

eternal perspectives

with author Randy Alcorn

Summer Issue • 2014

FORSAKEN FAITH

*Why are so many
college students
abandoning their
faith in Christ?*

PLUS

Setting Our Minds on
Things Above in Summer

Would a Good Steward
Spend Money on a Vacation?

contents

- 3 **Setting Our Minds on Things Above in Summer**
John Piper
- 4 **An Eternal Perspective Changes Everything**
Joni Eareckson Tada
- 5 **Q&A**
Randy Alcorn and Brenda Abelein
- 6 **Forsaken Faith**
Randy Alcorn
- 10 **Preparing Teens for College (and Adulthood)**
Alex Chediak
- 11 **Thinking of Retirement as the Next Opportunity to Serve Christ**
Randy Alcorn
- 12 **Would a good steward spend money on a vacation?**
Julia Stager
- 13 **News from EPM**
- 14 **Remembering Our Brothers and Sisters in North Korea**
Stephanie Anderson and Eric Foley
- 15 **5 Reasons to Rejoice, Not Worry**
Randy Alcorn



about

Eternal Perspectives, a publication of Eternal Perspective Ministries, seeks to encourage readers to learn to live in light of eternity.

Subscribe

This magazine is sent free to all who request it. To subscribe by mail or to receive an email notification when the latest edition is posted online, go to www.epm.org/magazine. Do you currently receive a magazine in the mail but would prefer to receive a notification to read it online? Update your subscription preferences at www.epm.org/preferences.

Permissions

Articles in this publication (and on our website) written by Randy Alcorn may be freely quoted or copied, in part or in whole, provided EPM's name, address, and website are placed on the copy. (If you wish to revise or leave out portions of an article, please submit to us for permission.) Feel free to reproduce this magazine, and pass it on to individuals, churches, or groups. It is our desire to spread this information, not protect or restrict it. A printable PDF is available at www.epm.org/magazine.

Contact

39085 Pioneer Blvd., Suite 206, Sandy, OR 97055
info@epm.org | 503.668.5200 | toll-free order line 1.877.376.4567

Donate

EPM is a nonprofit organization with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. All contributions are tax-deductible. Donate online at www.epm.org/donate.

Online Store

Shop online at www.epm.org/store for Randy Alcorn books and products.

Copyright © 2014 by *Eternal Perspective Ministries*. Layout by Stephanie Anderson, EPM staff member.

connect

Ways to stay connected with Randy and EPM for the latest news and resources:



www.epm.org
Find resources and purchase books.



www.epm.org/blog
Read Randy's latest blog posts.



www.facebook.com/randyalcorn
Connect with Randy and read daily posts.

www.facebook.com/EPMinistries
Follow EPM for the latest news from our office, including promotions.



www.twitter.com/randyalcorn
Read short daily thoughts from Randy.

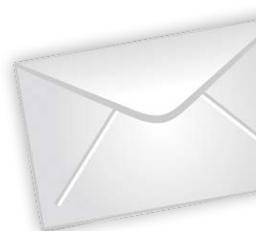
www.twitter.com/epmorg
Receive updates on our promotions and links to our latest online resources.



www.pinterest.com/randyalcorn
Explore and pin quotes and resources.

Do you receive our eNews?

Stay in touch with our ministry by signing up at www.epm.org/subscribe



Setting Our Minds on Things Above in Summer

Thoughts on Colossians 3:1-2

BY JOHN PIPER

Every season is God's season. But summer has its special power.

Jesus Christ is refreshing, but flight from him into Christless leisure makes the soul parched. At first it may feel like freedom and fun to skimp on prayer, and neglect the Word. But then we pay: shallowness, powerlessness, vulnerability to sin, preoccupation with trifles, superficial relationships, and a frightening loss of interest in worship and the things of the Spirit.

Don't let summer make your soul shrivel. God made summer as a foretaste of heaven, not a substitute. If the mailman brings you a love letter from your fiancé, don't fall in love with the mailman. That's what summer is: God's messenger with a sun-soaked, tree-green, flower-blooming, lake-glistening

letter of love to show us what he is planning for us in the age to come—"things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered into the heart of man, God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). Don't fall in love with the video preview, and find yourself unable to love the coming reality.

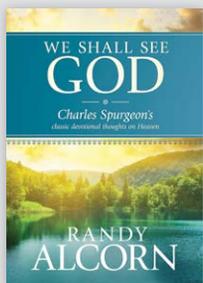
Jesus Christ is the refreshing center of summer. He is preeminent in all things (Colossians 1:18), including vacations and picnics and softball and long walks and cookouts. He invites us in the summer: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). This is serious summer refreshment.

Do we want it? That is the question. Christ gives himself to us in proportion to how much we want



more resources

Get a daily dose of eternal perspective this summer with *We Shall See God*, filled with insights on Heaven from Charles Spurgeon. www.epm.org/wssg



his refreshment. “You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13). One of the reasons to give the Lord special attention in the summer is to say to him “We want all your refreshment. We really want it.”

Peter’s word to us about this is: “Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). Repentance is not just turning away from sin, but also turning toward the Lord with hearts open and expectant and submissive.

What sort of summer mindset is this? It is the mindset of Colossians 3:1-2, “If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”

In the summer the earth is very much with us. And it is God’s earth! But it is all prelude to the real drama of heaven. It is a foretaste of the real banquet. It is a video preview of the reality of what the eternal summer will be like when “the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb” (Revelation 21:23). So, you see, the summer sun is a mere pointer to the sun that will be: the glory of God. Summer is for seeing and showing that. Will we have eyes to see? Do you want to have eyes to see? Lord, let us see the Light beyond the campfire. ■

www.desiringGod.org. Copyright 1997 John Piper. Used by permission.

The summer sun is a mere pointer to the sun that will be: the glory of God.

—JOHN PIPER

An Eternal Perspective Changes Everything

When a Christian realizes his citizenship is in heaven, he begins acting as a responsible citizen of earth. He invests wisely in relationships because he knows they’re eternal. His conversations, goals, and motives become pure and honest because he realizes these will have a bearing on everlasting reward. He gives generously of time, money, and talent because he’s laying up treasure for eternity. He spreads the good news of Christ because he longs to fill Heaven’s ranks with his friends and neighbors. All this serves the pilgrim well not only in Heaven, but on earth; for it serves everyone around him.

—Joni Eareckson Tada

Heaven: Your Real Home (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995)



How should we view and respond to people of different religions?

Answer from Randy Alcorn

First of all, we view them as created in the image of God, valuable, precious in God's sight, and therefore they should be precious in our sight. We should treat everyone with respect. As a matter of fact, even if we have an enemy and that person was attacking us, Jesus said, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27). (And I don't regard people of other faiths as enemies.)

Clearly we should have respect, love, kindness, mercy, grace, all of those things, toward others. There are very honest differences between people of different belief systems. So it doesn't mean we are going to agree



on everything. Clearly we are *not* going to agree on everything! But I think we need to disagree with grace and respect. Just because we don't believe the same thing doesn't mean we should have an antagonistic attitude toward other people.

However, as Christians, to be understanding and tolerant of other people also coincides with our need to be faithful to what we believe is true. So I can believe that somebody without Jesus Christ is actually going to Hell for eternity (Matthew 25:46), but still love that person and respectfully *disagree* with their belief system. I also need to be willing to protect them from harm, die for them, speak the gospel truth in love, and do all that I can to show them the love of Jesus. All of that fits together. ■

How can I comfort a friend who lost one of her unbelieving parents?

Someone wrote to EPM: *I will be attending a memorial service for a dear friend's mother who was not a Christian. Her father is devastated, even though she had battled cancer for nine years. How can I offer hope at such a time?*

Answer from Brenda Abelein, EPM support staff

Losing a loved one is a difficult season to navigate no matter what the circumstances. Comforting those who have lost a loved one they do not believe had a personal relationship with Jesus is even tougher. Begin by praying for comfort for the family, openness of their hearts to receive the care you offer, and wisdom as you reach out in Jesus' name to them. If ever there is a time when unbelievers may be most tender and open to hearing the gospel, it is when a loved one dies.

Remember, too, that we may not know whether a person has turned to Christ for their salvation. If they are critically ill or unresponsive in their final days, they may not be able to speak, but can communicate with God without any words at all. Someday in Heaven we may be surprised (and excited!) to find people who we didn't think were believers but called out to the Lord in their final hours. And God, in his loving kindness, hears them and gladly welcomes them into His kingdom at

any moment. For this reason, it's important that we never forget the daily urgency to take every opportunity to share the Good News with everyone we meet. We never know what part our little piece of the puzzle may play in their journey to Christ, when they may turn to Him, or when they will die and it will be too late to share.

Randy has performed many memorial services for those who were thought not to have known Christ personally. He often says "If your loved one could speak to you today, this is what they would want you to know..." and then tells them about Jesus dying on the cross for our sins which allows us all the opportunity to experience Heaven someday.

In times of grief we need friends who will be good listeners, offer unconditional love, and walk with us through the fire. When offering comfort, pray that God will equip you to be all that they need as they go through a difficult season, and talk with them about Heaven and God's love as the Lord prompts you. Many people also share Randy's small Heaven booklet as a tool to guide the conversation about Heaven, or to include with a card for the family. ■

more resources

Purchase Heaven booklets from www.epm.org/heavenbooklet

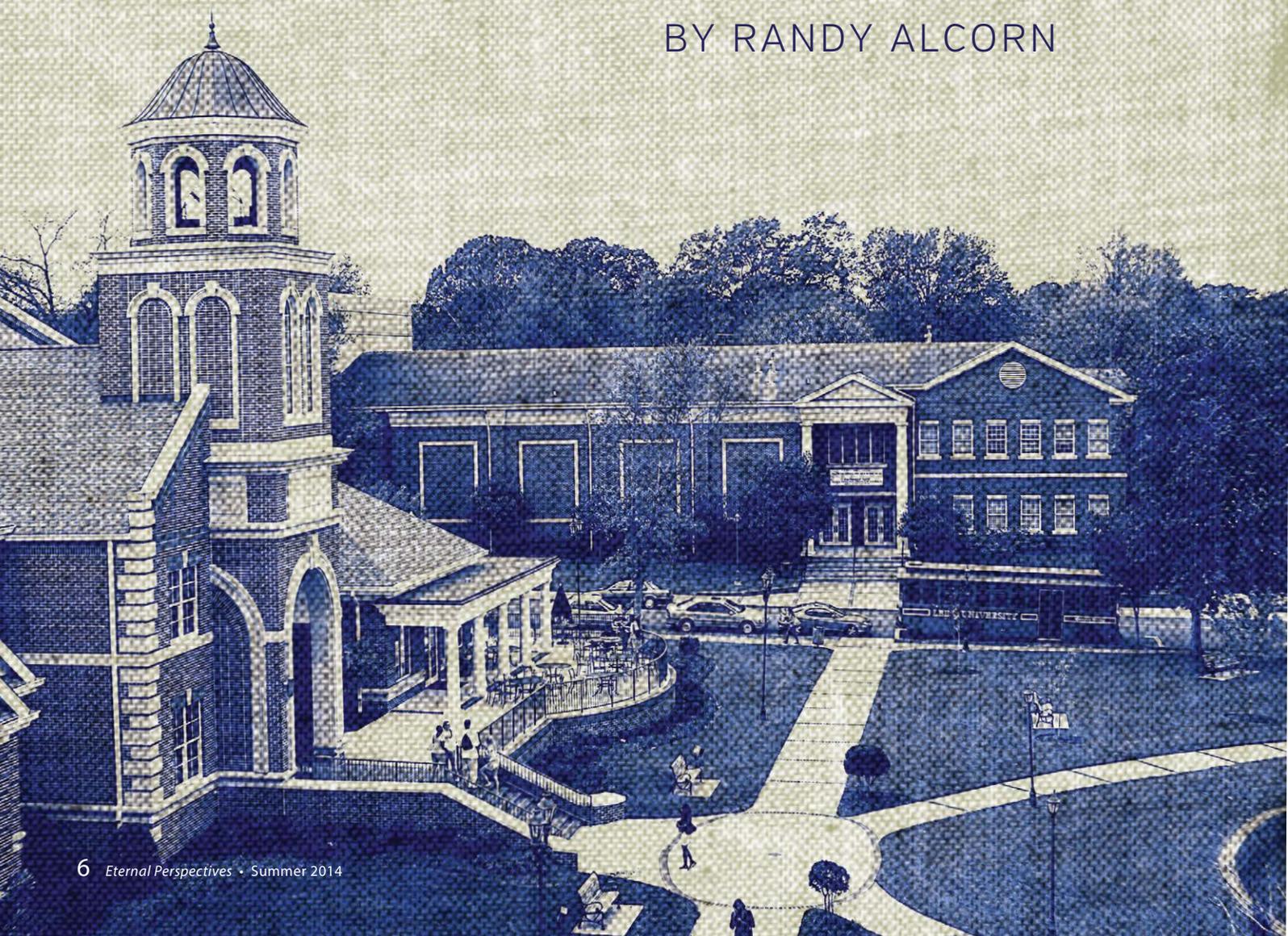


Forsaken

FAITH

Thoughts on why an astounding number of college students are abandoning their faith in Christ

BY RANDY ALCORN





he percentage of college students today who grow up in Christian homes and later turn their backs on Christ is stunning, almost beyond belief. I believe it's vital that parents and church leaders understand some of the major reasons behind this trend—and know what they can do now to help their children prepare for the challenges ahead.

Issue #1: The Problem of Evil and Suffering

Many times the faith of students from Christian families is shaken because they have professors who argue, "Well, if you were in charge of the universe and all powerful, would you allow children to starve and be raped? I would think not." As a young believer, C. S. Lewis was the first one to help me grapple with big and difficult questions like these. In *The Problem of Pain*, he described how he himself used to argue against the Christian faith:

Not many years ago when I was an atheist, if anyone had asked me, "Why do you not believe in God?" my reply would have [been]: "Look at the universe we live in."...History is largely a record of crime, war, disease, and terror.... the universe... is running down.... All stories will come to nothing: all life will turn out in the end to have been a transitory and senseless contortion upon the idiotic face of infinite matter. If you ask me to believe that this is the work of a benevolent and omnipotent spirit, I reply that all the evidence points in the opposite direction. Either there is no spirit behind the universe, or else a spirit indifferent to good and evil, or else an evil spirit.

Has Richard Dawkins or any atheist ever stated it more clearly? I love that Lewis articulated the problem of evil and suffering better than most atheists. Yet he embraced a biblical worldview which had a far greater explanatory power than his atheism. And he passed it on to me. (Let's feed our children C. S. Lewis on evil and suffering before they hear the rants of atheist and agnostic college professors, most of them intellectual pygmies compared to Lewis.)

In light of the great number of young people who go to college intellectually unprepared for what they'll face, and ultimately reject their faith, we need to ask ourselves two questions: What are we doing to help nominally Christian young people come to a true faith in Christ? And what are we doing to help youthful genuine Christians

go deeper in exploring Scripture, learning sound theology, and developing a truly Christian worldview, not a superficial one?

We need to teach our children to be readers and students of God's Word. If I am biblically grounded I can read the *Book of Mormon* and a book by the Dalai Lama and evaluate it appropriately. If I'm not, by reading such things I run the risk of believing untruths and being sucked into anti-Christian heresy.

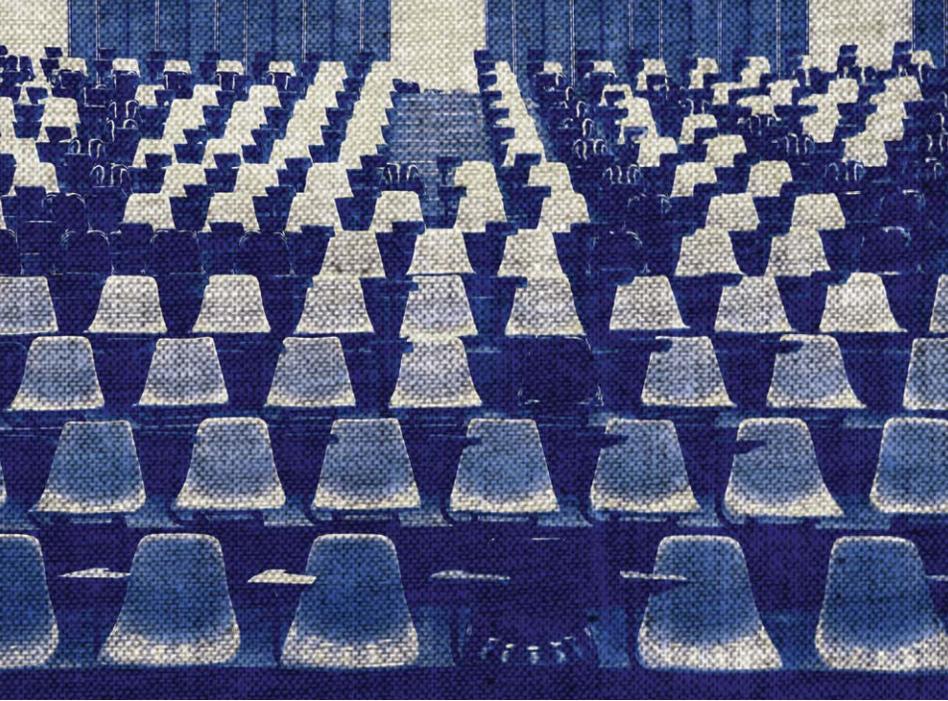
This is why so many Christian young people "lose their faith" in both secular and Christian colleges. Being insufficiently trained in the Scriptures, they fail to screen out what their professors and textbooks and peers are saying (and how they are living). They absorb and end up adopting from the college a false worldview, usually a specifically anti-Christian worldview. Some reject their faith entirely and seldom come back to church, but many more become nominal Christians who have adopted a worldview that overshadows and undermines their faith—even if they remain church-goers.

Let's not leave it to the world to ask the hard questions. Let the church lead the way. The Bible raises these very questions—including "How Long O Lord?"—and answers them better than any other worldview. The church can play a critical role in helping young people prepare for what they'll hear and face in college. (However, too often youth pastors get the blame for students whose parents expect the church to "fix" their kids. Unfortunately, speaking as both a parent and a former youth pastor, it isn't that easy. The church can and should be a source of guidance and support for parents. But no youth group is a substitute for attentive, hands-on parenting.)

I believe we as parents and grandparents need to teach our children that it's okay to explore difficult, theology-stretching issues. Don't wait until they get to a secular high school or off to college to hear them discussed! Bring them up. Say, "Let's talk about the fact that there's a lot of evil and suffering in this world. Why do you think God allows all that? God's all powerful. Why does He allow these things to happen?"

After being raised in a non-Christian home, I'm

Let's not
leave it to
the world to
ask the hard
questions.
Let the
church lead
the way.



Encourage your kids to come to grips with the Christian worldview—so it's not your worldview they're just automatically accepting, until one day they're challenged.

convinced the Christian worldview has a greater explanatory power than any other worldview. (And everyone, by the way, has a worldview.) So encourage your kids to come to grips with the Christian worldview—so it's not *your* worldview they're just automatically accepting, until one day they're challenged and reject it because they didn't have any basis for their own worldview.

Instead, help them look at what the Bible says. Encourage their questions, and then go and read good books yourself. Bring valuable insights to them to help them understand the Christian faith and Lord willing, to own their faith for themselves.

Issue #2: The Problem of Sexual Impurity

However, I don't believe that the problem of evil and suffering is the only reason young people are losing their faith. Many times, they go off to college and are surrounded by immorality, where you're strange if you're *not* sleeping with someone or watching pornography. Often their roommates are viewing porn, and so pretty soon they're going down that path too.

And once they've begun practicing sexual immorality, the only way to resolve their guilt problem is either to confess and repent, or to disbelieve—to no longer embrace the worldview where there is a God who is our Judge and has moral standards we're accountable to. It is very convenient for someone to reject faith and say it's for intellectual reasons, when it's actually for *moral* reasons.

Again, parents need to lead the way by teaching

and modeling purity in the home before their children reach adulthood. Train your children in choice and consequence, wisdom and foolishness, as exemplified in Proverbs. Teach them to love righteousness and hate sin (see Psalm 97:10). Teach them self-control—the ability to say no in other areas will carry over to sexual purity.

Parents should exercise gracious but firm control over their children's friendships and media habits. We should avoid a double standard that says children shouldn't watch impure programs on television, but it's okay for adults.

Protect your children. Would any thinking parents pile a stack of pornographic magazines in their son's bedroom closet, then tell him, "We trust you not to look at them"? This is what we do when we allow him a computer with internet access in his bedroom.

Every child receives a sex education. The only questions are: (1) When? (2) Where? (3) From whom? Parents should be their ultimate sex educators. Speak to your children about sex in age-appropriate ways not just as biology, but in the context of values, responsibility, and marriage.

If anyone else is teaching your children about sex, find out exactly what's being said.

And teach and model modesty in the home. Where else will your children learn it?

Asking the Tough Questions

I realize this will offend some, but to be completely honest, I think no Christian young person should be sent to a secular college—or for that matter many "Christian" colleges—unless he

is exceptionally knowledgeable of the Scriptures, is leading a strong Christian life and knows how to resist peer pressure and temptation to experiment with sex and drugs.

If he's not prepared to question his professors and if he may give in to their skepticism and attacks on the Christian faith, he does not belong there. If we want our children to lose their faith, there are less expensive ways to help them do that! (I'm being deliberately sarcastic to make an important point.)

If your child is going to a secular college or a Christian college that doesn't adhere to the authority of the Scriptures, is he/she mature enough to face the worldly temptations as well as the intellectual challenges to his faith? These are tough questions that need to be asked *before* your student steps foot in a college classroom. I highly recommend every parent read, and then discuss with their kids, J. Budziszewski's



book *How to Stay Christian in College* and *University of Destruction: Your Game Plan For Spiritual Victory on Campus* by David Wheaton. I also recommend *Preparing Your Teens for College* by Alex Chediak (see excerpt on the next page).

May we lead the way in teaching and training our children and grandchildren to follow Christ. And may we prepare them intellectually and morally for the world they'll face as adults. ■

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. (1 Timothy 4:12, NIV)

But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. (1 Timothy 6:11-12)

RANDY ALCORN

Best-Selling Author of *Heaven*

If God Is Good...

Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil

Now available in paperback

Special EPM introductory price of **\$9.99** (retail \$17.99) available for a limited time!

Order online at www.epm.org/igipaper

Valuable resource for parents and youth leaders!

Every one of us will experience suffering. Many of us are experiencing it now. As we have seen in recent years, evil is real in our world, present and close to each one of us.

In such difficult times, suffering and evil beg questions about God—Why would an all-good and all-powerful God create a world full of evil and suffering? And then, how can there be a God if suffering and evil exist?

In *If God Is Good*, Randy challenges the logic of disbelief, and brings a fresh, realistic, and thoroughly biblical insight to the issues these important questions raise.

Randy reveals the big picture of who God is and what He's doing in the world—now and forever. And he equips you to share your faith more clearly and genuinely.

Read a sample chapter at www.epm.org/igipaper.

Preparing Teens for College (And Adulthood)

BY ALEX CHEDIAK

Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. (Psalm 127:4)

Raising teens to be faithful Christian adults has never been easy. Like us, our children enter this world as sinners whose hearts must be transformed by the Holy Spirit. As parents, pastors, teachers, and mentors, we seek to be God's instruments in this process.

And while we pray and instruct them about the kingdom of God, we also prepare them to live fruitfully in the kingdom of man. The two are not disconnected: Academic, professional, and relational success flow primarily from character and maturity. And as Christians, we know that character and maturity flow most readily from a God-mastered life and soul, from the hearts of men and women who have bowed the knee to Jesus as Lord. We're not saved *by* good works, but we are saved *for* them (Ephesians 2:8-10). Good trees bear good fruit, for the glory of God, the benefit of others, and the adornment of the gospel (Titus 2:10).

A Bad Combination

But modern society poses unique threats to the development of our children. America's young-adult culture is increasingly narcissistic, captivated by superficial interests and instant gratification. Many teens today prefer to linger in the no-man's-land of adolescence, rather than complete the journey to adulthood. They're less resilient in the face of difficulty, more dependent on their parents, and more distracted by digital and visual media than former generations. And values such as honesty, industry, and the connection between sowing and reaping can seem like relics of a distant past.



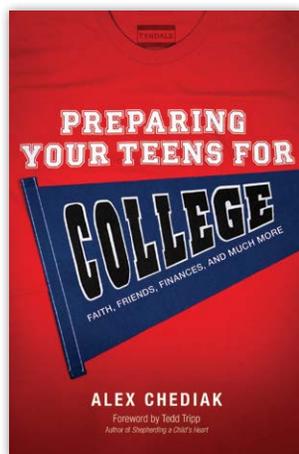
In a survey of more than 2,000 high school seniors in the Chicago area, sociologist James Rosenbaum found that almost half of them (46 percent) agreed with the statement, "Even if I do not work hard in high school, I can still make my future plans come true" (*Beyond College for All*, 59–62). This while the 2009 High School Survey of Student Engagement found that 77 percent of respondents spent five hours or fewer per week "doing homework," and 50 percent spent one hour or less per week "reading and studying for class."

As you might suspect, arrogance and an undeveloped work ethic are not the best foundation stones for post-high school ventures. If you think you're better at something than you really are, you expect it to come easily. This makes you less likely to work at it, less likely to succeed, and more likely to be surprised and disappointed when you don't. We send more teens to college than ever—and spend a fortune doing so—only to lose one in four of them before their sophomore year, while roughly half fail to graduate. (Pathways to Prosperity, Harvard Graduate School of Education, February 2011, reports that 56 percent of those who start at a

four-year college complete their degree in six years, and 29 percent of those who begin at a two-year college complete their degree in three years.)

Parents Make the Difference

The good news is that it doesn't have to be this way. What makes a difference? Training. Modeling. Disciplining. By parents. In homes. Before they go. What we impart to our children — in our speaking, listening, and by our example — makes a huge difference. If we teach them to see every aspect of their lives under the lordship of Christ, to take initiative, assume responsibility, accept correction, work (and study) unto the Lord, persevere in



commitments, live from biblical convictions, nurture faith-sustaining friendships, and be faithful stewards of their time, talents, and treasure—and do it all with the deepest joy and richest laughs—our teens can thrive in college and beyond.

Our teens' first years outside the home don't need to be a period of spiritual apostasy and professional wandering. With God's help, we can set them on a God-honoring trajectory. College can be a time when they continue on the path we've cleared to clearheaded thinking and lifelong learning, "careful to devote themselves to good works" in ways that are "excellent and profitable for people" (Titus 3:8).

As our children move through high school,

our role in preparing them for what comes next is absolutely crucial. May God strengthen and equip us for this vital work. ■

Alex Chediak (@chediak) is a professor of engineering and physics at California Baptist University and the author of *Preparing Your Teens For College* (Tyndale House, 2014), a book for parents of 7th-12th graders, and *Thriving at College* (Tyndale House, 2011), a book for college-bound young adults. Learn more about Alex's work at his website (www.alexchediak.com).

Article originally published at the Desiring God blog. Republished with permission.



Thinking of Retirement as the Next Opportunity to Serve Christ

BY RANDY ALCORN

When it comes to the "retirement dream," we must ask, "Whose dream is it?" It may be the American dream—but is it God's? For some people, retirement has replaced the return of Christ as the "blessed hope," the major future event that we anticipate. (Try doing a Bible study on the subject of retirement—I guarantee you, it won't take long!)

When a man retires at sixty-five, studies show his chances of having a fatal heart attack immediately double. Our minds and bodies weren't made for an arbitrary day of shutdown. Nowhere in Scripture

do we see God calling healthy people to stop working. Of course, it's perfectly legitimate to work without pay. It's your option to give labor to ministry and volunteer work rather than to your present job. But as long as God has us in this world, He has work for us to do. The hours may be shorter, the work different, the pay lower or nonexistent. But He doesn't want us to take still productive minds and bodies and permanently lay them on a beach, lose them on a golf course, or lock them in a dark living room watching game shows.

If you've saved for retirement and no longer need to work for pay, then donate your time working for the church, the poor or underprivileged children. And don't forget the great opportunity you have to become a self-supported missionary for two or five or ten or twenty years. If you're still here, God isn't done with you. In fact, your most fruitful years of ministry may be ahead. That's true whether you're in a retirement home or anywhere else. God has a unique ministry for you here and now. Don't kill time, any more than you would burn money. Instead, invest it in eternity. ■

EPM note: Pictured above is ACTION International missionary Mavis Orton, a retired nurse/midwife from England. Now 80 years old, Mavis ministers at Shalom Christian Birthing Home in Antipolo City, Philippines, which she founded over 20 years ago. The center provides a safe and dignified environment for at-risk mothers to give birth. Nearby churches work closely with Shalom's staff—resulting in many mothers and their families experiencing spiritual rebirth and becoming active in a local church.

more resources

Read John Piper's book *Rethinking Retirement* at <http://bit.ly/piper-retirement>

Would a good steward spend money on a vacation?

Question from a reader

I'm having difficulty understanding the difference between wise and foolish stewardship. Should we give all but the bare essentials, trusting only Jesus to provide? What about saving for retirement or a family vacation? I've always enjoyed seeing the world God created, and find myself most connected when I can see His work, but want to please Him with how I handle my finances.

Answer from Julia Stager, EPM staffer

Everything we have is a gift from God and is to be enjoyed and stewarded wisely. Part of stewardship (if not most of it) is determining how to wisely manage what has been given to you. It's clear you desire to honor God with what He's given you, and that's a great place to start! It's wise to plan ahead if possible so that we do not become burdens to others if the unexpected happens; Paul himself worked so as not to become a burden (1 Thessalonians 2:9).

The Bible gives us no direct instruction regarding modern vacations so believers are left to exercise godly wisdom and discernment to act in ways aligned with Scripture. The concept of rest is important in the Bible, so there is no problem with taking time off from work. But as far as vacations go, here are some questions that may help you discern your intentions and whether such a vacation would tend toward God-honoring things (good) or self-exalting things (bad).

Is the purpose of the vacation to:



- Get away from day to day life to rest in and refocus on God?
- Learn things that will draw you closer to God?
- Grow relationships with family or friends?
- Experience God's world in a way that will lead you to worship Him?

Or is it to:

- Show-off your wealth and ability to travel to friends/family/co-workers?
- Escape from your problems at home instead of addressing them?
- Satisfy a fleeting or impulsive desire?

Some more questions to ask might be:

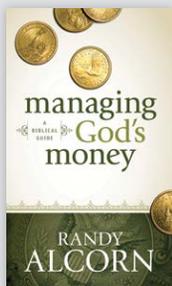
- Will this vacation put you in tempting situations?
- Is this experience focused on gratifying only your flesh or also your spirit?
- Are there ways these same things could be achieved at a lesser cost?
- Will spending money on this vacation decrease the money I would have given to my church, missions or others in need?
- After praying, reading the Bible and discussing the matter with trusted and mature believers does it still seem like a good idea?

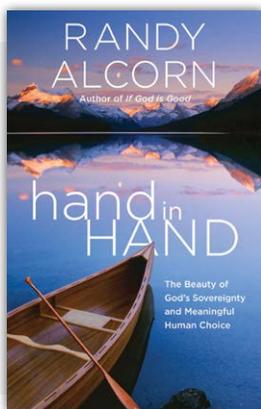
Randy and Nanci love going to Hawaii. Randy especially loves snorkeling and Nanci reads on the beach. They've been able to stay at friends' places and use frequent flyer miles when possible. Randy is not at all against going on vacations. He believes in spending money in wise ways that promote godliness. An unwise way of using money would be to spend lavishly or excessively on ourselves when those resources could be used so much more effectively for God's kingdom. ■

more resources

Read Randy's article "Choosing a Strategic Lifestyle Wherever You Live" at www.epm.org/choosing

His book *Managing God's Money* is the perfect study tool for anyone who is interested in gaining a solid biblical understanding of money, possessions, and eternity. www.epm.org/mgm





New book coming this fall: *hand in Hand*

In his latest title, Randy brings life-changing insight to the great debate between God's sovereignty and human choice, and tries to fairly present both the Calvinist and Arminian perspectives. Rather than attempt to "solve" this theological debate, *hand in Hand* helps you examine the question in light of all Scripture. The book will be available for purchase from our online store as well as from local bookstores.

Estimated release date October 21, 2014. Stay tuned to www.epm.org for more information in the coming months.

Registration still open for Randy's seminar at The Cove

Randy will be speaking at The Cove (Billy Graham Training Center), in Asheville, North Carolina, October 22-24, 2014. The seminar is titled "Our Future Hope: Thinking and Living Now in Light of Eternity." You'll be encouraged to deepen the hope of Heaven in your heart and draw closer to the One who made you for Himself. To register, go to <http://bit.ly/randycove>.

We invite your feedback!

Thoughts on the articles and content in this magazine? Issues and topics you'd like us to focus on in upcoming magazines? As always, we'd love to hear from you.

Send us your feedback and it might be included in the next issue. Email magazine@epm.org or send your letter to Eternal Perspectives Magazine, 39085 Pioneer Blvd., Suite 206, Sandy, OR 97055.



Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Heaven

This beautiful leather-like gift book provides solid, biblically based answers to more than 100 questions about God, Heaven, angels, and eternity and would make a great gift to families experiencing grief. *Available for purchase from EPM after the estimated release date of September 1, 2014.* (This is a special edition of Randy's book *TouchPoints: Heaven*.)



Help support the printing of *Eternal Perspectives*

Our magazine is free and always will be! But if you feel led, we invite you to consider donating to our magazine printing fund. This will help offset our costs and enable us to continue providing this free resource to all who request it. Go to www.epm.org/donate and under "Special Funds," select "Magazine Printing."

Two ways to partner with EPM through prayer

1 Join EPM's prayer partners team

Occasionally Randy sends out specific prayer requests by email related to his writing and speaking ministry. If you would like to sign up, go to www.epm.org/subscribe. We'd love to have you as part of our prayer team for Randy and EPM.

2 Pray for EPM's finances

We're heading into the summer season, when traditionally giving to non-profits is down. We so value your partnership in praying that the Lord would provide for our needs and help us to be wise stewards of what He has graciously entrusted to us.

REMEMBERING OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

IN NORTH KOREA

BY STEPHANIE ANDERSON, EPM STAFFER

The EPM office had a visit in May from Pastor Eric Foley and Pastor Tim Dillmuth, who are both with the nonprofit Seoul USA. This ministry works to mobilize western and Asian churches to remember the underground church of North Korea. What an eye-opening opportunity for EPM's staff to learn about North Korean Christians and correct some of the misconceptions we have on how to best minister to them!

Our visitors shared that when North Korean believers are asked how we in the West can pray for them, they often respond by explaining they pray for us! When asked why, they say, "You place a lot of faith in your money and freedom. We have neither money nor freedom. We have God, and that is enough."

Pastor Foley writes, "We Western Christians are tempted or deceived into confusing God with Mammon, and freedom of religion with freedom in Christ. North Korean Christians see daily the stark difference between the One True God and every counterfeit. They talk of a freedom that can't be taken away, even inside a concentration camp."



WHY PERSECUTION OF NORTH KOREAN UNDERGROUND CHRISTIANS WILL LIKELY WORSEN

With North Korea continuing its twelve year run as number one on the World Watch list of most persecuting countries on earth for Christians, it is hard to imagine that life could get any harder for North Korean underground believers. But new guidelines released earlier this year by the North Korea's Ministry of People's Security order a crackdown on "superstitious behavior," which likely means increased surveillance and even greater punishment for North Korean Christians.

What would it look like for Christian persecution to increase in already Christian-hostile North Korea?

Our best estimates are that one third of North Korea's 100,000 underground Christians are in concentration camps. But that means two thirds have so far managed to avoid detection by the

state. Some of those would be believers who have been protected because of their high position in the government or their family history. The 2013 execution of Jang Song Taek, Kim Jong Un's uncle, shows that position or blood will no longer exempt anyone from punishment.

North Korean Christians would not want us to pity them as these new guidelines go into effect. In fact, they regularly tell us not to pray *for* them but instead to pray *with* them—that God will empower us both to be faithful in whatever circumstances he places us. Money and "pity prayer" can't solve these problems. Instead, we need a willingness to share their stories, share their sufferings, emulate them in our own Christian lives, and support them as they reach their fellow North Koreans for Christ.

—Eric Foley, Seoul USA

LEARN MORE about Seoul USA and North Korean Christians at www.seoulusa.org/about/faq/. You can sign up to receive email updates on how to pray for the underground church of North Korea at www.seoulusa.org/resources/prayer-partner-update.

5 Reasons to Rejoice, *Not Worry*

BY RANDY ALCORN

Just after instructing us to rejoice in the Lord (Philippians 4:4), Paul wrote in verse 6, “Do not be anxious about anything.” Worry is a kill-joy. It specializes in worst case scenarios when God promises us best case scenarios:

- 1 He has already rescued us from the worst, which is eternal Hell;
- 2 Even if something horrible happens, He will use it for our eternal good (Romans 8:28);
- 3 Often bad things do *not* happen and our worry proves groundless;
- 4 Whether or not bad things happen, our worry generates no positive change, and in fact, can cause me great harm;
- 5 The cause for all our worries—sin and the Curse—is temporary, and will soon be behind us. Forever.

Hence the command to rejoice is not mere positive thinking—we have every *reason* to rejoice.

Paul continued in verse 7, “But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Instead of worrying, we’re to take our concerns to God, choosing to thank Him as we do—for His goodness, His sovereignty and His promises to work everything for good.

In verse 8 Paul said: “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

Thought is a choice. We often imagine, “I have no control over what I think about.” Martin Luther is credited with responding, “You can’t stop the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from making a nest in your hair.” What we choose to think about becomes our master.

Some believers become obsessed with everything that’s wrong with the world. We are continually bombarded by “news” (sometimes more sensational than informative) that dwells on the sufferings, tragedies and crises of life. It is easy for this unceasing avalanche of “bad news” to bury the Good News.

I do not favor living in a cave, denying suffering and trying to be “blissfully ignorant” of the world’s woes. Rather, Paul said, we are to focus our thoughts on the true eternal realities God affirms, that better empower us to rejoice.

Remembering God’s presence, praying and feeding our thoughts with good things that honor our King—these will increase our joy while starving our anxiety. ■



We are to focus our thoughts on the true eternal realities God affirms.

...the joy of the LORD is your strength. Nehemiah 8:10



Eternal Perspective Ministries
39085 Pioneer Blvd., Suite 206
Sandy, OR 97055



WHY YOUR PURCHASE FROM EPM MAKES A DIFFERENCE

When you buy Randy Alcorn's books from EPM's store, it supports the work of our ministry and funds our operating expenses. This allows the Alcorns to continue giving away 100% of the book royalties: 90% to other worthy Christian organizations and 10% to EPM (to help offset the costs related to the writing/researching/editing of the books, as well as to help facilitate the giving away of our books to people all over the world).

Plus, we offer:

- Competitive prices
- Quantity discounts for many of our products
- Personal customer service
- Complimentary items with your order (we often include items such as a bookmark)
- Exclusive products from Randy you won't find elsewhere, such as his *Eternity 101* DVD class (browse more of products available exclusively from EPM at www.epm.org/exclusives)

We deeply appreciate our customers. Thank you for being a vital part of our ministry!



Ordering
from EPM
supports our
ministry!

20%

OFF YOUR NEXT
ONLINE ORDER

To redeem your coupon, enter the discount code **20summer** during checkout from www.epm.org/store.

Discount does not apply to shipping and handling charges. Limit one coupon code per customer.

Offer expires July 31, 2014.