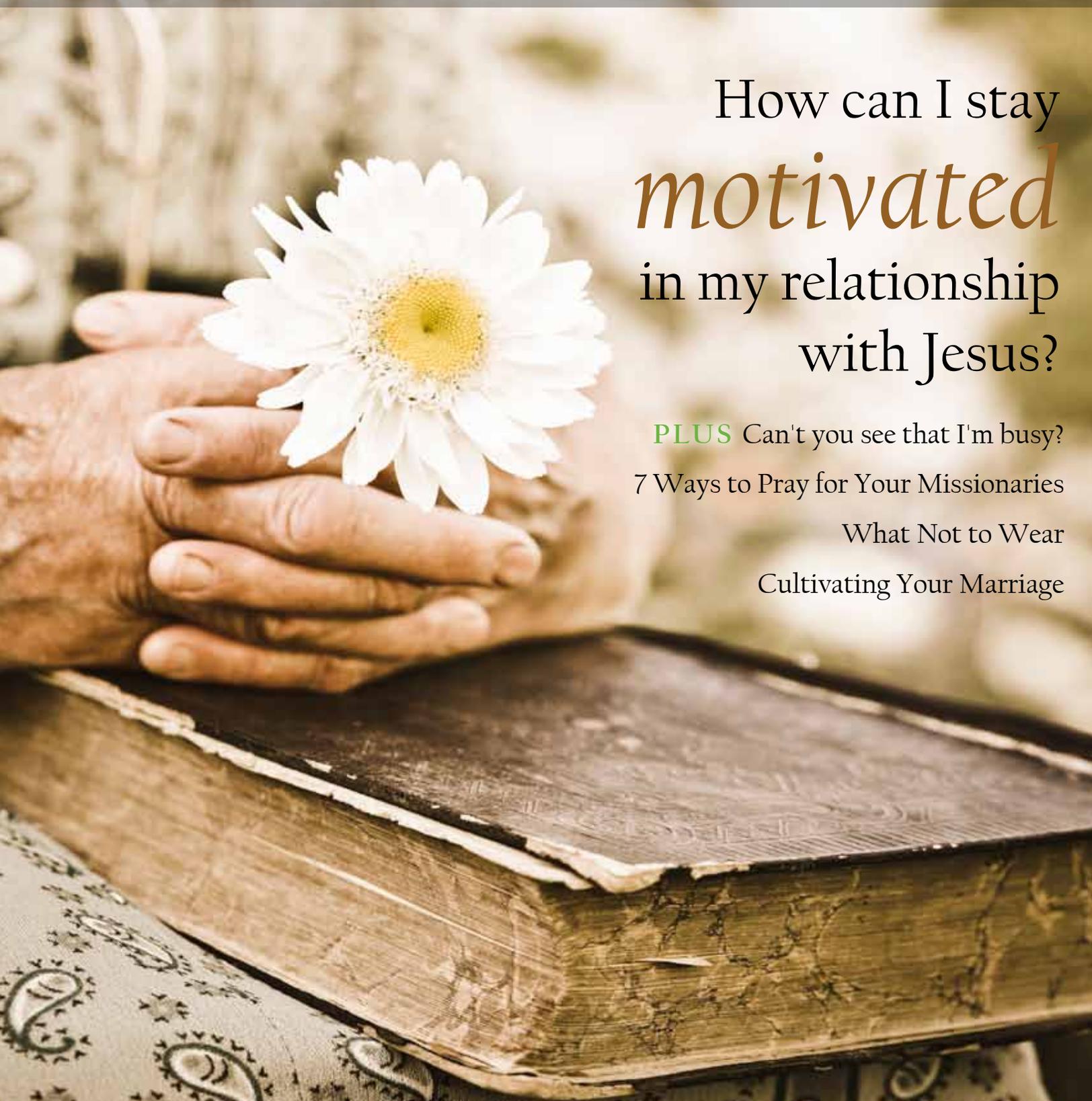


Eternal Perspectives

with author Randy Alcorn, founder and director

Summer 2012



How can I stay
motivated
in my relationship
with Jesus?

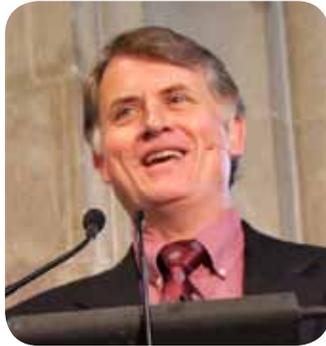
PLUS Can't you see that I'm busy?
7 Ways to Pray for Your Missionaries
What Not to Wear
Cultivating Your Marriage

Randy's speaking event

The Cove

Randy will be speaking at The Cove (Billy Graham Training Center) on "Four Central Truths of a Biblical Worldview", including Heaven, stewardship, and more.

October 2-4, 2012
Asheville, North Carolina
More details at www.epm.org/cove



The latest about upcoming books

Some of you have asked on Facebook if I'm working on any new books. I recently finished a "graphic novel" (the long comic book style) on the rich man and Lazarus. I'm really excited about it. It will be out this October 2012. I'm also doing research for a nonfiction book right now, and trying to zero in on a distinctive approach. I will share more when I get a better feel for what it will look like. Your prayers appreciated! —Randy

>> Watch a video of Randy sharing more about the graphic novel and his plans for new fiction books in a blog post at www.epm.org/blog/newfiction

Get the latest scoop on upcoming books and projects by following Randy at:

-  www.epm.org/blog
-  www.facebook.com/randyalcorn
-  www.twitter.com/randyalcorn

EPM How you can connect with Eternal Perspective Ministries

-  Sign up for our E-News Update to stay in touch with EPM and Randy: www.epm.org/newsletters
-  Like us on Facebook and get the latest promotions and special offers: www.facebook.com/EPMinistries
-  Follow EPM on Twitter and be alerted about our newest resources: www.twitter.com/epmorg
-  Sign up for our prayer partners emails and pray for Randy and EPM: www.epm.org/newsletters

What's on your summer reading list?

"You can never get a cup of tea large enough or a book long enough to suit me." — C.S. Lewis



Summer is a great time to dive into a fiction book (or two or three!). Do you enjoy murder mysteries? Check out Randy's novel *Deception* and get to know Detective Ollie Chandler. Like allegories? Try *The Chasm*. Or try *Safely Home*, a story about the persecuted church, or the novel *Courageous*, a story about fatherhood and family.

Explore all of Randy's fiction books at www.epm.org/fiction. Then stop by our EPM Facebook page (www.facebook.com/EPMinistries) and share your summer reading picks!

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I struggle with being introverted. Can I look forward to being extroverted in Heaven?

Response to an Exasperated Introvert by Julia Stager, EPM Research and Communications Assistant

Yes and no. There will likely be a broad spectrum of God-given personalities in Heaven. However, introversion and extroversion will look different there than they do here. Our social interactions and relationships in Heaven and on the New Earth will be free from comparisons, pride, and fear, which so often are the source of our insecurities.

The Bible paints Heaven not as a place where humanity is locked into a single “perfected” personality, but rather as a place where we are continually growing in our knowledge of God, his creation and ourselves. It is my understanding that we will not be increasing into sameness of personality, but increasing in a compatible diversity of personalities—all fulfilled by the fullness of God.

Introversion and extroversion, as with so many other gifts, come with innate risks. Just as more expressive people are more exposed to external temptations (decadence), reserved people can be more disposed to internal faults (spitefulness/despondency). All of us, no matter what our personality type, have struggles with our strengths and weaknesses.

In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis describes man as being made up of two parts: his raw material and his decisions. You were born with specific and valuable “raw material” (i.e. genetics, temperament, family circumstances, etc.) that God has specific purposes for, but he also allows us to grow and develop. Our decisions in this life impact eternity. We are currently developing our eternal selves.

Our resurrection bodies will expand our capacities to socialize in a satisfying way with other people *and* expand our capacities for contemplation and deep understanding. God has created a universe that has equal beauties expressed through relationships, our senses, and our mind. Which is more beautiful:

Extroversion	Introversion
Energized by people	Energized by solitude
Outgoing	Inward
Values breadth of experience	Values depth of experience

climbing a mountain and seeing a glorious view, understanding an intricate system, or enjoying deep fellowship with others who bear the image of God? Heaven is as wide as it is deep. There will be infinite intellectual, sensory, and relational experiences (not least of which will be our sinless relationship with the Creator). No single personality type is more suited for Heaven; it is equally and purposefully suited and created for all.



Our innate capacities and inclinations have been given to us by God. I encourage you to continue to pray about how you can serve him in your strengths and improve in your areas of weakness. I also encourage you to explore, with God, who he has created you to be. We only are our true selves when we are in a deep, dynamic, and personal relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. •

What books would you recommend to help Christians prioritize their lives so that they can say “yes” to the things they should be doing?

Answered by Randy Alcorn

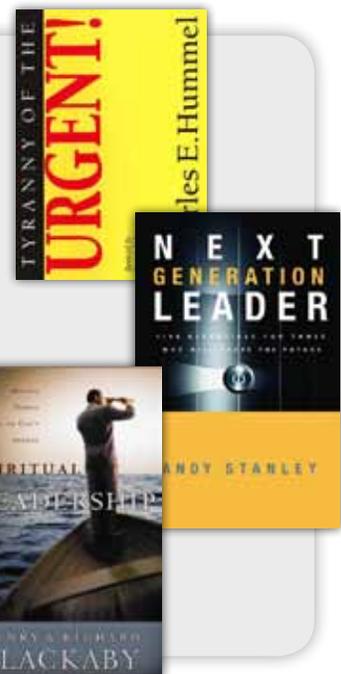
I recommend Robert Hummell's booklet *The Tyranny of the Urgent*. I also would suggest *Next Generation Leader* by Andy Stanley, which is excellent. It has a specific chapter on saying yes to things, as does *Spiritual Leadership* by Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby.

We need to neglect doing the things that countless people want us to do, so that we will be available to do what God wants. And sometimes He speaks in a still small voice, while people speak in a big LOUD voice. We have to make sure we're listening. To do that, we need to put our ear to His Word and pray and seek His face.

Instead of exhausting ourselves doing many secondary things, may we do a few primary things well. And that begins with our daily time with God.

I share more thoughts in my blog post "Planned Neglect: Saying No to Good Things So We Can Say Yes to the Best": www.epm.org/plannedneglect.

RA





Get Inspired to Dig Deeper in God's Word with Study Guides from Eternal Perspective Ministries

The Grace and Truth Paradox Study Guide

Includes four weeks of Bible study for individuals to complete in five daily segments. Also includes leader's guide. *Softcover, 109 pages.*

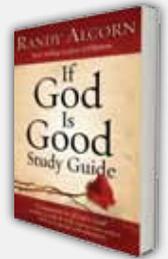
\$5.56 (retail \$6.95) 10+ for \$4.17 each



If God Is Good Study Guide

Includes a variety of questions for discussion. Adaptable from a four-week overview, to an exploratory eight-week journey, to an intensive thirteen-week course. *Softcover, 188 pages.*

\$7.99 (retail \$9.99) 10+ for \$5.99 each



Heaven Bible Study Workbook

Easy to read workbook provides six weeks of interactive Bible study (with 5 lessons per week), along with a group leader's guide in the back of each book. *Softcover, 158 pages.*

\$9.56 (retail \$11.95) 10+ for \$7.17 each



The Purity Principle Study Guide

Learn practical guidelines for living a life of purity. Includes four weeks of Bible study for individuals to complete in five daily segments. Also includes leader's guide. *Softcover, 109 pages.*

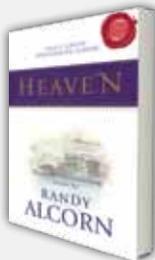
\$5.56 (retail \$6.95) 10+ for \$4.17 each



Heaven Small Group Discussion Guide

The only official companion to the *Heaven* Discussion Guide DVD. It includes 7 lessons, FAQs, reflection pages, leader notes, and other group suggestions. *Softcover, 128 pages.*

\$8.00 (retail \$10.00)



The Treasure Principle Bible Study

By Brian Smith and Randy Alcorn. Discover the joy of giving! This 12-week study is designed for personal reflection followed by discussion with a partner or group. *Softcover, 90 pages.*

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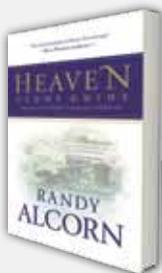


Heaven Study Guide

Perfect for individual or group study. Includes 12 lessons in a workbook format, and additional blank pages for notes. *Softcover, 87 pages.*

\$6.39 (retail \$7.99) 10+ for \$4.79 each

Available in Spanish. \$6.39 (retail \$7.99)



The Treasure Principle Study Guide

You can't take it with you, but you can send it on ahead. Includes four weeks of Bible study for individuals to complete in five daily segments. Also includes leader's guide. *Softcover, 109 pages.*

\$5.56 (retail \$6.95) 10+ for \$4.17 each



Order online at www.epm.org/store | 503.668.5200 | toll-free order line 1.877.376.4567

We'll be learning for all eternity, to Christ's glory... but we can start here and now

Jesus said to his disciples, "Learn from me" (Matthew 11:29). On the New Earth, we'll have the privilege of sitting at Jesus' feet as Mary did, walking with him over the countryside as his disciples did, always learning from him. In Heaven we'll continually learn new things about God, going ever deeper in our understanding. But we don't have to wait until Heaven to get started. —Randy Alcorn

Can We Be Good Without God?

by Craig J. Hazen

It's been fascinating to watch the very vocal and prolific new atheists, such as Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett and Richard Dawkins, make a case for objective morality. The phrase "objective morality" is a way of indicating that some behaviors are right (truth telling, kindness, tolerance) and some behaviors are wrong (rape, murder, racism) — for *real*. Morality is not just a matter of personal preference and choice (akin to liking peanuts better than almonds), but rather laws that are real and true and binding no matter what one thinks about them or whether one chooses to follow them.

The reason it has been fun to watch the new atheists defend this idea is because atheists of an earlier generation (such as J.L. Mackie and Bertrand Russell) thought it folly to do so. Classic atheists from the mid-20th century were very reluctant to grant that there was an objective moral law because they saw that it was just too compelling for believers to take the easy step from the moral law to God who was the "moral law giver." Accepting a real objective moral law would be giving far, far too much ground to the Christians and other theists.

In my view, this shift in attitude toward moral values among the new atheists is an indicator that our work in Christian apologetics and philosophy has had an impact. I can't count the times when in forums on various college campuses more traditional atheists and agnostics have had to squirm under the questioning from me or my colleagues about basic moral questions.

"Is it wrong to torture babies for fun?" "Is it wrong to treat a person as subhuman because she has darker skin?" As you can imagine, if an atheist were to answer "no," or "well, it depends," or "I prefer not to do these things, but how can I judge others," to these questions he would be running into some real trouble with the audience. Whether the audience is filled with conservative Christians or radical unbelievers, people in our culture have an aversion to those who waffle or dodge on such fundamental and obvious moral values.

I think the new atheists got tired of being in such a public relations conundrum, so they began embracing basic morality as some sort of natural feature of the physical universe. They now tend to maintain that there are objective morals, but that these morals did not come from God. Is it wrong to torture babies for fun? Of course it's wrong, says the new atheist. Goal accomplished. No more looking like an uncaring monster on stage in debates with Christians.

On the one hand, I think the new atheists have been helped in public discourse by their recent adoption of rudimentary moral values. One rarely feels now like one is being addressed by an amoral scoundrel when a new atheist is speaking in public. On the other hand, the new atheist now suffers from a problem that the old atheists would have quickly warned them about: How in the world

are we going to explain where these objective moral values came from?

The primary technique the new atheists have adopted for dealing with the issue of the origin or grounding of the moral law is obfuscation. The new atheists are very fond of saying, "We don't need God to be good." Indeed, they often say that atheists, agnostics and skeptics often lead more wholesome lives than lifelong professing Christians. Now, theists should not be fooled by this. Our response should be, "Of course you don't need God to be good — we've never claimed that you do." You see, it is not knowledge (epistemology) of the moral law that is a problem — after all, the Bible teaches that this law is written on every human heart. Rather, the daunting problem for the new atheist is the nature and source (ontology) of the moral law. Here are some questions you can ask Richard Dawkins the next time you sit next to him on a bus:

- If everything ultimately must be explained by the laws of physics and chemistry, help me understand what a moral value is (does it have mass, occupy space, hold a charge, have wavelength)?
- How did matter, energy, time and chance result in a set of objective moral values? Did the big bang really spew forth "love your enemy?" If so, you have to help me understand that.
- What makes your moral standard more than a subjective opinion or personal preference? What makes it truly binding or obligatory? Why can't I just ignore it? Won't our end be the same (death and the grave) either way?

The old atheists did not want to have to face questions like these, so they simply denied the reality of objective moral values. The new atheists have thrown the door open. Let's not make it easy for them. Let's ask the hard questions in a winsome and engaging way. •

Craig J. Hazen is the director of Biola's M.A. in Christian apologetics and M.A. in science and religion programs. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of California, Santa Barbara. This article originally appeared in the Summer 2011 issue of Biola Magazine and is reprinted with permission of Biola University.



Evaluating Movies in Light of Scripture

by Randy Alcorn

I was asked: *Randy, you often mention that you and Nanci have been to a movie. I'm curious about what kind and rating of movies you attend. I'm interested in how you regard the type of movie (violence, sexual overtones, etc.). Should Christians knowingly attend such films? This of course also applies to TV programs.*

Good movies are hard to find. I know, we're supposed to pretend that movies have no influence on us, or our children. That way we can be cool and go with the popular drift of culture and prove that not all Christians are uptight and moralistic.

But sexually explicit—and even suggestive—movies, TV, books, etc. are unacceptable according to Ephesians 5:3-20. Non-gratuitous violence can be acceptable for adults, I think, as long as it neither tempts us to do violence nor desensitizes us to true violence. Figuring that out will vary from person to person. But certainly our general Christian tolerance for sexual immorality is way too excessive. Remembering that Jesus is always with us, and asking ourselves what He thinks, should make a big difference.

When it comes to profanity, I confess that I have become more desensitized to it. And while one f-bomb used to be enough to keep me from watching further, now I can tolerate more. Some consider this a sign of increased Christian liberty, deliverance from the snares of legalism. In my heart, I fear it is a sign of decreased holiness, and disobedience to God's Word. (Some believers need to learn that there are many other sins to avoid besides legalism. Self-righteousness is dishonoring to Christ, but so is lust, careless and dishonoring speech, and conformity to the world, including being entertained by what God hates.)

Some Christians might say, *"But it's almost impossible to rent a movie without sex and offensive language."* There are Christian movie-review sites that can help you make good selections



for family viewing. (Check out www.christiananswers.net/spotlight/movies; www.movieguide.org; or www.pluggedin.com.) There are also services which offer edited movies, television adaptors which edit profanity, and DVD software that cuts offensive scenes from movies.

Even then, we need to make sure that we are evaluating what we're watching in light of Scripture. Instead of His Word simply being one more influence on us, God intends it to be authoritative over all other influences. I read it not simply as one more source of input but as the Source and the authoritative standard by which I judge all other input.

I evaluate *Friends* in light of Scripture. Then, if I'm discerning, in my opinion, I stop watching it. Why? Because the themes, while amusingly handled, are often (not always, of course) immoral and tempt me to think in those terms. I evaluate *Gladiator* in light of Scripture and realize that the themes of courage, the quest for human rights and liberty, and standing up with comrades in making principled sacrifice is biblical. I also discern that the movie's theology of people without Christ going to Heaven and reuniting with unbelieving family members is false. Using biblical discernment, I glean the true things from the movie, while screening out the bad. Only then is my mind protected from the subtle or not-so-subtle undermining of truth.

Bottom line, suppose there were no decent movies—what then? I enjoy good movies, but the Bible never commands us to "Watch movies." It does command us to "Guard your heart." *RA*

A fun challenge for your family this summer: raise money for a ministry

Together with your children, pick out a ministry you would like to support with your efforts. (For ideas to help get you started, see a list of some organizations EPM supports and/or recommends: www.epm.org/recommended.)

Decide what type of fundraiser you'd like to have. Maybe you can make and sell a craft, have a bake sale, a lemonade stand, a car wash, or a garage sale. Get your kids involved in the whole process, from start to finish. Share with your customers that you are giving away 100% of your proceeds. Then, have fun blessing a ministry with your profits.

Send a picture of your fundraising efforts to info@epm.org and we'll send you a free *Managing God's Money* book! We also might share your pictures and stories on our Eternal Perspective Ministries Facebook page (www.facebook.com/EPMinistries.)



Share your stories with us!
Email EPM at info@epm.org



Can't you see that I'm *busy*?

by Randy Alcorn



There was work to be done. After all, when Jesus came, the twelve came with Him. The floor needed to be swept. Food would have to be prepared and the table set. Twenty-six extra feet would require washing. Bedding, too, must be arranged, as traveling dinner guests always spend the night. *If I don't do it, she may have thought, it won't get done.*

Housework and meal preparation were things no one else seemed to notice—unless they didn't get done. Perhaps no one could remember a time when Martha didn't get them done, and she was determined this day would be no exception.

Both Martha and Mary loved and served Jesus. Yet one was a worker, the other a worshiper; one was a servant, the other a seeker. Together, they paint contrasting pictures of the Christian life.

In Scripture's account of that dinner, Martha is mentioned first (Luke 10:38-42). She was probably the eldest, certainly the one in charge of the home. Some speculate her family was prominent and wealthy. If so, she probably had several servants.

She was a doer, a goal-oriented achiever, a believer in the work ethic who took pride in her accomplishments and thrived on success. Today, Martha would make a good executive, coach, committee chairman, or Christian worker. She is the "super homemaker" type—a compulsive cleaner and five-course meal server who wouldn't be caught dead with dust on the refrigerator or frozen pizza in the oven.

As is often the case with siblings, Mary was quite different. Calm and relaxed, she seems more thoughtful and less tense than her sister. Mary was a thinker, a listener, a contemplator. Today we might describe her as "laid back" or "mellow," while Martha tended to be "uptight."

Martha was a classic example of what some physicians call the "type A" personality, those aggressively involved in an endless struggle to achieve, to accomplish more in less time. They see people as obstacles to their goals and have little tolerance for others' deficiencies. *(Continued on next page.)*

Mary, on the other hand, was a “type B” personality. Patient and low-key, she was people-oriented. It’s likely she often got distracted from her work to engage in conversation, much to Martha’s annoyance.

Mary may have depended heavily on an impatient Martha to do her jobs for her. Martha was the type who would hoe weeds; Mary was the type who would smell the flowers.

Mary sat at Jesus’ feet and listened to every pearl that dropped from His mouth. It wasn’t every day that one could hear the Master, and she wasn’t about to miss this opportunity.

Meanwhile, Luke tells us, Martha was “distracted by all the preparations that had to be made” (10:40 NIV). And a great deal did have to be done—all without vacuum, range, microwave, or even running water.

Martha is not criticized for working hard to be a good hostess, but rather for being distracted by her serving. The word translated “distracted” means “to be drawn about in different directions.” We are not distracted *to* something, but *away* from something. She was distracted from Jesus.

Being distracted is not always bad. One can be distracted from television, worry, eating, or even sin in general. Mary was distracted, too—from the housework. But more important, she was drawn toward her Lord.

Put yourself in Martha’s position. She had had it. Perhaps the bread had burned, the drinks had spilled, and the kitchen was a mess. No one else was bothered, but perfectionist Martha lived under the self-imposed pressure that made her endure such occasions rather than enjoy them.

She prided herself in serving dinner on time, and it was already late. Meanwhile, every time she breezed past the front room, her eyes focused on her sister Mary, blissfully seated at the feet of Jesus.

It’s not that listening to Jesus was wrong, of course. Martha would do the same if time permitted. But it didn’t, or so she told herself.

To Martha, Mary’s behavior was sheer laziness and the height of insensitivity. Unfortunately, her own insensitivity in not spending

time with Jesus never dawned on her.

Having put up with this situation for more than long enough, Martha marched into the front room, to the amazement of her guests. The Greek words used in verse 40 imply suddenness or haste.

Stepping right up to her honored guest, she said, “Lord, don’t You care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”

In essence, Martha accused not only her sister but also Christ of insensitivity and injustice. Here is the Messiah, the Savior, God incarnate—not the kind of person to whom one barks out orders. But Martha lost sight of whom she was dealing with. She allowed Jesus’ lordship to be eclipsed by her own grievances.

She was a lot like Peter—energetic, strong-willed, and ready to give advice, even to her Lord. When she should have been quietly listening to Him, she was loudly challenging Him.

Those same attributes that made Martha a capable, effective manager also got her in trouble. She was aggressive, assertive, and strong in conviction. She was also quick to criticize, intolerant of others’ differences, and prone to self-pity.

Maybe Martha was jealous of Mary’s close relationship with Jesus. Yet she could have been just as close had she chosen to spend the time with Him.

She should have calmly taken her concern to Mary. Instead, she disrupted the good fellowship of weary travelers and thoroughly embarrassed her well-meaning sister, not to mention herself.

But in Jesus’ response, we learn as much about Him as we do about Martha. He knew her heart. She did love Him and was sincerely doing her best to serve Him. She just didn’t realize she was serving her own pride. She attempted to minister *to* him when she desperately needed to be ministered *by* Him.

John 11:5 states, “Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.” With amazing wisdom and tenderness, Jesus here demonstrates that love by not rebuking Martha’s insolence. Instead, the Lord gently puts the whole scene in perspective for her.

“Martha, Martha,” He begins, as one often did in addressing one he deeply loved and longed to lead in a better way. We can imagine Jesus gently placing His hands on her shoulder, as He continues: “You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41, 42).

The word translated “worry” comes from the Greek words for “pieces” and “mind.” Literally, it means to come to pieces in the mind or to have a divided mind.

Jesus admits there is no end to the number of things we might worry about (Matt. 6:34). We can worry about our jobs, our possessions, our children, our health, or, like Martha, our responsibilities. Worry does not stem from these things, however, but from within.

It’s the product of a mind that lacks perspective. Such a

Be
and know th
—Psalm



mind needs to fill itself from the reservoir of God's Word, not the innumerable concerns that constantly vie for our attention. Martha quite likely knew the verse, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). Yet she seldom put it into practice.

Mary chose "what is better" or, literally, "the better portion." The reference is to food, and it sets up an interesting contrast. While Martha devoted herself to preparing physical food, Mary devoted herself to receiving spiritual food. She was a hungry soul, single-mindedly devoted to the spiritual meal served by Jesus and oblivious to all else.

still
that I am God.
n 46:10—



was a bit too frivolous.

She suffered from job saturation. Today, we, too, are often managed by our responsibilities. Sometimes, when we are unsure of our direction, we attempt to compensate by doubling our speed. The result is a hurried and harried Christian life, full of activity, but devoid of an eternal perspective.

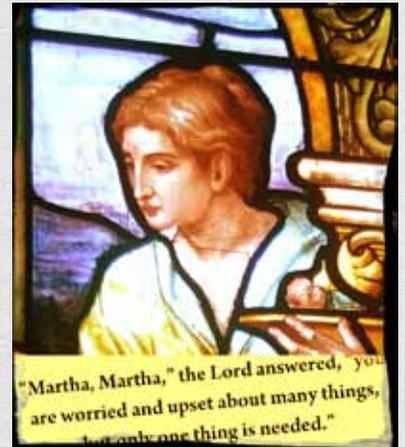
In his marvelous book *When I Relax I Feel Guilty*, Tim Hansel describes Martha-like believers as "Weary Servants of the Impossible." For us, there are never enough hours in the day or days in the week.

Often, those most committed to serving others give of themselves until they have nothing left. But they keep on

giving, drawing from a dry reservoir. They have forgotten how to receive.

Martha, too, forgot there was one thing even more fundamental than giving to Jesus. That sounds almost heretical, doesn't it? What could possibly be more important than giving to Jesus? Receiving from Him. The truth is, we need our Lord a great deal more than He needs us.

Jesus wants our fellowship and devotion, not just our skills and efforts. He values our service less than our devotion and worship. Yet it is worship that fosters the most effective service.



In his booklet *My Heart Christ's Home*, Robert Munger envisions Jesus saying these words to the Christian who neglects personal time with God:

"The trouble with you is this: You have been thinking of the quiet time, of the Bible study and prayer time, as a factor in your own spiritual progress, but you have forgotten that this hour means something to Me also....do not neglect this hour if only for My sake. Whatever else may be your desire, remember I want your fellowship!"

Martha is not rebuked for serving any more than Mary is commended for not serving. The message is not "worship precludes service," but "worship precedes service." I found when I was a pastor that grasping and maintaining this perspective on worship and service was the most important challenge in my ministry; it was also the most difficult.

It was too easy to base my sense of worth on what I did or how much I did, rather than who I was. Too often I cut short worship to devote more time to service. Ironically, whenever I put service before worship, I shortchanged those I was attempting to serve, and I shortchanged myself. But worst of all, I shortchanged my Lord.

Satan's favorite lie is, "There's work to do. God understands. He's always available, and there'll be plenty of time to spend with Him later." Hence, the urgent displaces the important. We allow the labor of our hands to overshadow the love of our hearts.

Often, the urgent is what people want us to do. But the important is what God wants us to do. Jesus did not always live up to others' expectations. But he was in touch with His Father and knew how to separate the grain of God's will from the chaff of man's will.

At the end of His life, Jesus said to His Father, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do" (John 17:4). What strikes me is not that Jesus worked, or even that He finished His work, but that the work He finished was what God gave Him to do. *RA*

What Not to Wear

by Mary Kassian

In 1 Timothy 2:9, the Lord provides three guidelines that help Christian women figure out what and what not to wear: “She adorns herself with respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control.” Let’s examine these three guidelines to help us ensure that our looks are in good order, properly arranged, and ready to display Christ.

Is It Becoming or Unbecoming?

Kosmio is the descriptive form of the Greek noun *kosmos* (to put in order, trim, adorn, or decorate), which is related to our English word *cosmos*—the universe. The Greeks regarded the universe to be an ordered, integrated, harmonious whole. *Kosmos* is the opposite of chaos. So when Paul told women that their adornment should be *kosmio*, he meant that like the universe, all the parts should be harmoniously arranged with the other parts. It should be “becoming”—that is, appropriate or fitting. Given the context, I believe Paul was implying that our adornment ought to be becoming on a number of different levels.

First and foremost, your clothing ought to be becoming, fitting to, and consistent with your character as a child of God. But it also ought to be becoming to your body type, becoming to your femininity, becoming to your husband, becoming to the other clothes you are wearing, and becoming to the occasion and place you intend to wear it. There’s a tremendous amount of guidance in that small word, becoming. It challenges you to evaluate your

clothes, shoes, purses, makeup, and hair from multiple angles as part of the harmonious, integrated whole of your life—to line up the seen with the unseen and the temporal with the eternal. It challenges you to bring a cosmic perspective to bear on your everyday decisions.

I like the word Paul chose. It has enormous implications. *Kosmio* means that a Christian woman’s “look” ought to be consistently put together, inside and out. This challenges those who put an undue emphasis on external appearance as well as those who neglect their personal appearance. It’s a corrective to women who dress extravagantly. It’s a corrective to those who dress seductively. But it’s also a corrective to those who think that “holy” means frumpy, ugly, unfeminine, and out of style. Becoming indicates that running around in baggy jeans and T-shirts all the time is just as inappropriate as being obsessed with stylish clothing. It means that a woman’s appearance ought to be put together nicely. It ought to be pleasant and attractive—on the inside and the outside.

Is It Decent or Indecent?

The second word, *aidous*, is based on the Greek term for shame and disgrace. The word is a blend of modesty and humility. When I think about a word picture that personifies this concept, I think of approaching God with eyes that are downcast.

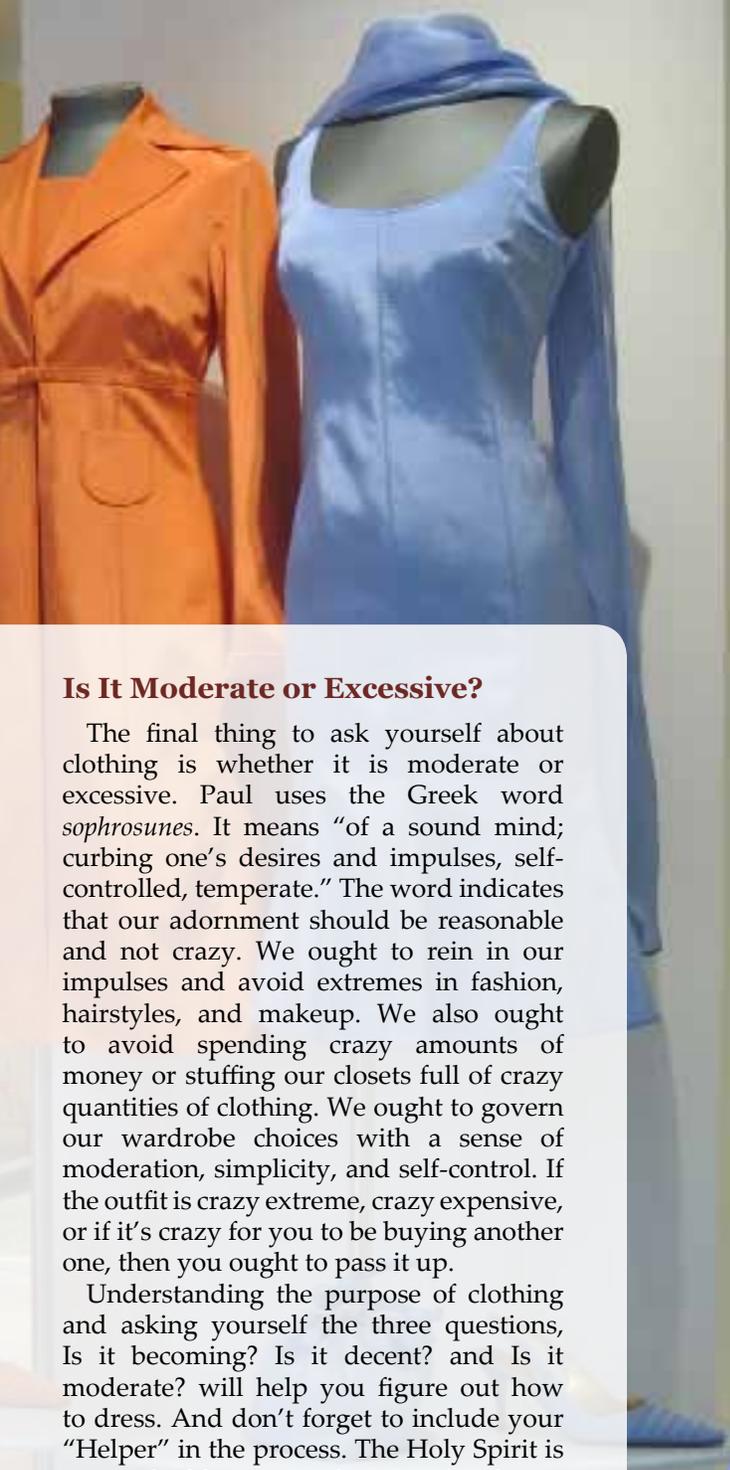
It involves a sense of deficiency,

inferiority, or unworthiness. It suggests shame, but also a corresponding sense of reverence and honor toward rightful authority. It’s the opposite of insolence, imprudence, disrespect, or audacity. Downcast eyes are the opposite of defiant eyes.

So does dressing with your eyes downcast mean that you are self-conscious? No. It means that your clothing tells the truth about the gospel. Your clothing shows the world that Jesus covers your shame and makes you decent. Your clothes cover your nakedness as the clothing of Christ covers your sin.

Dressing “with eyes downcast” means that you choose clothes that are decent in His eyes . . . not clothes that are provocative, seductive, and that honor nakedness. When you dress decently, you recognize that God ordained clothes to cover, and not draw attention to, your naked skin. You cover up out of respect for Him, the gospel, your Christian brothers—and out of respect for who He made you to be. Decency means you agree with the Lord about the true purpose of clothing and set aside your self-interest to dress in a way that exalts Christ.

So in that dressing room trying on that skirt, take time to sit, bend, and stretch in front of that mirror, and ask yourself, Is this skirt decent? Does it do what it should do? Does it properly cover me up? Does it showcase my underlying nakedness—or exalt the gospel of Christ?



Q&A with Randy Alcorn about modesty

Why doesn't the church address the issue of modesty?

I think there are many pastors and church leaders, who, like many husbands and fathers, are afraid to speak up for fear of offending women. They may think, *There are women who will think I am a pervert for even mentioning this.*

It's a difficult situation, but it's an issue I believe male leaders need the courage to address directly. We also need godly women (especially those who can be reasonably fashionable and attractive in the *right* sense) who will lovingly challenge other women and let them know when they are sending a wrong message. We need open, clear discussions about this so women can become aware and understand the issue.

Nancy Leigh DeMoss has excellent material on modesty and purity. She has a wonderful booklet titled *The Look: Does God Really Care What I Wear?* as well as several resources about the freedom of modesty at her ministry's website: www.reviveourhearts.com.

I do believe modesty is something we need to take a very close, careful, prayerful look at in the Body of Christ. We need to not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

How can men practice modesty?

Men too can pursue modesty and purity. One way is by avoiding frontal hugs. I love to show physical affection, so I often side-hug women I care about and know—if I have a close, appropriate brother-sister relationship. But I avoid full-frontal hugs.

The words a man uses are extremely important. For example, he should never call any woman "hot" except his own wife, and to her privately. By keeping his eyes under control, a man not only keeps himself from lust, but also doesn't give a glance to a woman that could tempt her to inappropriately seek his attention more.

Of course, a man should avoid sexually provocative clothing, though prevailing fashions make this much easier for men, because fashions expose and exploit the female body more than the male body. *RA*

Is It Moderate or Excessive?

The final thing to ask yourself about clothing is whether it is moderate or excessive. Paul uses the Greek word *sophrosunes*. It means "of a sound mind; curbing one's desires and impulses, self-controlled, temperate." The word indicates that our adornment should be reasonable and not crazy. We ought to rein in our impulses and avoid extremes in fashion, hairstyles, and makeup. We also ought to avoid spending crazy amounts of money or stuffing our closets full of crazy quantities of clothing. We ought to govern our wardrobe choices with a sense of moderation, simplicity, and self-control. If the outfit is crazy extreme, crazy expensive, or if it's crazy for you to be buying another one, then you ought to pass it up.

Understanding the purpose of clothing and asking yourself the three questions, Is it becoming? Is it decent? and Is it moderate? will help you figure out how to dress. And don't forget to include your "Helper" in the process. The Holy Spirit is an invaluable source of assistance when it comes to figuring out whether or not your appearance glorifies God. If your heart is right and you seek His guidance, He will be your personal wardrobe consultant and teach you what and what not to wear. •

Mary Kassian is an award winning author, popular speaker, and a distinguished professor of women's studies at Southern Baptist Seminary. She has published several books, Bible studies and videos, including: Girls Gone Wise, In My Father's House, and the Feminist Mistake. This article was originally posted on her website, Girls Gone Wise: www.girlsgonewise.com/what-not-to-wear/.

Watch Randy's video blog addressing modesty at www.epm.org/modesty

What to Do

If You Wake Up Feeling Fragile

by John Piper

There are mornings when I wake up feeling fragile. Vulnerable. It's often vague. No single threat. No one weakness. Just an amorphous sense that something is going to go wrong and I will be responsible. It's usually after a lot of criticism. Lots of expectations that have deadlines and that seem too big and too many.

As I look back over about 50 years of such periodic mornings, I am amazed how the Lord Jesus has preserved my life. And my ministry. The temptation to run away from the stress has never won out — not yet anyway. This is amazing. I worship him for it.

How has he done this? By desperate prayer and particular promises. I agree with Spurgeon: I love the "I wills" and the "I shalls" of God.

Instead of letting me sink into a paralysis of fear, or run to a mirage of greener grass, he has awakened a cry for help and then answered with a concrete promise.

Here's an example. This is recent. I woke up feeling emotionally fragile. Weak. Vulnerable. I prayed: "Lord help me. I'm not even sure how to pray."

An hour later I was reading in Zechariah, seeking the help I had cried out for. It came. The prophet heard great news from an angel about Jerusalem:

Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls, because of the multitude of people and livestock in it. And I will be to her a wall of fire all around, declares the Lord, and I will be the glory in her midst. (Zechariah 2:4-5)

There will be such prosperity and growth for the people of God that Jerusalem will not be able to be

walled in any more. "The multitude of people and livestock" will be so many that Jerusalem will be like many villages spreading out across the land without walls.

But walls are necessary! They are the security against lawless hordes and enemy armies. Villages are fragile, weak, vulnerable. Prosperity is nice, but what about protection?

To which God says in Zechariah 2:5, "I will be to her a wall of fire all around, declares the Lord." Yes. That's it. That is the promise. The "I will" of God. That is what I need. And if it is true for the vulnerable villages of Jerusalem, it is true for me as a child of God. God will be a "wall of fire all around me." Yes. He will. He has been. And he will be.

And it gets better. Inside that fiery wall of protection he says, "And I will be the glory in her midst." God is never content to give us the protection of his fire; he will give us the pleasure of his presence.

This was sweet to me. This carried me for days. I took this with me to the pulpit. I took it with me to family gatherings. I took it to staff meetings. I took it to phone calls and emails.

This has been my deliverance every time since I was first marking my King James Bible at age 15. God has rescued me with cries for help and concrete promises. This time he said: "I will be to her a wall of fire all around, and I will be the glory in her midst."

Cry out to him. Then ransack the Bible for his appointed promise. We *are* fragile. But he is not. •

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Cultivating Your *Marriage*

by Randy Alcorn



This is wedding season and I'm sure a lot of you will be going to weddings over the next few months. If you're married, be sure to use this opportunity to think in terms of cultivating and preserving your marriage. If you're not married, do what you can to support the sanctity of marriage and uphold the importance of this sacred gift and trust God has imparted to humanity.

Nanci and I celebrated our 37th anniversary this year. We thank God for His faithfulness and are profoundly grateful that we are each other's best friend and love and trust each other more than we ever have.

For those with children, let me remind you that the best two gifts you can give them is that you love the Lord with all your heart, and that you love each other unreservedly. They will find security in your love. And as important as raising children is, remember too that it was your wife or husband with whom you exchanged vows. Children are entrusted to us for perhaps twenty years, what may be a third or fourth of our lives. By God's grace, some of us will be married to our spouses for fifty years or more.

Don't make your family all about your children's activities. Love, honor, and serve your husband or wife. Carve out time for them. Go out for dates. Do dinner and a movie. Go out of town together. Put Christ in the center of your life and conversation. Thank Him together for His goodness and kindness, not only for the big things, but also for His small daily provisions of common grace.

In a culture that glorifies selfishness and immorality, cultivate and preserve your marriage. God will be honored, and your children and grandchildren will be grateful. And people will see a signpost that points to Christ's love for His bride (Ephesians 5). *R*

Let marriage be held in honor among all. —Hebrews 13:4

7 ways to *pray* for your missionaries



1 Pray for open doors.

"Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned" (Colossians 4:2-3).

2 Pray for boldness in witness.

"And pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel" (Ephesians 6:19).

3 Pray that God's Word will spread.

"Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you" (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

4 Pray for protection.

"And that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith" (2 Thessalonians 3:2).



5 Pray for their ministry.

"That I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints" (Romans 15:31).

6 Pray for God's guidance.

"So that I may come to you in joy by the will of God..." (Romans 15:32).

7 Pray for refreshment.

"...And find refreshing rest in your company" (Romans 15:32).

List by Andrea Johnson, ACTION International. This post originally appeared on www.actioninternational.org.

How can I stay motivated in my r

A reader of my blog asked, *How does a believer keep his motivation? I understand the motivation of the new believer, but how does one stay motivated in day-to-day living, year after year?*

Another way of putting that question, in biblical terms, is, “How do you keep from losing your first love?” (Revelation 2:4). When you come to know Christ and put your faith in Him, Jesus changes your life. You’re excited about Him, and everything in life is a contrast to what it was before. But over the long haul, how do you keep that motivation going? How do you sustain a Christ-centered life?

I think the answer to that is really how you sustain a relationship with *any* person. When Nanci and I first met and started dating, there was an excitement to our relationship and we had our first love. But you begin to realize that over time certain things will change, and the tendency is to start taking each other for granted.

What do you do about that? You make sure to cultivate your relationship by spending regular time with that person. Even when our girls were small, Nanci and I would have a date night and go out together. The two of us would sometimes go on vacations alone. We called on a lot of babysitters who were people from the church, or our kids would stay at our friends’ homes, or with grandparents. We really believed that the best thing we could do for our children was to have a strong marriage and to enjoy our time together.

So how do you spend time with God? By opening up His Word and spending regular time there. I know that believers used to talk a lot more about daily devotions and time with God, but I think many people started feeling like, “That is just a check-off the box, superficial kind of Christianity. I don’t want to just think, ‘Okay, I had my quiet time. So now I’m okay, and that’s all it takes.’”

Well, of course that’s not *all* it takes. But I would argue that it is a significant part of sustaining our relationship with the Lord, because I need to spend time in God’s Word every day. During the days when I don’t, I really see a difference in my eternal perspective (and my lack of perspective).

So, I would encourage you to spend daily time in God’s Word. It can be a read-through-the-Bible-in-a-year type of program, or one of many programs that provide daily readings of both Old and New Testament passages. You can go online and look at devotional books that help lead you through Scripture. There are also Bible-read-through groups with a weekly study where the Bible itself is the textbook. The participants have all read through the same portions of Scripture, and anybody can share anything they want from those

passages. This helps some with the accountability because you’re asking each other, “How did you do in your daily reading?”

Time in prayer should be integrated into your time in the Word. I confess that when I set aside time in prayer and it is all without reference to God’s Word, I can get sort of lost. So what I will do is pray Scripture, sometimes out loud to myself as I read.

I’d recommend reading in Colossians 1 where Paul prays for the Colossians, and then repeat the things he prays for: the knowledge of God’s will, a greater Christlikeness, conformity to His image, and a greater thankfulness of heart. I pray those things for myself, for my children and grandchildren, and for Nanci.

Praying is talking with God. Even in times when I’ve been dealing with serious depression, one of the things that has kept my spiritual life fresh and my relationship with the Lord intimate (not that it’s never been stale, because there have been times of staleness) is that I’ve kept going back to the Lord and just talking to Him as my Savior, my Lord, my God, my Judge, and also my Friend.

In my novel *Safely Home*, I talk about a chair that Li Quan and his family have in their home that nobody has ever sat in. Their guest Ben Fielding can never understand why because it’s the best chair in the house. It is only late in the book that someone finally explains to Ben what this chair is and why it sits empty when they eat dinner, or why someone might sit on the floor when the chair goes unused. It’s because the chair, which was made by Li Quan’s grandfather, a master craftsman, represents the presence of Jesus Christ.

There have been times when I’ve prayed, “Lord, I just want to sense your presence.” I have gotten down on my knees with a chair in front of me and said, “Lord, You are just as present as if You were physically sitting in this chair. You used to *sit* in chairs. As a carpenter, You used to *make* chairs!” (I’m not creating an idol or saying He really is physically sitting on that chair—He’s not. But I’m saying He’s there and every bit as real as if He *were* sitting in that chair.) I say, “Help me sense your presence as I pray to You right now.” I visualize Christ sitting in that chair and look to Him and talk to Him. And again, that’s not idolatry because Jesus did really become a man—He’s the God-Man. We don’t know exactly what His body looked like, but He had a body and now has a resurrection body which He’ll have forever.

Another thing I would say is, believe with all your heart that God has orchestrated your day and has divine appointments for you that you don’t yet know about. For example, on a given day I might be going to play tennis with a teenager, but I guarantee you I’ll meet or see somebody else as well. We may go out to dinner

Relationship with Jesus? by Randy Alcorn

because he has questions about the Bible, and I'll connect with someone else, perhaps our waiter or waitress, and give them a gospel booklet. God has your day planned out and that's what makes the Christian life exciting—trusting that God knows what is going to happen today and is going to give you opportunities to represent Him.

All of these things help us stay passionate about the Lord so that we don't live a Christian life of drudgery where we wearily put one foot in front of another, thinking, "I'm going to try my best to be obedient." Instead, a better cry is Paul's from Philippians 3: "I want to know Christ."

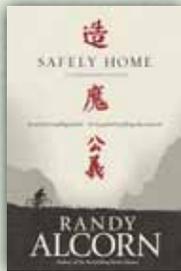
He'd known him for thirty years, but he wanted to know Him better every day.

Our relationship with Christ needs to be a love relationship, and although we certainly want to be obedient and need to obey Him even when we don't feel like it, we're nonetheless daily asking God to be present in our lives. We can trust He'll answer that prayer because He has promised us, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). As we pursue knowing the Lord Jesus Christ, may we sense the very presence of God's Holy Spirit in our lives. *RA*

- Watch the video version of Randy's answer to this question at www.epm.org/blog/motivation.

- Learn more about Randy's novel *Safely Home*, a story about persecuted believers in China, and read an excerpt at www.epm.org/safelyhomebook.

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"Lord, You are just as present as if You were physically sitting in this chair. Help me to sense your presence as I pray to You right now."

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

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