



ETERNAL PERSPECTIVES

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

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER • SPRING 2003

Pleasures, Possessions and Power

by Randy Alcorn

God has created each of us with certain desires that correspond to certain motivations. Each of us has built-in desires for pleasures, possessions, and power. At first this may sound unbiblical, because we've come to think of these things as temptations.

Satan does indeed tempt us in each of these areas. The desire for pleasure can degenerate into hedonism, desire for possessions into materialism, and desire for power into egotism. We might relate the desire for pleasure to the lust of the flesh, the desire for possessions to the lust of the eyes, and the desire for power to the pride of life (1 John 2:16, KJV).

Satan approached Christ on all three of these levels during his wilderness temptation.

He tempted Jesus to make bread for the pleasure of eating, to worship Satan for the possession of all the world's kingdoms, and to cast himself from the temple for the power of commanding angelic intervention (Luke 4:1-13).

So if the desires for pleasures, possessions, and power make us vulnerable to temptation, how can they be good? How can they properly motivate us? We must understand that desire for these things can only be appealed to because our Creator built that desire into us. This is how God designed us to be.

The draw to pleasures, possessions, and power cannot be rooted in our sin nature, since Satan appealed to these desires in Adam and Eve before they were sinful (Gen. 3:1-7). Christ had no sin nature. Satan knew this. Yet he appealed to Him on these same three grounds—pleasures,



possessions, and power. Why? Because Christ was human, and to be human is to have desires for these things. We want pleasures, possessions, and power not because we are sinful but *because we are human*.

If this argument seems unconvincing, there's a clincher—God himself appeals to each of these desires in us! He

offers us the reward of power in his eternal kingdom (Matt. 20:20-28; Luke 12:42-44; 19:15-19), possessions in his eternal kingdom (Matt. 6:19-21; 19:16-22, 27-30), and pleasures in his eternal kingdom (Ps. 16:11).

God appeals to our human nature, but *never* to our sin nature. Power, possessions, and pleasures are legitimate objects of desire that our Creator has instilled in us, *and* by which he can motivate us to obedience. The evil one counterattacks by tempting us to direct these legitimate desires to the wrong objects.

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Pleasures, Possessions and Power

The way of the world and the temptation of the devil is to try to gain each of these three things in the present world. The way of the Lord is to gain them in the future not by clinging to them in the present, but by forgoing them in the present. It's at this point that prosperity theology is so misguided.

Consider the threefold disciplines of fasting, giving, and prayer, which Christ addressed in Matthew 6:1-18. Fasting is denying the pleasure of eating to gain pleasure in God. Giving is denying the possession of riches to gain possessions from God. Prayer is denying one's own power to gain power from God. Eating, owning, and ruling are not bad—but in these three spiritual disciplines they are temporarily abstained from to accomplish a higher kingdom purpose.

For centuries, monastic orders have tried to tie into this concept through their vow of chastity (forgoing pleasure), vow of poverty (forgoing possessions), and vow of obedience (forgoing the power of living life one's own way).

But one need not forgo power because he hates power. He may forgo it because he wants power in another world. Jesus told his disciples they could become great in the next world by being a servant in this one (Mark 10:42-44). Likewise, one does not forgo possessions here because he hates possessions, but because he wants them in another world. Jesus didn't tell his disciples they shouldn't want to be great. Rather, he told them they could become rich in the next world by giving up riches in this one (Matt. 6:19-21). It's not a matter of no gratification, but delayed gratification. It's forgoing present temporal gratification to achieve future eternal gratification.

We admire an Olympic athlete for his dedication and discipline, but we don't pretend he's not acting in his self-interest. Admire a missionary, someone who works with street children, someone who feeds the poor. What they are doing is not selfish, but neither is it selfless. Their short-term sacrifices are in their eternal self-interest because God promises to reward them.

The person who gives his life, money and possessions to receive rewards from his God...is one whose deepest thirsts will be eternally quenched by the Maker and Fulfiller of Desire.

There are many good reasons to give—love, fear and hope are all good reasons. Love for God and for people (greatest commandments), fear of God (because our choices have consequences and we will be held accountable as stewards), and hope of reward (because God says he who comes to him must believe that he is a rewarder). To not be motivated by reward is to not trust God, to not please him. We need every reason for obeying him that he gives us.

This is not self-denial for its own sake, but purposeful self-denial for God's glory and our own ultimate good. The key to this is faith, the faith described and exemplified in the book of Hebrews (11:8-16). For it's faith that brings one to forgo something in this life believing that it—or a higher form of it—will be his in the next.

This is difficult to understand, because our sin nature has tainted pleasures, possessions, and power in this world. But in

eternity we'll be able to handle these things because we'll be without sin. As our sinless Lord handles them properly, we will be able to handle them properly.

Believers in prosperity theology don't realize that when we fail to limit our seeking of pleasures, possessions, and power in this world, where we're yet sinful, the result will be disaster. Look at the scandals that have rocked Christian organizations. The lives of the two most prominent fallen evangelists consisted of three basic elements in extensive measure: power, possessions, and pleasures. Both men rose to tremendous power over people, amassed a great deal of possessions, then indulged in many pleasures, which ultimately included sexual immorality. Like most of us, these men in their sinful human natures were incapable of handling here and now such large portions of power, possessions, and pleasures.

Can Appeal to our Desires Really be Spiritual?

God created us with certain desires, and made us to be motivated by the rewards that appeal to those desires. He calls us to action on the basis of promised rewards. As we've seen, the Scriptures are full of exhortations to act in certain ways to gain certain rewards. Yet there persists a misguided belief that desire for power, possessions, and pleasure in the next life is crass, and to pursue rewards is selfish or mercenary. Three godly Englishmen of three different centuries offer us a very different perspective, an explicitly biblical one.

John Bunyan, imprisoned in the seventeenth-century for preaching the gospel, stated:

The rewards are such as should make us leap to think on, and that we should



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remember with exceeding joy, and never think that it is contrary to the Christian faith to rejoice and be glad for them.

William Wilberforce, through his tireless efforts in Parliament, in the early nineteenth century finally succeeded in abolishing England's slave trade. He devoted most of his fortune to the cause of Christ. This was his perspective on our God-given desires: "Christianity proposes not to extinguish our natural desires. It promises to bring the desires under just control and direct them to their true object."¹

C. S. Lewis, Oxford and Cambridge professor in the middle twentieth century, wrote prolifically on the Christian faith and developed a unique hearing on two continents. He diverted most of his royalties to charitable causes and individual needs, living simply and thinking often of that world beyond:

The faint, far-off results of those energies which God's creative rapture implanted in matter when He made the worlds are what we now call physical pleasures; and even thus filtered, they are too much for our present management. What would it be to taste at the fountainhead that stream of which even these lower reaches prove so intoxicating? Yet that, I believe, is what lies before us. The whole man is to drink joy from the fountain of joy.²

The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial, but not about

self-denial as an end in itself. We are told to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ; and nearly every description of what we shall ultimately find if we do so contains an appeal to desire. If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider

the unblushing promises of rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.³

Conclusion

In nearby Portland, Oregon, every year there's a row of big, beautiful, new houses called the "Street of Dreams." While the houses are fun to look at, I'm struck with how sad it would be to have a dream so small as one of those houses.

When I was a pastor a couple came to my office and told me they wanted to be able to give more money to the church and to missions. "But we've always had this dream for a beautiful home in the country," they added, "and we can't seem to shake it. Is that wrong?"

I told them I thought the dream of a perfect place came from God. It's just that the dream cannot and will not

be fulfilled in this life. Our dream house is coming; we don't have to build it here. In fact, we can't. Any dream house we try building here will eventually

be ravaged by time, floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, carpenter ants, or freeway by-passes—you name it. And who would want to divert kingdom funds to a dream house on earth if you understand it's going to burn to the ground, with no insurance company left to cover the loss? Instead, why not use your resources to send building materials ahead to the Carpenter building your dream house in heaven?

Writing in 1649 Pastor Richard Baxter said:

We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy has been offered to us.
C. S. Lewis



If there be so certain and glorious a rest for the saints, why is there no more industrious seeking after it? One would think, if a man did once hear of such unspeakable glory to be obtained, and believed what he heard to be true, he should be transported with the vehemence of his desire after it, and should almost forget to eat and drink, and should care for nothing else, and speak of and inquire after nothing else, but how to get this treasure. And yet people who hear of it daily, and profess to believe it as a fundamental article of their faith, do as little mind it, or labour for it, as if they had never heard of any such thing, or did not believe one word they hear.⁴

May we joyously believe! And then may we live as though we believe!

(From *Money, Possessions, and Eternity*, Randy Alcorn, Tyndale House, revised 2002. See page 10 to order.)

¹ William Wilberforce, *Real Christianity* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1982), 65.

² C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (New York: Macmillan, 1980), 17-18.

³ Lewis, 3-4.

⁴ Richard Baxter, "The Saints' Everlasting Rest," *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981), 39-40.

A Theology of Heaven:

*A class taught
by Randy Alcorn
May 5-9, 2003*

**Western Seminary
Portland, Oregon
10:00 a.m.-4:50 p.m.
Monday-Friday**

This is a two credit hour course, or you can audit. Anyone is welcome. It should be a fun and fascinating week looking at what God's Word says about heaven. For more information, visit our website at www.epm.org/heavenclass or contact Kathy at 503-663-6481 or info@epm.org.

"A Theology of Heaven" will explore biblical statements on what happens at death; the intermediate state, as distinguished from the final state; the resurrection and final judgment; the nature of the new earth-centered heaven; the judgment seat of Christ; eternal rewards; and reigning with Christ.

We will address the pervasive myths and misconceptions, as well as the most frequent questions about heaven, including these:

Is the intermediate state a dwelling place of disembodied spirits, or is there a transitional body between death and the resurrection? Will the ultimate heaven be like Eden? Will there be animals? Will we learn and grow in our understanding? Will time exist?

What will our relationship with Christ be like? How will our worship change? How will we relate to each other? Do those in heaven see what's happening on earth? Do they remember their lives here? Will we recognize each other there? Will we still be ourselves, or will we be completely different? Will we actually eat and drink? What is

meant by "resting" and "serving" in heaven? Will there be national or ethnic identities and carry-overs of culture from the present earth? Will there be libraries, art, travel, recreation, entertainment, sports, or technology?

Central questions will include 1) Is there a continuity or discontinuity between our present life on earth and our future life in heaven? (2) Will heaven ultimately be the dwelling place of God and angels, which men must adjust to, or the dwelling place of men to which God and angels will accommodate? 3) What difference does it make whether we set our minds on heaven while we still live on earth?

Special emphasis will be given to the new earth as capital planet of the new heaven, and the far-reaching redemptive implications of Christ's work culminating in a resurrected universe delivered from the curse.

We will also deal briefly with hell, annihilationism and universalism, as well as purgatory, soul sleep, near-death experiences, supposed visitations from the dead, and the nature and significance of the millennium.

The central focus of the class will be the Scriptures dealing with heaven, particularly those chosen by the instructor in the pre-assigned "Inductive Biblical Overview of Heaven." Special attention will be given to the book of Revelation's depictions of both the present heaven and the new earth, as well as the interpretive tensions in dealing with apocalyptic and metaphorical language about heaven. (What should we interpret literally?)

The instructor will present central ideas and supplementary insights, but students will be called upon to draw their own conclusions, with guidance from the instructor and input from other students. Class discussions, coming out of thoughtful biblical study and contemplation of the assigned reading, will be of major importance.

Handouts on heaven will supplement class discussions, including writings from Augustine, Aquinas, John Bunyan, Jonathan Edwards, Richard Baxter, Charles Spurgeon, J. C. Ryle and C. S. Lewis. The required texts will be Paul Helm's *The Last Things (Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell)*, *A Brief History of Heaven* by Alister E. McGrath, and Randy Alcorn's *In Light of Eternity: Perspectives on Heaven*.

**I once scorned ev'ry fearful thought of death,
When it was but the end of pulse and breath,
But now my eyes have seen that past the pain
There is a world that's waiting to be claimed.
Earthmaker, Holy, let me now depart,
For living's such a temporary art.
And dying is but getting dressed for God,
Our graves are merely doorways cut in sod.**

—Calvin Miller, *Symphony in Sand*

(See www.epm.org/heavenclass/syllabus.html for class syllabus. See www.epm.org/heavenclass/inductivestudy.html for an inductive study of scriptures relevant to the doctrines of death, the afterlife, heaven, hell, resurrection, and eternal rewards.)

Action International's Role in Africa Famine Relief

by Rex Lee Carlaw, USA Director, Action International

Our offices get many questions concerning accountability. Some churches inquire about accountability of our missionaries overseas, many are interested in what percentage of their funds goes to the field after administration, and some ask us about the use of project funds.

Our largest project of late has been raising funds for famine relief in Africa. We are grateful to our ACTION constituency for rising to the occasion and providing food for many who are facing starvation in East Central Africa. A foundation which recently made a grant for this purpose sent us several questions. Doug Nichols, International Director, sent these questions to Glenn Ripley, our Zambia Team Leader, for comment. I found the answers fascinating, and would like to share them with you. They provide a glimpse into how giving actually results in food for villagers as well as the steps that are taken to safeguard the funds. We invite your prayers for this process since no system is infallible, and needs are greater than we are able to meet. I do think the process is encouraging. I hope this information will also serve to raise your awareness of what is happening in East Central Africa.

1 How secure are the funds given for famine relief when they are sent to Zambia?

We have had funds wired to our Zambia Barclay's account for several months now and have not had any problems. Wire transfers are tracked and the funds used as quickly as possible to minimize risk. If desired, funds could even remain in U. S. banks until the time of food purchase, though we haven't had any problems thus far.

2 How are the funds actually translated into food? What's the process?

Food is purchased locally through wholesale dealers. Negotiations have just been completed for 1000 metric tons of maize at a very good price. Transport is arranged through the wholesaler, or through separate transport providers.

3 What would actually be purchased for \$25,000? How many people are fed with this? How many bags of food?

We are currently buying maize at wholesale prices of \$225 to \$240 per metric ton; transport is 7 to 9 cents per kilometer/ton. The current ration for maize is 10 kg/person/month, so about 100 people can be fed per ton/month. In addition to the maize ration, beans or other forms of protein are also being provided. As a rough estimate, using \$250 per ton, including transport, \$1000 will buy four metric tons and feed 400 people/month. \$25,000 will buy about 100 metric tons and will feed 10,000 people for a month!

4 Do the food recipients hear the Gospel? How is evangelism done with the food distribution?

All distribution is done through local churches, providing a wide opportunity for the Gospel. In some cases, messages are preached at the time of distribution. In other cases, the Word may be shared in advance or during follow-up contacts. I have just returned from four days in a remote village where I was able to share the Gospel with about 100 people during a planning visit. In every case, the recipients understand that the food is coming from a local evangelical church and this opens the door to future evangelistic outreach by churches in the communities.

5 Once the check is received, what is the turnaround time for the people to actually get the food? Would it take two or three weeks before food is actually purchased and delivered?

Yes, the turnaround time is currently two to three weeks. Purchase of such large volumes obviously requires detailed planning from purchase through distribution, so some time is required to finalize these details.



6 What is the risk of fraud, stealing, or some chief or warlord taking the food?

Once distribution is made to regional centers, the food is under the control of the partnering churches. The churches have made provisions for security against theft and strict accountability measures have been put into place, both for audit purposes as well as for control against fraud. It is highly unlikely that a chief or headman would try to commandeer a shipment; this would undoubtedly be widely reported in the Zambian press and the public outcry would be enormous. There have been a couple of reports of stolen maize from warehouses, but these have been cases where genetically modified maize was being stockpiled for later distribution.

7 Can confirmation be sent after the food is given, such as a few stories or actual reports of the distribution of the food, with pictures?

Yes, representatives from ACTION or a sister agency will be present for as many distributions as possible and reports will be received from all. Stories and photos will be taken and made available.

You may write a designated check to EPM and 100% will be sent directly to Action International. Or you may write a check to: Action USA, PO Box 398, Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043-0398, or give online: www.actionintl.org

An UnHoly Hoax?

The Authenticity of Christ

It's become the surest way to get attention during Easter: claim the resurrection of Christ was an unholy hoax. The latest claimant is a researcher named Suzanne Marie Olsson. She says that she's convinced she has found the final resting place of Jesus—in a Muslim shrine in India. Olsson wants to exhume the body and run some DNA tests on it. Tracing the body's origins will "resolve the raging controversy," she says, over the identity of the remains.

Don't hold your breath, Ms. Olsson. People have been trying to "resolve the raging controversy" for some two thousand years.

I have been challenged myself many times on the resurrection. My answer is always that the disciples and five hundred others gave eyewitness accounts of seeing Jesus, risen from the tomb. But then I'm asked, "How do you know they were telling the truth? Maybe they were perpetrating a hoax."

My answer to that comes from an unlikely source: Watergate.

Watergate involved a conspiracy to cover up, perpetrated by the closest aides to the President of the United States—the most powerful men in America, who were intensely loyal to their President. But one of them, John Dean, turned state's evidence, that is, testified against Nixon, as he put it, "to save his own skin"—and he did so only two weeks after informing the president about what was really going on—two weeks! The real cover-up, the lie, could only be held together for two weeks, and then everybody else jumped ship in order to save themselves. Now, the fact is that all that

those around the President were facing was embarrassment, maybe prison. Nobody's life was at stake.

But what about the disciples? Twelve powerless men, peasants really, were facing not just embarrassment or political disgrace, but beatings, stonings, execution. Every single one of the disciples insisted, to their dying breaths, that they had physically seen Jesus bodily raised from the dead.

Don't you think that one of those apostles would have cracked before being beheaded or stoned? That one of them would have made a deal with the authorities? None did.

You see, men will give their lives for something they believe to be true—they will never give their lives for something they know to be false.

The Watergate cover-up reveals the true nature of humanity. Even political zealots at the pinnacle of power will, in the crunch, save their own necks, even at the expense of the ones they profess to serve so loyally. But the apostles could not deny Jesus because they had seen Him face to face, and they knew He had risen from the dead.

No, you can take it from an expert in cover-ups—I've lived through Watergate—that nothing less than a resurrected Christ could have caused those men to maintain to their dying whispers that Jesus is alive and is Lord. Two thousand years later, nothing less than the power of the risen Christ could inspire Christians around the world to remain faithful—despite prison, torture, and death.

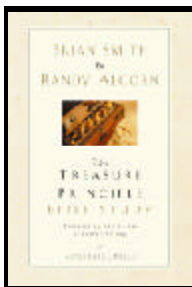
Jesus is Lord: That's the thrilling message of Easter. And it's an historic fact, one convincingly established by the evidence—and one you can bet your life upon. Go ahead researchers—dig up all the old graves you want. You won't change a thing. He has risen.

(Originally presented on "BreakPoint with Chuck Colson," 3/29/02, Copyright © 2002 Prison Fellowship Ministries. Reprinted with permission.)

Available in May:

The Treasure Principle Bible Study Guide

by Brian Smith & Randy Alcorn



This Bible study, a companion to Randy Alcorn's *The Treasure Principle*, can help you learn what it means to invest in eternity—to live and give now in a way that will pay off forever.

It is designed for personal reflection followed by discussion with a partner or group. Any of the questions in the study can serve as the basis for profitable discussion, but you'll find in each lesson several questions written specifically for dialogue between you and a partner or group.

Each of the 12 lessons also include a section entitled "Questions for God" that prompts you to converse with your Lord honestly regarding doubts, fears, joys, and new discoveries. You'll be encouraged to take to heart one short Scripture passage "For Meditation and Memorization."

This Bible study guide will urge you to contemplate what may be a very different way of thinking, a new perspective on life and eternity.

What is this “AIDS Crisis”?

As the international director of World Relief’s HIV/AIDS program *Mobilizing for Life*, Debbie Dortzbach is based in Africa where she experiences firsthand the heartache and devastation caused by this dreadful disease. Here, she offers insights into the terrors of AIDS...and challenges the Church in America to ask: “What would Jesus do?”

We hear about the “AIDS crisis” in Africa, but just how serious is the problem?

Debbie: More serious than you hear, or can imagine. The advances we make are clouded by regular reports of the AIDS disaster deepening elsewhere. The Church has been sleeping for too long, convinced that HIV/AIDS is not the Church’s problem. Now, the Church is being catapulted into the crisis.

What is the most tragic situation that you have encountered personally?

Debbie: Recently, I visited a home in Mozambique where a 15-year-old girl had just died of AIDS—and left behind twin babies. The babies’ grandmother is struggling to care for them along with her two sons, ages four and 10, but this lady also has AIDS. Her home has gaps in the mud walls and a leaky, corrugated metal roof. It won’t be long before that household is completely motherless. And this scenario is happening throughout Africa today.

Why should Christians in America be concerned?

Debbie: Because Jesus is. We have no option but to be concerned and to get involved. Too often, we shrug it off because this massive problem is far from us. It is only God’s mercy—and certainly not our piety—that keeps AIDS from causing widespread disaster in our own country.

Don’t people with HIV/AIDS deserve to suffer because of immoral behavior or un-Godly lifestyles?

Debbie: Thankfully, God doesn’t treat us according to what we deserve. If that were so, none of us could stand His judgment.

What does the Church offer people affected by HIV/AIDS?

Debbie: The Church offers the best and the most affordable medicine—hope, comfort, eternal life, and a Savior who loves us just as we are.

How do you think Jesus would respond to someone with HIV/AIDS?

Debbie: Jesus understands our needs beyond the next meal or failed relationship. Jesus guides people to healthy relationships...forgiving, reconciling, comforting, and protecting.

How should we respond?

Debbie: Humbly...with repentance for our imperfect love toward those who struggle with the misuse of God’s gift of sexuality. We need to examine our own hearts and be generous with our time and resources, serving others in Jesus’ name.



(This article originally appeared in World Relief’s bi-monthly issue of “Touching A Hurting World in Jesus’ Name,” January/February 2003. Photograph of Odeth by Jon Warren.)

MOBILIZING FOR LIFE

World Relief’s *Mobilizing for Life* HIV/AIDS program mobilizes and equips local churches to meet physical, emotional, and spiritual needs through:

- 1 **Education and Prevention:** Equipped with World Relief’s resources, churches promote biblical morality—including abstinence and marital fidelity—and confront the harmful myths and stigmas surrounding those with HIV/AIDS;
- 1 **Care:** Mobilized by World Relief, churches offer practical assistance and pastoral counseling, teach families how to care for sick relatives at home, and help AIDS orphans;
- 1 **Income Generation:** Small loans empower families to set up modest wage-earning enterprises so they can help extended family members, including orphans, affected by AIDS.

All gifts to EPM marked “AIDS Crisis” or “World Relief” will be sent in their entirety to World Relief. Or you may send support directly to World Relief, 7 East Baltimore St., Baltimore, MD 21202. You may also contact them via email at worldrelief@wr.org or call them at (443) 451-1900. Make sure to clearly designate your gift to “AIDS Crisis.”

**Questions
and
Answers**
By Randy Alcorn

Dear Sir,

I am an educated Hindu (an electrical engineer). Not the Hindu projected by the Western press as a fanatic. Like millions of my countrymen who are educated and are Hindus, I share an anti-pathy towards the missionaries. I have studied in Christian schools (the Seventh Day Adventist schools as well as schools run by the Jesuits). I admire their teaching skills and I also admire them because they never tried to convert the children. They also never mentioned anything much about their religion. But this does not decrease my hatred against the missionaries trying to take advantage of the poor by offering them a few kilos of rice and some money in return for their souls.

I notice that your views expounded in your website smack of western arrogance. You feel that the president and his meddling government should interfere in the internal affairs of other free nations and allow people like you to propagate your religion.

Besides this, Christians like you suffer from what I term as a "persecution complex." Probably this is because of your upbringing. The Bible says that Christ was a martyr and was persecuted during his time. So, I guess that you people try to wear the shroud of persecution in order to imitate him.

It is high time that the government of India places a ban on people of your ilk coming over to India and trying to convert the people over here. The foreign missionaries do not know anything about the rich and composite culture of India. These ignorant boors whose eyes are coloured with religious fanaticism and arrogance advise the Indians to forget their age-old customs and spew venom towards the Hindu religion. Naturally, this is causing strife and in the bargain, a lot of innocent

people are being killed. Did your God preach hatred or love?

We Indians had universities before you guys came out of caves. India is one of the few nations on the face of the earth where there was no anti-Semitism. We welcomed all religions and they prospered here. But now Christian missionaries are trying to take undue advantage of our benignity.

We Indians (irrespective of class, caste, creed, or religion) are rich spiritually. We do not require any other means of salvation and especially the artificial variety propagated by people like you. Mind you, I am not talking anything against Christianity. We Indians believe that a person must search his own path for spiritual needs. This path may be even atheism. In fact, the greatness of Hinduism lies in the fact that even atheism or animism are viewed as different paths towards God.

If people like you want to show off your western imperialist might and try to convert people in my country, I will be among the millions who will oppose you and justify any action taken against people like you. I believe that people like you want the entire nation to convert to Christianity and thus become another satellite of the US or any other Western country. Therefore, the message is loud and clear "INDIA DOES NOT REQUIRE ANY FOREIGN MONEY IN THE NAME OF AID FOR PROPOGATING CHRISTIANITY".

Jai Hind! (Victory to India)

Dear Jai,

I wanted to get back to you and hopefully address some of your concerns. Even though we disagree about some things, I'm glad that you wrote. By dialogue perhaps we can come to a better understanding.

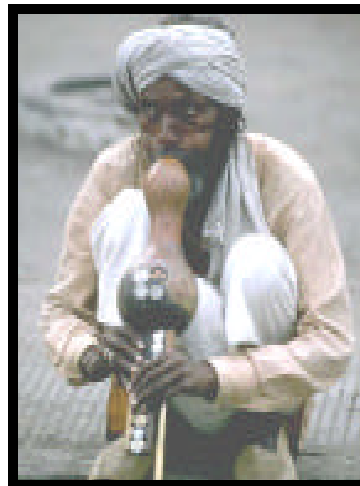
You suggest in your email that missionaries are "trying to take advantage of the poor by offering them a few kilos of rice and some money in return for their souls." But when I give to the poor, which I am committed to doing, I am not trying to buy their souls. If someone is trying to do that, they are doing something that is not just wrong, but

impossible. Jesus alone died for the souls of men. There is no amount of money or food that could buy their souls.

But what should I do as a Christian? The Bible says, "Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed, but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?'" (James 2:15-16).

The motive of a true missionary is to proclaim the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ; he is concerned for the eternal souls of people. But he is also concerned about the whole person, which includes his physical welfare. If the missionary does nothing for the physical needs of the people around him, then he is not following the teachings of Scripture.

It's also important that, when offering material assistance, a Christian asks nothing in return. Most recipients of food and clothing will not become Christians, but they are still loved and cared for. When I help someone in need, I don't require that he become a Christian. But I do wish to share with him that Christ



loved him enough to die for him. I don't believe that is taking advantage of him. I believe it is loving him. Now if someone does it in a condescending or paternalistic way, he is wrong. I'm sure some Christians have done it this way, but I can certainly tell you not all Christians do it this way.

It is not out of animosity toward the Hindu religion nor the Indian culture, that missionaries spread the Word of God. Rather, it is love for people and obedience to God that compels true Christians to share about their faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 14:6; "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." If His words are true, then only by faith in Jesus Christ can a soul be saved. I realize you do not believe this and I am not trying to force you to believe it—I'm only telling you what I believe.

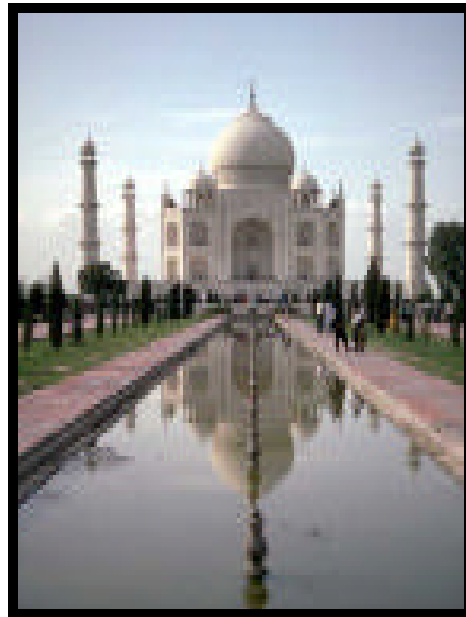
The Indian culture does, in fact, have a long and rich history that should be respected and appreciated. A true follower of Jesus Christ does not seek to change cultures, but to change hearts. I have been to many different countries, though not India, and I'm sure there are many things about India that are better than America. These things should be encouraged and learned from, never disrespected. America has become a very ungodly and materialistic country. I am not at all proud about many things I see in America. Some of them I am very ashamed of.

The Bible teaches that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). This means that God is holy and perfect and all mankind has missed the mark of perfection. The book of Romans also tells us that "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus" (6:23). Because we have all fallen short of God's perfection, we are deserving of eternal death and condemnation. But Jesus paid the penalty for our imperfection and by faith in Him, we can be made perfect in the sight of God. This makes it possible for us to be in His presence after we die and our souls leave this earth.

Some think this is a hard message, and it is. I don't want to admit that I am an imperfect sinner. But, the solution is not to cover things up and say that I am perfect when I really am not. The solution is to rely on God to save me and to make me perfect in heaven someday. If I pretend that I am perfect and that I can save myself by choosing my own path, then I am deceiving myself and I will have to pay the penalty for my sins on my own. That is what the Bible calls Hell. It is not something I made up or ever would. But since I believe the Bible, I naturally very much desire that people would go to heaven and not hell. So I want to tell them about the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ.

The difference between Christianity and every other religion is that Jesus teaches that I can do nothing to earn perfection before God. Only God Himself can cleanse me and purify me. The things I do in this life to obey Him are out of gratitude and service to Him; they are not a way to earn salvation or a better place in the next life. Most people

would like to think that they can make their own way, that they can take care of themselves. But the true Christian must admit that he is helpless and that only God can save him. Then he must place his faith in the physical death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the one who died to pay the penalty for the imperfection of all mankind. This is a message that needs to be spread to all people everywhere, regardless of culture or race. It is a message of spiritual freedom, which Jesus instructed His followers to share with the whole world (Matthew 28:18-20).



As you can see, this is not about America, it's about Jesus, who was of a different race than I, and lived in a very different culture than America or any western nation. The message of Jesus transcends all cultures and times. God has chosen to reveal Himself to the world through His Son Jesus Christ and through His Word, the Holy Bible. If I believed this to be true and did not tell others about it, I would be a selfish and arrogant person, caring only for myself. But Jesus is my example. He cares about all people, and I am constrained to share the message not only with those in my own country, but with the rest of the world as well.

You say I want to show off my "western imperialist might." I have no interest in that. It's not the West my allegiance is to. It's to Christ, who was not a Westerner. You say our website smacks of Western arrogance. I don't know what you're referring to. But if

there's something I'm shown that is indeed arrogant, I will remove it. Please show me.

You say you will "justify any action taken against people like you." That's sad. I would not justify any action taken against you, no matter how emphatically you desired to convert others to your beliefs. You say, "I believe that people like you want the entire nation to convert to Christianity and thus become another satellite of the US or any other Western country." Again, it isn't about the west—in fact, if you think the West is Christian, you're wrong. It's post-Christian. The average American's beliefs aren't Christian at all. To say that Christian missionaries are representing America or the West is simply not accurate. They are trying to represent Christ, who did not speak English and who lived in a land much closer to India than to America.

As for the persecution of Christians in India, it is not western missionaries I'm concerned about. It's Indian Christians, who I believe should have the same right—no more and no less—to be Christians as anyone else has to be Hindu or Muslim or anything else. I don't believe someone should have his rights taken away because of his religious beliefs. I hope you don't believe that either.

I hope this addresses some of your concerns about the motives of missionaries in India. Certainly, since missionaries are also sinners, many mistakes have been made. The goal of missions work is not to "westernize" your nation or any other nation. Rather, it is to proclaim the good news that Jesus Christ has paid the penalty for the imperfections of mankind and to give people in every part of the world the opportunity to receive His gift of eternal salvation. Any material assistance provided should only reinforce the message of love and concern for the whole person, body and soul.

If you wish to dialogue any further, I am open. Obviously we have different perspectives. But if you think my attitude is wrong, I want to know specifically in what areas. I hope that you will experience the love of Jesus, not for my sake, certainly not for the sake of America or western culture, but for your sake. You have my sincere best wishes and prayers.

Randy Alcorn

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Saving Babies and Saving Sinners

Thoughts on the Horrors of Abortion and Hell

by John Piper

I am frustrated that I have only one life to live for Christ. This morning after breakfast I was again distressed, very distressed, at the thought of the thousands of unborn children that are legally crushed to death by sterile medical instruments. I lay down on my bed and stared at the ceiling. The immensity of the horror of bloody little legs and arms and heads dismembered and piled on a clinic mat returned again and again.

For three years Noël and I lived a few miles from Dachau, the concentration camp outside Munich, Germany. Today it is open to the public. There are pictures. It is only because there are pictures that we believe it happened. Without the photographic record there would be no belief. We walked through the terrible chambers. We walked through the oven rooms. We walked between the stacked bunks. But that is not real. They are like props. It didn't really happen here in this very spot. Not really.

Then we saw the pictures. The pictures don't lie. Everything can lie but the

pictures. We can escape anything but the pictures. Worldwide indignation came from the pictures. Without the pictures it is unimaginable; it couldn't have been like that. Or, yes, it could have, but I can't come close to feeling what I should feel—not without the pictures.

So it is with abortion. It is the pictures that stun me this morning—the incredible scenes from *Eclipse of Reason* and the photographs of legally mangled corpses. What shall I do? Would petitions and prayers really have sufficed in Nazi Germany?

Then I think of the immensity and horror of the sin of disbelieving God. I think of the offense against his immeasurable honor. I think of the reality of hell and the word pictures in the Bible: “And the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night” (Revelation 14:11, RSV).

Suddenly, it hits me what an utter inconsistency it is to feel indignant as a Christian about the Holocaust of the Jews and the holocaust of abortion, but

not about the holocaust of sinners perishing in unbelief. Killing babies is a horrendous evil and their destruction is hellish. But not trusting God is a more horrendous evil, and the destruction of unbelieving people is not hellish but hell. Therefore I am frustrated that I have only one life to live for the glory of Christ. One life should surely be devoted to stopping the carnage (we must speak graphically or we lie) of abortion. Another life should surely be devoted to saving people from hell.

What shall I do? What is the solution to my frustration? The solution is the diversity of the members of the church of Jesus Christ. I cannot go to all the unreached peoples of the world with the good news of salvation from sin. I cannot spend all the time I would like writing, speaking, traveling, and agitating for the cause of threatened children. The only solution I know is you! Which horror in the world today makes you ache most? Where will you pour yourself out in the few years you have before you give an account to the righteous Judge of all the earth?

(John Piper, *A Godward Life [Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2001], pp. 205-206.*)

Long, habitual, and uninterrupted mercies?

by Hannah More, “Prayer”

That sun that has shone unremittingly from the day is a stupendous exertion of God's power, an astonishing exhibition of omnipotence.

In adoring the providence of God, we are apt to be struck with what is new and out of the usual course, while we too much overlook **long, habitual, and uninterrupted mercies**.

But **common mercies**, if less striking, are more valuable, because we have them always.

The ordinary blessings of life are overlooked for the very reason for which they ought to be most prized; because they are most uniformly bestowed.

They are most essential to our being; and when once they are withdrawn, we begin to find that they are also **most essential to our comfort**.

Nothing raises the price of a blessing like its removal, whereas it was its continuance which should have taught us its value.

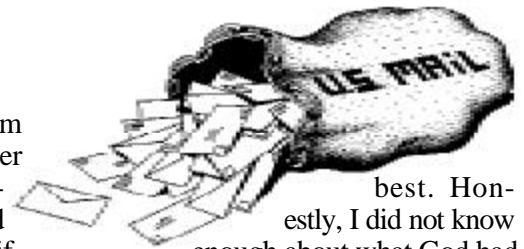
We prefer **novelties** to awaken our gratitude, not considering that it is the duration of the **common mercies** which enhances their value.

We desire fresh excitements.

We consider **mercies long enjoyed** as things to be taken for granted, as things to which we have a sort of presumptive claim; as if God had no right to withdraw what he has once bestowed, as if he were obliged to continue what he has once been pleased to confer.



Letters to EPM



I was reading one of your novels almost 5 years ago, when I read, “When we are at war with a people, we dehumanize them to do what we must do. If we want to reconcile with them, we must consciously promote them back to humanity.” (That’s as I remember the passage.) I read this at a time when my wife of 6 years and I had just been turned down for a China adoption and we had been told that Vietnam was our best chance. I was on the ground outside Chu Lai in 1969. I was wounded and spent several years at Balboa Naval Hospital in San Diego, and in spica casts and a wheel chair. I graduated from San Diego State in ’73 healed of my wounds, physically.

It wasn’t until October of 1997, when they told us we needed to adopt from Vietnam, did I realize my mind was not yet healed. I read your words in *Deadline* within days of the adoption agency’s announcement and realized what I must do. I did it. All things are possible in Him. Thank you.

When we arrived in Vietnam in ’97, Benjamin was 6 months old; he weighed 6 pounds, and was very sick. He had lost his brother, Joshua, before we arrived. It was quite an adventure evacuating him from the Mekong Delta region. It was a time filled with miracles.

It is Father’s Day today, and when Ben climbed up in bed with me this morning, I resolved to write to you and thank you for those words I read almost 5 years ago.

F. K. PS: Our daughter Abigale was 2 in January. She was born near Hanoi.

I want to thank you for your research and time that you spent regarding birth control pills. My fiancé and I will be married in October and we have been praying and seeking counsel from friends (and doctors) regarding the issues with birth control. We have received so many conflicting opinions and views, none of which seemed to have the support of research and full understanding that you provide in your booklet. This was particularly disappointing when coming from physicians.

We’ve been told that the rhythm method was unreliable and that other methods of contraception could potentially cause harm to the child if a child was conceived. We’ve also received differing opinions about whether the Pill does or does not inhibit implantation after fertilization.

We thank you for helping us learn and understand the truth about BCPs, and for providing us the information we needed to make the right choice.

B. G., Houston, TX

I wanted to drop you a note of introduction and thank you for allowing the Lord to use you and your ministry in such mighty, life-altering ways. I have been a believer for many years, and simply wanted you to know what an encouragement your books have been to us.

I read *In Light of Eternity* last year, and recently provided my unsaved dad a copy of the book. He took great interest in reading it (along with his new Bible), and told me two days ago that he wanted to be introduced to Christ. Wow! I have prayed for him for 23 years, and to hear him put his trust in Christ provided me a joy beyond words!! As you had shared in the book, it was reminiscent of your dad coming to saving faith in his later years.

The Treasure Principle has recently, and with such profound simplicity, deepened my perspective on the earthly investment/heavenly treasure relationship. Thanks for being such a good steward of the gift of written communication God has richly entrusted to you.

M. D.

I just finished your book, *In Light of Eternity*, five minutes ago and I am overwhelmed with the way God used this book in my life. I have been a Christian for 10 years—I was saved in college—and have been involved in ministry since my salvation. I have spent these years sharing my faith and discipling women. I have read a lot of books that led me to the Scriptures. Never have I read something that has impacted me in this way. The reality of heaven to me before reading this book was vague at

best. Honestly, I did not know enough about what God had to say about heaven to even believe that it was actually a real place. As I read your book, I looked up all the Scriptures you provided and God did an amazing work in my heart. I feel like He changed my perspective about my purpose here on earth and also showed me what I have to look forward to! People talk about being excited about heaven but I did not understand enough about it to even get excited!

Thank you for listening to God’s voice and writing this book. J. E.

It is 2:41 in the morning and I just finished reading *The Ishbane Conspiracy*. I should be in bed, but I could not put it down. I finished it and *Lord Foulgrin’s Letters* in about a week and a half. Your books are fantastic and opened my eyes to a lot of things (so much so, that I’ve started changing things in my life). But that’s not why I’m writing...I’m writing to let you know, that through your books, my relationship with the Lord has deepened to a whole new level that has changed me from the inside out. I’ve been praying constantly and trying to learn more. I just wanted to thank you. And to let you know that Jesus is working in my heart daily (which I assume is the reason you write these novels).

I grew up in a Christian home but turned away from it in my teenage years when I began to have more freedom. I wasted a lot of precious time focusing on the wrong things and doing the wrong things. I became pregnant at 19, unmarried. Fortunately, as God has a wonderful way of doing, He turned the situation around and it became a blessing. Both my husband (the father of our baby) and I have become Christians (for me, again, for him, for the first time) and will be married for three years in January. Our darling daughter is two-and-a-half and happily involved in her Sunday school and hopefully growing up with the knowledge that if God can change Mommy, He can do anything! R.

God's Strengthening Presence in Suffering

From *Preparing For the Underground Church* by Pastor Richard Wurmbrand

Note from Randy: The following words from Richard Wurmbrand, the founder of Voice of the Martyrs, could be misunderstood or taken out of context. He was, and I am, a firm believer in the authority of Scripture and its power as the Word of God. That power, however, resides in God's Spirit. An atheist or a demon can memorize and recite Scripture. Only a disciple draws his strength from the God concerning whom Scripture testifies.

How much each one of us can suffer depends on how much he is bound up with a cause, how dear this cause is to him, and how much it means for him. In this respect we have had in Communist countries very big surprises. There have been gifted preachers and writers of Christian books who have become traitors. The composer of the best hymnal of Romania became the composer of the best communist hymnal of Romania. Everything depends on whether we have remained in the sphere of words or if we are merged with the divine realities.

God is the Truth. The Bible is the truth about the Truth. Theology is the truth about the truth about the Truth. A good sermon is the truth about the truth about the truth, about the Truth. It is not *the* Truth. The Truth is God alone. Around this Truth there is a scaffolding of words, of theologies, and of exposition. None of these is of any help in times of suffering. It is only the Truth Himself Who is of help, and we have to penetrate through sermons, through theological books, through everything which is 'words,' and be bound up with the reality of God Himself.

I have told in the West how Christians were tied to crosses for four days and four nights. The crosses were put on the floor and other prisoners were tortured and made to fulfill their bodily necessities upon the faces and the bodies of the crucified ones. I have since been asked: "Which Bible verse helped and strengthened you in those circumstances?" My answer is: "NO Bible verse was of any help." It is sheer cant and religious hypocrisy to say, "This Bible verse strengthens me, or that Bible verse

helps me." Bible verses alone are not meant to help. We knew Psalm 23, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want...though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death..."

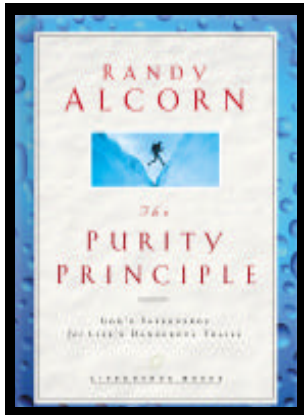
When you pass through suffering you realize that it was never meant by God that Psalm 23 should strengthen you. It is the Lord who can strengthen you, not the Psalm which speaks of Him so doing. It is not enough to have the Psalm. You must have the One about whom the Psalm speaks. We also knew the verse: "My Grace is sufficient for thee." But the verse is not sufficient. It is the Grace which is sufficient and not the verse.

Pastors and zealous witnesses who are handling the Word as a calling from God are in danger of giving holy words more value than they really have. Holy words are only the means to arrive at the reality expressed by them. If you are united with the Reality, the Lord Almighty, evil loses its power over you; it cannot break the Lord Almighty. If you only have the words of the Lord Almighty you can be very easily broken.

Coming in
July:

The Purity Principle

by Randy Alcorn



Sexual purity isn't just right. It's also smart. God has placed warning signs and built guardrails to keep us from plunging off the cliff. This book deals with training our children in sexual purity; protecting purity in dating (at any age); and maintaining purity in marriage. *The Purity Principle* is biblical, practical, and concise. It's a one-stop handbook for individuals, families and churches.

True happiness!

by Octavius Winslow,
"Evening Thoughts"

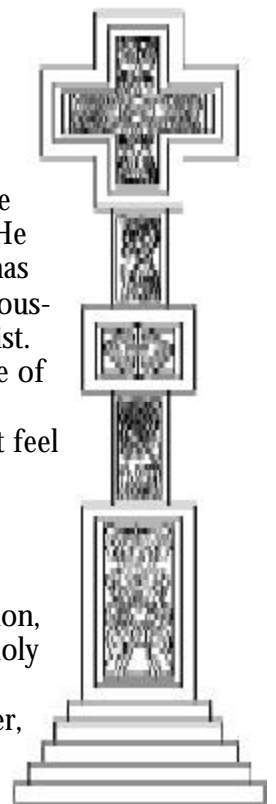
Happiness is the attainment that the world is eagerly in search of. But the believer in Christ is its only possessor. He has found it, and found it in Jesus. He has found it in a renunciation of self righteousness, and in a humble reception of Christ.

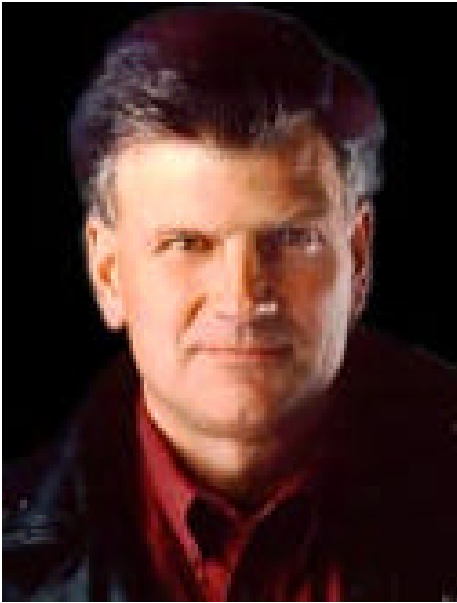
There is no **true happiness** outside of Jesus!

What **true happiness** can the heart feel while...

it is unrenewed,
its sins unpardoned,
the soul unjustified,
and therefore under condemnation,
and exposed to the wrath of a holy
and just God?

Oh, dream not of **happiness**, reader,
until you have gone as a repenting
sinner to the cross of Christ!





Jesus Freak

Franklin Graham remains unashamed of the Name, despite public criticism. No generic prayers for him.

The following are portions of an interview with Christianity Today editor David Neff and deputy managing editor Timothy Morgan.

All I can do is speak for myself. I didn't ask to be at Columbine. It just happened. When I get invitations like that, I just have to believe that God opens those doors because he expects the name of his Son to be interjected into that situation. I would be showing dishonor to my Father in heaven not to mention the name of his Son in those settings.

We don't even want to get near it." But the AIDS issue around the world is basically heterosexual.

The world's response is condom distribution. But the problem is people don't use them, for whatever reason, even people who are educated. I was invited to speak at an AIDS fundraiser in New York City with the Global Business Council on HIV/AIDS. Former ambassador Richard Holbrooke is the head, and he said, "Franklin, we'd like for you to come and give the benediction."

"Can I say something other than a prayer?"

"Yes. The only thing we ask is that you don't attack homosexuals."

"That's not what I do."

When I got up to speak, I reminded them that every one of the 40 million people infected with HIV has a soul, precious to God. I said, "I will work with each and every one of you to save life." Oh, they applauded.

Then I said, "I'm prolife." Silence. I said, "I think it's just as important to save the life of an unborn child as it is to save the life of a man or woman eaten up with AIDS." Silence.

"We can't do this without God's help. That's why I'm here to ask for God's help."

The number one obstacle is the world's concept: Just give me a billion condoms and we can solve this issue. What the world wants to do is continue in a sinful lifestyle.

The church is sitting back, saying, "I told you so. If you all would keep your pants zipped up, then there wouldn't be any of these problems." We have failed to get involved because homosexuals are in this fight. We've got to be willing to get down with people we don't like.

The greatest mission field in front of us is HIV/AIDS patients. Yes, it's

Your book *The Name* defends your use of Jesus' name in public prayers. How surprised were you by the reactions to your prayers at Columbine High School and the 2001 presidential inauguration?

I can't say I was surprised, because I've seen this before. We as Christians should not be afraid of mentioning the name of Jesus Christ. The freedoms other religions enjoy in this country are because of Christians, who came to this nation searching for freedom. Jews have had more freedom in this country than in any nation on the face of this earth outside of Israel. A Muslim has more freedom in this country than he has in a Muslim country. Christians gave them this freedom.

Why do you think some people say they're offended, then?

Because they are. Listen, if I mention the name Muhammad, people go: Okay. You mention the name of Buddha: Oh, that's nice. You mention the name of Jesus Christ, and it divides a room. People scowl. People breathe a sigh of relief. This is more evidence that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that Satan wants to do everything he can do to discredit that name.

Local pastors often get asked to give prayers or to say a few words at community events. Should they follow the pattern that you set forth and always speak in the name of Jesus?

At the inauguration, Houston pastor Kirbyjon Caldwell and you took mutual strength and encouragement.

We were in a room at the hotel. The program committee was meeting. Kirbyjon saw me and said, "Franklin, are you going to use the Name?" I looked at him. He said, "In the prayer, are you going to use the Name?"

"Ah. Yes, I'm going to pray in the Name."

"Good. So am I. We'll both get in trouble together."

Kirbyjon gave a great prayer, and it came from his heart.

How do you feel about Christians commemorating events separately compared to what happened in New York City last year, where everybody got together under Oprah's umbrella?

[After the memorial service at] Yankee Stadium, I talked to a lot of pastors who said, "We were left out." It was people offering generic messages and prayers. They tried to make it a Hollywood event. Hollywood has nothing to offer to anybody. Who offers more hope—Oprah or Almighty God?

You've been speaking out about HIV and AIDS. What is the biggest obstacle to Christian ministry in responding to the HIV/AIDS crisis?

One is the perception in the church that it's caused by homosexuality, which in this country accounts for the majority of cases. Churches say, "This is dirty.

tough, but what a challenge. These people have a soul, made in the image of God, and Jesus Christ died for them. Are we to say, "I don't want to get my hands dirty?"



Would you see this happening through organizations like Samaritan's Purse and World Vision?

No, I see it working in the local churches. Every local church ought to be looking for ways to have hospice care for HIV/AIDS victims, counseling, and education.

We need to be right up in the front. We are so wrapped up in our little programs. I'm saying, Just do it. Quit talking about it. How much money do you have in your budget for HIV/AIDS? Anything? Put it in there. Make it a line item so that the elders and the deacons and the pastor, everybody, sees it.

Then let's start looking for somebody in the community who we can invest in—somebody who has a heart for HIV/AIDS, who's doing something for HIV/AIDS in the community. Let's pray that God will raise up men and women out of that church who say, "Pastor, I'm here, I'll go to the hospital, and I'll visit."

As a Christian leader, you are unusual in that you are involved in social ministry through Samaritan's Purse and in evangelism through the BGEA. How are your two callings related?

I don't see a division. The thing is Jesus Christ. He healed people. That's social ministry. He fed people. This is social ministry. But that wasn't the end in itself. Christian organizations got off on the social ministry, and they forgot their purpose. The soul is the purpose. Every miracle Jesus did, he did so that those who were the recipients of his grace and his mercy would put their faith and trust in him as the living Son of God.

With Samaritan's Purse, we do evangelism. That's the core of everything we do. The goal of the BGEA is evangelism. But as I walk down life's road, I'm just not going to bypass people who are hurting. I'll want to help them so that I can tell them about Christ.

Some major Christian ministries got involved in just helping people. Christian people came into the organization who weren't really evangelical. They began to compromise and say, "We can have a witness by our presence." Give me a break. Don't say you're going to be a Christian by just sitting there like a knot on a log.

"Faith cometh by hearing." People have got to hear it.

How do you build into organizations the ability to keep that Christian focus?

You've got to get committed people, and you have to review constantly what the goals and objectives are. Keep coming back to the Cross. Keep coming back to the focal point.

You have called Islam "wicked" and "violent" and not "this wonderful, peaceful religion." To what degree have your views on Islam been shaped by your experience in Sudan?

It's not just Sudan. I have also been to Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan. I've been around the Muslim world for a long time. Out of all of these Islamic countries, there's not one democracy. There are no personal liberties. There are no freedoms, religious freedom or any other freedom. I see how they treat people of other faiths. It frightens me.

After 9/11, there were groups that said we all worship the same God. It's not the same God. The God of Islam is not a father. The God of the Christian faith is a father. He has a son: his name is Jesus.

Christianity Today, November 18, 2002, pages 58-60

Randy Alcorn's Speaking Schedule...

(in response to those who've asked)

April 11-15, 2003: Christian Writers Conference, Mt. Hermon Christian Conference Center, Mt. Hermon, CA (*Contact information: 831-335-4466 or www.mounthermon.org/writers*)

May 5-9, 2003: A Theology of Heaven: An intensive class taught by Randy Alcorn at Western Seminary, Portland, OR, Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-4:50 p.m. (*Contact Information: Kathy, 503-663-6481*)

May 17-21, 2003: Expolit Miami (Spanish Christian literature convention), Miami, FL (*Contact information: Marie Tamayo, 305-592-6136*)

May 23-26, 2003: The JESUS Film Briefing, Leavenworth, WA (*Contact information: Jim Sweeney, 503-652-2344*)

August 17-19, 2003: The Cove (Billy Graham Training Center, Ashville, NC (*Contact information: 800-950-2092*)



A. W. Tozer on Personal Life . . .

The Need for Solitude

And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.

—Matthew 14:23

Modern civilization is so complex as to make the devotional life all but impossible. It wears us out by multiplying distractions and beats us down by destroying our solitude, where otherwise we might drink and renew our strength before going out to face the world again.

“The thoughtful soul to solitude retires,” said the poet of other and quieter times; but where is the solitude to which we can retire today? Science, which has provided men with certain material comforts, has robbed them of their souls by surrounding them with a world hostile to their existence. “Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still” is a wise and healing counsel, but how can it be followed in this day of the newspaper, the telephone, the radio and the television? These modern playthings, like pet tiger cubs, have grown so large and dangerous that they threaten to devour us all. What was intended to be a blessing has become a positive curse. No spot is now safe from the world’s intrusion.

Of God and Men, 125

Face Down, Listening

Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations.”

—Genesis 17:3-4

The Scriptures declare, “Abram fell on his face” as the Lord talked with him (Genesis 17:3). Abraham was reverent and submissive. Probably there is no better

picture anywhere in the Bible of the right place for mankind and the right place for God. God was on His throne speaking, and Abraham was on his face listening!

Where God and man are in relationship, this must be the ideal. God must be the communicator, and man must be in the listening, obeying attitude. If men and women are not willing to assume this listening attitude, there will be no meeting with God in living, personal experience....

Yes, Abraham was lying face down in humility and reverence, overcome with awe in this encounter with God. He knew that he was surrounded by the world’s greatest mystery. The presence of this One who fills all things was pressing in upon him, rising above him, defeating him, taking away his natural self-confidence. God was overwhelming him and yet inviting and calling him, pleading with him and promising him a great future as a friend of God!

Men Who Met God, 21-22.



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