

Eternal Perspectives

with founder and author Randy Alcorn

Winter 2012

A pair of hands is shown holding a red Christmas ornament. The ornament has a silver cap and a gold ring. The text on the ornament is written in white and yellow. The background is a warm, golden-brown color.

Changing
Christmas
in our Families and in our Hearts

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Plugging into the Church | Setting our Hearts on Heaven

a publication of Eternal Perspective Ministries

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Go to epm.org/christmasguide to access our Christmas Gift Guide, filled with great affordable book ideas for everyone on your list! Find gifts under \$10, gifts for teens, and more. Best of all, when you purchase Randy's books from EPM's store, the profits go directly to support the work of our ministry and fund our operating expenses. This frees us up to continue giving away 100% of the author book royalties to worthy ministries around the world.

epm.org/christmasguide



You'll also want to sign up to follow EPM on Facebook (facebook.com/EPMinistries.) We'll be offering some exclusive promotions to our Facebook fans this Christmas season!

You can now follow EPM on Facebook and Twitter!



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While Randy's Facebook and Twitter will continue to provide you with encouraging quotes and personal updates from Randy, the EPM pages will offer you the latest information on specials and new resources, as well as exclusive giveaways. It'll also give you interesting news on the ministries EPM is supporting around the world. We hope to see you there!

Two new books available for preorder

Eternal Perspectives

Brimming with verses, quotes, and selected passages on the topic of life after death, *Eternal Perspectives* is the most comprehensive collection of quotations about Heaven ever compiled. (Over 1300 Quotes)

Preorder price: \$16.49 (retail \$24.99 - save 34%) *Estimated release March 2012.*

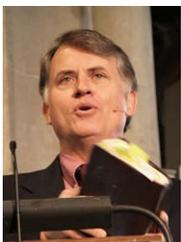
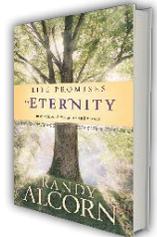
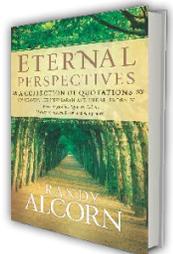
Life Promises for Eternity

A beautifully designed two-color, padded gift book that provides readers with more than 100 brief, inspirational readings on the topic of Heaven.

Preorder price: \$7.99 (retail \$9.99 - save 20%) *Estimated release March 2012.*

Order online at www.epm.org | phone 503.668.5200 | toll-free 1.877.376.4567

Win a signed copy! When you preorder either book from EPM, you're automatically entered to win a signed book. We'll be giving away 10 signed copies of *Eternal Perspectives* and 10 signed copies of *Life Promises for Eternity* to randomly-drawn preorder customers.



Randy's speaking schedule

More details at epm.org/events

Mom to Mom

January 12, 2012 at Good Shepherd Community Church in Boring, Oregon

Randy and Nanci will do a Q&A on the topic of "Guarding the Environment of Your Home."

Corban's chapel

January 20, 2012 at Corban University in Salem, Oregon
Randy will be interviewed on the topic of Heaven.

Biola's chapel

February 28-March 2, 2012 at Biola University in La Mirada, California

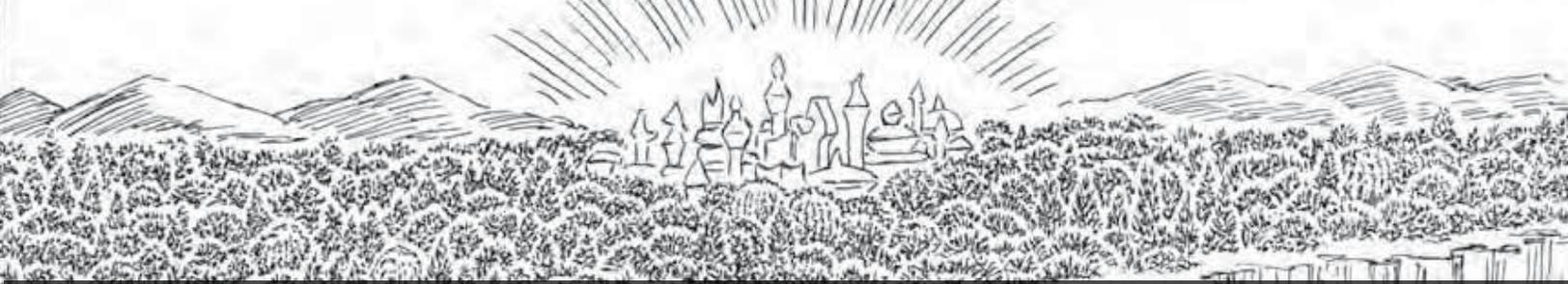
Randy will be the featured guest for the Financial Stewardship chapel series.

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Q Why do many Christians tend to avoid fiction stories?

ANSWER: by Randy Alcorn

Some Christians view fiction as the opposite of truth. But sometimes it opens eyes to the truth more effectively than nonfiction.

There's still a stereotype perpetuated by believers who seem to take pride in saying, "I never read Christian fiction because it's so syrupy and unrealistic; it's poor quality." I hear this so often that I have a standard response: "How do you know that if you never read Christian fiction?" Actually, it's just the popular thing to say, but those who say it are uninformed. Anyone who has actually read much fiction written by Christians in the last ten years knows there are many high quality stories, well-researched and well-written, dealing realistically with all kinds of serious issues. They are no more predictable or preachy than bestselling or award-winning secular novels.

The second bestselling book of all time is *Pilgrim's Progress*, a work of fiction written by John Bunyan in the 1670s. It may also be the second most influential book in history.

Jesus taught in parables. He told stories to capture imaginations and move hearts. The reason I started writing fiction in the early 90s was that I love good stories, and I believe they have a Trojan Horse effect.

People open the doors of their minds to a story. The Trojan Horse comes in and the next thing you know the soldiers sneak out and take over the city of the mind. It's not manipulation, it's a way of communicating that captures the imagination and moves the heart.

Here's an example. My novel *Deadline* has a subplot that involves abortion. Jake Woods was involved with an abortion decision in his past and is plagued by guilt, and ends up in a group of men talking about abortion.

Years ago, our daughters played volleyball and one of the team moms happened to be an outspoken pro-choice advocate. One of the other moms gave her *Deadline*. I thought, "Oh no! I wish she'd given her one of my other novels instead!"

As much as I knew about the power of fiction, I assumed it was a bad introduction to my writing for this particular woman. Three weeks later, I was sitting at a volleyball

game. I hadn't seen this woman since she'd been given the book. I saw her coming, walking rapidly toward me.

I braced myself, thinking "Here it comes."

She pointed her finger at me, and said, "Somebody gave me that novel of yours!" Uncomfortable pause. Then she said, "I loved it!"

I was shocked. She asked, "You know what my favorite part of that novel was?"

"I don't have a clue."

This non-Christian woman said, "When you showed the conception of a child from Heaven's viewpoint."

That was the single most dramatically prolife aspect of the book, and it was her favorite part! I don't know if she totally reversed her position on abortion, but I know that it profoundly affected her thinking in a way that simply would not have happened just by reading my non-fiction books on the subject. The truth is, she probably would never have read books titled *Why ProLife?* or *ProLife Answers to ProChoice Arguments*. And if she had, her defenses would have been up. That's the power of fiction—to get past the worldview gate-keeper and touch both the heart and the mind. *R*



Art (as seen in *The Chasm* by Randy Alcorn) by Mike Biegel (VermontGreetingCards.com). Find fiction by Randy Alcorn at www.epm.org/store/category/fiction/

The Valley of Vision

Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly, **Thou hast brought me** to the valley of vision, where I live in the depths but see Thee in the heights; hemmed in by mountains of sin I **behold Thy glory**. Let me learn by paradox that the way down is the way up, that to be low is to be high, that the broken heart is the healed heart, that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit, that the repenting soul is the **victorious soul**, that to have nothing is to possess all, that to bear the cross is to wear the crown, that to give is to receive, that the valley is the place of vision. Lord, in the daytime **stars can be seen** from deepest wells, and the deeper the wells the brighter Thy stars shine; let me find Thy **light in my darkness**, Thy life in my death, Thy joy in my sorrow, Thy grace in my sin, Thy riches in my poverty, Thy glory in my valley.

Taken from *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions*, edited by Arthur Bennett

Prolife Resources and Books

January 22, 2012 is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday and we want to help people share the truth about the unborn with compassion and conviction.

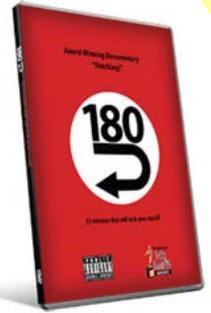
PRINT.....WEB.....FILM.....

Some of you have heard about the excellent "180" movie, done by Ray Comfort and his ministry.

It's mind-blowing and unforgettable, a reminder that the truth can change your heart and set you free. My friend Joni Eareckson Tada described it as "Riveting!" and John Piper said, "I give my unflinching, joyful, trembling Yes to '180'. Unflinching, because it's right. Joyful, because it's good. Trembling, because our defeated enemy is still vicious."

A few months ago, Ray asked for my input on the project and I was very positive in what I said. Eternal Perspective Ministries was also happy to donate 50,000 copies of *Why Pro-Life?* for them to use related to the video.

If you haven't yet watched it, I'd encourage you to check out this fast-moving 33 minute film. I enthusiastically recommend it. (It's available in its entirety for free online; you can also order DVDs for as low as \$1.00 each, or an entire course curriculum, which includes *Why ProLife?*)



www.180movie.com



Abort 73.com is a website that exists to educate people about abortion. The website offers a wealth of resources and information on the subject as well as tools for getting the conversation started (posters, t-shirts, social media campaigns, etc.)

From their mission statement: "Motivated by our Christian calling to establish justice, to expose evil injustices, to minister to the needy and helpless, and to extend love to every human person, Abort73.com aims to expose the practice of abortion as an injustice of historic proportions. We believe the best way to do so is to persistently, creatively, and comprehensively educate individuals (esp. students) with the massive body of evidence that stands against it."

Prolife Pastors' Kit— EPM offers a **free** kit to pastors that includes a resource brochure, a copy of Randy's book *Why ProLife?*, and a DVD of his 2010 Sanctity of Human Life message. To order a kit, email info@epm.org or call our office at 503.668.5200.

Pastors and church leaders can also access many **free** resources, including Randy's articles and Q&As, audio and video, links to some recommended prolife organizations, and more at www.epm.org/resources/prolifepastors.

Quantity Discount on *Why ProLife?*— To equip churches and prolife organizations sharing the truth about the unborn, EPM offers case quantities of Randy's book *Why ProLife?* to churches for \$1.00 per copy (80%+ discount from the \$7.99 retail price) when you purchase 50 books or more.

Order online at www.epm.org, or call our office at 503-668-5200 or toll-free at 1-877-376-4567 (customer service Monday-Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. PT, and Friday 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. PT). **We recommend ordering by Friday, December 30, 2011 to receive your books in time for Sanctity of Human Life Sunday.**

Other prolife books by Randy, available from EPM, are *ProLife Answers to ProChoice Arguments* and *Does the Birth Control Pill Cause Abortions?*



Changing Christmas in our Families and in our Hearts



An alarming number of children from Christian homes grow up grasping for every item they can lay their hands on. Children raised in such an atmosphere—which includes most children in America—are afflicted with a killer disease called “affluenza.”

Consider the typical American Christmas. When the annual obstacle course through crowded malls culminates on the Big Day, what’s the fruit? We find a trail of shredded wrapping paper and a pile of broken, abandoned, and unappreciated toys. Far from being filled with a spirit of thankfulness for all that Christmas means, the children are grabby, crabby, picky, sullen, and ungrateful—precisely because they’ve been given so much.

We love our children. So do their grandfathers and grandmothers, aunts and uncles, cousins and friends. All of us seem to think that love is measured by giving things. We say it isn’t so, but we go right on acting as if it were. Our children aren’t battery operated. Their deepest needs are spiritual, mental, and emotional, and these needs cannot be met by flashing lights and doll houses. This sometimes dawns on us, but we soon forget. Another Christmas, and again we immerse our children in things. In doing so, we mentor them in a perspective on life directly at odds with the Scriptures we seek to teach them at home and in church.

Can we change the pattern of materialism in our homes at Christmastime? Certainly. We can buy far less. We can hand make presents, set a budget, and buy presents in advance to avoid the unnerving jostling through stores. Any change is good if it helps us to focus on Christ rather than on ourselves. We can visit shut-ins or take food to the needy—to focus on giving rather than receiving.

My wife often staged a “Happy Birthday Jesus” party for our girls and their friends. Each child brought one gift personally made for Jesus. (After all, whose birthday is it?) One year, a few nights before Christmas, our family sat around a candlelit table holding hands. Then each of us said what we appreciated about the Lord. After praying together and singing Christmas carols, we shared what we appreciated about each other. It was an unforgettable evening.

If a child receives four presents, the gifts can be spread out on each of the four days before Christmas. On Christmas night, after reading Scripture and singing carols, each giver can present his or her gift in turn to the recipient. In the quietness and simplicity of the celebration, we can pray and express our gratefulness to God for his greatest of all gifts, the Lord Jesus. By taking our focus off the human receiver and putting it on the divine giver, Christmas can become a symbol of God’s giving heart rather than people’s grabbing hands.

This is only a beginning. You may wish to make more radical changes in your Christmas. When our missions pastor told our church about enslaved Christians in Sudan one November, family after family spontaneously decided to forgo Christmas presents and give instead to free the slaves. My family was among them, and it was a wonderful Christmas, made better by the knowledge that we’d given to what matters instead of exchanging more stuff we didn’t need. But even if you still exchange presents, you can make Christmas different. Don’t be victimized by the world’s materialism. Worship Christ in simplicity. *R*

Advent Conspiracy: Nobody Wants a Christmas Worth Forgetting

(www.adventconspiracy.org)



The Advent Conspiracy is a grassroots movement with more than 1,000 churches in 17 countries participating as co-conspirators—with projects as varied as drilling a water well for those who lack access to clean water or simply encouraging congregations to think of meaningful acts of kindness as meaningful gift options to replace traditional Christmas gifts.

Before you think we're getting all Scrooge on you, let us explain what we mean. We like gifts. Our kids really like gifts. But consider this: America spends an average of \$450 billion every Christmas. How often have you spent money on Christmas presents for no other reason than obligation? How many times have you received a gift out of that same obligation?

How often have you spent money on Christmas presents for no other reason than obligation?

Thanks, but no thanks, right? We're asking people to consider buying ONE LESS GIFT this Christmas. Just one. Sounds insignificant, yet many who have taken this small sacrifice have experienced something nothing less than a miracle: They have been more available to celebrate Christ during the advent season.

By spending less at Christmas we have the opportunity to join Him in giving resources to those who need help the most. When Advent Conspiracy first began, four churches challenged this simple concept to its congregations. The result raised more than a half million dollars to aid those in need. One less gift. One unbelievable present in the name of Christ.



A Christmas Greeting:

Nanci and I would like to extend a Merry Christmas to all. May it be for you a Christmas full of joyful noises, perhaps, but also may there be a clean blanket of quietness in which you can be still, and know that the baby, born in a Bethlehem barn, is God.

~Randy

Q&A: COURAGEOUS



Answers by Randy Alcorn

Photos by Todd Stone

Do you think the time is ripe for men to receive the message of *Courageous*?

I really do. I think there are a lot of men in this culture who are just waiting to be challenged. In my experience, whenever men's ministries in churches have challenged men to be godly men, there are many who step forward. But there are numerous churches that simply need a tool that can be used to make that challenge. I believe the *Courageous* movie and the related books and studies are an instrument that God can greatly use, and I expect Him to do exactly that.

Then it will be up to the churches, and the small groups and men's ministries within those churches, to take the next step and not just challenge men, but also inspire them to rise up and say, "Yes, I am resolved to be a man of courage and conviction." Actually helping them to follow through with that resolve no matter what will be a huge challenge, but I expect that many churches and many men will rise to meet that challenge. *Courageous* has the potential to make a profound difference.

Was it easy for you to write a novel based on someone else's screenplay?

In a word...no!

It might seem like it would be easy because after all, Alex and Stephen Kendrick gave me an excellent movie script to start with. The problem is, a screenplay is not a novel, and what

works on the screen (and the movie works beautifully) and in a book is not always the same.

Alex and Stephen and Sherwood Baptist Church are terrific, and they are excellent at movie-making, doing what I couldn't begin to. But, like every novelist, I have my own style, my way of writing and constructing a story line and developing characters and their own back-story. It wasn't easy to assume ownership of someone else's story, even such a good one, and then multiply it four times and write a true novel in their characters, plot, themes, development, approach and tone that would be seamlessly integrated and true to both my style and theirs. This is a challenge of collaboration but hopefully the final product justifies all the work it required. And I'm grateful to hear so many people who haven't seen the movie yet say they love the book.

For example, usually as I write a novel I come up with creative ideas that require me to subtract a character I started with, change which characters I have in a scene, and even change a character's age, appearance, ethnicity or name. If there's a compelling reason to do so—and sometimes there is—I make very significant changes from my earlier drafts. I can go back and plant clues wherever I want to and make last minute changes the reader will never be aware that I made, changes which make the book much better. But obviously, I didn't have the option of taking away some of Adam's lines and replacing them with something else. I couldn't take a line that belonged to Nathan in the movie and give it to his wife Kayla in the book. People would notice.

So, to me, the twenty percent of the *Courageous* novel that was straight from the screenplay was written in stone. I could tweak things here and there, add something to enhance it, but I didn't want to change the movie. Of course, movies based on novels frequently alter and contradict the novels they are based on. But I don't think a novelization should take those liberties with a movie.

Also, I had to make compromises with point of view because the camera shows the movie viewer things that in a novel you shouldn't normally convey except from a restricted point of view of a single character. But I had to fudge on this occasionally because if I didn't, some portions of the book would have felt really different from the movie in a way that could confuse people who experience both.

What kind of research did you do in writing the novelization? How did it help you in writing the book?

Last fall I spent four days in Albany, Georgia (home of Sherwood Baptist Church, Sherwood Pictures, and the *Courageous* movie production). I met extensively with Alex and Stephen Kendrick, and a variety of people, including Ken Bevel, who played Michael in *Fireproof* and plays Nathan in *Courageous*. I was driven around town for three hours by a savvy cop, a veteran investigations Captain who showed me the gang life where drug deals happen, and took me on a tour of the jail. I took photographs and visited most of the film's locations.

I worshipped at Sherwood Baptist on Sunday, which I really enjoyed (a key scene in the movie and the book takes place there). So when I wrote a scene, I'd been there. Authenticity is important. If it's true in the writer's mind the reader picks that up, if it's vague to the author, the reader senses that and doesn't buy into the story.

The movie filming had already been completed, but I was able to watch the Kendrick brothers as they worked on *Courageous* in the editing room. They would run a scene back and ask, "Does this work?"

Movie making and book writing are not contradictory, but supplementary mediums. Watching Alex and Stephen sit at their computers surrounded by big screens, editing *Courageous*,

showed me that making a good movie is remarkably similar to making a good book, which I've been trying to do for twenty-five years. The painstaking editing process helps you to make it into the most compelling story that reaches into hearts of the audience.

What do you hope readers of the book and viewers of the movie will come away with?

There are several nonfiction books related to the *Courageous* movie, but I really believe that the *Courageous* novel is going to have its own distinctive role in impacting readers. We're already seeing this to be true. For instance, a police officer wrote last week to say his wife gave him the book, he read it and it caused him to "come back to Christ." This novel is unique among the books in that like the movie, it is a story, and stories have a unique power. God can bring truth into peoples' lives through the experience of reading good fiction because it speaks to our hearts in ways different than nonfiction.

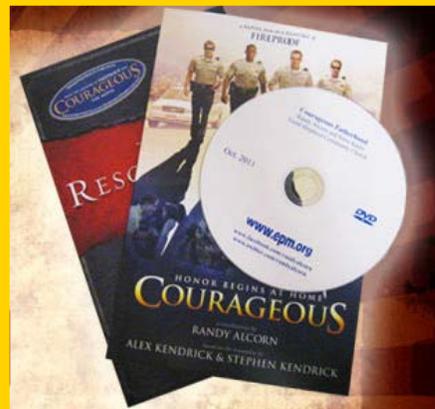
What makes a story unforgettable and haunting and the subject of water cooler conversations is the same thing in movies as it is in books. We crave a story that has the ring of truth, that involves action and conflict and the growth of characters we care about. A story that we don't leave behind when we exit the theater or read the last page of the book. We want a redemptive story that stays with us and changes us for the better. That's what I'm convinced the movie *Courageous* will do, and the novel *Courageous* also. People will spend five times longer in the novel than in the theatre watching the movie, and this will give them more time to think and reflect. You can stop reading and ponder what you've read, and reread it, then read it to a friend, or post a portion on Facebook.

Though a movie or a book alone usually isn't enough to change people, it can be an instrument used by God to get their attention and challenge them to take the next step. The key to long-term growth and turning around hearts and families will be churches, families, and individuals meeting with God and each other day after day, calling upon Him to transform us, by the grace and truth of Jesus Christ and the power of His Holy Spirit.



COURAGEOUS FATHERHOOD PACK

www.epm.org/courageous-pack



EPM Price \$17.68
(Retail Value \$34.98)

Includes:
Courageous (novel),
Resolution for Men
and *Courageous*
Fatherhood DVD

Plugging into the Church

by Suzanne Hadley Gosselin

Leah threw her hands up in exasperation.

"I don't know what body part I am," she said. "I feel like I'm the tonsils or the appendix. Something you don't really need."

The six people sitting around the table—all in their 20s and early 30s, all single—nodded.

Our dinner conversation had taken an odd turn from amusing workday anecdotes to our feelings about church.

Leah, 30, who was incinerated by her last church, described what drew her to the cult-like legalism she experienced there. "I decided I was going to make myself indispensable," she said. "I was there every night of the week. I got involved in *everything*."

That strategy did not end well. "When my husband and I started having problems and eventually divorced, I became an outcast," she said. "The pastor lived on my street but never talked to me again."

Jake, 29, nodded. "I haven't really been part of a church for three years. I just don't fit anywhere." This from an outgoing guy who grew up attending church and worked for a Christian organization.

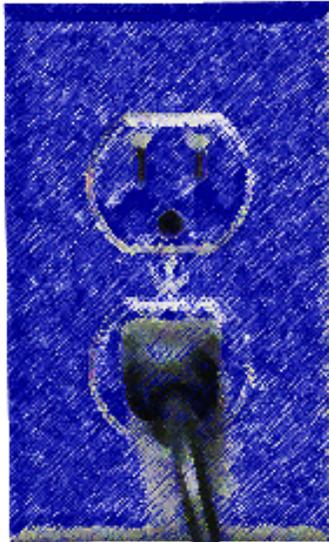
The other stories around the table were similar. The pastor's daughter looking for authentic community where she can be open about her struggle with an eating disorder. The well-spoken young professional who can't find a place to exercise his gift of teaching. The 28-year-old bachelor who wonders if someday soon people will cast a suspicious eye on him for working in children's ministry. And, me, in my early 30s, having fully expected to have had a family by now, and wondering what it looks like to serve the church—like this.

Yet despite the longing to fit in, there was deep camaraderie among us over our struggle for belonging in the church. Beneath the solidarity, was longing. Longing for a spiritual oasis where people truly care about our needs, help us sort out our confusion and reassure us that we are not alone in our fears.

Getting There

The conversation that night stuck with me. Partially because this was a group of young adults that from the average evangelical perspective would be considered the cream of the crop.

Most of us attended church from infancy and were reared by godly parents who taught us to follow biblical principles. We had all been active in our churches and served in vital



ministries. And yet even we felt awkward about engaging with the sacred entity that Christ established as His physical presence on earth.

A couple of months ago my pastor asked everyone in the congregation who was between ages 18 and 30 to stand. About one-sixth of the congregation rose. "I have to confess," our 40-something pastor said, "I don't know how to reach your generation. I don't understand you. You will have to be the ones to reach your generation."

I understood the pastor was being very honest, but his words weighed heavily on my spirit. *How?* I thought. *How can I reach my generation when you are essentially telling me I'm on my own?* My generation already struggles to get on board with a spiritual organization that seems incongruent with many of our values—authenticity, relevance, community.

When it comes to what motivates me to brave the pews, it's the comfort of knowing someone will know my name and save me a seat. I desire to belong and be valued.

Unfortunately, the message I've sometimes received from the church is that there is not an integral role for me to play. That my best ministry is to simply show up, and if I'm extra ambitious, evangelize my peers.

Instead of "I don't understand you," I longed for my pastor to say, "I want to know you. I may not understand you now, but I suspect that if I got to know you, I would discover that you have something incredibly important to contribute."

Something I've learned is that the church is not always going to be effective at reaching out to me. And yet, over the last decade, I have had an overwhelmingly fulfilling relationship with my church. Here are four ways to plug in:

1. Remember God's purpose for ALL believers within the church. Those who truly desire to follow Christ recognize that the church is something special. Deep down we know that the very thing that seems inhospitable to us is the solution for the isolation and restlessness we feel. There is undeniable beauty in the idea of a group of humans demonstrating the unity of the Godhead and doing His work on earth.

If the church is Christ's bride, it must be something remarkable. If He loved the church enough to give His life for her, she must be far more valuable than we comprehend. And when we discover what that is all about, we will be caught up in something wonderful.

The first Christian churches were characterized by intense community, selfless giving and overflowing love. People of all ages and stages in life came together to revel in the power of the gospel and worship God. It didn't seem to matter if you were on your own. In fact, they seemed to care for you more if you were a widow or orphan.

2. Become involved in the life of the church. A few years ago when I felt disconnected attending Sunday morning services, I signed up to teach fifth grade Sunday school every week. Something remarkable happened. Twenty kids and their parents began to recognize me at church and come over for hugs. Once the children's ministry staff learned that I had 10 years of experience teaching children, they sought me out for my ideas and expertise.

Getting to know children and families in my church made all the difference. Suddenly I wasn't alone in Sunday morning service. I had little friends waving to me, smiling and telling me I looked pretty.

3. Start Something. A lot of young adults complain that their church offers nothing for people in their life stage. This was the case for me and some of my friends. So at the beginning of this year, we decided to start a 20-something Bible study. Obviously the need was great. The first day we announced the group, 30 people signed up! [Note: I also ended up falling in love with and marrying my co-leader.]

Around the same time, we began a Facebook group and organized a monthly get together. Sometimes we met at someone's house for lunch after church. Other times we went bowling or out to a movie. A little organization provided great community time and an opportunity to make new friends.

4. Get to Know Your Pastor. Pastors struggle to balance ministry to the senior saints of the church, families and

singles. By spending time getting to know your pastor, you give him the opportunity to understand your needs.

Last year, I made an effort to talk to my pastor almost every week after church. We graduated from the same small Bible college, so that gave us some common ground. Each week I would tell him something I liked about the sermon or share a story about my kids' Sunday school class. Soon he knew my name and would approach me and ask how I was doing.

When I became engaged to Kevin earlier this year, my pastor told me he had been praying for a godly spouse for me. This meant a lot, since I go to a church with 1,200 members. Most pastors want to get to know the people in their churches. But they may need you to take the first step.

Loving your church

Like Leah, our generation is looking for a cause worth investing our whole lives in. Twenty-somethings have a lot to offer. Generations X and Y are deeply spiritual, concerned about their neighbors and willing to take big risks. We resonate with Christ's challenge that a man "take up his cross and follow me." That is passion that is well-spent within the church.

When we plug into our congregations, we can reap the full benefit of what the Body of Christ was intended to be. The truth is, the church needs us as much as we need it. We must discover what body parts we are and how we can help the church take motion. Then we can feel more like hands than tonsils. •

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A Prayer from Randy Alcorn

Father, thank you so much for your church, which is the Body of Christ, and for the blessing of being your children. Lord, we are grateful that you so loved the church that you gave your life for us. Thank you that the Church you recognize is manifested in local churches all over the world, with pastors, teachers, elders, deacons, and people who love you and seek to follow you.

Jesus, we know how imperfect the church is because we are the church. But we also know that you are Lord of the church. Thank you for the privilege of fellowshiping with your people. If there are people reading this who have given up on church, I pray you would prompt them to go back, give it another try, and commit themselves to be part of a Bible-teaching fellowship in order to grow and to meet their needs and their family's needs.

Father, thank you so much for your love and grace, and the privilege of worshipping and honoring you. We thank you and praise you in Jesus' name, Amen.

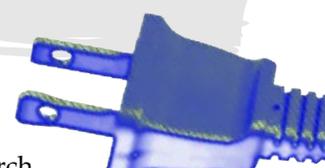
more resources

Watch/listen to Randy share more about the church:

Why should the local church be important to us?
www.epm.org/churchimportant

What would you say to those who have given up on the church?
www.epm.org/churchgivenup

Plug in: If you would like a church recommendation for your area, please call our office at 503.668.5200 or e-mail info@epm.org and we will do our best to help you.



Living for Christ Today to Prevent a Future Sorrow of Regret

Recently, I retweeted a quote from John Piper. He wrote, “So much deep, heart-wrenching sorrow of regret among 60 somethings. I plead with you under 40: Preempt this!” I believe Piper’s point is just another way of saying live wisely today, and you will save yourself from regrets.

To me, it means that people later in life have many regrets that could have been avoided by making different choices earlier in life. A man may one day wish he would have spent more time in the Word, worked harder on his marriage, invested more time with his children, wasted less time, and overcome besetting sins.

The point is, for those under 40 (or 30 or 50), do now what you will regret later on that you did not do. Preempt later sorrow by choosing to do today what you will then realize you should have done. Don’t procrastinate obedience, holiness, purity, drawing close to God, and

servicing others. Live now the way that (if you don’t) you will one day wish you would have. No matter what age you are—even if you are over 60—you can begin to make God-honoring choices today.

John Piper is certainly not suggesting God doesn’t forgive past sin. But a man can be fully forgiven and still regret that he was unfaithful to his wife, that he wasn’t there for his children, and that he wasted so much time pursuing materialism.

The good news is, for the one who lives by faith and by the grace and power of Christ, sin is not inevitable and repentance and righteous choices are fully possible. If we make good choices, we please God and spare our lives of the ugliness and consequences of sin. We avoid the eventual regret at a later age of having wasted our lives that could have been lived for the glory of God, the good of others, and for our own happiness and joy as well.

At the end of the movie *Schindler’s List*, there’s a heart-wrenching scene in which Oskar Schindler—who bought from the Nazis the lives of many Jews—looks at his car and his gold pin and regrets that he didn’t give more of his money and possessions to save more lives. Schindler had used his opportunity far better than most. But in the end, he longed for a chance to go back and make better choices.

Five minutes after we die we’ll know exactly how we should have lived. But then it will be too late to go back and change anything. God has given us his Word so we don’t have to wait until we die to know how we should have lived. There’s no second chance for the unbeliever—but also no second chance for the believer! Just as missionary C. T. Studd said, “Only one life, ’twill soon be past; only what’s done for Christ will last.”

You and I have one life on earth to invest in heaven. Let’s not miss the opportunity. Here’s a prayer for us: May what will be most important to us five minutes after we die become most important to us now. *RA*

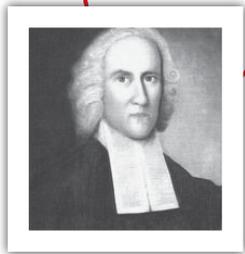
By Randy Alcorn



Setting our hearts on

Heaven

and living for our true home



Jonathan Edwards

It becomes us to spend this life only as a journey toward heaven . . . to which we should subordinate all other concerns of life. Why should we labor for or set our hearts on anything else, but that which is our proper end and true happiness? —Jonathan Edwards, *The Christian Pilgrim*

When the followers of Jesus Christ lose their interest in heaven they will no longer be happy Christians, and when they are no longer happy Christians they cannot be a powerful force in a sad and sinful world. It may be said with certainty that Christians who have lost their enthusiasm about the Savior's promises of heaven-to-come have also stopped being effective in Christian life and witness in this world. —A. W. Tozer, *The Quotable Tozer Volume II*

For three things I thank God every day of my life: thanks that he has vouchsafed me knowledge of his works; deep thanks that he has set in my darkness the lamp of faith; deep, deepest thanks that I have another life to look forward to—a life joyous with light and flowers and heavenly song. —Helen Keller



Helen Keller

Cultivate, then, your hope, dearly beloved. Make it to shine so plainly in you that your minister may hear of your hopefulness and joy, cause observers to take note of it because you speak of heaven and act as though you really expected to go there. Make the world know that you have a hope of heaven... that you are a believer in eternal glory and that you hope to be where Jesus is. —Charles Spurgeon, "The Hope Laid up in Heaven," *Sermon 1438*



C.S. Lewis

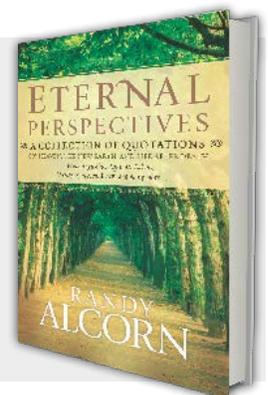
Hope is one of the Theological virtues. This means that a continual looking forward to the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in': aim at earth and you will get neither. —C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

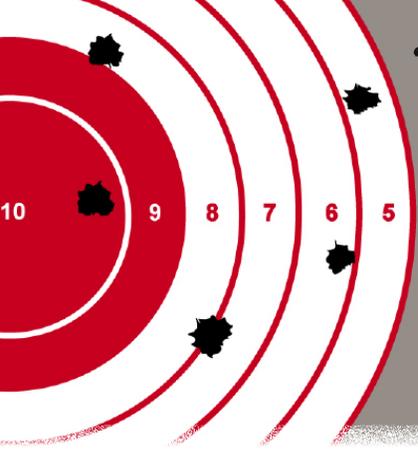
The above quotes are excerpted from the new book *Eternal Perspectives*

There is something innately soul stirring about contemplating what God has promised us—eternal life with him and his people in a land of never-ending wonder. This comprehensive collection of quotations is intended to do just that—stir your soul with a myriad of thoughts and imaginings on the wonderful world that awaits us. *Enter to win 1 of 10 signed copies simply by preordering!*

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Sexual Temptation

Three Critical Facts Every Christian Needs to Know

Critical fact #1

by Randy Alcorn

excerpted from the newly revised and updated *Sexual Temptation* booklet

We are targeted for sexual immorality.

Some years ago there were weighty rumors about an international “hit list,” a calculated plan for paid assassins to murder strategic world leaders. A terrifying thought, isn’t it? Yet I’m convinced that the enemy, Satan, has maintained such a hit list throughout the millennia. And there’s every reason to believe that mature Christians are at the very top of his list.

If you have a ministry of any sort—public or private—as a teacher, preacher, leader, helper, or as any kind of salt and light in the world (Mt. 5:13-16)—then take heed: you are a targeted man, a marked woman. The forces of evil have taken out a contract on you. There is a price on your head sufficient to make any bounty hunter salivate. Satan is out to get you. Why? Because he wants to nullify your ministry. Because you bear on your shoulders the reputation of Christ. The enemy scores a strategic victory in his assault on that sacred reputation if you lose your battle against sexual temptation.

Our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers of darkness, against spiritual forces of evil in the invisible realm (Eph. 6:12). These desperately evil beings have vested interests in our moral collapse. They will do everything in their power to strike out at Christ and his church.

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8).

Critical fact #2

We are vulnerable to sexual immorality.

All Christians are susceptible to sexual sin. The myth that we are morally invulnerable dies slowly, even in the face of overwhelming evidence. But there is not and never has been some mystical antibody that makes us immune to sexual sin.

“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18). What level of pride is required to believe that sexual sin could overtake Lot, Samson, David (“a man after God’s own heart”), Solomon, the Corinthians, and many Christian leaders today, but not me? Paul’s warnings deserve a prominent place on our mirrors, dashboards, desktops, and computers: “But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted” (Gal. 6:1); “If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!” (1 Cor. 10:12).

Critical fact #3

We are fully responsible for our moral choices.

It’s often said that people “fall” into immorality. The expression is as revealing as it is faulty and dangerous. The very term fall betrays a victim mentality. It sounds as if we were walking down a street and someone tripped us or kicked our feet out from under us. It implies that moral collapse comes out of nowhere, that there is little or nothing we could have done to prevent what happened.

We do not fall into immorality. We walk into it. Indeed, sometimes we run headlong into it. We must realize from the beginning that immorality is a choice. It is not something that happens to people. It is something that people make happen.

We may do everything in our power to achieve physical health, and prevent getting cancer, yet we can still get cancer. But this is not true of immorality. If we depend on our Savior and take deliberate and ongoing steps to cultivate purity and avoid immorality, we can avoid it. It does not choose us. We choose it—or we choose to avoid it. •

Sexual purity resources to help you guard your way

Sexual Temptation: Establishing Guardrails and Winning the Battle

In a world that makes sex an idol, we are fooling ourselves if we think immorality's lure will have no effect on us. It is possible with God's help to live sexually pure lives. But what we lack, and desperately need, is a deeper understanding of our vulnerability, and clear, preventive guidelines we can follow to avoid immorality. *Booklet; 57 pages. Includes two appendices: "A Message to and about Pastors and Christian Leaders" and "The Perils of Internet Pornography."*

EPM price \$2.00; 10+ for \$1.50 each; 50+ for \$1.00 each



Purity Principle Pastors' Kit

This free kit, available to pastors, includes:

- Complimentary copy of Randy's book *The Purity Principle*
- Sexual Purity Wallet Card
- DVD of Randy's messages: "Sex Is Not the Problem" and "The Sweet Taste of Freedom"
- Resource brochure

Contact EPM by email (info@epm.org) or by phone (503.668.5200) to request your kit.

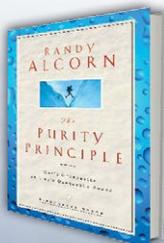
Sexual Purity Wallet Card

Pack of 20 glossy, wallet-sized cards printed on card stock. The card reads, "Sexual purity is God's will for me." The other side says, "The battle for purity begins in my mind." Both sides include Scripture.

EPM price \$1.00 per 20-pack



More purity resources



The Purity Principle

EPM price \$7.14
(retail \$10.99)

24+ for \$6.59 each;
96+ for \$5.50 each



Purity Messages DVD

Two of Randy's
messages on purity.

EPM price \$5.00



The Purity Principle Study Guide

EPM price \$5.56
(retail \$6.95)

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It is God's will that you should be sanctified:
that you should avoid sexual immorality. I Thessalonians 4:3

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