



# Eternal Perspective Ministries

## Overcoming the Myths About Heaven

By Randy Alcorn

*The following is excerpted from the introduction to Randy's book, In Light of Eternity (subtitled "Perspectives on Heaven"), which is soon to be released. We think it will be an encouraging and motivating gift for both believers and unbelievers.*

I once heard a pastor make a startling confession: "Whenever I think about heaven, it makes me depressed. I'd rather just cease to exist when I die."

I tried not to show my shock as I asked him, "Why?"

"I can't stand the thought of that endless tedium. To float around in the clouds with nothing to do but strum a harp...it's all so terribly boring. Heaven doesn't sound much better than hell. I'd rather be annihilated than spend eternity in a place like that."

Where did this Bible-believing, seminary-educated pastor get such a view of heaven? Certainly not from Scripture, where Paul said to depart and be with Christ was "better by far" than staying on earth (Philippians 1:23). And yet, though my friend was more honest about it than most, I've found many Christians share the same misconceptions about heaven.

I've received literally thousands of letters concerning heaven because I picture it in my novels. Here's a letter that came last week:

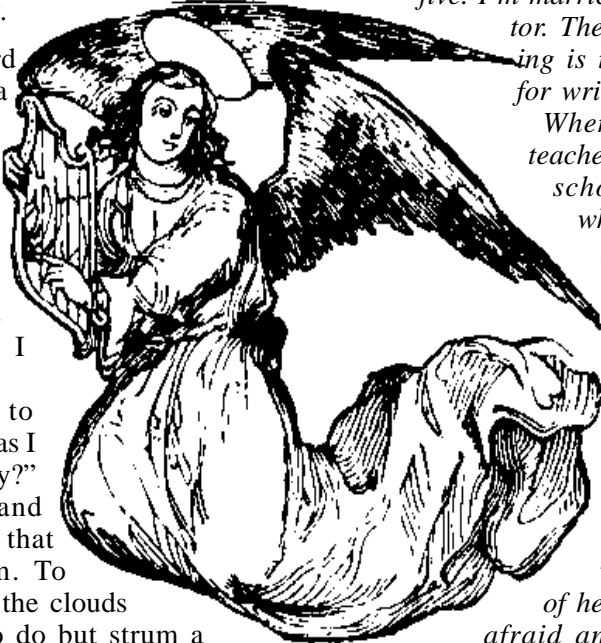
*I've been a Christian since I was five. I'm married to a youth pastor. The reason I'm writing is to tell you thanks for writing Deadline.*

*When I was seven, a teacher at my Christian school told me that when I got to heaven I wouldn't know anyone or anything from earth. I was terrified of dying. I was never told any different by anyone either.*

*Until reading Deadline I was still terrified of heaven. But I'm not afraid any more. Heaven will be great.*

*It's been really hard for me to advance in my Christian walk because of this fear of heaven and eternal life. You don't know the weight that's been lifted off me. I cried every time I read about Finney being in heaven and all his experiences there. Now I can't wait to get there.*

Because of pervasive distortions of what heaven is like, it's common for Christians to not look forward to heaven, or even to dread it. I think there's only



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one explanation for how these appalling viewpoints have gripped so many of God's children: Satan. Demonic deception.

Jesus said of the devil, "When he lies he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). Some of Satan's favorite lies are about heaven. Revelation 13:6 tells us the satanic beast "opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven." Our enemy slanders three things: God's person, God's people, and God's place—heaven.

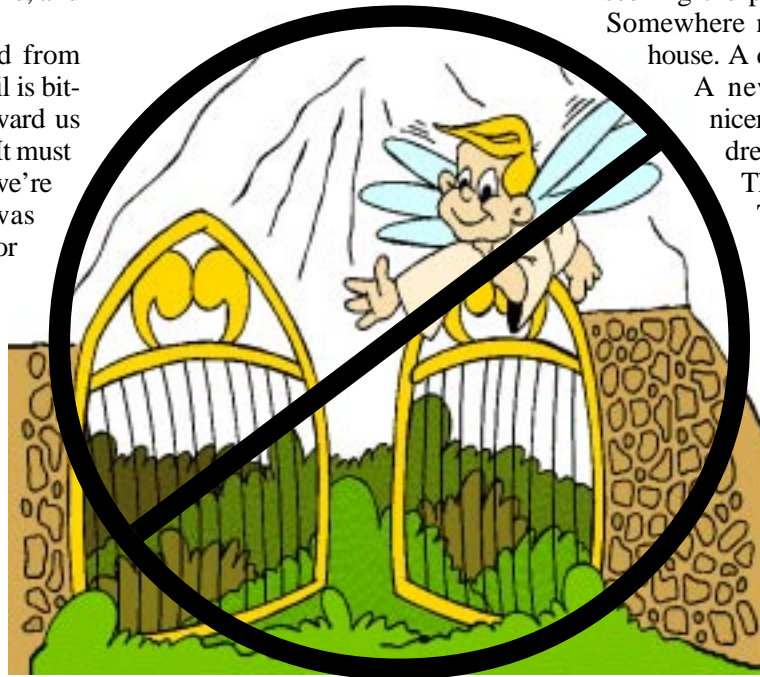
After being forcibly evicted from heaven (Isaiah 14:12-15), the devil is bitter not only toward God, but toward us and the place that's no longer his. It must be maddening for him to realize we're now entitled to the home he was kicked out of. What better way for demons to attack than to whisper lies about the very place God tells us to set our hearts and minds on (Colossians 3:1-2)?

Paul warned us to be aware of the devil's schemes (2 Corinthians 2:11) and put on God's armor to stand against them (Ephesians 6:11). Make no mistake—one of Satan's favorite tactics is feeding us a distorted view of heaven. He knows we'll lack motivation to tell others about Jesus if our view of heaven isn't that much better than our concept of hell.

Look at all those people walking the streets, working in offices, standing in lines, sitting in restaurants. Their eyes are filled with needs, hopes, longings. The world tells them they're just molecules and DNA, time plus chance. But God "has set eternity in the hearts of men" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Their hearts cry out for eternal realities, for what will last, what really matters.

They search for something, *anything*, to fill the raging emptiness within. Satan offers them anesthetics that temporarily dull the pain, but they wear off. The promise of fulfillment is always broken. So they go right on searching in all the wrong places. They turn to drugs, sex, money, and power for the same reason they turn to religion and self-help seminars. Their instincts tell them "something's missing, there has to be more."

And they're absolutely right. Something *is* missing.



The first thing missing is the person we were made for—Jesus. Haggai 2:7 refers to Messiah as "the desired of all nations," the *all* people of all cultures long for.

But there's something else missing. Every human heart yearns for not only a person, but a place. The place we were made for. The place made for us.

In Revelation 3:12, Jesus makes a great promise to those who obey him: "I

will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which is coming down out of heaven from God, and I will also write on him my new name." Jesus says he will put on us the name of the person *and* the name of the place (heaven) for which we were made.

We spend our lives longing for this person and this place. Just as people restlessly move from relationship to relationship seeking the person they were made for, they move from location to location seeking the place they were made for. Somewhere new and better. A bigger house. A different city. The suburbs.

A new neighborhood—safer, nicer, with better schools. That dream house in the country. That idyllic mountain chalet. That perfect beach cottage.

We have the very answers the world cries out for, yet our wrong views of God's person and God's place silence and distort our message. What a triumph of Satan that we would actually pass on to our churches, children and world a dreary view of heaven—and by implication a dreary view of God. (If we imagine heaven is boring and dreadful, aren't we really saying *God* is boring and dreadful?)

When Jesus said to us, "I am going there [to heaven] to prepare a place for you....I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:2-3), he spoke as a groom to his bride-to-be. These are words of love and romance. How would any bride who loves her husband-to-be respond to them? She'd be thrilled. Not a single day



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would go by, not a single *hour*, in which the bride wouldn't anticipate joining her beloved in that place he prepared for her to live with him forever.

Like a bride's dreams of sharing a home with her groom, our love for heaven should be overflowing and contagious, just like our love for God (Revelation 19:7). Our passion for God and our passion for heaven should be inseparable. The more I learn about God, the more excited I get about heaven. The more I learn about heaven, the more excited I get about God.

How it must wound the heart of our bridegroom to see us clinging to this dilapidated roach-infested hovel called earth, dreading the thought of leaving it, when he has hand-built a magnificent estate for us, a place beautiful and wondrous beyond measure.

What's your attitude toward heaven, your theology of heaven? Does it fill you with joy and excitement? How much thought do you give to heaven? How often do you and your church and your family talk about it?

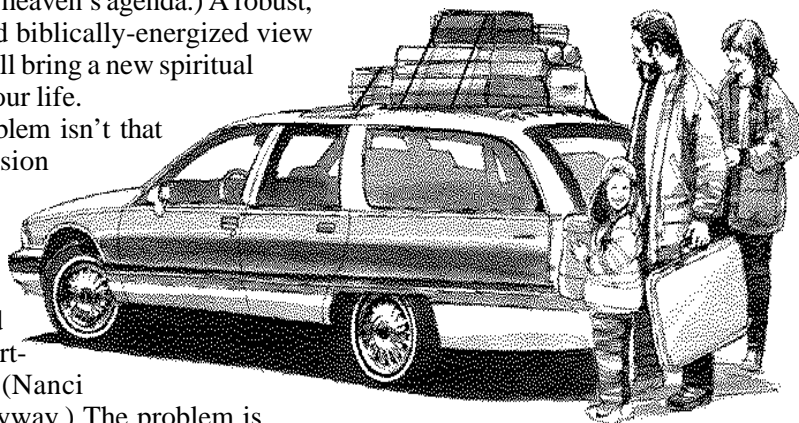
If you lack a passion for heaven, I can almost guarantee it's because you have a weak, deficient, and distorted theology of heaven. (Or you're making choices that

conflict with heaven's agenda.) A robust, accurate, and biblically-energized view of heaven will bring a new spiritual passion to your life.

Our problem isn't that we lack passion in general. We all have it—look at the way we stand up and cheer at sporting events. (Nanci

and I do, anyway.) The problem is that we get most passionate about things that don't ultimately matter—the perfect season, the perfect house, the perfect lawn, the perfect car. None of these is bad—notice I didn't list pornography, adultery, fornication, theft, and hatred. Our problem is that the things fueling our passion are only secondary, while we lack passion for what's primary. To derail us, all Satan needs to do is minimize our passion for two things—the person of God and the place of God.

A. W. Tozer said,  
Let no one apologize for the powerful emphasis Christianity lays upon the doctrine of the world to come.



Right there lies its immense superiority to everything else within the whole sphere of human thought or experience.... We do well to think of the long tomorrow.

The greatest weakness of the western church today is arguably our failure to think of the long tomorrow—to take seriously the reality that heaven is our home. Out of this springs our love affair with this world and our failure to live now in light of eternity.

When my family goes on a trip, we like to know in advance something about where we're going. If we're planning a vacation, we carefully study the brochures and maps to know the destination's attractions. (We don't want to know everything—we do like surprises.)

God hasn't told us so much about heaven that it spoils all the surprises waiting for us. But he's told us enough—far more than most of us suppose—that we can envision it and get really excited about it.

Bookstore travel sections exist because everybody wants to know about the place they're going. So think of this book as a travel guide to heaven. If we want our children or grandchildren to be more excited about heaven than the Grand Canyon or Disney World or summer camp, open up the Bible and talk to them about heaven's attractions, not just earth's.

*In Light of Eternity can be purchased for \$13.95 at your local Christian bookstore the first of November. Quantity discounts are available through EPM.*

## The Drama "Deadline"

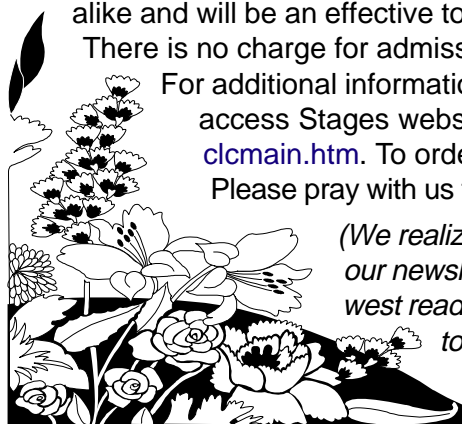
For those who don't live too far from Portland Oregon, a full-length drama based on Randy's novel "Deadline" will be performed the month of October by *Stages*, a Portland-based Christian theatre group. The cast represents a group of 45 people (plus a dog) from 28 different churches. The drama will run the month of October at Christian Life Center in Aloha, between Beaverton and Hillsboro. The days and times are Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights at 7:00 p.m. and Saturday matinees at 2:00 p.m. This drama is designed for both Christians and nonChristians alike and will be an effective tool for introducing others to Christ.

There is no charge for admission, however tickets are required.

For additional information about the drama you can access *Stages* website at <http://www.clcaloha.org/clcmain.htm>. To order tickets call (503) 649-4444.

Please pray with us for the eternal impact of this drama.

*(We realize some of the events we share our newsletter are relevant only to North west readers but we want to include them to give an opportunity for all of you to pray, no matter where you live.)*



# Questions from the Next Generation

The following article appeared in the Dallas Morning News May 2, 1999, and was written by Marcey Musgrave, a junior at Texas A & M University.



I am a member of the upcoming generation—the one after Generation X that has yet to be given a name. So far, it appears that most people are rallying behind the idea of calling us Generation Next. I believe I know why.

The older generations are hoping we will mindlessly assume our place as the “next” in line. That way, they won’t have to explain why my generation has had to experience so much pain and heartache.

“What heartache?” you ask. “Don’t you know you have grown up in a time of great prosperity?” Yeah, we know that. Believe me, it has been drilled into our heads since birth. Unfortunately, the pain and hurt I speak of can’t be compensated for with money. You have tried for years to buy us happiness, but it is only temporary. Money isn’t the answer, and it is time for people to begin admitting their guilt for failing my generation.

I will admit that I wasn’t planning to write this. I was going to tuck it away in some corner of my mind and fall victim to your whole “next” mentality. But after the massacre in Littleton, CO, I realize that as a member of this generation that kills without remorse, I had a duty to challenge all of



my elders to explain why they have allowed things to become so bad.

Let me tell you this: These questions don’t represent only me but a whole generation that is struggling to grow up and make sense of this world.

We all have questions—we all want explanations. People may label us Generation Next, but we are more appropriately Generation “Why?”

“Why did most of you lie when you made the vow of ‘til death do us part’?”

“Why do you fool yourselves into believing that divorce really is better for the kids in the long run?”

“Why do so many of you divorced parents spend more time with your new boyfriend or girlfriend than with your own children?”

“Why did you ever fall victim to the notion that kids are just as well off being raised by a complete stranger at a day care center than by their own mother or father?”

“Why do you look down on parents who decide to quit work and stay home to raise their children?”

“Why does the television do the most talking at family meals?”

“Why is work more important than your own family?”

“Why is money regarded as more important than relationships?”

“Why is ‘quality time’ generally no longer than a five to ten minute conversation each day?”

“Why do you try to make up for the lack of time you spend with us by giving us more and more material objects that we really don’t need?”

“Why does your work (in the form of a cell phone, laptop computer, etc.), always come with us on vacations?”

“Why have you neglected to teach us values and morals?”

“Why haven’t you lived moral lives that we could model our own after?”

“Why isn’t religion one of the most important words in our household?”

“Why do you play God when it comes to abortion?”

“Why don’t you have enough faith in us to teach us abstinence rather than safe sex?”

“Why do you allow us to watch violent movies but expect us to maintain some type of childlike innocence?”



“Why do you allow us to spend unlimited amounts of time on the Internet but still are shocked about our knowledge of how to build bombs?”

“Why are you so afraid to tell us ‘no’ sometimes?”

“Why is it so hard for you to realize that school shootings and other violent juvenile behavior result from a lack of your attention more than anything else?”

Call us Generation Next if you want to but I think you will be surprised at how we will fail to fit into your neat little category.

These questions should, and will, be asked of the generations that have failed us. You have pursued your selfish desires for years but now is the time to reap what you have sown. Some rude awakenings like the Littleton massacre have occurred and probably will continue until you can begin to answer our questions and make the drastic changes to put us, your kids, first.

Time is running out, for in just a few short years we will be grown, and it will be too late. You might not think we are worth it, but I can guarantee you that Littleton will look like a drop in the bucket compared to what might occur when a neglected Generation “Why?” comes to power.

# Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church

Sunday, November 14, 1999, is the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. Over 300,000 churches are expected to join together in what has become the largest single prayer day event in the world.

## Facts and Trends about Persecution

There have been more people martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ in the 20th Century than in all the previous nineteen combined. (*By Their Blood*, by James and Marti Hefley)

According to World Mission Digest there are some 100 million martyrs in this so-called "modern" 20th Century.

More people have died in circumstances related to their faith in this century than in all the 20th Century wars combined (statistical research of the *WEF Religious Liberty Commission*).

The main reason for the rise in persecution, especially over the past several years, seems to be the exponential growth of evangelicals in places such as Latin America, sub-Sahara Africa and Asia. Not surprisingly, these are the same areas of the world where Christians are experiencing discrimination, harassment and persecution at the hands of those with power.

The shift in evangelical growth from the Western world to the Two-Thirds World over the past few decades has been startling. In 1960, over 70% of all evangelicals lived in North America and Western Europe. In 1990, 70% of all evangelicals lived outside the West in the Two-Thirds World, and the numbers continue to grow at a staggering rate. (*Operation World* by Patrick Johnstone)

Reported incidences of persecution have actually increased since the fall of Communism in the former USSR.

Believers around the world feel they have been silent too long and because they feel a new sense of support from fellow Christians they are now publicly stating their belief in Jesus, willing to risk the repercussions coming from their public declaration.

**Psalm 115:6** *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.*

**Proverbs 24:11-12** *Rescue those being led away to death, hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, "but we knew nothing about this" does not He who weighs the heart perceive it?...Will He not repay each person according to what he has done?*

**Acts 12:5** *Peter was in prison, but prayer was being made fervently by the church.*

**1 Cor 12:26** *If one part suffers, every part suffers with it.*

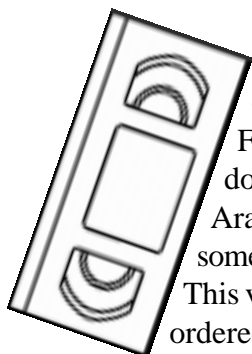
**2 Thess. 1:4** *We speak proudly of you among the churches for your perseverance and faith in the midst of the persecution you endure.*

**1 Tim. 2:1-2** *Pray for those in authority.*

**2 Tim. 3:12** *[The connection between rejoicing and persecution.]*

**Hebrews 13:3** *Remember all those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.*

**1 Peter 4:12-19** *If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.*



A powerful four-segment video entitled "Four Faces" has been produced. "Four Faces" chronicles first-person accounts of the suffering church in four countries. Filmed on location in Sudan, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines (for Saudi Arabia) the video provides a passport into some of the most restrictive nations on earth. This video is available for \$15.00 and can be ordered by calling (toll free), Prayer for the Persecuted Church, 888-538-7772, or through the website [www.persecutedchurch.org](http://www.persecutedchurch.org).

# Fame or Character?

By Randy Alcorn

*Last year I spoke at a Green Bay Packers pre-game chapel. The players and coaches there were just like the rest of us, except more famous and wealthy (and somewhat larger). This is the message I shared with them.*

Have you ever seen a sink hole? Cars can be parked on a street day after day, and everything appears normal, then one day the asphalt caves in and cars disappear into a gigantic hole.

Everybody says “that hole came out of nowhere.” But they’re wrong. The hole appears suddenly but the process that led to it has gone on for many years. The underground erosion was invisible, but it was there all along. When a man does something terrible, it appears to have come “out of the clear blue sky.” It hasn’t. It’s the cumulative product of years of moral erosion.

Sink holes remind us of two things: 1) something can look good on the outside, when underneath major problems have been going on for years, and disaster’s about to happen; 2) our lives are affected by little choices, which have cumulative effects that can result in either moral strength or moral disaster.

Deuteronomy 17:14-20 was written 3500 years ago—it addresses the timeless dangers that come with power and fame. It’s true in government, church, workplace, and athletics. It’s true everywhere. Prominence brings with it privilege, but also responsibility and temptation. It’s full of spiritual pitfalls and moral landmines.

Fame puts us in the power position, a position of influence where people will listen to us and follow us. But fame also sets us up for failure. In Deuteronomy 17, God gives three specific warnings of what the king, the most famous and powerful person in the nation, should not do.

## 1. Don’t acquire many horses.

Horses were a symbol of power and status. Kings collected them not just for military purposes but for bragging rights. For some the equivalent might be cars, or anything we possess that becomes our focus and feeds our pride. Of course, the danger wasn’t the horses themselves, it’s not the cars themselves, it’s that they can become your center of gravity.

**2. Don’t take many wives** (or your heart will be led astray).

Kings were used to having what they wanted, and they had their pick of women. This led to moral compromise. Remember King David? The king, or any other famous or

privileged person, should be careful not to let his eyes stray, but to exercise self-denial and moral discipline. You’re all exposed to sexual temptation. Don’t give in to it or you’ll dishonor God and you’ll pay a huge price.

## 3. Don’t accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.

Those things can become the object of your faith, the props that hold you up. The greater its mass, the greater the gravity. Jesus said, “You cannot serve both God and money”—let money be your servant, but be careful not to let it become your master.

500 years later King Solomon had 40,000 horse stalls. He had 7,000 wives. He had tons of gold. He violated every one of these warnings, and he paid the price. He began as a wise man, but over time his heart was turned away from God. Solomon didn’t obey God’s Word. He thought he was above the rules.

He wasn’t. Neither are we. We can no more get around the moral law of God than the law of gravity.

Deuteronomy 17:18-20 gives a prescription for what the king can do to develop and maintain his integrity and his character, and not to be seduced by fame.

He was to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law. Copy out longhand the Word of God? This is very strange, because that’s what the scribes did. The king didn’t do that kind of labor—the king didn’t do anything tedious, it was all done for him by his staff. Sound familiar? As professional athletes, lots of other people work for you.

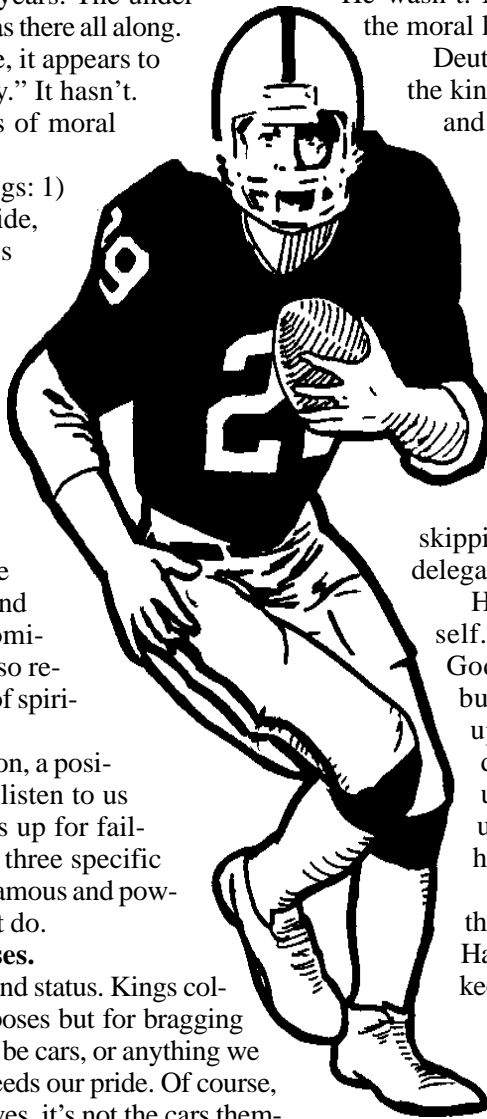
God is telling us, take care to labor over every word of the Scriptures. Become a student of God’s Word. When you write it out by hand you’re dealing with every word, not skipping over anything. This is something you can’t delegate to someone else.

He was to write out the Scriptures “for” himself. He may govern a nation, but the Words of God are to govern him. He may be called King, but he is under the true King. He can’t make it up as he goes, like a lot of celebrities try to do. He is not above the law of God—he is under the law of God. You and I are men under authority—we are not our own, we have been bought with a price.

The Scripture is “to be with him.” Don’t let this book be far from you. Take it on the road. Have it on your nightstand or the dining room table, keep it on the television to remind you not to watch it unless you’ve read the Word first, and when something comes on that violates the Word turn it off.

None of us has diplomatic immunity to the laws of God. We’re all under it. No exceptions. The truth is not something we manipulate to further our own ends, it’s not something we twist and spin to serve us. We are not masters of the truth, we are *servants* of the truth.

“He is to read it all the days of his life.” There’s no day off from the Word of God. Every day we miss it is missed



opportunity, missed character training. Think of the newspaper, *Time* magazine, *Sports Illustrated*. What do they do for your character? They're junk food for the mind. A little bit, you can get by with, but if that's your main diet it'll catch up with you. The Word of God is bread and meat for your character. Don't neglect it.

Deuteronomy 17:19 reads "that he may learn to revere [or fear] the Lord his God." Yes, he's a God of love, but he's also a God of holiness, and his standards are to be taken seriously. He watches us and one day we will stand before him and give an account of our lives. I'm leading a group of men studying *The Joy of Fearing God*, by Jerry Bridges. I highly recommend it to you.

Scripture is full of commands to fear God and it is also full of commands to not be afraid. If we fear God, we need not be afraid of anyone or anything else. But if we don't fear God, we have reason to be afraid of other things. You fear God when you come to grips with the fact that he is in charge and you are not.

We think we're much more powerful than we are. Shirley McClain goes out on the ocean beach and shouts into the water "I am God, I am God, I am God." Couldn't you just see God flicking his finger and bringing a tidal wave over her? "No you're not."

A year ago a friend's wife died. As soon as I heard, I went over to his house. He'd always been a successful athlete and businessman. He told me, "All my life I've been able to get what I wanted but this morning I only wanted one thing, and that was to bring her back to life, but I couldn't."

One day you think you're in charge, and the next thing you know you're injured or traded or cut or your Mom gets cancer or your baby is really sick and suddenly you're reminded that God is calling the shots.

Verse 19 says the king is to "follow carefully all the words of this law." All means all. Small acts of daily faithfulness to God won't make the news. But they will please God and they will build something great into your children. They're wet cement and every day you're inscribing something into them that one day will become permanent.

Verse 20 goes onto say "and not consider himself better than his brothers and turn from the law to the right or left."

That's the big danger of being in the public eye—that you start to think of yourself better than Joe Schmo who works at the tire shop or the grocery store. You think that you're above the rules of life. But none of us is. The remedy is to have our Bibles nearby, read them every day,

write out verses and put them where they're visible, and remind ourselves we're no better than anyone else, we're all under the same rules. God is watching and he cares how we live.

The second half of verse 20 says that if the king reads God's Word regularly, and learns to fear Him and carefully follow his words, then "he and his descendants will reign a long time." You will leave your children a spiritual heritage. It doesn't take much to leave our children an inheritance—it takes a lot to leave them a heritage, to pass on to them the values and priorities of virtue, humility and the fear of God.

The greatest thing you can do for your children is to love God with all your heart. The second greatest thing you can do for your children is to love your wife.

You're athletes and you live in a culture that puts you on a pedestal because of your skills. You have to fight for perspective because gifting and skills aren't the same as character and virtue.

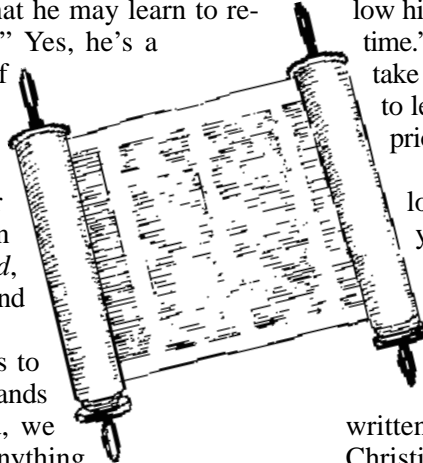
I've had a small taste of that in recent years. I've written ten books. Four years ago one of them got on the Christian bestseller's list and two more have joined it, and suddenly my books have sold a half million copies. I'm thankful for that. But there's something dangerous about it. People want me to autograph a book even if I haven't been walking with God. People admire me when I've been unkind to my wife. People should be admired for their character, but usually are admired for their skills or image.

For all they know, I could be a wife-beater, child molester, rapist, or murderer and they'd still be asking me to sign a book. These people don't know me. They aren't in a position to judge my character and your fans aren't in a position to judge yours. The problem with fame is, it becomes detached from character and integrity. And when people admire you, you can believe you're worthy of admiration and can become proud and let down your moral guard.

It's a huge mistake to believe what people think about you. If you do, you're going to get yanked around big time. One day you're a hero, the next day you're a jerk. That's why we have to set aside people's opinions of us. We have to know who we are—and who we aren't—in God's eyes.

When someone thinks too little of me I always remind myself that there are other people who think too much of me. And the court of public opinion isn't what matters—what matters is what God thinks. He's the Audience of One. I want to hear Him say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

Here's a warning. The more famous a man becomes the harder it is to cultivate and retain virtue. The bigger your image, the more it tends to eclipse your character. Instead of building character, some people just build image. A celebrity is known for what he does in one area of life, while God looks at who we are in all areas of our lives. People will bow down before the king even when he's been a jerk, because he's the king.




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**Our lives are affected by *little choices*, that have cumulative effects which can result in either moral strength or moral disaster.**

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But God is never fooled. I can't con him. He sees me at my worst—and yet he still loves me. If everyone else thinks I'm a loser but my heart is right with him, I'm a winner. If everyone else thinks I'm a winner but I'm not right with God, I'm a loser. God isn't fooled—he doesn't believe our press clippings, not the good ones and not the bad ones.

On the judgment day I won't stand before literary critics or book-lovers and you won't stand before the media or football fans. We'll all stand before the Audience of One. And in that day it will be his assessment of our lives, and no one else's, that will matter.

God's eyes are always open. Our lives are an open book. Jesus said what we do in secret will be shouted from the housetops. Our president has learned that—and there's plenty of people in both parties that have fallen into scandal. There's no such thing as a private moment. Jesus said Satan was a liar, and his biggest lie is, "No one's looking. You can get away with this." How about you—is there scandal brewing in your life?

Years ago I researched the founding of America. In several of the thirteen colonies it was a stated requirement that any government leader must believe in God, the afterlife and a judgment in which he would be held accountable for his actions. The point is, if you don't believe in those things, you will think you can sin and get away with it. Well, God says we can't. No exceptions.

Image is how we look on the outside to people who don't know us. Character is what we are in the dark when no one but God sees us. Character is what we really are. When David was being considered for king, people thought he was too young and too scrawny. God says, "Do not consider his appearance or his height... The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

How many people do we admire from a distance but when we see them up close we lose their respect? Others you don't admire until you get to know them and then they

gain your respect. A great goal is that as people know us better, they would respect us more, not less.

Fame is deceptive, isn't it? There's lots of school teachers and nurses and people who work with kids and old women down on their knees praying—they aren't going to be in the papers, and they're doing things more important than you and I are doing. Don't be infatuated with yourself.

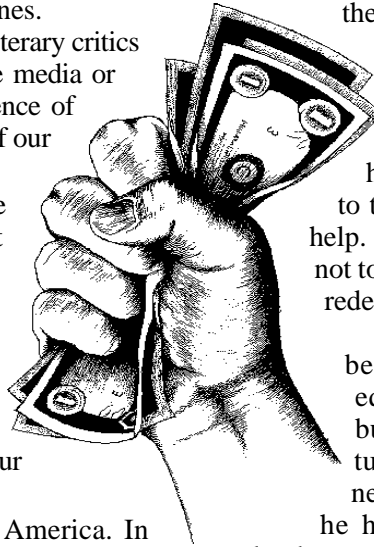
It takes a lot more sacrifice to be a hero than to be a celebrity—and that begins at home, being a hero to your wife, your children, to the weak and needy and poor God tells us to help. Jesus, the Lord of the universe, said "I came not to be served, but to serve, and to give my life to redeem the many."

Philippians 2:6-8 tells about Jesus, "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!"

Your football career will come to an end, but God's will for you to walk with him won't. God has called us to a lifetime of servanthood. When we're used to being served, and when we don't go out of our way to serve others, we can't be Christlike. He's a servant. We should be servants.

Scripture says "Whatever we do, we should do it for the Lord and not men. Whatever we do, we should do it all to the glory of God." He's the king—we're the servants. Not everyone is called to be a star. But everyone is called to be a servant. God says, "It is required of a steward that he be found faithful."

**Prayer:** "Lord, help these men to be faithful today, to do their job, to do it with all their strength and all their focus. Help us all to remember you are the Audience of One, that there is no such thing as a private moment. Help us to live out our lives for your glory and use the platforms you've given us not to exalt ourselves, but to serve others and to serve you."



## The GAP is coming to the Northwest!

The Genocide Awareness Project (GAP) is coming to Northwest colleges during September and October, 1999. GAP is a prolife project sponsored by the Center for BioEthical Reform (818-360-2477). Preparations have been made to bring huge, thought-provoking signs related to abortion to the heart of the college campuses. (For pictures and further information refer to our Spring 1999 EPM newsletter or visit our website.) The Northwest schedule is as follows:

- **University of British Columbia:** Sept. 27-30, 1999
- **University of Washington:** Oct. 4-7
- **University of Oregon:** Oct. 11-13
- **Multnomah Bible College:** Oct. 15
- **Portland State University:** Oct. 18-20
- **Oregon State University:** Oct. 20-22
- **Washington State University:** Oct. 26-27
- **University of Idaho:** Oct. 28-29

EPM staff worker, Ron Norquist, participated in the GAP project at University of Florida last January and had this to say "I have never experienced better quantity or quality conversation with people about life issues than I did that week." EPM is participating financially in this Northwest project and we ask you to pray with us for God's truth to prevail, hearts to be open and the gospel to be shared.



# World Relief in Turkey

(Report from World Relief—September 1999)

On August 17<sup>th</sup> 1999, at approximately 3:15 a.m., the small town of Izmit, Turkey, and the province surrounding, sustained one of the worst disasters in human history. In 45 seconds, 60,000 buildings were destroyed or damaged; 40,000 people perished or are now considered missing; 30,000 people suffered injuries; and 200,000 people found themselves homeless.

As Clive Calver, President of World Relief, stated after arriving in Turkey, "This is no ordinary disaster. It's colossal... The sheer level of devastation is incredible. In ten years' time, Turkey will still be recovering from [those] 45 seconds."



Heavy rains continue as the people of this community try to rebuild. Unfortunately, most of the survivors have limited options and find their only housing arrangement is sleeping in the open or in a makeshift tent. Daily rations of food, medicine and clothing are being distributed by a handful of churches but supplies are depleted. Financial assistance is needed to purchase household supplies, infant care items, personal hygiene items and emergency shelter.

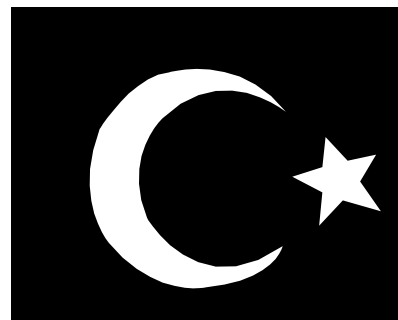
In a critical meeting arranged by the church leaders of Turkey, the governor of the affected province around Izmit has asked World Relief to erect a camp of up to 1,000 tents and/or semi-permanent housing for families living in the area. World Relief has undertaken this project. Preparation of surface terrain began last week.

Truckload after truckload of gravel was dumped onto the soil in order to

provide protection against the effects of rain. After the ground was prepared, emergency latrines and shower facilities were assembled. World Relief's immediate objective is to erect 500 tents in the upcoming weeks to provide for people who currently live in makeshift shelters. Once the tents are occupied, it is anticipated that World Relief will be responsible for the food security and medical needs of the occupants.

In the upcoming months, World Relief intends to pursue the more desirable option of purchasing commercially made units to house displaced families over the harsh and wet winter months. These winterized units are insulated, have built-in interior and exterior lights and can be stacked into apartment type units if needed. The cost is approximately \$3,450 for each unit. Due to the extent of the devastation, it has been estimated that World Relief will need \$2.5 million to help the people of Turkey begin

to recover from the effects of the earthquake. This includes the continuing distribution of food and supplies, setting up the tent camp and providing adequate shelter before winter arrives.



World Vision U.S., World Vision Canada, and World Concern have all designated World Relief as the lead disaster relief agency during this crisis.

The Christians in Turkey want to use this time of desperate need to gain credibility in the eyes of their predominantly Muslim community. "By providing high quality care to the earthquake victims and families in need of shelter we... will put the church in a very positive light," reported Stephen Houston, World Relief's disaster response coordinator for Turkey, just after the meeting with church leaders in Istanbul. "Thus we will bring glory to God while relieving human suffering."

Please pray for: 1) the injured and those who have lost—or are missing—family members; 2) wisdom and strength for staff and church members providing assistance; 3) opportunities for the fellowships in Turkey to share the Gospel through practical demonstrations of Christ's love and compassion.

Funds are urgently needed. Your gifts can be given to World Relief through EPM or directly to World Relief, P.O. Box WRC, Wheaton, IL 60189.

"O Jesus, Master and Center and End of all, how long before that Glory is Thine which has so long waited Thee? Now there is no thought of Thee among me; then there shall be thought for nothing else. Now other men are praised; then none shall care for any other's merits. Hasten, hasten, Glory of Heaven, take Thy crown, subdue Thy kingdom, enthrall Thy creatures."

—Jim Elliot

(found in his Bible, after his death in 1956)

# Liar, Liar

## *Seven degrees on the downward staircase of honesty*

By J. Budziszewski

(This article appeared in *WORLD* magazine, August 28, 1999.)

The filthiness of our national politics has brought to my mind a question put to me nearly 20 years ago by one of my teachers. "Don't you think there is more lying in politics than there used to be?" he asked. "Why do you think that this is happening?"

At the time, young oaf that I was, I thought his question silly. But after thinking to these 20 years, I would like to try to answer it.

Our statesmen do lie more, and for same reasons that most of us lie more. There are seven degrees of descent on the downward staircase of honesty. Not all are at the bottom, but most of us are at a level higher than we admit.

The first and topmost stair is simple. The greater our trespasses, the more we have to lie about. We lie about money, sex, and our children because we sin about money, sex, and our children. A turning point in both public and private life came in the early '70's, when we legalized the private use of lethal violence against babies yet unborn. The justification of such staggering betrayal takes more lies than there are words to tell them.

The second stair is self-protection. Lies are weaklings; they need bodyguards. Even the smallest prevarication needs a ring of perjuries to keep from being seen. But every new lie needs its own protective ring. Pretending to be a liar is smothered in layers of mendacity, onion shells, as thick as flannel blankets.

Third down is habituation. We make habits of everything; it is part of our nature. Courage and magnanimity become habits, and so does the chewing of gum. In time lying too becomes a habit. After you have lied awhile for need, you begin to lie without need. It becomes second nature. You hardly notice that you do it. Asked why, you can give no reason. You have crossed the border between lying and being a liar.

Underneath the previous stair is self-deception, for beyond a certain point, a person starts losing track of truth. Your heart cannot bear to believe that you lie as hugely as you do, so to relieve the rubbing, itching, pricking needles of remorse, you half-believe your own lies.

Rationalization follows next in order. As your grasp on the truth continues to weaken, you come to blame its weakness on truth itself. It's so slippery, so elusive, who can hold it? It changes shape, moves around, just won't sit still. Not at all fair of it, but everything is shades of gray anyway. How silly to believe in absolutes. Truth is what we let each other get away with, that's all.

Sixth comes technique. Lying becomes a craft. For example, you discover that a great falsehood repeated over and over works even better than a small one. Nobody can believe that you would tell such a whopper; therefore, you have a motive to make every lie a whopper. This technique, called the Big Lie after a remark in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, is not a monopoly of politicians; probably no one uses it in public life before he has practiced it in private. Our American variation on the Big Lie works by numbers instead of size. If you lie about everything, no matter how small, nobody can believe you would tell so many lies. The whistleblowers exhaust themselves trying to keep up with you, and eventually they

stumble so many times that people must be the liars. By the time a lie is found out, the virtue of honesty has become so discredited that no one cares whether you are lying or not. "They all do it."

The seventh and bottom-most stair is that morality turns upside-down. Why does this happen? Because the moment lying is accepted instead of condemned, it has to be required. If it is just another way to win, then in refusing to lie for the cause or the company, you aren't doing your job.

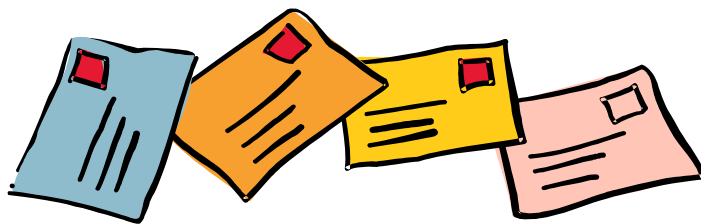
This is where we are, and this is who we are becoming. The sin is not just in our politicians, they came from us and we led them. How serious are we about truth? Do we dare finally yield

our hearts, words, and deeds to Truth Himself, to be scraped, scoured, and made *honest* until they can give back His light?

*J. Budziszewski is the author of The Revenge of Conscience. He has taught at the University of Texas for over fifteen years. An adult Sunday school teacher and lay Christian counselor, he left his Christian upbringing and abandoned his faith shortly after entering college and did not return to the Lord until ten years later. This experience made him acutely aware of the struggles Christian students face when entering college and prompted him to write another excellent book, How to Stay Christian in College.*



# Letters to EPM



Dear Mr. Alcorn,

I'm a fourteen-year-old missionary kid living in the Philippines. Both *Deadline* and *Dominion* struck thoughts in me—they hit spots of me that I'm finally beginning to understand. Not only did they intrigue and inspire me, but they helped me. Not only did they make me laugh and cry, but they made me think and pray. And I know you've heard things like that probably millions upon times, but I want to tell it anyway.

See, *Dominion* helped me understand a little bit about myself. My dad is from Florida and my mom is from Singapore. Being a mix between the two, at times it can evoke feelings of rootlessness. I'm not home in Florida and I'm not home in Singapore. Not only that, but I'm living in a completely foreign country, which strangely enough, I'm coming to consider my home. I've lived here all my life, besides furloughs and visits with relatives.

Although I'm not black I could identify with the characters in *Dominion*. I could identify with what Clarence meant all those times he tried to explain racial issues to Jake. When I go to the States, at times I feel the way he felt. When I'm in Singapore, at times I understand his feeling of difference and even rejection.

While *Dominion* understood me, *Deadline* was maybe the most powerful

novel I've ever read. When God says, "Well done, good and faithful servant," I must have gone through a dozen tissues. And when Jake receives Christ and you see Finney in heaven rejoicing, I laughed and cried. It was all so real.

I'm rather surprised I suddenly told you all this—all about how I've felt as a missionary kid and as a mixed kid. I just tried to explain to you feelings I'm only now beginning to be able to identify with. I thought you'd know how I felt because you depicted those same feelings so well in *Dominion*. You created characters so real they jumped off the pages and understood me in a way that few people have been able to understand me.

God used you in a wonderful way. I can't wait to see you in Heaven. All praise, honor, glory, and splendor be to the God of Love!

J.K., Philippines

Dear Mr. Alcorn,

It feels strange to write to you, but I feel it is the right thing to do. I feel that I must let you know that *Deadline* has had a strong impact on my life.

Looking back now, I know the Lord reached out for me many times during the years. Finally He reached me through your book. I became a newborn Christian. I found your book in the library. I lent it because it was a thriller. I had no idea that it had a religious message too.

At first, reading it, the religious color of it didn't really appeal to me. But at the end when Jake invited the Lord into his life, I did also. This experience was great, and the first 2 or 3 weeks were like honeymoon weeks. Also, my point-of-view on life changed radically.

These four years have had their ups and downs, but now I think I finally found a good fellowship. So I just wanted to let you know how the Lord used you and your book in my life! Thank you.

God bless you and your good work,  
A.H., The Netherlands

Dear Sir,

I've just finished reading Randy Alcorn's book entitled *Deadline*. I don't know when I've had any book but the Bible move me as this did. I wish to thank all those involved in the Prison Book Project for getting such good material and making it possible for people to enjoy it even in here. Please continue to obtain and send worthwhile decent reading material of this caliber. Thank you so much.

Sincerely,  
J.P., prison inmate

I just finished reading *Edge of Eternity* and have to say that I was totally captivated, the message of salvation was so clear, and the characters took on traits of all of us in some form or another. As much as I enjoyed *Deadline* and *Dominion* this one hit the spot. It will be reread many times. Thanks for your hard work.

In Christ Jesus,  
P.S., Fergus Falls, MN

Mr. Alcorn,

I just wanted to drop you a note to encourage you. My family and I are from Cleveland, OH but are currently living in Asia trying, however feebly, to make a difference with our lives.

We just finished *Edge of Eternity* and my family greatly enjoyed it. It was wonderful fodder for our "family night" times as it brought up so many points of discussion. My oldest son (age 7) asked when we finished the last page, "But where is the rest of the story???"

I told him, "If Mr. Alcorn were here, I imagine he would tell you to write the rest of it with your life."

Know that you are appreciated, and not just by the Audience of One!

In Him,  
BE, Asia



# Sin, Blame & Forgiveness

By Randy Alcorn

*The following letter and response were exchanged by email.*

Randy,

I really appreciate your article "Psychology: Servant or Master?" on your EPM website [www.epm.org].

One thing I would change though is in the section about "Victim Mentality." You state that, "We see life as unfair and ourselves as its victims. We focus on the offenses others have done against us. And we fail to realize all these offenses pale in comparison to our own offenses against God, who not only forgives us, but both requires and enables us to forgive others and move forward free from the past."

It is true we offend God, and it is true that this is grievous to the extreme, but the offenses that are done against us are wrong, simply because they are like our own offenses—wrong because they are done against God. In response to the wrongs done against us in the past, God is pained himself and is pained for us, his children. To imply that our pain is not real or valid because we ourselves have done wrong would be to negate the entire human race and the wrongs we do each other. The offenses of others do not "pale

in comparison" for they are exactly the same—they are sin. Sin hurts, sin maims, sin destroys—it affects the victim of it, who is himself a sinner.

Dismissing our pain by a comparison to our own sins certainly does not comfort, nor does it show God as having been with the victim in the abuse (how ever BIG or small the abuse was in our "shades-of-sin" estimation). We are comforted not by comparing our sin to His holiness, but by His sovereign,

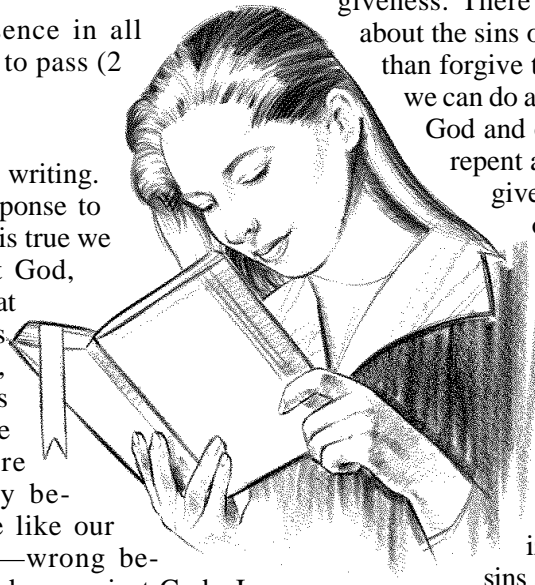
powerful presence in all that He brings to pass (2 Cor 1:3,4).

Dear Jim,

Thanks for writing. You say in response to my article, "It is true we offend against God, and it is true that this is grievous to the extreme, but the offenses that are done against us are wrong, simply because they are like our own offenses—wrong because they are done against God. In response to the wrongs done against us in the past, God is pained himself and is pained for us, his children."

I totally agree, and see nothing in the article that suggests otherwise.

Then you say, "To imply that our pain is not real or valid because we



fostered by modern psychology and counseling methods—should be put in proportion, and should not dominate our thinking and overshadow us, keeping us from forgiveness. There is little we can do

about the sins others do to us, other than forgive them. There is much we can do about our sins against God and others—confess and repent and embrace the forgiveness of God and call

on his power to live differently. Yet what we tend to do is be preoccupied with wrongs (including real wrongs) others have done against us, while minimizing, rationalizing and denying our sins against God and others.

We become embittered at how God has allowed us to suffer at others' hands, rarely considering how others have suffered at our hands.

You say, "The offenses of others do not 'pale in comparison' for they are exactly the same—they are sin."

Let me develop Matt. 18:21-35, the main passage I cite after my statement about our sins against God paling in comparison to others' sins against us. I believe this is a clear teaching of this passage, which begins with Peter raising a question about how much we should be willing to forgive others for their offenses toward us. Jesus responds by telling the story of the servant who was forgiven a huge debt by the king but refused to forgive a small debt by a fellow servant.

As in most of the parables, I believe the king represents God, to whom we owe an infinite debt and against whom our offenses are worse than anything done against us, precisely because of God's holiness and our lack thereof. I was not saying others' sins against God are always less than ours, Jim, but simply that their sins against us are far less than ours against God. That's a critical distinction. Yes, all sin is ultimately against God. David said, "against you and you only I have sinned," but that doesn't mean he didn't sin against Uriah. We must understand that because

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**There is little we can do about the sins others do to us, other than forgive them. There is much we can do about our sins against God and others—confess and repent and embrace the forgiveness of God.**

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ourselves have done wrong would be to negate the entire human race and the wrongs we do each other."

Now we're not tracking, Jim. It sounds like you're thinking I was saying that the offenses against us aren't wrong. I'm not saying that at all—of course these offenses are wrong. That is the very meaning of "offenses." I was not implying our pain is not real or valid, but simply that what others have done against us—which is what we always tend to focus on, a wrong focus often

of who God is and who we are, someone's sins against me are never equal to my sins against God (nor his sins against God).

Take a look at Matthew 18. This man owes 10,000 talents, roughly six million dollars. For a servant in that economy, it would take something like 190,000 years to work off the debt and its interest. This is a huge amount, more than any person would ever owe another person, far more than he could even begin to pay off. This is an infinite debt, meant to convey the immeasurable size of our sins against a holy God.

The servant begs the king for mercy; he says, "be patient and I will pay back everything." Of course, we really can't pay back God for our sins, and it is arrogance which thinks our sins small enough and our selves big enough to pay them off. That is a fatal problem in the man which ultimately brings him down.

Now, in the story, the king takes pity and forgives the debt and lets the man go. The central teachings at this point of the story are: 1) He owed a debt so great it could never be repaid, and there was nothing he could do to earn forgiveness. The Master was completely within his rights to punish the servant forever; 2) He granted forgiveness purely out of grace, in response to what appeared to be the servant's genuine recognition of his sin.

Now, what happens next is that the man goes out and finds a fellow servant, who owes him a very small debt—the amount owed is 1/600,000 of what he had owed the king. This is the kind of analogy I'm making in the article, Jim, the one Jesus outlines in this story. And this is my basis for disagreeing with you when you say others' sins against us "do not pale in comparison to ours against God—they are exactly the same, they are sin." Of course they are sin, but I believe this

passage contradicts your notion, because of the vast difference in the amounts of money owed, on which the story hinges. There is a deliberate emphasis placed on this difference, and the debts are clearly not "exactly the same," as you put it.

The first man's offenses against the King were infinitely greater than the second man's offenses against the first man.



That doesn't mean the second man's offenses weren't real, that he owed no debt to the first man. Of course he did. But while real, his sins against that man were not at all equal to the man's sins against his king. That's my point in the article, and I think the passage is very clear on this. (Even from the point of view of sheer numbers of sins, all my sins are against God, while only some, usually a relatively small number, of another person's sins are against me. That's not the only distinction, but it is one of them.)

You would expect that the first man, touched by the forgiving grace of his master, will extend that forgiving grace to the second man. But he doesn't. He demands payment, and resolves to punish him (Matt. 18:28).

In verse 29 his fellow servant falls to his knees and begs him, just as he had begged the king. Now surely his heart

will be touched. But it isn't! Verse 30 says, "he refused" (Greek = persisted in his unwillingness). He stubbornly refused to forgive. He threw the man into prison (paralleling our unwillingness to forgive and attempts to inflict pain on those who have hurt us).

Now, when the king hears of this, in essence he says, "Had my forgiveness really touched your heart you would have extended it to your brother." He sees then that the man had not embraced his grace, and throws him to the torturers, because if we do not embrace the king's grace, accept his forgiveness, we must pay for our own sins, and since our debt is infinite, the punishment is eternal.

I believe the story teaches 1) Our debt to God is infinitely beyond our capacity to repay, and 2) Our debt to God is infinitely greater than any person's debt to us. In other words, any offenses against us (real as they may be) are small change, small potatoes. Not in and of themselves, but in comparison to our offenses against God. This is what I'm talking about in terms of others' sins against us "paling in comparison" to our sins against God. Isn't that a clear teaching of this passage? (If not, what is?)

The final point of the story, I think, is that when we truly experience God's forgiveness for our sins, it will transform us into forgiving people. To forgive someone, I call upon my faith in the grace of God in Christ's atonement, by which I not only receive forgiveness, but give it. In fact, the real test of my forgiveness is my ability to forgive others. In Luke 7 Jesus said of the immoral woman, "she loves much because she has been forgiven much."

This comes out of a sense of proportion as to our sins against God in comparison to others' sins against us.

Those who think they have little to be forgiven for by God never find it easy to forgive others. Those who forgive freely are those who understand that since God has forgiven them much more, they cannot, must not withhold forgiveness from others.

Of course, a woman who is molested and raped and beaten should never deny the reality of a man's sin against her—this is not about denial, any more than the solution of Matthew 18 would have been for the first servant to deny the second servant's debt to him. The solution wasn't to deny sin, but to forgive sin.

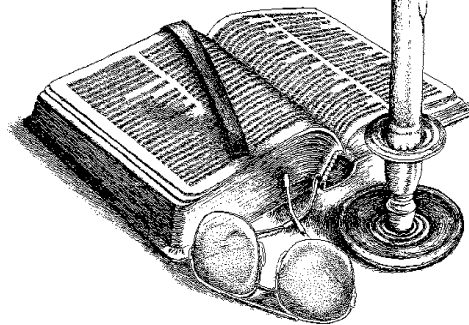
Seeing that the darkness of her own sin has put her in infinite debt to God, and that God has graciously forgiven that debt, can free and empower the badly abused woman to forgive those who have sinned terribly against her.

The unforgiving person is obsessed with others' offenses against him, demonstrating that he "doesn't get it"—he doesn't grasp the meaning of Matthew 18. If we "cannot" forgive others, we need to ask ourselves, "Have I underestimated the extent of God's holiness, and the extent of my own sins against God, and the extent of the forgiving grace of God for me?" And, "if God has forgiven me my infinite debt, am I not obliged to forgive others their finite debt, no matter how much it hurt me and how wrong they were?" Indeed, if we are unwilling to do this, we demonstrate clearly that we have not been transformed by the forgiveness of God.

Ultimately, the one thing that is costlier than forgiving is not forgiving. Bitterness is a horrible price to pay, and by minimizing our sins against God and others, and maximizing others' sins against us, we set ourselves up for bitterness.

I have seen many people helped through Christian counseling, but it is a sad thing to see people who have gone through Christian counseling and come out "in touch" with not just their own pain, but a deep bitterness and suspicion toward others. Ironically, they seldom afflict punishment successfully on those they are embittered against (who sometimes have been terribly wrong, and sometimes haven't been). It is their own soul that's poisoned, and sometimes they end up hurting people whose offenses against them they've blown way out of proportion.

No wonder our churches have so many people always expecting to be wronged and never being surprised, always cataloguing the sins of others against them, whether forty years ago or yesterday or those anticipated tomorrow. The life without grace is a miserable life. This is what I mean by the "victim mentality." Of course I don't mean no one is ever a victim—I'm talking about an outlook, a posture, a self-fulfilling or imaginary state of mind.



Perhaps you have not spent much time with people who see themselves as perpetual victims, people endlessly obsessed by wrongs others have done to them, whether by their spouse, their employer, their pastor, the policeman, the checker at the grocery store, the neighbor whose branches fell on their side of the property line, etc., etc., etc. I have, and I long for those people to understand and

be liberated by what Jesus said in Matthew 18.

You say in your letter, Jim, "Sin hurts, sin maims, sin destroys—it affects the victim of it, who is himself a sinner."

I fully agree.

You say, "Dismissing our pain by a comparison to our own sins certainly does not comfort."

The point of Matthew 18 is not to dismiss pain, but to put offenses in proportion and perspective.

You say, "We are comforted not by comparing our sin to His holiness, but by His sovereign, powerful presence in all that He brings to pass" (2 Cor 1:3,4).

I don't think the primary point of Matthew 18 is comfort at all (and that wasn't the point of my article, which was a critique of psychology), but perspective that leads to an understanding of sin and grace, and frees us from self-preoccupation to forgive as God has forgiven us. Once when I was writing an article on comfort and encouragement, I developed the 2 Cor. 1 passage, since that was the subject. But when writing on psychology's inadequacies on points of sin and self-perception and forgiveness and grace, as I was, I would still have to go to the principles at the heart of Matthew 18.

Hope this helps, Jim. I wish you God's very best.

Randy Alcorn

## What's Unique About Christianity?

During a British conference on comparative religions, experts from around the world debated what, if any, belief was unique to the Christian faith. They began eliminating possibilities. Incarnation? Other religions had different versions of gods appearing in human form. Resurrection? Again, other religions had accounts of return from death. The debate went on for some time until C. S. Lewis wandered into the room. "What's the rumpus about?" he asked, and heard in reply that his colleagues were discussing Christianity's unique contribution among the world religions. Lewis responded, "Oh, that's easy. It's grace."

After some discussion, the conferees had to agree. The notion of God's love coming to us free of charge, no strings attached, seems to go against every instinct of humanity. The Buddhist eight-fold path, the Hindu doctrine of karma, the Jewish covenant, and Muslim code of law—each of these offers a way to earn approval. Only Christianity dares to make God's love unconditional.

Excerpted from *What's So Amazing About Grace?*  
by Philip Yancey, page 45.

# World Inequality Facts



*Inequalities in the distribution of wealth are highlighted in a report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) published June 7, 1999. Among the facts and figures contained in the report, drawn from a variety of UN and other official sources, are the following:*

The fortune of the world's three richest people exceeds the gross national product of the poorest countries and their 600 million inhabitants. The report does not name the three, but according to the latest issue of Forbes Magazine, they are Bill Gates of Microsoft, financier Warren Buffet and Paul Allen, also of Microsoft, who have total assets of 156 billion dollars. Most of the 600 million live in sub-Saharan Africa.

The world's richest 200 people have more than doubled their wealth in the four years to 1998. Their assets exceed the combined income of 41 percent of the world's population.

More than 80 countries have an income per head lower than ten years ago, despite slight improvements in health and education.

The disparity in income between the top fifth and the bottom fifth of the world's population has increased from 60:1 to 74:1 in the past decade.

The United States counts 26.3 percent of its population as internet users; the equivalent figure for South Asia is 0.04 percent, for Arab states 0.2 percent.

A Bangladeshi would have to save all his wages for eight years in order to buy a computer; an American would need to save just a month's salary.

One-fifth of the population of the countries with the highest income per head control 86 percent of the global GNP, 80 percent of exports and 74 percent of telephone lines.

Organized crime is estimated to make 1,500 billion dollars a year. Sexual exploitation of women and girls makes seven billion.

On the world's currency markets 1,500 billion dollars are exchanged every day.

Pressures of competition have brought a boom in the number of workers without contracts. In Colombia, for instance, they account for 39 percent of the workforce.

Tanzania spends nine times its health budget on repaying its debts and four times its education budget.

In the Human Development Table, in which 174 countries are given an index measuring their achievements in terms

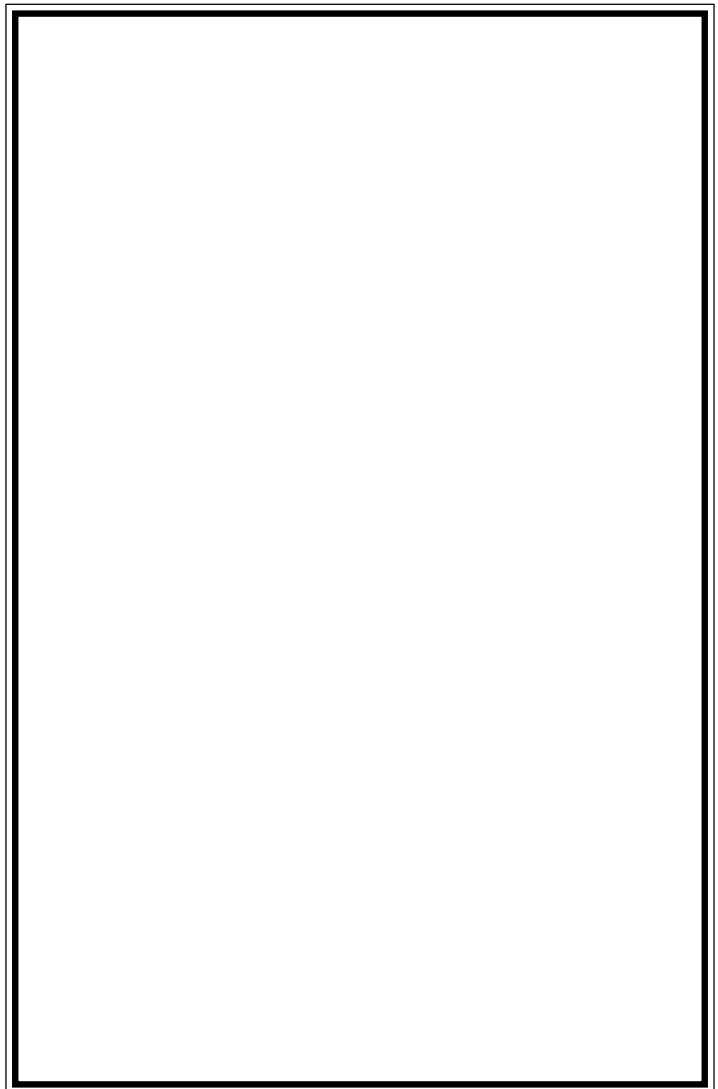
of life expectancy, educational attainment and adjusted real income, Canada, Norway and the United States are the top three, followed in turn by Japan, Belgium, Sweden, Australia, the Netherlands, Iceland and Britain.

The bottom 10 countries in terms of human development as measured by the UNDP index, are, in descending order, Central African Republic, Mali, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Niger and Sierra Leone.

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*"Jesus said that we will always have the poor with us; therefore, let's do all we can to reach as many as possible with the glorious gospel. Perhaps we can't reach all of them, but we can certainly try to minister the truth of John 14:6 and Christlike loving care!"*

*Doug Nichols, Action International*



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## What 'Pro-Life' Means:

Ö To be pro-life is to recognize the inherent dignity and value of every individual human life.

Ö To be pro-life is to acknowledge that all of us are created equal and endowed by our Creator with the unalienable right to life and that governments are instituted to secure that right, as stated in our beloved Declaration of Independence.

Ö To be pro-life is to understand that abortion is the direct and deliberate killing of a baby prior to birth, an act that can never be justified. It is to know that medical procedures necessary to save a mother's life, that cause the unintentional death of her unborn baby, do not constitute a direct abortion.

Ö To be pro-life is to realize that unless every innocent life, whether an embryonic baby in a petri dish or the son or daughter of a rapist, is safe and protected under the law, none of us is safe in our homes, on the streets, in a schoolyard, in a hospital or a nursing home.

*(Excerpted from "What 'Pro-Life' Means," The Dallas Morning News, Texas Viewpoints, 8/1/1999 by Colleen Parro)*



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