



Eternal Perspectives

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

Spring 2005

Guilt, God, and Self-Esteem by Randy Alcorn



The Hebrew word for sin means “to miss the mark.” Sin is missing the mark of God’s holiness. It is falling short of his righteousness. Some of us fall shorter than others, but all of us fall far short of God’s perfection. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Despite what some would have us believe, there *is* such a thing as true moral guilt. Therefore, not all guilt feelings are invalid—they may stem from a true condition. We do people no favor by saying “Don’t feel guilty” when in fact, according to God’s Word, they *are* guilty. Our goal should be a conscience cleansed of sin, not a conscience that denies sin.

The unbeliever is alienated from God, objectively guilty before Him. If he experiences alienation, guilt, and an overall sense of distance from God, he is experiencing what’s true. People are actually fortunate to have such feelings—they may draw them to Christ, the only one who can ultimately free them from guilt.

When we, as Christians, are living in sin and are therefore out of fellowship with God, we too experience alienation and guilt. Our reconciliation to God through Christ does not change, our future destiny does not change, but meanwhile we cannot enjoy the benefits of walking with God. As we sense this condition, it can result in constructive sorrow that leads us to deal properly with our sin (2 Corinthians 7:8-10).

David provides us one of the most vivid descriptions of stress in God’s Word:

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
For day and night
your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer. Selah
Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, “I will confess
my transgressions to the LORD”—
and you forgave
the guilt of my sin. (Psalm 32:3-5)

David’s health deteriorated; he spent his days sighing and groaning; he felt alienated from God and was left drained and exhausted by unresolved sin in his life. Not all stress comes from sin, but sin is a powerful source of stress.

But there was a solution to David’s sin problem, just as there is to ours—“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

David confessed to the Lord the sin that was weighing him down. He then experienced forgiveness from the guilt that plagued him. The rest of Psalm 32 makes clear that the stress was removed when the sin was dealt with. That is why David was able to write this introduction to the same Psalm:

Blessed is he
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.
Blessed is the man
whose sin the LORD does not count against him
and in whose spirit is no deceit
(Psalm 32:1-2).

David was forgiven for many sins, including adultery and murder. Notice that he had an accurate perception of reality—he felt guilty when he *was* guilty and he felt clean and forgiven when he *was* clean and forgiven.

If we break God’s law, as all of us do, we *are* guilty whether or not we *feel* guilty. Likewise, once our sins are confessed and repented of before Christ, we *are* forgiven whether or not we *feel* forgiven.

Residual Guilt

Many Christians do not feel forgiven after they have asked for God’s forgiveness. They suffer not from true guilt but from a lingering sense of a guilt that Christ has removed. Their residual guilt haunts them.

Though she has confessed and genuinely repented of her adultery, Helen lives in a self-inflicted purgatory. She is convinced God cannot forgive her, despite his Word’s assurance that he has. God says he has forgotten Helen’s sin and has buried it in the deepest sea (Jeremiah 31:34; Micah 7:19). But like

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the dog who digs up his old bones to chew on them some more, Helen won't let her sin lie where God has buried it. She refuses to accept the atonement. Instead she tries to repeat it.

When Christ died on the cross, he said, "It is finished." The word translated "It is finished" was commonly written across certificates of debt—it meant "Paid in Full." God

insists on paying it all.

God has seen us at our worst and still loves us. None of our sins—past, present or future—are hidden from his sight. No skeleton will fall out of our closets in eternity. God is on our side (Romans 8:31). Jesus is our defense attorney (1 John 2: 1). No matter who throws dirt at us, including Satan, "the accuser of the brethren," it will never stick. In Christ we are totally, absolutely, unconditionally cleared of all our sin.

Jesus suffered for our sins so we would not have to. By refusing to accept his provision, we imply that he died in vain. By inflicting suffering on ourselves, we imply that we are good enough to pay our own way.

False Guilt

Others are plagued by false guilt. False guilt is different from residual guilt, though it has many similar effects. False guilt is a self-condemning, self-punishing response to things for which we are not and never have been truly guilty. False guilt is purely imaginative—but its effects on us are painfully real.

Have you ever driven by a policeman when you weren't doing anything wrong, yet your heart pounds, your muscles tighten, and you breathe rapidly? You treat yourself as if you were guilty even when you aren't! That's false guilt.

False guilt may stem from perfectionism, or from unrealistic expectations of yourself. Often these unrealistic expectations are learned early in life, from home or school or church or any number of influences. Sometimes they are simply part of a demanding perfectionistic personality that is instinctively hard on itself. Such personalities can emerge even out of the least demanding environments.

Beneath these unrealistic expectations is often a sense of conditional approval—if I succeed in doing all these things *then* God will love me, others will love me, and perhaps I will even approve of myself. Those who struggle most from false guilt are

often the ones concerned about pleasing others and earning their favor, proving they are worthy.

False guilt is especially common for the Christian woman. Perhaps it's because she is always reminded of what a godly woman she ought to be, what a submissive, cheerful, organized, and generally stunning wife and mother she's supposed to be. But she knows that she is *not* all these things—who is? The gap between her expectations and reality is the guilt gap.

Similarly, single mothers may feel guilty because their children don't have a father. Abused women may feel guilty because they feel responsible for their husband's behavior. These women expect too much of themselves (more than God expects of them), and the result is guilt feelings.

Sandra apologizes for everything. If the bread is a little overdone or she has to stay home from church to care for the children or she must excuse herself to answer the phone or change a diaper, Sandra always says "I'm sorry." But she doesn't confine this to little things that don't matter and that everyone understands anyway (so why apologize?). Sandra says "I'm sorry" about the weather, about the lost football game, your headache, about anything and everything that is less than perfect (which covers a lot of ground). And she doesn't just mean "I feel bad for you"—she actually feels responsible for things totally beyond her control. As a result, she labors under a cloud of false guilt.



Sherry told us she went to a doctor with terrible stomach ulcers. She put it off far too long, because she couldn't bear to admit that she, a Christian, had ulcers. Ironically, her ulcers were made worse because she felt so guilty for having them. Her doctor, also a Christian, shocked her with his response: "A higher percentage of my female patients who are Christians have ulcers than those who are non-Christians." Why? Part of it is unrealistic expectations. We set unattainable goals, then punish ourselves for not attaining them.

In Christ we are totally, absolutely, unconditionally cleared of all our sin. Jesus suffered for our sins so we would not have to.

Carol felt guilty for being happy. She was in a Bible study group, where everyone else but her was going through hard times. She felt so guilty she wouldn't share the wonderful things God was doing in her life because she didn't want to make everyone else feel bad!

Linda is a missionary who loves to get letters from home, yet goes into a guilt tailspin every time she does because, she says, "I'm so far behind in writing back."

Of course, men also struggle with false guilt. Todd is a caring brother who felt guilty for backing off from an emotionally needy guy who was constantly calling him. But Todd was busy raising his children, caring for his wife, and ministering to other men...not to mention working for a living. He had to accept the fact that there just wasn't enough of him to be available to this guy who thought he always needed him. He wasn't being selfish—just realistic. Todd lined the man up with some other guys who could share time with him. Todd was caring and responsible. There was no valid basis for his guilt feelings.

I now receive so many emails related to my books, asking me questions, that I could easily spend sixty hours a week responding to them. But if I'm ever going to write another book, or do anything else, I can't. Yet I struggle with guilt feelings, not wanting to disappoint anyone. Our EPM board recently helped me by saying I should only respond personally to a small number of these emails, and not feel guilty about the rest being handled by our EPM staff (who do a great job, by the way).

True guilt can be confessed and dealt with. False guilt is more slippery.

Combating Guilt Feelings

Ironically, focus on false guilt can keep us away from facing up to true guilt, which most of us have plenty of. But true guilt can be confessed and dealt with. It should not and need not pile up on us. False guilt is more slippery. No wonder, since Jesus died for our real sins not our imaginary ones.

The only solution to residual guilt is to repeatedly rehearse the facts of forgiveness. Likewise, false guilt is combatted as we rehearse the facts, recognizing that our limitations are not sins.

Remind yourself that God cares for you (1 Peter 5:7), God hears you (Psalm 34: 15), and God understands your limitations and the stress they bring (Hebrews 4: 14-16).

And if you're feeling guilty because you, a Christian, are going through stress take a closer look at

your Savior. Jesus was "deeply moved in spirit and troubled" and wept at the death of his friend Lazarus (John 11:33-35), was stirred to compassion by the plight of the multitudes (Matthew 9:36), cried out over his beloved Jerusalem that had rejected him (Matthew 23:37-39). Jesus' stress was so great that the blood vessels under his skin broke and he literally sweated great drops of blood (Luke 22:42-44).

The God-man knew no sin, but he knew a lot of stress. The next time you think stress is a synonym for sin, remind yourself of the stress of the sinless one.

Understanding and Accepting Who I Am

A great deal has been said about self-esteem. Unfortunately, the self-esteem movement long ago degenerated into a cult of self-centeredness.

First, we should correct the almost universally accepted notion that Matthew 22:37-39 teaches three kinds of love: God-love, self-love, and others-love. In fact, it teaches two kinds of love: that we should

love God and that we should love others. It does not teach self-love. It simply recognizes and assumes that self-love exists—and that is something very different than teaching it as a virtue to be cultivated.

In the same way, Ephesians 5 says husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. But

it does not say "husbands, love your own bodies." It just recognizes that we do. The one who loves his body takes care of it. He feeds and clothes it. This is self-love—simply to take care of one's self. The biblical authors assumed there was plenty of self-love in almost everyone. (We "look out for number one," right?) They were not commanding more self-love but were encouraging their readers to take care of others as much as they already tended to take care of themselves.

Who You Think You Are

Rather than emphasize self-love, which can become self-centeredness, we need to focus on self-acceptance that is based on an accurate self-image.

It is important to realize the difference between self and self-image. Self is who you really are. Self-image is who you think you are.



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Rather than emphasize self-love, which can deteriorate into self-centeredness, we need to focus on self-acceptance that is based on an accurate self-image.

Satan, the master of extremes, wants us either to exalt ourselves or degrade ourselves. Scripture tells us it's important to think accurately about ourselves. "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment..." (Romans 12:3).

Scripture teaches that human beings stand condemned before God. Apart from Christ we are guilty and therefore our self-esteem is naturally low. That is why Christians who try to make people feel fulfilled apart from Christ tread on dangerous ground. Our ministry is not to make guilty people feel less guilty, but to make guilty people know their guilt can be taken away. The good news is not that they are righteous without Christ (that's a lie). The good news is that they can be made righteous by confessing their sin and accepting Christ's redemptive work on their behalf.

It's only part of the story to say God loves us just the way we are. God also loves us too much to let us stay that way. We are not basically good folks. We are sinners in desperate need of grace. But God offers that grace. He cleanses us from our guilt and in doing so he gives us the only valid basis for a positive self-image.

Once God has declared us "not guilty" he says there is no condemnation for us (Romans 8:1). Then and only then should we tell people they should not feel guilty. Why? Because, in fact, they no longer are guilty. They are clothed in the righteousness of Christ: acceptable, even commendable in the sight of a holy God.

Experiencing Your Identity

Just because God has made us righteous and guiltless doesn't mean we automatically experience the benefits of who we are. Our minds are like tape players, constantly running a message. We see our



entire lives in the light of this message. We interpret everything in a way that reinforces our fundamental beliefs about ourselves.

I may interpret everything I do as great, meaningful, more special and significant than what anyone else does. Everything I see reinforces my inflated prideful opinion of myself:

I am more important than other people. My ideas are always better, my insights more profound, my work more skillful. Without me, my family and church would crumble. I am indispensable. God needs me on his team, and everybody should be grateful I'm around. I will see that I get all that's coming to me. After all, I deserve it.

This is the kind of attitude that Romans 12:3 warns us not to have: "Don't think more highly of yourself than you ought to think." However, the verse also says we are to think of ourselves with sound judgment, which means we are to think accurately about ourselves. Thinking accurately means that not only are we not to think too highly of ourselves, but neither are we to think too lowly of ourselves. Some people certainly do have a pride problem, but many others have a self-depreciation problem. This is the sort of tape they run through their minds:

I am a failure, a loser. I lack the personality, good looks, and brains of successful people. I will never be as good as others. I don't do anything right. Nobody likes me, and those that seem to must just be pretending. God can't use me. I'm not a worthwhile person and probably never will be.

Both the prideful and the self-depreciating views are a product of a conformed mind, a mind that takes its cues from the world or self or Satan rather than from God. The transformed mind is very different. The tape that runs through it says this:

I am far from perfect, but I'm immeasurably valuable to God. He specially created me in his image, and I'm unique. Christ thought enough of me to die for me and not consider it a waste.

As a Christian, I'm a child of God. I am clothed with Christ's righteousness. God is on my side. According to his promise, I will spend eternity with him. God has seen me at my worst and still loves me.

This means that regardless of how I feel about myself and how I think others feel about me, I am loved by God. I am totally secure in Christ's unconditional and unending love. And as long as he has me here, there's a great purpose to my life.

As you re-read these messages, consciously reject the wrong ones and embrace the right one. The more you fill your mind with the biblical truth about who you are, the more your self-image will come into line with God-revealed reality.

Made By the Master

Facial surgeries, breast implants, and other non-accident-related cosmetic surgeries often betray a sad insecurity that still plagues people after they are done. By focusing on appearance and image rather than character and spirit, many people live in a world of superficiality that ultimately dooms their self-esteem because beauty, as they have wrongly defined it (in our terms), will inevitably diminish, and with it their acceptance of themselves.

Self-image should be based on what God's Word says is true of us. The world says you are worth a certain amount because you look a certain way or can perform a certain way. God says you are created in God's image and redeemed by Christ whether or not you can perform by society's numbers. You are not a product of your performance. You may receive a *D* but *you* are not a *D*.

Being precedes doing. You are not a child of God if you do everything just right. You are a child of God because, fully aware of all your faults and sins, he has made an irrevocable claim on you to be your Father. God loves you with a love that cannot be earned and therefore cannot be lost. Once you truly understand this, you will experience real security. Until you do, you will live in uncertainty and turmoil.

The secure Christian knows who he is and needn't live under the tyranny of self-doubt. His ego is no longer made out of fine China, but durable stainless steel. Fear of rejection diminishes, because even when rejected he still knows who he is. Fear of failure dissipates, because even when he fails he knows he's still loved. Furthermore, he knows that even his failure is a character-building tool in the hands of the Master Craftsman, who is not yet finished with him.

In Romans 8 Paul spoke to the Christian plagued with self-doubt. If we really listen to this message, not once but again and again, it can radically change our lives. Here is the essence of Romans 8:

Once you come to Christ there is no condemnation for you. You are a child of God who in times of loneliness and hurt can cry to him from the deepest



intimacy, "Abba (Papa, Daddy) Father." Both the Holy Spirit and Son pray for you continuously. Your Father filters out everything and only allows you to experience what is for your best good. God is totally on your side; he has chosen you unconditionally and defends you against accusation. Absolutely nothing you or anyone else can do or say or think will ever, under any circumstances or in any way, separate you from the love of Christ.



Cultivating Your Inner Life

The greatest truth anyone can learn is this: the most important part of your life is the part that only God sees (1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Peter 3:3-4).

Many Christian lives are like those Florida sink holes, where buildings and streets appear on the outside to be standing strong, then one day collapse under their own weight because of underground erosion that has left them without support.

Many have made it through life on good looks, talent, and drive, but wake up one day to find that none of those are sufficient to support them under the weight of the burdens that have come upon them. Terry was a successful businessman, coach, and men's group leader, but one day he collapsed under the weight of his own success. He admitted to me that for many months he'd neglected the inner garden of his soul. Now it had all caught up with him.

Time must be budgeted daily to accumulate inner strength and resolve, to fill and deepen our spiritual reservoirs. Make it your highest goal to cultivate your inner self by sitting at the feet of Christ. Set and keep a daily appointment with God. Withdraw from life's busyness to seek him in solitude.

All of this may mean getting up thirty minutes earlier, carving out forty minutes in the late morning or afternoon, or missing a television program in the evening. It is worth any "sacrifice" to spend time in God's presence. No time spent with Christ is wasted time. In fact, turn off that television for the whole evening, or the week, and read a good book. Talk with your family. Replenish your spirit.

Nothing so cultivates the inner person and enriches our relationship with God as biblical meditation. Meditation is the process of pondering, musing, and reflecting upon God and his truth. In the process, our hearts are drawn to God, our thoughts are filled with his thoughts, and ultimately, our behavior becomes like Christ's.

*Self-image
should be
based on what
God's Word says
is true of us....
You are not a
product of your
performance.*



Meditation is more than reading the Bible. It is musing upon it, rehearsing it prayerfully and thoughtfully. It is not swallowing Scripture whole, but chewing long and hard before digesting it. As a therapy for stress, meditation is often superior to medication. (I am not suggesting medication is wrong. Sometimes it can be helpful.) It is in prayerfully Christ-centered

meditation that the peace of God is experienced and the inner life is bolstered to withstand the pressures of the outer life.

There is really no secret to meditation. All of us meditate. We may meditate on a novel, a TV program, a sermon, a song, a shopping list, a friend, or

this morning's newspaper ads. Right now you're meditating on this article. All of us meditate. The key to meditation is the *object* of meditation...and the worthiness of that object.

Biblical meditation focuses on God—his attributes (Psalm 48:9), his works (Psalm 77:11-12), and his Word (Psalm 119:15-16). As we meditate on him, we become increasingly like him.

We like to hear seven methods and five easy steps and three proven secrets to the Christian life. But there are no shortcuts to spirituality. There is no pill that makes us godly, no checklist to make us view God and ourselves accurately. We become more Christlike only as we take pains to focus our gaze on Christ:

"But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Corinthians 3: 18).



Chinese Christians Still Persecuted for Their Faith *The Voice of the Martyrs* Newsletter

34-year-old Jiang Zongxiu went to her neighboring marketplace last June in Guizhou Province, China. Along with her mother-in-law, Jiang took opportunities to hand out Bibles and Christian literature and tell people about Jesus. Only on this day, they had an encounter with the Chinese police.

The two Christian women were handcuffed together and brought to the police station. They were interrogated throughout the evening of the 17th. The next morning they were sentenced by the Public Security Bureau (PSB) to 15 days incarceration for "suspected spreading of rumor and disturbing the social order."

Jiang and her mother-in-law knew the risk of spreading Christian literature in Communist China. Both had been active in their church for more than 10 years and dared to go forth. Even when they were arrested, interrogated and sentenced to serve 15 days, they were willing to accept the consequences of their

actions—all from a government that claims to have "freedom of religion."

But it was not enough for the PSB to arrest and beat these two Christian women for the crime of passing out Christian literature. On the afternoon of June 18th, Mrs. Jiang Zongxiu was pronounced dead by the PSB office of Tongzi County. They claimed she died of "natural causes." The fact is, she was beaten to death.

The Voice of the Martyrs has received video testimony from the surviving family, photos of Jiang's body showing her bruises, and a copy of the actual arrest document. All of this had to be smuggled out of China as the authorities continue to attempt to hide their systematic persecution of Christians. An international campaign is now under way on behalf of the surviving family.

Much of the world would like you to believe Christians are no longer persecuted in China. Sister Jiang's family would disagree.

You may contribute to this worthwhile and strategic ministry by contacting them directly:

Voice of the Martyrs
P.O. Box 443
Bartlesville, OK 74003
918-337-8015
www.persecution.com

(You may also give your contribution through EPM. 100% of designated contributions go directly to the ministry noted.)

Two EPM Needs: Used Laptop Computer and Printer

Sometimes people are upgrading and still have useable equipment to donate. EPM's shipping department has two needs: 1) laptop computer with Windows 2000 or XP, with wireless capabilities, 2) black and white printer.

If you have either of these you would like to donate to EPM please contact Kathy Norquist at kathy@epm.org or 503-663-6481. We would be happy to provide you with a "gift in kind" tax deductible receipt upon request.

Cramming for Heaven by Randy Alcorn

I spent a few hours with Carol King (see picture), who was dying of cancer. She joked that imminent death had changed her shopping habits. She said, "I no longer buy jumbo shampoo. I don't even buy green bananas!" But the most unforgettable thing she said was, "I'm cramming for Heaven."

In school, did you cram for tests? I did. Death involves the greatest examination in our lives, with by far the greatest consequences. It merits careful and thorough preparation. Our time is limited. We should all be cramming for heaven.

Any life that leaves us unprepared for death is a foolish life. Matthew Henry said, "It ought to be the business of every day to prepare for our last day."

As unbelievers cannot come back to Earth and live life over again and this time trust Christ, believers cannot come back and relive our lives, this time faithfully serving Christ. Now is our window of opportunity. C.T. Studd said, "Only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last."

There is an important qualification to this, however. *We will indeed have another opportunity to live on Earth.* The life we will live on that New Earth will be abundant

and exhilarating, unhindered by sin and death. Our life here now, on the old Earth, is an opportunity to serve Jesus and draw upon his strength. It's what we do in this life on the old Earth that will carry over into life on the New Earth.

Our life here won't be the end of our physical earthly existence. In fact, we'll spend eternity in new bodies, on a New Earth. This is the doctrine of resurrection. Our narrow and weak theology of resurrection—inseparable from our weak theology of Heaven—leaves us woefully unprepared for death, since we think death means leaving behind the ultimate human earthly experience, rather than moving toward it.

Meanwhile, we should all be preparing for the life to come. Like Carol, who has already passed the test, already graduated, we should spend our lives cramming for Heaven.

Let's go forth as Magellan, sailing on a charted course, eyes on the horizon...in our case, headed toward Heaven.



*Any life
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Pastors' Resources on Heaven

*The following resources are available
at no charge on our website at:
www.epm.org/resources-eternity_pastors.html*

*(These may especially be helpful to pastors
who want to preach on Heaven.)*

Resources based on the *Heaven* book:

- * *Heaven, Part I: Looking Forward to a New Earth* (sermon by Randy Alcorn):
 - Power Point presentation
 - Audio Sermon
 - Sermon Notes (PDF format)
- * *Heaven, Part II: Resurrected Living on a New Earth* (sermon by Randy Alcorn):
 - Power Point presentation
 - Audio Sermon
 - Sermon Notes (PDF format)
- * *Three-week Heaven Bible Study for small groups* (PDF format)
- * *Heaven Study Guide* (PDF format)
- * *Heaven Study Guide* (Word document): email a request to EPM at info@epm.org
- * *Heaven DVD: Randy Alcorn speaking to pastors & church leaders on Heaven*
(DVD free to pastors/\$2.00 shipping charged; \$5.00 for others)

Additional Resources:

- * *Heaven* by Randy Alcorn (\$16.10)
- * *In Light of Eternity* by Randy Alcorn (\$7.99)
- * *In Light of Eternity Study Guide* (www.epm.org/pdf/ILOE_Study_Guide2.pdf)



The Church at Work in Sri Lanka by Randy Alcorn

Please don't be put off from extending help because of the millions of dollars coming in from governments (Red Cross, OXFAM, etc.). The need is more than just containers of supplies. It is a "human factor" need. They can't meet that. Only the Body of Christ is empowered to minister healing and peace and comfort. It is more than throwing mineral bottle water from moving trucks and feeling like they have done their part. It is about sitting down with a mother who has lost her husband and children, and praying with her and helping her to put the bottle of water on her lips and nourish her ONLY THE CHURCH CAN.

Paul Hattaway, Director, Asia Harvest

The aftermath of the devastating tsunami in Southeast Asia will continue for a long time.

No matter how you do your giving, through special offering at your church, or through an established famine relief and development organization, I would encourage you to give to not just any humanitarian organization, but specifically to those organizations staffed by committed Christians who unapologetically render aid to people in the name of Jesus—not for self-congratulation or guilt-relief, but for His glory.

Dying people need medical care and food and shelter...and they also need Jesus. We should feel no tension here—meeting physical needs and spiritual needs go hand in hand. Many organizations give the physical help, and of course this is commendable, but since there are organizations that give the very same kind of physical help, and often more, AND also share the good news of salvation in Christ...why shouldn't we give exclusively to such distinctively (not just nominally) Christian organizations? And especially to those who work directly with the local Christian churches in the country in crisis?

Remember, many of the people and organizations will leave after the world media is no longer interested. I'm not being cynical—this is just a fact of life. The ones who will stay for the long haul are mostly organizations who were already working there before the crisis, and of course the most important "organization" of all: the Church, our brothers and sisters native to that country, and the missionaries serving them.

EPM is voluntarily serving two groups in Sri Lanka. One is the Lanka Evangelical Alliance Development Service (LEADS), an organization that several evangelical ministries are channeling funds to. LEADS is highly recommended by Ted Rubesh who grew up in Sri Lanka as an MK, and has served there for many years, and who I went to school with at Multnomah Bible College.



The other group is Lanka Bible College, where Ted Rubesh teaches. Ted had this to say about the relief efforts through LBC:

There is a network of alumni and present students who come from all corners of the island. Many of these come from areas affected by the tsunami, and minister to congregations and communities severely affected. A number of them have lost family and all that they own. With this network, we have already in place a group of potential eyes and ears on the ground, who know the particular situations and communities that they are involved in, and can help direct us to specific areas of need. We would like to use this network to create a broad range of practical and specific projects that could link individual donors (people and churches, etc.) abroad to specific needs...thus helping put a more personal touch to donors' giving...and praying. We see our part not so much as doing "overall health," but more in doing specific "micro-surgery" if you will.

EPM is forwarding all designated funds to these ministries. (One of our core principles is that we never keep any portion of funds raised for the ministries of others, so 100% of all funds given go directly to the poor and needy.) We have also taken a portion of our ministry reserve funds to give to LEADS, believing our possible future "needs" are nothing compared to their overwhelming present needs.

Of course, there are many other good organizations working in Sumatra, Sri Lanka, India, etc., and if you know one that is truly committed to Christ and is very familiar with the local culture there, that's great, by all means do your giving through them. If you or your church wish to support LEADS or Lanka Bible College, you may send a gift to EPM, indicating the ministry on the memo or in an accompanying note. Those distributing the resources are committed Christians, church members in Sri Lanka. If you wish both for your entire gift to go to an organization with

Dying people need medical care and food and shelter... and they also need Jesus.

trained national Christians distributing the resources, and to get a tax deductible receipt (not so you can keep more but so you can GIVE more to the needy), you may wish to consider this option.

God says of King Josiah, "He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?" declares the LORD " (Jeremiah 22:16). Jesus said that a day is coming when, "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'" (Matthew 25:40). That's how personally Jesus takes the help we offer the poor.

Jesus said, "It is more blessed [which also has the connotation of "happy-making"] to give than to receive." On behalf of the desperately needy in that part of the world, thanks for giving generously for the glory of Christ...who promises not to overlook any cup of cold water given to the needy in his name.

I thought you might be as moved as I was by these words from a missionary in Sri Lanka. We've been praying the Lord would allow the persecuted church of Sri Lanka to assert itself (in servanthood) in the midst of this crisis. This is an indication God is powerfully answering! May He be glorified, the church strengthened and those who were closed to the gospel be reached for Christ.

From a missionary in Sri Lanka:

The past few days have been almost inconceivable in light of the past year and half, and the heavy persecution of Christians in Sri Lanka. We have seen religious walls come down

that pre-Tsunami were in life-threatening proportions. We have cleaned wells and distributed medicine in Muslim villages and Mosques, started clean up and re-building of schools for two Catholic churches, providing them with uniforms, books and shoes, then started

digging latrines in Buddhist temple grounds for a huge refugee camp and will start construction of a new kitchen area for a temple known for refugee housing during floods of the monsoon. We actually sat and had tea with one of the more predominant and influential Buddhist monks in the nation and he was deeply moved by the compassion extended by the believers. Never before has the love of Christ been able to penetrate these religious fortresses and touch these religious leaders. They see us come to them in Christ's love and serve them after all the persecution been handed to the brethren in Sri Lanka. It is a great honor to serve these people and to see the church come out of its walls to reach suffering people in an hour of great need. Believers here are going the extra mile, turning the other cheek, blessing those who persecute them. I am amazed and so deeply affected. My life will never be the same.



More complete information about both of these groups can be found on the front page of our website at www.epm.org. 100% of designated contributions go directly to the ministry noted.

How to Pray for the Aftermath of the Tsunami Disaster

by Roshan Mendis, LEADS Director in Sri Lanka

Please pray for:

- all of the countries involved
- people who have lost family members, especially children who have lost families
- those who have lost home and belongings
- health care & relief efforts, and for relief workers
- the wise use of resources and aid
- compassion among those involved in relief efforts
- survivor guilt haunting those who blame themselves for another's death
- the safety of the volunteer/medical teams (*local & foreign*)
and the logistics support staff at LEADS
- ease of stress and work overload of current LEADS staff stretched to the limit
- honesty & integrity of all local government representatives
- leadership & dedication of the politicians to unite apart from political agendas
- proper formulation of national policies (that these may not cause and create further poverty)
- the recruitment processes in all of our offices (that the correct people will be picked)



It is Never Right to Be Angry with God

by John Piper

*In the Bible,
many feelings
are treated as
morally good
and many as
morally bad.
What makes
them good or
bad is how they
relate to God.*

Recently I said those words to a group of several hundred people: "It is never, ever, ever, right to be angry with God." As I looked out on the people there was an incredulous look on many faces. This was not landing well. Clearly many did not agree. This was confirmed in a question-and-answer time, when one person asked from a microphone, "Would you say something more about not

being angry with God? Did you mean to say that it is never right to be angry with God?"

My answer was, "Yes, that is what I said. But perhaps you are stumbling over something you think I said which I didn't say. So let me add this: If you are angry with God, it is never right not to tell him so." This made some people scratch their heads again and look more puzzled. It puzzled me that they were puzzled. So I said it again another way: "If you are sinning by being angry with God, don't compound the sin by hypocrisy." The perplexity stayed on many faces. So I said it again: "If you sin by being angry with God, don't add to it the sin of trying to conceal it from him. That would double the offense."

Some were obviously tracking with me, but others looked baffled. At that point, I left it and went on to another question. But I have been thinking about those baffled looks ever since. Why was this so difficult to grasp? What assumptions were out there that made two simple statements so baffling. "It's never right to be angry with God." And: "It's never right to hide your anger from him, if you feel it." To me nothing could be more obvious. Why is this so non-controversial to me and so baffling to some others?

Here are two possible assumptions that may be common in many heads today, which would make them balk at what I said.

First, many assume that feelings are not right or wrong, they are neutral. So to say that anger (whether at God or anybody else) is "not right" is like saying sneezing is not right. You just don't apply the labels right and wrong to sneezing. It just happens to you. That is the way many people think about feelings: they just happen to you. Therefore, they are not moral or immoral; they are neutral. So for me to say that it is never right to be angry with God is to

put the feeling of anger in a category where it doesn't belong, the category of morality.

This kind of thinking about feelings is one of the reasons there is so much shallow Christianity. We think the only things that have moral significance in the world are acts of volition. And we think feelings like desire and delight and frustration and anger are not acts of volition, but waves that break on the shore of our souls with no moral significance. Small wonder that many people do not earnestly seek to be transformed at the level of feelings, but only of "choices." That makes for a very superficial saint (at best).

This assumption is contrary to what the Bible teaches. In the Bible, many feelings are treated as morally good and many as morally bad. What makes them good or bad is how they relate to God. If they show that God is true and valuable, they are good, and if they suggest that God is false or foolish or evil, they are bad. For example, delight in the Lord is not neutral, it is commanded (Psalm 37:4). Therefore it is good. But to "take pleasure in wickedness" is wrong (2 Thessalonians 2:12), because it signifies that sin is more desirable than God, which is not true.

It's the same with anger. Anger at sin is good (Mark 3:5), but anger at goodness is sin. That is why it is never right to be angry with God. He is always and only good, no matter how strange and painful his ways with us. Anger toward God signifies that he is bad or weak or cruel or foolish. None of those is true, and all of them dishonor him. Therefore it is never right to be angry at God. When Jonah and Job were angry with God, Jonah was rebuked by God (Jonah 4:9) and Job repented in dust and ashes (Job 42:6).

The second assumption that may cause people to stumble over the statement that it is never right to be angry with God is the assumption that God really does things that ought to make us angry. But, as painful as his providence can be, we should trust that he is good, not get angry with him. That would be like getting angry at the surgeon who cuts us. It might be right if the surgeon slips and makes a mistake. But God never slips.

So I say it again: It is never right to be angry with God. But if you sin in this way, don't compound it by hypocrisy. Tell him the truth and repent.

(Pastor John Piper, Bethlehem Baptist Church, November 13, 2000—Fresh Words Edition, Desiring God Ministries)

A Theology of Heaven: A class taught by Randy Alcorn

(using Randy's book *Heaven*)

May 20-21, 2005

10 am-4:50 pm, Friday; 9 am-3:50 pm, Saturday

Western Seminary, Portland, Oregon



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Words of Wisdom...

I have little fear that any nation or combination of nations could bring down the United States and Canada by military action from without. But this I do fear—we sin and sin and do nothing about it. There is so little sense of the need of repentance—so little burden for the will of God to be wrought in our national life. I fear that the voice of blood will become so eloquent that God Almighty will have no choice but to speak the word that will bring us down.

—A. W. Tozer, *Echoes from Eden*

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

—New Tribes Missions

“Holiness is the habit of being of one mind with God, according as we find His mind described in Scripture. It is the habit of agreeing in God's judgment—hating what He hates, loving what He loves—and measuring everything in this world by the standard of His Word.”

—J. C. Ryle, *Holiness*

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.

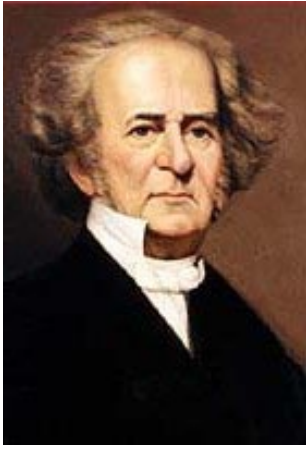
—Nate Saint, *Jungle Pilot*

There is nothing little in God; His mercy is like Himself—it is infinite. You cannot measure it. His mercy is so great that it forgives great sins to great sinners, after great lengths of time, and then gives great favours and great privileges, and raises us up to great enjoyments in the great heaven of the great God. It is *undeserved mercy*, as indeed all true mercy must be, for deserved mercy is only a misnomer for justice....had the rebel been doomed at once to eternal fire he would have richly merited the doom, and if delivered from wrath...Some things are great, but have little efficacy in them, but this mercy is a cordial to your drooping spirits...Millions have received it, yet far from its being exhausted, it is as fresh, as full, and as free as ever.

—C. H. Spurgeon

Morning & Evening Daily Readings





Lewis Tappan

Born May 23, 1788,
Northampton, MA
Died June 21, 1873,
Brooklyn, NY

*He worked hard
to establish a
profitable
secular business,
and then used
the greater part
of the money
generated by
that business to
glorify Christ...*

Lewis Tappan and the Amistad Slaves by Randy Alcorn

Excerpted from a message given at John Piper's Pastors' Conference in Minneapolis, Feb. 2004.

Arthur and Lewis Tappan were brothers, business innovators in the silk trade in New York City in the early 1800s.

Lewis was raised a Calvinist, but became a Unitarian. Later he had an encounter with God in which he returned to the faith of his childhood, a changed man.

The Tappans determined to use their company's profits for Christian causes. Their business funded and managed various evangelical societies that distributed Bibles, tracts, and Sunday school materials. They founded the Magdalene Society, which ministered to unwed mothers in New York City.

In 1833, Lewis Tappan read a biography of William Wilberforce, the British parliamentarian used of God to bring down the slave trade. Tappan resolved to do whatever he could to further the abolitionist cause in America. Lewis Tappan helped found the American Anti-Slavery Society. From their business headquarters, the Tappans spearheaded fundraising drives for the antislavery movement, sponsored special speakers and revival meetings, and organized national mailings of abolitionist literature, mailings that went to the North and the South.

Tappan sponsored an evening church service with blacks and whites fully integrated, unheard of even in the North. This caused a riot. Rioters vandalized the Tappan company store. A mob gathered outside Lewis Tappan's house, broke open the door, smashed windows, and hurled the family's furniture out into the street. In the center of the street men set afire the Tappan family belongings, including a large pile of bedding, pictures, furniture, and window frames. Tappan's family got out just in time.

Tappan founded the journal *Human Rights*, a newspaper called the *Emancipator*, and a children's magazine called, *Slave's Friend*. In a ten-month period, the Society mailed over one million anti-slavery pieces, mostly paid for by the Tappan's business profits.

Predictably slave-owners were outraged at Lewis Tappan. The citizens of Charleston broke into the U. S. Post Office and hauled off mailbags from New York City. Slavery supporters burned the abolitionist mailings under the hanging effigies of Tappan and other abolitionists. One Southerner offered a \$50,000 reward for Tappan's head.

In 1836, Lewis Tappan opened a mailed package, to discover a slave's ear. In another box he was sent a piece of rope warning him he'd be hung.

Tappan responded to this by placing in his breast pocket his only weapon, a New Testament. Tappan wrote: "We will persevere, come life or death. If any fall by the hand of violence, others will continue the blessed work."

Something happened then, in the providence of God, that focused national attention on the horrors of the slave trade (as attention deserves to be focused today on the horrors of the abortion industry). A floundering ship in the Atlantic was boarded by the U. S. Navy. A group of Mendi Africans had overthrown the crew of the Cuban slave ship *L'Amistad*.

Lewis Tappan came forward to take care of the prisoners and hired legal help.

In the courtroom Lewis Tappan sat on a bench next to three little girls from the slave ship. He befriended Cinque, the leader of the rebel slaves. He provided the slaves with Bibles and literature.

Lewis Tappan was courageous and sincere but a naïve religious man. But he was a follower of Jesus, who made available the wealth entrusted to him to serve the cause of Christ and of freedom.

In 1839 The *New York Herald* compared him to Judas and said he deserved to be hung. (Those of us who've experienced misrepresentation in the media should console ourselves at how mild it's been in comparison.)

By decisions of the court, the Africans appeared to be set free, but President van Buren asked the Supreme Court to reconsider the case. Tappan retained



The Amistad Slaves on Trial at New Haven, Connecticut, 1840, (1938-1939) by Hale Woodruff (1900-1980). Copyright © 2003 Amistad Research Center

former President John Quincy Adams to argue their case before the Supreme Court.

Adams won the case. Although Adams gets the credit, Adams wrote to Lewis Tappan, *"The Captives are free! But thanks, thanks in the name of humanity and justice to you."*

Tappan arranged for the Mendi Africans to return to their homeland. First, because that was just, and second so they could spread the gospel of Jesus to their fellow countrymen.

Now, what's really remarkable, is that none of this was what Lewis Tappan did for a living. In his day job, Lewis Tappan established the nation's first credit rating agency, the Wall Street and Merchant Exchange...which today goes by another name: Dun and Bradstreet.

Tappan put business profits into the Amistad Committee to spread antislavery information to other countries. He was a leader in the Underground Railroad. Believing the Fugitive Slave Law dishonored Christ, he helped slaves escape to freedom, rather than returning them to slavery. For that he could have gone to jail for many years.

When the Civil War ended, and there was emancipation, if anyone deserved to retire it was Tappan. So what did he do? He changed the name of the Amistad Committee to the American Missionary Association, which spearheaded missions in West Africa, East Asia, and the British West Indies.

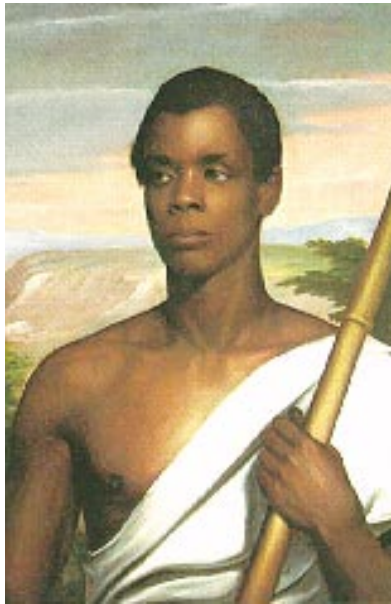
It also founded colleges for the Southern freed people, including Fisk University in Nashville, Berea College in Kentucky, and Howard University in Washington, DC.

A number of the Amistad prisoners came to faith in Christ.

There are a few surviving letters from the prisoners to Tappan. This one's from Cinque, the one who stood in the courtroom and said "Give us free." Keep in mind that this was written in English, which would be a third language for a Mendi African. So don't let the syntax mislead you:

Dear Sir: Cinque and Mendi people pray for Mr. Tappan all time...Cinque love Mr. Tappan very much, and all Mendi people love Mr. Tappan very much. I no forget Mr. Tappan forever and ever; and I no forget God, because God help Mr. Tappan and Mendi people.

Your friend, CINQUE



Cinque

And then a letter to Lewis Tappan from the slave Kinna after his return to Africa:

God is very great, very good, and kind. We have been on great water; no danger fell upon us; oh no. We never forget glorious God for these great blessings. How joyful we shall be! I never forget you. May God be blessed! Our blessed Savior Jesus Christ has done wondrous works. Oh, dear Mr. Tappan, how I feel for this wondrous work. I cannot write so plain because the ship rolls. Pray; Jesus will hear you; and if never see you in this world, we will meet in Heaven.

Your true friend, KINNA

Amistad is the story of one small part of Lewis Tappan's life. He was a follower of Christ who did not go off in the woods to live the simple life. He didn't go to seminary. He worked hard to establish a profitable secular business, and then used the greater part of the money generated by that business to glorify Christ by bringing love, material goods, hope, the gospel and legal justice to the oppressed. To the glory of Christ.

Now, why have I taken valuable time to tell this story? Because Lewis Tappan, like R. G. LeTourneau and Stanley Tam, was a disciple who used money to make an eternal difference. Tappan, LeTourneau, and Tam weren't missionaries or pastors. They worked at secular jobs. Like our people do.

We need to be inspired to raise the bar, to break the chains of mediocrity. People like us in every age,

in the midst of poverty and in the midst of wealth, have risen above their culture and followed Christ.

Our people need to see it is not impossible to topple the idol Mammon and to exalt the risen Christ in our daily lives, our businesses, our financial dealings. Our people don't just need to know about Hudson Taylor and Amy Carmichael and John Wesley. They need to know about R. G. & Evelyn LeTourneau, Stanley Tam, and Lewis Tappan. They need a vision for C. T. Studd's words, "Only one life, twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last." And John Wesley's, "I judge all things only by the price they shall gain in eternity."

God's calling on Lewis Tappan, R. G. LeTourneau, and Stanley Tam was just as great as his call on John Wesley, and they reached people in their God-given sphere of influence that someone like John Wesley could never have reached. They expanded that sphere of influence through their giving

Our people need to see it is not impossible to topple the idol Mammon and to exalt the risen Christ in our daily lives, our businesses, our financial dealings.



Recreated L'Amistad ship

Let's teach our people it's good to work for a living. It's good to make money for the glory of God, and spend it and give it for the glory of God.

and reached the uttermost parts of the world even if they rarely left their own cities. And one day they will worship God beside people of every language and every tribe and every nation.

Let's teach our people it's good to work for a living. It's good to make money for the glory of God, and spend it and give it for the glory of God. It is good to work enough to make more money than you need. Paul says in Ephesians 4, "He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may..." That he may what? Have just enough to live on? No, "...that he may *have something to share with those in need.*" We should work not only because it's healthy, and to care for our families, but to use the excess income to help the needy and reach the lost.

Who are the Lewis Tappans in your church? The Stanley Tams? The R. G. LeTourneaus? And yes, the Amy Carmichaels and William Bordenes and John Wesleys? Are they being sucked down

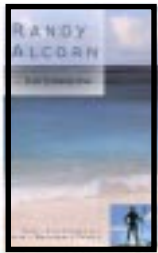
into the black hole of materialism? Or are they being freed from the gravitational hold of Mammon because their pastors are giving them a new center of gravity, Jesus Christ? How many potential servants are being lost to Mammon, when the risen Christ beckons them to joyful life-changing, community-changing, world-changing service?

What are you doing to find such men and women and mentor them and challenge them to invest their treasures in heaven? What are you doing to become the kind of man whose counsel and challenge they would gladly follow, because they see Christ-centeredness rather than money- and thing-centeredness exemplified in your life? Those who work with junior high and high school and college...what are you doing to pour yourselves into our future church leaders who will set examples, for better or for worse, for generations to come?

Three New Study Guides From LifeWay Resources

The following resources may be purchased through EPM at www.epm.org/orderform.html

The Purity Principle



The choice is yours. So are the consequences.

Everyone faces a choice—to live by God's rules or to chart their own course. Those who choose God's way invite blessings, while those who go their

own way ensure a life of misery.

When it comes to sex, the risks couldn't be greater. Outside God's boundaries, sex has the power to destroy. God's ideal is purity. Obedience to His plan sets you on the path to a higher pleasure—a life that brings you incomparable joy, pleases your loving Father, and yields eternal rewards.

This study vividly portrays the choices you must make between purity and impurity—and the serious consequences of those choices. You will understand how purity not only glorifies God but also benefits you. From Scripture you will learn why purity is always smart and impurity is always stupid. Because the battle for purity takes place in the mind, you will adopt biblical strategies that fortify your mind to fight sexual temptation, and you will learn practical guidelines for living a life of purity.

The Grace & Truth Paradox



Unlimited grace. Uncompromised truth.

Our world today needs grace. Only by seeing the grace of God's forgiveness can people realize a hope for salvation. But our world also needs truth. Only by seeing the

truth of God's judgment can people realize their need for salvation.

That's why every believer needs to share both grace and truth with unbelievers—the way Jesus did. As Jesus brought redemption and healing to people, He expressed grace and truth in perfect balance. If believers express both qualities in balance, we can accurately show the world who Jesus is.

This study will teach you the meanings of grace and truth as revealed in God's Word and will illustrate the way Jesus balanced these qualities as He related to people. You will discover your tendency to express either grace or truth, and you will learn how to maintain a better balance in your life. By learning to show grace and truth, you can redemptively reflect Jesus' character as you offer others both the hope and need for salvation in Him.

The Treasure Principle



Priceless treasure can be yours. Don't ever settle for less.

For many people, life is like a treasure hunt. They spend their whole lives searching for riches and possessions they think will make them happy. Yet they are never satisfied.

Jesus knew that only heavenly treasures can satisfy. That's why He warned people not to collect treasures on earth but to discover the joy of collecting treasures in Heaven. His teachings show that you can't take it with you, but you can send it on ahead.

Highlighting the infinite value of heavenly treasures over earthly ones, this study will teach you how to collect treasures that will last for all eternity. You will acknowledge God's ownership of all things while accepting your role as His money manager. Six biblical keys will guide you to use your money and possessions to make deposits in heaven. As you get a glimpse of the life-changing joy of giving, you will discover the hidden treasure that awaits those who invest in eternity. And you'll know why you could never be content with less.

(Available in April.)

Letters to EPM

Your book *Heaven* is a real gold mine. I have just read it for the fourth time.

I became a born-again Christian at the age of eighteen. A week after I met Jesus, I landed in the hospital. On Christmas Eve, I was told I had Crohn's Disease (an intestinal disease which slowly eats away at the intestines).

In 2000, my immune system was wiped out by a massive bacterial infection. My disease had spread throughout my body. I got the news a couple months ago that I am at high risk for cancer, stroke, or heart attack. I am now 47.

Now, please don't feel bad for me because it has been the greatest thing that ever happened to me. The Lord has shown me so much over the years.

Over the last few months, I have felt myself turning towards the soul and away from the world, as though Heaven means more to me than anything. I don't care about things of this world—the trappings and the lust of things. I have been doing a lot of thinking about Heaven, feeling so sorry for those who want to stay on this earth forever.

I have read your new book over and over and over again. It is one of comfort and hope. I think if I found out I only had five months to live, I wouldn't freak out. For some reason, Heaven seems so close to me these days. I feel like I have to hurry and wrap things up—like my time is running out. All the things I thought mattered, just don't anymore.

I am longing for Heaven. I don't see anything down here that has held my soul captive. People ask me if I'm depressed. But I am a very happy person. I feel like I am slowly losing sight of this world.

It feels like the Lord is preparing me for something, but I don't know what it could be. Thinking of Heaven has been my greatest focus.

Congratulations on a book so well done. I can't wait to go there. All I long and ache for, can never be found down here. It doesn't even exist here.

S. B., N. Fond du Lac, WI

I have been working and living in China since 1992 teaching English, studying Mandarin, and sharing the Gospel with Chinese. I have lived in NE China for half of that time and most recently I have lived in NW China. I am currently home on a one-year furlough, living in the States.

I just finished reading your book *Safely Home*. I am impressed with your accuracy as to

Chinese life and culture. You did a great job of letting folks know that China is a big place and what is happening in one place may not be happening in another. I have read many books on China, both fiction and non-fiction, and am often frustrated by the biased picture they give of China being the same all over and often unfair portrayals of life there and the people and officials. Thank you for bringing a balanced and accurate viewpoint to the novel.

Blessings, C. S.

Your book, *The Treasure Principle*, has changed my entire perspective on life. I am 20 years old and within the past 3 months have been able to come out of debt. I know it is God's plan for me to be a missionary.

I began, also, to tithe last week for the first time in my life. I not only got a raise this week, but was also added on to my mother's health insurance.

Your book has changed my life and I am lucky to have found it at such a young age.

J. S., Kissimmee, FL

I work in an office with many women. I recently found and read your book on *The Purity Principle*. I now read it once a month. It has made a great deal of difference in how I view the ladies in the office and how we interact together. It has been a real blessing and made me appreciate my wife even more. Please don't let this book go out of print.

L. S.

I just finished the last page of *Edge of Eternity*, which I found for 25 cents in a public library in the used book sale room. Though 55 years old and a Christian for almost 30 years, I am touched and challenged and healed by your book. Areas of unsettledness and failure, I hope and believe, are potentially past. The small opportunities to pray for someone, or give or reach out, will be stones I can stop and pick up, as gifts to my King, without distraction and self-doubt.

And my struggle to serve the Lord in *significant* ways feels like its over, with a new contentment to just walk the red road, doing each day's deeds in contentment and freedom and joy. And the goal—not my spiritual development, not maximum effectiveness and pursuit of my potential in Christ—is faithfully walking the path *He* lays out for me, with love and gratitude and joy.

R. C., Seattle, WA



"Heaven seems so close to me these days. I feel like I have to hurry and wrap things up—like my time is running out."



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

Criticism and Abuse

But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.

1 Thessalonians 2:4

"Let not thy peace depend on the tongues of men," said the wise old Christian mystic, Thomas à Kempis, "for whether they judge well or ill, thou art not on that account other than thyself."

One of the first things a Christian should get used to is abuse....

To do nothing is to get abused for laziness, and to do anything is to get abused for not doing something else.

Was it not Voltaire who said that some people were like insects, they would never be noticed except that they sting? A traveler must make up his mind to go on regardless of the insects that make his trip miserable....

One thing is certain, a Christian's standing before God does not depend upon his standing before men. A high reputation does not make a man dearer to God, nor does the tongue of the slanderer influence God's attitude toward His people in any way. He knows us each one, and we stand or fall in the light of His perfect knowledge.

The Next Chapter After the Last, p. 94-95

Happiness is Not the Goal

You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

2 Timothy 2:3-4

That we are born to be happy is scarcely questioned by anyone. No one bothers to prove that fallen men have any moral right to happiness, or that they are in the long run any better off happy. The only question before the house is how to get the most happiness out of life. Almost all popular books and plays assume that personal happiness is the legitimate end of the dramatic human struggle.

Now I submit that the whole hectic scramble after happiness is an evil as certainly as is the scramble after money or fame or success....

How far wrong all this is will be discovered easily by the simple act of reading the New Testament through once with meditation. There the emphasis is not upon happiness but upon holiness. God is more concerned with the state of people's hearts than with the state of their feelings. Undoubtedly the will of God brings final happiness to those who obey, but the most important matter is not how happy we are but how holy. The soldier does not seek to be happy in the field; he seeks rather to get the fighting over with, to win the war and get back home to his loved ones. There he may enjoy himself to the full; but while the war is on his most pressing job is to be a good soldier, to acquit himself like a man, regardless of how he feels.

Of God and Men, p. 48-49

This Does Not Come From God

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

James 4:7

I have had times in my life and ministry when the burdens and the pressures seemed to be too much. Sometimes physical weariness adds to our problems and our temptation to give in to discouragement and doubt. At these times it seems that even in prayer it is impossible to rise above the load. More than once, by faith that seemed to have been imparted directly from heaven, the Lord has enabled me to claim all that I needed for body, soul and spirit. On my knees I have been given freedom and strength to pray, "Now, Lord, I have had enough of this—I refuse to take any more of this heaviness and oppression! This does not come from God—this comes from my enemy, the devil! Lord, in Jesus' name, I will not take it any longer—through Jesus Christ I am victor!" At these times, great burdens have just melted and rolled away—all at once.

Brethren, God never meant for us to be kicked around like a football. He wants us to be humble and let Him do the chastening when necessary. But when the devil starts tampering with you, dare to resist him!

I Talk Back to the Devil, p. 15

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