



ETERNAL PERSPECTIVES

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

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How Could a Good God Allow Evil and Suffering?

by Randy Alcorn

The Problem of Suffering

I walked through the Killing Fields in Cambodia. I saw the skulls piled up, and stood by the mudpits where hundreds of bodies were thrown. I saw a human jawbone lying at my feet. I picked it up, held it in my hand, and wept. The darkness was overwhelming—the ground cried out at the tragedy in which two to three million Cambodians, nearly one third of the country's population, were murdered by Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge.

Along with eight others, I was escorted by a gentle Cambodian couple, Vek and Samoeun Taing, who survived the Killing Fields. Samoeun's parents both starved to death. One of her brothers was known dead, another brother was never seen or heard from. Presumably he was murdered and thrown into one of the thousands of unmarked graves, many of them containing hundreds of bodies each.

Vek's brother and sister-in-law and six children all perished in this holocaust. We stood together at a tree where Khmer Rouge soldiers killed children by holding their feet

and swinging them into the tree to smash their heads.

I'll never forget our visit to Yad Vashim, the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, which to me is even more powerful than the Holocaust memorial in Washington, DC, though I recommend that one too.



VekHuong Taing in front of a mass grave of 450 victims in Cambodia (picture taken by Randy Alcorn)

My newly released novel, *Safely Home*, is set in China, and has a subplot about the persecution of Chinese Christians.

In Africa, children are dying of AIDS and starvation. Not long ago, one of our church's missionary families put their three-year-

old down for his rap. He never woke up. Little Eli died. Their lives came to a screeching halt. They live each day with this terrible loss.

My mom and my best friend from childhood both died of cancer.

I watched my father die and have been there as families have been devastated by tragedies. So why am I telling you this sad news? Because I want to address what is perhaps the most common argument against religion in general and the Christian faith in particular—the problem of suffering and evil.

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Evil and Suffering as an Argument Against God

The logic goes like this:

- There may be no God at all.
- There may be a God who is all good.
- There may be a God who is all powerful.
- But there *cannot* be a God who is all good and all powerful, because such a God could not allow such evil and suffering as we see in this world.

Many years ago I read Rabbi Harold Kushner's New York Times best-seller, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. He concluded God is all good but not all powerful. Kushner said, "It's too difficult even for God to keep cruelty and chaos from claiming their innocent victims."

In other words, God wins some and he loses some. But he's just not strong enough to stop evil. By attempting to solve a problem, Kushner commits a heresy. This is not the picture of God portrayed in the Bible.

There are no easy answers to this sobering question. But here are some perspectives to consider as you wrestle with it.

1. The Bible itself raises this question. It never backs away from it.

The problem of suffering and evil is raised in Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Job, and many of the Psalms.

God does not condemn people for asking such questions. For instance, Jeremiah 12:1 says, "You are always righteous, O LORD, when I bring a case before you. Yet I would speak with you about your justice: Why does the way of the wicked prosper?"

The Psalms ask questions like, "Why, O LORD, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? Why are the heavens silent when I ask for help? Why do the good suffer? Why do the evil prosper?"

Anyone who tries to gloss over or minimize the problem of evil doesn't get it. I've walked through the streets of Garbage Village in Cairo, and places of great poverty in Africa, China, Cambodia, and the former Soviet Union. Like many readers, I've been with suffering people. The Bible doesn't underestimate the seriousness of suffering and evil and neither should we.

2. The Bible attributes the origin of human evil to people exercising their free will; when they choose to disobey God's standards, it brings suffering.

God said, "You can eat the fruit of every other tree, but if you eat from this one, you will surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17). "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). We are free to choose, but *there will be severe consequences if we choose to disobey*. Adam and Eve chose that path. When they did, then evil, death, and suffering kicked in.

The Bible teaches that the whole earth was under man's dominion and care, and that not only man, but animals and all creation suffered the effects of human sin. "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration...in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious



Shelf of skulls, the Killing Fields, Cambodia

freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time" (Romans 8:19-22).

Thus, one of human sin's consequences is a disordered creation, including natural disasters. But the greatest tragedies of history, which have caused the most suffering, are not natural disasters, but wars and persecutions and murders conducted by sinful human beings. (Jesus made it clear that this does *not* mean that each person's suffering is due to that person's sin [Jhn 9:1-3].)

People are quick to lay the blame for this at God's feet. They point to portions of the Bible that speak of terrible things. But there is much the Bible records that it doesn't endorse. And when God orders military aggression against a particular people group, we should take a closer look at the group and their cancerous influence on surrounding nations. We may still not understand, but at least we'll have a more accurate picture of what was at stake.

God condemns the human choices that have brought the great majority of suffering. Men blame God. But God blames men. Jesus looked at the suffering of Jerusalem, and wept over it. He longs for people to live by his standards. If we did, there would not be evil and suffering.

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3. To argue that God should not permit evil or suffering is to argue against human beings having free choice.

Is moral freedom good? Is it right that we have the ability to choose for ourselves? Or would it be better if human beings were choiceless, mechanistic robots who did good because we had no other choice?

When we question God, we're exercising the same freedom of choice as when we choose good or evil. We're having this discussion only because God has created us with a freedom to make choices and have our own viewpoints.

Without this freedom to make meaningful choices, we wouldn't be human. What does freedom mean? Until we are transformed by Christ in the resurrection, doesn't it necessarily involve the capacity to choose evil? Of course. You cannot have true freedom of choice if you can only choose good but not evil.

And what if evil was stripped of all its consequences, so you could choose evil but it wouldn't bring any suffering? Well, then it wouldn't be evil any more, because evil and suffering are inseparable, just as good is inseparable from the desirable consequences it produces. Strip evil of its consequences, and we wouldn't be exercising real choices. It would only be a facade.

The freedom to choose is sacred in this society. Isn't it ironic to blame God for giving us the very freedom we so highly prize?

4. The things we consider the greatest virtues would not be known in a world without evil and suffering.

Here's a short list of desirable qualities: compassion, mercy, heroism, courage, justice, sacrifice.

Think about it. Could there be...

- Compassion without suffering?
- Mercy without need?
- Heroism without a desperate plight?
- Courage without danger?
- Justice without injustice?
- Sacrifice without a compelling case for it?

Which great virtues could be seen in a world without suffering or evil? Don't most if not all of the greatest virtues come into play in response to evil and suffering?

Think of your favorite books and movies. Take *Gladiator*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *Schindler's List*, or *Amistad*. Or take fiction like *Star Wars* or *Lord of the Rings*. The virtues and camaraderie that inspire us in these stories *could not exist without evil or suffering*.

If you could snap your fingers and remove all evil and suffering that has ever happened, would you? If you did, there could be no Helen Keller, Frederick Douglas, Sojourner Truth, Abraham Lincoln, Harriet Tubman, Susan B. Anthony, Corrie ten Boom, or William Wilberforce (who abolished England's slave trade).

We must not minimize suffering. But we must also admit that we praise the virtues that have emerged from suffering. In so doing we make an unspoken admission, *that good can come out of suffering*.

Isn't it logically inconsistent to say the virtues that emerge out of contexts of suffering are good, then turn around and say there's no way a good God could allow evil and suffering?

5. Short-term evil and suffering sometimes accomplish long-term good.

The Bible shows God using evil deeds for his good purposes, deeds done through the willing actions of moral creatures.

For instance, Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. It was a terrible evil, and God held them accountable. But many years later Joseph rose to power in Egypt, and under his guidance they stored up huge amounts of grain to survive a great famine. Citizens of Israel and other nations came to Egypt to get grain. Joseph said to his brothers who sold him into slavery, "You intended it for evil, but God intended it for good—to save many lives." (Genesis 50:20).

God can and does use human acts of evil—and the suffering that comes out of them—for other people's good. Paul says "we rejoice in our sufferings,

because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Romans 5:3,4).

After all his years in the Gulag, Solzhenitsyn wrote: "It was only when I lay there on rotting prison straw that I sensed within myself the first stirrings of good. Bless you, prison, for having been in my life." Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl didn't glorify suffering, but he did speak of definite good that came out of it.

One effect of suffering is to draw people to God. 2 Cor. 1:8-9 says we endure suffering "in order that we should not trust in ourselves but in God, who raises the dead."

The British preacher Charles Spurgeon suffered from a very painful disease. He said, "If I did not believe my disease came from the hand of God, I would be in despair." This is very different than Rabbi Kushner who tries to console himself and his readers by believing God lacks the power to prevent our suffering. In fact, there is little comfort in a God who lacks the power to control things! There is far more comfort in a God who permits suffering and can use it for our good, to fulfill a sovereign purpose.

6. Our moral objection to evil and suffering is itself an argument for a good God.

This may sound contradictory, but think about it. Only by appealing to a standard of goodness that's outside ourselves can we determine that evil is evil and there is something fundamentally wrong with suffering.

How could moral evil evolve out of lifeless matter? Chemicals mixing and molecules banging against each other cannot account for good and evil. Nor can they account for the profound human awareness of good and evil.

An atheist may say evil proves there is no God. But follow this to its logical conclusion. Without God there is no reference point for good and evil. Who can condemn nature for evil? Nature is what nature is. And we should have no capacity to break outside the system and evaluate it if we are really the product of blind evolution rather than intelligent design.

On what basis can we call one thing good and another evil? If there is no God, then "good" and "evil" are nothing more than subjective feelings reflecting what our culture has taught us to approve or disapprove. Evil is nothing more than whatever I happen to oppose or dislike. Suppose you object to murder, but I think it's fine. You think rape is evil and someone else thinks it's okay. Apart from some external objective moral standard we're just exchanging opinions. Why is your opinion or mine more valid than Adolf Hitler's or Jeffrey Dahmer's?

People who claim to be moral relativists say there's no such thing as a moral absolute—but they can't live within their own system. Ask them, "If I were to beat you over the head with a baseball bat, rape your sister, kidnap your child, or burn down your house, do you think that would be absolutely wrong?" Of course—if we admit it, we do believe in moral absolutes. *But who or what is behind those standards?* The answer is a good God who has written his standards of goodness on our hearts.

If there is no God, there is no such thing as objective evil. What we would call evil is merely projecting our subjective feelings onto events. But that doesn't satisfy our instinctive outrage over evil and suffering.

The very fact that we recognize evil and object to it, is evidence that a God of goodness has planted in us the notion of goodness. *We are using God's own standards of good as an argument against him.* My question to some of my atheist friends is, "If there is no God, why are you so angry at him?"

7. If you argue that evil is evidence there is no God, you must also admit that good is evidence there is a God.

You can't have it both ways. You can't argue for the negation of a thing, a good God, by the existence of evil unless you also argue for the thing itself, a good God, by the existence of good. If not for a good God, where would goodness come from?

Is there anything in the blind evolutionary process of survival of the fit test

that would cultivate kindness and putting other people first? How much good should we expect to see in a self-generated world? None. We should only see ruthlessness and the will to survive at everyone else's expense. We do see plenty of that, of course, but we also see kindness, compassion, sacrifice, and love. I'm convinced that without a good God, who creates in us an appreciation of virtue and empowers people to do good, we would see none of those.

8. Our understanding is limited. If there is an all-knowing God, it shouldn't surprise us that he might have purposes in suffering which we cannot comprehend.

Isaiah 55:8 says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

How much do you know? Let's say you're the smartest person who's ever lived, and that you know .1% of all there is to know in the universe. Is it possible that in the 99.9% of all that you don't know, there is enough good in the universe to outweigh the evil? Is it possible that in the 99.9% you don't know, there exists a good God, and even a rational explanation—if you were smart enough to understand it—of why a good God would permit suffering? Is it possible that the evil, bad as it is, has been used to accomplish good purposes?

Ever been to a football game at half time when the band forms words or pictures in the middle of the field? They look great from up in the stands. But have you ever been on the sidelines when the band forms its symbols? You can't see them. What the band's doing appears pointless, confusing, apparently meaningless. We see life from the sidelines. God sees it from above, in the grandstands. The Bible invites us to walk up in the stands and get a better perspective.

In my novel *Edge of Eternity*, after seeing many events of this life that are terrible, something happens to the main character, Nick Seagrave, toward the end:

A vast fabric stretched across the sky. Bending back my head, I saw on

the fabric countless unsightly lumps and knots, like thick, rough yarn with frayed strings.

Suddenly, Marcus beside me, I was yanked up into the sky and pulled through a hole in the center of the fabric. Now I was on the other side, the topside. I looked down and saw a beautiful work of art, like needlepoint or cross-stitching, a magnificent tapestry. The yarn and threads had been perfectly knitted together in elaborate design by the hands of a master craftsman. I saw in the center of the tapestry the Woodsman on a tree. I saw how a senseless murder, history's worst act of betrayal, was the centerpiece of a glorious design. Surrounding it I saw other tragedies, absurd and incomprehensible events that now had clear meaning and purpose.

"It's stunning," I said to Marcus. "Before I saw only the underside, the ugly knots and frays. I never saw the design, the beauty."

"No wonder," Marcus said. "Until now, you have always lived on the wrong side of the tapestry."

A few years ago a woman came to my wife and me. She was dying of cancer. One day she seemed perfectly healthy, the next she was going in for chemotherapy. She wondered why, if there was a loving God, he had let her life fall apart like this.

My wife Nanci used an analogy. Imagine a three year-old-boy has swallowed poison. The father calls poison control and they say, "You have to get him to the hospital, and whatever you do, don't let him fall asleep. If he falls asleep, he'll die." It's a cold winter night and the boy's in his pajamas. His father rushes him to the car. He's sitting beside him in the front seat. Dad rolls all the windows down. His son shivers in the cold. The boy's head starts to drop. His father reaches over and slaps him in the face. The boy cries. His head starts to nod again. The father slaps him again and again, all the way to the hospital.

Can the child understand why his father is slapping his face? Of course not. He's only three years old. His father, through tears, says "I love you, son." But if this is love, the boy doesn't want any more of it.

Even though the child isn't able to understand, the father is acting in his best interests. What the father is doing is good. It appears to be out of line with what the child knows about his loving father. But what the child thinks of as cruelty is actually kindness. His father is doing what is best for him.

Is it possible that God is showing his love in the midst of human suffering, and like three-year-old children, we sometimes don't understand? (By the way, during her illness, our friend came to faith in Christ, and a short time later died. I look forward to seeing her again in heaven.)

The God of the Bible faced both evil and suffering head on. He took it all on himself in an astounding act of redemption. Both the incarnation and redemption of Christ silence the argument of a deistic God who keeps his distance from suffering.

Because we lack omniscience, holiness, justice and love, we are unqualified to pronounce judgment on God. After Job has questioned God about why he has allowed him to undergo suffering, we're told in Job 38, "Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said: "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!"

God asks Job question after question that Job is too young and puny to begin to understand. Then he says, "Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the shadow of death? Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all this. Then he adds a bit of sarcasm. He says, "Surely you know, for you were already born! You have lived so many years!"

Did you catch God's sarcasm? We have lived so few years. Read the last

five chapters of Job. Then ask yourself if you know enough to put God before your judgment seat rather than stand before his.

9. God demonstrates great compassion for people who suffer.

In Exodus 3, when Israel was suffering, we're told,

The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey. The cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

When Paul, who was then called Saul, was killing and imprisoning Christians, Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus. He asked him an amazing question: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" We might have expected him to say, "Why are you persecuting my people?" What he said shows that God takes it personally when his people suffer. And, in ways we do not understand, *God himself suffers along with them.*

Sometimes God intervenes by taking away the suffering. Often he intervenes by meeting people and comforting them in their suffering. Sometimes he holds their hands in death to bring them home to the perfect world he's made for them.

I have been with many suffering people, in China, Cambodia, Egypt, Kenya, Hungary, Russia, the Ukraine, Moldavia, and here in Oregon too. I've heard their stories. I saw my mom die of cancer. I was with my best friend from childhood when he died of cancer. Along with my wife and daughters and brother, I was with my dad when he died. I can tell you from experience that if you turn to Christ and accept his comfort,

he will be there for you in the time of suffering. He will hold your hand and the day you die, he'll take you into the new world, and wipe away your tears.

Christ is so attentive to the suffering of his people that his return to establish the new world will be prompted by the death of the last martyr:

[The martyrs] called out in a loud voice, 'How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?' Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed (Rev. 6:10-11).

God doesn't always do what we ask him to, nor does he do it immediately, when we want him to. But countless millions of people who are suffering—including persecuted Christians in China, Sudan, Indonesia, and many middle eastern countries—have attested to God's care and comfort.

10. Jesus Christ's incarnation and redemption demonstrate that God has never dished out any suffering He hasn't taken on himself.

In the incarnation, God became a man. John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." In the redemption, the only sinless man who ever lived—Jesus Christ, the God-man—took upon himself all the sins and evil and sufferings of the world (2 Corinthians 5:21). He underwent an eternity of suffering in a time span of six hours on the cross. He wasn't forced to do this. He chose to, as the ultimate act of love for mankind.

Because of our sins we are headed toward an eternity in hell, where God is not. Because of his redemption, he offers us an eternity in heaven, where God is.

In Philippians 2, the Bible tells us Jesus was God, but "made Himself nothing." He came down to live in our world, to suffer our weaknesses, to face our temptations and sufferings. God became a servant to us. He came to seek and to save the lost, even to the point of death.

Why did he do this for us? Because he loves us. He saw our suffering and had compassion on us. He wanted to deliver us from the evil that enslaved us.

John 3:16-19 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

The Bible says when Christ was in the garden before he went to the cross, "being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground" (Luke 22:44). The stress upon him even before he was crucified was so great that it was breaking his blood vessels.

He didn't have to die on the cross. He chose to. Jesus said at any moment he could have called twelve legions of angels to deliver him from his captors (Matthew 26:53). That's 72,000 angels. But he didn't choose to be delivered. He chose to die for our sins instead.

The God of the Bible faced both evil and suffering head on. He took it all on himself in an astounding act of redemption. Both the incarnation and redemption of Christ silence the argument of a deistic God who keeps his distance from suffering.

Think about this: if God can bring the single greatest good in human history, the redemption of mankind, out of the single most horrible event in human history, the crucifixion of Christ, then He's a master at turning evil on its head, and bringing about good. If he can use the evil and horrors of his own crucifixion for good, can he use other suffering for good?

11. God promises he will make a brand new world, a new heaven and new earth, where there will be no more suffering.

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, '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!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life" (Revelation 21:1-4).

God offers final relief from suffering for all who will accept his suffering on the cross on their behalf. This promise of an eternity without suffering brings a whole new dimension to suffering. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

This is why Paul can say, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

12. Those who embrace the Christian faith most deeply and passionately are not those who live in comfort and ease, but those who live in suffering.

Today, the strongest Christian churches in the world are not in America, but in places like Sudan, China, Egypt, and India. In Sudan Christians are severely persecuted, raped, tortured, and sold into slavery. Yet they have a vibrant faith in Christ. People who live in Garbage Village, in Cairo, are part of the largest Christian church in Egypt. Hundreds of thousands of the poor in India are turning to Christ. Why? Because the caste system and the fatalism of Hinduism have given them no answers. They are turning to a personal God who loves them and understands suffering, because he has suffered more than anyone.

The prophet Habakkuk wrestled with the problem of evil and suffering. He finally said, "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and

the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights" (Habakkuk 3:17-19).

13. Those who are most critical of God for allowing suffering usually do very little to help alleviate it themselves.

We ask God, "Why aren't you doing more to help the needy?" God might respond, "Look at all the resources I've put into your hands, so no one needs to go hungry. What are you doing with the solutions to world suffering that I've entrusted you? Why aren't you doing more to help the needy?"

We could spend less on houses, drive less expensive cars, spend less money on clothes and toys, and give the money to keep whole villages alive. For the cost of what some of us spend on Starbucks's coffee, we could feed whole families. Before you cast stones at God for not doing what you think he should about human suffering, ask yourself what you could be doing.

Why is it fair for us to judge God for allowing suffering, when we're doing so little to alleviate it? We ask, "If God can help the poor, why doesn't he?" Maybe we should ask, "If God has given us so much to help the poor, why don't we?"

Conclusion

Carrie ten Boom, from the depths of a concentration camp, wrote: "No matter how deep our darkness, He is deeper still."

Suffering is many things, but in the end it is God's invitation to us to trust him, and to look forward to a place where all suffering will forever be replaced by joy. Heaven is that place.

Our present suffering is a reminder that heaven, not this world, is our home. Once we're there with our Lord, he will wipe away our tears.

Then we'll look back at our suffering with new eyes. May God give us a glimpse now of what we will see then.

Strategic Missions Concerns

1. AIDS In Africa— World Relief says that the AIDS problem in Africa is “the worst crisis in human history.” To fully measure the devastation of AIDS, one simply needs to examine the numbers:

- While the Black Death of medieval history claimed 20 million lives, AIDS is expected to kill 40 million people in Africa alone in the coming years. Already, 25 million Africans have contracted the virus.
- With just 11 percent of the world’s population, Africa is home to 75 percent of the world’s AIDS sufferers.
- In Malawi, one of every six people is estimated to be living with the HIV virus.
- There are 13 million orphans in Africa, primarily as a result of their parents’ early death from AIDS. The U.S. Ambassador to Zambia, David B. Dunn, says that more than 25 percent of Zambia’s children are orphans.
- Ratio of the number of Africans killed by AIDS last year to the number killed by warfare: 19:1 (Source: World Health Organization, Geneva)

2. The Christian “center of gravity” is no longer the West...it is Africa, Asia, and South America. This should not be so, though it is not surprising, since Christianity has seldom, if ever, remained healthy and vigorous within rich, dominant societies. The North American component of the global Christian missionary force is a steadily diminishing proportion of the whole.

3. Some 4,000 “unreached people groups” today have no viable Christian witness, according to missions statistician David Barrett. An estimated 1.556 billion people in the world have never heard the gospel.

4. Those who wish only to give and not to go need to be reminded that if all ministry were done by Christians of the same ethnic groups as their non-Christian neighbors, the 4,000 sociolinguistic people groups without any Christian witness would remain unreached forever.

5. The number of people born in the non-Christian world grows by 129,000 a day.

6. Even the well-intentioned giver faces subtle dangers. Roger Hedlund, a missionary with CB International in Madras, India, states, “Americans are especially vulnerable to an appeal that says, ‘Give us your dollars, but not your sons and daughters.’ If we do that, missionary vision will die within a generation, and the dollars will also (eventually) stop.”

7. Only five percent of graduating students in evangelical seminaries, Bible colleges, and similar institutions say they plan to become cross-cultural missionaries. The other

95 percent are planning to minister in North America—which is home to 5 percent of the world’s people, and the most evangelized in the world.

8. Forty percent of all Latin American missionaries return from their assignments early and discouraged because of a lack of training, a lack of on-field pastoral support, and a lack of finances.

9. 4,600 languages still have no portion of the Scriptures. Wycliffe Bible Translators estimates that if translation efforts continue at their current pace, it will take another 100 to 150 years to provide some Scripture in every language that needs it. A complicating factor, however, is that two billion of the people in the world cannot read the language they speak, and so literacy efforts must be added to many translation projects.

10. Trends today. Short-term missions is a definite wave today from the West. The hope is that this trend will have long-term benefit by sparking a lifelong commitment to missions and by widening the pool of informed missions supporters. Another missions movement today is the tentmaker movement, or “kingdom professional.” Restricted access countries require creative access approaches. One such network today is Intent, a network of 50 tentmaking agencies.

11. The world’s estimated 719 million Hindus have long been objects of missionary concern. Despite two hundred years of Christian outreach in India, only one percent of the country would call itself evangelical.

12. Several factors make China the country to watch. Current stats about the number of believers in China could push the number closer to 200 million rather than the previously thought 100 million (that’s almost 20% of the population!).

A recent conference revealed that in one region in China it was known that 87,000 believers were desiring medical training in order to take the gospel to unreached Chinese tribes. They are willing to die for their faith. The Chinese government is under extreme pressure to change their position on persecution to be in league with world trade. China could host the 2008 Olympics, putting even more pressure on them to change its position on Christianity. When you consider these events and factor in human

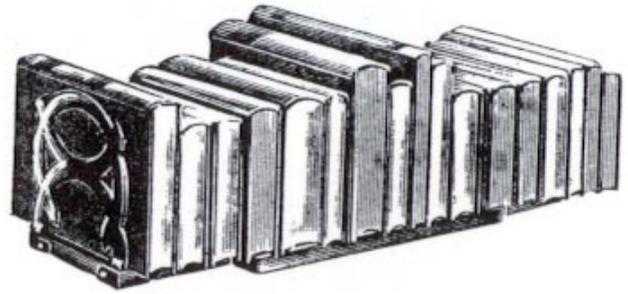


population statistics, you come up with a staggering thought. We could see 10% of all the people who have ever lived in all of human history saved in China during our generation.

Gleaned and edited from various missions publications, newsletters, and books by Ed & Janet Landry, ACTION missionaries in the Philippines. Action International Ministries, PO Bx 398, Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043, Tel: 425/775-4800 Fax: 425/775-0634

My Favorite Books

by Randy Alcorn



Favorite Novels (with apologies to Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Dickens, Hemingway, and Steinbeck)

1. *The Chronicles of Narnia* (7), C. S. Lewis
2. *The Lord of the Rings* (3), J. R. R. Tolkien
3. *Perelandra*, C. S. Lewis (closely followed by the other two in the space trilogy, *Out of the Silent Planet* and *That Hideous Strength*)
4. *The Singer trilogy* (including *The Song* and *The Finale*), Calvin Miller
5. *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*, Homer
6. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain
7. *Robinson Crusoe*, Daniel Defoe
8. *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
9. *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis
10. *The Chosen*, Chaim Potok
11. *In His Steps*, Charles Sheldon
12. *Pontius Pilate*, Paul Maier
13. *A Wrinkle in Time* trilogy, Madeleine L'Engle
14. *The Book of God*, Walter Wangerin
15. *Ben Hur*, Lew Wallace

Honorable mention: *The Birth*, Gene Edwards; *The Mantle* (name later changed to *Elijah*), Robert Stevens

The First Book I Fell in Love With: *Stadium Beyond the Stars*, Milton Lesser—juvenile science fiction I read as a third grader and reread several times in subsequent years; not a great book by anyone's standards, but as Lewis said of George MacDonald's *Phantastes*, "it baptized my imagination."

Short fiction (short stories, plays or poetry): Several short stories by Flannery O'Connor; "Beyond the Horizon," Eugene O'Neill; Poetry, "O God, I Love Thee," Francis Xavier.

Novels I wish were on my list but I've never finished them:

Everything by Tolstoy and Dostoevsky

Novels that are secretly on my list but I won't admit it: *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (and sequels), Douglas Adams

Nonfiction, after the Bible:

1. *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A. W. Tozer
2. *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis
3. *Knowing God*, J. I. Packer
4. *Desiring God*, John Piper
5. *He is There and He is Not Silent*, Francis Schaeffer
6. *Loving God*, Chuck Colson
7. *Through Gates of Splendor*, Elisabeth Elliot
8. *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, Eugene Peterson
9. *Your God is Too Small*, J. B. Phillips
10. *Tortured for Christ, God's Snuggler, Foxes Book of Martyrs* (three books on the suffering church that greatly impacted me many years ago)

2nd team nonfiction:

11. *Peace Child*, Don Richardson
12. *The Everlasting Man*, G. K. Chesterton
13. *Principles of Spiritual Growth*, Miles Stanford
14. *The Calvary Road*, Roy Hession
15. *Biography of George Mueller* (don't recall author)
16. *The Church at the End of the 20th Century*, Francis Schaeffer
17. *Where is God When it Hurts*, Philip Yancey
18. *The Joy of Fearing God*, Jerry Bridges
19. *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster
20. *Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrick Bonhoeffer
21. *Disciple*, Juan Carlos Ortiz
22. *Kingdoms in Conflict*, Chuck Colson
23. *No Wonder They Call Him the Savior*, Max Lucado

Short nonfiction (essays, sermons, booklets, etc):

- "The Weight of Glory," C. S. Lewis
- "The World's Last Night," C. S. Lewis
- "Our Unclaimed Riches," A. W. Tozer
- "The Art of True Worship," A. W. Tozer
- "The World to Come," A. W. Tozer
- "Tyranny of the Urgent," Robert Hummel
- "My Heart, Christ's Home," Robert Boyd Munger.

Nonfiction honorable mention: These are books which I will likely never re-read, but which had great impact when I read them, mainly because at that particular time of life I really needed what they offered. (I see the providence of God in what books He leads me to at what time.)

Let Justice Roll Down, John Perkins
Basic Christianity, John Stott
Battle for the Bible, Harold Lindsel
The Cross and the Switchblade, David Wilkerson
Run, Baby, Run, Nicky Cruz
My Utmost for His Highest, Oswald Chambers
Evidence that Demands a Verdict, Josh McDowell
Countdown, J. B. Hardy
Competent to Counsel, Jay Adams
The Gospel According to Jesus, John MacArthur
The Life of an American Slave, Frederick Douglas
Open Windows, Philip Yancey
Between Heaven and Hell, Peter Kreeft
When I Relax I Feel Guilty, Tim Hansel
Roaring Lambs, Bob Briner
Jesus the Revolutionary, H. S. Vigevino
The Pursuit of God, A. W. Tozer
The God Who Is There, Francis Schaeffer
Jesus Rediscovered, Malcolm Muggeridge
The Content of our Character, Shelby Steele
The Nazi Doctors, Robert Jay Lifton
When People are Big and God is Small, Edward Welch
From Jerusalem to Iryan Jaya, Ruth Tucker
The Pursuit of Holiness, Jerry Bridges

Most powerful books I've read (for first time) in last year:

The Legacy of Sovereign Joy, John Piper
The Hidden Smile of God, John Piper
The Case for Christ & The Case for Faith, Lee Strobel
How Now Shall We Live?, Chuck Colson
Revolution Within, Dwight Edwards
Your God is Too Safe, Mark Buchanan

Authors on a Desert Island: If I had to go on a desert island and could have only 1) my Bible and 2) any and all books written by only seventeen modern authors and ten historical authors, whose books would I take with me?

17 Modern authors: **10 Authors from Church history:**

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. C. S. Lewis | 1. Charles Spurgeon |
| 2. A. W. Tozer | 2. Jonathan Edwards |
| 3. Francis Schaeffer | 3. Martin Luther |
| 4. John Piper | 4. John Calvin |
| 5. J. R. R. Tolkien | 5. John Wesley |
| 6. Eugene Petersen | 6. Augustine |
| 7. Chuck Colson | 7. Thomas Aquinas |
| 8. Max Lucado | 8. John Bunyan |
| 9. Phil Yancey | 9. Blaise Pascal |
| 10. Calvin Miller | 10. Tertullian |
| 11. Elisabeth Elliot | |
| 12. J. I. Packer | |
| 13. John R. W. Stott | |
| 14. John MacArthur | |
| 15. Joni Eareckson Tada | |
| 16. Peter Kreeft | |
| 17. Francine Rivers | |

A Cool Artsy Book: *Beyond Words*,

Ron DiCianni

One Theology Reference Book:

Systematic Theology, Wayne Grudem

Other reference books:

Vine's Expository Dictionary

New Compact Topical Bible

The IVP New Testament Background

Commentary, Craig Keener

"A room without books is like a body without a soul." Cicero

"We read to know we are not alone." C. S. Lewis

"No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader." Robert Frost

"Pithy sentences are like sharp nails which force truth upon our memory." Denis Diderot

"When I get a little money, I buy books; and if any is left, then I buy food and clothes." Erasmus

A Dialogue About Harry Potter Books

(Portions of this dialogue appear in *The Ishbane Conspiracy*

by Randy, Angela & Karina Alcorn)

"Just call me the Oblivious Mother," Diane said. "Either I never knew you were watching those movies or I didn't understand what they could do to you. I'm so sorry. Tonight Daniel's at this anger-management class he has to pass to get back in school. Well, yesterday I asked Daniel how he first heard about the Ouija board, before his uncle gave him one. You know what he told me? Remember those Teddy Ruxpin books, Jilly? There was one called *The Missing Princess*."

"Sure. I remember you reading it to us."

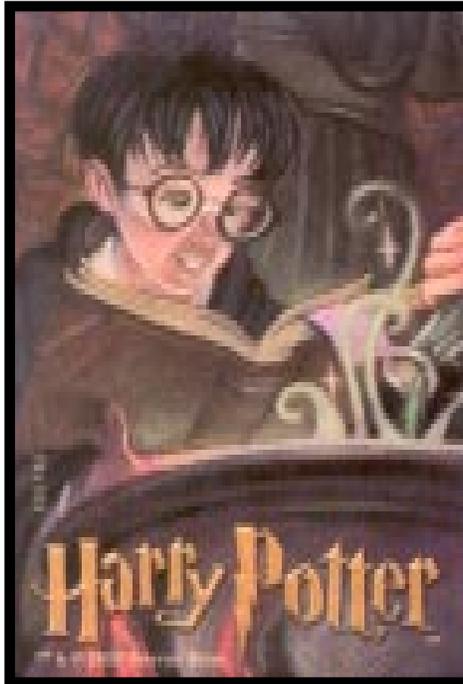
"We still have it—I went and looked it over, and if I hadn't I'm not sure I'd believe it. The children go to someone called the Wizard of Wee Gee. Get it—wee gee? They consult a Ouija board to find where the princess is. Daniel says he always thought that was really cool. We read that book out loud, and I never thought twice about it. I feel like a terrible parent."

"Don't blame yourself, Mom. I should have known better. After he came to Christ, Dad talked to me about movies and some of my romance novels. But by then I'd already seen and read a lot of stuff I shouldn't have. Hey, I'm the one that gave Daniel the Harry Potter books for Christmas, remember? I thought he'd get into the fantasy and the supernatural stuff. At first he turned up his nose because it seemed like they were for little kids, but next thing you know he was reading them all the time, and checking out the other ones."

"As a teacher and a mom," Jodi said, "the Harry Potter books are a hot button with me. Kristi and I have talked about it a lot, haven't we? More kids and adults are reading these books than anything else. Their sales are incredible—something like tens of millions of them. What bothers me, is I keep hearing Christians say that the magic in Harry Potter books is no different than the magic in C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* stories and Tolkien's *Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*. Well I've read both and they are different. In the Narnia books the

children are brought to Narnia through 'magic.' But it's the Creator, it's Aslan who does the miracles, including empowering them each time to get from earth to Narnia."

"Exactly," Kristi said. "And that 'magic' is just another name for supernatural acts, miracles done by God. What Lewis called the 'ancient magic' is God's eternal standards that sin would have to be judged, and that the Son of God's redemption would win back human sinners who have betrayed him. That's a magic beyond the witch's power and understanding. And when the King's



servants do magic, they recognize Him as the source of power. It's more like the apostles praying to God to do miracles."

"But the white witch's magic is different," Jodi said, "it's evil. It's disconnected from God. There's a clear distinction between the two kinds of magic in the Lewis books—you just can't miss it. Supernatural acts done by God are welcomed. But the ones empowered by evil are to be avoided at all costs. But in Harry Potter, the distinction's not so clear. There's no recognition of God as Creator, Judge or Savior."

"I admit for the most part I like the stories," Kristi said. "But they wouldn't be good for someone like Daniel, because the source of Harry's magic isn't clear. Yeah, it doesn't appear to be evil. I mean he's this likable young wizard who's orphaned, then raised by non-magical relatives and invited to study at a school of witchcraft and wizardry. It's good versus evil, and good always wins in the end. Harry has mostly good character and motives, there are virtues like loyalty and friendship and self-sacrifice. But it's full of wizards and witches, and you end up feeling good about witchcraft. But who's actually behind it? What makes the magic work? Is it God, the devil, angels, demons, hidden human powers, nature, impersonal cosmic forces, New Age entities, or what?"

"One thing's for sure," Jodie said, "it's not the God of the Bible. It's not Jesus. And in Scripture there's no such thing as neutral supernatural power sources—they're either good or evil. Those that don't believe in God's Son are evil, even if they're disguised as good."

"That's what I've told Brittany about Skyla," Jillian said. "She keeps quoting me the Wiccan creed 'Do no harm.' That's supposed to make witchcraft okay. But Rob has shown me these Scripture passages saying it's forbidden for us to call on or try to communicate with any supernatural powers except God himself."

"Rob's right on target there," Greg said.

"And if you're not sure," Kristi said, "you have to stay away. That's why when we have kids I wouldn't want them to read Harry Potter until they're old enough that we can read them together and use some discernment. If you've got a strong Christian filter in place, you can screen out the part that's off base, but if you don't..."

"You don't want it to be a doorway to something else," Greg said. "How many kids—and even adults—watch the programs and read the books and learn that witchcraft is really okay, that there's no reason to fear it, that you can use supernatural powers to good ends, even when the God of the Bible has nothing to do with it? It's subtle, but it's dangerous."

Letters to EPM

Dear Randy,

I was both delighted and challenged when I read your book *Deadline*. I am not one to read fictional books, but a friend recommended the book and supplied a copy for me to read. I began reading and found that I could not put it down. I had a little difficulty at first with the paragraphs with Finny in heaven, but I found myself later being challenged by the underlying scriptures. I realized that I needed to reaffirm my relationship with Christ and allow the fire to be rekindled between us. I had grown cold and callous. Thanks to your insight into God's wonderful Word, I was also brought back to the reality that there is always something that I have yet to learn. Your book is a piece of art and I pray that your rewards in heaven will far surpass those you have harvested on earth.

Sincerely in Christ, J.G.

Dear Randy,

I am writing you because my heart is so moved by one of your books. I just read *Money, Possessions and Eternity*. What a life-giving, refreshing commentary this is on the most important topic of our money and the stuff we may possess in this world! My husband and I just had our 8th child last fall and we can testify to the fact that the things in life that God views as important are definitely NOT the stuff money can buy. Rather, it's the people we invest in and how much we pour our lives out for Jesus that really counts. That is where we find satisfaction and fulfillment in life.

L.M., Grand Rapids, MI

Dear Randy,

My brother and I, while traveling several hundred miles together to a family funeral, read to each other, *In Light of Eternity*. It became a blessed and sacred journey together. Conversation was rich, tears flowed freely and our hearts were strangely warmed by the biblical truths in your book.

Both our parents are now safely home, and while living, they instilled in their children, an intensely deep anticipation for home. Your book confirmed our conviction that "this place is not our home and the more we lay up our treasures in heaven, the more we will long for heaven and the more content we'll be to leave earth behind."

Thank you for increasing my longing to see Jesus and enter my heavenly home.

Gratefully, M.G.

Dear Mr. Alcorn,

I just wanted to write you and tell you just how timely your Spring Newsletter was for me. It came in the mail yesterday, at the end of a particularly bad week. My husband had said some really cruel things to me last night, and I was sitting alone in our office wondering how badly God would punish me if I just gave up and divorced him.

Many people have told me that my husband's behavior is emotional abuse, and that he's also having an affair. I figure, whether that's true or not (I don't know), I made a vow of marriage before God and I'm going to stand by it, and I really have no right not to forgive my husband because so much has been forgiven me.

However, last night I was at the end of my rope, when I looked down and saw your newsletter in our pile of mail. Reading the first page or so was enough to change my entire perspective and remind me that whatever my circumstances are, God put me in them for a reason, and it's for my own good, even when it's unpleasant.

I just needed some biblical encouragement, and sometimes that's rare. So thank you, and know that God is using you in wonderful ways.

God bless you, K.S.



Mr. Alcorn,

I just finished reading your book *Lord Foulgrin's Letters* and I wanted you to know it changed my life. I have always been an agnostic. But when I read your book, it opened my eyes to the direction I was taking, particularly when Jordan says, "MY God wouldn't send anyone to hell." I realized I was creating God in my image, not the other way around. The more I read, the more I realized I was just like Jordan Fletcher.

I have read the Bible before, but did not really get the perspective of heaven, hell and the forces at work in both until now.

I went down to a nearby church last night and was saved. I owe you a debt of thanks.

Here's hoping I see you heaven.

Born Again, D.P.

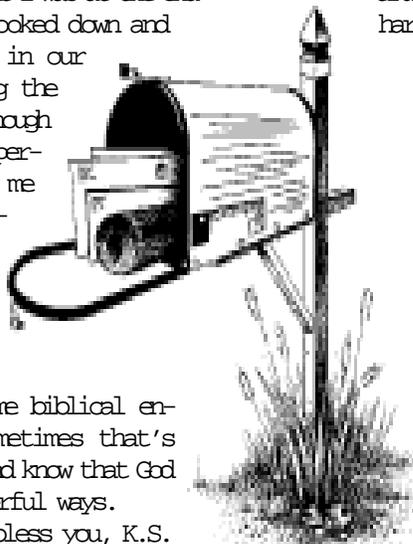
Dear Randy,

ProLife Answers to ProChoice Arguments is filled with so much truth...and yet it was so hard for me to read.

I congratulate you on the extensive research and work that went into that book. Many times during my reading, I had to stop, close my eyes and pray, as I wept, that God would use me to help with the prolife cause and put an end to this horrible practice.

Thank you for a book that our society needs to read!

Sincerely, A.E.



Sometimes Heaven Comes Down to Earth

by Paul Eshleman

On this night, the encounter occurred in a place that seemed more like Hell.

Mozambique was a nation in absolute chaos. Civil war had degenerated into total anarchy. In recent days, this same nation had been devastated by terrible floods. Marauding soldiers and Marxist rebels were fighting each other. Even worse, they were routinely raiding villages and robbing, raping, and killing any person they encountered. At the time, Mozambique was gripped by a cruel famine. Millions were dead or dying.

Over 500,000 refugees had fled. Some had come to a camp just inside South Africa. When JESUS Film partners Willie and Marie Erasmus arrived, the sights and sounds were overwhelming.

Shimmering waves of heat rose in the distance as the blazing African sun beat down on the film team truck. Gritty red dust hung in the air, the evidence of thousands of refugees on the move. Willie and Marie had heard there was little or no water for these people, that they barely staved off starvation by eating a meager daily ration provided by struggling relief agencies.

As they entered the huge camp, they told how they were overcome by the stench of human excrement. Even worse was the sea of emaciated bodies and the empty hopeless looks in the eyes of the people. They heard tale after tale of misery—like that of the young mother who had fled Mozambique with her children, but was eaten alive by a lion before she could make it to the camp. Her two children survived, only to be confronted with this Hell on Earth—their hopes for a better life dashed.

But, there was hope. That's why Willie and Marie had come. A young missionary working among these desperate people had begged Willie and Marie to come and show them the "JESUS" film. At first, Willie had protested, "We haven't yet translated it into the Shangan language these people speak." The young missionary had replied, "It's OK, we'll interpret it while it is being shown." He had already led 30 of these refugees to Christ. In the middle of this camp they had formed a church. And they had been trained and were ready to help counsel those he had prayed would respond to the message that night.

It seemed that Willie drove the truck through the camp forever, trying to find a suitable clearing where the film team could show the film. Finally, they found a place. All afternoon they worked in the searing heat to set up the portable screen and the sound system.

But Marie sensed that something was very wrong. In her spirit she could feel demonic oppression building. Then the team heard witch doctors chanting and saw them throwing bones on the ground in satanic rituals. With howling and incantations, the witch doctors began calling up the "spirits of their ancestors." An eerie and foreboding pall seemed to fall over the camp. Satan wanted the showing stopped.

Willie called the team together to pray. Thirty others who came from a nearby New Life Training Center were also enlisted. They had come to help with evangelism and follow-up, but now they were involved in full spiritual warfare.

For three hours they interceded, praying that God would bind the power of the evil, pour out His blessings, and open the eyes of these spiritually blind people who lived in darkness and continuing misery. They joined hands and walked around in a circle, symbolically encircling the camp. They beseeched God to tear down the walls of evil that had engulfed these people, just as He destroyed the walls of Jericho.

As darkness set in, the ragged refugees emerged from their shacks and began to stream toward the showing area. The witch doctors stopped their dancing. More than one thousand people crowded into the small, dusty clearing. When it was dark enough, the film began.

With the English soundtrack playing low and with microphone in hand, the interpreter translated line by line all that was taking place on the screen. Between reel changes (there are four reels

and three changes) he told them why it was important that Mary be a virgin and how only a supernatural man could be God.

Marie recounted, "During the scenes of the crucifixion in the fourth, 30-minute reel, we sensed something unusual was happening. Everyone began to cry—women, men, and children. A mournful wailing gradually rose from the crowd into a relentless crescendo."

As Jesus was being pushed down the Via Dolorosa, the weeping became louder and uncontrollable. When the Roman soldiers started nailing Jesus to the cross, many of the people jumped up and ran toward the screen with their hands in the air, crying out to God.

Everywhere people were confessing their sins. The film was forgotten. Rivers of tears poured down their dirty cheeks. Men beat their chests and cried out, "Oh God! Oh God!" Some were on their knees, some stood with eyes closed and arms raised, others lay prostrate on the ground. The interpreter was even on his back in the dirt, praying, thanking God, crying, praising, and worshiping.

These people were in the presence of a holy God. They were overwhelmed by a sense of their sinfulness and wanted desperately to be forgiven.



Someone turned off the projector. The film team rushed to pray with and counsel those who were seeking God. But they couldn't speak. One by one, the team members themselves fell to their knees, confessing their own sins.

"I can't explain how I felt," Willie told me. "I felt the awesome power of God. I felt His love, His compassion, His care. It was overpowering. It was a wave that welled up inside us and we couldn't contain it. We were totally, irrevocably, hopelessly in love with Jesus. And the experience just burst out of us with confession and tears, praise and worship, and a feeling of wonder."

Tears came into Willie's eyes, "I saw a nine-year-old boy crying out to God. I turned to pray for him, but I couldn't because I was crying myself. A 70-year-old man with his eyes open and his hands in the air, repeated over and over again, 'I just saw Jesus! I just saw Jesus!' But we were not just seeing the portrayal of Jesus, we were feeling His presence so powerfully that we just couldn't take it in."

Marie continued, "I started to pray with one woman, but I couldn't speak. I was overcome and began confessing my own sins. The sense of God's presence, His power and holiness, was so great that no one could do anything but confess their sin. I knew I was in a holy place. These people had nothing. And God decided to give them a chance—right there in that filthy camp—to feel His presence and His love."

More than 30 minutes passed. Still the sounds of weeping and passionate prayer filled the field. Willie went to the interpreter and said, "We need to finish the film so they will know the good news of the resurrection."

All across the audience the people continued to wipe tears from their eyes. They saw the burial of Christ and then the resurrection. The interpreter explained to the crowd, "Jesus died to make the payment for our sins. But death could not hold him." And with that, he pointed to the screen and shouted with uncontainable joy, "And there He is! He was raised from the dead!" The crowd exploded as if a dam had burst. Everyone

began cheering, dancing, hugging one another, and jumping up and down.

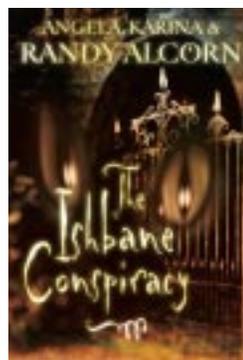
The film team never finished showing the film. An invitation was given for those who wanted to receive Christ to come to the front. The "problem" was they ALL wanted to accept Him as their Savior and Lord—all 1,000 people!

Isn't God wonderful? Who can know or understand His ways? These people had absolutely nothing. They were totally hopeless. They desperately needed to know love, to belong to someone. That night, that holy night, Heaven came down to Hell on Earth. Through prayer, God brought to their impoverished, darkened hearts His indescribable love. They had never heard of Jesus. But that night, they experienced His touch. What a night! What a God!

No, not every showing of "JESUS" is so incredible. Many are actually somewhat routine and predictable. But many others are just as dramatic and power-filled. What is certain is that God is using this most-translated film in all of history to radically, supernaturally transform the lives of millions around the world. To date, some 128 million have indicated decisions for Christ at showings of "JESUS." More than 1,195 Christian organizations have chosen to use the "JESUS" film as one of their primary tools of evangelism. This is why more than 2,885 film teams are laboring using 652 different translations of "JESUS."

Excerpted from a letter from Paul Eshleman, Director, The JESUS Film Project

Note: If you are interested in contributing to The JESUS Film Project, mail all checks payable to: **The JESUS Film Project, 910 Calle Negocio, Suite 300, San Clemente, CA 92673.** Or, if you prefer, you may designate all or a portion of your contribution gift to EPM to go to the JESUS film. As always, we will send 100% of your contribution to the designated recipient.

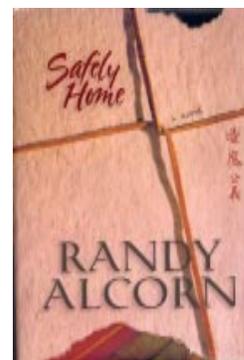


The Ishbane Conspiracy

by Randy Alcorn & daughters,
Angela and Karina Alcorn

Safely Home

by Randy Alcorn



Both just published!!

Available in your local bookstore—or may be ordered

Quantity discounts available from EPM

What About Abortion in the Case of Rape?

The following is an email exchange between our office and a prochoice woman. The first letter was unsolicited. Apparently she saw the prolife articles on our website.

To EPM:

You people make me sick, You could never convince me to change my mind. What if your wife, daughter was raped and was pregnant. Don't you think every time they would look at their child they would think of the brutal act of violence they experienced. And a suggestion along with a prolife book why don't you also put a fetus in a jar on your coffee table.

Jane,

I'm sending this information in response to your message. It is excerpted from Randy Alcorn's book, *ProLife Answers to ProChoice Arguments*. I hope you will read it. Let me know what you think.

"What about a woman who is pregnant due to rape or incest?"

Pregnancy due to rape is extremely rare, and with proper treatment can be prevented.

Studies conducted by Planned Parenthood's Guttmacher Institute indicate that two consenting and fertile adults have only a 3 percent chance of pregnancy from an act of intercourse. They also indicate there are factors involved in a rape which further reduce these chances for rape victims. The Guttmacher Institute says 14,000 abortions per year are due to rape or incest, which amounts to just over 1 percent of all abortions. Other studies show that pregnancies due to rape are much rarer than is generally thought, perhaps as few as one in a thousand cases. Furthermore, since conception doesn't occur immediately after intercourse, pregnancy can be prevented in nearly all rape cases by medical treatment that removes the semen before an ovum can be fertilized.

So where does the misconception come from that many pregnancies are due to rape? Fearful young women will sometimes attribute their pregnancies to rape, since doing so gains sympathy and avoids condemnation. The young woman called "Roe" in the famous *Roe v. Wade* case who elicited sympathy in the court and media because she claimed to be a rape victim-years later admitted she had lied and had not been raped at all.

Prochoice advocates often divert attention from the vast majority of abortions by focusing on rape because of its inherent (and well-deserved) sympathy factor. Their frequent references to rape during discussions of the abortion issue leaves the false impression that pregnancy due to rape is common.



Rape is never the fault of the child; the guilty party, not an innocent party, should be punished.

In those rare cases when a pregnancy is the result of rape, we must be careful who gets the blame. What is hard about this hard case is not whether an innocent child deserves to die for what his father did. What is hard is that an innocent woman has to take on child-bearing and possibly mothering-if she decides to keep the child rather than choose adoption-for which she was not willing or ready. This is a very hard situation, calling for family, friends, and church to do all they can to support her. But the fact remains that none of this is the fault of the child. Why should Person

A be killed because Person B raped Person A's mother? If your father committed a crime, should you go to jail for it? If you found out today that your biological father had raped your mother, would you feel you no longer had a right to live?

Biblical law put it this way: "The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father" (Ezekiel 18:20). And, "Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin" (Deuteronomy 24:16). Civilized people do not put children to death for what their fathers have done. Yet aborting a child conceived by rape is doing that exact thing. He is as innocent of the crime as his mother. Neither she nor he deserves to die.

Rape is so horrible that we easily transfer our horror to the wrong object. We must not impose the ugliness of rape or incest upon either the innocent woman or the innocent child.

The woman is not "spoiled goods"-she is not goods at all but a precious human being with value and dignity that not even the vilest act can take from her. Likewise, the child is not a cancer to be removed but a living human being. By all means, let's punish the rapist. (I favor stricter punishment of the rapist than

do the prochoice advocates I know.) But let's not punish the wrong person by inflicting upon the innocent child our rage against the rapist.

The violence of abortion parallels the violence of rape.

One woman says, "When a woman exercises her right to control her own body in total disregard of the body of another human being, it is called abortion. When a man acts out the same philosophy, it is called rape." There is a close parallel between the violent attack on an innocent woman that happens in a rape, and the violent attack on an innocent child that happens in an abortion. Both are done in response to a subjective and misguided sense of need, and both are done at the expense of an

innocent person. The woman may not hate her child the way the rapist may hate his victim, but this is no consolation to the child. Regardless of the motives or disposition of his mother, he is just as brutally killed. The violence of abortion is no solution to the violence of rape. The killing of the innocent by abortion is no solution to the hurting of the innocent by rape.

Abortion does not bring healing to a rape victim.

Imposing capital punishment on the innocent child of a sex offender does nothing bad to the rapist and nothing good for the woman. Creating a second victim doesn't undo the damage to the first.

In February 2000 presidential candidate Alan Keyes addressed 120 middle school students in Detroit. A thirteen-year-old girl asked if he would make an exception for rape in his position on abortion. He spoke of the pain of rape, then said, "But I don't believe it is right to take that pain and actually make it worse. And to the burden of that rape down through the years, if that abortion takes place, do you know what I'm adding if I let you have an abortion? I'm adding the burden of that abortion. And at some point, the truth of God that is written on your heart comes back to you. And you're wounded by that truth."

One feminist group says, "Some women have reported suffering from the trauma of abortion long after the rape trauma has faded." It is hard to imagine a worse therapy for a woman who has been raped than to add the guilt and turmoil of having her child killed. Even if we convince ourselves and her that it isn't a real child or even her child, some day she will realize it was. Those who advised abortion will not be there then to help carry her pain and guilt.

I have a dear friend who was raped and became pregnant as a result. Because of her circumstances it wasn't best for her to raise the child, but she gave birth, and the baby was adopted into a wonderful Christian family. She periodically has contact with them and her child.

It has not been an easy road, and I would say nothing to minimize her pain. The hardest part is not being able to raise her child, not hearing the footsteps in

her home. Yet there is a bittersweet joy—the joy of knowing God brought this beautiful little girl into the world through her, and brought an immense happiness to this family.

When I look at my friend, I find great comfort in knowing how she has brought joy to our Father in heaven, who has been pleased by her decisions and has brought character and beauty and life out of her suffering. Hers is not the suffering that comes with regret over having done the wrong thing to an innocent child. It is a suffering accompanied by the hand of God who comforts and sustains her, and brings present waves of joy and contentment that are a foretaste of the fullness of joy in the heaven to come. But even now, the wonder she knows when she sees this delightful child overshadows the suffering she has gone through.



A child is a child regardless of the circumstances of his conception.

On a television program about abortion, I heard a man argue, "Anything of this nature has no rights because it's the product of rape." But how is the nature of this unborn child different from that of any other unborn child? Are some children more worthy of living because their fathers were better people? And why is it that prochoice advocates are always saying the unborn child is really the mother's, not the father's, until she is raped then suddenly the child is viewed as the father's, not the mother's? A child conceived by rape is as precious as a child conceived by love, because a child is a child. The point is not how he was conceived but that he was conceived. He is not a despicable "product of rape" but a unique and wonderful creation of God.

Women often think that a child conceived by such a vile act will be a constant reminder of their pain. On the contrary, the innocence of the child often has a healing effect. But in any case, the woman is free to give up the child for adoption, which may be the best alternative. Aborting the child is an attempt to deny what happened, and denial is never good therapy.

One woman told me, "A baby is the only beautiful thing that can come out of a rape." Having and holding an innocent child can do much more good for a victimized woman than the knowledge that an innocent child died in an attempt to deny or reduce her trauma.

What about already-born people who are "products of rape"?

What if you found that your spouse or adopted child was fathered by a rapist? Would it change your view of their worth? Would you love them any less? If not, why should we view the innocent unborn child any differently? After I shared similar thoughts in a lecture, a dear woman in her mid-twenties came up to me in tears. I'll never forget what she said:

Thank you. I've never heard anyone say that a child conceived by rape deserved to live. My mother was raped when she was twelve years old. She gave birth to me and gave me up for adoption to a wonderful family. I'll probably never meet her, but every day I thank God for her and her parents.

If they hadn't let me live, I wouldn't be here to have my own husband and children, and my own life. I'm just so thankful to be alive.

Singer Ethel Waters was conceived after her twelve-year-old mother was raped. Waters touched millions through her life and music. Many other people, perhaps some of our dearest friends whose stories we'll never know, are what some disdainfully call "the product of rape."

Kathy Norquist
Ministry Assistant to Randy Alcorn
Eternal Perspective Ministries

Response from Jane:

DO NOT SEND ANYMORE MESSAGES OR I WILL CONTACT MY PROVIDER!

A. W. Tozer on Prayer . . .

Teach Me to Listen

Now the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant hears."—1 Samuel 3:10

Lord, teach me to listen. The times are noisy and my ears are weary with the thousand raucous sounds which continuously assault them. Give me the spirit of the boy Samuel when he said to Thee, "Speak, for thy servant heareth." Let me hear Thee speaking in my heart. Let me get used to the sound of Thy voice, that its tones may be familiar when the sounds of earth die away and the only sound will be the music of Thy speaking voice. Amen. *The Pursuit of God*, 82-83.

Take Time to Listen

The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. I opened my mouth and panted, for I longed for Your commandments.—Psalm 119:130-131

The Quakers had many fine ideas about life, and there is a story from them that illustrates the point I am trying to make. It concerns a conversation between Samuel Taylor Coleridge and a Quaker woman he had met. Maybe Coleridge was boasting a bit, but he told the woman how he had arranged the use of time so he would have no wasted hours. He said he memorized Greek while dressing and during breakfast. He went on with his list of other mental activities—making notes, reading, writing, formulating thoughts and ideas—until bedtime.

The Quaker listened unimpressed. When Coleridge was finished with his explanation, she asked him a simple, searching question: "My friend, when dost thee think?"

God is having a difficult time getting through to us because we are a fast-paced generation. We seem to have no time for contemplation. We have no time to answer God when He calls. *Jesus, Author of our Faith*, 46.

Not Asking for Anything

I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live.—Psalm 116:1-2

I think that some of the greatest prayer is prayer where you don't say one single word or ask for anything. Now God does answer and He does give us what we ask for. That's plain; nobody can deny that unless he denies the Scriptures. But that's only one aspect of prayer, and it's not even the important aspect. Sometimes I go to God and say, "God, if Thou dost never answer another prayer while I live on this earth I will still worship Thee as long as I live and in the ages to come for what Thou hast done already." God's already put me so far in debt that if I were to live one million milleniums I couldn't pay Him for what He's done for me.

We go to God as we send a boy to a grocery store with a long written list, "God, give me this, give me this, and give me this," and our gracious God often does give us what we want. But I think God is disappointed because we make Him to be no more than a source of what we want. Even our Lord Jesus is presented too often as "Someone who will meet your need." That's the throbbing heart of modern evangelism. You're in need and Jesus will meet your need. He's the Need-meeter. Well, He is that indeed; but, ah, He's infinitely more than that. *Worship: The Missing Jewel*, 24-25.

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