



ETERNAL PERSPECTIVES

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

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER • FALL 2003

The Purity Principle

by Randy Alcorn

The Purity Principle is this: *Purity is always smart; impurity is always stupid.*

Does God really argue for sexual purity on the basis that it's the smart choice, while impurity is stupid? Judge for yourself:

Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife? For a man's ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths. The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of his sin hold him fast. He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly. (Proverbs 5:20-23)

Why avoid adultery? Because God will see it and He will bring judgment. But even before judgment day "the cords of his sin hold him fast." The adulterer will be ensnared; he will die. He's the primary victim of his foolishness. In contrast, the man who remains pure can "rejoice" and "be captivated" by his wife's love, enjoying their sexual union (Proverbs 5:18-19).

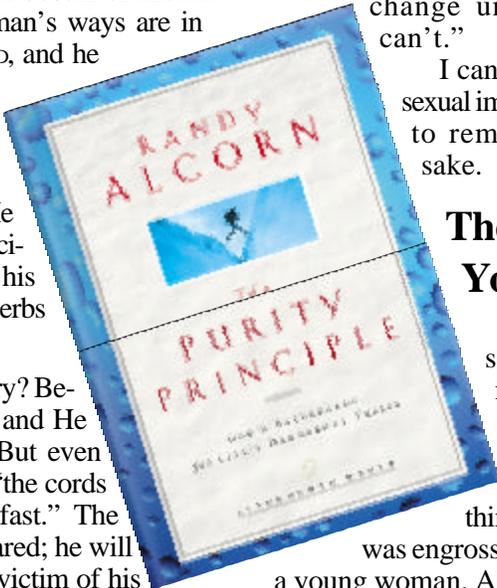
In the next chapter God asks, "Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched? So is he who sleeps with another man's wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished. (Proverbs 6:27-29)

Haunting words: *no one who touches her will go unpunished.*

Proverbs also depicts the man who is seduced into adultery as "an ox going to the slaughter," and like a deer or bird being killed by a hunter (Proverbs 7:21-27).

A believer recovering from sexual addiction (which requires repentance from sexual sin) told me, "Addicts always think they can get away with it. You won't change until you realize you can't."

I can *never* get away with sexual immorality. God wants me to remember that...for my sake.



The Battle's in Your Mind

Brad was a seminary student preparing for ministry. One night he argued with his wife. Upset, he drove to Starbucks to think things through. Soon Brad was engrossed in conversation with a young woman. A few hours later he was in bed with her.

Brad came to me, ashamed and distressed. "How can I tell my wife?" he asked. "Will she ever forgive me? It was so sudden—there was no warning. It came out of the clear blue sky!"

Or did it?

Brad had worked nonstop to put himself through seminary. He'd come to subtly resent his wife, seeing her and the children as obstacles to his goal of entering the ministry. He no longer dated her or communicated on a deep level.

**World Shapers:
A Treasury of
Quotes from
Great
Missionaries**
5

**Chinese Police
Torture Christians**
7

Letters to EPM
11

**Not Divesting,
But Investing**
12

EPM Finances
14

**Tozer on
Trials & Pain**
16

(continued on page 2)

He'd been looking and lusting at the magazine racks. He'd watched raunchy movies when his wife was gone. All of this culminated in the horrible episode that "happened without warning."

The truth is, sexual sin *never* comes out of the blue. It is the predictable result of natural processes. Relationships are neglected and a mind is granted exposure to impurity.

Today's thoughts are the stuff of which tomorrow's character is made. Temptation may come suddenly, but sin doesn't. Neither does moral and spiritual fiber. Both result from a process, over which we *do* have control.

We are what we think. We forge our sexual morality through an ongoing series of choices and actions, including tiny indulgences and miniscule compromises. The eye lingers here...the mind loiters there. Like a photographic plate accumulating light to form an image, our mind accumulates the light we expose it to, godly or ungodly.

The battle is in our minds.

Setting Boundaries

To protect our purity we need to set mental boundaries.

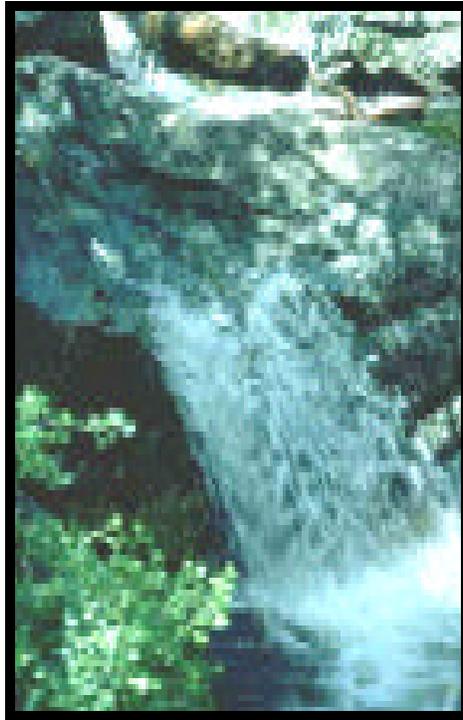
On a scale of one to ten, adultery or pornography addiction might be a ten, at the top of a ladder. But the question is, what were the bottom rungs of that ladder—the ones, twos, and threes? When we identify those, disaster prevention can take place.

Of course, prevention's not always easy—but it's a lot easier than the alternative: misery.

Disaster prevention happens in small but significant ways.

For years I didn't permit myself to go in a particular doorway to our local supermarket because of a magazine rack. Later, my mental discipline became strong enough that I could keep my eyes away. But until then I honored my boundary. It was inconvenient, but a small price to pay to guard my purity.

We have a television, but we don't have cable. Not because we believe it's



wrong, but because we don't want more temptation in our home.

I'm not telling you what you have to do. Boundaries will vary from person to person. A boundary may be not standing in a checkout line where certain magazines are displayed. Or not driving in a certain part of town. Or never going on a business trip alone. Or not watching a particular actor or listening to a particular musician.

**“Above all else, guard your heart [mind, inner being], for it is the wellspring of life.”
(Proverbs 4:23)**

Boundaries keep temptation from getting a foothold. They are based on the premise that *our sexual purity cannot be strengthened if we keep doing what we've always done!* We must change our habits. We are sentries charged with protecting something immensely strategic.

Our Commander says:

“Above all else, guard your heart [mind, inner being], for it is the wellspring of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

“Above all else” means it should be at the very top of our daily duty sheet. It is of the *utmost* importance that we protect our inmost being from new sources of temptation. We must not provide ammunition for our enemy to use against

us. We must force our sin natures not to draw from old input (which fades as time goes on). Meanwhile, we make sure new input is pure and Christ-honoring.

Of course, your flesh will demand that you give it new fuel. “Feed me,” it will cry. But you refuse, praying this: “Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your Word” (Psalm 119:37). You become part of the answer to your prayer by turning your eyes away. (Consider writing out this verse and posting it on your television.)

We are not to be conformed to the world, but transformed by *renewing our minds* (Romans 12:2). We're to deny lust and put it to death when it tries to get a grip on us (Colossians 3:5). We're to affirm that we are new creations in Christ, covered with His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:17, 21).

Your sanctified mind, fed on God's Word, nourished by His Spirit, polices your thought life. It says yes to what pleases Christ and no to what doesn't.

Filling Your Mind with Pure Thoughts

Just for a moment, I'd like you to carefully follow my instruction. Ready? Okay...don't think about snakes. Don't—I repeat, *do not*—think about big slimy snakes, slithering up from your bathtub drain at night and crawling into your bed.

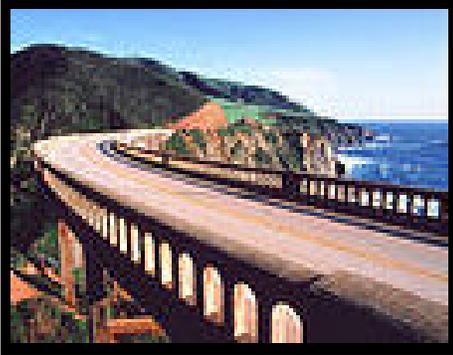
You heard me. *Don't think about snakes.*

Have I kept you from thinking about snakes? No, I've *encouraged* you to think about them.

Now, I want you to envision your favorite dessert. Perhaps it's your mother's Dutch apple pie, or chocolate chip cookies with a tall frosty glass of milk, or Jamoca Almond Fudge ice cream, or a Butterfinger Blizzard. Just think about that mouth-watering treat.

What's happened in the last few moments? You'd forgotten all about those slithering snakes...until I mentioned them again.

“We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). When the wrong thoughts come we correct them, replacing them with God's truth. In time, evil thoughts aren't as much at home in us, and become easier to evict.



While other urges exist for our physical maintenance, sex does not (1 Corinthians 6:12-13). We will die without food and water. We will not die without sex. No matter how strong the desire, sex is never an emergency, never a necessity. A friend told me, "No body has ever exploded due to toxic sperm buildup."

As we learn to stop feeding lust, and say no to its demands, we begin to master it. In time its demands become less pressing, more manageable.

A Covenant With Your Eyes

Job says, "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl" (Job 31:1). Job made a commitment to guard his heart by guarding his eyes. The verses that follow spell out the terrible consequences should he not live by this covenant of purity (Job 31:2-12).

A covenant is an agreement between God and man. In this case we make a sacred commitment to God—and to our families and comrades. The agreement is to not look at—and to immediately turn away from—whatever pulls us toward lust.

Have you made a contract with your eyes, to not look where they shouldn't?

Are you practicing this purity covenant when you walk across campus?

When you work out? When you drive? When you select television shows? When you're at church?

Have you announced your covenant to others? Have you asked them to pray for you and hold you accountable to it? Have you restated your covenant before God?

If not, why not do it now?

Parable of the Doughnuts

Imagine someone whose weakness is eating doughnuts. His doctor says, "No more doughnuts." He vows to God, "No more doughnuts." He promises his family, "No more doughnuts." He calls the church and gets on the prayer chain. He even goes to a doughnut deliverance ministry to have the demon of doughnut desire cast out of him.

Here's a guy who means business, right?

But then what does he do? Well, if he's like a lot of us, he goes right on reading about doughnuts, listening to doughnut music, and watching television programs about making doughnuts. He spends his time with other doughnut lovers talking about doughnuts, joking about doughnuts at the office, where he often glances at the doughnut calendars on the wall. He looks through the newspaper for doughnut coupons and subscribes to *Doughnut Desires*, with its glossy, color photos.

It's not long before he's driving to work the long way that "just happens" to go by a doughnut shop. He rolls down the window and inhales. Pretty soon he's buying the morning paper from the rack right outside the doughnut shop. He's lingering just long enough to check out doughnuts through the window.



Then he remembers he has to make a phone call, and hey, what do you know, the doughnut shop has a pay phone. And since he's there anyway, why not have a cup of coffee?

Now, remember, this man has no intention of breaking his vow and eating doughnuts. But the totally predictable and inevitable result is—what? *That he will give in and eat doughnuts!*

And can't you just hear his sad lament? "What went wrong? I prayed! I asked others to pray. I asked God for deliverance. Why try? I give up. You do your best and look what happens!"

The First and Most Basic Strategy

If we learn nothing else from the parable of the doughnuts, we should learn that sincere intentions, and even prayers, are not enough. *To have victory over temptation we must have clear goals and sound strategies, and we must diligently carry them out.*

What's our first line of defense against impurity?

"Flee from sexual immorality" (1 Corinthians 6:18).

When it comes to sexual temptation, it pays to be a coward. He who hesitates (and rationalizes) is lost. He who runs, lives.

Scripture puts it emphatically:

"Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way" (Proverbs 4:14-15).

Joseph demonstrated this with Potiphar's wife:

And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her...She caught



ETERNAL PERSPECTIVES is a quarterly publication of Eternal Perspective Ministries, 2229 E. Burnside #23, Gresham, OR 97030, 503-663-6481. Fax: 503-663-2292. Email: info@epm.org. Web page: www.epm.org. EPM is a nonprofit organization with 501(c)3 tax-exempt status. All contributions are tax-deductible.

This newsletter is sent free to all who request it. Articles in this publication (and at our website) written by Randy Alcorn may be freely quoted or copied, in part or in whole, provided EPM's name and address are placed on the copy. Feel free to reproduce this newsletter, and pass it on to individuals, churches or groups. It's our desire to spread this information, not protect or restrict it.

him by his cloak and said, 'Come to bed with me!' But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house. (Genesis 39:10, 12)

Joseph not only refused to go to bed with her but to "even be with her." When she finally pushed herself on him he didn't stay. He ran.

Don't stay and try to "resist" temptation when you can run from it.

Anticipate and Prevent Sexual Temptations

Those whose jobs involve travel get lots of sexual temptation. Home, family, and community provide natural restraints that are left behind. Anonymity, loneliness, and leisure time often spell catastrophe.

I know godly men and women who travel frequently, yet consistently have moral victory. But many others have long track records of failure. They need to stop traveling, even if it means finding another job that pays less.

At a men's conference I once asked those who travel to stand and share what they'd found helpful in resisting sexual temptation. One man told us that for a long time he'd watched immoral movies in hotel rooms. After years of this, he finally decided to do something.

"Whenever I check into a hotel I ask them to remove the television from my room. Invariably they look at me like I'm crazy. 'But sir, you don't have to turn it on.' Since I'm a paying customer I politely insist, and I've never once been refused. Immorality is no longer just a button push away. This is how I've said 'I'm serious about this, Lord.' I've done this for a year, and it's my key to victory. Everything's changed."

This man discovered a great principle: It's always easier to *avoid* temptation than to *resist* temptation we've already exposed ourselves to.

In moments of strength, make decisions that will prevent temptation in moments of weakness.

Cultivate Your Inner Life

There's a danger that a book like *The Purity Principle* can appear to be behavior modification. I'm well aware that simple guidelines and the "just try harder" exhortation aren't enough to subdue the flesh, break the grip of lust,

or minimize the power of deeply ingrained habits. There is no "easy little formula."

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of drawing on the indwelling power of the risen Christ. Self-reformation is not enough.

Yet Scripture commands us to do and *not* do certain things that *are* within our power. And often, in doing these things, our hearts change. So

we should take wise steps, knowing that they are necessary but not sufficient. Ultimately, the battle for purity is won or lost in quietness, on our knees with God and in collaboration with our fellow soldiers.

Busyness wears down our ability to hear the promptings of God's Spirit, His Word, and His people. Fatigue makes us oblivious to what's really happening. Healthy self-examination reveals to us our "triggers"—the situations that tempt us. We then take these to God and ask Him for strength and wisdom to avoid them.

Time with God is the fountain from which holiness flows...and joy, and delight.

Memorize and Quote Scripture

Jesus quoted Scripture to answer Satan's temptations (Matthew 4:2-11).

When the attacks on your purity come, be ready to take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). This requires you to memorize Scripture:

"I have hidden your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11).

The Purity Principle—and even this article—contains many Scripture passages. Pick out several that really speak to you. Write them out, carry them with you, post them prominently. When you're tempted, talk back to the devil. The Bible gives you the words to say. Have them ready.

Pray and Don't Give Up

Jesus taught His disciples, *we should always pray and not give up* (Luke 18:1).

We are often brought to our knees after losing a battle. But we need to fall to our knees *before* the battle begins.

Too often we declare a truce with sin. We tolerate unrighteousness and let it claim more territory in our lives, and in our homes.

Jesus says "Don't give up! Pray for God's help." Some readers will be suspicious of this because they've heard "Just read the Bible and pray, and that will solve everything." No, it won't solve everything, but nothing will be solved without it. Jesus knew what He was talking about. So did James.

"Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

Would God tell you to abstain from impurity if that were impossible?

Many men have been defeated so long they think victory is impossible. They've given up. That guarantees they'll go right on losing. But God calls us and *empowers* us to be "overcomers" (Revelation 3:5)—those who experience victory over sin.

An overcoming friend told me, "*People never change until it hurts them less to change than to stay the same.*" Many Christian men—most of whom had to become desperate first—are in sexual addiction recovery groups that have been great instruments of change in their lives. (Like everything else, these groups should be measured by their faithfulness to revealed truth. Some are biblically oriented and some are not.) Tens of thousands of people are living proof that victory over sexual temptation is possible. And frankly, we need to hear their stories in our churches, to glorify God and bring this message of hope.

Draw upon your supernatural resources in Christ (2 Peter 1:3-4).



For the grace of God that brings salvation...teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age (Titus 2:11-12).

This is about the great themes of Scripture, redemption and grace. Our sexual struggles should remind us of our need for grace and empowerment—and make us long for our ultimate redemption (Romans 7:7-25).

If a lifetime of purity seems inconceivable to you, commit yourself in 24-hour increments. Do you want freedom from the actions and obsessions of lust? Get help. Be wise. Avoid temptation. Go to Christ. Experience His sufficiency. Draw on His power.

And when the first 24 hours are over, and you've tasted of the Lord and seen He is good (Psalm 34:8), commit to the next 24 hours. Depend on Him one day at a time.

Never underestimate Christ. Sin is not more powerful than God. Don't imagine there can't be victory until we get to heaven. God says otherwise. We're not to wait for victory. We're to live in it (1 John 5:4).

A Final Question

Are you ready to commit—or recommit—yourself to a life of sexual purity? Now's the time. Nothing's more fleeting than the moment of conviction.

God made a universe in which righteousness is always rewarded, and unrighteousness is always punished.

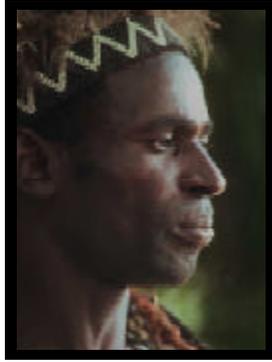
Purity is always smart; impurity is always stupid.

"I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve" (Jeremiah 17:10).

Live in such a way as to hear your Lord say to you one day, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

When we hear Him say those incredible words, we will know that any sacrifice we made was nothing compared to the joy that will forever be ours. (And that joy, by the way, starts *now*.)

(Excerpted from Chapters 5 & 6 of The Purity Principle. You may order this book from your local Christian bookstore; quantity discounts available through EPM.)



World Shapers: A Treasury of Quotes from Great Missionaries

Compiled by Vinita Hampton and Carol Plueddemann

Amongst many who sought to deter me, was one dear old Christian gentleman, whose crowning argument always was, "The cannibals! You will be eaten by cannibals!" At last I replied, "Mr. Dickson,

you are advanced in years now, and your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms; I confess to you, that if I can but live and die serving and honouring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by cannibals or by worms." (*John G. Paton, SJP, 28*)

And people who do not know the Lord ask why in the world we waste our lives as missionaries. They forget that they too are expending their lives...and when the bubble has burst they will have nothing of eternal significance to show for the years they have wasted. (*Nate Saint, JP, 158*)

I know enough about Satan to realize that he will have all his weapons ready for determined opposition. He would be a missionary simpleton who expected plain sailing in any work of God. (*James O. Fraser, POF, 10*)

Remember the miller's donkey. The miller, son, and donkey went to the market. The miller rode the donkey all the way and people exclaimed, "Cruel man, riding himself and making his son walk." So he got down and his son rode; then people slanged, "What a lazy son for riding while poor old father walks." Then both father and son rode, and people said, "Cruelty to animals, poor donkey." So they got down and carried the donkey on a pole, but folks said, "Here are two asses carrying another ass." Then all three walked and people said, "What fools to have a donkey and not ride it." So let's go ahead with our work for God and not care what folks say. (*C. T. Studd, FAF, 29-30*)

Had I cared for the comments of people, I should never have been a missionary... (*C. T. Studd, CAP, 196*)

Young man, sit down: when God pleases to convert the heathen, he will do it without your aid or mine. (*Said to a young William Carey, WCM, 63*)

For five years we never went outside our doors without a volley of curses from our neighbours. (*C. T. Studd, CAP, 95*)

We need to look resolutely away from the impossibilities and to the Lord. His help will come, though often it cannot break through to us until the last moment. (*Isobel Kuhn, ITA, 11*)

(Excerpted from chapter 2, "Voices of Opposition")



Note from Randy on Chinese Persecution:

One of the most common questions we receive goes like this: "I've been told there really isn't much persecution in China. I/my friend/my pastor traveled there and saw Christians worshipping freely, with Bibles for sale in their churches. They say we shouldn't fall for the myth that Christians are still persecuted in China. What are we to believe?"

The truth is that visiting Americans are typically taken to registered churches, where Bibles are in fact available. What they fail to realize is that 70% of Chinese Christians are part of illegal house churches, not registered churches. One reason for this is that the government lays regulations on registered churches, in attempts to control them and restrict what they say. (Some registered churches truly preach the Word and follow Christ, but this is in spite of the communist government's attempts to control them.)

Another reason is very simple—it's common for cities of over a million people to have only one or two legal churches! This forces the great majority of Christians—who do not have automobiles and can only get to church on foot or bicycle—to gather for worship somewhere else. In some places police look the other way and don't interfere with Christians going to worship. In other places they routinely beat them, put them in prison, confiscate their property and harass them and their families. Some die in prison.

When I was in China we asked one of the local pastors how many Christians in that area were currently in jail for Christ. He thought about it, counted quietly, then replied "Twenty-two." Chinese jails are not like those in America. Prisoners are frequently beaten and abused.

One Chinese brother said, "The sun is always shining somewhere in China, and the snow is always falling somewhere else." I believe that many American Christians, including some Christian leaders, have done a disservice to our suffering brothers and sisters by denying their persecution. In doing this they unwittingly become agents of China's international propaganda efforts. (The government loves to point to registered churches as proof of their religious tolerance.)

To go to one part of China where you are led to a registered church with Bibles available, then to conclude "there is no persecution in China" is silly and irresponsible. It's comparable to someone visiting Duluth, Minnesota in January, then going back to their home country saying, "It's never warm in America—I know, I was there." Just because they didn't witness Phoenix in July doesn't mean it isn't real.

Christianity Today has featured detailed articles on the persecution of Chinese Christians. One Chinese refugee in New York, working with Christians in China, has collected over 5,000 testimonies with pictures of the persecuted (www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/003/12.44.html). The records include accounts of more than 100 deaths and thousands of injuries. Li Shi-xiong, head of the New York City-based Committee for Investigation on Persecution of Religion in China offers to a doubting world a 10-foot-high stack of 22,000 testimonies about persecution of Chinese Christians. It includes court transcripts, internal government documents, and photo-



At the detention center in Henan Province, Xikai Huang is hung from a pole. After several hours of this torture, his wrists were bleeding. This type of torture was invented by the police.

graphs. Experts call it the largest collection ever assembled on the persecuted church in China. (www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/003/11.38.html)

Following (pages 7-10) is a disturbing article written by Voice of the Martyrs—a fine ministry we help support with some of the royalties from *Safely Home*. It demonstrates the reality of persecution in China.

Whenever you hear American Christians reassuring people that persecution no longer happens in China, please give them a copy of this article or the ones from *Christianity Today*. Our brothers and sisters deserve for us to know the truth, so we can lift them up to our Father and help in other ways.

Voice of the Martyrs has a family fund which is devoted to assisting families of the persecuted. You can support them directly at P.O. Box 443, Bartlesville, OK 74005 (918-337-8015), or give to EPM with a check designated to Voice of the Martyrs. We will send 100% to VOM. You may also view their website: www.persecution.com.

Chinese Police Proudly Record Their Torture of Christians

by Bob Fu

Warning from Randy Alcorn: The pictures and parts of this article are disturbing. We are printing it so you can pray for our suffering brothers and sisters, and to answer those who claim Chinese Christians are no longer persecuted.

In the spring of this year, one of Voice of the Martyr's most trusted contacts brought the following Chinese interrogation and torture photographs to us with documentation. The names of the policemen and the Christians have been independently verified. The photographer, an "insider," assured the police that these photos of their work would go to their superiors as record of their "conscientious work" with the possibility of a "promotion." Most of these believers are in their street clothes. The Chinese Christians who smuggled these photographs to us explained that the torture of Christians is a weekly affair. The photographer is now in hiding and will be for some years.

Sister Ma and her family were sound asleep one night in May 2001, when Chinese Public Security Bureau police burst into her house and arrested her, her son and her daughter-in-law. The police left her 5-year-old grandson alone with nobody to take care of him. A 27-year-old woman, a friend and fellow Christian named Yu Zhongju, dropped by the house during the raid and was also arrested.

According to interviews with members of Sister Ma's house church and statements smuggled out of prison, dozens of church members were arrested at the same time and beaten with clubs, jolted with cattle prods and burned with cigarettes. When they fainted, buckets of water were poured on them to revive them. Interrogators stomped on the fingers of male prisoners and stripped off the clothes of young women prisoners and abused them.

"They used the electrical prods on me all over," Ms. Ma said, fighting back tears. "They wanted to humiliate us."

Additional details about Sister Ma's arrest and torture were learned by *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof, who reported on November 26, 2002, that police in a remote region of China had interrogated a woman named Ma Yuqin, but their efforts seemed unsuccessful. Kristof wrote: "She never broke when she was tortured with beatings and electrical shocks. Even when she was close to death, she refused to disclose the names of members of her congregation or sign a statement renouncing her Christian faith."

While the physical abuse was almost unbearable, the mental torture was even worse. Throughout her ordeal, Ma Yuqin could hear the sounds of her son being tortured in the next room. They could hear each other's screams—additional incentives to betray their friends and their faith. Recalling this, Ma Yuqin began to sob. "They wanted me to hear (my son's) cries," she said. "It broke my heart."

According to VOM sources, Sister Yu was beaten to death while in custody.

Kristof verified what VOM has been reporting for the past 36 years: This kind of treatment has been common in China for more than half a century. Citizens—whose only crime is worshipping God—are burned with cigarettes, beaten with clubs and martyred for the faith.

"Persecution good for church"

After reading numerous stories like Sister Ma's, one would inevitably assume or at least start questioning whether Christianity in China has any prospect

and opportunities to survive, let alone grow. This question was clearly on the mind of Kristof, who wrote: "One of the ironies of Christianity in China is that in the first half of the 20th century, thousands of missionaries proselytized freely and yet left a negligible imprint. Yet now, with foreign missionaries banned and the Underground Church persecuted, Christianity is flourishing in China with tens of millions of believers."

Indeed, in 1949, there were only 834,000 Chinese Protestant members. In 1982, the estimate was 35 million Christians. In 1987, Christians in China estimated that there were 50 million; and in 1991, a figure of 63 million was given to Protestants and 12 million to Catholics. Today even the officially registered church under the Three-Self Patriotic Movement and the China Christian Council admits that there are more than

15 million believers. But for every believer who worships in TSPM churches, there are at least six to seven who worship in their homes or in the "house churches." It is difficult to estimate exactly how many Christians worship and serve in these house churches. In 2000, an unconfirmed report stated that there are approximately 80 mil-

lion believers in the house-church movement. Clearly the house-church movement has been the mainstream of Protestant Christianity in China.

The heaviest concentration of Christians is in the provinces of Henan in Central China and Zhejiang in East China, just south of Shanghai. On the average, 10 percent of the population in these provinces is Christian. In some villages nearly half of the population is Christian. Today the gospel has spread to every province through Chinese itinerant evangelists. Even among the traditionally less reached provinces, such as Jiangxi and Hunan in Central China and among the border provinces of Heilongjiang, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia



Aizhen Miao, a house-church believer is kneeling down on a brick, while they electrify her mouth with an electric prod.

(Islamic), Xinjiang, Qinghai, Yunnan, Guangxi, etc., house churches have been planted and are engaged in local evangelism. Christian growth has accelerated since the June 4, 1989, Tiananmen Square event. In the Nanchang area, for example, a communist journal reported that in a certain prefecture called Chinxien, there were 20 believers in 1984, but that number grew to 6,000 in 1991.

Why has Christianity grown so rapidly in China? One of the pioneers of the modern-day Chinese house-church movement—Pastor Samuel Lamb—spent 20 years in various prisons for his unregistered, evangelistic activities. He explained to a VOM representative that while the government hopes to destroy the unregistered church by stepping up efforts to suppress it, the result is actually the opposite: The church continues to grow rapidly as the communist government increases persecution against Christians. Persecution is the fuel feeding the flames of revival.

“Before I was arrested, my church had only 200 members. After I was released from prison the first time, I found the church had grown to 900 members! Then came the confiscation of the church. Before the government confiscated our church, the church numbered 900 members. After the confiscation, the church had grown to 2,000 members!” With a broad grin on his face and a twinkle in his eye, the elderly Pastor Lamb looked our VOM representative in the eye and exclaimed, “Persecution good for church!”

The Chinese church is growing rapidly, because it is persecuted. It is persecuted, because Chinese believers are standing firm as defenders of the faith.

The golden biblical passage for Christian apologetics is 1 Peter 3:14b-15. Peter is speaking here: “‘And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.’ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense (‘apologeo’) to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”

Peter commands us to do apologetics, to sanctify the Lordship of Christ, especially in the context of persecution and suffering, which had already occurred quite often during his time. Peter’s suggestion is for Christians not to fear or be

troubled by the intimidation, harassment, torture and even imprisonment from persecutors. Chinese house-church believers have adopted this approach. Their response demonstrates a central theme of Christian apologetics in both a defensive and offensive way. It is *defensive*, because of their willingness to suffer and die for Jesus and their tenderness to love their torturers. These attitudes show both the reality of the Lordship of Christ and the love of Christ for the sake of the gospel. These attitudes are also very *offensive*, because by acknowledging Christ as their Lord and their Lord only, these persecuted followers of Jesus offend any other system of belief and faith that believes otherwise. Thus, this has become one of the most important reasons for their persecution.

Since 1949, the history of the church in China has been one of persecution and suffering. Yet by going through different stages of suffering and persecution, the church in China has been transformed from a timid, “foreign-colored” institutional church into a bold, indigenous, institutionless church; and it has been changed from a dependent *mission* church to an independent *missionary* church. It is a church that has gone through the steps of the cross, following the footsteps of her Lord: betrayal, trial, humiliation, abandonment, suffering, death, burial, resurrection, and the gift of the Spirit of Pentecost. The historical shape of the suffering church in China indeed resembles the face of the Servant of the Lord, who suffered for her.

The Pattern of State Supremacy over All Religions

The traditional pattern of the church-and-state relationship in China is the supremacy of the state over religion. In traditional China, the emperor held the highest power. Today this pattern of state

supremacy and official orthodoxy persists in China under a Socialist totalitarian state. That means there is no such thing as separation of church and state as understood in the West. The church must operate under the religious policies of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and under the legal ordinances of the state. The state has its own official orthodox, namely, Marxism, Leninism, and the Thought of Mao that the party seeks to propagate. (After the 15th CCP Con-

gress, the thought of Deng Xiaoping was added to it.) All other ideologies and beliefs are considered “heterodox” (departing from accepted beliefs).

Religious activities carried outside of state control are not only considered heterodox in ideology, but also “illegal,” and hence are subject to prosecution, which is

a form of legalized persecution. House churches that refuse to register with the state, and hence conduct their activities outside the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (sphere of control), come under this category of “illegitimate religious activities”; and some of the organized house churches that are active in evangelistic expansion are labeled as “cultic groups,” and these have become the state’s primary target of attack. (Editor’s Note: American charities *do not* have to register. They do so only for the positive benefits of tax exemption.)

The Place of the TSPM

China’s constitution declares that citizens of China shall enjoy freedom of religious belief. Freedom of religion, however, does not include freedom of propagation outside the approved places designated for religious activities, nor does it include the freedom to establish churches according to one’s religious convictions.

After the collapse of the former Soviet Union and Eastern European communist countries in 1989, the Chinese Communist Party started a tight, controlling policy, implementing different



Xiangdong Cai is tortured at the police station in Henan Province. Water is being forced into his stomach.

systems in the name of “making religion compatible with socialist society” (*People’s Daily*, March 14, 1996).

According to the understanding of a Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) official: “compatible” means that religion is subordinate to socialism (*Zong Jiao Gong Zuo Tong Xun*, March 1996, p.31). (The RAB is a governmental department in charge of all religious patriotic organizations, through which the Communist

organized as the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. Its function is to assist the government in implementing its religious policy. The TSPM reports to the Religious Affairs Bureau, which approves registration, pastoral personnel appointment, leadership training and financial oversight. For example, in one registered TSPM church, when the pastor got sick, a second person was approved by the non-Christian (atheist) Religious Affairs

Bureau to preach in his place. During this time, he must not preach when his assistant preaches. When he gets well and is able to preach, his assistant may not preach.

The Place of House Churches

House churches that have developed through itinerant evangelism or spontaneous growth of the church are considered illegal. They are now required to register with the RAB. One of the requirements for registration is that they must have a pastoral leader who is endorsed by the TSPM, which in turn

seeks the approval of the RAB. Other requirements include a certain number of members, the organization of a church council, and an adequate reason to show that a church is needed.

Usually when a house church registers with the RAB, it must join the TSPM. Although one RAB official stated that one does not have to join the TSPM when registering, this is not common practice. If a house church does not register with the RAB or join the TSPM, its leaders are warned of the consequences. If they refuse to comply, their worship services are terminated, their leaders arrested and sent to labor camps; or as in some cases, they are fined. From 1996 to 1997, many church leaders were arrested for refusing to register and join the TSPM. The most well known of whom is Xu Yongze, who was arrested on March 16, 1997, and sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment in early October.

Another less publicized case is that of house-church leader Yan Defeng of

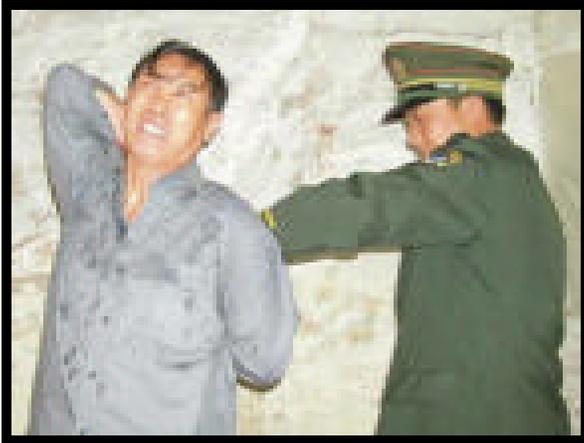
Heshui County, Gansu Province. Public Security Bureau officials harassed Yan for more than four years. He was first arrested in June 1995, chained to a heating pipe and forced to reveal the names of his house-church members. On Easter Sunday, March 1997, PSB police abruptly burst into Yan’s home as he and 18 other Christians were celebrating in afternoon worship. The PSB officials confiscated Bibles, hymnals and other Christian materials and arrested 14 of the believers. Seven of those attending the house-church meeting were detained for six hours and released. Five others were freed after they paid a fine. Yan’s brother, Dehui, was held for 15 days. Yan was detained for 53 days without a trial, and no explanation was given for his lengthy detention.

Why House Churches Do Not Register and Refuse to Join the TSPM

The alienation between house churches and the TSPM has been deeply rooted in the history of the church in China since 1950. Christians in the 1950s witnessed how the government used the TSPM to destroy both the institutional church established by Western missions and indigenous churches founded by Chinese believers. During the pastoral reform effort of the Great Leap Forward Movement, pastors who were unwilling to bow down to the absolute authority of the state were imprisoned—some for two decades. Many were sent to prison during this period through the betrayal of TSPM pastors.

Today in many cases, TSPM pastors inform the government of house-church activities, resulting in the arrest and imprisonment of house-church leaders and members. Thus, to the house churches, the TSPM is an agent of the government. House-church leaders do not regard the TSPM and the China Christian Council (CCC) as authentic representatives of the Chinese church. Hence it is hard for them to be reconciled with their betrayers who are still betraying them.

Secondly, once a house church registers with the government and joins the



House-church believer Zhirong Sun is tortured by “sword-carrying.” Both hands are handcuffed behind the back. The police pull on the handcuffs to make it painful. They boast that they have a “disco dance” with this brother to accelerate his pain.

Party carries out its religious policy.) That is to say that some religious doctrines and ethical teachings must be used to promote socialist construction after the religions have been reformed: All negative elements are eliminated, and each religion is willing to be under the direction of the Chinese Communist Party. More concretely speaking, the result of being compatible with socialism is that only certain “patriotic” religious professionals (with preaching certificates issued by the Chinese Communist Party) will be allowed to teach the ideals of love and sacrificial spirit, instead of teaching from the Bible about the Great Commission, Redemption, the Last Days and spiritual warfare.

The Chinese government believes the only legitimate sphere for Christian activities is the sphere of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement as one of the “patriotic organizations.” The Three-Self Reform Movement was set up by the State in 1950, and in 1954, was formally

TSPM, its activities are limited to Sunday worship. Even mid-week prayer meetings and fellowship groups in believers' homes are forbidden. As a leader in the TSPM church, he must enforce this requirement over his own flock, which an evangelical pastor finds difficult to do. In his heart, he wants his church to grow. He wants the people to have their own Bible study groups. Once he joins the TSPM, he loses the freedom to pastor his flock according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. So he would rather suffer the consequences of arrest than to lose his spiritual freedom.

Thirdly, once a house church registers and joins the TSPM, it can no longer engage in evangelism outside the church building or designated places of worship. But house churches are committed to evangelism, and they have developed rather sophisticated systems of training itinerant evangelists and sending them to border provinces and neighboring provinces where the gospel has not been preached. If they join the TSPM, they would have to give up evangelism, a major part of their Christianity. Thus the issue is: to evangelize or not to evangelize? The laws of the land clearly oppose such church expansion through evangelism. Chinese house-church members believe Christians have a duty to work to fulfill the command of the Great Commission. So in the matter of evangelism, they would rather obey God than man (Acts 5:29).

Finally, the most important reason why house churches refuse to register and join the TSPM is their belief in the Lordship of Christ over the church. "Who is the head of the church: Christ, or the state?" they ask. The TSPM accepts the state as the supreme authority of church affairs. House churches are committed to obeying Christ; and if such obedience brings suffering, they would rather "walk the pathway of the cross" than obey an atheistic state power that frustrates them from serving Christ. These bold believers have come to expect persecution, because they are followers of Jesus rather than Mao and the Chinese Communist Party leadership. They know it has been granted to them for the sake of Christ "not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake," engaged in

the same conflict as the apostle Paul (Philippians 1:29, 30).

Why would our Chinese brothers and sisters endure such agonies with no physical or political solution or salvation in sight? They know that they will win in the end, like the elderly Chinese woman we reported on last year who lined up every morning outside her jail cell. Instead of shouting, "Communism is good!" with the others, she would shout, "Jesus is better!" and then was forced to do push-ups as her punishment. Millions of overcoming Chinese believers proclaim, "Jesus is better!"



Dongyun Jiang's arms were tied behind her back. The officer was standing on her feet and twisting her feet. It was so painful she started screaming. He then used his shoe-polishing cloth to block her mouth for about three hours and made sexual advances as well.

Editor's note: Most of the text in this feature article was excerpted from two lectures presented by China analyst Bob Fu. Bob and his wife, Heidi, are Chinese Christians who were imprisoned in Beijing for holding evening Bible studies with university students. During the daytime, Bob taught English to high Communist Party officials. Mr. and Mrs. Fu and their family now live in the United States. Bob advises VOM on China issues and will be a visiting professor at Oklahoma Wesleyan University in the B.A. program on missions and the persecuted church during the January 2004 semester. He is completing Ph.D. studies at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

(Article from *The Voice of the Martyrs*, June 2003)

Underground Christian Publications

Journalist Li Ying is currently serving a 15-year prison sentence in the Chinese gulag for her role in the publication of the South China Church magazine. She originally received a sentence of death by execution from the Middle Court of Jingmen City for "illegal publishing," but international attention and pressure caused a higher court to reduce her sentence following a retrial in October, 2002.

VOM representatives met Li Ying's mother, Shu Qin Gong, last year. (See VOM's September 2002 newsletter.) She explained, "Li Ying knows to follow the Lord means suffering. Her suffering for Jesus is a glory."

Only one Christian magazine is allowed in China, and it is published by the state-controlled Three-Self Patriotic Church. The government uses the magazine as a propaganda tool—all other Christian publications are illegal.

The Voice of the Martyrs is helping to print an underground church magazine managed by house-church leaders, called *Love Feast*. It features unregistered church news, testimonies, Bible studies, and sermons that inform and encourage Chinese believers in their Christian faith.

We also print the children's storybook, *He Lived Among Us*, in both the Cantonese and Mandarin languages. We continue to smuggle thousands of Bibles and other Christian literature into China each year. Chinese pastors receive much-needed help through our Pastor Support Program, and families of imprisoned Christians like Li Ying are helped through our Families of Martyrs Fund. With your support, we will continue to help our suffering brothers and sisters in China in the weeks and months ahead. Pray for Li Ying and other persecuted and imprisoned Chinese Christians who are only guilty of loving the Lord Jesus Christ.

(*The Voice of the Martyrs*, June 2003)

Letters to EPM

I have just finished reading *Safely Home*, and I needed to tell you that the impact it had on my emotions and thoughts about myself is big. If I look at the way I have been living the last few years, not going to church anymore, hardly ever reading the Bible, hardly ever seriously praying to the One that has giving me so much to be grateful for. Your book made me cry, made me feel very ashamed about myself, made me feel so very jealous about the relationship that Li Quan has with Jesus in your book. To make it even worse, I know that if Jesus hadn't come into my life 15 years ago, I know I would be dead, or at least in prison by now. I have been so terribly wrong with the choices I made after my father died. Your book kind of put me back to where I belong, what I am here for, who my Lord is, where priorities are, that I have to battle, and never ever give up.

R.K., The Netherlands

I recently read the book *Edge of Eternity* and there's no way I can explain or describe what happened to me. It was like a window in my heart was opened and I somehow began to understand scripture a lot better. I visited this site just to discover the author has other books. I was really thrilled. May the Lord bless you as you help in opening blind eyes.

I.O., Nigeria

My wife encouraged me to read your novels and I am so glad she did. I am a 23 year veteran of the FBI in LA and have truly enjoyed *Deadline*, *Dominion* and *Safely Home*. I worked gangs for over 5 years and you were right on point with your research. I felt like I was right there amongst the homies at Five Deuce, Eight Treys and the rest. I have also worked Asian OC and appreciated learning more about the Chinese culture. But I really want to thank you for hitting me over the head with the spiritual message in each of the books. I hope you are planning other novels. We need good Christian fiction that men can read and relate to. I have actually given your books to

non Christians at work encouraging them to learn more about the particular crime scene or culture and of course the valuable message behind each book.

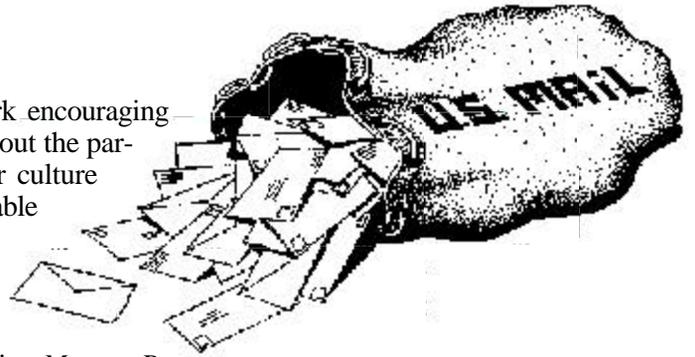
B.H.

I have finished reading *Money, Possessions, & Eternity* and have been greatly blessed as God has proved his faithfulness yet again by teaching me these valuable truths. I was so excited while reading, that it took me longer than usual to read—I kept putting the book down to go apply what I had learned!

God has been moving me in this direction for some time now, but this book was the vital information I needed. I read it with my Bible open in front of me the whole time so I could look up the references. I put verses and quotes from the book onto 3 x 5 cards to put in my wallet by my money, and I returned some things I had recently bought so I could give the money away. The woman's ministry director at my church is going to Haiti on a short term mission trip, and I was able to give her the \$200 I had gotten from the items returned. I felt like John Wesley with the pictures on his wall and the maid. It was a huge "Ah-Ha" moment. If I buys things for myself that I don't need, it literally takes things away from those who are truly needy. I realized nothing I bought for myself—jewelry, fine art, clothing had ever made me happy, but giving the money away was such a joy!

J.B.

I just wanted to take a minute and tell you how much your book *Dominion* has changed my life. I was born in 1963 and was given up



for adoption. I was raised in a typical home, but without much spiritual attention. In college I was a self-proclaimed atheist. But in 1996 I went through a divorce and in the lowest point of my life I accepted the gift of salvation from Jesus, thanks to some people who witnessed and prayed for me. I began to consume the Word of God and raise my daughters in it.

In 1998 I read your book and the scenes of heaven and of meeting past generations enthralled me. For the first time ever I began to be curious about my natural family. I decided not to wait until I got to heaven to meet them and, not knowing if they would even be there, I hoped God would use me to help if necessary. I was able to obtain records and did some researching and found my mother's address. I wrote to her and opened the door for us to begin to know each other. She wrote back and I found that I had three half-siblings.

We wrote often and on Easter Sunday 1999 we met face-to-face for the first time. It was amazing. I have since then met my two half-sisters and my half-brother. I was re-married in August 2002 and my half-sister was my maid of honor, my half-brother was my groomsman, and my mom brought my grandma as an extra special surprise. So please, when you write your novels do not think they are unimportant. Every time I tell the story I still get the chills and I always give *Dominion* the place it deserves.....God's starting block for a life-changing experience.

M.E., Casper, WY



Not Divesting, But Investing

by Randy Alcorn

What's the biggest misconception Christians have about giving? That when we give money away to a church or ministry, or to help the needy, it's gone. While we hope others will benefit from it, we're quite sure we won't. We think we're *divesting* ourselves of money, disassociating from it. Once it leaves our hands, we imagine, it has no connection to us, no future implications relevant to our lives.

We couldn't be more wrong.

What we think we own will be rudely taken from us, some of it before we die, and anything that's left the moment we die. But now is our window of opportunity not to *divest* ourselves of money, but to *invest* it in heaven. We don't have to have everything taken from us. We can give it before disaster or death strike. Now's our chance to give what we can't keep to gain what we can't lose.

We are God's money managers. He wants us to invest His money in His kingdom. He tells us He's keeping track of every cup of cold water we give the needy in His name. He promises us He will reward us in heaven because we help the poor and needy who cannot pay us back for what we do for them.

We can buy up shares in God's kingdom. We can invest in eternity.

Why Giving is Better than Receiving

When Jesus said "It is more blessed to give than to receive," He really meant it (Acts 20:35). It sounds counter-intuitive, doesn't it? But when you give, you plug into God's law of rewards. You experience dramatic and lasting returns for the investments you've made. When you give, you receive far more than when you keep.

When you give, therefore, it is not only for the glory of God and the good of others—though those would certainly be good enough reasons. When you give, it is for *your* good too. Like the law of gravity, the law of rewards operates constantly, even when we give it no thought.

This morning a nurseryman called me because he wants to give away as

much as he can to God's kingdom. He's normally not bubbly, but his voice rang with passion. He was far more excited than if he was talking about buying a new car. Through giving, he was getting something far better—something that wouldn't rust or get totaled or lose its appeal. He talked to me about wanting to please God and receive eternal rewards. He believed that through his giving he was getting something far more valuable than anything he could acquire on earth. He actually believed he was getting something that would be waiting for him when he gets to heaven.

Some would think he's foolish to talk this way. But I'm convinced he's absolutely right.

I spend a lot of time talking with givers. At one gathering, we went around the room and told our giving stories. I took notes.

The most common words used to describe giving were "fun," "joy," "exciting," and "wonderful." There were lots of smiles and laughter, even tears of joy. One older couple shared how they're always traveling around the world getting involved in the missions work they support. Meanwhile, their house in California is getting run down. They said, "Our children keep telling us, 'Fix up your house, or buy a new one. You can afford it!' We tell them, 'Why would we do that? That's not what excites us!'"

Many Christians don't give. Others determine to do their part but sigh deeply before writing a check to their church or ministry. They give strictly out of a sense of duty and obligation. Better to give out of duty than not give at all, but how sad to miss out on the joy. That joy comes when you understand God's law of rewards.

What's the difference between reluctant and joyful givers? Reluctant givers give

as if they were spending, and getting nothing in return. Joyful givers give as if they were investing, anticipating a great deal in return. While some Christians give with all the enthusiasm of paying their taxes, others "get it," and are infused with joy and purpose. Those who "get it" understand the law of rewards. Those who "don't get it," don't understand. They don't know what they're missing...and what they're missing is something truly great.

When they hand over money, investors don't say to themselves, "I'll never see this again; I'll never benefit from it." No. The reason they invest is because they not only believe in what they're doing, but are anticipating eventual benefits that will come back to them. What will come back is rewards.

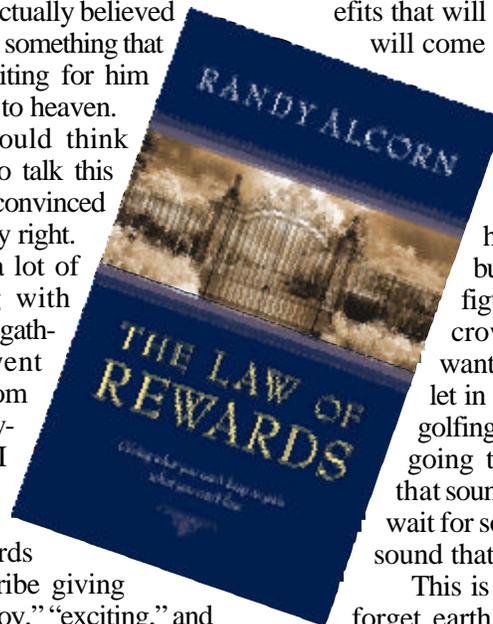
The Reward Connection

Most Christians have heard about eternal rewards, but many consider them to be figurative—nice words about crowns, but come on, who wants a crown anyway? A chalet in the mountains, a new boat, golfing on the finest courses and going to the Bahamas...doesn't that sound like a lot more fun? Why wait for something later that doesn't sound that great anyway?

This is one of our problems. We forget earth is not our home, so we waste our lives pouring ourselves and our money into what will go up in smoke. Meanwhile, God offers us the opportunity to experience a down payment of joy—the delight that comes *today* in doing what you know God wants, and anticipating hearing Him say to you *tomorrow*, "Well done."

Too often we think of heavenly rewards as unconnected to our earthly actions. In fact, they are tangible dividends we can gain by the things we do and say on earth.

As we'll make clear later, this isn't salvation by works; faith in Jesus is our one and *only* grounds for entering heaven. But the Bible shows that while our faith determines our eternal destination, our behavior—including what we do with our money—determines our eternal rewards.



In this book we'll talk about how we can honor God with our money, what actions and attitudes God rewards, what eternal rewards are, and why it's okay—and in fact, *important*—to be motivated by them. We'll see that giving isn't about trying harder to do the right thing while

quietly resenting our sacrifices. It's about understanding how God made us and responding joyfully to the way he motivates us. It's about seeing what God is doing, and eagerly buying up shares. (Who wants to be left out of the world's greatest investment opportunity?)

Let's open our minds to truths of Scripture that lay buried beneath this culture's rocky surface. Let's discover together the life-changing, eternity-impacting paradigm shift offered us in *the law of rewards*.

(*The Law of Rewards*, Intro, p. ix-xiii)



The Power of Incentives

Businesspeople work in a world of incentives. So do homemakers, schoolchildren, and every other human being, regardless of age, nationality, or wealth. Every effective manager, every wise leader knows the importance of incentives. These are tangible motivators that may be personal, social, spiritual, physical, or financial. Unfortunately, too many Christians consider incentives to be “secular” or “carnal” or “unspiritual.”

Most of us use rewards to motivate our children. So why are we surprised that God uses rewards to motivate us? By God's own design, *all* of us need incentives to motivate us to do our jobs and do them well. Motivation by reward is not a result of the fall. Rather, it is God's original design for humanity.

To say, “I don't do anything for the reward—I do it only because it's right,” may appear to take the spiritual high road. But in fact it's pseudospiritual. It goes against the grain of the way God created us and the way He Himself motivates us. And it completely contradicts all the passages of Scripture that clearly attempt to motivate us by our desire for rewards. When we say “You shouldn't do anything to get a reward,” do we imagine we are more spiritual than Jesus, Paul, and God's Word?

When our daughters lived in our home as teenagers, suppose I'd told one of them, “If you do a full day of yard work Saturday, I'll pay you \$50 and take you out to a nice dinner.” Would it be wrong for her to want to earn the \$50? Would it be wrong for her to look forward to going out to a nice dinner with her dad? Of course, it wouldn't be wrong! I'm her father, I made the offer, and I *want* her to want those things!

Of course, it would be inappropriate if my daughter refused to work unless I would offer her rewards. But because rewarding her was my idea, not hers, she would have every right to be motivated by the rewards I offered her. In fact, my own joy would be lessened if she *didn't* want the rewards I offered her—especially the reward of enjoying that special dinner with her.

“But God doesn't owe us anything,” you might argue. “He has the right to expect us to work for Him with no thought of reward.” True, we should be willing and happy to serve Him, even if there is no payoff. Jesus addressed this when He said, “So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’” (Luke 17:10).

The point is, God owes us nothing. So if we came to Him and said, “You owe us—we want to be paid,” we would be dead wrong.

But here's the incredible thing, the factor that turns the entire debate on its head—it wasn't *our* idea that God would

reward us. It was *His* idea! Satan didn't make up the idea of incentives. Our sin nature didn't make it up. A corrupt world didn't make it up. *God* made it up. He designed us to need incentives to motivate us to do our jobs and do them well.

Suppose my daughter did the yard work joylessly and then said, “Dad, I just did my duty. I refuse the money. And I don't want to go to dinner with you.” How would that make me feel?

We flatter ourselves—and insult God—when we say, “I don't care about reward.”

God will reward the child who gave to the missions offering the money she'd saved for a softball mitt. He'll reward the teenager who kept himself pure despite all the temptations. He'll reward the man who tenderly cared for his wife with Alzheimer's, the mother who raised the child with cerebral palsy, the child who rejoiced despite his handicap. He'll reward the unskilled person who was faithful and the skilled person who was meek and servant-hearted. He'll reward the parents who modeled Christ to their children and the children who followed Him despite their parents' bad example. He'll reward those who suffered while trusting Him, and those who helped the ones who were suffering. He'll reward the couple who downsize, selling their large house to live in a small one and give all the money away to missions.

He doesn't *have* to reward anyone for anything. He does it because He *wants* to! And make no mistake, regardless of what you and I think about it, that's exactly what he's going to do: “For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person *according to what he has done*” (Matthew 16:27, italics mine).

Why does God reward us? Because He is pleased by what we've done. A child who wants to be rewarded by his parents realizes they will be pleased by his good deeds. Hence, his desire for reward is not mercenary—it is inseparable from his love for his parents and his desire for their approval.

(Excerpted from *The Law of Rewards*, by Randy Alcorn [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2003].)



EPM Finances: For Those Who Ask

by Randy Alcorn

In our newsletter, we deliberately speak very little about EPM or our financial needs. Sometimes people wonder why. We want to keep the focus on the Lord, and issues of eternal concern. We certainly don't want to draw people's giving away from their churches or worthy Christian ministries. And we really want to provide this newsletter as a no-cost service to people. Jesus said, "Freely you have received; freely give" (Matthew 10:8).

Sometimes we're asked "How's EPM doing financially?" We usually say "just fine." God is our faithful provider. However, once every few years, it's time to say a little more.

We have a core group of supporters who give regularly to our ministry. Some of them started giving when the ministry began in June 1990 and our office was in the Alcorn basement. Nanci and I were the only employees and funds were never an issue. (Because of lawsuits from abortion clinics, due to peaceful nonviolent civil disobedience in 1989-90, I can only make minimum wage anyway...which really helps with EPM's overhead expenses!)

As the years have gone on, moving into an office and expanding our ministries have created greater financial needs. However, only twice in our history have we faced what I'd call serious financial challenges. The spring of 2001 was one of those times. We decided to reduce staff hours, eliminate one staff position, and close the office on Fridays. We decreased the outflow and God graciously increased the inflow. Believing that these cuts were good stewardship, we've kept them in place.

EPM is active in many ministries, and serves as a resource for everything from people with questions about eternity, heaven, missions or famine relief, to students wanting to make a prolife speech or pray for persecuted Christians or go to the mission field. Many of these contacts are spurred on by my eighteen books and our newsletter.

I am the only full-time employee of EPM. Kathy Norquist (30 hours a week)

is my ministry assistant, Bonnie Hiestand (20 hours) is our office secretary and newsletter designer, and Janet Albers (20 hours) is our financial secretary. Nanci still balances the checkbook, handles taxes and some special contributions. As our financial reports testify (you're welcome to one), the salaries we pay aren't high.

With every new book, newsletter, speaking opportunity, phone call, email and visit to our website (which has had 297,000 visits from all over the world), EPM continues to expand. Our newsletter is now received at no cost by over 14,000 people representing every state and many countries. We find ourselves in contact with more and more people each month. We're joyfully laboring to keep up.



One of our reasons for existing is to help fund worthy organizations. We call to people's attention some of God's most strategic kingdom efforts. 100% of all contributions sent to EPM and designated to special ministries go there.

Some people like to centralize their giving through EPM. In a sense, they use us as an eternal investment broker. They write one check, with a note designating the gift to one or several specific ministries or areas of ministry. We keep up with a number of different worthy ministries. If we become aware of problems that raise concerns about this ministry's effectiveness or integrity, we send our support elsewhere until this is resolved.

All of my books and royalties are owned by EPM. This source of income

has been significant. It's been my desire, and the board has agreed, to use as much of this royalty income as possible to fund worthy missions projects. When royalty checks come in we keep no more than 10% for EPM and send 90% to different worthy ministries. By God's grace, for the last five years, we've been able to give 100% of royalties away.

It may seem strange to give away royalties when we could keep them and not need to rely much on donors. *However, we believe the giving and prayers of people are vital to what we're doing.* Jesus said our hearts follow our treasure, and we want some of God's people's hearts and prayers to be in our ministry. We also believe God's hand is on the book sales and He is pleased when we dedicate those to Him and give them to His work. (When I see my books on the bestsellers list I think "God, you're just raising funds to help ministries you love, aren't you?")

Partly because of our emphasis on special giving to other ministries, rather than to EPM's general fund, our monthly support sometimes falls considerably short of our needs, even though we labor to keep expenditures at a minimum. God provides in the form of periodic gifts from some of you, but these are not enough to offset our expenses.

As I write, we're facing not a crisis, just a bit of a shortage. The three months of operating expenses the board likes us to keep in the bank has been fluctuating over the past few months, sinking to as low as one month's reserve. Once we're able to meet operating expenses, we replenish this account. God has always provided, and He will again. Please don't feel pressured to give. I'm just giving information for those interested.

If God does lay on your heart to give to our ministry, or to pray for us (the greatest gift you can offer), know that we deeply appreciate it. If you decide either to regularly or periodically support EPM, it would be helpful for us if you'd let us know by filling out the response form and returning it to us.

Just Asking...

Evangelism and Discipleship tips helping you reach your world.

As believers, we sometimes get scared at the thought of sharing the gospel. Many complain that they just don't know how to bring up the subject. Next time you are talking with friends, try some of these questions:



- *Where are you on your spiritual journey?*
- *If you could have a talk with God about anything, what would you ask Him?*
- *What do you find most and least appealing about Christianity?*
- *Who is Jesus Christ?*
- *If someone asked you how to become a Christian, what would you say?*
- *If you were to die today, where do you think you would go?*

These questions can help any Christian get into a discussion about Jesus. Remember to keep asking questions, and really listen to the answers. Focus your conversation on Christ, and stay anchored to the basics of the faith.

Once the spiritual conversation gets started, trust the Holy Spirit to change the person's life.

(March/April 2003, Vol. 30, No. 2, *Worldwide Challenge*)

“We are not necessarily doubting that God will do the best for us; we are wondering how painful the best will turn out to be.”

— **C. S. Lewis** (in a letter to a friend when Lewis's wife, Joy, was suffering from cancer)

Our greatest fear should not be of failure, but of succeeding at something that doesn't really matter.

— **New Tribes Missions**
(author unknown)

EPM Response Form *(Please feel no obligation)*

Name: _____

Street/apt. or box #: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Indicate one or more below:

- I'd like to pray regularly for EPM.
 - send special requests to my email address
 - mail special requests to my home address
- I'd like to become a regular supporter of EPM in the amount of \$_____ per month.
- I would like to enclose a one-time gift of \$_____ to be used by EPM as most needed.
- I'd like to designate the following to go (100% and immediately) to support worthy ministries through one of EPM's special funds: missions, relief, suffering church, prolife, handicapped, family, legal defense, salt & light, racial reconciliation. *(Circle the fund of your choice.)*

Send to: Eternal Perspective Ministries, 2229 E. Burnside #23, Gresham, OR 97030.
(No envelope enclosed to prevent waste.)

A. W. Tozer on Trials and Pain . . .

The Labor of Self-Love

For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

—Galatians 1:10

The labor of self-love is a heavy one indeed. Think for yourself whether much of your sorrow has not arisen from someone speaking slightly of you. As long as you set yourself up as a little god to which you must be loyal there will be those who will delight to offer affront to your idol. How then can you hope to have inward peace? The heart's fierce effort to protect itself from every slight, to shield its touchy honor from the bad opinion of friend and enemy, will never let the mind have rest. Continue this fight through the years and the burden will become intolerable. Yet the sons of earth are carrying this burden continually, challenging every word spoken against them, cringing under every criticism, smarting under each fancied slight, tossing sleepless if another is preferred before them.

The Pursuit of God, 112

Nothing to Fear

You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.

—Isaiah 26:3

The only fear I have is to fear to get out of the will of God. Outside of the will of God, there's nothing I want, and in the will of God there's nothing I fear, for God has sworn to keep me in His will. If I'm out of His will, that is another matter. But if I'm in His will, He's sworn to keep me.

And He's able to do it, He's wise enough to know how to do it and He's kind enough to want to do it. So really there's nothing to fear.

I get kidded by my family and friends about this, but I don't really think I'm afraid of anything. Someone may ask, "What about cancer? Do you ever fear that you'll die of cancer?" Maybe so, but it will have to hurry up, or I'll die of old age first. But I'm not too badly worried because a man who dies of cancer in the will of God, is not injured; he's just dead. You can't harm a man in the will of God.

Success and the Christian, 80-81

Few Lovers of His Cross

For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.

—Hebrews 10:36

When God needs a person for His service—a good person, an effective person, a humble person—why does He most often turn to a person in deep trouble? Why does He seek out a person deep in the crucible of suffering, a person who is not the jovial, "happy-happy" kind? I can only say that this is the way of God with His human creation..

Ezekiel did not come out of pleasant and favorable circumstances. The light had gone out in his heart. He probably thought that God takes a long time to work out His will.

Does not this same view surface in much of our Christian fellowship? We do not want to take the time to plow and to cultivate. We want the fruit and the harvest right away! We do not want to be engaged in any spiritual battle that takes us into the long night. We want the morning light right now! We do not want to go through the processes of planning and preparation and labor pains. We want the baby this instant!

We do not want the cross. We are more interested in the crown.

The condition is not peculiar to our century. Thomas a Kempis wrote long ago, "The Lord has many lovers of His crown but few lovers of His cross."

Men Who Met God, 115

Eternal Perspective Ministries
2229 East Burnside #23
Gresham, OR 97030

Address Service Requested

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PORTLAND, OR
PERMIT NO. 1388