

eternal

perspectives

SPRING/SUMMER 2017

RANDY ALCORN ON

WHO ARE YOU BECOMING?

PLUS

Making Your Days Count

**The Difference Between Nice
and Kind—and Why It Matters**

**Can Self-Forgetfulness
Make Us Happier?**



contents

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|--|
| 3 | Come and See Jesus
Randy Alcorn | 12 | Can Self-Forgetfulness Make Us Happier?
Randy Alcorn |
| 4 | Making Your Days Count
Joni Eareckson Tada | 14 | Q&A
Randy Alcorn |
| 10 | The Difference Between Nice and Kind—and Why It Matters
Barry Corey | 15 | News from EPM |
| 11 | Two (of the Many) Ways EPM Is Impacting Eternity | | |



about

Eternal Perspectives seeks to encourage readers to learn to live in light of eternity. This magazine is a publication of Eternal Perspective Ministries, a Christ-centered nonprofit organization founded and directed by author Randy Alcorn. Have feedback? Email us at magazine@epm.org.

All Scripture quoted in Randy's articles are from the English Standard Version (ESV), unless otherwise noted.

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COME AND SEE *Jesus*

BY RANDY ALCORN

Come and see what God has done, his awesome deeds for mankind! —Psalm 66:5 (NIV)

Philip invited his friend Nathanael to “come and see” Jesus (John 1:45-46). The best way to “come and see” is to open the Bible and learn about Jesus. If you hold Him at a distance, you’ll never see the truth of who He is.

Have you come? Have you seen Him? If not, brace yourself. Because once you see Jesus as He really is, your worldview, your affections, *everything* will change.

The first UK physician to die of the AIDS virus contracted the disease while conducting medical research in Zimbabwe. Near the end, he couldn’t talk and had only enough strength to write the letter *J*.

His wife asked, “Jesus?”

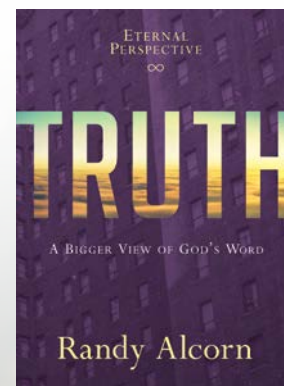
He nodded. Yes, Jesus. In the end, Jesus is what mattered. ■

“If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him.” —C. T. Studd

The above is an excerpt from my new devotional book *Truth: A Bigger View of God’s Word*, which offers 200 brief daily meditations, Scriptures, and inspirational quotes that will enable you to grasp more fully the TRUTH of God’s Word. It contains reflections not only on the general topic of truth, but also on many facets of truths found in Scripture, including eternity, purity, holiness, and happiness.

In a world of clashing claims and competing worldviews, where our own feelings and circumstances change from day to day, nothing is more important than God’s truth. It’s real, life-giving, and able to transform. We desperately need it to ground and guide us. —*Randy Alcorn*

Learn more and order at epm.org/truth.



MAKING YOUR DAYS

Count!

BY JONI
EARECKSON
TADA



Absorbing the sudden news that you have a terminal illness can be overwhelming. Up until that bad medical report, you enjoyed a certain rhythm in your days: running errands, picking up your kids from soccer, dropping things off at the cleaners, coffee with friends, and your weekly routine of the market. But now, it's all being held hostage by medical appointments. Your disability has become a big parenthesis in your life, and you find yourself wondering if things will ever get back to normal. There are even days when you wonder "If this is the way it's going to be, is life really worth living?"

Whenever I begin to think my efforts don't count—or even when my quadriplegia and wheelchair feels like too much to handle—I think of a young woman named Kim. Perhaps more than any other person, Kim showed me that my life—your life—counts and it counts more than we can possibly imagine.

A CONVERSATION WITH KIM

I first learned about Kim when an elder from her church in Pennsylvania called to ask if I would contact her with a few words of encouragement. "Kim is a brilliant 26-year-old Christian woman who has always been active in our church," he said, "but last year she contracted a motor-neuron disease and now must stay in bed. She can hardly move and she must be fed with a feeding tube." The elder paused for a moment, then added, "Kim is very depressed, and she's wondering if her life is worth living anymore."

I telephoned Kim right away. Her mother tucked the receiver under her ear. Her breathing was so faint, I could hardly hear Kim's voice. We discussed many things, including our favorite parts of the Bible, the subject of Heaven, and prayer. Finally, Kim said with great labor, "Joni, they want to give me a ventilator to help me breathe, but I don't know whether I want one. I'm so tired. Do you think I should go on a ventilator?"

I was speechless. I took a deep breath, whispered a prayer, and replied, "Kim, there are a lot of things to consider, not the least of which is that your decision will affect many people around you. But of the two

choices facing you, I think there's a better one." I then proceeded to tell her a simple but powerful Bible verse which has encouraged and guided me through the toughest of times in my 45 years of quadriplegia.

24 HOURS OF OPPORTUNITIES

Second Peter 3:8 says, "Do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day." We all know the old adage that God looks at the last 2,000 years as a couple of days gone by, but what about the other half of the verse? The part about seeing each day as a thousand years? It's like divine geometry. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out God's mathematical formula. If we see each day as comparable to a millennium in eternity, then each 24 hours is chock full of opportunities to invest in a thousand years' worth of eternity. Each day God gives us the precious gift of hours to invest in the lives of others—investments which will have eternal repercussions for us and them.

Kim perked up at this idea. "But I'm in bed. I can't go anywhere or do anything. How can my life count in this condition?" This is what I told her: First, Kim, you can pray. No matter how feeble or fainthearted your prayers may seem, they have very special power with God. It says in Psalm 10:17, "You, Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry." The Lord cups His ear to listen when someone like you prays, someone who is enduring great affliction. He bends over backward when people offer Him "a sacrifice of praise" (Hebrews 13:15). God is going to use your intercessions to shake the lives of everyone around you.

That intrigued her. "And your obedience counts for eternity. Now is your chance to stretch your soul's capacity for God, Kim. Your patience and endurance will resound to more glory to God than you can possibly appreciate right now. As it says in Romans 8:18, 'I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.' If you keep a godly response, then it must multiply out to at least 558 years of eternal benefit to you and glory to God!"

She laughed. I shared more. I encouraged her to think of the impact her patience and endurance would have ►

**EACH DAY GOD
GIVES US THE
PRECIOUS GIFT OF
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IN THE LIVES OF
OTHERS.**



WHEN YOU LOOK TO

Jesus

EACH DAY, EACH MINUTE AND HOUR,
YOUR LIFE WILL COUNT FOR ALL OF ETERNITY.

on others around her, like her mom and dad. Philippians 2:4 tells us to always look out for the interests of others before our own. We are always called to think of others no matter how difficult our circumstances.

I suggested to Kim, “The next time your mother tube-feeds you your lunch, why don’t you ask to say a blessing on the food before she syringes it into your G-tube?” She thought that was a creative idea! I continued, “Do the divine geometry on that one. It’s got to pan out to at least 784 years’ worth of eternal benefit to you and your mother, as well as glory to God.”

What a way for Kim to live out her remaining days. If she were to live only two more weeks with a perspective like this, that figures out to be 14,000 years’ worth of eternal reward and glory. By the time we finished talking on the phone, my young friend was energized.

GOD’S DIVINE CALCULUS

It should energize us, too. No matter how overwhelmed we feel by a terminal diagnosis and all its attending problems, our lives count. The smile you give others in the waiting room... the notes of encouragement you jot to other patients in the chemo clinic... the phone call of appreciation to your doctor’s secretary... the cookies you bake for the women’s group who is praying for you... all these things count! “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

Isn’t that wonderful? Your light and momentary troubles are achieving for you an eternal glory that far outweighs the inconvenience of any hardship you may be facing. If you give God a little obedience in a tough situation, He will do His divine calculus—He will multiply out to you one eternal blessing after the next that will make your earthly trials seem like a dim, half-forgotten memory.

Little wonder Psalm 90:12 tells us, “[O Lord], teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” So value your days and make the most of every opportunity for doing good because this is the kind of wisdom God wants you to apply to your 24-hour slices of time. Life is so short and even James 4:14 asks, “What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.” No wonder the Bible describes each day as like a thousand years—that’s how priceless they are.

Kim ended up living another month-and-a-half after our conversation on the phone. But as her mother told me later on, those 45 days—she looked at them as 45,000 years—were some of the most meaningful and important weeks she ever lived.

A LIFE WORTH LIVING

Friend, if Kim made the most of every opportunity to reflect Jesus Christ during those difficult last days of her life, you and I can reflect Jesus, as well. So get a head start on eternity by understanding—and investing in—the real connection between this world and the next. Please know that your prayers, obedience, sacrifices, and Christian encouragements toward others have a direct and positive bearing on your capacity for joy, worship and service to God in Heaven.

Life worth living is not found in a set of circumstances—whether pleasant or painful. Life worth living is found in a person, the Prince of Life. The Resurrection and the Life. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He has the words of life. And Christ the Savior is the One who desires to be Lord of your days, as well as your Wisdom for living. When you look to Him each day, each minute and hour, your life will count... and it will count for all of eternity. And with that, you get an A+ in His divine geometry! ■

Joni Eareckson Tada is the founder and CEO of Joni and Friends International Disability Center, an international advocate for people with disabilities, and the author of over 50 books. This article originally appeared on joniandfriends.org.



THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT OF OUR LITTLE CHOICES

BY RANDY ALCORN


Have you ever seen a sink hole? Cars can be parked on a street day after day, and everything appears normal, then one day the asphalt caves in and cars disappear into a gigantic hole.

Everybody says, “That hole came out of nowhere.” But they’re wrong. The hole appears suddenly but the process that led to it has gone on for many years. The underground erosion was invisible, but it was there all along.

Likewise, sometimes when a man commits adultery and abandons his family, it appears to have come “out of the clear blue sky.” It hasn’t.

Sink holes remind us of two things: first, something can look good on the outside, when underneath major problems have been going on for years, and disaster’s about to happen. Second, our lives are affected by little choices, which have cumulative effects that can result in either moral strength or moral disaster. ►



A close-up photograph of a person's right arm and hand holding a black pen over an open book. The book's pages are visible, and the person is wearing a blue denim shirt. The background is a light-colored wooden surface.

A battering ram may hit a fortress gate a thousand times, and no one impact seems to have an effect, yet finally the gate caves in. Similarly, sinful actions don't come out of nowhere—they're the cumulative product of little moral compromises made over time, which ultimately result in ungodly behavior. On the other hand, it's equally true that godly actions are the cumulative product of small, habitual, and Christ-honoring choices for righteousness.

WHO ARE YOU BECOMING?

Every day we're becoming someone—the question is, who? Author Jerry Bridges, hearing me address this, told me that Dawson Trotman, founder of The Navigators, used to say, "You are going to be what you are now becoming."

Scripture speaks of this process of character development: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Who you become will be the cumulative result of the daily choices you make. "The path of the righteous is like the first light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day" (Proverbs 4:18). This is why Scripture continually warns us against wrong choices: "Do not enter the path of the wicked and do not walk in the way of the evil. Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and

pass on" (Proverbs 4:14–15).

You become like what you choose to behold. Behold Christ, you become Christlike. Gaze upon superficiality and immorality, and it's equally predictable what you'll become.

CHOICES FOR GODLINESS

"A long obedience in the same direction," to borrow a Eugene Peterson phrase, is sustained by the small choices we make each day. Most of us know the difference between eating cottage cheese and donuts, or the difference between a daily workout and spending life on a couch. What I eat and whether I exercise will determine the state of my body. The same is true of our spiritual lives. Whether I read Scripture and great books, or spend my best hours watching TV and looking at my phone, will make me into the person I will be several years from now. I should discipline myself today, not for discipline's sake, but for the purpose of godliness (1 Timothy 4:7, 8).

Psalms 1 says the one who continually meditates on God's Word "is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither." Trees do not choose where to place themselves, but we do. We determine what our sources of nourishment will be.

DEVELOPING GODLY HABITS

Following Christ isn't magic. It requires repeated actions on our part, which develop into habits

EVERY DAY WE'RE BECOMING SOMEONE—THE QUESTION IS, WHO?

and life disciplines. Our spirituality hinges on the development of these little habits, such as Bible reading and memorization and prayer. In putting one foot in front of the other day after day, we become the kind of person who grows in Christlikeness. Once we develop Christ-honoring habits and experience their rewards, we'll instinctively turn our minds to what makes us happy in Christ.

A decade from now, would you like to look back at your life, knowing you've made consistently good decisions about eating right and exercising regularly? Sure. But there's a huge gap between wishes and reality. The bridge over the gap is self-control, a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23).

The key to self-control is discipline, which produces a long-term track record of small choices in which we yield to God's Spirit, resulting in new habits and lifestyles. In fact, Spirit-control and self-control are interrelated in Scripture, because godly self-control is a yielding of self to the Holy Spirit.

It's true we are creatures of habit—but it's also true Christ can empower us to form *new* habits.

YOUR CHOICES TODAY

So how can you start to make the right small choices? Ephesians 5:15-16 tells us to "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time." Why not redeem two hours of your day that you would have spent on television, newspaper, video games, phone, working overtime,

or hobbies? Change your habits. Spend one hour meditating on and/or memorizing Scripture. Spend the other hour reading a great book. Share what you're learning with your spouse and children, or a friend.

Listen to Scripture and audio books and praise music while you fold clothes, pull weeds, or drive. Say no to talk radio or sports radio, not because they're bad but because you have something better to do. Fast from television, the Internet, and social media for a week. Discover how much more time you have. Redeem that time by establishing new habits of cultivating your inner life and learning to abide in Christ. "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

May we call upon Christ's strength today to make choices that will honor Him, bring us great happiness, and help us become the kind of people we want to be ten years from now! ■

Looking for further resources to help you grow in your Christian walk? Randy has compiled a list of recommended books, blogs, websites, and software to help readers go deeper into God's Word and draw closer to Jesus. See the list at epm.org/resourceslist.

the difference

BETWEEN NICE

AND KIND

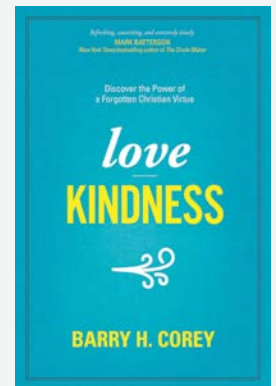
and why it matters



BY BARRY COREY

Barry Corey has written an important book, which I thoroughly enjoyed. He advocates true kindness without reducing it to mere cosmetic niceness. Too many Christians choose between standing for truth and demonstrating grace, and the result is self-righteous meanness disguised as truth or indifferent tolerance disguised as grace. *Love Kindness* attempts to avoid both errors, and it's full of both grace and truth, with warm and heart-touching stories. (I was particularly moved by the example of Barry's dad.)

The church today desperately needs the humility that rejects mean-spirited religion and exemplifies kindness while upholding biblical truth. You needn't agree with everything in this book to profit from it immensely—it will make you think, reflect, and see yourself as others may see you. Most important, it may prompt you to ask Jesus, “Will you help me to love kindness?” —Randy Alcorn



I've been distressed in recent years by so many Jesus followers who are more interested in picking a fight than making a friend. Someone told me recently that we never lead our enemies to follow Jesus, but we do lead our friends. Christians have been quick to bypass kindness and prefer to begin a shouting match, or they just talk among themselves about how awful the other side is. We have ranted before we've related, deeming the latter too soft on sin. Christians—and I've seen this especially in American Christians in

recent years—have employed the strategy of winning the combative way, and it's not working.

The “culture wars” have done little to change our society, and we've lost many if not all of these wars. As a result, the church too often is marginalized and mocked, and increasingly people are viewing the Bible as just as intolerable as our aggressive tactics. It's time for a new way of living lives of radical kindness, not to be accepted but to be faithful. I'm willing to bet that if Christians leaned more into kindness and understood more its revolutionary

power, the world would see a side of us that would cause many skeptical and irate folks on the other side to take notice. Our radical gestures of kindness may be rejected. They may be received. But they will not be forgotten.

By kindness, I'm not talking about when you buy a stranger coffee or when you bring in your neighbor's trash cans or when you tell someone they have food in their teeth. These are nice random acts. But kindness is not a random act. It's a radical life. Kindness is not limited to grandmothers or Boy

Niceness may be pleasant, but it lacks conviction. It has no soul.

Scouts. Never mistake kindness for niceness. Kindness is all over the Bible, plentiful in both Testaments. But you won't find niceness in the Bible once—nor the word nice, for that matter. Kindness is fierce, brave and daring. It's fearless and selfless, never to be mistaken for niceness. They're not the same and never were. Kindness is neither timid nor frail. Niceness is kindness minus conviction. I think we should scrub "nice" from our vocabulary. We need to stop telling children to be nice and instead tell them to be kind, and then tell them the difference.

The virtue of kindness is rooted in Scripture, forged on sound Christian theology and modeled over the centuries by followers of Jesus. Since the early church, disciples have walked the risky and sometimes dangerous road of kindness. Kindness is a radical way of living biblically. It's a fruit of the Holy

Spirit on Paul's short list in Galatians 5. It's not a duty or an act. It's an imperative. It's the natural outcome of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives. We exhale kindness after we inhale what's been breathed into us by the Spirit. Kindness radiates when we're earnest about living the way of Christ, the way of the Spirit. Kindness displays the wonder of Christ's love through us.

Niceness may be pleasant, but it lacks conviction. It has no soul. Niceness trims its sails to prevailing cultural winds and wanders aimlessly, standing for nothing and thereby falling for everything. Kindness is certainly not aggression, but it's also not niceness. Niceness is cosmetic. It's bland. Niceness is keeping an employee in the job, knowing he's no longer the right fit therefore failing him and the company because you don't have the courage to do the kind thing. Kindness calls you to tell him

he's not the person for the position and then dignify him in the transition.

Kindness is a dimension of God's common grace through us. It's a civility grounded in gentleness and respect. At the same time, kindness is neither milquetoast nor weak. It is fierce and passionate. The God-authored spirit of kindness in us has the power to upend the enemy and season the world around us for the good. Kindness as Jesus lived it presents the highest hope for a renewal of Christian civility, a renewal needed now more than ever. ■

Dr. Barry Corey serves as the president of Biola University (biola.org)

and is the author of Love Kindness: Discover the Power of a Forgotten Christian Virtue (see amzn.to/2orHgLA). Barry and his wife, Paula, have three children.



Two Ways EPM Is Impacting Eternity

1 Randy writes books, which God uses to change the lives of readers worldwide.



2 The book royalties are given away to worthy ministries, which God uses to change lives.



Each week our staff hear from many readers letting us know how a particular book has impacted them. Here's a recent story we loved:

One reader told us about her son, who is leaving this summer for a 3-year mission to Thailand. It all started because she read Randy's novel *Safely Home*, and then had her son read it when he was in middle school. She writes, "After reading *Safely Home*, his focus was totally and completely on being obedient to spreading the Gospel...His long-term God-Vision is to have a Christ-centered youth home in EVERY urban city in Asia."

Would you like to partner with us to change lives in Jesus' name? Give online at epm.org/donate or text 503.444.8675 with the dollar amount you wish to give.

*Your
Partnership
Makes It
Possible*

Donations to the general fund support our office operations and staff, including Randy as he writes, as well as enable EPM to give away 100% of the book royalties.

CAN

Self-Forgetfulness

MAKE US HAPPIER?

BY RANDY ALCORN

"Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." —Philippians 2:4-7

"The thing we would remember from meeting a truly gospel-humble person is how much they seemed to be totally interested in us. Because the essence of gospel-humility is not thinking more of myself or thinking less of myself, it is thinking of myself less." —Timothy Keller

On the first day of a long-awaited two-week vacation, I found out that a book I'd labored on intensely had been altered for the worse, and I had no recourse. It was the one and only time in thirty years of writing that the published book would be inferior to the manuscript I'd submitted. It was the low point in my professional life. I was disappointed not only by what had happened but also by how deeply it affected me. If you've ever been disappointed by your own disappointment, you understand. ("I should be bigger than this—how come I'm not?")

We were at our friends' house on Maui. Despite the beautiful surroundings, I stewed over this writing project, even though I realized I'd eventually gain perspective. (I did, but not until after the vacation; I just wanted to fast-forward to when I knew I'd feel better!) Meanwhile, I snorkeled for three hours

a day. That was the only time when the cloud dramatically lifted. Floating and diving among the beautiful fish, turtles, eels, and sharks—and enjoying a magical hour and a half swimming with a monk seal I named Molly—I lost myself in these creatures and the God who made them. I forgot about myself, my shortcomings, others' failings, and my disappointments.

I left my troubled self on the shore. As long as my face was underwater, I was free and happy. It was only when I got out of the water and came back to "Randy's world" that my happiness vaporized.

Sometimes when times are tough, I have that same experience of losing myself during quiet times with God. Sometimes I have it when laughing with family and friends. Other times it's when I'm riding a bike or listening to music or a great audio book. In his book *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis said of



I'm happy.

the humble person, "He will not be thinking about humility: he will not be thinking about himself at all." I've seen the truth of what Lewis and Tim Keller and others have discovered, experiencing my greatest happiness not simply when I think less of myself, but when I think of myself less. When I'm thinking most about Jesus and others, and least about me, I'm most fulfilled.

People who think a lot about themselves and their plans for wealth and success—e.g., writing a bestselling book and being mentioned in the same sentence with Hemingway—tend to be unhappy.

However, people who think a lot about Christ and His grace, the great doctrines of the faith, and how to love and serve others tend to be happy people. By redirecting attention from ourselves to God, we adopt a right perspective that brings happiness. Just as I revise my writing to make it better, I must revise my beliefs and thought habits in light of God's Word. Happiness isn't my exclusive goal, of course, but it's certainly a welcome by-product.

Psalms 37:4 reads, "Delight yourself in the LORD." Not "sit there and wait for the Lord to delight you." It's active, not passive. We aren't spoon-fed His pleasures; we need to go to the banquet, reach out our hands, and eat that delicious cuisine. As surely as it's our responsibility to put good food in our mouths, it's our responsibility to move our thoughts toward God and be happy in Him!

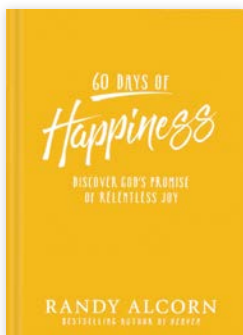
We need to stop consuming our self-preoccupied thoughts and instead cultivate our appetite for God and what's true about Him: "Taste and see that the LORD is good. How happy is the man who takes refuge in Him!" (Psalm 34:8, HCSB).

When I contemplate Christ—when I meditate on his unfathomable love and grace—I lose myself in Him. When He's the center of my thinking, before I know it, I'm happy.

Tim Keller writes in *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness*, "Don't you want to be the kind of person who, when they see themselves in a mirror or reflected in a shop window, does not admire what they see but does not cringe either? . . . Wouldn't you like to be the skater who wins the silver, and yet is thrilled about those three triple jumps that the gold medal winner did? To love it the way you love a sunrise? Just to love the fact that it was done? You are as happy that they did it as if you had done it yourself. . . . This is gospel-humility, blessed self-forgetfulness."

As commendable as such humility is, we can never achieve it simply by willing it to appear. Otherwise, we'll be thinking about ourselves and our valiant attempts to be humble. What we need is to be so gripped by Jesus and His grace, so lost in His love, that we truly forget about ourselves. Why would we want to think about ourselves, the lesser, when we can think about Him, the infinitely greater? This happens directly, when we worship and serve Him, and also indirectly, when we love and serve others for His glory.

Lord Jesus, this side of Heaven we'll never completely forget about ourselves, but by your grace, help us more and more to turn our focus away from ourselves and toward you so we can experience the happiness of self-forgetfulness. Show us how we can better serve others, not just ourselves. Thank you for motivating and helping us to help others—for your gladness, as well as theirs and ours. ■



a 60-day devotional from Randy Alcorn

This article is an excerpt from **60 Days of Happiness: Discover God's Promise of Relentless Joy**. Randy writes, "This book is drawn from carefully selected portions of my larger book *Happiness*. However, I've reworked the material to present it in a fresh and different way. It's for anyone who likes to deal with subjects in bite-sized chunks that are also heart-touching and practical. I hope it not only informs you about one of the most appealing subjects in the world but also encourages you and moves your affections toward God."

Learn more and order at epm.org/60days.

Q Even though I know Christ and look forward to being with Him in Heaven, I still struggle with fear about what the moment of my death will be like. What perspective can you give me?

ANSWERED BY RANDY ALCORN

A Years ago, I interviewed a young man from Burundi who told me something profound: “If I fear death as unbelievers do, I have nothing to offer unbelievers. Only when you are free from the fear of death are you really free.”

Though as believers we know that Heaven awaits us after death, many of us still wonder about or fear the moment of death. What will it be like? Will it be frightening to experience the soul’s departure from the body?

May we remember that Jesus came to deliver us, “that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery” (Hebrews 2:14-15).

I love Charles Spurgeon’s perspective:

Depend upon it, your dying hour will be the best hour you have ever known! Your last moment will be your richest moment, better than the day of your birth will be the day of your death. It shall be the beginning of heaven, the rising of a sun that shall go no more down forever!

There’s evidence that at the moment of death, the believer will be ushered into Heaven by angels (Luke 16:22). Different angels are assigned to different people (Matthew 18:10), so perhaps our escorts into Heaven will be angels who have served us while we were on earth (Hebrews 1:14).

Most importantly, the Lord Himself will be with us during our deaths. He has promised to never leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). Nothing, not even death, can separate us from His love (Romans 8:38-39). God promises that all who know Him will experience acceptance into His holy, loving, and gracious arms.

Erwin Lutzer describes death and God’s presence



with us this way in his book *One Minute After You Die*:

Death is not the end of the road; it is only a bend in the road. The road winds only through those paths through which Christ Himself has gone. This Travel Agent does not expect us to discover the trail for ourselves. Often we say that Christ will meet us on the other side. That is true, of course, but misleading. Let us never forget that He walks with us on this side of the curtain and then guides us through the opening. We will meet Him there, because we have met Him here.

Psalm 23:4 says, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, *for you are with me*; your rod and your staff, they comfort me” (emphasis added). Nancy Guthrie writes in her *One Year Book of Hope* about this verse:

There is no doubt that a shadow is a dark place to be. But when the Lord is our shepherd, we no longer have to fear the dark places that death takes us. In the shadows we reach out to find him beside us, and the fear of the unknown fades. When he gently uses his rod of correction to prod us in the right direction and his staff of compassion to draw us close, we find comfort.

When we are in the fold of God, death is impotent to destroy us. It is depleted of its evil power. The valley where we encounter death is transformed into a place of peaceful comfort; it is in this valley that we are more aware of God’s presence than ever before. ■

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Speaking Events

Randy will be speaking several times over the coming months, including:

Operation Mobilization Ships Presidential Briefing
June 22-25, 2017 | Montego Bay, Jamaica
omships.org

American Christian Fiction Writers Conference
September 21-24, 2017 | Grapevine, Texas
acfw.com/conference

Illuminations Conference
October 26-29, 2017 | Washington, D.C.
illuminationsgathering.org

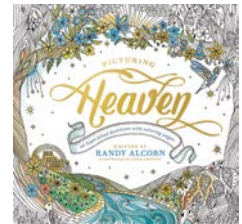
For more details and a full list, see epm.org/events.

Coming This Fall

We're excited to introduce two releases coming from Randy. Stay tuned to epm.org for more info!

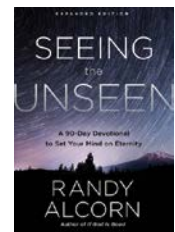
Picturing Heaven: 40 Hope-Filled Devotions with Coloring Pages

This coloring book features 40 designs carefully interpreted from the pages of Scripture, accompanied by meditations on our eternal home. Preorder at epm.org/picturingheaven. (Expected release September 2017)



Seeing the Unseen, Expanded Edition: A 90-Day Devotional to Set Your Mind on Eternity

Each brief entry in this 90-day devotional inspires readers to live with a right view of eternity. This new edition is expanded to include 30 additional daily readings. Preorder at epm.org/unseen. (Expected release October 2017)



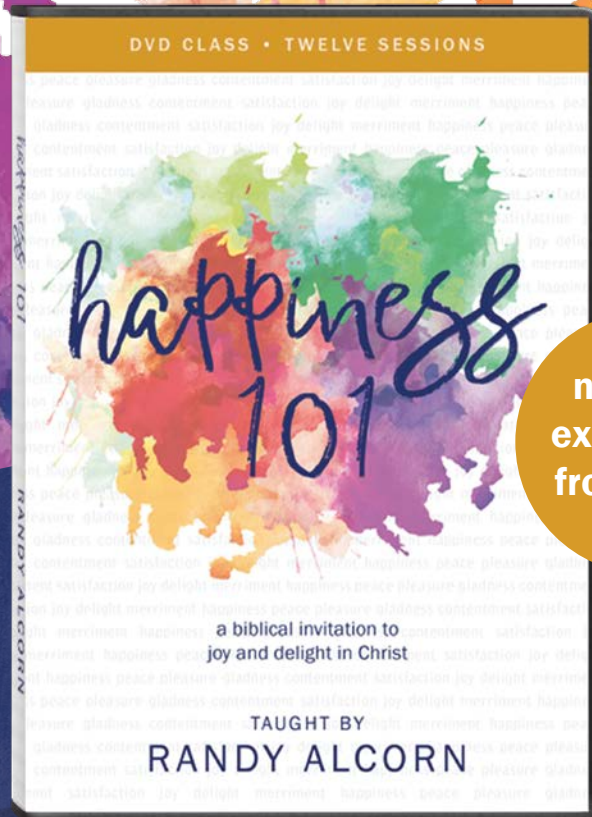
Pray for Randy's Trip to Nigeria

Lord willing, this November, Randy and Nanci will travel to Africa, where Randy will be speaking at the national pastor's conference for Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA, one of the largest denominations in Nigeria). This is a strategic opportunity for him to teach and encourage thousands of pastors. The Alcorns would deeply value your prayers for travel, safety, and the eternal impact of their time.

Sign up to receive our occasional prayer updates by email at epm.org/connect.



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