



Quarterly Newsletter
Fall 1998

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

What About Y2K?

by Randy Alcorn

“What do you think about the year 2000 problem?” The question was asked me the first time a year and a half ago.

“What’s your take on Y2K?” The question is asked of me now every day, in emails, letters and phone calls.

Y2K is nerd slang for “Year 2000,” also known as the Year 2000 computer problem and the Millennium Bug. Unless you’ve been in a coma, you’ve heard of it.

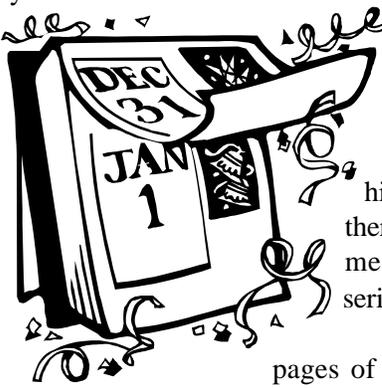
Nobody but God knows what’s going to happen January 1, 2000. (Of course, we don’t know what’s going to happen tomorrow either.) I’m not certain Y2K will be the social meltdown some predict. But neither do I believe it’s not a problem.

One Y2K internet site lists no less than 51 books on the subject. Major articles are appearing regularly in newspapers across the country. In June *USA Today* had seven articles on Y2K in a single issue. In the first week of August major articles appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times* and *The Chicago Tribune*, and dozens of other news sources.

All these articles, however, were buried under the sordid details of our latest presidential scandals. But the third week in October was declared by the government “National Y2K Awareness Week” and the October 19 *USA Today* devoted a front page article to the subject. On October 20, ABC’s Nightline dedicated an entire program to Y2K preparations. By the end of

1998 I expect the media will latch onto this story like a pit bull. The news magazines and talk shows will go Y2Krazy. Before the world becomes obsessed by it, the people of God need to think it through so we can be leaders in our response, not followers.

I hesitated to address this issue, partly because everyone else is. But that’s all the



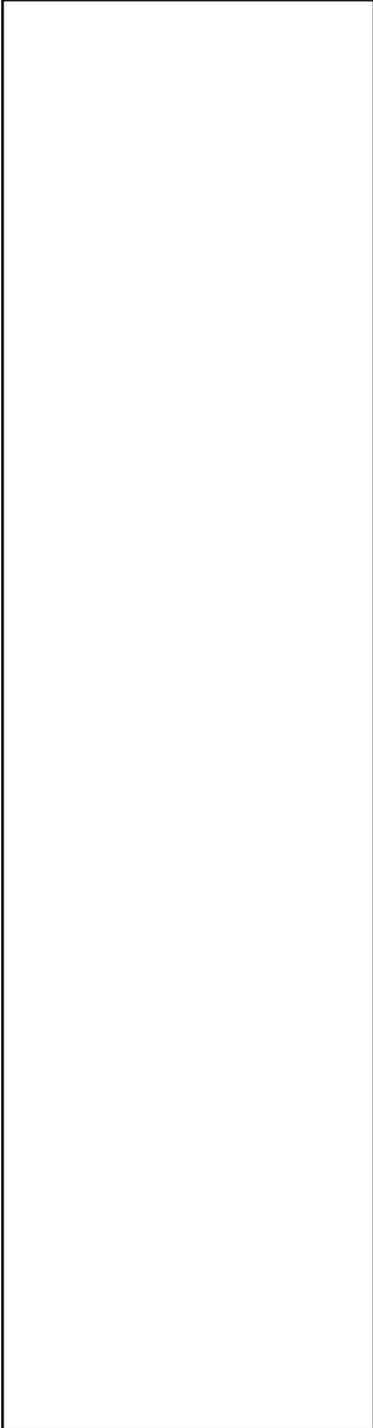
more reason to try to bring an eternal perspective to it. God is seated securely on his throne. He’s not wringing his hands over Y2K. Neither should we. (That doesn’t mean we shouldn’t take it seriously.)

I’ve put together eighteen pages of Scripture passages concerning what God tells us about facing the future. It’s available at no charge from EPM. Just ask for it, or download it from our website at www.epm.org, where you can also find this and many other articles.

What Y2K May Mean

In June 15 senate hearings Senator Robert Bennett said that after a confidential survey of the ten leading energy companies, he believes it is a virtual certainty that there will be brownouts and regional blackouts as the year 2000 begins. He says, “The size and scope of the Y2K crisis is still unknown. What is known is that it has the potential to be a major national disaster. We can hope for the best, but we must not rule out preparation for the worst.”

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The Wall Street Journal quotes Edward Yardini, chief economist of Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, as saying, "We must prepare for the possibility of business failures and the collapse of essential U.S. government services, including tax collection, welfare payments, national defense and air-traffic control." In 1996 Dr. Yardini estimated Y2K presented a 10% chance of a deep global recession. At the end of 1997 he put the estimate at 40%. His mid-1998 estimate was 70%.

Capers Jones estimates 5-7% of medium-size companies will fail as a direct result of Y2K problems. Y2K expert Peter DeJaegger says the figures could be 20% for businesses outside the U.S.

Financial analyst John Westergaard (www.Y2Ktimebomb.com) states, "A massive computer crash comparable to the stock market crash of 1929 will occur . . . causing a decline in the gross national product, huge government deficits and possibly political and social instability. The abilities of federal, state and local governments to provide normal services will be seriously compromised and the ability of the U.S. military to defend the nation will be materially reduced."

Investment counselor Tony Keyes is quoted in *Computer World* as saying, "The crash of 1929 will pale in comparison to the 'crash of the century.' Lay-offs will be rampant, unemployment will rise dramatically, and the economy will drown in dismal depression."

Christian economist Gary North (www.garynorth.com) goes further—he claims that the banks will fail, the stock market will collapse and the power grid will not only go down but will be unable to get back on line. He warns people to move at least 100 miles away from major cities, which will erupt into chaos with no electricity, sewage, and water, and eventually

no food. Popular author Grant Jeffrey, in his book *The Millennium Meltdown*, confidently affirms Y2K will cause a "global crisis, the scope of which we haven't experienced since World War II."

Radio teacher Chuck Missler (www.khouse.org) is traveling the country doing seminars instructing people how to prepare for the coming disaster. Level-headed Larry Burkett, whom I know and respect, is still researching the issue but even now advises storing food reserves and water,



and considering alternative heat and light sources (www.cfcministry.org).

World magazine takes Y2K seriously enough that every issue features new information on the problem. The Christian Broadcasting Network gives regular updates (www.cbn.org). In late October Dr. James Dobson devoted three days to the subject on *Focus on the Family*. Hundreds of writers, speakers, and radio talk show hosts, both secular and Christian, are regularly addressing Y2K. Many pastors are now talking about it at church. My own non-alarmist church devoted a message to Y2K in August, then sent a church family letter addressing it. Just last week the leaders sent out a booklet full of practical suggestions on "Preparing for Emergencies."

Some claim the Y2K problem has been manufactured by right-wing fundamentalist Christians. That's nonsense. While some Christians may be guilty of overstating the problem and enmeshing it

with their own prophetic bias, this is a real and objective problem. It's being taken very seriously by millions of secular businessmen, economists and programmers of every temperament. The great majority of sources I cite in this article are secular, not Christian. Every day dozens of new articles are written on the subject, the vast majority of them secular (www.year2000.com/Y2Karticles.html is updated daily).

Fortune magazine has dubbed it "the Year 2000 Menace." An August 19 Y2K article in *The Oregonian*—a newspaper not known as a hotbed of religious fundamentalism—asked the question "Should I be worried?" then responded, "Yes." In an article entitled "Terror 2000" *The Nashville Scene* compared America to the Titanic and the Y2K problem to the iceberg, saying it's too late to turn the huge ship and avoid the iceberg.

The recently passed federal budget includes \$3.4 billion for emergency Y2K spending. Many lawmakers are saying this isn't nearly enough. I saw a matter-of-fact notice from a large emergency food storage company apologizing that they are way behind in delivery because of huge orders coming from congressmen and the White House, presumably as a result of the Capitol Hill Y2K hearings.

How'd This Happen?

In the Computer Wild West of the 60's there were no thought-through standards and computer disk space was as precious as waterholes in the desert. Programming gunslingers referred to years using two digit rather than four digit date fields. 65 meant 1965. This shorthand was technically inaccurate, and programmers knew at the time it was good



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only for this century and couldn't hold up in the next. It couldn't work once the last two digits became 00, since that's a lower number than 99, not a higher one, and it would throw everything off.

This seemed like no big deal, since programmers were sure their programs would no longer be used in another ten years, much less by the end of the 90's. (Maybe we should say the 1990's.) But the same old programs stayed in use and the two digit system continued. Out of force of habit, even many new software programs and embedded computer chips developed into the 90's have still used this system, which means they are unable to process correctly any date after December 31, 1999. When the millennium changes, 99 will cycle *back* to 00. In the passing of a second, all date-sensitive computations—and computers are full of them—will be invalid.

What does this mean? Here's a small example: Marks & Spencer department store in London recently destroyed tons of food because the expiration date was 2002 but the computer read the 02 as 1902. So, when it had four more years of shelf life, the computer calculated it was 96 years old and had it destroyed.

Tests have been done where computer dates are adjusted forward to December 31, 1999 and allowed to turn over. In some cases the computers have stopped working completely. In other cases they have begun to spew out incorrect data. When they are networked with other computers the bad data begins to spread. Rather than compliant computers correcting noncompliant ones, the noncompliant computers infect the compliant. (Good apples don't improve bad ones, bad apples spoil good ones.)

So why not just fix those computers? After ignoring the problems for many years, serious efforts are now going on to do that very thing. (Though as recently as July 1998 a report from Merrill Lynch indicated a shocking two out of three American businesses had *not yet started* to work on the problem.)

Unfortunately, this isn't as easy as someone coming up with a program called Y2Kfixit.exe. There are *hundreds of millions* of lines of computer code, written in different programs and spread out on countless mainframes, and embedded in

literally *billions* of microchips. The experts say that because we were so late getting started, there just isn't time for many microchips to be replaced and for all the computers to get fixed.

The March 2, 1998 *Business Week* said, "Finding, fixing, and testing all Y2K affected software would require over 700,000 person-years." In other words, the size of the problem *is* the problem.

What Happens if Computers Go Down?

Computers control nearly everything, including power plants, water and sewage systems. What happens if a power plant's computers don't work? No electricity, no heat, no water, no sewage.

What if it takes more than a few days to fix the problems? What if it takes weeks or a month or more? That's where the serious stuff comes in. How long are most people prepared to go without heat, refrigeration, water or sewage in the dead of winter? What will happen in cities if hours turn into days or weeks or more before the problems are fixed?



Supermarkets operate by "just in time delivery," and carry only 72 hours worth of food on their shelves. In times of emergency or high demand, most of their supplies would be gone in a matter of hours. Of course, without electricity they wouldn't be open at all, and fuel and food delivery trucks wouldn't be moving to deliver replacement goods. If there's no electricity, no gas gets pumped. With no electricity, most businesses would be crippled and products and services we depend on would be inaccessible. Banks wouldn't be open, and if opened would quickly run out of money, since they keep on hand less than

3% of what their depositors put in. (Because of the probability of banking problems, nearly everyone is recommending keeping cash on hand.)

The Nuclear Regulatory Commissions has stated it is requiring all American nuclear systems to prove their full Y2K compliance before 2000 or face mandatory shutdowns. This is a wise move—but how will it affect the 20% of the country dependent on nuclear power plants for their electricity?

And what about the 40% of the country dependent on coal-run power plants, which require an immense, steady supply of coal, which arrives daily via huge strings of rail cars? Railroad car movements in this country are controlled by aging computers and hidden embedded systems.

Crops grown by U.S. farmers each year are dependent upon importing hybrid seeds, which produce good fruit, but that fruit contains mostly sterile seeds. You can plant those seeds but they won't grow. Each year farmers have to buy and import brand new hybrid seeds to grow their crops. What would happen if an economic crisis here or say, in Central and South America (the primary sources of seeds for U.S. farming) prevented the processing, shipping, receiving, distribution, or planting of these seeds, or the harvesting of the crops? Would there be eventual famine, as some are predicting?

The single most significant Y2K issue (though by no means the only one) is what happens to the power grid. As the Yourdons say in their carefully researched book *TimeBomb 2000* (www.yourdon.com), "Reliable electrical supply is the most basic linchpin of a civilized modern society. Nothing works without it." The bad news is that there are over 7800 power companies in the U.S., and as of August 1998, not one of them had been certified to be Y2K compliant. Will some of them make it? Sure. The question is, how many of them won't, and what effect will those that don't have on those that do?

If the power goes down, some think "so what—people got by without electric power for many centuries; we can too." But unlike our ancestors, we've become totally dependent on electricity. Most of us aren't Amish. We simply don't have the skills and the knowledge

to function effectively in a society without dependable power sources and readily available food and cash.

Money magazine reported that in April the computer network that schedules patient appointments at three hospitals and 75 clinics in Pennsylvania shut down, all because one person punched in an appointment for January 2000. Rx2000 did a survey of health care representatives knowledgeable about the Y2K problem. They asked "Do you agree or disagree that the Year 2000 issue has a significant potential to lead to unnecessary deaths in health care?" 94% agreed.

Unfortunately, the solution isn't as simple as just fixing hardware and software. As a Merrill Lynch paper points out, "the Millennium Bug exists in almost every place digital technology is used—including so-called embedded technology that is found in manufacturing systems, medical equipment, elevators, telephone switches, satellites and even automobiles." Many Y2K experts are now saying the embedded computer chips pose the greatest threat to systems failures.

Y2K and End Times?

A number of Christian prophecy books see Y2K as the likely trigger of martial law, a cashless society, the rise of the AntiChrist, the mark of the beast, and events leading to the return of Christ.

I certainly believe in the return of Christ. But I do not put much faith in prophecy buffs, who have been getting it wrong for so many years. What international conflict in the past century, especially involving the middle east, has not inspired books and sermons affirming "this is it"? (Lenin, Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin, JFK, and Henry Kissinger are just a few of the "AntiChrists" who have come and gone.) Eventually some of the prophecy "experts" will be right about some things. Will it be this time, and will Y2K trigger the *real* end times events? It's possible, of course. But I've heard too many "the sky is falling" and "this is the beginning of the tribulation for sure" predictions for too many years to base my concerns about Y2K on those.

Is it possible God will use the year 2000 problem as part of his judgment on this nation that glorifies immorality and kills unborn children and holds God and his truth

in contempt? Yes. God can do anything he wants. (That's why we call him God.) And, yes, there are plenty of passages of Scripture that talk about God rewarding righteousness and bringing judgment on nations for their sins (Deuteronomy 8:19-20; 28:1-48; 30:15-20).

All the talk about the Internet uniting the planet, and computers "speaking the same language" reminds me of Genesis 11 and man's pride in the tower of Babel. God brought down that monument to man-centeredness and confused the languages. It might be a fitting irony if the computer language became confused, computers and their operators can no longer talk to each other, and the

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height of human achievement in which we have taken such great pride leads to our economic and social downfall. Still, all this is completely speculative and may well not happen.

We simply cannot know what God intends to do with this problem. What we do know is it's a real problem, and a potentially serious one.

Economic Implications

According to the prestigious British news magazine, *The Economist*, "Fixing computers to read the year 2000 will become the single most expensive problem of all time" ("The World in 1998," December 1997).

If you think Y2K is a hyped-up exaggerated problem (many do), take a look at what businesses are spending to solve it. BankAmerica: \$600 million. Federal Express: \$500 million. General Motors: \$500 million. CitiCorp: \$400 million. Chase/Mannhattan Bank: \$250 million. Merrill Lynch: \$200 million. That's just six companies I've seen figures on. Those six alone add up to 2.4 billion dollars, and that's just the tip of

the iceberg. I read an Atlanta newspaper that said ten large Atlanta companies have reported they would spend \$700 million dollars on Y2K. That's just ten companies in a single city!

If it wasn't a problem, if it wasn't a *huge* problem, do you really think these successful companies would be spending this kind of money that will take a huge toll against their profits over the next few years?

Suppose you're the ultimate optimist who thinks *nothing* will go wrong in the year 2000. Even if everything got fixed in time, how well can the stock market perform, how well can the economy thrive, when companies are spending this kind of money to fix one single problem?

Now consider the huge costs to business and economy if the experts are right and there are in fact breakdowns in access to electrical power, natural gas, sewage treatment, and telecommunications. What happens to the economy if there is restricted transportation of essential goods and limited provision of essential services? What will happen to businesses whose customers don't have access to their bank accounts and can't pay their bills? What kind of business failure and unemployment would this lead to?

What about those businesses who themselves are Y2K compliant, but whose vendors aren't? *Infoworld's* July 18, 1998 issue featured Sears, which got an early start on the Y2K problem, in 1994. Of its 5000 suppliers, Sears says only "a small percentage" are compliant. If most of those businesses don't come through, Sears will be crippled, even if it's 100% compliant.

The domino effect in our highly specialized economy can hardly be overstated. For instance, what if General Motors has its problem totally taken care of, but the companies that manufacture and deliver its brakes do not? If they fail, General Motors fails—cars cannot be produced without brakes. If every manufacturer but two—say the gas tank and carburetor suppliers—comes through, that would be a high level of success. But who's going to buy a car without a carburetor or gas tank?

There is only one economic highway, and we're all on it. If someone tells you 90% of the cars on the freeway are

running fine, does that sound good? In fact, it would be a disaster. How many flat tires and engine failures does it take for traffic to get backed up ten miles?

Consider the issue of legal liability for Y2K problems. Over 200 law firms are developing Y2K expertise to handle what could be trillions of dollars worth of Y2K lawsuits on the horizon. Many major newspapers have carried articles about the widespread anticipation that the courts will be flooded by Y2K liability lawsuits. Lloyds of London, the world's largest insurance syndicate, has been advised by its computer insurance specialists that they could face a trillion dollars in litigation expenses alone. Lloyds is now refusing to cover any Y2K related problems.

Consider the huge loss of productivity in businesses since Y2K costs and labor are nonproductive, i.e. they do *nothing* to make actual improvements, but merely reduce impending damage. Y2K compliance efforts are absorbing huge amounts of resources a company would otherwise be spending on growth and development.

So far we've looked only at economic realities, but we haven't yet addressed the issue of public *perception*, which itself has a tremendous influence on the stock market. As they gain more information, what will people think about Y2K and how will it affect their confidence in the market? Unless a silver bullet comes along to fix Y2K—and nearly everyone says it won't—can anyone seriously believe all this could have anything other than a negative effect on consumer and investor confidence?

I'm not saying our economy will collapse and all businesses will nose-dive. I hope the experts are dead wrong when they talk about the effects of Y2K. But those who assume the stock market is the best place to have their money in 1999 and 2000 might want to reread the previous dozen paragraphs.

I'm no expert, but it seems to me it requires a great deal of faith for individuals and churches and Christian organizations to keep large amounts of money in the stock market right now

in light of both the economic realities *and* the public perceptions related to Y2K. Wisdom suggests we take a hard look at where we have our money, especially in the next few years.



Perspectives on Y2K

What exactly is going to happen January 1, 2000? We simply don't know. That takes us right back to the Word of God, where we should have been in the first place:

Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. (James 4:13-16)

This puts us in our place. We're not God, we don't hold the universe in the palm of our hands and *we just don't know what lies ahead of us*. I don't know if I'll be killed in a car wreck tomorrow or if a loved one will be diagnosed with terminal cancer. I'm not in charge—neither are you.

God is in charge, and he is not being taken by surprise. He knew about Y2K before he created the world. He can and will use it as part of his plan, which may or may not include judging society and disciplining his church. Rather than speculate on what will happen, we should focus on what the Bible has told us all along—fear God, trust God, be wise, be prepared, be faithful, be generous, care for your family, look after the body of Christ, reach out to those who don't know Him. Y2K changes none of these principles. It may simply give us an opportunity to act on them.

Scripture tells us, "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7). We should respond to Y2K not with a spirit of fear, but of power (knowing God has given us in Christ all the resources we need to face any difficulty), love (putting the glory of God and the good of others before ourselves), and a

sound mind (a disciplined, self-controlled and Spirit-controlled intellect that evaluates the available information and acts in light of biblical priorities and wisdom).

The Bible says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given him" (James 1:5). I lack wisdom, don't you? Let's join together in prayer that God will give us wisdom.

Is Preparation Spiritual?

On becoming informed of this problem, many people go one of two directions—panic or denial. Neither response is healthy. Having read many credible sources and spoken to people in various computer and business positions, I think there is in fact a Y2K typhoon, bending and twisting and threatening and headed our way. But it is still offshore. By the time it hits shore in January 1, 2000 it may be a force five hurricane, or it may be nothing more than a windstorm that knocks down a barn here and there. Or it could be anything in between.

Given the evidence and the testimony of so many experts, doesn't it seem wise to make some preparations, just as we would if an offshore typhoon were headed our way? If the typhoon dissipates we'll be delighted (I sure will), but if it hits us full force we—and any friends and neighbors we might be able to help—will be glad we prepared.

The Oregonian advises "Keep an emergency supply of cash and liquid assets, in case bank cash machines don't work or your bank balance is in error . . . Prepare as if a big storm is on the way, building an adequate supply of food, water, blankets, a battery-operated radio, a first-aid kit, prescription medicines and other necessities." The Cassandra Project has nineteen pages of specific guidelines for Y2K preparation (millennia-bcs.com/prep.htm).

Are such measures appropriate for believers who trust the Lord? When God graciously indicated famine was ahead, he directed Joseph to lead Egypt in storing up grain during years of plenty, to draw from during years of want (Genesis 41:26-41). Jesus spoke of the ten virgins with their lamps, the foolish ones who brought no store of oil, and the wise ones who thought

ahead, prepared and stored up oil (Matthew 25:1-13). Proverbs 6:6-11 commends ants because while food is available they store it up for the winter when it won't be available. We're commanded to consider the ants' ways and learn from them.

"A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it" (Proverbs 22:3). Turning a blind eye to a problem can ultimately result in unnecessary suffering. If there are truly substantial reasons to believe Y2K may cause serious problems (research it and decide for yourself—don't take anyone's word for it), it seems wise for believers to take reasonable steps to avoid or minimize it, and position themselves to be of help to others.

If you or your child or elderly parent had asthma or diabetes and the experts said a big tornado was coming and stores might be closed or unable to replenish supplies for weeks or months, would you be distrusting God if you bought extra asthma spray or insulin? No, you'd be using your God-given brain and caring for your loved ones. (What's the downside? You won't throw away medicines or canned food, you'll use them, right?)

One thought to consider—if you decide to store up extra, do it sooner while there's still time for it to be manufactured and replenished, rather than later when it will mean someone else won't have it.

Spiritual Preparation

The most important thing in the year 2000 is the most important thing in 1998 and 1999 and 2005—where do we stand with God? Are we serving him and others rather than just looking out for ourselves? Do we affirm God's providence and his sovereign hand over nations?

If you choose to make preparations or contingency plans for the year 2000, fine—just be sure these are in addition to, not in place of, your focus on God.

The year 2000 will come and go, but our need for Christ will not. If you aren't walking with God, Y2K is not your main problem. If people realize their dependence on God as a result of the Y2K crisis, I think it may prove to be a blessing in disguise. No matter how bad things get, we will be

better off if we turn to God and depend on him to help us.

Meditate on Isaiah 40 and expand your view of God. Turn off the TV and read great books like these: *The Knowledge of the Holy*, by A.W. Tozer;

Knowing God, by J. I. Packer; *Desiring God*, by John Piper, and *The Joy of Fearing God*, by Jerry Bridges. No matter how big Y2K may prove to be, our God is a whole lot bigger!

Y2K could turn out to be a powerful ministry opportunity for Christians. In many natural disasters—including hurricanes, floods and earthquakes—churches have risen up to provide help and perspective. Why can't churches serve the community and lead the way with Y2K contingency plans? Why not have taskforces to educate and recommend steps for the church, and become a lifeboat for needy people in the church and community? (For help see the Joseph Project, www.josephproject2000.org or call them at 678-445-5512.)

Church and relief-oriented organizations are a central part of America's helping infrastructure. If they aren't prepared for Y2K they won't be in a position to help others prepare or respond to it. Churches in areas of frequent natural disasters have a tremendous advantage—they may already have storehouses of clothes and food. Other churches should ask how they could help others if there were losses of electricity and need for food, water, heat and shelter. Churches should seek to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. It's much easier to minister in an emergency when we are prepared for it spiritually, mentally, and physically.

Christians should be the first to look out for the community's elderly, poor, ill and disabled. We should be the first to

show our children Christian generosity and sacrifice for the good of others. Churches and communities will sink or swim together. Hopefully nonbelievers will remember Christians as those who showed they lived by higher principles than the world. This will give credibility to the gospel we speak.

In her soon-coming book on Y2K, Shaunti Feldhahn points out that when London was overtaken by the plague in the 1660's, wealthy aristocrats fled the city. The educated and the powerful, including most doctors, escaped, leaving the poor and uneducated to face the plague. But many Christians, in particular the Puritans, stayed. Most were educated and had sufficient means to flee, but did not. They stayed, shared their resources, and risked their lives. In fact, many of them died while caring for the sick and needy. They knew this world was not their home.

The Puritans had been scorned by much of their society, but during the plague many of the lower classes came to respect them and adopt their faith when they saw the love of Christ flow through them. It was terribly hard for these Christians, but they stood firm. How many of us would be willing to follow their example today?

This isn't a condemnation of those choosing to relocate, as long as wherever they live they reach out with Christ's love. Many doing this believe they'll be in a better position to help others than by staying places they think will become chaotic if Y2K proves serious. We should all ask God for his direction, which might be different, and might benefit from the wise counsel of spiritual leaders. While relocating is not my family's choice, it seems wise to have contingency plans. In light of the many informed people, secular and Christian, who believe Y2K may have serious effects for months or more, it's only wise to consider what you might do or where you might go if circumstances become worse than anticipated.

Any Good from Y2K?

If Y2K brings serious problems, it may remind us of things we should have been aware of all along—God

is in control and we're not; American prosperity is not an everlasting right, but a temporary privilege; we shouldn't trust in stock markets, banks, retirement funds, businesses, houses and lands, but in God.

What those obsessed by Y2K need to realize is the solution is not to transfer our trust from banks and retirement programs to gold, silver, guns and boxes of food and barrels of water and nonhybrid seeds or generators. (None of these is wrong, and some might be wise, but under no circumstances should they become the objects of our trust any more than banks or Wall Street.) The solution, regardless of which earthly possessions we choose to keep or surrender, is to put our trust in God.

Perhaps the spiritual revival that has eluded us in days of prosperity will come to us in days of adversity. On the darkest nights the stars shine brightest. In times of personal darkness—or in times of regional or national darkness—the light of Christ can shine more brightly through us, his followers. *If*, that is, we are ready to represent him faithfully.

As we ponder the worst case scenarios of Y2K it should remind us that the Carpenter from Nazareth has gone to build a home for us (John 14:1-2). It should increase our sense of dependence on God and make us stronger as we realize our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Suffering can build our characters (Romans 5:3), deepen our prayer lives and draw families and the Body of Christ closer together. It can increase interdependence in the Christian community, making us more like the church described in Acts 2:42-46 and 4:32-35.

Let's get some perspective—our worst case scenarios with Y2K are better than the best case scenarios of many of our brothers and sisters throughout the world. While we're talking about whether to store food, they have no food to store. While we're concerned about storing up extra prescription medicines, they have no medical care at all.

While we fear our standard of living might go down, Christians in the Sudan are being murdered and taken into slavery. (For a mere \$50 each, Christian Solidarity International can buy freedom for these enslaved brothers and sisters. EPM just sent them \$5000 to free 100

slaves. Call CSI at 949-640-7885.) Are we more concerned about having hot water in a blackout than getting clean water to diseased African children who will die without it? (Want to help those children? Call World Relief at 1-800-535-5433.) Are we worried about fuel to get our beautiful cars down the street while there are over 100 million children living on the street? (To help them, call Action International at 425-775-4800.)

"He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord and he will reward him for what he has done" (Proverbs 19:17). "If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered" (Proverbs 21:13). God said of King Josiah, "He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it

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to prepare for
tomorrow is to walk
with God today.

means to know me?" (Jeremiah 22:16).

It's my prayer that concerns about Y2K might motivate us to take a hard look at ourselves and our affluence and indifference to physical and spiritual needs around the world. I pray it will prompt us to put more of our assets in the one place that's truly safe. I don't mean the stock market, under a mattress or in gold. I mean investing it in God's kingdom by giving it away to help those who need the gospel and food and clothing and physical care. Once you lay your treasures up in heaven, moths and dust and rusts and thieves and fire—and Y2K—can't get it.

According to Jesus, in Matthew 6:19-25, we can't take it with us, but we *can* send it on ahead. If Christians lose vast amounts of money in the stock market, bank accounts, business and real estate, we'll wish we would've given it to further the gospel and feed the poor. We can't keep it anyway. Why not invest it now in what will count for eternity?

This is not a veiled attempt to encourage you to give to EPM—we're doing fine. Give to your local church and one of the organizations I just gave phone numbers for. Want other eternal investment

ideas? Call us, and we'll share them. (Christian organizations and churches should be prepared with answers for donors who ask, "Will you be using these funds for God's kingdom soon, or do you plan on holding them in investments or in the bank?")

Conclusion

You and I may not face serious problems in 2000—but we may face terminal cancer in 1999 or loss of a loved one in 2001. Our presumption that life is supposed to be easy and predictable is patently false (1 Peter 4:12). If the Y2K issue reminds us of nothing besides this, it will have served a great purpose.

If most of the experts are wrong and Y2K turns out to be no big deal, we can all smile about it and evaluate what we've learned about God and ourselves, and be better prepared for difficult times that will come in different forms.

I certainly hope the Y2K typhoon will dissipate before it hits shore January 1, 2000. If it does we should all get down on our knees and thank God for his mercy. In fact, we should do that every day anyway—why not start now?

If Y2K hits hard, we will be grateful to have prepared spiritually and to have taken reasonable steps of material provision for our families, neighbors and churches. And if we suffer financial losses, we will remind ourselves that money should never be the object of our faith, and be thankful for every dollar we have invested in the eternal causes of world missions and caring for the needy in the name of Christ. We'll also be grateful for every day our sovereign and gracious God gives us to serve him and others with what we have left.

We can't depend on anybody's predictions about Y2K, but we *can* depend on this: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8); "Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1); "Nothing shall separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:28-39).

If we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, we need not worry about tomorrow (Matthew 6:24-34). The best way to prepare for tomorrow is to walk with God today.

Where Are Missions Headed?

by Doug Nichols, *director of Action International*

If missions are not careful, they may become like the old empty cathedrals in Europe. Sidetracked, our main activities could become: caring for missionaries, building retirement homes, increasing allotments, upgrading insurance, and obtaining nicer offices instead of taking the Gospel to the masses.

If we get sidetracked with the baby boomer, baby buster, seeker or warfare seminar mentality instead of taking the message to the lost, missions in the twenty-first century will be nothing more than a shell (possibly with lots of activity but with no life).

As we approach the twenty-first century, our purpose should be to "Proclaim [Christ], admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ" (Colossians 1:28).

"If you do not wish to be full of regrets when you are obliged to lie still, work while you can."
 —Charles Spurgeon

All evangelical missions and churches need to plan together to evangelize and disciple the millions in India, in lost Europe, Muslim Africa, and the Middle East, the world's 150 million street children, the 800 thousand teenage prostitutes of Thailand, as well as the major unreached cities of the world such as the 550 unchurched slum areas of Manila and the over nine million poor of Calcutta. This will take more than "supporting a national worker or needy child" (each of us should do both!).

Churches and missions need to recapture the word "sacrifice" for the sake of the lost. Let's not wait for the twenty-first century. Let's reach our generation now with the Gospel.

Charles Spurgeon said from his bed of sickness, "If you do not wish to be full of regrets when you are obliged to lie still, work while you can. If you desire to make a sickbed as soft as it can be, do not stuff it with mournful reflections that you wasted time when you were in health and strength!"

Why don't some of us older pastors and missionaries forget about retirement, break out of the "we deserve a break" mold, and give all we have before death for the Gospel's sake and God's glory? We shouldn't just talk about our heroes such as Paul, C.T. Studd, Hudson Taylor, George Whitefield, David Livingstone, L.E. Maxwell, William Booth, and Amy Carmichael; let's emulate them! Missionaries, pastors, and Christian workers today, and in the twenty-first century, should recommit ourselves to die in the battle if need be with our backs bent under the Gospel plow and our bodies worn out in ministry for the masses who need the Gospel of salvation in Christ. "And for this purpose [we] labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within [us]" (Colossians 1:29).

C.T.

USAID estimates there will be nearly three million orphans (2,886,000) in Malawi and Zambia by the end of 1999.

Yes, it is hard to relate to these statistics! It is easier to be concerned (and we should be) about children being shot in public schools or a suffering child in our neighborhood. As Christians, however, let us not "cross to the other side of the road" and let millions of children die without the gospel and Christian care!

Long- and short-term missionaries are urgently needed to serve with Action International Ministries in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zambia as children's healthcare and orphanage workers, evangelists, church planters, leadership developers, Bible teachers, nurses, doctors, builders, managers, administrators, teachers, youth workers, vocational teachers, and agriculturalists.

Missionaries are responsible (with their church) to trust the Lord for their personal support and funds to do the work!

Please call our Candidate Secretary, Pearl Kallio, or USA Director, Rex Lee Carlaw, at 425-775-4800 or 800-755-6918 if you would like more information, would like to support a worker, or to apply for service.



Note from Randy: Action International is a ministry we wholeheartedly support. If you want to invest in eternity, I can't think of a better place to send your money.

Action International Ministries

P.O. Box 398
 Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043-0398;
 Tel.: 425-775-4800 Fax: 425-775-0634
 action-usa@xc.org.

Prayer for the Persecuted Church

by Karina Alcorn

From Sudan to China, from Peru to India, over 200 million Christians face the daily reality of religious persecution. Some are threatened, abducted, imprisoned or even executed for holding fast to their faith in Jesus Christ.

Though we don't know most of them by name, they are part of the worldwide Body of Christ, the universal church. As their brothers and sisters, we have the privilege and the responsibility of lifting them up in prayer before our Lord and Savior.

November 15, 1998 is scheduled as the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. The theme is "Shatter the Silence."

This is a sample letter (addressed to the Embassy of Saudi Arabia) included as an encouragement to write to appropriate officials on behalf of our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ.

Dear Ambassador:

I have recently learned of some disturbing occurrences in your country. These reports are very distressing to me, and I felt compelled to write you and voice my strong objection.

It seems that several Christians have been arrested and are being detained and questioned pertaining to their religious preferences and to their work in your country. Not only is this highly offensive to me as an American citizen, but it troubles me as a human being.

I understand that you have a different legal system than the United States, and I know there are many cultural differences at play. However, as a member of the United Nations, Saudi Arabia subscribes to Article 18 of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, which promotes freedom of religion. Imprisoning members of a religious minority on the basis of their religion clearly violates that commitment.

When someone from Saudi Arabia comes to the United States, he will find the freedom to practice his religion as he sees fit. He may build a mosque, promote his religion and freely distribute religious

Last year's event saw over 60,000 U.S. churches join 110 other countries

in prayer for our brothers and sisters throughout the world who are suffering for their faith in Christ. This year, Prayer for the Persecuted Church is aiming for

100,000 North American churches to participate.

It's not too late to get involved (even after November 15). You can order a Resource Kit for yourself or your church and choose a different date to set aside for this important prayer ministry. Each kit contains the following: a brief video, a Prayer Resource Magazine, a Global Persecution Prayer Map highlighting hot spots of persecution, a brochure and a set of Leadership Sheets which aid local church leaders in conducting a service focusing on the plight of our suffering brothers and sisters. *To order, call 1-888-538-7772 or visit the Prayer for the Persecuted Church website at www.persecutedchurch.org.*

literature. Though not everyone will agree with him, the government grants him this legal right.

I am not asking that you give special favoritism to Christians or to Americans. I am asking as a fellow human being that you take responsibility for the actions of the nation you represent. Remember that the world is watching, and that Saudi Arabia has agreed to the United Nations policy of religious freedom.

In closing, I strongly urge you to encourage your government to release the Christians who are currently being held. And not only that, I implore the nation of Saudi Arabia to take seriously its responsibility to uphold the basic right of religious freedom.

Respectfully, Karina Alcorn

Grace & Truth: All We Have to Offer to a Dying World

Randy Alcorn was the speaker for the annual Christian Life Conference at Multnomah Bible College & Biblical Seminary September 7-11, 1998.

The subjects he covered were:

"Truth & Grace: A Two-Point Check List of Christlikeness"

"Truth: Should We Downplay it in the Name of Grace?"

"Truth: Guarding Grace from Moral Compromise"

"Grace: Guarding Truth from Legalism"

"Grace: What Makes it So Amazing?"

The complete five tape series is now available from EPM for \$12.00, no charge for U.S. postage.

The Rich Family in Church

by S. Martin

I'll never forget Easter 1946. I was 14, my little sister Ocy was 12 and my older sister Darlene was 16. We lived at home with our mother, and the four of us knew what it was to do without many things. My dad had died five years before, leaving Mom with seven school kids to raise and no money.

By 1946 my older sisters were married and my brothers had left home. A month before Easter the pastor of our church announced that a special Easter offering would be taken to help a poor family. He asked everyone to save and give sacrificially.

When we got home we talked about what we could do. We decided to buy 50 pounds of potatoes and live on them for a month. This would allow us to save \$20 of our grocery money for the offering. When we thought that if we kept our electric lights turned out as much as possible and didn't listen to the radio, we'd save money on that month's electric bill. Darlene got as many house and yard cleaning jobs as possible, and both of us babysat for everyone we could. For 15 cents we could buy enough cotton loops to make three pot holders to sell for \$1. We made \$20 on pot holders.

That month was one of the best of our lives. Every day we counted the money to see how much we had saved. At night we'd sit in the dark and talk about how the poor family was going to enjoy having the money the church would give them. We had about 80 people in church, so we figured that whatever amount of money we had to give, the offering would surely be 20 times that much. After all, every Sunday the pastor had reminded everyone to save for the sacrificial offering.

The day before Easter, Ocy and I walked to the grocery store and got the manager to give us three crisp \$20 bills and one \$10 bill for all our change. We ran all the way home to show Mom and Darlene. We had never had so much money before. That night we were so

excited we could hardly sleep.

We didn't care that we wouldn't have new clothes for Easter; we had \$70 for the sacrificial offering. We could hardly wait to get to church! On Sunday morning, rain was pouring. We didn't own an umbrella, and the church was over a mile from our home, but it didn't seem to matter how wet we got. Darlene had cardboard in her shoes to fill the holes. The cardboard came apart, and her feet got wet. But we sat in church proudly. I heard some teenagers talking about the Smith girls having on their old dresses. I looked at them in their new clothes, and I felt rich.

When the sacrificial offering was taken, we were sitting on the second row from the front. Mom put in the \$10 bill, and each of us kids put in a \$20 bill. As we walked home after church, we sang all the way. At lunch Mom had a surprise for us. She had bought a dozen eggs, and we had boiled Easter eggs with our fried potatoes! Late that afternoon the minister drove up in his car. Mom went to the door, talked with him for a moment, and then came back with an envelope in her hand. We asked what it was, but she didn't say a word. She opened the envelope and out fell a bunch of money. There were three crisp \$20 bills, one \$10 and seventeen \$1 bills. Mom put the money back in the envelope. We didn't talk, just sat and stared at the floor.

We had gone from feeling like millionaires to feeling like poor white trash. We kids had such a happy life that we felt sorry for anyone who didn't have our mom and dad for parents and a house full of brothers and sisters and other kids visiting constantly. We thought it was fun to share silverware and see whether we got the spoon or the fork that night. We had two knives that we passed around to whoever needed them. I knew we didn't have a lot of things that other people had, but I'd never thought we were poor. That Easter day I found out we were. The minister had brought us the money for the poor family, so we must be poor.

I didn't like being poor. I looked at my dress and worn-out shoes and felt so ashamed, I didn't even want to go back to church. Everyone there probably already knew we were poor! I thought about school. I was in the ninth grade and at the top of my class of over 100 students. I wondered if the kids at school knew that we were poor. I decided that I could quit school since I had finished the eighth grade. That was all the law required at that time. We sat in silence for a long time. Then it got dark, and we went to bed.

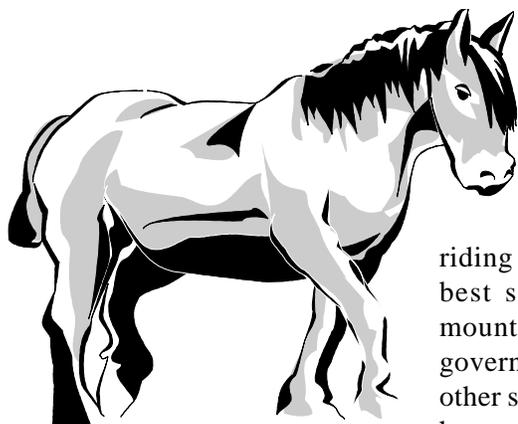
All that week we girls went to school and came home, and no one talked much. Finally on Saturday Mom asked us what we wanted to do with the money.

What did poor people do with money? We didn't know. We'd never known we were poor. We didn't want to go to church on Sunday but Mom said we had to. Although it was a sunny day we didn't talk on the way. Mom started to sing but no one joined in and she only sang one verse. At church we had a missionary speaker. He talked about how churches in Africa made buildings out of sun-dried bricks, but they needed money to buy roofs. He said \$100 would put a roof on a church. The minister said, "Can't we all sacrifice to help these poor people?" We looked at each other and smiled for the first time in a week. Mom reached into her purse and pulled out the envelope.

She passed it to Darlene. Darlene gave it to me, and I handed it to Ocy. Ocy put it in the offering. When the offering was counted, the minister announced that it was a little over \$100. The missionary was excited. He hadn't expected such a large offering from our small church. He said, "You must have some rich people in this church." Suddenly it struck us! We had given \$87 of that "little over \$100." We were the rich family in the church! Hadn't the missionary said so? From that day on I've never been poor again.

I've always remembered how rich I am because I have Jesus!

(This story was received via email to EPM)



Handling A Dead Horse

Dakota tribal wisdom says that when you discover you are riding a dead horse, the best strategy is to dismount. However, in the government we often try other strategies with dead horses, including the following:

1. Buying a stronger whip.
2. Changing riders.
3. Saying things like "This is the way we always have ridden this horse."
4. Appointing a committee to study the horse.
5. Arranging to visit other sites to see how they ride dead horses.
6. Increasing the standards to ride dead horses.
7. Appointing a tiger team to revive the dead horse.
8. Creating a training session to increase our riding ability.
9. Comparing the state of dead horses in today's environment.
10. Pass legislation declaring that "This horse is not dead."
11. Blaming the horse's parents.
12. Harnessing several dead horses together for increased speed.
13. Declaring that "No horse is too dead to beat."
14. Providing additional funding to increase the horse's performance.
15. Do a CA Study to see if contractors can ride it cheaper.
16. Procure a COTS dead horse.
17. Declare the horse is "better, faster and cheaper" dead.
18. Form a quality circle to find uses for dead horses.
19. Revisit the performance requirements for horses.
20. Say this horse was procured with cost as an independent variable.
21. BRAC the horse farm on which it was born.
22. Promote the dead horse to a supervisory position.

(Received off the internet, author unknown)

You can help EPM cut down on costs by sending us your new address, hopefully before the next newsletter comes out. Though we mail them out bulk rate at a cost of \$.17 per newsletter, for every returned newsletter with the wrong address we are charged \$1.36 in return postage. Not only that, but you don't receive your newsletter. And if we are mailing it to you it will cost us another \$.78. So the sooner we receive your change of address, the better. Thanks!



A Message from God's Creation

Psalm 17:8, Psalm 63:7, Psalm 91:4, Matthew 23:37

An article in National Geographic several years ago provided a penetrating picture of God's wings. After a forest fire in Yellowstone National Park, forest rangers began their trek up a mountain to assess the inferno's damage. One ranger found a bird literally petrified in ashes, perched statuesquely on the ground at the base of a tree. Somewhat sickened by the eerie sight, he knocked over the bird with a stick. When he struck it, three tiny chicks scurried from under their dead mother's

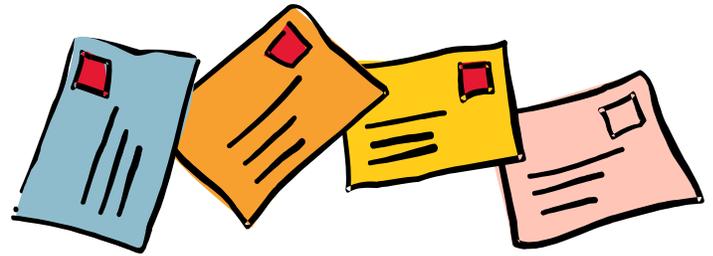
wings. The loving mother, keenly aware of impending disaster, had carried her offspring to the base of the tree and had gathered them under her wings, instinctively knowing that the toxic smoke would rise. She could have flown to safety but had refused to abandon her babies. When the blaze had arrived and the heat had singed her small body, the mother had remained steadfast. Because she had been willing to die, those under the cover of her wings would live.



"He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust" (Psalm 91:4).

Learn to experience the warmth and protection of life beneath the wings of the Almighty.

Letters to EPM



I just finished reading *Deadline* for about the 6th time. It's getting really inked up and highlighted. I use your insights and dialog analogies all the time in sharing the faith. We have a great desire to share who God is through music and dialog. It can get pretty hairy sometimes. And I cry like a baby every time I read the part of the boxing match Jake Woods has with God. Hallelujah!!!!

Thank you for all the studying you've done. I know you will have great treasure in heaven. (Thanks for widening my eyes on that one too.) We are former rock'n rollers who got saved 12 years ago and now have 6 kids—5 sons and 1 daughter. We do music for the Lord now. Well, I don't mean to ramble but thank you, Randy Alcorn, for helping me to understand more of God's love for me and everybody, even those who say they hate Him. Heaven is going to be a trip!

Steve Lopes, Gardiner, WA

I do quite a bit of reading. My father was an English teacher, and believe me, I know good writing when I read it. And *Dominion* was fantastic!

I'm a relatively new white believer who has had many racist thoughts over the years. I believe now that they have all been generated by my fear of violent crime and the portrayal of blacks in the media as well as my cultural upbringing.

During the last few years I have had the pleasure of getting to know a single, black mother and her child very well. I led her to the Lord through our church's evangelism explosion ministry. I believe that the Lord has been doing a work in my heart ever since, and I am convinced that he put your book into my hands to help carry out his purpose in my heart.

I have to admit that I spent many moments crying while reading the book because I was so convicted as to the state of my thoughts concerning racial issues. Thanks so much for your sensitive writing. It has impacted my life for eternity. I know that I will never be the same again.

Let's all continue to pray that the Lord would heal the racial divide in our country, especially in our churches. May we all be truly brothers in Christ no matter what color we are.

Steve D'Alessio Columbia,
MD

I have read both of your novels: *Deadline* and *Dominion*. I wanted to tell you that God has

used you, with your writing, to encourage me and bless me. You have also helped me to start to look at things differently; as you would say, "with an eternal perspective." I thank you for this.

I wanted to let you know that our Lord has been using you even here in prison. In fact, your book *Deadline* played a part in my last roommate's decision for Christ! Praise God!!

An Inmate, California Department of Corrections

Hello, I am a student at the University of Wisconsin. I just finished reading *Dominion* about 5 minutes ago, and I have read *Deadline* several times. I have written to authors before, but never because of a fictional work. Both *Deadline* and *Dominion* have had a powerful impact on my life. The speculations on heaven have really helped to focus my mind on eternity, rather than this world. Also, they have had the added impact of illustrating God's love for me in real ways. Because of various issues in my life, I have had a hard time accepting or understanding Christ's love for me. I feel that in the process of reading your works, God has helped me to begin to accept His love and allow Him to really make a difference in my life.

Also, I very much appreciate all of your C. S. Lewis references. He is my favorite author, I now have 20 of his books, and my thinking is very much influenced by his.

Anyway, I just had to write and tell you how much I appreciate you writing *Deadline* and *Dominion*, and that God has used them in a mighty way in my life. I will pray for EPM.

Deanna Ratz, Madison, WI



I'm thirteen years old and a member of Covenant Life Church, where you spoke several times recently. I said "thank you" after the last message you gave, and shook your hand. But after reading *Edge of Eternity*, and having it make a profound impact on my life, I knew two words weren't enough.

I know you give the glory to God, and so do I, but after reading this novel, I really started living for the line, instead of the dot. By the grace of God, I have stopped before almost every action I conduct, and think about how I and the Audience of One will feel and say about what I do while on this earth. Thanks to your gift, God and I have completely turned my life around.

David Somerville, Gaithersberg, MD

Randy Alcorn's New Book

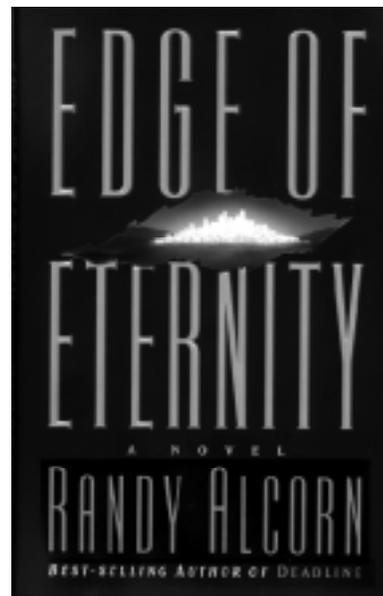
(From the catalog produced by WaterBrook Press, publisher of *Edge of Eternity*)

Best-selling author Randy Alcorn, who kept readers on the edge of their seats with his novels *Deadline* and *Dominion*, has written a gripping, action-packed, and visionary spiritual thriller that illustrates the all-important decisions each of us must make concerning life, faith, and the world beyond our own. Alcorn spins an entertaining and intriguing tale about a world where life's deeper reality is revealed—focusing readers' attention on the truth about heaven and hell.

What is *Edge of Eternity* all about?

Edge of Eternity is a highly imaginative spiritual thriller that powerfully illustrates the eternal implications of the all-important decisions each of us must make in our brief window of opportunity on earth. Nick Seagrave is a disillusioned executive who has lost his family, and in the midst of crisis suddenly awakes to find himself in what appears to be another world. Pursued by ancient flying beasts, leery of a monstrous web that threatens to hold him captive, stalked by an evil brooding intelligence, Nick meets up with people on the roads he chooses to travel, and in the midst of great danger sees his

past, present and future in a way he never has before. To his amazement, Nick can now see, hear, taste and smell the realities of both heaven and hell. He walks between two worlds, where every choice he makes casts a vote for heaven or hell. He lives each moment on the edge of eternity. What Nick discovers about the worlds beyond, and about himself, is revolutionary both to him and to the reader.



Edge of Eternity (a beautiful hard cover book) is now in Christian bookstores everywhere. If you do not have a local bookstore in your area, feel free to purchase directly through EPM. Cost is \$14.95 + 10% shipping. Quantity discounts are available. Call or write for information.

Puppies For Sale

A story illustrating God's heart

A store owner was tacking a sign above his door that read "Puppies For Sale." Signs like that have a way of attracting small children and sure enough, a little boy appeared under the store owner's sign.

"How much are you going to sell the puppies for?" he asked. The store owner replied, "Anywhere from \$30 to \$50." The little boy reached in his pocket and pulled out some change. "I have \$2.37," he said. "Can I please look at them?"

The store owner smiled and whistled and out of the kennel came Lady, who ran down the aisle of his store followed by five teeny, tiny balls of fur. One puppy was lagging considerably behind. Immediately the little boy singled out the lagging, limping puppy and said, "What's wrong with that little dog?" The store owner explained that the veterinarian had examined the little puppy and had discovered it didn't have a hip socket. It would always limp. It would always be lame.

The little boy became excited. "That is the little puppy that I want to buy." The store owner said, "No, you don't want to buy that little dog. If you really want him, I'll just give him to you." The little boy got quite upset. He looked straight into the store owner's eyes, pointing his finger, and said, "I don't want you to give

him to me. That little dog is worth every bit as much as all the other dogs and I'll pay full price. In fact, I'll give you \$2.37 now, and 50 cents a month until I have him paid for." The store owner countered, "You really don't want to buy this little dog. He is never going to be able to run and play with you like the other puppies."

To this, the little boy reached down and rolled up his pant leg to reveal a badly twisted, crippled left leg supported by a big metal brace. He looked up at the store owner and softly replied, "Well, I don't run so well myself, and the little puppy will need someone who understands!"

(Received via email, author unknown.)



The Great Debate

by Kathy Norquist

“Ron is just a man. He will never understand what it’s like to be a woman. He will never be pregnant or go through labor.” These were the opening remarks from Sharon*, a woman representing NARRAL (National Abortion & Reproductive Rights Action League) in a debate with Ron Norquist in a human sexuality class. I had never accompanied Ron on a debate before, so I decided to witness one firsthand this past Spring at Portland Community College.

Ron was introduced first and had 15 minutes to present his prolife position. He focused his presentation on personhood, addressing the crucial question of “When does a person’s life begin and therefore deserve protection?” He walked the audience through a very logical, factual sequence of conception to birth, showing several colorful intrauterine pictures depicting the developing baby. He left the



prochoice students commented they thought her tactic was demeaning and I believe she lost the debate at the beginning. The thrust of her presentation was a woman’s right to choose. She referred very little to the beginning of life and neglected to address the evidence Ron presented.

At one point the woman said to the class, “Now you know that antichoice people believe that you, you sitting right here in this classroom, should not have sex until you are married.” She paused, looked out at the students, and indignantly asked “Can you believe that?!” I was so shocked that I found myself saying “Yes! Do you think that’s impossible? Are we just animals?” By the facial expressions of some of those around me, they seemed to understand my response.

It was interesting observing the class during the presentations. The facial expressions, body language and verbal responses of the class members all indicated there was intense processing of the material presented. I was impressed with how attentive some in the class were while Ron was speaking. Truth was being presented—God’s truth, and seeds were being planted.

I was also impressed with the fact this was a very real spiritual battle. Satan has blinded the eyes of many people and they are not willing to face the truth.

One woman told Ron she resented his use of biological facts in his presentation. “I have my truth and you have your truth. I want you to respect my truth as well,” she explained. A belief in moral relativism permeates the college classroom and shows just how blind to the truth our society has become.

A lively question and answer time followed the presentations. In response to her opening statements Ron said “I don’t need to have been a slave owner in the South to know that slavery was wrong. In the same way I can know that abortion is wrong even though I’m not a woman.” The NARRAL woman replied under her breath, “You probably were a slave owner!” Audible gasps followed by those who had heard her comment. This was another example of trying to personally discredit Ron rather than address the real issue at hand.

As we left the classroom, one of the students met us outside. “I just want to thank you, Mr. Norquist, for your presentation. You won hands down. Although I still consider myself prochoice I wanted you to know what a great job you did.” He then went on to share how his mother had been raped and became pregnant as a result. He felt she was justified in having an abortion. That one exception was

**name changed to protect identity*

(continued on page 15)

It has always been a blessing to have Ron speak in my high school classroom. He is easy to listen to as he communicates from his genuine heart with a good sense of humor. Yet, he is also very thought-provoking as he challenges my students to think through an issue in all its ramifications.

*Mitzie Tillstrom
high school teacher
Damascus Christian School*

pictures up during his presentation, as is his usual practice. He has found it to be quite true that a picture is worth a thousand words. In fact, at another debate he had a woman come up to him and say, “I’m prochoice and I don’t agree with all that you said. But those pictures, I just can’t get away from those pictures.”

Sharon then presented her case. Though her opening remarks aimed to discount Ron’s message this actually seemed to backfire on her. Even some of the

very personal to him. Ron was able to encourage him and challenge him to keep thinking and studying the issue. It was a very warm exchange and we pray God will continue a work in his heart.

Overall I was struck with the sense that God's truth had been presented and Ron had been the messenger. He answered the questions thoughtfully, without overreacting even when he was under per-

sonal attack. His presentation was based on facts and hard evidence in stark contrast to his opponent. Only God knows the ultimate outcome. Seeds of truth were planted and He brings the harvest.

Ron has extensive experience in the area of prolife speaking and is available to speak in a variety of settings, both Christian and secular, junior high age on up. He may be contacted at 503-637-6181.

Ron has been a guest participant in my ethics and values courses and medical ethics courses for a number of years now. He certainly provokes a good deal of class discussion while clearly articulating the logic involved in the prolife argument.

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Strong Enough to Care About the Weak *Jesus and the Children—and Us*

When Isaiah says that God “exalts himself to show mercy to you” (Isaiah 30:18, RSV), he teaches us that one mark of great, self-sufficient poise is the willingness to get down low with the weak. This is probably why Jesus was so taken with children. It is also why Christians care about children in church and children on the streets.

According to some estimates, there are probably one hundred million children who live on the streets of our cities around the world. Some estimates say that by the year 2000 half the global population will be children under the age of fifteen, and perhaps two billion of them will live in extreme poverty or be at risk. The United Nations estimates that one million children enter the trade of child prostitution each year.

The impulse to move toward this need rather than away from it is a sign that the Spirit of Jesus is at work in us. Consider a few of his relations with children.

1. Jesus was a child.

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given and the government will be upon his shoulders” (Isaiah 9:6, KJV).

2. Jesus took children in his arms and blessed them.

“Let the children come to me, do not hinder them” And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them” (Mark 10:14, 16, RSV).

3. Jesus healed a child of a foreign woman.

“‘O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.’ And her daughter was healed instantly” (Matthew 15:28, RSV).

4. Jesus cast a demon out of a child.

“And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured instantly” (Matthew 17:18, RSV).



5. Jesus raised a child from the dead.

“Taking her by the hand he said to her, ‘Talitha cumi,’ which means, ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise.’ And immediately the girl got up” (Mark 5:41-42, RSV).

6. Jesus used a child's loaves and fish to feed five thousand people.

“‘There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what are they among so many!’ Jesus said, ‘Make the people sit down’” (John 6:9-10, RSV).

7. Jesus said you should become like a child.

“Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3-4, RSV).

8. When Jesus came, children cried, “Hosanna to the Son of David.”

“The chief priests saw the children crying out in the temple, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’” (Matthew 21:15, RSV).

9. Jesus predicted the terrible days when fathers would give their children up to death.

“And brother will deliver up brother to death, and the father his child” (Mark 13:12, RSV).

10. Jesus said that if you receive a child in his name, you receive him and the one who sent him.

“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me” (Mark 9:37, RSV).

The question is not whether caring for children is easy and safe, or whether they are responsive and thankful, or whether caring is depleting. The question is whether Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and whether we can say with the apostle Paul, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

(Excerpted from *A Godward Life* by John Piper, pp. 65-67.)

Knowing God's Will

by Randy Alcorn

There are tons of books, tapes, and sermons about finding God's will. The assumption seems to be that God's will is lost or buried—like God doesn't really want us to know his will and hides it from us. It's as if God is a Cosmic Easter Bunny who hides the eggs and maybe says "You're getting warmer," and sometimes we stumble onto them, but we never know whether we've found them all or not.

Some think God's will is revealed in a dramatic experience or sudden revelation—a voice that says "Go on the Mexico trip this summer" or "Ask Cathy to the prom."

Some think God's will is something to be afraid of. "I hate spiders and humidity so I just know God's going to send me to some equatorial jungle in South America."

Some think God's will is nothing but circumstances. "I've been offered a job there, so it must be God's will." Or, "He asked me out, so it must be God's will," or "The bank approved my loan application so it must be God's will."

Is God's will mainly about lots of personal details, including school, job, who to date, where to live, etc.? Or is it about something else?

1. God's will is that we be saved (2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:3-4).

2. Once we're saved, God has a further will for our lives. There are certain things he wants us to do and not do (Eph. 2:9-10). God's will is something for us to do, not just to know or believe or affirm (Mk. 3:31-35; 1 Jn. 2:17).

3. Because God loves us, his will for us is in our best interests too. Where God wants us is the very best place

to be, the only safe place. What is to God's glory is also for our good (Matt. 16:26; 25:21; Lk. 2:10; Jn. 16:7; 1 Cor. 7:35; Eph. 6:8). If God wants you in an equatorial jungle, you wouldn't be happy anywhere else!

4. God wants us to know his will—He's not cruel. Because he loves us he gives us his Word, the Road Map, so we don't have to grope in darkness (1 Cor. 2:9-10; Ps. 119:105).



The Bible is the revealed will of God. If you want to live in his will, then "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly".
(Col. 3:16)

5. God's will is that we be sexually pure (1 Thess. 4:3-7). This extends to fleeing from temptation (1 Cor. 6:18) and keeping our bodies from impurity, but also keeping our minds pure (Matt. 15:19-20; 5:28; Prov. 4:23; Ps. 119:37; Phil. 4:8).

6. God says those who don't know his will are unwise, and it is God's will that we be filled with and controlled by his Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:17-18). When we are controlled by the Spirit, we show it in certain ways. We will not commit the acts of the sinful nature (Gal. 5:19-21), but will produce the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). We will participate in worshipping the Lord,

teaching each other, giving thanks to God and serving others (Eph. 5:17-33). James 1:5 says we don't have wisdom because we don't ask for it—prayer is critical in seeking and living the will of God.

7. God's will is that we live in submission to God-given authority, that others may see our willingness to humble ourselves as servants (1 Pet. 2:13-15). It also means we recognize God as our highest authority and put obedience to him above obedience to men (Acts 4:18-20).

8. Sometimes God's will is that we go through difficult times, even suffering, to accomplish his purpose in us and through us (1 Pet. 3:17, 4:19).

9. The Bible is the revealed will of God. If you want to live in his will, then "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3:16). Fill your heart and mind with the Word of God, trust in his empowerment to obey Him, and confess and repent when you disobey and fail. If you do this, **you will be living in the will of God!**

Summary: The will of God is not wrapped up in the details of what we do, but the character of who we are. True, it is not just the large choices, but the daily small choices that cumulatively build us into who God wants (wills) us to be. God cares about the little things and his will can include details, but these are secondary. What is primary is that we choose to follow his clear direction in spiritual and moral arenas. Then all the details fall into place from there.

"Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Ps. 37:4). Augustine said, "Love God and do as you please." If you're really loving God, you want to do whatever pleases him, even if it's difficult.

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