



Quarterly Newsletter
Spring 1999

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

Y2K Update: Good News/Bad News

by Randy Alcorn

The two most well-known acronyms in the church today may be WWJD and Y2K. The first (What Would Jesus Do?) is not only much more important than the second, it is the question which should dictate our response to Y2K.

In the previous article on Y2K (Fall 1998) I cited many passages of Scripture, and referred readers to our website for nineteen pages of biblical perspectives on any possible crisis. These Scriptures are foundational to properly responding to the information in this article. If you haven't read them, I recommend you do. It's vital that we bring God's perspective to Y2K, which has great potential to confuse and misdirect the body of Christ.

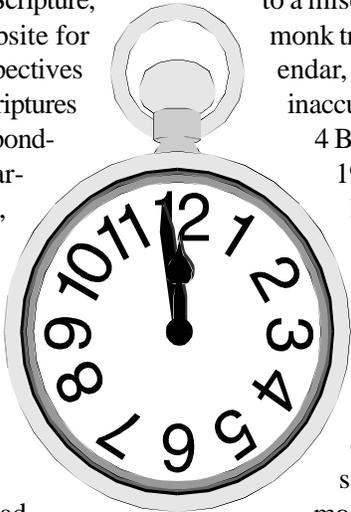
Millennial Madness

First, all the "millennial madness" is foolishness. God—not "fate" or "destiny" or mindless forces—is in control of the universe. I don't believe God cares a bit about whether a year has three zeros or two or one. No matter what your eschatology is—and Christians have different ones—it should not determine your view of Y2K.

If you think God cares about the beginning of the new millennium, consider that the new millennium does not begin January 1, 2000, it begins a year later. 1 AD was the

beginning of this millennium (there was no year 0). The first 2000 years AD isn't over until the end of 2000, which is midnight December 31, 2000, not 1999.

If you think that the 2000 year anniversary of the birth of Christ is a big deal to God, guess what? It's already past. Due to a miscalculation by a sixth century monk trying to set up the modern calendar, the birth of Christ was dated inaccurately. It actually happened in 4 BC, meaning that by the end of 1997 the 2000 year anniversary had come and gone.



The Basic Question

Will Y2K be the end of life as we know it, a meltdown of society, with the whole power grid going down and an inability to restart it? My guess is that in most places the lights will stay on,

and where they go out they will be restored fairly soon. In some places there may be longer power outages that cause serious problems.

Of course, I may well be wrong (hence the word "guess"). The situation may be a little better—or perhaps a lot worse—than I think. Frankly, everyone else is guessing too, no matter how certain they sound when they assure you "nothing will go wrong" or "it will be the end of the world."

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I consider Y2K to be a serious problem, but I think there may be some reasons for relative optimism, at least in contrast to the worst case scenarios. Certainly there is no room for presumption.

I've collected some new research and I'm going to share some bad news and some good news about Y2K. No matter if you're from the "no problem" or "insurmountable problem" school of Y2K, try to view this information on its own merit. You may be surprised. Since I like the good news better I'll end with that. First, the bad news.

The Bad News

There have been too many test failures related to programs and hardware that have been manually shifted over to 2000 to believe *nothing* will go wrong. The question is how many things will go wrong, how serious they will be, and whether or not they will have a domino and long-term effect.

On January 6, 1999 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) officials urged the emergency management, fire and emergency services communities and the public to get ready now for Y2K. They said the public should be responsible for their own preparations and not assume others will take care of them (<http://www.fema.gov/nwz99/99001.htm>).

The United States Department of Agriculture's website on food supply contains some optimistic material, but also warns about possible interruptions of the "farm to fork chain" which "can mean more expensive, less available food supplies." Another article on the site says, "There appears to be some risk of year 2000 disruptions to U.S. imports of foreign food, especially perishable commodities. . . . The Coast Guard has also initiated an 'outreach' program to all ships entering U.S. ports and in mid-1999 will

not allow ships which are not Y2K compliant to enter U.S. waters." (<http://www.usda.gov/aphis/FSWG/map.html>)

In December, the *Wall Street Journal* reported on the Coast Guard's concern about Y2K's effect on seaports, through which 95% of the goods imported into the country come:

Unable to differentiate 00 from the year 1900, computer programs and systems aboard ships and at port facilities could malfunction or completely shut down, the Coast Guard said. It said the glitch could cause, among other things, the loss of main engine operations and the mishandling of hazardous materials.

In their SEC filings and other disclosures, many businesses are beginning to quietly acknowledge they are uncertain

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about their ability to conduct business because of Y2K. General Motors says, "The inability of GM or significant external interfaces of GM to adequately address Year 2000 issues could cause disruption of GM's business operations." (<http://207.238.19.242/cdetails.cfm?ID=5015>)

Chevron says, "The company already has developed and maintains extensive contingency plans to respond to equipment failures, emergencies and business interruptions. However, contingency planning for Year 2000 issues is complicated by the possibility of multiple and simultaneous incidents, which could significantly impede

efforts to respond to emergencies and resume normal business functions. Such incidents may be outside of the company's control, for example, if mission-critical third parties do not successfully address their own material Year 2000 problems." (<http://207.238.19.242/cdetails.cfm?ID=4943>)

The Red Cross has issued warnings concerning Y2K and people's needs to be prepared for emergency contingencies. It says,

Most people anticipate Y2K problems may happen December 31, 1999, at midnight. Many experts predict that the problem is more likely to be a persistent one over a few years rather than a single "crash." . . . Experts who spoke at the Senate hearings believe that there may be localized disruptions. For example, in some areas, electrical power may be unavailable for some time. Manufacturing and production industries may be disrupted. Roads may be closed or gridlocked if traffic signals are disrupted. Electronic credit card transactions may not be processed. Telephone systems may not work. (<http://www.redcross.org/disaster/safety/y2k.html>. This article includes a checklist of things to do to prepare.)

A report appeared in WORLDNET DAILY on January 11, saying that the National Guard is acting in light of the possibility the U.S. power grid will go down in 2000, and that oil imports will slow down or cease. It says,

The National Guard is planning an exercise to practice a full mobilization of all 480,000 members of the National Guard. It will take place May 1 without the use of phones, television, or radio. The exercise is planned to prepare for a possible mobilization in the event computer failures from the Y2K bug cause major disruptions of power,



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telecommunications, transportation and banking.

The nation's Y2K czar acknowledged in a speech, quoted on the newswires, that preparations are being made for the possibility of martial law as a result of Y2K problems. For the government to consider this possibility suggests there must be persuasive evidence that things *could* get serious.

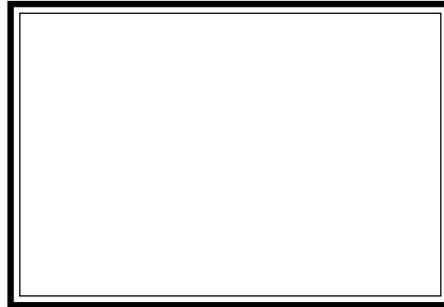
As chairman of the Senate committee investigating Y2K, Senator Robert Bennett continues to take the problem very seriously and is amazed many others still don't. (<http://www.y2ktoday.com/modules/home/default.asp?id=736&feature=&type=>) The March 8, 1999 *U.S. News and World Report* referred to the latest report from the Y2K Senate Committee as "startling, even going so far as to urge Americans to stockpile at least small amounts of food and water to protect against expected brownouts." Senators Bennett and Christopher Dodd predict in the report that Y2K will be "one of the most serious and potentially devastating events this nation has ever encountered." They describe the problem as "diabolical."

The Senate and House recently made an official decree that "in order to provide the public and technology professionals with an additional day, prior to the start of the workweek, to begin repairs on failed computer systems caused by the Year 2000 computer problem, the New Year's holiday in the year 2000 shall be deemed to occur on January 3, 2000."

SEC Chief Accountant Lynn Turner says "many companies are still not complying" with Y2K disclosure requirements (*World*, February 27, 1999, page 11). More than half haven't revealed the cost of their Y2K repairs, and close to half won't divulge what they plan to do if their companies malfunction. The same article says Senator John McCain has introduced a new bill to limit the amount of damages plaintiffs can collect due to Y2K.

Even if someone is optimistic about Y2K progress in America, the international problem appears more serious. There's a lot of old computers spread around the world on which economies have become dependent, and none of these countries has

the resources to put into correcting the problem that are now being used by American businesses. So America could come out on top in Y2K repairs, but a lot of the world could still suffer. Speaking of the world scene, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said, "Energy supplies, supplies on supermarket shelves, public transport and health care will all be affected."



The Department of Defense has recently sent experts to Russia in order to determine the level of support needed by Russia for Y2K remediation, particularly the nuclear weapons systems. (<http://www.fcw.com/pubs/fcw/1999/0208/webdodrussia-2-8-99.html>)

Ed Yourdon, author of over twenty books in the computer field, wrote one of the early Y2K books, in which he took a careful and restrained look at the possibilities. Yourdon has just come out with an updated assessment, in which he predicts "we're going to suffer a year of technological disruptions, followed by a decade of depression." (<http://www.yourdon.com/articles/y2koutlook.html>) He says, "I believe that Y2K will be equivalent to throwing a million monkey wrenches into the 'engine' of the global economy, and that it will lead to a depression similar in severity and duration to the Great Depression."

Recent news articles have stated that Venezuela's oil refineries will not be Y2K compliant and it will likely be unable to export oil for some time. They also say that 17% of U.S. oil comes from that country.

I read a Center for Workforce Effectiveness survey of companies which admit they will not have their Y2K problems fixed in time. Only 20% of them said they plan

to inform the public of this. The justification is "we want to avoid panic" (loss of business may be a bigger reason).

I disagree with this tactic, though I've talked with Christians who endorse it. I believe we should simply tell each other the truth, the negatives along with the positives. Don't patronize people and pretend you know what's best for them. Trust them to act as adults and make their own decisions. The truth ultimately will avoid more panic than it creates, because it gives people time to sift out information and make plans, if they so choose.

What creates panic is when people find out at the last moment that they've been reassured by people who aren't telling the whole truth. The "anti-panic" motive ends up justifying untruths and half truths and silence on important issues. I hope businesses will change their tactic in this regard. (Remember, the reluctance of many people to believe valid positive indicators about Y2K partially stems from cases where they find they haven't been told the truth.)

The Good News

For some time now, I've been asking people to tell me what good signs they see concerning Y2K. I've had a number assure me that Y2K won't be a problem. My response has always been, "Great, delighted to hear it and I very much want to believe you—just show me the documentation." In nearly every case, the only thing anyone could give me was someone else's reassurances based on . . . well, usually just based on their subjective feelings.

The problem has been that the Y2K negativists, including pessimistic magazine and newspaper articles, are always citing sources and studies to show why they're pessimistic. But for six months I read nothing of any substance demonstrating why Y2K might *not* be a serious problem. In the last few months I've come across some credible sources worth looking at. Here are some of the more encouraging indicators about Y2K.

Nearly all the Y2K sites insist "there's no silver bullet" for Y2K. Maybe not, but there is a steady stream of new computer

programs, some of which are getting great reviews. (This and other information can be found at <http://www.y2ktimebomb.com/sitemap.htm>.) Businesses are gobbling them up, eager to make up for lost time. Personally, I think some of them will prove very useful and reduce (not eliminate) the total Y2K damage.

I read that the nuclear power plants in Sweden have had their clocks set back to 1990 with no problems. Wouldn't it be great if the solution proved that easy? Maybe in some places it will.

Many of the sources concerned about Y2K admit that yes, there is some progress in the hardware and software arenas, but they always say "the biggest problem is the embedded chips and that's what's going to take us down." (Chuck Missler is one who often makes this point.)

The Gartner Group is considered the world's leading authority on information technology. They have said many pessimistic things about Y2K. Nearly everyone writing on the subject has quoted them, as did I in my article in last fall's newsletter (<http://www.epm.org/Y2Kartno.htm>). They still have very serious concerns about Y2K. But in a special report by the Gartner Group dated October 7, 1998, they cite the expert testimony of Loe Marcoccio, who states,

Embedded systems will have limited effect on Year 2000 problems, and we will see a minimal number of failures from these devices. Only 1 in 100,000 free-standing microcontroller chips are likely to fail due to Year 2000. A small percentage of real-time clock-driven chips are affected, but these failures will be a small percentage of the non-embedded system failures. The key issues concerning embedded chip failures are 1) very few will fail, and 2) of those that fail, the majority will fail right at the millennium, and the majority of these will only fail once—if they are active when the clock ticks over.

This could prove to be very good news. I tend to believe good news from the Gartner Group for the same reason I believed them when they gave bad news—they're the experts, and I'm not. (You can't have it both ways—you can't

consider them credible for bad news but not for good.)

It appears many of the power companies are making progress. Y2K expert Howard Belasco is now saying "The Lights will be on," as noted in his article at <http://www.y2ktimebomb.com/Industry/Utilities/hbela9904.htm>. He says many goods and services may be disrupted, but compared to scenarios in which there is no power, this could prove mild indeed.

In his column on electrical utilities, Y2K expert Dick Mills reports that in a February hearing a number of New York State power plants indicated they have completed Y2K remediation and testing. The witnesses also said that many more will be finished well ahead of The North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC) July 1 deadline. The spokesman for Niagara Mohawk also said that even when finished, they plan to continue probing, testing, planning and training right up to January 1. (<http://www.y2ktimebomb.com/PP/RC/dm9906.htm>)

It appears to me that the majority of the electrical power people who actually work in the field and are inside the loop see Y2K doing little more than creating limited blackouts and perhaps a period of brownouts, with minimal long-term consequences. Those most convinced power loss will be widespread and long-term (critical issues as to whether Y2K might be closer to a 2 or a 9 on the disaster scale) seem mainly—though not exclusively—those looking in from the outside.

The Pacific Northwest's Bonneville Power Administration, for example, assures its constituency that it is taking Y2K very seriously, that it plans to complete its testing and repairs by March 31, and in a worst case scenario can manually control its operation. (<http://www.bpa.gov/Corporate/GI/Y2K/Y2K.html>)

The NERC prepared a report for the Department of Energy and presented that report September 17, 1998. In their conclusion they state, "The initial findings of this report are that the impacts of Y2K on electrical systems appear to be less than first anticipated. With continued work toward finding and fixing components that may be

Y2K deficient and with properly coordinated contingency planning, the operating risks presented by Y2K can be effectively mitigated to achieve reliable and sustained operation of electrical systems into the year 2000."

There are numerous critics of this report, saying it is way too optimistic and is based on data from a small number of sources. However, it may prove to be true. (I sure hope so, don't you?)

While business failure, recession, depression and other negatives can certainly come without major power loss, it's the electricity issue that's the watershed. I know some people may be stretching the truth, but I find it hard to believe that *all* these people are incompetent or lying. We'll see. (Electrical power expert Rick Cowles makes both Y2K positivists and negativists uncomfortable with his middle of the road position: <http://www.euy2k.com/newsroom.htm>.)

A nonchristian friend of mine (I can't give his name, but he's real) works in a significant position related to statewide Y2K repairs. He says things are going reasonably well, but that Y2K problems are already surfacing and there will certainly be more. (Oregon is in the bottom ten states in Y2K preparation.) He can't be specific, and says the problems are not being made public to avoid panic. Nonetheless, overall he is quite optimistic that critical services will be intact. (He does have personal contingency plans in case they are not.)

Some of the Y2K articles still circulating say that all credit cards expire in 1999, because they won't work if they say 00. But a VISA spokesperson recently said that 45% of their credit cards now have expiration dates in 2000, and are working fine.

I consider it good news that when we entered 1999 many of the programs that project a year in advance have not had serious problems. I've read about some that have, but it doesn't seem to have been a large scale problem as some predicted it would be. One of the larger problems was a Blue Cross/Blue Shield computer system that manages prescription drug benefits for 3.7 million workers. The system locked up on January 1, and for a day it denied drugs

to 96,531 members at 47,000 pharmacies. But here's the good news—the pharmacies overruled the computers and dispensed the medications anyway. The human part of the equation brings some flexibility and improvising that could prove very helpful in dealing with some Y2K problems.

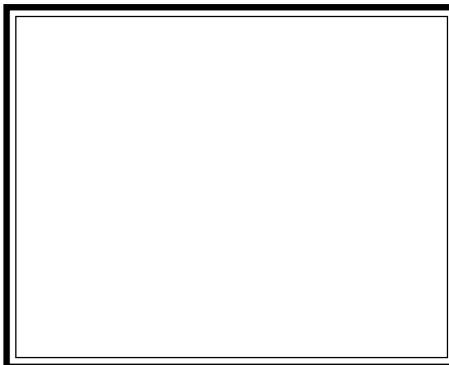
In a survey done by the Americans Talk Issues Foundation, 69% said they believe the Y2K problem will range from serious to extremely serious. Why is this good news? Simply because it means that fewer people are in denial about it being a problem. (In my opinion, panic typically comes with a sudden awareness when it's too late to do anything, not a gradual one when there's still time to act.) The survey said that over 10% of Americans had already purchased emergency supplies and provisions in case Y2K was a problem. That amounts to nearly three million people. The more people who think ahead early means the less problems caused by procrastinators, who will only take action if a crisis is undeniable and imminent. (*That's when panic happens.*)

A Federal Y2K Information Center hotline has been set up at 1-888-872-4925 (888-USA-4y2k). Updated recordings cover many Y2K issues, including banking, utilities, personal preparations. It downplays the probable effects of Y2K, thought it admits it “could temporarily interrupt services at any time.” While it assures major services should be in place, it compares Y2K problems to a winter storm, and recommends three days of food and water, no less than half a tank of gas, and recent copies of important information. Overall it's a very upbeat source of information (some will suspect it's too upbeat), so if you get tired of hearing the negative, try this one!

Steve Hewit, editor of *Christian Computing* magazine, and a lone voice of unqualified optimism on the Focus on the Family Y2K panel broadcast last fall, says he thinks Y2K will be nothing more than “a bump in the road.” He cites various sources more positive about Y2K than those typically cited in the media: <http://www.1.gospelcom.net/ccmag/y2k/covr1198.html#05>.

Hewit claims Y2K is causing conflict in churches, that people are not citing current materials, are going to questionable sources, and are passing on some information that's downright bogus. In some instances I think he's correct. He believes many Christians are reading their eschatology into Y2K. As I said in my article last fall, I most certainly agree with that claim and I consider it unfortunate.

Hewit's advice on Y2K boils down to this: “What should you do at this point? Probably nothing.” His article is a source of Y2K reassurance. Even those who think



he's too positive could benefit from some of his insights and cautions.

Another interesting source of relatively good news is Pete Holzmann, president of the International Christian Technologists' Association. His paper on Y2K (http://www.gospelcom.net/iccta/y2k/html/research_paper.html) takes the problem seriously. Still, he says there's a lot of hype and overreaction and is convinced things aren't going to be nearly as bad as many think. For instance, he assures us, “Pacemakers, street lights and cars don't care what year it is.” He argues, “I have yet to discover a true critical Y2K defect in an electric power delivery system, i.e. something that would cause a serious interruption in power delivery.”

Holzmann says that in western nations, as of January 2000 “purchases using credit cards and checks will still work fine.” He maintains that applying Murphy's law (“If anything can go wrong, it will go wrong”) to this situation is inappropriate. Why? Because complex systems normally function even when several of their parts are broken. He admits

that power companies are behind on Y2K corrections, but says this is in the area of non-critical billing and administrative functions that can cause problems, but not power outage. And he also says, at least for computers, “Every ‘embedded system’ critical failure I've ever seen can be readily solved through a manual reboot.” His paper is well footnoted, and most of the sources are credible, but you may want to check them out (the source cited after one significant claim is humorist Dave Barry!).

I've received unsolicited letters from my phone company and bank assuring me they're on top of Y2K. Of course, I wouldn't expect a letter saying, “we're in serious trouble—better take your business to our competitor.” Still, I don't work on the assumption that *all* good news about Y2K is a lie. That approach sets us up to be unbalanced.

A tremendous amount of attention is being paid to Y2K, which is very encouraging when you consider how little attention it was getting a year ago. While doomsdayers say “Too little, too late,” I personally think we'll be in better shape than it appeared we might be six months ago. (How good is “better”? We'll find out!)

In the November 1998 Berean Call (<http://www.thebereancall.org>), Dave Hunt says this about Y2K:

The problem has been irresponsibly and grossly overstated. I have not found anyone in the electric power industry who, after searching through every computer system and chip they have has found anything that would have shut them down had they not fixed it. I interviewed one of the top computer experts in the country who says he is in contact with 7 to 10 information technology managers per week of major corporations (all with annual sales over \$500 million) and he has not found one of them who is concerned; they all claim to have Y2K behind them. Nor in the process of going through everything have they (except very rarely) found anything that would

have shut any system down. Y2K has been overstated!

Y2K has sometimes been overstated and sometimes been understated. It all depends on who you've been reading or listening to. If you've been getting your input from just one side or the other, I'd suggest you balance it out by seriously listening to another point of view.

(My home church has made a helpful booklet called *Preparing for Emergencies*, accessible online from www.goodshepherdcc.org/info.html. Those interested in not only personal preparation but community awareness should check out *Y2K Citizen's Action Guide*, by Eric Utne.)

So What Do I Really Think?

After January 1 I suspect everyone who's said much about this problem from any point of view will be saying, "See, I told you so." Nearly everybody will have been right about something, if only by accident. They will conveniently ignore all their other predictions, good or bad, that proved wrong.

I would rather just present evidence and let everyone draw his own conclusions. But people keep asking me, "What do you *really* think is going to happen?" I'm not a prophet and I don't know, but somewhat reluctantly, I'll offer a few opinions.

Do I buy the positive viewpoint or the negative one? I think there's too much good news to believe those who envision the worst case scenario, and too much bad news to believe those who envision the best case scenario.

Do I think banking systems will collapse? No. Do I think some banks may close because of last minute panic withdrawals and insufficient funds, and some stores run out of food because of last minute panic and disrupted delivery? I don't know, but it's a real possibility. Do I think the stock market could experience a sharp decline? Nobody knows—it may keep going great guns. But a sharp decline is certainly possible, not only because of Y2K but other reasons (including market overvaluing and the weakness of the Asian economy).

Will I have some money in the bank at the end of 1999? At this point, I'd think the answer would be "sure." Would I have *all* my money there? No. Do I think electricity across the country will go out at midnight January 1? No, I don't. Will there be outages in various places around the country, and around the world? I would guess there will be, but again, who knows?

Will I expect to get a dial tone if I pick up the phone after midnight on January 1, 2000? I'd say "Yes." But I wouldn't be shocked if there wasn't a dial tone either—and neither would I panic.

Do I think this is the end of civilization as we know it? No, I don't. But it could play a part in the end of this unusual period of unqualified prosperity. There could be shortages and other problems that tip the scale toward recession or depression.

Even if Y2K proved traumatic, the fact is traumatic things have happened throughout human history. This wouldn't be the first or the last. Of course, we shouldn't forget that most of the traumatic things that have been predicted never really happened. Yes, this one is different in the sense that there's a real objective problem. But it is certainly subject to overstatement or panic, both of which are unhealthy.

I have just begun writing another book which would probably be published in 2000. There could be delays, but if I didn't think it would ever be published, I wouldn't be working on it. Do I think my daughters will go back to college in January 2000? I hope so, and I expect they will. But maybe there'll be some problems some places that will delay starting school again. If so, it's not the end of the world—hey, we'd get more time with our daughters.

If "I don't know what tomorrow will bring" is starting to sound like a theme, it's an explicitly biblical one we should remind ourselves of every day, regardless of Y2K:

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)

Many of us have become presumptuous in making our plans, as if we have the power to control life. Guess what? God is God and we're not. Live with it.

I'm not convinced that Y2K *will* cause serious problems, but I do believe the evidence clearly indicates it *could*. That's a very important distinction. Just because someone advises precautions doesn't mean he's convinced there will be a disaster. (If asked the chances of your house burning down in the next year, you'd say it's pretty improbable, wouldn't you? Yet you probably have fire insurance—why?) The question is whether you should make preparation for something that's not at all certain, but which does have a more than negligible chance of happening (whether that's 1% or 5% or 20% or more is your guess).

A newsletter reader wrote me that the February 7 *Miami Herald* quoted a spokesperson for Florida Power and Light, who assured the public that things were well under control and there was no cause for worry. Later in the interview the same woman said she was personally stocking up on canned goods, water, propane, etc. Does that sound like lying or hypocrisy? Not necessarily. If you think there's a 90% chance of no power outage you can say things are under control. But that means there's a 10% chance of a failure—and isn't that good enough reason to do a little preparing, as long as there's no big downside?

Whatever we do, let's seek to make sure our actions flow out of trust in God and bring glory to Him. Let our question be, WWJD in light of Y2K?

May we always remember that this world is not our home, and that the place he has prepared for us cannot be touched by natural disaster or Y2K. May we seek his face to determine what will please him most.

You may wish to go to our EPM website and read "Scriptures to consider in preparing for the future" (<http://www.epm.org/Y2KBible.htm>). These are God's perspectives, and they are true and relevant whether Y2K turns out to be no problem or a big problem.

Sudan Slavery

Since the mid-1980's, chattel slavery has undergone a great revival in Sudan. This is directly related to the upsurge of radical Islamism and the imposition of the totalitarian ideology of *Jihad* (Islamic holy war) on the state by the NIF regime. There are tens of thousands of chattel slaves in northern Sudan. These slaves have been captured during raids involving government-sponsored militias, the NIF's Popular Defense Force and the regular army. The most recent and most devastating raids of this decade, in which over several thousand people were enslaved, took place between April and June of 1998. The raids for chattel slaves take place mainly in northern Bahr El Ghazal. The slaves are generally women and children, who are divided up by their captors and are kept as war booty. They may be bought and sold. Most of the chattel slaves are concentrated in Dafur and Korodofan, while some slaves end up in Khartoum and other parts of the North.

On one particular visit, CSI redeemed 640 slaves in conjunction with two separate networks of Arab traders, who work within the framework of local Arab-Dinka peace agreements and CSI's slave redemption program. Here are some slave interviews chosen at random by CSI to build up their extensive documentation of chattel slavery in Sudan:

Abuk Anyar Kwan—(12-year-old girl from Angot village) I was caught four years ago during the rainy season. I was at home with my mother, father and brother when the soldiers came. There was fighting and we ran away to hide in the bush. We stayed there all day. At night, we thought the soldiers had gone away, so we went back home to sleep. But the soldiers came back while we were sleeping. They killed my father, and then they grabbed me. I struggled to get away, but they stabbed me in the leg (*scar visible*). They caught my mother and brother too. There were four of them. Their names were Yusuf, Hussein, Hassan and Ahmed. They forced us to walk about eight days. There were a lot of other people and a lot of soldiers. On the way, the soldiers raped all the women. They raped me too, even though I was so young. They did this

to me every day. We walked to a place called Tabun, near Meiram. After we arrived there, my mother, brother and I were sold to Harun Ibrahim. We lived miserably there. I had to cook for him. That was my main job. I also had to cultivate groundnuts. We were given only leftovers to eat, and we had to sleep outside without shelter. I was often beaten. It was Harun's wife Haida who beat me the



most. They tried to turn me into a Muslim. When I refused to do the things the Muslim way, they beat me. The worst thing about being a slave was losing my family. My brother Kwan Anyar Kwan (10 years old) is still in the North. Harun sold him to someone else. Harun's daughter told me that he was sent to Futa, and is now in the Koranic school there. I was taken away from Harun in August. Now I am alone. I plan to go to my uncle's home, but I have not seen him yet. I am very glad to be back here. Thank you for making it possible.

Akuc Aken Genge—(26-year-old mother from Riangawac, enslaved at beginning of the rainy season 1992) I was grinding grain when the raiders came. They wore jellabeyas. Some were on horseback, others were on foot. The people started to run this way and that. I started to run too, but I was caught from behind. They also captured my mother and father and six brothers. Our hands were tied together with a long rope. One of my hands was left free so that I could better carry heavy goods on my head and back. We had to walk strung up like this to Gejel, near Meiram. When we got there, I was separated from my family. We were sold to different people. I had to go to the home of a man named Mohammed who lived in Gejel. He and his wife Sara gave me the name Ajeba. They

tried to make me pray and do other things in the Muslim way, but I did not want to do them. They would beat me if I did not do them, so I would pretend to do them. I had to do a lot of jobs for Sara, like grinding grain, collecting firewood and washing clothes. I lived in the same house as Mohammed and Sara, and Mohammed used me as a concubine. He is the father of my twins. They were called Hider and Altheip in Gejel, but I call them Ngor and Abuk. Sara was very jealous of me. When Mohammed was away she would often chase me and strike me with a camel whip for no reason at all. This was the worst part of being there. I am very happy to be away from that place. I don't ever want to go back to the North. I will now try to find my relatives. I have heard that there are some around, but I have not seen them yet.

Abuk Akec Dhel—(enslaved in the summer of 1994) My husband Yom Manyul Akok, was also captured. I saw him last during the raid. My child, Majok Yom Manyul (5 years old), was taken too. He was put on a horse and taken away. I never saw him again. I now have two children, Kueth (4 years old) and Ayel (3 years old). They are from my master Mohammed. He lives in Gerban. I was once beaten because I went to the home of a neighbor of Mohammed who had Dinka slaves. Mohammed and his wife gave me the Fatima. His wife treated me badly. Slaves who tried to escape were slaughtered with a knife. When this happened all the slaves had to go to witness the execution. One day somebody visited Mohammed, and I was then free. Now I will go back to my village. I think my children will be accepted there.

Christian Solidarity International recently sent EPM a letter thanking our readers for sending many donations on behalf of redeeming the Sudanese women and children out of bondage. CSI has been able to go to Sudan twice this year to redeem over 1,900 slaves. CSI can do this only because of your faithful and dedicated service to our Lord. Once in bondage, the slaves now have the opportunity to fulfill the potential God had intended for their lives. Thank you for your generosity. Given the national exposure to this issue, the greatest response needed now is prayer for these Christian brothers and sisters.

Why Pray?

One of the most common questions relating to God's providence is, "If God has ordained all things and knows all things, why, then, do I pray?" To deal properly with this dilemma, we must clarify two things about prayer.

First, prayer is designed for our benefit, not God's. Second, prayer is a means God uses to bring about His purposes. He uses prayer just as much as the preached Word or the service of His people.

A.W. Pink said, "Prayer is not designed for the furnishing of God with the knowledge of what we need, but it is designed as a confession to Him of our sense of need." God invites, even commands, us to pray. In praying, we confess our utter dependence upon Him, and in that confession, we are drawn closer to Him. Prayer is an act of worship in which we draw close to the presence of God. And just as we are warmed when we spread ourselves before the sun, so we are changed, affected, renewed, strengthened by the light of God and His grace when we spread ourselves before Him in prayer and supplication.

Prayer is one way in which we commune with our heavenly Father. Jesus communed with His Father while He

suffered the trials and temptations of this world. He found relief and comfort in pouring out His soul to His Father, and we too can find that same peace and comfort if only we would come into His presence more often and with the sincere desire to commune with Him. So often we do not benefit from our prayers because we use them as shopping lists. We tell God what we want, but we fail to worship Him, to adore Him, to seek Him in our prayers. Instead, we seek something He can give us, and when we do not get it, we are frustrated and wonder why our "prayers do not work."



"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions..."

(Eph. 6:18)

Prayer always "works" because it strengthens us and our relationship with our heavenly Father. It also works because through prayer God brings about His eternal decrees. In giving us the grace to pray God answers our prayers, thus executing His providential plans. We play a role in God's purposes even when we are on our knees. May each of us, in obedience to Him, pray on all occasions, seek His face, and glorify Him as we confess our need of His grace.

(Ligonier Ministries *TABLETALK*, November 1995.)

Questions and Answers

by Randy Alcorn

Question:

I have read *Deadline, Dominion*, and just finished *Edge of Eternity*. I have also read some of Frank Peretti's novels. From both you and Peretti there seems to be the idea that angels are loosed or bound from intercessory action by whether or not saints here pray, or the time spent, intensity, etc. of the saints' praying. This is a neat speculation, but I would like Scripture that specifically indicates this to be the case. Ask, seek, knock are spiritual directives, but the specific tying in of prayer to warfare between angels and

demons and how it affects the circumstances of this world I have not grasped from Scripture. Can you enlighten me?

Thanks, Bob M.

Answer:

Read Daniel 10 (or start with chapter 9 to get a fuller context). Daniel prays in chapter 9 and in 10:12 an angel appears to Daniel, saying to him, "your words were heard and I have come in response to them." Verse 13 then says "But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes came to help me, because I was detained . . ."

So here you have a clear example of an angel being sent by God in response to the prayers of a saint, and fallen angels ("prince" here is clearly an angel, used for the speaker and for Michael) then detaining him in battle. The answer to prayer is delayed because of this invisible but very real warfare. You also see a territorial nature to demons, as this fallen prince is described as over Persia, a

specific country. Presumably he has demons in the hierarchy under his command, spread throughout Persia (as there would not be just one demon assigned to a whole country). Michael, mentioned here, is elsewhere called the archangel, the angelic commander, and the fallen Lucifer, now Satan, would be his counterpart, the commander over fallen angels (demons).

The purity, sincerity or intensity of Daniel's prayer presumably affected the response, as God doesn't hear the prayers of the impure and says "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16). Why then was there a delay in the answer? We don't know, and God is free to delay answers and give us answers we don't like as he wishes, but it seems possible that if others had joined Daniel in his prayer, the righteous angels might have been empowered to resist the demons interfering with their mission. That part is speculation, but the rest seems clear, even if difficult to envision. Best wishes.

Investing in eternity,
Randy Alcorn

At the Gap

by Ron Norquist

“Let’s go see the gap!” My friend, Bob, is a dentist but I was fairly certain he wasn’t talking about dental work.

Bob explained that Gregg Cunningham, head of the Center for Bio-Ethical Reform, was spearheading a project for college campuses called the Genocide Awareness Project (GAP). Cunningham has developed a team of people who take huge, thought-provoking signs onto a college campus and hand out literature confronting students with the truth about abortion in our country.

Much of the work is done ahead for the project. Connection is made with a student pro-life group and negotiations are made with the university for security guards and metal barricades (at the University of Tennessee someone had tried to drive his car through the signs almost hitting one of the women working with the project).

On January 9th we awoke to temperatures in the 20’s (brrrr, this is Florida?). The clear southern skies soon warmed up and



once the signs were in place on the University of Florida campus, students began to come around to check us out. We had placed smaller signs about a hundred yards out that said “Warning, Genocide Pictures Ahead” which seemed to make people even more curious.

We stood nearby in front of the signs that displayed three pictures. The first was a picture from the Nazi Holocaust showing dead Jewish

people stacked up like cord-wood and underneath it the word Ungentile. The next photograph showed a hanging of a black man by a group of white men. Under it was the word Unwhite. The last picture was an enlarged picture of a dime. Draped across it were dismembered arms and legs, the results of a first-trimester abortion. Under it were the words Unborn.



I have never experienced better quantity or quality conversation with people about life issues than I did that week.

One freshman co-ed reluctantly took my literature and with genuine disgust in her voice said she was greatly offended by the ugliness of the pictures and the comparison of abortion to the Holocaust and slavery. I agreed they were truly ugly and said “There are similarities, though. In each case an innocent person is being killed. And in each case the victims are dehumanized in order to make their killings acceptable. The Jews were called vermin and insects and black people were said to be nothing more than animals. Pre-born children are called blobs of tissue or pregnancies which can be terminated.”

She continued to look at the pictures then argued “but fetuses aren’t yet people.” “They’re not comparable.” I paused to let her think.

I love it when the conversation gets to this point because I get to ask the big question, the foundational question about abortion, certainly one of the most fundamental questions of our age. “When do you think a person’s life begins and therefore deserves protection?”

As she rolled it over in her mind she finally said, “At birth.” Asking her “Why?” took us into a discussion about babies and value and death and life and eventually her life.

Connections like this were made with students, faculty, administration and campus workers throughout the week. Questions about life often lead to questions about eternal life and I was able to share the gospel with four different students during our week in Florida. God used some rattling of chains to spread his message of truth.

At least ten thousand dollars is needed in order to bring this project and its people to Pacific Northwest college campuses this fall. Donations may be given to EPM and designated to the GAP project.

Weighing Y2K Preparation Against World Needs

Randy Alcorn

In my previous article on Y2K I said something that I'm convinced needs repeating:

Some think Piper's words are harsh, but I believe they are a timely warning. I am convicted by them, but I welcome such conviction. John has no doubt seen people overreacting to Y2K and making it their central concern in life—we know that's wrong, because Christ and his kingdom is to be our central concern (Matthew 6:33).

In his January 3, 1999 sermon at Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Pastor John Piper made these poignant and powerful statements:

Of course, John's prophetic word doesn't just apply to Y2K preparations, it applies to everything else we do with God's money (notice I didn't say "our" money). One man can give 80% of his income to the Lord (yes, there are people who really do this), have no retirement funds and \$800 in the bank and decide to spend a few hundred dollars to buy canned food in case Y2K is a problem. Another man can give 5% of

his income to the Lord, have a quarter million in retirement funds and \$10,000 in the bank, and do nothing to prepare for Y2K. Does that mean the second man is more spiritual, that his lack of concern for Y2K is rooted in trust for God? Obviously not.

We can't draw conclusions about a person's spirituality simply on how he chooses to respond to Y2K. But we can and certainly should use it as one more test among many of our level of dependence on God. Where is our heart? What are our motives?

I do not believe Y2K is creating a new level of selfishness among Christians. I think it's just demonstrating a materialism and selfishness that's already pervasive and has manifested itself in a thousand other ways most of us haven't noticed.

We notice people's preoccupation about Y2K just because it's new; we don't notice our preoccupation with ourselves, our comforts, our houses, our cars, our jobs and our status, because that's not new—but it's certainly no more godly.

Ironically, many Christians who scoff at Y2K preparation do so on materialistic premises. They can't imagine the possibility that their retirement or bank accounts could be jeopardized, that they could lose their business or be unable to make payments on their houses or boats or cars. It's simply unthinkable. They've always known prosperity, and they view it as a birthright.

They are not trusting God by refusing to lay up for Y2K—indeed, they have laid up in their retirement programs hundreds of times what someone else might lay up for Y2K. If they liquidated their holdings they could feed thousands of poor people for decades—so they don't have much room to criticize as faithless those who put some canned food in the basement.

There are indications Y2K may hit some of the rest of the world (particularly Asia—perhaps Russia and China especially) harder than America. So, those who are already struggling will likely struggle more. We need to think not just of ourselves, but to reach out and help people more, not less. Think about people all over the world who couldn't possibly afford to store up goods for a week, much less for a month or

more. Think about places where they really need generators, not to assure heat and warm showers for a few days, but to meet more basic ongoing needs.

I was on a waiting list to get a generator, thinking it might help our family and be a resource for neighbors. But then I thought of missionaries and natives of third world countries who could use generators all the time, and moreso if Y2K hits them hard. I thought of generators used to show the Jesus Film in remote villages, where many are brought to faith in Christ.

Maybe God *is* leading us to buy generators, but for others rather than ourselves. Nanci and I decided to take the money we would have spent on a generator and give it to God's kingdom. (I am *not* saying God doesn't want anyone to buy a generator for themselves—I think some people and some churches should have generators, and some of us shouldn't; ask God what he wants.)

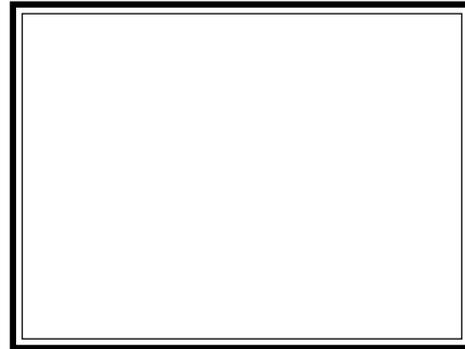
Here's a proposal. Develop your own matching funds program. For every dollar you put into Y2K preparation, put a minimum of an extra dollar into Christian ministries that bring assistance and the gospel to the truly needy. Whatever you do, don't reduce your giving in order to subsidize Y2K preparation. (This is *not* a request for funds to EPM—God has always provided for us faithfully. It's a reminder about the needs of the many missions organizations we're privileged to support.)

I have received three letters from missionaries in different parts of the world who are planning for possible Y2K scenarios (none of them are panicking, nor should they). One said, "The conversion has been in the works for a year and a half, but we have a long way to go. We are also making contingency plans for our ministries to have adequate cash on hand before December for about three months worth of activities." They're hoping that if there are significant Y2K effects, they'll be poised to minister. If there aren't, they will be a little ahead in their budget. What will have been lost?

Are these missionaries losing their focus and failing to trust God, or are they simply acting wisely in light of current information? If, like me, you are concerned that funds might be delayed in getting to

missionaries and needy people if Y2K is a problem, you might consider large advance gifts sometime this year.

(One other note: I have noticed many Christians quoting Matthew 6:25-34—one of my favorite passages—as if God has



promised that his children can never go hungry or suffer. Many Christians across the globe know this is not the case. Many other passages which deal with suffering and trials, and preparation and wisdom, balance Matthew 6 and visa versa.)

Summary

Would it be unspiritual to buy extra food and blankets and candles to prepare for a possible hurricane? Then why would it be unspiritual to do the same for Y2K?

If you set aside provisions for the hurricane and the electricity doesn't go out and service in the stores is uninterrupted, would you feel you'd been foolish for preparing? Then why should you feel that way if Y2K has minimal consequences?

I grew up in a family where my dad had gone through the Depression, and we always had a couple of months worth of food in the basement. We never threw it away—we ate it! If you have an extra two months of food, and decide you don't want to store that much, fine, now you don't have to buy food for two months. Give the money you don't spend on food to your church's missions fund. Or give the food itself to a local ministry to street people. They can always use it. Or have a little extra on hand for other possible emergencies. (It's not like Y2K is the only thing that could ever happen—maybe this will turn out to be a training exercise for something else.)

But if your family and neighbors could use the food, as in a natural disaster situation, wouldn't you be glad you have it rather than a couple of hundred dollars extra sitting in a bank or a mutual fund or a car accessory or some stereo equipment?

The Good Samaritan was able to help the man in crisis because he not only had love and time to give him, but also bandages, oil, wine and money to share (Luke 10:33-35). He took him to an inn and promised to come back and pay all that expense as well.

If there's a 10% chance a hurricane is coming I don't advocate overpreparation. Neither do I advocate *no* preparation. There is no place for a Christian either hoarding or worrying (Luke 12:15-34), but there is definitely a place for wise planning (Proverbs 6:6-11; 22:3). We should all ask the Lord to give us wisdom (James 1:5) and realize he will lead some of us differently than others.

"Whether you eat [or buy extra canned goods] or drink [or store some water], or whatever you do [whether you have a bank account or retirement funds or own a house or car or don't], do it all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

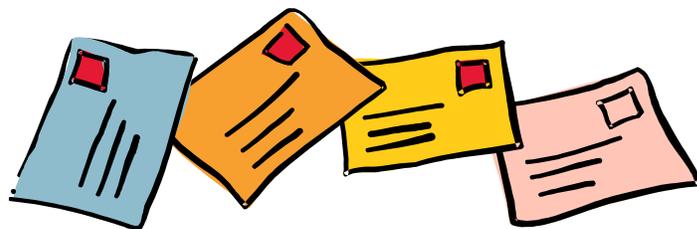
My personal advice? Don't spend much money on anything you wouldn't use if there are minimal Y2K problems. As long as you're not being wasteful, what's the downside in being prepared?

There is nothing inherently spiritual or unspiritual about preparing for a hurricane or Y2K, but if we become obsessed by it, if our lives are centered around disaster preparation rather than serving Christ, we are clearly wrong. We should all seek the Lord and do what we believe is most honoring to Him.

We should not think "I'm spiritual because I'm preparing for Y2K" or "I'm spiritual because I'm not preparing for Y2K." We can be spiritual or unspiritual either way, depending on our hearts, our motives, our priorities and our generosity for the kingdom of God.

There is no one formula for responding to Y2K, unless it is this: that whatever we do fulfills what Jesus called the greatest commandment, to love the Lord our God with all our hearts and souls and minds and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Letters to EPM



Dear Randy,

I finished your book *Deadline* today and I cannot really begin to tell you what a gift this book has been to me. My husband was diagnosed with terminal cancer 3 days after we were married. I soon learned that God had brought us together suddenly and unexpectedly because He had a plan. I was chosen to deliver His precious child home to Him safe and loved. We knew each other a total of nine months and he died exactly 6 months from the day of our wedding.

This was the most difficult and the most wondrous time of my entire life. Never have I felt so close to God. When my husband went home, exactly one year ago today, I celebrated because he was with God. Then I mourned and mourned and mourned for the profound loss in and of my life.

As I was reading *Deadline* and you depicted heaven, I cried such cathartic tears. Triumph was mine, because now I had a real and precious picture of joining my husband in Paradise someday. My loss had been transformed into hope. At that same moment there was an underlying joy present in me...as if I suddenly knew a big secret.

God bless you, Randy, and thank you for painting such a beautiful picture of a possible future...one I can fix my eyes on and hold close to my heart. I have courage now, too, in believing that my husband and a guardian angel watch over me. I also have the joy in understanding that today is not the anniversary of my husband's death, but in fact, his new birthday.

With love,
J.D., Redmond, WA

Dear Randy,

I sit here with tears in my eyes having just finished *Edge of Eternity*. Thank you for writing it. I appreciate the chance it has given me to pick up my guide book, forget what I think, and read what I should. The challenge of course will be the doing.

Thank you for the glimpse.

Warm Regards,
J.J., Tigard, OR

Dear Mr. Alcorn,

I just finished your thrilling novel, *Dominion*, and I have to say my life has been totally transformed. I am a black woman from Africa and I did not even know all this rich history about black people. It really changed my perspective of my culture.

God bless you. Every time I read your book, I receive such information and revelation. Heaven has never been so real to me as it is now. I now know that every decision I make has eternal effects. I pray that you continue to write such life-changing novels.

Yours truly,
AM, Westerville, OH

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.

P.S., Fergus Falls, MN



Dear Rev. Alcorn,

I have just now finished reading your novel *Deadline*. I join the many others who have been touched by your writing. God has certainly given you an incredible gift!

I had to write to you, particularly because of that special character in your book, "Little Finn." I have a Down's Syndrome brother and our family's "theology" has always bordered on suspecting that Mike is indeed, a very special creation of God's, if not in fact, an angel! We do know, without a doubt, that Mike has a very special relationship with God, one that can only be the envy of most "normal" folks!

Your portrayal of the Down's Syndrome child in heaven speaking to all gathered there was so moving! I could not help but weep as I read that incredible description. We have seen my brother, Mike, so often turn our thoughts and others towards God in such profound ways, while the world would see him and his kind as one of the "weak" or "foolish" things of this world. Some time ago my youngest son asked me if his Uncle Mike would be like us in heaven. My honest response, "No son, I think we will be like Uncle Mike!"

Thank you for your fine books! Both *Dominion* and *Deadline* have been impossible to put down. They are excellent, not only because they make enjoyable reading, but because they provoke thought and contain so much "meat" for the reader to chew on! I can only look forward to any further books you might author! May God continue to bless your unique talent & ministry!

Sincerely,
C.S., S. America

Hate Crime Statement

The Evangelical Theological Society this morning (Nov 20) passed (by voice vote) a resolution on homosexual conduct, "hate crime," and truthfulness in the secular media w/respect to reporting on evangelicals. The ETS is having its 50th annual meeting in Orlando. We have 1225 in attendance, our largest meeting ever. I was elected president as well (a one year post which takes effect at the end of the meeting tomorrow, Nov. 21). The ETS consists of professors of Bible and theology from a wide variety of evangelical backgrounds, all affirming that "The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written, and therefore inerrant in the autographs."

The primary author of this morning's resolution was Daniel Heimbach (former member of the White House Domestic Policy Council under President Bush, and now a professor of ethics at Southeastern Baptist Seminary in Wake Forest). The resolution passed by a voice vote.

The resolution follows:

Whereas the heinous beating death of Matthew Shepard, a homosexual student in Laramie, Wyoming, earlier this year was allegedly motivated by hate, and

Whereas this heinous murder, although already subject to the most severe criminal sanctions, has energized a national movement calling for separate and additional sanctions when existing crimes are motivated by hate, and

Whereas advocates for the social normalization of homosexual behavior have laid the blame for hate crimes on the moral witness of the Church and God's gracious offer of forgiveness to repentant sinners, and

Whereas some in the national media covering reaction to the heinous death of Matthew Shepard have accepted and perpetuated homosexual attacks on the moral witness of the Church without any factual basis and have thereby failed in the fundamental journalistic responsibility to report truth and not false accusation, and

Whereas violent bodily harm and death by murder are terrible sins worthy

of criminalization by human law, but are nevertheless no more sinful and no more worthy of criminal sanction because motivated by hate, than if by lust, greed or cruel indifference, and

Whereas all men and women are created equally in the image of God so that violence suffered by any victim is no less heinous if a perpetrator is motivated by lust, greed, or cruel indifference than if by hate, and

Whereas because "man looks on the outward appearance" and only "God looks on the heart," the idea of hate crime is about adding civil sanctions for something no human being can accurately or fairly discern in any other, and

Whereas accepting the idea of hate crime invites persecution of any moral belief of the Church that is at odds with the desires of sinful human nature,

Be it, therefore, resolved by the members of the Evangelical Theological Society attending the 50th annual meeting held at Orlando, Florida, that we abhor the terrible sin of doing intentional physical harm to another human being for no reason other than hate, and

Be it further resolved that we equally abhor using the rhetoric of hate to prejudice the power of civil government against the open and complete proclamation of moral standards revealed in God's Holy Word—including both God's love for sinners as well as his judgment of sin, and

Be it further resolved that we affirm that Scripture clearly teaches that homosexual conduct is always an abomination

in the sight of God for all human beings, both men and women, in all circumstances, without exception, (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9), and

Be it further resolved that we affirm as biblical and do ourselves agree with the position that Christian moral

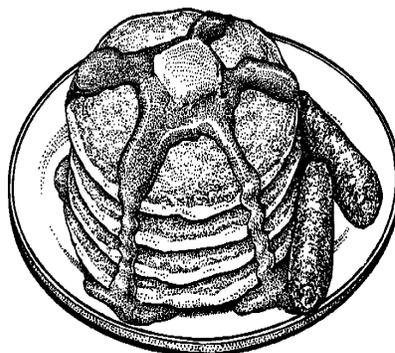
"The faithful ministers of Christ are to dispense God's truths, however disagreeable they may be to some, and whatever they themselves may suffer for doing so."

Matthew Henry

opposition to homosexual behavior is not and can never be license for anyone to engage in any form of slander, harassment or violence against one with whom we disagree, and

Be it further resolved that we oppose any attempt by civil authority to judge the hearts of men and women for any purpose, much less for the purpose of creating a legal fiction that can only ensure unequal treatment for equally heinous criminal actions, and

Be it finally resolved that we call on the national media to refrain from and repudiate unsubstantiated, untruthful, and hateful accusations against evangelical Christians and to report truthfully concerning the Church's true message of the good news that God offers forgiveness for sins through faith in Jesus Christ.



The First Pancake

A mother was preparing pancakes for her sons, Kevin, 5, Ryan, 3. The boys began to argue over who would get the first pancake. Their mother saw the opportunity for a moral lesson. "If Jesus were sitting here, He would say, 'Let my brother have the first pancake. I can wait.' Kevin turned to his younger brother and said, "Ryan, you be Jesus!"

Zambian Children's Camp

EPM had the privilege of participating financially in a children's camp in Lusaka, Zambia, a joint project of Action International Ministries, a ministry to children in crisis which EPM highly endorses), Alliance for Children Everywhere, and Jesus Army Camp. The camp was held on the edge of a slum area of Lusaka, the capital city of Zambia. Following are selected portions of the camp report from one of the workers:

I took a small team to the markets today to buy the food and other supplies. We had to hire two pick-up trucks to get everything back to the campgrounds, and when we arrived very late this afternoon, there were kids already there waiting for camp.

My biggest delight came when one little boy, covered in the soya flour from the bags he had been carrying, came up to me after we had emptied everything out. He said, "Who is all of this food for?" I replied, "For you at the camp." He said again, "I didn't know we were going to eat, so can I come early to be first in line?"

Camp starts officially at 7:30 in the morning. I can hardly wait to see the looks on those other 250 children's faces when they also learn about the food. Only one problem. There can only be one, first in line!!!

Food is such a big issue here. During the months of Oct-Dec. these kids may eat once EVERY OTHER DAY before the harvest comes in.

Two hundred and thirty four children started ACTION'S CAMP MTENDARE (Mtendare means peace in Ninja) today! The little boy we talked about yesterday was ONE of the first into the campgrounds this morning. But, there surely was no line!!! Instead, there was a large crowd of little people waiting for the big black gates to swing open letting them into the Jesus Army plot. They started coming before 7:00 a.m. The counselors, all 29 of them, and the four cooks, were ready on the inside of the gates to greet them, and hug them. They ALL got a hug.

Then, each counselor standing ready with a fistful of brightly colored ribbons, banded each camper on their wrist to separate the groups, and to help them identify their own campers. All banded, the first activity was EAT!! And did they ever eat. We had a breakfast porridge called HEPS. The mix has soya flour, corn meal, a bit of sugar and a blend of multi-vitamins for this type of malnourished child. Every drop, in every cup was licked out clean as a whistle.



After breakfast, these kids who are usually pretty laid back for lack of energy, were jumping, skipping rope, and singing with so much light and energy, I got tired just watching them. The food, even that one meal, had already made a big difference. Throughout the day, the campgrounds had groups of kids everywhere. Some making bright-colored cloth dolls, some others cloth bags. Some were learning to skip rope for the first time, others playing London Bridge with their counselors. A group of older boys were banging wire for making cars.

Lunch was one of the most amazing sights. We served mince (hamburger) mixed in with cabbage and served with nshima. The children were amazed that they were going to be eating mince. I doubt that even 1/2 the children have ever even tasted it. Again, after lunch, the plates were licked very clean.

The word about the camp spread quickly throughout the compounds (slum area), so we expect a healthy crowd on Saturday. The end of the day was sweet as the children sang songs and had an end-of-the-day devotion. With a toothbrush in one hand (we gave each child one to take home) and an orange in the other, they went back to the compound, tired and blessed.

The climax came on Saturday, when the day started before sunrise with a few children gathered at the gate. By the time the program began there were over 800 children and many adult family members. Over 100 children trusted Christ as their Savior.

The most special part of the day came when one little girl, maybe about 9 years old, stood in front of the entire assembly and shared her experience of giving her heart and life to Jesus. She was showered with applause, and you could tell that she was indeed blessed.

Singing, sharing, hugging and laughter filled the camp, and finally when all was said and done, the food distributed and juices drunk, no one wanted to leave!!!

The children then made a long, long, long, line around the camp; over and through the buildings, and with hands held marched for what seemed like forever around the camp. And still they stayed on. After more songs and a few games, finally, with wire cars, dolls and shoulder bags in hand they SLOWLY left the camp grounds with full bellies, great memories, and for more than 200 children—those saved during the week and those who came into the Kingdom on that last day—Jesus as their newly-found guide and friend.

54 Babies

By George F. Will

Source: *Washington Post*:
December 3, 1998; Page A23

CHINO HILLS, Calif.: Where Route 71 crosses over Payton Drive, at the bottom of the steeply sloping embankment, two boys, who were playing nearby, found the boxes. The boys bicycled home and said they had found boxes of "babies."

Do not be impatient with the imprecision of their language. They have not read the opposite Supreme Court opinions. So when they stumbled on the boxes stuffed with 54 fetuses, which looked a lot like babies, they jumped to conclusions. Besides, young boys are apt to believe their eyes rather than the Supreme Court.

The first count came to a lot less than 54. Forgive the counters' imprecision. Many fetuses had been dismembered—hands, arms, legs, heads jumbled together—by the abortionist's vigor. An accurate count required a lot of sorting out.

The fetuses had been dumped here, about 30 miles east of Los Angeles, on March 14, 1997, by a trucker who may not have known what the Los Angeles abortion clinic had hired him to dispose of. He later served 71 days in jail for the improper disposal of medical waste. Society must be strict about its important standards.

What local authorities dealt with as a problem of solid waste disposal struck a few local residents as rather more troubling than that. They started talking to each other, and one thing led to another,

and to the formation of Cradles of Love, which had the modest purpose of providing a burial for the 54 babies.

The members of Cradles of Love—just a few normal walking-around middle-class Americans—called them babies, and still do. These people are opposed to abortion, in spite of the Supreme Court's assurance in 1973 that abortions end only "potential life." (Twenty-five years later the Supreme Court has not yet explained how a life that is merely "potential" can be ended.)

Some will say the members of Cradles of Love, who are churchgoers, have been unduly influenced by theology. Or perhaps the real culprit is biology. It teaches that after the DNA of the sperm fuse with those of the ovum a new and unique DNA complex is formed that directs the growth of the organism. It soon is called a fetus, which takes in nourishment and converts it to energy through its own distinct, unique organic functioning, and very soon it looks a lot like a baby.

Anyway, theology or biology or maybe their eyes told the members of Cradles of Love that there were some babies in need of burials. So they asked the coroner to give them the fetuses. Then the American Civil Liberties Union was heard from.

It professed itself scandalized by this threat to . . . what? The ACLU frequently works itself into lathers of anxiety about threats to the separation of church and state. It is difficult, however, to identify any person whose civil liberties were going to be menaced if the fetuses were (these are the ACLU's words) "released to the church groups for the express purpose of holding religious services." The

ACLU said it opposed "facilitation" of services by a public official.

The ACLU's attack on the constitutionally protected right to the free exercise of religion failed to intimidate, and in October the babies were buried in a plot provided at no charge by a cemetery in nearby Riverside.

Each baby was given a name by a participating church group. Each name was engraved on a brass plate that was affixed to each of the 54 small, white, wooden caskets made, at no charge, by a volunteer who took three days off from work to do it. Fifty clergy and four persons active in the right-to-life movement carried the caskets. Each baby's name is inscribed on a large headstone, also provided at no charge. Fifty-four doves, provided at no charge by the cemetery, were released at the services.

The ACLU trembled for the Constitution.

We hear much about the few "extremists" in the right-to-life movement. But the vast majority of the movement's members are like the kindly, peaceable people here, who were minding their own business until some of the results of the abortion culture tumbled down a roadside embankment and into their lives.

Which is not to say that this episode was untainted by ugly extremism. It would be nice if the media, which are nothing if not diligent in documenting and deploring right-to-life extremism, could bring themselves to disapprove the extremism of the ACLU, which here attempted a bullying nastiness unredeemed by any connection to a civic purpose.

God's Billboards

Recently a Ft. Lauderdale advertising agency launched a billboard campaign (including the inside and outside of buses) that included 17 different messages from God. This non-denominational campaign started in September sponsored by an anonymous client.

- "Let's Meet At My House Sunday Before the Game"—God
- "C'mon Over And Bring The Kids"—God
- "What Part of 'Thou Shalt Not...' Didn't You Understand?"—God
- "We Need To Talk"—God
- "Keep Using My Name in Vain And I'll Make Rush Hour Longer"—God

- "Loved The Wedding, Invite Me To The Marriage"—God
- "That 'Love Thy Neighbor' Thing, I Meant It."—God
- "I Love You...I Love You...I Love You..."—God
- "Will The Road You're On Get You To My Place?"—God
- "Follow Me."—God
- "Big Bang Theory, You've Got To Be Kidding."—God
- "My Way Is The Highway."—God
- "You Think It's Hot Here?"—God
- "Tell The Kids I Love Them."—God
- "Need a Marriage Counselor? I'm Available."—God
- "Have You Read My #1 Best Seller? There Will Be A Test."—God

Why We all Need Christ

by Angela Alcorn

Note from Randy: In response to a question in a college application form, my seven-year-old daughter Angela wrote the following. I asked her if we could print it here in the newsletter. Nanci and I praise God that both our daughters, by His grace and to His glory, are walking closely with Him. What Angela says here cuts to the heart of the Bible's teaching about our need for the Savior.

"I can do this. I don't need any help. I can make it on my own."

"Strength comes from within. If you believe in yourself, anything is possible. Trusting in anyone but yourself will get you hurt."

How many times do I hear those words and get these messages each day? It's all around us—the lie of the world that tells us that if we believe in ourselves, we will be saved. Saved, by the world's standards that is. Salvation is defined as feeling content, peaceful, carefree, happy. "Saved" from a life without meaning; "saved" from dependence on others; "saved" from having to feel bad about ourselves.

Men and women today have become so obsessed with their independence that it's considered normal for them to handle things on their own. Why should they count on God for anything, when in their minds they've got it together, and they've made it through everything by themselves? Many people have been hurt when they've given their trust to other people, so they no longer trust in anything but themselves to get things done. This is selfishness disguised as virtue.

That's what's so scary about this worldview. People have gotten to the point where, if they even believe there's a God, they think

if they're good enough, God will accept them into heaven. They don't need to rely on Him for their salvation. They look at all of the horrible things that people do, and reason that surely they don't deserve hell as much as those people do. They're better than that—they deserve heaven. (Wrong.)

We as Christians need to show the world that it's impossible to make it to heaven by our own power or self-righteousness. Sooner or later, we all have to place faith in that one and only Someone (not something) who can lead us there. Otherwise, we have to rely on our own strength and goodness, and it's just not nearly enough. Who are we to compete with the holiness of our Creator? Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

People need God in order to be saved from ourselves and the lies the world fills us with. We need to be saved from our independence, saved from ourselves and our sin. The Bible not only tells us that Christ died to give us eternal life, it also says He died to save us

from the judgment of God Almighty. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." (Romans 5:8-9)

Faith in Christ for our salvation is the most important thing we can share with the world, because it will literally mean the difference between heaven and hell—eternity with God, and eternity separated from Him. We are all sinners and deserve to be judged. People today need to humble themselves and be filled with hope based squarely on the reality that Christ alone has paved the way for us, on a path covered with His blood. That path, and that one alone (John 14:6), can and will lead anyone who believes to eternal life.



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2229 East Burnside #23
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