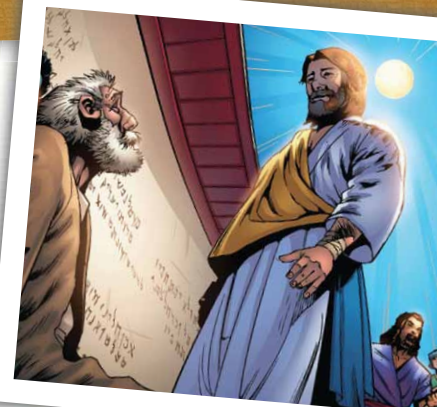


View more sample art and order at www.epm.org/eternity

PARTNER WITH US (PLUS A SPECIAL OFFER)

We want to encourage you to read *Eternity* yourself (if you've never read a graphic novel, we predict you'll like it!) and to catch the vision of how you can share it with others. Here's four ways you can partner with us in sharing the book:

- 1 A "Buy-two-get-one-free" special**
Purchase 3 paperback *Eternity* books from www.epm.org/eternity (retail \$16.99, EPM price \$13.59 per book), and during checkout, use the discount code **magazine3** to deduct the full price of one book. Offer ends August 10, 2013. *Limit 1 free book per order.*
- 2 Send us your stories**
We'd love to hear your stories of how God has used the book to impact readers. Send them to us at www.epm.org/contact-us.
- 3 Support our books for prisoners fund**
Help us send the book to prisoners nationwide. Donate online at www.epm.org/donate (under "Special Funds" select "Books for Prisoners Fund").
- 4 Join our Facebook party on Thursday, July 25**
See the magazine back cover for your invitation and more details.



6 Eternal Truths to Remember Each Day

by Randy Alcorn

A startling thing has happened among modern Christians in the western world. Many of us habitually think and act as if there is no eternity—or, as if what we do in this present life has no bearing on eternity.

The trend today is to focus not on our eternal future (who cares about the “sweet bye and bye”?) but our present circumstances, as if this world were our home. Yet Scripture states the reality of our eternal future should dominate and determine the character of our present life, right down to the words we speak and the actions we take (James 2:12; 2 Peter 3:11–12).

Let’s be sure to remind ourselves today—and every day—of “the real thing.” Here are six eternal truths to remember:

1 There are only two eternal destinations—Heaven or Hell—and I and every person I know will go to one or the other.

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it (Matthew 7:13–14).

Both Heaven and Hell touch Earth—an in-between world leading directly into one or the other. The best of life on Earth is a glimpse of Heaven; the worst of life is a glimpse of Hell. For Christians, this present life is the closest they will come to Hell. For unbelievers, it is the closest they will come to Heaven.

The reality of the choice that lies before us in this life is both wonderful and awful. Given the certainty of our two possible destinations, shouldn’t every person be willing to pay any price to avoid Hell and go to Heaven? And yet, the price has already been paid. “You were bought at a price” (1 Corinthians 6:20). The price paid was

exorbitant—the shed blood of God’s Son, Jesus Christ.

Consider the wonder of it: God determined that He would rather go to Hell on our behalf than live in Heaven without us. He so much wants us not to go to Hell that He paid a horrible price on the cross so that we wouldn’t have to.

All roads do not lead to Heaven. Only one does: Jesus Christ. He said, “No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). All other roads lead to Hell. The reality of Hell should break our hearts and take us to our knees and to the doors of those without Christ.

2 This world (as it is now) is not my home and everything in it will burn, leaving behind only what’s eternal.

The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming (2 Peter 3:10–12).

Earth has been damaged by our sin (Genesis 3:17). Therefore, the earth as it is now (under the Curse) is not our home. The world as it was, and as it will be, is our home. We are pilgrims in this life, not because our home will never be on Earth, but because our eternal home is not currently on Earth. It was and it will be, but it’s not now.

God says this present earth will be consumed by fire (2 Peter 3:10). Paul says the fire of God’s holiness will consume whatever we’ve done that amounts to wood, hay, and straw. But he tells us there’s something that will survive the fire and go right into the new heavens and new earth—works of gold, silver, and precious stones (1 Corinthians 3:12).

What will last for eternity? Not your car, house, degrees, trophies, or business. What will last for eternity is every service to the needy, every dollar donated to feed the hungry, every cup of cold water given to the thirsty, every investment in missions, every prayer for the needy, every effort spent in evangelism, and every moment caring for precious children—including rocking them to sleep and changing their diapers. The Bible says we'll reap in eternity what we've planted in this life (Galatians 6:7–8).

3 My choices and actions in this life have a direct influence on the world and the life to come.

Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done (Revelation 22:12).

What we do in this life is of eternal importance. You and I will never have another chance to move the hand of God through prayer to heal a hurting soul, share Christ with one who can be saved from hell, care for the sick, serve a meal to the starving, comfort the dying, rescue the unborn, translate the Scriptures, bring the gospel to an unreached people group, further God's kingdom, open our homes, or share our clothes and food with the poor and needy.

When we view today in light of the long tomorrow, the little choices become tremendously important. Whether I read my Bible today, pray, go to church, share my faith, and give my money—actions graciously empowered not by my flesh but by His Spirit—is of eternal consequence, not only for other souls, but for mine.

4 My life is being examined by God, the Audience of One, and the only appraisal of my life that will ultimately matter is His.

So then each of us will give an account of himself to God (Romans 14:12).

Ask yourself whether you are living for the approval of this culture, or for the approval of Jesus. Then ask yourself, "In the end whose judgment seat will I stand before?" We are to live out our lives before the Audience of One. His approval is the one that matters. If our goal is to hear others say, "Well done," we won't do what we need to do to hear Him say it.

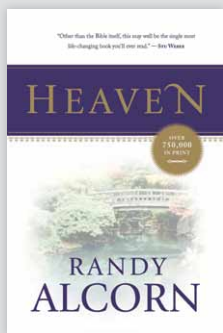
We should remind ourselves of what the Bible says about being fools for Christ (1 Corinthians 1:18–31; 4:8–13). The question is not whether we will be seen as fools—that part is certain—but when and to whom we will be seen as fools. Better to be seen as fools now in the eyes of other people—including other Christians—than to be seen as fools forever in the eyes of the Audience of One. *(continued on next page)*

We do well to think of the long tomorrow.

—A. W. Tozer

more

EPM offers Randy's book *Heaven* for an everyday, discounted price. Read an excerpt and order at www.epm.org/heavenbook



Browse our many free resources on Heaven and eternity at www.epm.org/resources/heaven

5 God is sovereign, and I can trust that He is working all things—including the most difficult things—in my life together for good.

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).

In the midst of a world that groans under suffering and evil, God's main concern is conforming His children to the image of Christ. And He works through the challenging circumstances of our lives to help develop that Christlikeness in us. We can be assured that whatever difficulty He has allowed in our lives has been Father-filtered, through His fingers of wisdom and love.

Perhaps the greatest test of whether we who are Christ's followers believe the truth of Romans 8:28 is to identify the very worst things that have ever happened to us, then to ask whether we believe God will in the end somehow use those things for our good. The Bible is emphatic that He will. We have no reason to think He'll be any less trustworthy concerning this than with any other promise He has made. By faith let's trust Him today that in eternity we'll look back and see, in retrospect, how Romans 8:28 was absolutely true!

6 My ultimate home will be the New Earth, where I will see and enjoy God and serve Him as a resurrected being in a resurrected human society.

But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13).

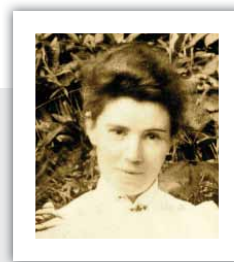
Is resurrected living in a resurrected world with the resurrected Christ and his resurrected people your daily longing and hope? Is it part of the gospel you share with others? Paul says that the resurrection of the dead is the hope in which we were saved. It will be the glorious climax of God's saving work that began at our regeneration. It will mark the final end of any and all sin that separates us from God. In liberating us from sin and all its consequences, the resurrection will free us to live with God, gaze on Him, and enjoy His uninterrupted fellowship forever, with no threat that anything will ever again come between us and Him. ■

For a Time of Sorrow

Sorrow is one of the things that are lent, not given. A thing that is lent may be taken away; a thing that is given is not taken away. Joy is given; sorrow is lent. We are not our own. We are bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), "and our sorrow is not our own" (Samuel Rutherford said this a long time ago). It is lent to us for just a little while that we may use it for eternal purposes. Then it will be taken away and everlasting joy will be our Father's gift to us, and the Lord God will wipe away all tears from off all faces (Isaiah 25:8).

So let us use this "lent" thing to draw us nearer to the heart of Him who was once a Man of Sorrows (He is not that now, but He does not forget the feeling of sorrow). Let us use it to make us more tender with others, as He was when on earth and is still, for He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Hebrews 4:15). ■

—Amy Carmichael, *Edges of His Ways: Daily Devotional Notes*



Amy Carmichael (1867-1951) was a missionary in India for 55 years, where she rescued and ministered to the abused and needy. She was also a prolific writer and poet. "One can give without loving," she wrote, "but one cannot love without giving."

No More Tears

A Father's Anticipation of Heaven

Whenever I spend time with severely disabled people—physically, mentally, or both—I'm keenly aware of how wonderful it will be to have resurrected bodies. My friend David O'Brien is a brilliant man trapped in a body that groans for redemption. His cerebral palsy will be gone the moment he leaves this world for the present Heaven, but the biggest treat will be at his resurrection, when he will have a new body, forever free of disease. I picture David running through fields on the New Earth. I look forward to running beside David . . . and probably behind him.

My body and mind, for the moment, may be relatively healthy. But as an insulin-dependent diabetic, I've known what it is for both my body and my mind to fail me. They suffer under the Curse enough that I too know just what I want—a new body and a new mind, without sin, suffering and incapacity. Every year that goes by, I long more to be a resurrected person and to live on the resurrected Earth, with my resurrected brothers and sisters, and above all, with my Lord—the resurrected Jesus.

In this touching article, Greg Lucas writes about anticipating his disabled son's total healing.

—Randy Accorn



By Greg Lucas

Springboard communication device, they have become so much a part of his life and body, he cannot do without them.

I glanced up in time to watch Jake wrestle his coat off and then his shirt. He grunted and fought with his sleeves in a noble battle, nearly toppling over from unbalanced determination. As he struggled to free himself from his outer garment, I sensed his irritation, which only amplified my own desperation to care for this broken boy.

Last Sunday, as I was changing Jake's clothes, (after a gallant but failed attempt to get him to the bathroom on time) I slid his leg braces off his crooked feet and stared for a while at the devices that are supposed to help him walk.

"AFO's": ankle-foot-orthotics. I hate them. He hates them. But like his thick glasses and his

My face seems to be scarred these days with the dried and salty tear tracks of weary frustration. I cry more than people know—more than a man likes to admit. Still I fight to keep composure. "No more tears. Someday, no more tears," I quietly remind myself.

In the midst of the wreckage, like so many times before, my mind is carried to a sheltering place of wonderful assurance and future grace. I have it memorized:

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (Phil. 3:20-21)

What does this promise mean to a desperate dad and his disabled son?

In my most vivid, imaginative and reoccurring dreams—it looks something like this:

I'm walking with Jesus through a wheat field (I'm not sure why I always envision a wheat field; it just seems right...and biblical). *(continued on next page)*

The sun is shining brighter than I have ever seen it shine—at least it looks like the sun, only more brilliant, loving and personal. It penetrates everything with a powerful presence. The sky is electric blue decorated with sparse, white-cotton clouds. The temperature is mild and the wind is gently blowing a hint of honeysuckle into my nose, reminding me of childhood summers when life was new and worries few.

Jesus is silent as He walks, and He's smiling. He is setting the pace and occasionally turning His head to look at me. His hands are held out just below waist level as He lets them glide gently over the heads of wheat. It's as if He has a certain purpose in mind, a surprise of some sort. His smile grows wider and warmer as we get closer to our destination.

I want to look around and take in the scenery—I'm certain it's breathtaking, but His face is all I can focus on at the moment. I cannot take my eyes off Him. He is inviting, comforting, safe and filled with so much joy! I am completely satisfied and without fear in His presence.

I have a strong desire to take His hand like a little child and never let go, but all my faculties are so captivated by His presence that none of my voluntary senses will respond. I can only look on Him and enjoy—and yet that is enough.

The beauty of the azure-blue sky outlines His face and the brilliance of the Great Light behind Him nearly blinds my peripheral vision as it breaks through His thick, dark hair.

Suddenly He stops, closes His eyes and slightly nods His head as if answering a silent whisper. Turning towards me, He places one hand on my shoulder and with the other He touches His finger to my chin and physically, but gently, turns the gaze of my face forward to a lone figure walking from the edge of the wheat field.

The unfocused silhouette begins to move towards us. His shoulders are broad and his gait is smooth, like a warrior running into battle. For just a moment I wonder if we are in danger, but then I remember I am with Jesus.

As the figure gets closer, the first facial feature I can make out is a smile, warm and inviting—beaming with joy. He slows to a gallop just short of reaching us; then walks, and then stops. There is a familiarity in his presence.

The wind blows through the wheat field as Jesus softly laughs and affectionately nudges my shoulder.

"Go see!"

I walk towards the lone figure, and the mysterious character places his hands on his hips, throws back his head, and laughs.

The closer I get, the more I begin to understand.

"Dad, it's me!" The man proclaims with a strong baritone voice.

"Jake?"

I begin to move with urgency towards him, running hard and then falling like a child into his arms. A long embrace is mixed with rejoicing, then weeping, then astonishment and joy.

Gripping him with a father's love, I kiss his chiseled cheek and bury my face into his neck. He smells like the field—earthy, strong, clean and sweet.

"Jacob! My son!"

Grasping his shoulders, I gaze on his face.

"Look at you son! Look at you!"

We stare at each other for a second and I step back, scanning him from head to toe and taking in his sharp demeanor. His hair is thick and glowing auburn like the peak foliage of a sugar maple in fall. His eyes are glistening hazel, clear and focused. With no thick, smudgy glasses to

hinder his view, he returns a sharp and steady gaze.

"Look...at...you!" I repeat in complete wonder.

He smiles with uncontainable elation and raises his arms, turning 360 degrees for a full inspection.

"You should see how fast I can run! You want to race me?"

"I...I don't think I can run right now, son," I respond, stunned with complete awe.

"Come on, dad! Let's go, on three!" He playfully challenges as he runs in circles around Jesus and me,

darting straight and cutting on a dime from side to side.

Jesus laughs.

"You always did like to run," I reply, my mind blinking back to crooked legs, plastic braces and clumsy feet. Oh, how I hated those braces.

"Yeah, but now I don't fall—ever!" He smiles as he leaps through the air. "I can run like the wind!"

He finally comes to an abrupt stop and faces me, placing both hands on my shoulders, forcing my full attention. His smiling demeanor turns dead serious.

"And wait till you hear me sing!"

The volume of his voice decreases as he closes his eyes. "I have all these songs in my head."

His elation returns as the volume increases with the speed of his excited tone. "Remember that song you used to sing to me when you brushed my teeth? By the way, LOOK at my TEETH!" He smiles his familiar, contagious smile and opens his mouth wide for inspection.

"And that song mom used to sing when she put me to bed? And that song you sang when you woke me up and every time you washed my hair? That really helped me



get through my bath time, by the way. I always wanted to tell you that, but...well, you know."

"And all those songs we sang in church...I know them ALL!"

He is talking so fast, so eager and so clear, like he has been waiting to talk all his life. I can barely keep up with all he is saying and find myself joyfully adrift with the simple tone of his voice and the beautiful inflection of his words.

Suddenly and spontaneously he stops talking, looks skyward, and begins to sing,

"Before the throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea: A great High Priest, whose name is Love, who ever lives and pleads for me."

His voice is smooth and beautiful, deep and articulate. It grows bolder with anticipation and excitement as his eyes move from the sky, back to me, and then to Jesus.

He points to the Savior as his focus grows intent.

"My name is graven on His hands, my name is written on His heart; I know that while in heaven He stands, no tongue can bid me thence depart. No tongue can bid me thence depart."

Jesus smiles in reply to the satisfaction of his worship.

"Show him your hands Jesus! Show him your hands!"

Jake excitedly concludes his hymn of praise just as abruptly as it began.

"I learned a new song too! Wait till you hear it, dad."

"I cannot wait to hear it, son."

We talk and sing throughout the day—a day that never ends—as we stroll and run without tiring under the brilliant blue sky. We talk about the years of his

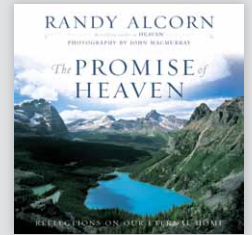
disability, the suffering, confusion and pain. We talk about the things he missed, and the things I missed—the hurt and the frustration, the laughter and the joy. There is forgiveness in his tone and grace in his words—so much grace. He is so excited to tell me everything, and I am so ready to listen.

Jesus is between us, in our midst. He puts His arm around Jake and reaches over and wipes my cheek with the sleeve of His garment. "No more tears," He gently commands. "Today, no more tears."

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen (Hebrews 11:1). ■

more

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Watch/listen to Randy's message "Difficult Truths & Deep Love: Pondering Sovereignty, Suffering, and the Promise of Heaven" at www.epm.org/deeplove.

*Greg Lucas is a police officer and a Bible teacher and advisor for The Elisha Foundation, which encourages families experiencing disability toward a more intimate faith in Christ (www.theelishafoundation.org). He is also the author of *Wrestling with an Angel: A Story of Love, Disability and the Lessons of Grace*. Greg and his wife, Kimberly Ann, have four children.*

Pain isn't for God's benefit;
He uses it for ours (James 1:2-4; Genesis 50:20).
He is a God who redeems.
It hurts to straighten what is bent.

—Julia Stager, EPM staff



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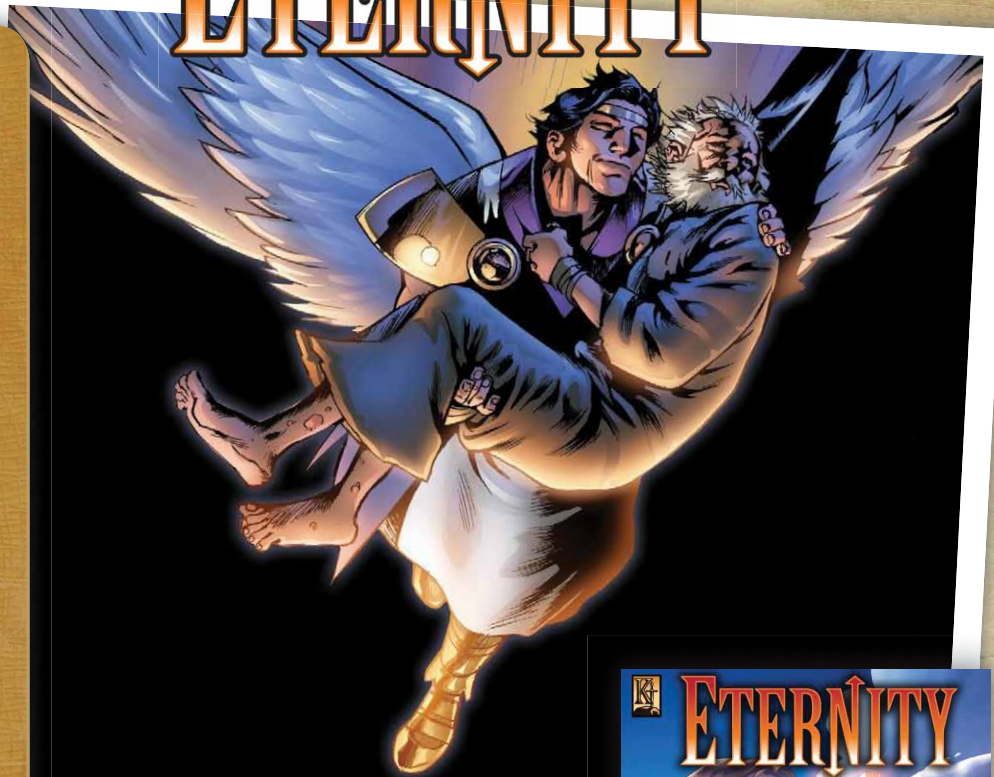
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