

eternal

perspectives

FALL/WINTER 2017

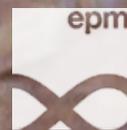
ANSWERING CLAIMS THAT THE BIBLE CONTAINS ERRORS

*And Why It Matters
That It Doesn't*

ALSO INSIDE

4 Reasons You Shouldn't
Be Colorblind

Reflections at Christmastime
on the Light of Jesus



contents

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|--|
| 4 | Abba, Father
Randy Alcorn | 12 | A Light Has Dawned
Randy Alcorn |
| 5 | Let Us Bless His Name
Charles Spurgeon | 13 | Tim Keller on the Christmas Message |
| 6 | The Deadly Life of Ease
Randy Alcorn | 14 | Q&A
Karen Coleman |
| 10 | 4 Reasons You Shouldn't Be Colorblind
Trillia Newbell | 15 | News from EPM |



about

Eternal Perspectives seeks to encourage readers to learn to live in light of eternity. This magazine is a publication of Eternal Perspective Ministries, a Christ-centered nonprofit organization founded and directed by author Randy Alcorn. It can be read online at epm.org/magazine.

All Scripture quoted in Randy's articles are from the English Standard Version (ESV), unless otherwise noted.

Subscribe

Our magazine is sent free to all who request it. To subscribe by mail or to sign up to receive an email notification when the latest edition is posted online, go to epm.org/subscribe. Do you currently receive a magazine in the mail but would prefer to read it online? Send us a message at epm.org/connect.

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 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 complete magazine, and pass it on to individuals, churches, or groups.

Contact

39085 Pioneer Blvd., Suite 206, Sandy, OR 97055
info@epm.org | 503.668.5200 | toll-free order line 1.877.376.4567 during office hours (Mon.-Thurs. 8:30 a.m - 4:30 p.m. PT, Fri. 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. PT)

Donate

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

Online Store

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

Copyright © 2017 by Eternal Perspective Ministries. Layout by Stephanie Anderson, EPM staff.

connect

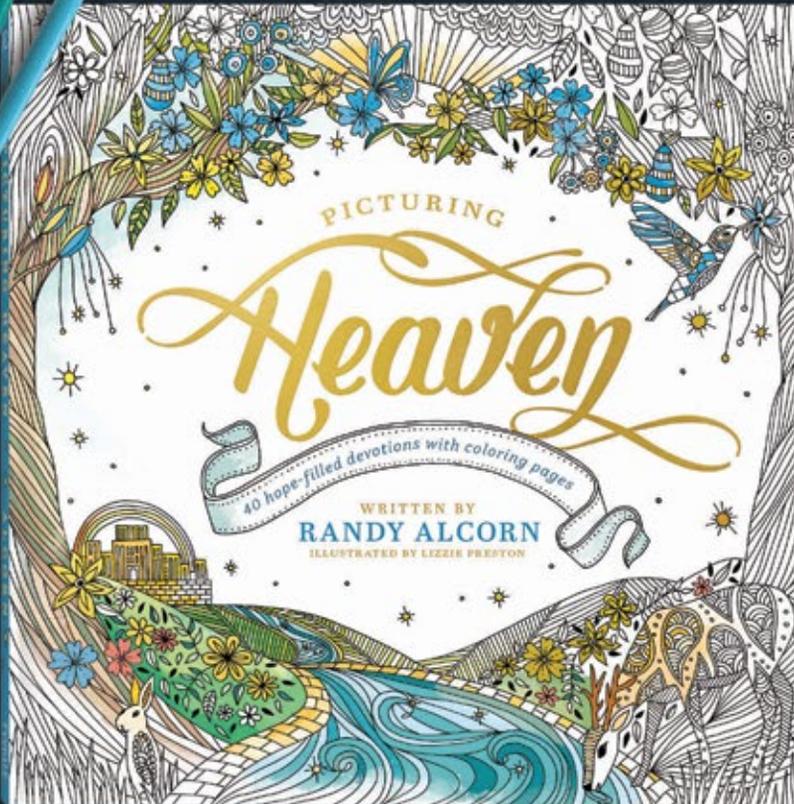
-  epm.org
Find resources and purchase books.
-  epm.org/blog
Read Randy's latest blog posts.
-  facebook.com/randyalcorn
Connect with Randy and read daily posts.
facebook.com/EPMinistries
Follow EPM for the latest news from our office, including promotions.
-  instagram.com/randyalcorn_epm
See EPM's word art featuring quotes from Randy and others.
-  pinterest.com/randyalcorn
Explore and pin quotes and resources.
-  twitter.com/randyalcorn
Read short daily thoughts from Randy.
-  vimeo.com/randyalcorn
Watch videos and messages from Randy.
-  youtube.com/eternalperspectives
Subscribe to Randy's videos.

Stay in touch with our ministry by email

Sign up to receive updates at epm.org/subscribe

imagine Heaven

the way the Bible describes it



Let the power and majesty of Heaven fill your heart with joy as you color these 40 carefully interpreted designs of Scripture. Savor a respite from daily life as you read and meditate on devotions from Randy Alcorn, bestselling author of *Heaven*.

SOFTCOVER
ISBN 978-1-4964-2527-0

To download a sample page and to order, go to epm.org/picturingheaven.



LIVINGEXPRESSIONSCOLLECTION.COM

TYNDALE and Tyndale's quill logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Living Expressions is a trademark of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Abba, Father

What Having God as My Heavenly Father Means to Me

BY RANDY ALCORN

I grew up with a dad who slept at home, but generally wasn't there for me or my brother. He was a good provider, and I was proud of his extraordinary physical strength, but he didn't come to my games or any school activities. I never had the experience of playing catch or going camping or fishing with him. He was a skilled mechanic, but didn't take the time to teach me how to work with my hands. He was always off to work or when home, working on something else or reading the newspaper. Beyond telling me to do various chores, he rarely spoke to me and I had little access to him. While my mom was always there and approachable, it seemed my father wasn't interested in me.

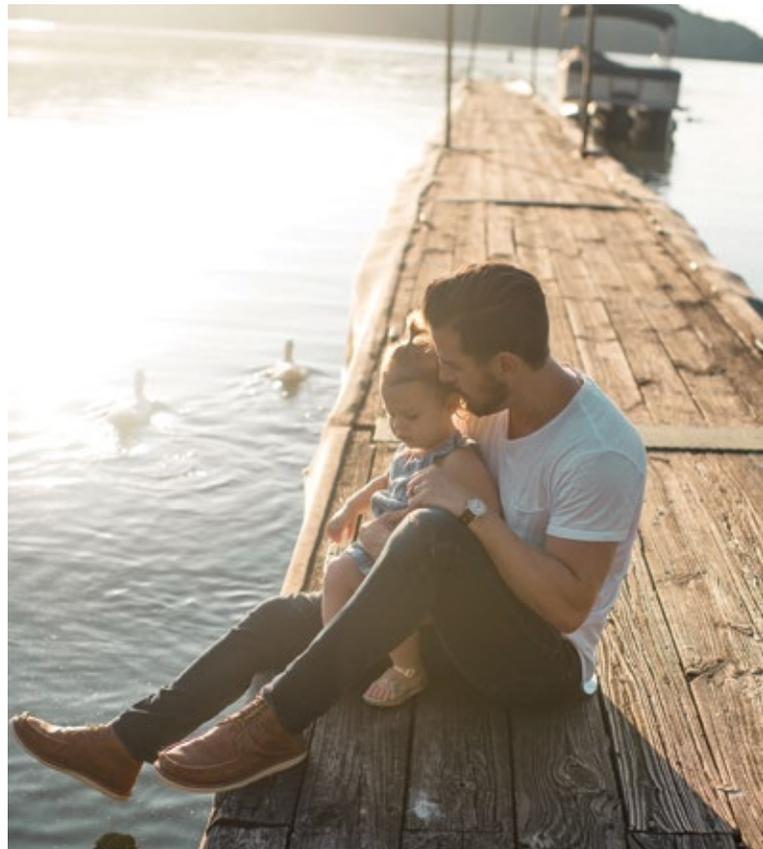
Everyone is different, but what happened to me was that my earthly father's absence made me all the more appreciative when I entered into a relationship with Jesus, and thereby into a relationship with my Father in Heaven. This Father loved me unconditionally, and despite His high expectations, He never told me to do anything that He didn't give me the strength to do, and was quick to forgive me when I failed, which I often did.

I found God the Father 100% trustworthy, an infinitely powerful provider who created the universe itself, not only for His glory but also for my good, as His son. I believed Him to be, and do now more than ever, personally and genuinely interested in my life. He wired me a certain way, and when I use my gifts and abilities to serve Him, I am His apprentice, having learned at His feet, under His

guidance. It is an honor and joy when I show some resemblance to my Father in Heaven. He means everything to me.

I base these concepts not on wishful thinking, but on God's revealed Word, and its blood-bought promises. I am a child of God, born into His family: "Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:12-13, NIV).

But as if being born into His family weren't enough, Scripture says He also chose to adopt me:



"You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" (Romans 8:15). He's not a distant and unapproachable Father. I am delighted to call Him "Abba, Father."

I always have access to Him, the King of the universe. His throne room is continuously available to me, His child, and He always has time for me: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16, KJV).

While my earthly father often seemed impossible to please, my heavenly Father seems eager to say to me, "Well done." Not only is He willing to spend

time with me, He's also eager to do so, and went to incredible lengths that I might spend eternity living with Him in His place, with Him always there for me, and me always able to proudly serve under Him. It's my privilege to worship Him, and call Him my Father.

I later had the privilege of leading my dad to Jesus when he was 84 years old. For the final five years of his life, when he was failing and needed my help, at last we became close. (Read the full story at epm.org/fathersconversion.) I can't wait to reunite with my earthly father in Heaven, transformed into the image of our mutual Father in Heaven. ■

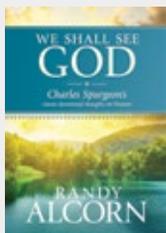
Let Us Bless His Name

BY CHARLES SPURGEON

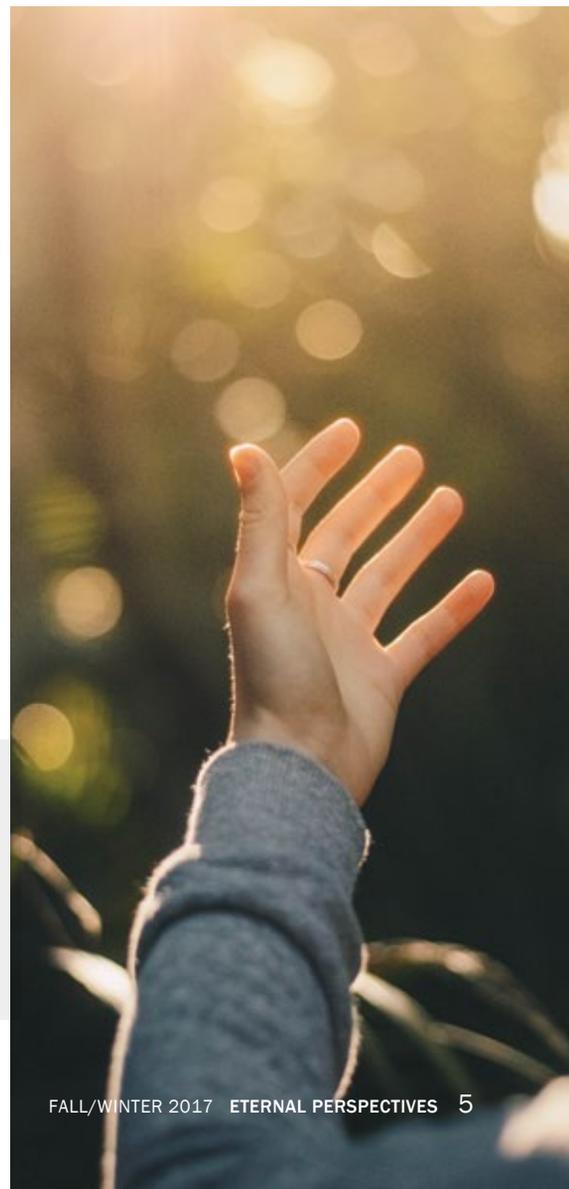
Let us begin to be very thankful, if we have not been so before. Let us praise God for common mercies, for they prove to be uncommonly precious when they are once taken away. ...Bless God for your reason; bless him for your existence. Bless God for the means of grace, for an open Bible, for the throne of grace, for the preaching of the Word.

You that are saved must lead the song. "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name." Bless him for his Son. Bless him for his Spirit. Bless him for his Fatherhood. Bless him that you are his child. Bless him for what you have received. Bless him for what he has promised to give. Bless him for the past, the present, and the future. Bless him in every way, for everything, at all times, and in all places. Let all that is within you bless his holy name. Go your way rejoicing. May his Spirit help you so to do!

Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892) was England's best-known preacher for most of the second half of the nineteenth century. This excerpt is from his sermon "Knowledge. Worship. Gratitude."



Get a daily dose of Charles Spurgeon's insights on Heaven in *We Shall See God*. In this book, Randy Alcorn has compiled the most profound spiritual insights on the topic of eternity from Spurgeon's sermons and arranged them in a devotional format, along with his own comments. Available at epm.org/wssg



THE DEADLY LIFE OF EASE

BY RANDY ALCORN

Jesus isn't our gofer who exists to run our errands. Rather, He is our Sovereign who gives us what we need while sometimes denying what we want.

We want deliverance from suffering. We want our loved ones to be protected. We don't want economic crises, natural disasters, job losses, car accidents, or cancer. Our prayers and often our expectations boil down to this: Jesus should make our lives go smoothly. That's what we want in a Messiah. *But it is not what God wants.*

Jesus is not our personal assistant charged with granting our wishes. While He often doesn't give us what we want, He always gives us what we need.

Ironically, the life of ease we most desire is the very kind of life that would make us the people we least admire. Because, let's be honest, virtually everyone who has suffered little in life seems shallow, unmotivated, self-absorbed, and lacking in character. And yet we do everything we can to avoid challenges, both to our children and to ourselves.

God's parenting method doesn't shield us from

adversity and the character it builds. He knows the life of ease is deadly to the development of Christlike character. ■

PERSPECTIVES FROM GOD'S WORD

"And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18, NIV).

"For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters" (Romans 8:29, NIV).

PERSPECTIVES FROM GOD'S PEOPLE

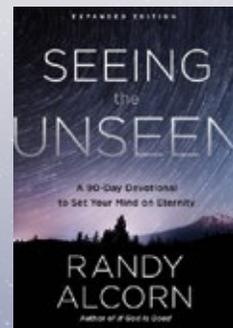
"Jesus, you are righteousness, not my moral coach; my Lord, not my co-pilot; my life, not my concierge."
—Scotty Ward Smith

"If your hope is anchored in Jesus, the worst case future scenario for you is resurrection and everlasting life." —Scott Sauls

This article is one day's meditation in the new edition of Randy's book *Seeing the Unseen*, a 90-day devotional which equips and inspires readers to live today with a right view of eternity. This edition is expanded from the original to include 30 additional daily readings. Each day's entry includes Bible verses and inspirational quotes.

Seeing the Unseen would make a wonderful gift this Christmas season!

Learn more and order at epm.org/unseen



ANSWERING CLAIMS THAT THE BIBLE CONTAINS ERRORS

And Why It Matters That It Doesn't

BY RANDY ALCORN

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY KAREN
COLEMAN, EPM MINISTRY ASSISTANT

When people say they believe the Bible contains errors, it's a good practice to ask them to name those errors so you can open a Bible and look at them together.

Sometimes they will raise old and easily answered questions such as "Where did Cain get his wife?" But usually they can't name many supposed errors, if any at all. Often, they've taken as truth the word of other people that the Bible contains errors, without investigating for themselves.

When you take the time to talk about their concerns, you can demonstrate that you have investigated it for yourself, that you've done your homework, and are convinced that when God says all Scripture is "God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16), He means that it is all accurate and reliable. Of course, if you haven't actually done that, it's time to start! Don't be afraid, because God's Word will hold up under your scrutiny. (It certainly has under mine!)

Remember, if someone asks a question you don't know the answer to, it's okay to say, "That's a great question. Let me research it, and I'll get back with you." The Christian Research Institute gives this advice: "...rather than taking a fearful attitude when faced with an alleged biblical contradiction, we should view these occasions as opportunities to search and explore the Scriptures. One thing I can guarantee is this: your awe of the majesty of Scripture will deepen."

WHERE DID CAIN GET HIS WIFE?

Let's go back to Cain's wife. She is referred to in Genesis 4:17 as the mother of Enoch. The typical claim is that Cain couldn't have had a wife since only he and Abel were born to Adam and Eve.

This fails to recognize that Genesis 5:4 specifically tells us that Adam and Eve had other sons and daughters. Considering their long lifespans they likely had many childbearing years. But is there a problem since Genesis 4:17 precedes Genesis 5:4? Not at all. The narrative is not strictly sequential. It's very common for books of history to talk about one person's life, tracing out what they did for decades, then move back to deal with another of their contemporaries. With Cain, the text of Genesis has fast-forwarded decades, and by then he likely had a number of sisters of marriageable age. He obviously married one of them, or if it was multiple decades later, possibly one of his nieces. If in those days no one had children by a close relative, the human race would have quickly become extinct.

The problem of Cain's wife is no problem to anyone but the most superficial reader of Scripture (and to those who have heard others say it is a problem).

WHAT ABOUT OTHER SUPPOSED ERRORS?

There are many claims of various errors in the Bible; I'll deal with just a couple.

Some say that since it groups bats with birds, the Bible falsely teaches that bats are a type of bird (Deuteronomy 14:11, 18). First, there was no scientific definition or established classification of a bird in that time. It makes perfect sense that bats could be grouped with birds due to the fact that both fly.

The inspired original manuscript, in reference to bats, used a Hebrew word meaning a kind of animal that can fly. Unfortunately, some English translations render the word as "bird." When a bat is involved, a better English translation would be "flying animal." Obviously, it's not an error to categorize a bat as a flying animal!

Some critics claim attribution errors, such as in Matthew 27:9-10: "Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me.'" This reference is actually found in Zechariah 11:13, not in the book of Jeremiah.

The answer to this lies in early Judaism's understanding of the canon of the Old Testament. The standard Jewish practice was to group the prophets together, even as Jesus did in referring to "the Law and the Prophets" in Matthew 22:40. According to Jewish scholar Nahum Sarna, Jeremiah was once regarded as the first book of the prophets, before Isaiah. He further explains "...in the Jewish way of labelling things you call a book by its first few words, and you call a collection of books by the first book in that collection." So a learned Jewish exegete would see nothing strange in Matthew's attributing this fulfilled prophecy of the potter's field to Jeremiah.

WAS JESUS WRONG ABOUT THE MUSTARD SEED?

Some claim that when Jesus said the mustard seed was the "smallest of all the seeds on earth" (Mark 4:31), He was mistaken, since there are smaller seeds.

According to botany experts, the seed of the black mustard variety was in fact the smallest garden-variety seed commonly used in Palestine—even the entire eastern world—at that time. It grew into a

GOD'S WORD WILL HOLD UP UNDER YOUR SCRUTINY.

very large shrub. Jesus used it as an illustration twice, and both times was speaking proverbially with statements about faith (Matthew 17:14-20) and the Kingdom of God (Mark 4:30-34).

John Piper lends a helpful perspective by clarifying the proper definition of error for judging the reliability of any literature. Thus when Jesus said the Kingdom of God is “like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth” (Mark 4:31), His basic intention was “not in the least botanical... Jesus capitalized on the proverbial smallness of the mustard seed to make a perfect, inerrant point about the kingdom of God.”

WHY DOES ALL THIS MATTER?

It matters because if we cannot trust the Bible—if we can’t rely on it to tell us the truth in everything it speaks to—then it cannot be, as 2 Timothy 3 says, “profitable” for us. We can’t correct ourselves with it if it’s sometimes incorrect.

And if it isn’t reliable in this and that area, why would I think it is correct about love, holiness, grace, justice, idolatry, greed, gossip, fornication, adultery, homosexuality, or even the Gospel itself? If the Bible cannot be trusted to tell us the truth in all things—big or small—how can it be trusted at all? And if God considers truth so precious, and His Word so powerful, why would He claim to breathe out Scripture from His mouth (2 Timothy 3:16) and carry along the writers of Holy Scripture (2 Peter 1:21), and then fail to guard that Scripture against error?

In the early church, God’s Word, all of it, was viewed as the standard by which God’s people should evaluate any and all teachings. The Berean Christians were commended for measuring the apostle Paul’s words against the Old Testament Scriptures: “Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what



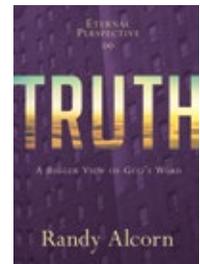
IF THE BIBLE CANNOT BE TRUSTED TO TELL US THE TRUTH IN ALL THINGS—BIG OR SMALL—HOW CAN IT BE TRUSTED AT ALL?

Paul said was true” (Acts 17:11, NIV).

Unless the Bible were fully inspired, fully true, “examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were true” would be meaningless. We can’t take something containing untruths—with no objective way to decide what’s true and what isn’t—and use it to measure whether something else is untrue. If you had a tape measure you knew to be inaccurate, would you bother using it?

Ironically, without studying Scripture or researching the actual facts, countless believers embrace the claims of the Bible’s critics. Yet most of those critics’ claims are nothing new. The Bible has been criticized incessantly for the last 150 years, and long before that. The charges just haven’t stuck. “Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens” (Psalm 119:89).

I’m reminded of what the Huguenots said of the Bible and its critics: “Hammer away ye hostile hands; your hammers break, God’s Anvil stands.” ■



Read or download a PDF of Randy's longer article on inerrancy, "Can We Trust the Bible? Is It Without Error?," at epm.org/trustbible

Learn more about Randy's devotional *Truth: A Bigger View of God's Word* at epm.org/truth

4 REASONS YOU SHOULDN'T BE

Colorblind

BY TRILLIA NEWBELL

Can you imagine wanting to be colorblind? And yet I hear that hope all the time.

When I speak with people about ethnic and racial diversity, it's not long before I hear, "I don't see color. I'm colorblind! My parents taught me not to see color."

The phrase is trying to express that all people are people, and that color doesn't matter. I've also heard colorblindness cited as a defense against racism: "I'm not racist. I love all people. In fact, I'm colorblind."

But I disagree.

I'd like to suggest that we aren't colorblind, we don't need to be colorblind, and we actually should strive to *not* be colorblind. Colorblindness leads us in the wrong direction. Instead, I want to encourage us to be colorsmart. Here are four reasons why.

1. IT'S NOT REALISTIC

I'm an African-American woman. I cannot—and crucially, I have no desire to—erase the fact that God made me this way. There's no hiding my milky-brown, freckled skin. I am who I am. When I walk into a room and I'm the only black woman, it's obvious. I know it; you know it; we all know it. It's ridiculous to pretend otherwise.

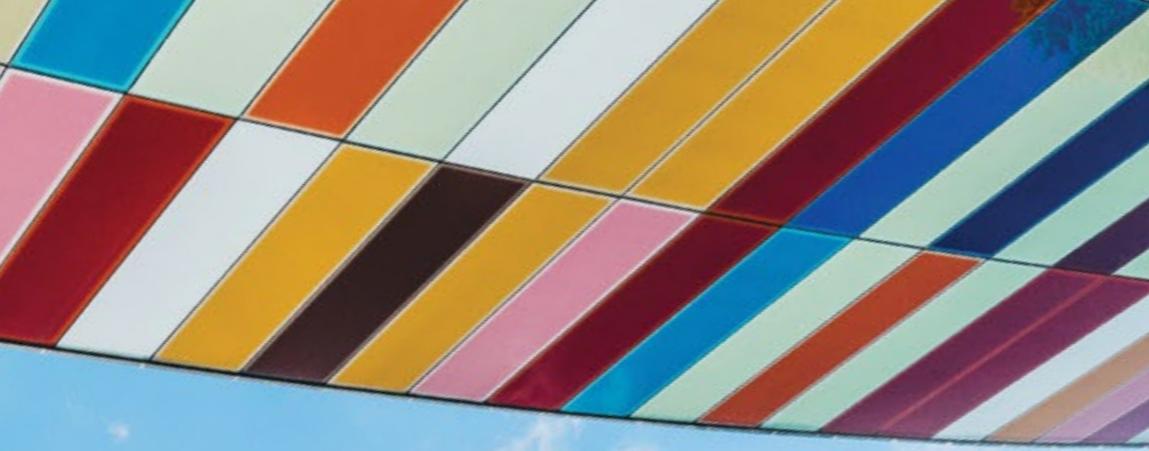
This doesn't mean we need to act awkward around each other. If we've embraced the fact that God has created us as equals, there's no reason for awkwardness. If you encounter someone ethnically different from you, it's unrealistic, unhelpful, and possibly unloving to pretend you don't notice. When your child says, "Mommy, why is that woman wearing a dot on her forehead?" don't shush him quiet out of embarrassment. Take the question as an opportunity to positively explain her culture.

Instead of pretending we're colorblind, let's celebrate God's creation and be colorsmart.

2. IT MISSES THE OPPORTUNITY TO CELEBRATE GOD'S GOOD DESIGN

Colorblindness seeks to ignore or flatten the differences between us. Being colorsmart, however, enables us to see others as crafted in God's image—just like us—while still acknowledging the beauty of our differences. We're all equally created to reflect aspects of our Creator God. Nevertheless, He creates each of us uniquely. This should be proactively acknowledged and celebrated rather than fearfully ignored.

The reality is we're *not* all the same in regard to skin color, interests, likes, gifts, and desires. God



made us differently for a purpose: His manifold glory. Instead of striving to be colorblind, then, let's recognize these differences in ways that express genuine love for neighbor and gratitude for the beauty of God's flawless design.

Don't we want to celebrate who God designed us to be? We should want our kids to rejoice that God created them the way they are and others the way they are. That's the beautiful reality of creation.

3. THE GOSPEL IS FOR ALL NATIONS

The most important reason to be colorsmart is that the gospel is for every nation. God celebrates His creation *and* redemption of all kinds of people.

The Bible tells us that we sinned, putting everything out of order, leading to the racial hatred we tragically see throughout history and still today. But Scripture also shows us how God is working for the redemption of all people through Christ. He's glorified now when redeemed rebels from all nations worship Him as one. We can see the fulfillment of His promise to redeem every tribe, tongue, and nation when we gather, fellowship, and worship with those who are different from us.

4. WE WILL REJOICE IN COLOR FOREVER

We shouldn't be colorblind, because God doesn't erase these distinctions in Scripture, and because they endure into eternity. Revelation 5 shows us a beautiful picture of every color, tribe, tongue, and nation worshipping *together* around the throne. The Lord's mission is to reconcile all things—us to Himself, then us to one another. We will spend eternity in a new creation filled—gloriously!—with people of all backgrounds and colors.

So instead of pretending like we're colorblind, let's celebrate God's creation and be colorsmart. Instead of pretending there are no differences, let's get to know one another. The pursuit of ethnic harmony doesn't require us to ignore how God uniquely designed us. But it does require sacrifice. As we celebrate our differences, we will grow to love the nations, and reach out to them with the gospel of grace as we embrace our God-given differences. ■

Trillia Newbell is the author of God's Very Good Idea; Enjoy; Fear and Faith; and United. She lives in the Nashville area with her husband and best friend, Thern, and their two kids. You can find her at trillianewbell.com





A LIGHT HAS *Dawned*

Reflections at Christmastime on the Light of Jesus

BY RANDY ALCORN

One day I got a late start on a bike ride and went too far. By the time I turned around, I found myself miles from home on a trail with absolutely no light. At times I could not see the trail's edge, and I had no clue what was on either side.

I was in the dark. Alone. Or at least I thought so, until I felt a presence and realized I'd just passed someone within inches. I could easily have run into him or her. I don't remember being afraid of the dark until that night. I had no light and couldn't flip

a switch or call someone to solve my problem. When I finally made it to the dim lights of civilization, I was flooded with relief...and sheer happiness!

The people Jesus spoke to lived without streetlights. If they didn't have a lamp and a means to light it, they groped in darkness, vulnerable to assailants. They understood what it meant when Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

Jesus didn't say, "I'll point you to the light" or "I'll

Jesus didn't say, "I'll point you to the light." He said, "I am the light."

The only Light.

give you the light." He said, "I am the light." The only Light.

John tells us in his Gospel that Jesus is "the true light that gives light to every one" and the light that "shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:9, 5). I love that phrase from John 1:9, which says that Jesus came as the light that "enlightens every man" (NASB). I think it reflects the fact that all people in history have benefited from the coming of Christ, and His redemptive life and death—even those who reject Him. "The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned" (Matthew 4:16).

God is portrayed in Scripture as full of light. He has a bright radiance, seen by Moses and Elijah and Isaiah and the apostle John. During Christ's transfiguration, the appearance of His face changed, and His clothing "became as bright as a flash of

lightning" (Luke 9:29, NIV). He appeared to Paul and blinded him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-9). The apostle John is emphatic: "God is light; in him there is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5).

Scripture says that God Himself will be the light source for the New Jerusalem. Isaiah tells us, "The Lord will be your everlasting light" (60:19), and "Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn" (Isaiah 60:3, NIV). But John goes further, saying, "The Lamb is its lamp" (Revelation 21:23, NIV). He saw what Isaiah couldn't: The God who is the city's light is the Messiah Himself.

This present world is still cursed with sin and suffering, but these obstacles can't trump joy or diminish the light that dawned at Christ's incarnation. He has already come, and with Him came light, hope, and redemption—the down payment of this world's final transformation, when we'll experience His brightness firsthand. ■

TIMOTHY KELLER ON THE CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

There has never been a gift offered that makes you swallow your pride to the depths that the gift of Jesus Christ requires us to do. Christmas means that we are so lost, so unable to save ourselves, that nothing less than the death of the Son of God himself could save us. That means you are not somebody who can pull yourself together and live a moral and good life.

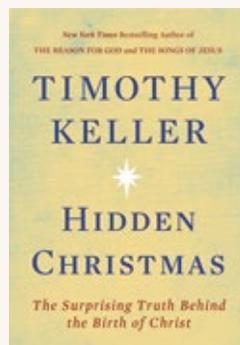
Christmas, therefore, is the most unsentimental, realistic way of looking at life. It does not say, "Cheer up! If we all pull together we can make the world a better place." The Bible never counsels indifference to the forces of darkness, only resistance, but it supports no illusions that we can defeat them ourselves. Christianity does not agree with the optimistic thinkers who say, "We can fix

things if we try hard enough." Nor does it agree with the pessimists who see only a dystopian future.

The message of Christianity is, instead, "Things really are this bad, and we can't heal or save ourselves.

Things really are this dark—nevertheless, there is hope." The Christmas message is that "on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned."

Notice that it doesn't say from the world a light has sprung, but upon the world a light has dawned. It has come from outside. There is light outside of this world, and Jesus has brought that light to save us; indeed, he is the Light. ■



Adapted from the book Hidden Christmas: The Surprising Truth Behind the Birth of Christ by Timothy Keller.



Is it permissible for a Christian to occasionally enjoy erotic reading? (I'm not talking about anything violent.) I am actively following Jesus and choosing sexual purity in mind and body, but I'm single and may never get married.

ANSWERED BY KAREN COLEMAN,
EPM MINISTRY ASSISTANT

When the apostle Paul was writing about Christian liberty in 1 Corinthians 10:23-31, he said everything we do should be:

1. Profitable (beneficial, valuable, worthwhile)
2. Edifying (helping to improve us morally or spiritually)
3. Done for the glory of God

I don't know exactly what you consider erotic reading. (Some argue it's merely pornography in literary form.) But after a one-minute Google search for "erotic reading" I didn't see anything I would want Jesus to find me reading. Consider this prayerfully: If Jesus is sitting next to you as you read (and through His indwelling Holy Spirit, He is!), can you hand Him the story and ask Him to read it to you?

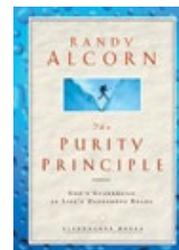
I'm glad you're not reading violent erotica. But where is the line drawn? And what about something violent you may run across while looking for something non-violent? We can't ever "un-read" something after we've allowed our eyes to see it.

In Philippians 4:8, Paul laid out instructions that can help us to guard our minds: "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." Can each of those rightly apply to erotica?

Just because you don't have any prospects of marriage at this time doesn't mean you won't get married someday. Even though it may be difficult to see now, reading erotic stories can set you up for disappointment, creating unrealistic expectations for your future spouse to fulfill.

Marshall Segal of *Desiring God* says reading genres similar to this "might feel like a fun and harmless fantasy, but it's not so subtly redefining the power and beauty of sex, creating spiritual blockages in your heart...and impairing your ability to enjoy real and lasting pleasure."

Randy has written extensively about sexual purity. I'd encourage you to read his article "Guidelines for Sexual Purity" (epm.org/guidelines), his book *The Purity Principle* (epm.org/purity), or his booklet *Sexual Temptation: Establishing Guardrails and Winning the Battle* (epm.org/stbooklet). These things would help you establish a Biblical view—something solid against which to line up your behavior and choices. ■



What Book Is Randy Presently Working on?

One question we've been asked by readers is what Randy's next book is. "Currently, I'm writing a book about how 'the good life' really is the generous life," Randy says. "It's the better way. If you're missing out on happiness in life, it's found in giving. The book will tell a lot of encouraging and challenging stories of people giving away their time, money, and expertise."

Please pray that God would enable him to make real progress on the book in the coming months and give him wisdom as he writes. With each book he's written, Randy knows that faithful prayers of those on his prayer team have made a profound and eternal difference! We look forward to sharing more about the book in the months to come.

Sign up to receive monthly prayer updates about Randy's speaking and writing ministry at epm.org/connect.



YEAR-END GIFTS TO EPM

If you've been impacted by the ministry and resources of EPM, including this magazine, we invite you to partner with us by making a year-end gift. It's through the generous support of ministry partners that we're able to continue our work of investing in eternity.

What does EPM's outreach look like? It includes providing quality, Christ-centered content online, which is accessible throughout the world; sending books to inmates in facilities across the U.S.; supporting Randy's book writing; reaching out in Jesus' name to all those we come in contact with; and so much more.

If you'd like to make a year-end, tax-deductible donation, you can give at epm.org/donate or call us toll-free at 1.877.376.4567 during office hours (Monday - Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Fridays 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. PT). As a reminder, a tax deductible online gift in 2017 must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. on December 31. Thank you for your support!

Did you know?



EPM has a vibrant outreach to inmates across the country. We've mailed over 5,000 books to prisoners so far this year!



Speaking Events

Randy will be speaking several times over the coming months, including:

ECWA National Pastor's Conference
December 11–15, 2017 | Abuja, Nigeria

Hope Chapel
February 2018 | Kihei, Hawaii
hopechapelmaui.com

The Grove Community Church
April 7-8, 2018 | Riverside, California
thegrove.cc

Cornerstone Church
May 13, 2018 | Hamilton, Bermuda
cornerstone.bm

For more details and a full list, see epm.org/events.



eternal perspective ministries
39085 Pioneer Blvd., Suite 206
Sandy, OR 97055

Find gifts

for everyone on your list,
and support the work of
our ministry!

Get great gift ideas when you check out EPM's Christmas gift guide. We have many books that make wonderful gifts, including Randy Alcorn's devotionals *Seeing the Unseen* and *Truth*, as well as the new adult devotional coloring book, *Picturing Heaven*.

View the guide at
epm.org/christmasguide

