

# eternal perspectives

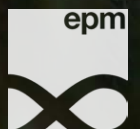
SPRING/SUMMER 2023

## Meet the *Resurrected* You

**ALSO INSIDE**

**Biblical Hope Is a Solid Certainty**

**Is There a Danger of Worshipping the Bible  
Instead of God?**



# contents

- |    |  |    |  |    |   |
|----|--|----|--|----|---|
| 3  | News from EPM                                      | 12 | All Glory to Our King: EPM Staff and Board Members Share Favorite Quotes   | 20 | Resources and Books for the Grieving                |
| 4  | Biblical Hope is a Solid Certainty<br>Randy Alcorn | 15 | Is There a Danger of Worshipping the Bible Instead of God?<br>Randy Alcorn | 22 | The Four Biggest Assets in My Grief<br>Randy Alcorn |
| 6  | Meet the Resurrected You<br>Randy Alcorn           |    |  |    |   |
| 10 | Questions Sent to EPM                              | 18 | When a Beloved Pastor Fails<br>Hannah De Cleene                            |    |   |

## about

This magazine is a publication of Eternal Perspective Ministries, a Christ-centered nonprofit organization founded and directed by author Randy Alcorn. It can be read online at [epm.org/magazine](https://epm.org/magazine).

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

### Subscribe

Our magazine is sent free to all who request it. To subscribe by mail or to sign up to receive an email notification when the latest edition is posted online, go to [epm.org/subscribe](https://epm.org/subscribe).

### Permissions

Articles in this publication (and on our website) written by Randy Alcorn may be freely quoted or copied, in part or in whole, provided EPM's name and website are placed on the copy. (If you wish to revise or leave out portions of an article, please submit to us for permission.) Feel free to reproduce this complete magazine, and pass it on to individuals, churches, or groups.

### Contact

39065 Pioneer Blvd., Suite 100, Sandy, OR 97055  
[info@epm.org](mailto:info@epm.org) | 503.668.5200

### Donate

EPM is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. Donate online at [epm.org/donate](https://epm.org/donate).

## connect



[epm.org](https://epm.org)  
Find resources and purchase books.



[epm.org/blog](https://epm.org/blog)  
Read Randy's latest blog posts.



[facebook.com/randyalcorn](https://facebook.com/randyalcorn)  
Connect with Randy and read daily posts.  
  
[facebook.com/EPMinistries](https://facebook.com/EPMinistries)  
Follow EPM for the latest news from our office, including promotions.



[instagram.com/randyalcorn\\_epm](https://instagram.com/randyalcorn_epm)  
See EPM's word art featuring quotes from Randy and others.



[pinterest.com/randyalcorn](https://pinterest.com/randyalcorn)  
Explore and pin quotes and resources.



[twitter.com/randyalcorn](https://twitter.com/randyalcorn)  
Read short daily thoughts from Randy.



[vimeo.com/randyalcorn](https://vimeo.com/randyalcorn)  
Watch videos and messages from Randy.



[youtube.com/eternalperspectives](https://youtube.com/eternalperspectives)  
Watch and subscribe to Randy's videos.

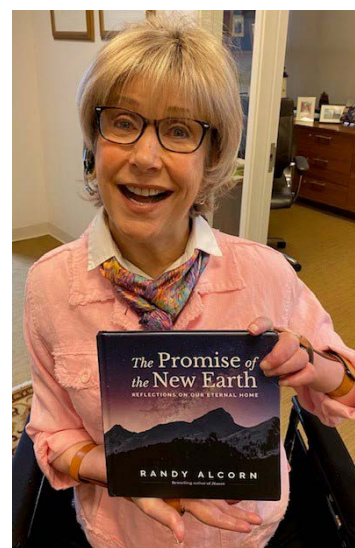


## Joni Eareckson Tada shares her appreciation for *The Promise of the New Earth*

Joni wrote Randy and EPM, "Thank you for the copies of *The Promise of the New Earth* that you gifted to Joni and Friends—we have used them as gifts to give bereaving families, many of them dealing with loss due to ALS, stroke, and Alzheimer's. I am so grateful that you have written such a stellar volume that offers tangible hope and the anchor of God's Word!"

Randy wrote back, "Joni, dear friend, I was so touched by the photo of you holding up *The Promise of the New Earth*, and your very kind words. I haven't forgotten the appointment you and I made years ago to meet and hang out on the New Earth!"

Order *The Promise of the New Earth* from [epm.org/promise](http://epm.org/promise)



## Brenda Abelein retires from EPM

Brenda has faithfully served EPM since 2010 as a ministry assistant. Her attention to detail, heart for Jesus, and exemplary customer service skills have been a great blessing to our ministry. We wish Brenda all the best in her new season of life, enjoying her grandchildren!



## Randy's message at CBU

In March, Randy visited California Baptist University in Riverside, California where he shared at their chapel. He spoke about suffering, Heaven, and the goodness of God, and also about Nanci and her faithfulness through cancer.

Watch the message at [epm.org/cbu-chapel](http://epm.org/cbu-chapel)

## Do You Receive Our Weekly Emails?

Each week EPM sends out emails with special offers on books and products, and the latest news from our ministry. It's one of the best ways to stay connected with us. Sign up for our email newsletter at [epm.org/subscribe](http://epm.org/subscribe)



# *Biblical Hope* Is a Solid Certainty

BY RANDY ALCORN

**R**eferencing the coming resurrection, Paul wrote, “For in this hope [of the redemption of our bodies] we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently” (Romans 8:24–25).

To many of us, “hope” sounds wishful and tentative, but biblical hope means to anticipate with trust. We expect a sure thing, purchased on the cross, accomplished and promised by an all-knowing God. Scripture offers solid ground for our hope in Christ.

At times I am troubled when I use the word *hope* in writing about Heaven, which is why I will sometimes use the phrase “blood-bought hope” or “certain hope.” Yet even then, “certain hope” sounds like I should be using a different word than *hope*, because if it’s certain, it might seem as if it’s not really hope. However, the word *hope* historically and biblically means far more than what it has been reduced to today. To use the same word of hoping it’s a sunny day or that our favorite team wins the game or that the meal we’re cooking turns out well just doesn’t seem like the right word to use of something God has promised to us and purchased for us.

When Scripture speaks of *peace*, *hope*, *justice*, and *love*, it routinely attaches deeper and more Christ-centered meanings to those words than our culture does. For example, love is commonly used in superficial ways, as popular music has long demonstrated. People say they love hamburgers, hairstyles, and YouTube. They “make love” to someone they barely know. This means we must take pains to clarify what Scripture *actually means* by love, holiness, hope, peace, pleasure, and happiness. We should contrast the meaning in Scripture with our culture’s superficial and sometimes sinful connotations.



Got Questions\* explains the difference between the English use of “hope” and the words used in Scripture that are translated as *hope*:

The word *hope* in English often conveys doubt. For instance, “I hope it will not rain tomorrow.” In addition, the word *hope* is often followed by the word *so*. This is the answer that some may give when asked if they think that they will go to Heaven when they die. They say, “I hope so.” However, that is not the meaning of the words usually translated “hope” in the Bible.

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word *batah* and its cognates has the meaning of confidence, security, and being without care; therefore, the concept of doubt is not part of this word. We find that meaning in Job 6:20; Psalm 16:9; Psalm 22:9; and Ecclesiastes 9:4. In most instances in the New Testament, the word *hope* is the Greek *elpis/elpizo*. Again, there is no doubt attached to this word. Therefore, biblical hope is a confident expectation or assurance based upon a sure foundation for which we wait with joy and full confidence. In other words, “There is no doubt about it!”

The Christian worldview doesn’t offer some vague, tenuous hope that there might be eternal life and happiness. It offers the solid promise of an eternal relationship with a happy God whose love is so great it sent Him to the Cross to secure our eternal righteousness and thus our never-ending happiness. Knowing His redemptive design, God assures His children, “I know the plans I have for you . . . plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11).

Paul writes in Titus 2:13, “As we wait for the happy fulfillment of our hope in the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (NET). Again, *hope* means not a wish, but a certain promise. Got Questions explains, “Biblical hope carries no doubt. Biblical hope is a sure foundation upon which we base our lives, believing that God always keeps His promises.”

Such solid hope is the light at the end of life’s

## Biblical hope is a solid expectation *secured by the* *blood-bought promises* of our Savior and King.

tunnel. Not only does it make the tunnel endurable, it fills the heart with anticipation of the world into which we will one day emerge. Not just a better world, but a new and perfect world. A world alive, fresh, beautiful, and devoid of pain, suffering, and war; a world without disease, accident, and tragedy; a world without dictators and madmen. A world ruled by the only one worthy of ruling.

This hope isn’t an unrealistic dream or fantasy. Rather, it’s a solid expectation secured by the blood-bought promises of our Savior and King. After making the pledge that He will end all suffering and death, Christ, “who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’ Then he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true’” (Revelation 21:5, NIV).

Jesus was saying, “That’s my promise, permanently inscribed in the scars on my hands and feet.” In a world where little seems certain, this is a promise we can take to the bank!

Is resurrected living in a resurrected world with the resurrected Christ and His resurrected people your daily longing and solid hope? Is it part of the gospel you share with others? It will be the glorious climax of God’s saving work that began at our regeneration, and will mark the final end of any and all sin that separates us from God. In liberating us from sin and all its consequences, the resurrection will free us to live with God, gaze on Him, and enjoy His uninterrupted fellowship forever, with no threat that anything will ever again come between us and Him.

May God preserve us from embracing anything other than a biblical definition of our hope. May we rejoice as we anticipate the height, depth, length, and breadth of our redemption! ■



# Meet the *Resurrected* You

BY RANDY ALCORN

**R**esurrection—Christ’s and ours—is a cornerstone of the Christian faith. Yet how many of us ponder what our resurrected selves will be like? You might think Scripture doesn’t say much. In fact, it tells us a lot, and gives us solid reasons to deduce much more.

For instance, Paul wrote, “The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. . . . It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:42–44). The term

“spiritual body” doesn’t mean an incorporeal body made of spirit—there is no such thing. Body means corporeal: flesh and bones. A spiritual body will still be a body. But it will be spiritual, under the holy control of a redeemed and righteous spirit.

God made Adam from the earth to live on it, not float on the air. He joined spirit and body to make us completely human. He did not design us to be disembodied spirits as Plato taught, yet sadly, many Christians believe just that. To be with Christ in the present Heaven is better by far than living on earth under the curse. But Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 15 that we will not be eternally complete until our resurrection.



Whatever else a glorified body is, it is first and foremost a resurrected *body*.

## Was Jesus Only a Ghost?

“Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him” (1 John 3:2). Christ’s post-resurrection actions offer us a preview of what resurrected people will do—including preparing and eating meals, conversing, and traveling. If Jesus had been a ghost, we would become ghosts. More importantly, if Jesus had only been a ghost, redemption wouldn’t have been accomplished.

The risen Jesus told His disciples,

“Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. (Luke 24:39–43, NIV)

Jesus didn’t just say He wasn’t a ghost; He proved it. Likewise, He “will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body” (Philippians 3:21). Whatever else a glorified body is, it is first and foremost a resurrected body.

In Acts 1:11, an angel explained, “This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way. . . .” The resurrected Jesus who lived among them forty days before ascending is the same Jesus in soul and body who will return to raise His people’s bodies from the grave. Why didn’t Jesus immediately ascend to Heaven? Perhaps partly to show His design for resurrected people to live on a physical earth.

## You Will Still Be You

Bible-believing Christians often ask me, “Will we become angels when we die?” Somewhere they have gotten the idea that whatever we may be after death, we won’t really be human. No wonder so few Christians look forward to Heaven. Humans are not drawn to the idea of becoming inhuman.

Jesus clearly taught that resurrection does not happen one at a time when we die (see John 5:28–29). Scripture portrays resurrection as a matter of continuity from our present into our future lives. The Westminster Confession says, “All the dead shall be raised up with the selfsame bodies, and none other . . . united again to their souls forever.” Selfsame and none other unequivocally mean we will still be us.

When I became a Christian in high school, my mother saw many changes, but she still recognized me. She said, “Good morning,





Since we know  
what bodies are  
and we know  
what the earth is,  
*imagining new  
bodies and a New  
Earth without  
sin, death, and  
suffering isn't  
impossible.*

Randy,” not “Who are you?” My dog never growled at me—he knew exactly who I was even though I was a new person in Jesus. Likewise, this same Randy will undergo another significant change at death, and yet another at the resurrection. But I will still be who I was and who I am—just a far better version.

## In My Flesh, With My Eyes

It's hard to imagine a clearer claim to our physical and mental continuity in the afterlife than Job's:

I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. (Job 19:25–27, NIV)

Peter said, “Heaven must receive him [the risen Christ] until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets” (Acts 3:21). What could be a stronger statement about continuity than God promising He will “restore everything”? Restoration is about bringing back the original good, which requires getting rid of the bad.

Adam and Eve were 100% human in body and spirit both before sin, and after. We will be humans after sin's destruction—far better humans, but never non-humans. The fundamental difference between our present and future selves will be our deliverance from sin, death, disease, and the curse (Romans 8:21, 23).

## What Will Glorification Be Like?

The apostle John described the glorified Jesus as shining with an overwhelming power and brightness (Revelation 1:12–18). But just as Moses and Elijah were glorified in a secondary sense in the transfiguration, so God's people will experience derivative glorification from Jesus: “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever” (Daniel 12:1–3).

Our glorification will involve a dramatic and marvelous transformation. What prepares us to participate in God's glory in our resurrection bodies? Our current sufferings (1 Peter 5:1–4; 2 Corinthians 4:17). We are called “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (Romans 8:17).

Joni Eareckson Tada says in *Heaven: Your Real Home*, “Somewhere in my broken, paralyzed body is the seed of what I shall become. . . . if there are mirrors in heaven (and why not?), the image I'll see will be unmistakably 'Joni,' although a much better, brighter Joni.”



Jesus says of the New Earth, “Behold, I am making all things new” (Revelation 21:5). This means He will restore Creation to its former pre-curse glory, and likely give it greater beauty and wonder than the original. We, and the new world, will become far better and in that sense far different. But we will be the same people, without sin; and it will be the same world, without evil and suffering. All will be made glorious.

## Imagining Life After Resurrection

Though our imaginations will naturally fall short of resurrection reality, I believe we should allow them to step through the doors Scripture opens. Since we know what bodies are and we know what the earth is, imagining new bodies and a New Earth without sin, death, and suffering isn’t impossible. That’s why Peter says, “We are looking forward to a new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13). If you don’t imagine it, you won’t long for it!

“Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous” (Psalm 139:14, NLT). How much more will we praise God for the wonders of our resurrection bodies and minds—free from sin and disease and dementia? Our resurrected senses may function at levels we’ve never known. On the New Earth, we’ll still be finite but no longer fallen, suggesting we’ll continually experience discovery. Will our eyes function as telescopes and microscopes and see new colors? Will our ears recognize voices from miles away?

We’re commanded, “Glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:20). What will we do for eternity? Glorify God in our bodies. Scripture tells us, “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). Forever, we will eat, drink, and do all else to the glory of God. We will worship Jesus not only when we gaze upon Him and sing, but as we work, rest, explore, study, learn, and celebrate.

Revelation 22 shows us God’s plan for eternal Heaven is a redeemed earth free from the curse, inhabited by active, embodied people—wonderfully good news to all who imagine Heaven to be dull, boring, and unearthly. On the New Earth, “his servants will serve him” (Revelation 22:3). We will have things to do, places to go, people to see.

## All We Were Meant to Be

In Heaven, civilization and dominion will be sanctified and glorified: “The holy people of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever” (Daniel 7:18). I and all God’s people—together with my parents, dear friends, and my beloved wife Nanci, who went to Jesus in March 2022—will cultivate and develop the New Earth, and marvel at its wonders.

We will surely write books, perform music, create art, play, laugh, meet new friends, discover, invent, and travel on the New Earth. How do I know? We do these things now, not because we’re sinners, but because we’re humans, made in God’s image. Sin will cease; image-bearing will not. Above all, we’ll be joined to Christ, in a perfect marriage that present marriages, in their finest moments, prefigure (see Ephesians 5:21–33).

## Are You Looking Forward to Resurrection Day?

Our destiny is to rule under the King on the New Earth, to His glory. You and I will become all our Father intends us to be. That process begins here and now and will bear full fruit in his eternal kingdom.

Together, we’ll creatively serve and worship Him with purified hearts, minds, and bodies, forever enjoying His vast and beautiful creation and sharing in His boundless happiness. We will delight endlessly in our triune God, and incredibly, He will delight in us! ■

# Questions Sent to EPM

## Question from a reader:

I was asked by a family member what I thought about deconstructing your faith. Has Randy posted anything on this topic?

## Answer from EPM staff:

You can see the articles Randy has shared related to this at [epm.org/deconstruction](http://epm.org/deconstruction).

He writes, "When we contemplate what feels like an avalanche of Christian leaders declaring—whether through their actions or words or both—their loss of faith in Jesus and God's Word, we should realize that for every leader who loudly denies Christ, there are thousands of less well-known Christians who are doing the same. This is the age of deconversion. First Peter 5:8 says, 'Be sober minded, be watchful. Your adversary the devil is going around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.'"

Randy recommends *Another Gospel? A Lifelong Christian Seeks Truth in Response to Progressive Christianity* by Alisa Childers. Also, The Gospel Coalition published a book titled *Before You Lose Your Faith: Deconstructing Doubt in the Church*, edited by Ivan Mesa. Here's another resource from Desiring God: [epm.org/deconstruction-mean](http://epm.org/deconstruction-mean).

## Question from a reader:

Why do I suffer so much pain? What reading suggestions do you have on this subject?

## Answer from Doreen Button, EPM staff:

I am sorry you experience so much suffering from the pain in your life. Pain is a universal symptom of the death Adam and Eve, as humanity's representatives, put into motion in the Garden (see Genesis 3).

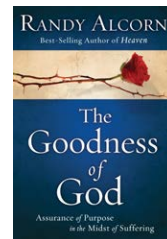
Jesus offers us rescue from sin and relief from pain (at least the emotional pain, and sometimes the physical pain as well, and ultimately from both). When we turn our faces toward Him, asking Him to be the Lord of our lives, we receive His peace.

Are you familiar with the story of Jesus sleeping in the boat during a life-threatening storm (Matthew 8)? That's the kind of peace I'm talking about. I've experienced it, so I know it's not just religious pie-in-the-sky wishful thinking. The more I practice looking at Jesus, no matter how stormy my circumstances, the more that peace permeates me.

God uses our pain to draw us close to Him. As C.S. Lewis wrote in *The Problem of Pain*, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." We can choose to listen to Him or to turn a deaf ear and reap the consequences of ignoring the One who loves us so much, He gave His very life so we could enter into relationship with Him. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6). That's the road map into God's eternal, loving presence where He will "wipe away every tear" and "sorrow and sighing are no more."

One of my favorite books of Randy's on this topic is *The Goodness of God*. It's the smaller version of his comprehensive book *If God is Good...Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil* (see [epm.org/books](http://epm.org/books)).

I pray that you will find the peace in Christ your heart longs for, even if the specific "why" of your suffering remains elusive. Job went through suffering at a level I can't even fathom. God spoke directly to him and never answered his questions,





but He did show Himself sovereign, powerful, and faithful. He also was with Job in his pain and cared about what was happening to him. If Job was satisfied, in the depths of his suffering, we can be too.

### Question from a reader:

Is it OK to ask my mother, who is in Heaven, to pray to Jesus for me?

### Answer from Stephanie Anderson, EPM staff:

Sometimes people assume those in Heaven no longer pray. But as Randy points out, "Prayer is simply talking to God. Angels can talk to God, and therefore angels pray. We will communicate with God in Heaven, and therefore we will pray in Heaven, presumably more than we do now, not less."

There is great comfort in remembering that Jesus Himself intercedes for us: "Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us" (Romans 8:34). The Spirit also prays for us: "For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words" (Romans 8:26). How incredible to know the King of the Universe prays for us! We don't need to ask anyone in Heaven to pray for us, even though it's very possible they do.

Randy writes, "I sometimes ask Jesus to pass on messages to Nanci as I have asked Him to do for my mother since 1981 when she joined Him there. We shouldn't pray to the saints who are with Jesus, or try to talk to them directly, but we can always pray to Jesus, our only Mediator."

Randy has frequently talked about how Nanci is now with Jesus, her best friend, and Jesus is Randy's best friend and always with Him (Matthew 28:20).

So Jesus is the bridge that keeps them connected until they are reunited in His presence.

May the love of Jesus and the knowledge that His ears are open to your every cry (Psalm 34:15) bring you deep comfort. "In my distress I called upon Yahweh; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears" (Psalm 18:6).

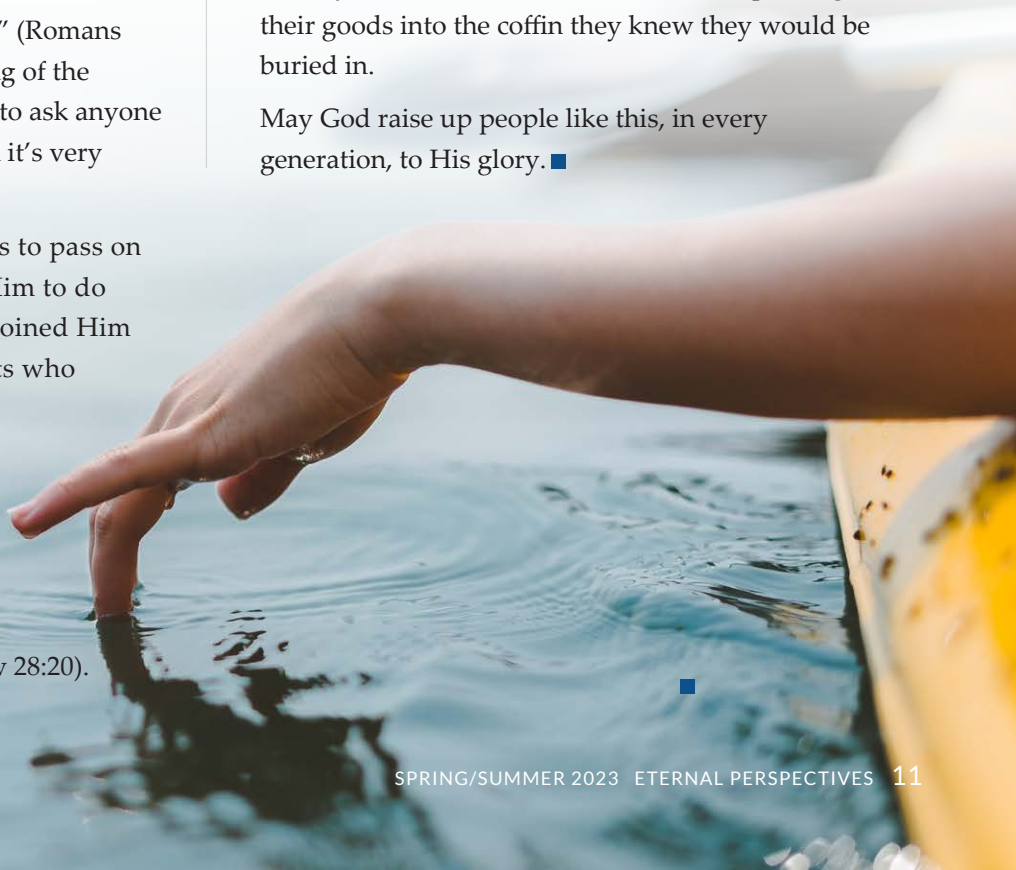
### Question from a reader:

As a young believer, what books most impacted you and taught you what it means to follow Jesus wholeheartedly?

### Answer from Randy Alcorn:

When I came to Christ as a high-schooler in 1969, I read Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, Richard Wurmbrand's *Tortured for Christ*, and Brother Andrew's *God's Smuggler*. I was deeply touched by these stories. I also read Corrie Ten Boom's *The Hiding Place* and the story of Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, and the other three missionary martyrs in Ecuador (in Elisabeth Elliot's *Through Gates of Splendor* and *Shadow of the Almighty*). To me, they were the essence of what it meant to follow Jesus wholeheartedly, like the 19th-century missionaries, who went to Africa packing their goods into the coffin they knew they would be buried in.

May God raise up people like this, in every generation, to His glory. ■



# All Glory to Our King

## *EPM Staff and Board Members Share Favorite Quotes*

We asked several of our staff and board members to share a Christian quote that they've found meaningful, and also why that quote has helped them in their walk with Christ.

### **Doreen Button, editor:**

**"'Safe?' said Mr. Beaver; 'don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you.'" —C. S. Lewis, writing about Aslan in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe***

God terrifies me sometimes. He's just SO big, and SO powerful. And yet, when I rest between His two velveteen paws, lean back into His comforting warmth, and feel His sweet breath on me, I know that even though He's not safe in the sense of controllable—or even predictable—He is infinitely good. And there is no place I'd rather be.



### **Brenda Abelein, ministry assistant:**

My sweet friend Myrna Alexander is an author and was a missionary for many years in Russia. She shared this at a seminar on prayer she was teaching at Good Shepherd many years ago, and it has been

so impactful for me. I have this written on a chalk sign that sits out where I see it every day:

**"Pray. Never give up in the process, regardless of what you see or feel. God is always at work!"**

When I'm worried or anxious about a situation, my first instinct is usually to try to DO something to fix it. But Myrna's words remind me that PRAYER is always the best first step, and God is the only one who can fix broken things. He sees far beyond what I can see or feel in the moment and always knows what's best.



### **Kathy Norquist, board member:**

***Do it immediately; do it with prayer;  
Do it reliantly, casting all care;  
Do it with reverence, tracing Christ's hand  
Who placed it before you with earnest command,  
Stayed on His omnipotence, safe 'neath His wing,  
Leave all resultings. DO THE NEXT THING.***



The quote “Do the next thing” (originally from an old English poem) was shared by Elisabeth Elliot and has served me well over the years. At times I’ve felt a bit rattled



and out of sync with my day, wondering how to move forward. Then I remember this quote and simply take the next step! It has also helped me to discipline myself in keeping a daily routine and doing the important things first.

**“Life is a process, not an event.”**

I first heard this quote from Jackie Viss, who was such a blessing in my life as a spiritual mentor for many years, and it also was attributed to Elisabeth Elliot. It has helped me to have patience and trust in the Lord’s timing and wisdom in dealing with me through the various trials and issues in my life.

**Christy Amadio, ministry assistant:**

**“To rest is to acknowledge that we humans are limited by design. We are created for rest just as surely as we are created for labor. An inability or unwillingness to cease from our labors is a confession of unbelief, an admission that we view ourselves as creator and sustainer of our own universes... This wrong thinking renders us not free, but enslaved to our ambition and enslaving of those we employ to achieve it.” — Jen Wilkin, *Ten Words to Live By***

Recently I have been thinking about what it really means to keep the Sabbath. And I realize at the heart of it is acknowledging that the work God calls us to is HIS work. In Exodus, God gives Moses and the Israelites the work of building the tabernacle and all the accessories for worship. But the section ends in chapters 29 and 30 with Him explaining that the men He called to do the work He equipped with the skill and knowledge, by His Spirit, to do it. He had provided the material needed when they plundered Egypt in the exile. Then He calls them to not forsake the Sabbath—a reminder that in the midst of the work, its completion doesn’t



rely on them! It is His work, and He provides all that is needed to complete it. “They sought God eagerly, and He was found by them. So Yahweh gave them rest on every side” (2 Chronicles 15:15b).

**Amy Woodard, Randy’s personal assistant:**

**“Faith is...believing that in the midst of suffering and need that God will be enough, that He will enable me to make it through.” —Pamela Reeve, *Faith Is...***

I purchased this book in my early 20s and identified with so many of the encouraging thoughts and lessons on each page. I read this one at a particularly difficult time and felt like the Lord was telling me right then, “I’m with you, I’m enough for you, and I will help you get through this.” I memorized that sweet promise, and it has encouraged me so many times in the last 20+ years to trust God in the difficult moments and believe that by trusting and leaning into Him, He will be the One to enable me to make it through hard things in life.



**Heidi McLaughlin, ministry assistant:**

***Think through me, thoughts of God,  
And let my own thoughts be  
Lost like the sand-pools on the shore  
Of the eternal sea.***

**—Amy Carmichael**

After growing up as an anxious child, I remember coming across this quote as a young fledgling adult recently out of the nest of my parents. Anxious thoughts ruled my mind. “Think through me, thoughts of God” resonated and settled in and gave me a phrase to add to my prayers. Think through me Jesus. Whatever is pure and lovely, honorable and true, think these thoughts through me. On my own, my thoughts are just anxiety after anxiety. This translated to my prayers later as I realized more and more that apart from Christ, I could do very



little in my own strength. *Love people through me, parent my children through me. Jesus, I can't do it; do it through me.* It helped me recognize myself as the vessel that Christ does His work through and that it was not by my own efforts but by the work of His Holy Spirit in me that I could obey and overcome a deeply rooted and habitually anxious thought life.

**Robin Green, board member:**

**"Remember Whose you are and Whom you serve. Provoke yourself by recollection, and your affection for God will increase tenfold; your imagination will not be starved any longer, but will be quick and enthusiastic, and your hope will be inexpressibly bright." —Oswald Chambers**

I appreciate this quote because it reminds me of my identity. I belong to God, and I serve God. Jesus came as a servant, and He served! He went about doing good, helping people, meeting needs as the Father showed Him. Recollecting that I belong to Him and that I'm here to serve Him does increase my affection for Him. It ignites my imagination, and brightens my hope. What joy that brings!



**Stephanie Anderson, communications and graphics specialist:**

**"God is too good to be unkind and He is too wise to be mistaken. And when we cannot trace His hand, we must trust His heart." —Charles Spurgeon**

One of the greatest blessings of being part of this ministry has been the wonderful, godly people I have worked with over the years. Kathy Norquist, then Randy's assistant and now one of our board members, shared a variation of this quote with me years ago, when I was facing challenging circumstances: "When you can't trace His hand, trust His heart." How delightful to realize this saying originated with the wise wordsmith and preacher Charles Spurgeon.



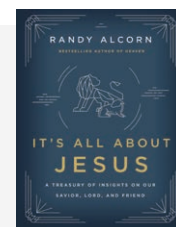
There have been many times in my life when I have not understood what God is doing. Some reasons for some circumstances have become clear over time, but others remain a complete mystery, and likely will until I'm face to face with Jesus. It's not always easy, but there is great peace in knowing that even when understanding is elusive, I can trust my good and faithful Savior to do what is best for me *and* brings Him glory. This reminds me of another favorite quote:

**"Occasionally, weep deeply over the life you hoped would be. Grieve the losses. Then wash your face. Trust God. And embrace the life you have." —John Piper**

**Kress Drew, board member:**

**"...were I asked to focus the New Testament message in three words, my proposal would be *adoption through propitiation*, and I do not expect ever to meet a richer or more pregnant summary of the gospel than that." —J. I. Packer, *Knowing God***

Packer's three-word summary of the New Testament rightly instructs my thinking each time I repeat it in thought and in prayer, lifting my gaze from self and performance, to grace and the Godhead. For I am His adopted son only through the wrath-bearing sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. It is finished. He is risen. I am forgiven. All glory to our King! ■



## Enjoy these quotes?

Find many more powerful quotes about Jesus and our life in Him in Randy's book *It's All About Jesus*: [epm.org/allabout](http://epm.org/allabout)



# Is There a Danger of Worshipping the Bible Instead of God?

BY RANDY ALCORN



Perhaps you've heard someone say something like, "My faith is in God, not the Bible" or "Be careful you're not worshipping the Bible or making an idol out of it." What should our response be?

I agree that there is a danger of having our faith in the wrong object. And there have been some people who seemingly hold the Bible in higher esteem than they do Jesus. But seen properly, the Bible is not a competitor with God; on the contrary, *it is our God-given means of knowing Him through His revealed truth.*

**God's Word is the only trustworthy revelation of His character and will.**

How can we know what God is really like? We can't know without an authoritative revelation from God. Everything else is guesswork.

Anselm wrote, "Intelligent nature . . . finds

its happiness, both now and forever, in the contemplation of God." But we can only contemplate God with confidence if we have a source of information about God we can trust.

Scripture says this about its own nature:

- Every scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. (2 Timothy 3:16, NET)
- No prophecy of scripture ever comes about by the prophet's own imagination, for no prophecy was ever borne of human impulse; rather, men carried along by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (2 Peter 1:20-21, NET)

The people in Berea were commended for subjecting the apostle Paul's words to God's Word: "Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11, NASB).

Everything the Bible says about God is true; everything anyone says about God that contradicts the Bible is false. Apart from a belief in the authority of God's Word—as well as a growing knowledge of what it says—we'll be vulnerable to deception. This is why one of the greatest needs in churches today is the consistent teaching of sound doctrine. Without it, and without people reading good books that reinforce a biblical worldview, God's people will drift along, swept away by the current of popular opinion.

Faith is not inherently virtuous. Its value depends on the worth of its object. The Bible, understood in context and given precedent over our own instincts and preferences, is our dependable guide for faith and practice. Only by learning what Scripture says about God can we know what's true about Him.

### **When we delight in God's Word, we are delighting in Him.**

Imagine this scenario, from an age before e-mail, social media, and FaceTime: a young woman is in love with a soldier serving overseas. Every day she checks her mailbox. Whenever a letter arrives, she opens it and eagerly reads and rereads every word.

Wouldn't it be accurate to say she delights in her fiancé's love letters? Would anyone correct her, "No, you should only take delight in him, not his letters"? That would be a meaningless distinction. Why? Because his love letters are an extension of him.

Yet I've heard people say, "Don't take pleasure in the Bible; take pleasure in God." But to study God's words is to take pleasure in God, because His Word is an expression of His very being.

Anyone who finds happiness in God must find happiness in God's words:

- In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. (Psalm 119:14)
- I find my delight in your commandments, which I love. (Psalm 119:47)
- Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. (Psalm 119:97)

Notice such Scriptures demonstrate that to delight in and to meditate upon God's Word is to delight in God Himself.

A woman self-consciously told one of our pastors that before going to sleep each night she reads her Bible, then hugs it as she falls asleep. "Is that weird?" she asked. While it may be unusual, it's not weird. This woman has known suffering, and as she clings to His promises, she clings to God. Any father would be moved to hear that his daughter falls asleep with letters he wrote her held close to her. Surely God treasures such an act of childlike love.

### **The point of studying God's Word is to know Him.**

There is a danger of idolizing our own knowledge of the Bible rather than remembering the point is to know Him better. (If we fail to understand that, the problem is with us, not the Bible!) J. I. Packer, in the first chapter of his book *Knowing God*, says this:

To be preoccupied with getting theological knowledge as an end in itself, to approach Bible study with no higher a motive than a desire to know all the answers, is the direct route to a state of self-satisfied self-deception. We need to guard our hearts against such an attitude, and pray to be kept from it. ...there can be no spiritual health without doctrinal knowledge; but it is equally true that there can be no spiritual health with it, if it is sought for the wrong purpose and valued by the wrong standard.

...Our aim in studying the Godhead must be to know God himself better. Our concern must be to enlarge our acquaintance, not simply with the doctrine of God's attributes, but with the living God whose attributes they are. As he is the subject of our study, and our helper in it, so he must himself be the end of it.

May we see Bible study and doctrine as a basis for humble worship of our King and Savior, not for prideful posturing.



## God's words have the power to bring heart-happiness.

As a new believer in Christ, I couldn't get enough of God's Word. At night I sometimes fell asleep with my face on an open Bible. Other times I would listen to Scripture on cassette tapes (if you're 35 or younger you may need to Google that!). As I drifted off to sleep, my last waking memories were of God's words.

When Jeremiah said that God's Word "became to me a joy and the delight of my heart" (Jeremiah 15:16), he was suggesting that Scripture has a cumulative effect that increases over time. Happily, by God's grace, I can attest to this. As our dear sister Joni Eareckson Tada says:

If you want to increase your desire for God, then get to know Him in a deeper way. And there is no better way to know Him than through His Word. Get into God's Word, and you will get a heart for Jesus. Get passionate about Scripture, and your passion for Him will increase. Feelings follow faith...and faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

God promises that His Word "will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11). We live in a time where the Bible is increasingly minimized. Let's be committed to doing everything we can to uplift and honor God's Word, as a means of knowing and loving Him. ■

*“Our aim in studying the Godhead must be to know God himself better.”* J. I. PACKER



# When a Beloved Pastor Falls

BY HANNAH DE CLEENE

**W**e've all been disappointed in people before, but the hurt can be harder to swallow when it comes from inside the four walls of our church.

Perhaps a beloved pastor led your parents to Christ and performed your wedding, but you later discovered he spiritually abused other church members. Maybe your youth pastor always supported you at soccer games and plays but recently abandoned his wife and family for someone else. God used this pastor in your life, but now the memories feel tainted. How can we reconcile the good he's done for us with the harm he's done to others?

When a pastor or other church leader fails morally, church members often tend toward two types of responses. We might deny or excuse the pastor's failures—*He's done so much good in our congregation over the years; that can't be true!* Or we might discredit his ministry altogether—*All his sermons and everything I've learned from him are no longer valid.*

Instead, we must learn to hold these extremes in tension. The good doesn't mean a pastor is incapable of doing wrong, nor does the bad necessarily erase the fruit of his ministry.

## Holding the Tension

The Bible is full of people and leaders God used for good, even though they had major failures. Abraham and Moses are familiar examples.



Abraham followed the Lord to an unknown land and offered his son as a sacrifice, fully believing in the power of resurrection (before it had ever happened in history). But he also lied about Sarah being his wife on two occasions, and he went along with her plan to have an heir through their servant Hagar (Genesis 12:12–14; 16:2–4; 20:2).

Moses led Israel out of Egypt across the parted Red Sea, and God entrusted him with the Ten Commandments. Yet, after seeing miracle upon miracle, he struck a rock to produce water in unbelief (Exodus 20; Numbers 20:10–13).

What were these two men, along with many other flawed people, commended for in Hebrews 11? Their faith. Though Abraham and Moses failed at times, they continually turned back to the Lord in obedience. Their failures didn't erase the wonderful ways God used them for his purposes.



But that doesn't mean church leaders receive a free pass for their sins. Abraham was separated from his son Ishmael, and Moses never entered the promised land. The results of sin can often be severe and grievous. Pastors may need to step down from their positions until repentance and reconciliation occur and church discipline has been enacted. Even then, full restoration to ministry may not be possible or wise.

## Clinging to Christ

What does that mean for those of us left in the aftermath? The sad reality is that a once-beloved church leader may no longer be someone we should confide in or follow. We may even need to find a new congregation to join.

However, that doesn't void the ways God used these leaders in our lives. We can still thank God for what he taught us through them while expressing our hurt, disappointment, and even anger to the Lord over our broken church situations. That's part of casting all our cares on him (1 Peter 5:7). Instead of suppressing our emotions over these failures or allowing the sin of bitterness to destroy us, Hebrews 12:1-2 gives us a better focus:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.

God has set a race before each of us, and for many of us, that race involves dealing with the sinfulness and brokenness of church leaders. May we let their failures remind us of our own need to lay aside the sin that clings so closely to us.

Jesus alone lived perfectly. When our earthly leaders fail, we're reminded to continually look to Christ. Because He alone is the founder and perfecter of our faith, we can hold the good and the bad of our leaders in tension. Only Jesus is worth clinging to with our whole hearts. ■

**Hannah De Cleene** is a content writer in Des Moines, Iowa. She belongs to Saylorville Church where she enjoys serving in the counseling ministry. Find more of her writing at [literologylife.com](http://literologylife.com).



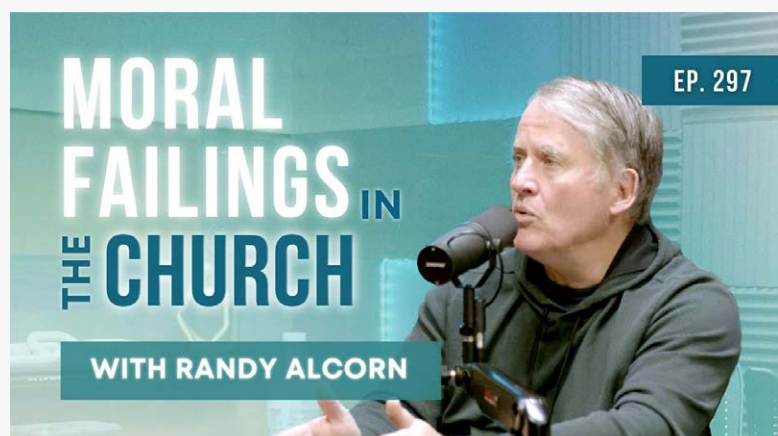
This article originally appeared on The Gospel Coalition ([thegospelcoalition.org/article/beloved-pastor-falls](http://thegospelcoalition.org/article/beloved-pastor-falls))

## Moral Failings in the Church: Randy's Interview with Pure Desire


Randy was interviewed on the Pure Desire Ministries podcast ([puredesire.org](http://puredesire.org)). They covered these questions:

- Why do Christian leaders fall?
- How can we prevent this from happening?
- How are churches supposed to recover?

And much more. Watch the interview at [epm.org/pure-desire](http://epm.org/pure-desire)







# Resources and Books for the Grieving

**M**arch 28 marked one year since Nanci Alcorn went to be with Jesus. Since then, Randy has had several opportunities to speak about an eternal perspective in grief, which has resulted in EPM hearing from many grieving people over the last year. These hurting hearts need hope, perspective, and resources that point them to Jesus. Here are just a few of the messages we've received from those touched by what Randy has shared and written, and some of the resources we frequently recommend.

## **In response to Randy's interview on Men's Golf Fellowship:**

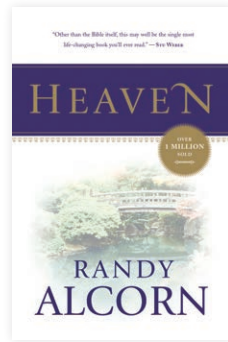
"I just listened to your interview where you spoke with Steve Silver. I can't tell you how comforting it was. Thank you for studying Scripture about our final destination! I have it in my will to purchase copies of your book for all who attend my funeral. I love imagining what it will be like. Your book and this interview helped me have a more informed imagination." —C.S.L.



Watch Randy's interview about Heaven with Steve at [epm.org/steve-silver](https://epm.org/steve-silver)

### In a message to Randy on Facebook:

"Your book *Heaven* gave me the courage to look at the imminent loss of both of my parents while I saw their decline side by side. It gave me comfort again when they passed into Heaven, and still gives me hope and anticipation for when that time comes for me and other loved ones. I'm sure your grief, and your willingness to publicly share it, is bringing great comfort to many in similar circumstances." —B.F.



Order the *Heaven* book from [epm.org/heavenbook](http://epm.org/heavenbook)

### In response to Randy's message on "A Theology of Suffering and Grief" at Liberty University:

"I was glad to hear this message that addressed not only grief, but also the disappointment we sometimes have with God through losses. You risked vulnerability to share the joy available even in the midst of tragedy. I admire your resolve to 'not waste your grief.' Thank you especially for sharing your beloved Nanci with us. I, too, am struggling with serious health problems and really needed to get refocused. I was inspired by Nanci's pursuit of God's presence through her ordeal. It's so easy to lapse into feeling lost and abandoned, but she guided her heart to rest in Him until she experienced the ultimate deliverance. Her courage inspired me to find my own anew." —D.D.



Watch Randy's message at Liberty University at [epm.org/liberty-message](http://epm.org/liberty-message)

### In response to Randy's article "The Four Biggest Assets in My Grief":

I cannot thank you enough for this article. My grief is so overwhelming, but I know I will spend eternity with my grandson who died suddenly. Yes, he is with God, who is also with me now. So much of your article is so helpful. And thank you for your book on Heaven. Finishing it now. ...Also, was blessed by hearing you speak in Leesburg, Florida. Thank you. You get it! Thank you, and Nanci, for your faithfulness. —C.H.

Read the article on the next page.

## More Resources from Our Ministry

Christians Grieve the Death of Believing Loved Ones, But We Don't Grieve Without Hope: Read the article at [epm.org/grieve-hope](http://epm.org/grieve-hope)

An Eternal Perspective on Suffering, Loss, and Grief: Watch Randy's video message at [epm.org/perspective-loss](http://epm.org/perspective-loss)

## GriefShare

Sign up for a year of daily emails that provide encouragement and reminders of the recovery process at [griefshare.org/dailymails](http://griefshare.org/dailymails)



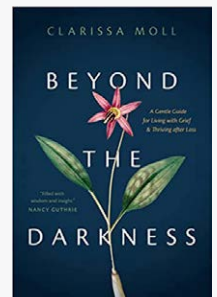
Thousands of GriefShare support groups meet weekly at locations around the world. Find one near you at [griefshare.org/findagroup](http://griefshare.org/findagroup)

## Recommended Books

*When Your Family's Lost a Loved One* by Dave and Nancy Guthrie

*A Grief Disguised* by Jerry Sittser

*Beyond the Darkness: A Gentle Guide for Living with Grief and Thriving After Loss* by Clarissa Moll



See a full list of recommended books on grief at [epm.org/books-grief](http://epm.org/books-grief)

# The Four Biggest Assets in My Grief

BY RANDY ALCORN

**G**rieving a loved one's death is a long, often lonely, always painful process. Four key players stand out in my continued healing journey through grief.

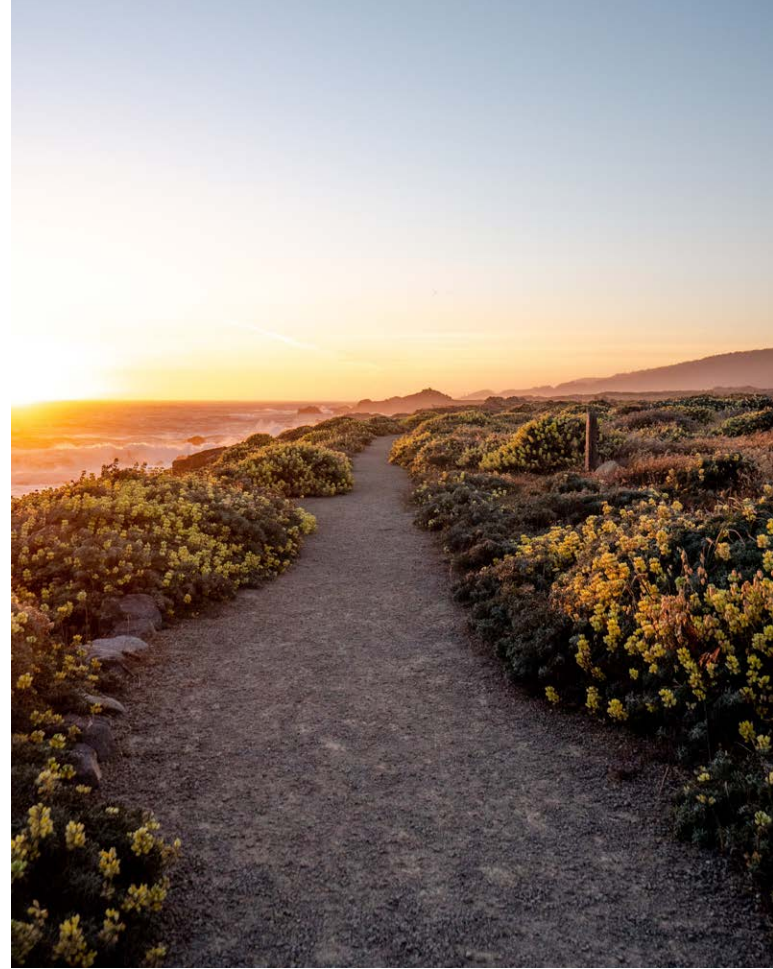
## **1** First, I have firm belief in the promises of Jesus about our eternal future.

They are blood-bought, meaning our resurrection is guaranteed. Nanci and I spent so much time talking about the world to come, and she would walk me through her afterlife bucket list. We would talk of adventures together on God's New Earth that are all still ahead of us. So though her death is a heartbreaking interruption, we can both anticipate the everlasting reunion in a world without sin and suffering and grief, where happiness will be the air we breathe.

## **2** Second, I cherish my friendship with God.

I have frequently pondered with astonishment in the last year Jesus's words in John 15:15: "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you" (NIV).

Jesus is my closest and dearest friend. He was and is Nanci's closest friend. Jesus was closer to Nanci than I ever was, and He is closer to me than she ever was. He's the only being in the universe that is true love. And He is with me on this present earth, and He is with her in Heaven; so that means she is with Him, and I am with Him. That certainty closes what



would otherwise seem a huge distance between Nanci and me now. Jesus is the bridge that keeps us connected until we live in that new world, with new bodies and minds, that He is preparing for us. The connection I feel to her through Him is profound.

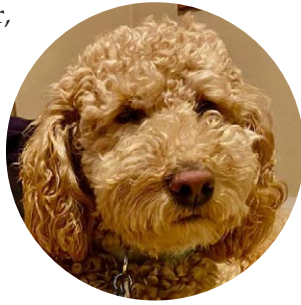
Jesus promised, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). And in Hebrews we're promised "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (13:5). Two of the three members of the triune God—Son and Spirit—indwell us! And He invites us to "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). These promises mean that no matter how we may feel, we are not abandoned or unloved.

## **3** Third, one of the great blessings since Nanci went to be with Jesus has been our dog Gracie, who we picked out together.

Obviously these are not in order, or my dog wouldn't come before family and friends! But when I'm not traveling, Gracie is my constant companion.



Every day we run together,  
and her sheer excitement  
and delight as she  
dramatically pulls her  
leash forward makes  
me laugh hard and run  
faster than I otherwise  
would. Romans 1:20 says,  
“For since the creation of the



world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.” Animals are the second most important part of God’s creation, after people. We should see God’s nature in His creation.

Gracie is, of course, not God; she is secondary, part of His creation, but she points me to the primary, who is God alone. She snuggles with me, sending a message of love and affection. When I let her outside she runs around the yard crazily. When I give her one of a variety of healthy treats, she darts and jumps and is overcome with exuberance from the moment she hears the bag open. She then charges off to her favorite spot in the living room and relishes her treat for ten seconds before eating it. Her body language declares, “I am surely the world’s most fortunate creature.” It is nearly impossible for me to be unhappy in her presence.

#### **4 Fourth, I’ve found a great deal of comfort in my family, church, small group, and close circle of friends.**

Paul instructed the Galatians to “Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ” (6:2). Our daughters have been wonderful to me, and have helped me in both physical and spiritual ways. They have called and checked in and made themselves available to help. Karina, who lives 1,000 miles away, has done a lot to organize and simplify our finances—everything from autopay to paperless billing to helping with taxes. Angela has often picked up groceries for me and dropped by meals and helped around the house. I consider our sons in law, “the Dans,” to be good friends, and

I am encouraged by their wonderful care for my daughters and grandchildren.

My grandsons have helped me mostly by just being who they are and sharing their lives with me when I’m at their homes and games, and by Facetime, videos, and texts. In March, we were all together for six days, the middle of which fell on the one-year anniversary of Nanci’s going to be with Jesus.

Regarding our church, as I said at Nanci’s memorial service, with all the people who hate the church these days and have terrible stories about church people, I can never resent the church but only appreciate it because of what I witnessed in the last years and months of Nanci’s life. People brought meals, prayed, visited her, massaged her hands and feet, and spent the night at our house to help care for her. I can only love the church because of what it has done for my dear wife. I saw the same kind of care for my mother when she was dying in 1981. I have never forgotten the four nurses from our church who were with her nearly day and night.

Our little group of three couples—Steve and Sue Keels, Paul and Michele Norquist, Nanci and I—ate together at the Keels’ house nearly every Thursday for twenty-some years, enjoying Sue’s wonderful meals. In the last three years we’ve shared many tears, after Jason, Steve and Sue’s son, died the day after Thanksgiving in 2019. Then Michele died January 1, 2022, and Nanci on March 28, 2022. Sue still fixes dinner for Paul, Steve, and me on Thursdays, though the six of us have been reduced to four. To show how this small circle connects with suffering, loss, and grief, consider that of the four of us still here, two have lost their son, and the other two have lost our wives.

*If you don’t have them, take the initiative to make these kinds of friends.* Hold on to them. Live beside them. Walk the valley of the shadow of death with them. We need each other. I thank God for my church, my family, my friends, my small group, for Him, and for His promises which guarantee I’ll never walk that valley alone. ■



eternal perspective ministries  
39065 Pioneer Blvd., Suite 100  
Sandy, OR 97055

Browse all Randy's books at [epm.org/books](https://epm.org/books) and get an extra 15% off our discounted prices with code **SUMMER23**

COUPON ENDS AUGUST 31, 2023

