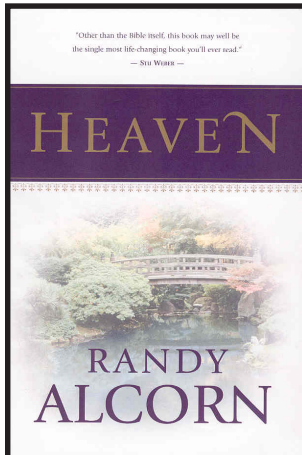


Eternal Perspectives

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

Fall 2004



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This World Is Not Our Home...or Is It?

by Randy Alcorn

God will make the new earth his dwelling place. . . . Heaven and earth will then no longer be separated as they are now, but they will be one. But to leave the new earth out of consideration when we think of the final state of believers is greatly to impoverish biblical teaching about the life to come.

Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*

Many books on Heaven speak only of the intermediate state, where Christians go when they die. Often they say nothing about the New Earth, where we'll live forever as resurrected people.

Other books address the New Earth but deny its true nature. As one author puts it, "Is this new earth like our present earth? Probably not." But if it isn't, why does God call it a New *Earth*? This author also says, "The eternal phase of Heaven will be so unlike what we are familiar with that our present language can't even describe it." Certainly our present language can't *fully* describe it, but it *does* in fact describe it (e.g., Revelation 21–22).

Many religions, including Buddhism and Hinduism, picture the afterlife as vague and intangible. Christianity specifically refutes this notion. Biblical Christianity doesn't give up on humanity *or* the earth.

Paul Marshall writes, "Our destiny is an earthly one: a new earth, an earth redeemed and transfigured. An earth reunited with heaven, but an earth, nevertheless."

Our Longing for Eden

We are homesick for Eden. We're nostalgic for what is implanted in our hearts. It's built into us, perhaps even at a genetic level. We long for what the first man and woman once enjoyed—a perfect and beautiful Earth with free and untainted relationships with God, each other, animals, and our environment. Every attempt at human progress has been an attempt to overcome what was lost in the Fall.

Our ancestors came from Eden. We are headed toward a New Earth. Meanwhile, we live out our lives

on a sin-corrupted Earth, between Eden and the New Earth, but we must never forget that this is not our natural state. Sin and death and suffering and war and poverty are not natural—they are the devastating results of our rebellion against God.

We long for a return to Paradise—a perfect world, without the corruption of sin, where God walks with us and talks with us in the cool of the day. Because we're human beings, we desire something tangible and physical, something that will not fade away.

Adam was formed from the dust of the earth, forever establishing our connection to the earth (Genesis 2:7). Just as we are made *from* the earth, so too we are made *for* the earth. But, you may object, Jesus said he was going to prepare a place for us and would take us there to live with him forever (John 14:2-3). Yes. But *what is that place?* Revelation 21 makes it clear—it's the New Earth. That's where the New Jerusalem will reside when it comes down out of Heaven. Only *then* will we be truly home.

Clues to the Nature of the Eternal Heaven

I heard a radio preacher say, "There's nothing in our present experience that can suggest to us what Heaven is like." But if the eternal Heaven will be a New Earth, doesn't that suggest that the current Earth must be bursting with clues about what Heaven will be like?





*If you think
you can't
imagine
Heaven—
or if you
imagine it as
something
drab and
unappealing—
you can't get
excited
about it.*

Scripture gives us images full of hints and implications about Heaven. Put them together, and these jigsaw pieces form a beautiful picture. For example, we're told that Heaven is a city (Hebrews 11:10; 13:14). When we hear the word *city*, we shouldn't scratch our heads and think, "I wonder what that means?" We understand cities. Cities have buildings, culture, art, music, athletics, goods and services, events of all kinds. And, of course, cities have *people* engaged in activities, gatherings, conversations, commerce, and work.

Heaven is also described as a country (Hebrews 11:16). We know about countries. They have territories, rulers, national interests, pride in their identity, and citizens who are both diverse and unified.

If we can't imagine our present Earth without rivers, mountains, trees, and flowers, then why would we try to imagine the New Earth without these features? We wouldn't expect a non-Earth to have mountains and rivers. But God doesn't promise us a non-Earth. He promises us a *New Earth*. If the word *Earth* means anything, it means that we can expect to find earthly things there—including atmosphere, mountains, water, trees, people, houses—even cities, buildings, and streets. (These familiar features are specifically mentioned in Revelation 21–22).

We're told we'll have resurrection bodies (1 Corinthians 15:40–44). When God speaks of us having these bodies, do we shrug our shoulders and say, "I can't imagine what a new body would be like"? No, of course we can imagine it. We know what a body is—we've had one all our lives! (And we can remember when ours looked better and worked better, can't we?) So we *can* imagine a new body. In Heaven, we'll rest (Revelation 14:13). We know what it means to rest. And to want to rest (Hebrews 4:10–11).

We're told we will serve Christ on the New Earth, working for his glory (Revelation 22:3). We know what it means to work. And to *want* to work.

Scripture speaks of a New Jerusalem made of precious stones. Some of the jewels listed in Revelation 21:19–21 are among the hardest substances known. They indicate the material solidity of the New Earth. The problem is not that the Bible doesn't tell us much about Heaven. It's that we don't pay attention to what it tells us.

Some of the best images of Heaven are in children's books. Why? Because they depict earthly

scenes, with animals and people playing, and joyful activities. The books for adults, on the other hand, often try to be philosophical, profound, ethereal, and otherworldly. But that kind of Heaven is precisely what the Bible *doesn't* portray as the place where we'll live forever.

We can only hope for what we desire, and we can only desire what we can imagine. If you think you can't imagine Heaven—or if you imagine it as something drab and unappealing—you can't get excited about it. You can't come with that childlike eagerness to embrace the kingdom that God so highly values (Mark 10:15).

Abraham "was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:10). If he was looking forward to it, don't you think he was imagining what it would be like? Abraham's descendants "were longing for a better country—a heavenly one" (Hebrews 11:16). And, as Christ's followers, "we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come" (Hebrews 13:14); "we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised" (2 Peter 3:13, NLT).



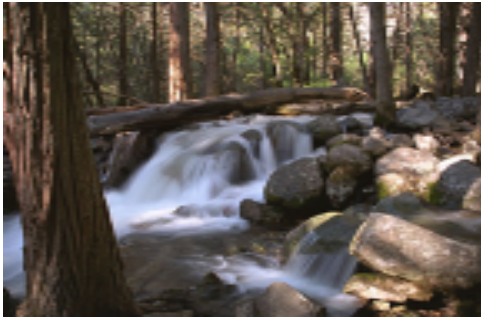
Is the Eternal Heaven an Actual Place?

Many people can't resist spiritualizing what the Bible teaches about Heaven. According to an evangelical theologian, "While heaven is both a place and a state, it is primarily a state." But what does this mean? A theologian writes, "Paul does not think of heaven as a place, but thinks of it in terms of the presence of God." But when a person is "present," doesn't that suggest there's a place?

One book puts *place* in quotation marks whenever it uses the word to describe Heaven or Hell. It says Paradise is "a spiritual condition more than a spatial location." But Jesus didn't say that Heaven was "primarily a state" or a "spiritual condition." He spoke of a *house* with many *rooms* in which he would prepare a *place* for us (John 14:2). In Revelation 21–22, the New Earth and New Jerusalem are portrayed as actual places, with detailed physical descriptions.

Jesus told the disciples, “I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John 14:3). He uses ordinary, earthly, spatial terms to describe Heaven. The word “where” refers to a place, a location. Likewise, the phrase “come back and take you” indicates movement and a physical destination.

If Heaven isn’t a place, would Jesus have said it was? If we reduce Heaven to something less than or other than a place, we strip Christ’s words of their meaning.



Are We Just Passing Through?

The old gospel song, “This world is not my home, I’m just a-passing through,” is a half truth. We may pass from the Earth through death, but eventually we’ll be back to live on the restored Earth.

Earth has been damaged by our sin (Genesis 3:17). Therefore, the Earth as it is now (under the Curse) is not our home. The world as it was, and as it will be, *is* our home. We have never known a world without sin, suffering, and death. Yet we yearn for such a life and such a world. When we see a roaring waterfall, beautiful flowers, a wild animal in its native habitat, or the joy in the eyes of our pets when they see us, we sense that this world is—or at least was *meant to be*—our home.

We are pilgrims in this life, not because our home will never be on Earth, but because our eternal home is not *currently* on Earth. It was and it will be, but it’s not now.

Will the Eden we long for return? Will it be occupied by familiar, tangible, physical features and fully embodied people? The Bible clearly answers *yes*.

The biblical doctrine of the New Earth implies something startling: that if we want to know what the ultimate Heaven, our eternal home, will be like, the best place to start is by looking around us. The present Earth is as much a valid reference point for envisioning the New Earth as our present bodies are a valid reference point for envisioning our new bodies. We shouldn’t read into the New Earth anything that’s wrong with this one, but can we not imagine what it would be like to be unhindered by disease and death? Can we not envision natural beauty untainted by destruction?

The idea of the New Earth as a physical place isn’t an invention of shortsighted human imagination. Rather, it’s the invention of a transcendent God, who made physical human beings to live on a physical Earth, *and* who chose to become a man himself on that same Earth. He did this that he might redeem mankind *and* Earth. Why? In order to glorify himself and enjoy forever the company of men and women in a world he’s made for us.

The Three Phases of Earth’s History

In order to have a biblical worldview, we must have a sense of our past, present, and future, and how they relate to each other. Without understanding God’s original plan for mankind and the earth, we cannot understand his future plan. Without the bookends of past and future in place, the books—our present lives—won’t stand up.

The following chart shows the three phases of Earth’s history: humanity’s past on the original Earth; our present experience on the fallen Earth; and our promised future on the New Earth. (*An important limitation of this chart is its inability to fully reflect the “already and not yet” paradox of our being raised with Christ and seated with him in Heaven; the present reality of our righteousness in Christ; and the fact that God’s new creation has already started with the death and resurrection of Christ.*)

The chart portrays human history and human destiny. It demonstrates the continuity of past, present, and future, and the continuity between life on the old Earth and life on the New Earth. By comparing each series of statements, you’ll see the distinct differences between these three periods. I encourage you to study this chart and contemplate the significance of each phase of Earth’s history.



The present Earth is as much a valid reference point for envisioning the New Earth as our present bodies are a valid reference point for envisioning our new bodies.

Three Eras of Earth and Mankind

Past	Present	Future
Genesis 1 – 2	Genesis 3 – Revelation 20	Revelation 21 – 22
Original mankind	Fallen mankind/ Some of whom believe and are transformed	Resurrected mankind
Original Earth	Fallen Earth, with glimmers of original	New Earth; resurrected on mankind's coattails (Rom. 8)
God delegates reign to innocent mankind	Disputed reign with God, Satan, and fallen mankind	God delegates reign to righteous mankind
Mankind given dominion, with intended stewardship of Earth	Mankind's dominion thwarted, frustrated, and twisted	Mankind's dominion fulfilled; redeemed stewardship of Earth
God in Heaven, visiting Earth	God in Heaven, separate yet active (indwells believers by his Spirit)	God living forever with mankind on the New Earth
No Curse	Sin and the Curse	No more Curse
No shame	Shame	No shame or potential for shame
Tree of life in Eden (mankind can eat)	Tree of life in Paradise (mankind cut off from)	Tree of life in New Jerusalem (mankind can eat again forever)
River of life	Rivers and nature, with glimmers of past and future	River of life flows from God's throne
No death	Death permeates all	Death forever removed
Mankind created from the earth	Mankind dies, returns to the earth; new life to some	Mankind resurrected from the earth to live on the New Earth
First Adam reigns	First Adam falls; mankind reigns corruptly, with glimpses of good; Second Adam comes	Second Adam reigns as God-man, with mankind as co-heirs and delegated kings
Serpent, Satan, on Earth	Serpent, Satan, judged but still present on Earth	Serpent, Satan, removed from Earth, thrown into eternal fire
God walking with humans in the Garden	Humans cut off from God	God dwells face-to-face with humans
Creation and mankind perfect	Creation and mankind tainted by sin	Creation and mankind restored to perfection
Mankind names, tends, rules the animals	Animals and mankind hurt each other	Animals and mankind live in complete harmony
Ground fertile, vegetation lush	Ground cursed, vegetation diseased	Ground fertile, vegetation thrives
Abundant food and water	Hunger and thirst, toil for food and water	Abundant food and water
Restfulness, satisfaction in labor	Restlessness, toil in labor	Enhanced restfulness, joy in labor
Paradise	Paradise lost, sought; glimmers seen, foretastes	Paradise regained and magnified
Mankind in ideal place	Mankind banished, struggles and wanders in fallen place(s)	Man restored to ideal place
Mankind able either to sin or not to sin	Mankind enslaved to sin, empowered not to sin	Mankind unable to sin, permanently empowered
One marriage (Adam and Eve)	Many marriages	One marriage (Christ and church)
Beginning of human culture	Contamination and advancement of culture	Purification and eternal expansion of culture
Mankind learns, creates in purity	Mankind learns, creates in impurity (Cain, Babel)	Mankind learns, creates in wisdom and purity
God's plan for mankind and Earth revealed	God's plan delayed and enriched	God's plan for mankind and Earth realized

In Genesis 3, the Earth's first radical transition (mankind's fall and first judgment) can be seen as one bookend of human history under the fall. In Revelation 20, we see the second bookend in the Earth's last radical transition (Christ's return and last judgment), creating a picture of great symmetry.

In Genesis, God plants the garden on Earth; in Revelation, he brings down the New Jerusalem, with a garden at its center, to the New Earth. In Eden, there's no sin, death, or Curse; on the New Earth, there's no *more* sin, death, or Curse. In Genesis, the Redeemer is promised; in Revelation, the Redeemer returns. Genesis tells the story of Paradise lost; Revelation tells the story of Paradise regained. In Genesis, humanity's stewardship is squandered; in Revelation, humanity's stewardship is triumphant, empowered by the human and divine King Jesus.

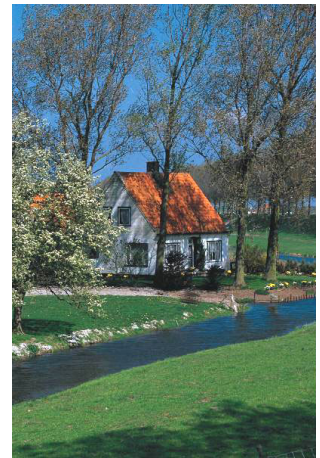
These parallels are too remarkable to be anything but deliberate. These mirror images

demonstrate the perfect symmetry of God's plan. We live in the in-between time, hearing echoes of Eden and the approaching footfalls of the New Earth.

Paul Marshall concludes, "This world is our home: we are made to live here. It has been devastated by sin, but God plans to put it right. Hence, we look forward with joy to newly restored bodies and to living in a newly restored heaven and earth. We can love this world because it is God's, and it will be healed, becoming at last what God intended from the beginning."

The earth matters, our bodies matter, animals and trees matter, *matter* matters, because God created them and intends them to manifest his glory. And as we'll see in the following chapters, the God who created them has not given up on them any more than he has given up on us.

Excerpted from Heaven, by Randy Alcorn. EPM is matching Amazon's price of \$16.10 (30% discount). Order at www.epm.org or call 503-663-6481.



Free DVD on Heaven to All Pastors

See and hear Randy Alcorn speak to pastors and church leaders, concerning what the Bible says about Heaven and The New Earth. Pastors are welcome to use this 28-minute video presentation in their churches as they wish. Feel free to tell your pastor about this offer. He can request it by contacting EPM (bonnie@epm.org, 503-663-6481). Others may purchase the same DVD at a minimal charge of \$4.00 (which includes postage).

Operation Christmas Child

Millions of children's lives are touched each year by Operation Christmas Child. When Samaritan's Purse undertook the project in 1993, the staff expected to receive a few thousand shoe box gifts from donors. Instead, 28,000 boxes were collected and delivered to children in Romania. Since then, the Christian international relief and evangelistic organization has distributed more than 31 million gift-filled shoe boxes to children in over 120 countries.

The concept is simple. Churches, schools, organizations, families, and individuals pack shoe boxes with gifts such as toys, school supplies, personal hygiene items, candy, and small items of clothing. Participants take the boxes to one of more than 1,700 drop-off sites located in all 50 states. From there, they are sent to one of six major processing centers in the United States to be inspected and prepared for overseas shipment. Then the boxes are loaded onto cargo planes, sea containers, and trucks bound for delivery in some of the most remote regions of the earth.

From the beginning, Samaritan's Purse President Franklin Graham envisioned Operation Christmas Child as an outreach for the Gospel.



When the shoe box gifts arrive at their destinations, local Christians assist in the distribution of the boxes. They offer the children illustrated booklets called "The Greatest Gift," now available in over 50 languages. Churches in the area also have follow-up evangelism and discipleship Bible lessons, and many people come to know Christ and experience changed lives.

From children in Sudan suffering from the world's longest running civil war to Ugandan children devastated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, these shoe box gifts go to children who have never received a Christmas present. The gifts brighten the lives of hurting children and provide opportunities to share with them the hope found in Jesus Christ, God's Christmas gift to the world. *(This article was excerpted from the Samaritan's Purse 2004 newsletter.)*

For more information or to order free materials, contact Samaritan's Purse at (800) 353-5949 or visit www.samaritanpurse.org

National Collection Week is November 15-22, 2004,

but shoe box gifts are accepted year round at Samaritan's Purse international headquarters in Boone, NC. Gifts may be mailed or shipped to:

**Operation Christmas Child
Samaritan's Purse**
P.O. Box 3000
801 Bamboo Road
Boone, NC 28607
(828) 262-1980



Pondering One-Issue Politics and Cruelty To Animals by John Piper

Investigating dog life in Minnesota has solidified my decision to vote against those who endorse the right to abortion. So then what is my response to the charge of being a one-issue voter?

No endorsement of any single issue qualifies a person to hold public office. Being pro-life does not make a person a good governor, mayor, or president. But there are numerous single issues that disqualify a person from public office. For example, any candidate who endorsed bribery as a form of government efficiency would be disqualified, no matter what his party or platform was. Or a person who endorsed corporate fraud (say under \$50

million) would be disqualified no matter what else he endorsed. Or a person who said that no black people could hold office—on that single issue alone he would be unfit for office. Or a person who said that rape is only a misdemeanor—that single issue would end his political career. These examples could go on and on. Everybody knows a single issue that for them would disqualify a candidate for office.

It's the same with marriage. No one quality makes a good wife or husband, but some qualities would make a person unacceptable. For example, back when I was thinking about getting married, not liking cats would not have disqualified a woman as my wife, but not liking people would. Drinking coffee would not, but drinking whiskey would. Kissing dogs wouldn't, but kissing the mailman would. And so on. Being a single-issue fiancé does not mean that only one issue matters. It means that some issues may matter enough to break off the relationship.

So it is with politics. You have to decide what those issues are for you. What do you think disqualifies a person from holding public office?

I believe that the endorsement of the right to kill unborn children disqualifies a person from any position of public office. It's simply the same as saying that the endorsement of racism, fraud, or bribery would disqualify him—except that child-killing is more serious than those.

When we bought our dog at the Humane Society, I picked up a brochure on the laws of Minnesota concerning animals. Statute 343.2, subdivision 1 says, "No person shall...unjustifiably injure, maim, mutilate or kill any animal." Subdivision 7 says, "No person shall willfully instigate or in any way further any act of cruelty to any animal." The penalty: "A person who fails to comply with any provision of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor."

Now this set me to pondering the rights of the unborn. An eight-week-old human fetus has a beating heart, an EKG, brain waves, thumb-sucking, pain sensitivity, finger-grasping, and genetic humanity, but under our present laws is

not a human person with rights under the 14th Amendment, which says that "no state shall deprive any person of life...without due process of law." Well, I wondered, if the unborn do not qualify as persons, it seems that they could at least qualify as animals, say a dog, or at least a cat.

Could we not at least charge abortion clinics with cruelty to animals under Statute 343.2, subdivision 7? Why

is it legal to "maim, mutilate and kill" a pain-sensitive unborn human being but not an animal?

These reflections have confirmed my conviction never to vote for a person who endorses such an evil—even if he could balance the budget tomorrow and end all taxation.

Excerpted from A Godward Life, Book I: Savoring the Supremacy of God in All of Life by John Piper (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 1997, pp. 279-280).

"There are numerous single issues that disqualify a person from public office."



Ministry to Needy Children in Northern Uganda

by Margi Nichols

Margi Nichols (wife of Doug Nichols, Director of Action International) wrote this letter, sharing about their visit to Gulu to encourage Action missionaries Jerry & Candis Bingham who have a ministry to the "Night Commuters":

What a time we have been having. We arrived here in Kampala, Uganda, early Wednesday morning after a very long trip. The next day we headed to Gulu, a town of 50,000 people in northern Uganda. It's about a five-hour drive, the last hour through rebel territory and potential danger. The rebels presently are targeting another part of the country, so it's not as dangerous as usual.



Gulu is something else! You have to see it to believe it. There are 20,000 children who walk in to town every night from the surrounding countryside and little villages in order to be safe (hopefully) from the rebels. The rebels make raids nightly to abduct children. While there are many terrorist and rebel groups worldwide who use varying degrees of violence, the Kony terrorists (Lord's Resistance Army/LRA), target children, murdering and kidnapping them for child-soldiers, slaves, and concubines. Over the last 17 years, the Kony terrorists have slaughtered thousands of Catholics and Protestants in northern Uganda and abducted 25,000 children.

So many people are killed in these raids and the villages are destroyed. There is such fear and hopelessness in the countryside. The children will walk as far as 12 miles to get to Gulu each day to spend the night in town, sleeping in abandoned schools (that are badly deteriorated—with mud floors and no electricity, running water or toilet facilities), in some hastily erected shelters, on a local hospital grounds, on the streets and in the bus park. The children arrive from 6:30-8:00 p.m. carrying their little sacks, walking barefooted, and mostly in

ragged clothes. Then they leave for home as soon as it gets light, about 6:00 a.m. Doug was watching them Sunday morning streaming out of town on two roads and one trail.

There is such a need here amongst these children! No one feeds them, so that is one thing the Bingham's are going to be working on. The Bingham's have just moved up to this town, the only Americans there. No one can believe they are living in that place because it is so dangerous. Candis and Jerry are deeply loved by everyone up there—and they love the people. We were able two different nights to talk to 3,000-4,000 children. They put on a program for us with singing, skits and poems which they created themselves. It was so interesting. Then we spoke to them from God's Word to encourage them. They listened very intently and quietly. Imagine three to four thousand children sitting in the dark on the ground to hear us. It was incredible!

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." (Gal. 6:9)

**Action International is now feeding 3000 of these children. The meal is simple but nourishing and only cost five cents per child. A child can be fed for one month for only \$1.50. \$7.50 will feed five children for one month. A church or group might consider feeding 100 children monthly for \$150 or 500 for \$750.*



If you would like to give to this worthwhile ministry (James 1:27), you may write a check to:

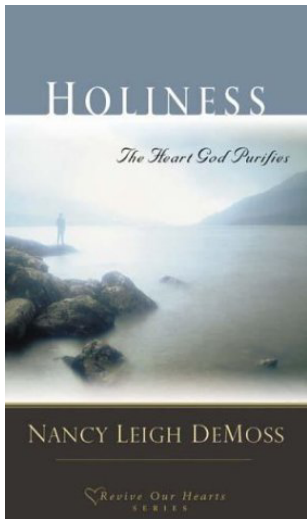
Action International
P.O. Box 398
Mountlake Terrace, WA
98043-0398
425-775-4800
www.actionintl.org

(You may also give your contribution through EPM.

100% of designated contributions go directly to the ministry noted.)

Action International worker ministering to the children.





Each day the God in whose presence the seraphim cry “Holy, Holy, Holy,” examines every secret corner of our lives. He’s the Audience of One.

Holiness: The Heart God Purifies **by Nancy Leigh DeMoss**

Following is Randy Alcorn’s foreword to Nancy’s book, which Randy highly recommends.

Several years ago, my daughter Karina—whose judgment I deeply respect—read Nancy Leigh DeMoss’s *Lies Women Believe* and recommended it to me as a great book. Since then I’ve come to know Nancy as a precious sister. When I’ve read her books, and spent time with her doing her radio program or talking on the phone, I’ve been drawn to Jesus.

Readers can rest assured that *Holiness: The Heart God Purifies* comes out of a life that has first-hand experience with the subject matter. The holiness I’ve seen in Nancy doesn’t scream “Look at me—I want you to be impressed with my holiness.” It’s not the check-off-the-boxes legalism perfected by the Pharisees and paraded by a thousand Christian groups since. It flows from a heart humbly submitted to Christ’s lordship. Nancy’s holiness is saturated with grace.

“Be holy for I am holy.” God is the reason we should be holy. But he’s also the empowerment for our holiness. Many of us are convinced we should be more holy, but we’ve gone about it wrong. To be holy in our strength, and for our glory, is to be distinctly unholy. To be holy in Christ’s strength and for his glory...that’s our calling, and our joy.

Like Jesus, this book is full of grace and truth—challenging yet winsome, convicting yet inviting. True holiness isn’t cold and deadening—it’s warm and inviting. It’s irresistible. Those who think otherwise have never seen it, but only its caricatures. In this book Nancy strips “holiness” of its baggage, so we see it as it is. And, contrary to popular belief, it’s something beautiful.

Yes, there is the carry-your-cross demand. But there’s also Christ’s assurance, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:29-30).

Holiness is the only path to happiness. Every time I’ve been unholy it has made me unhappy. Every time I’ve been holy it has made me happy. Holiness sometimes hurts in the short run, but an hour or day or month or year or lifetime from now, holiness *always* brings happiness. Jesus promised it would: “Happy are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

Nancy says, “No amount of striving or self-effort can make us holy. Only Christ can do that.” Gladly, I want to shout, “That’s true!”

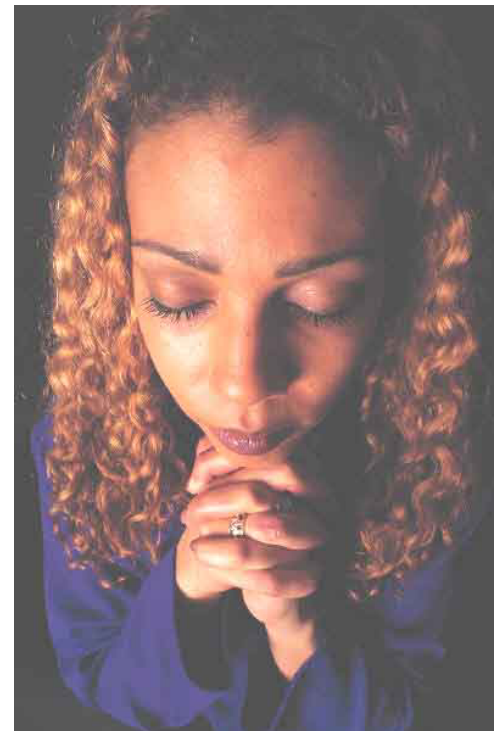
She says, “Somehow, the evangelical world has managed to redefine sin; we have come to view it as normal acceptable behavior—something perhaps to be tamed or controlled, but not to be eradicated and put to death. We have sunk to such lows that we can not only sin thoughtlessly, but astonishingly, we can even laugh at sin and be entertained by it.”

Sadly, this time, I say, “That’s true.”

Each day the God in whose presence the seraphim cry “Holy, Holy, Holy,” examines every secret corner of our lives. He’s the Audience of One. What really matters is whether *he* is pleased with our lives.

May we humbly acknowledge that when it comes to holiness—with all its sacrifices and rewards and pleasures—apart from Christ we can do nothing. But by his grace and empowerment, we really *can* live so that we may one day hear him say those amazing, thrilling words: “Well done, my good and faithful servant!”

The moment we hear those words, from the mouth of our Lion and Lamb, we’ll know that in comparison, nothing else matters.



Letters to EPM:

One Family's Journey from This Life to the Next

April 2001

My brother, Chris, passed to the other side yesterday. The visions of heaven described in your writings helped him immensely. In fact, they helped all of us to let go of him, convinced he was being welcomed into eternity by loved ones as well as Christ Himself.

I too am battling cancer. I was diagnosed with breast cancer last year and am just now finishing up my treatments. My prognosis is good so I plan to be around for a while. However, because of your inspiration I am not afraid of dying. I try very hard to keep my eyes on God and to praise Him through the joy and the sorrow. I'm trying to keep my eyes on eternity and not get bogged down with the minor annoyances of life. By concentrating on eternity there is a sense of urgency to share the Good News with others, especially those I love so much. I don't want them to miss the opportunity of spending eternity with our Lord.

I wanted you to know how much you've impacted our lives. Not just Chris's and mine, but my brother Terry's and my mother's life. We just keep passing around our latest Randy Alcorn books. They prepared us for the inevitable passing of my brother, and for that we are "eternally" grateful.

Dawn K. Lechler

January 2004

I am now facing a recurrence of breast cancer and may be facing this dilemma in the near future. Please put me on your prayer list. I am experiencing some anxiety right now, and even though I keep telling myself and others that I'm not afraid to die, I think I am afraid of the dying process. So I will need God's presence and comfort and peace in the following days as I am faced with decisions regarding treatment, etc. I want to keep my eyes on the Lord through this whole thing and not get caught up in all the medical stuff—you know, chances of survival, waiting for results from tests, wondering how long I have and how painful it's going to be. I want to have supernatural peace through this and I want to experience God like never before. Please pray this for me, and for those close to me who are hurting.

Dawn K. Lechler



May 2004

A note from Dawn's brother:

I am writing this letter because my sister came to the end of the time needed to decide where she would spend eternity and complete her assigned tasks...she went to her true home that Christ had prepared for her.

In January of this year we found out her cancer had come back with a vengeance.

She particularly liked *In Light of Eternity*. Because it helped us to prepare for our brother's passing so much, we bought numerous copies to send to friends and loved ones faced with illness and death.... Dawn told her son, Alex, she wanted him to read from it to her each night until the Lord came to take her home. Sadly, she only had one good night after getting back to her house and then went quickly there after. Her son went on to read the book for himself and said it helped him a great deal to be at peace with her passing. Now my family is eagerly awaiting the release of your new book, *Heaven*.

Terry Ketring

May 2004

A note from Dawn's mom:

A few days before my daughter's death, she asked her son to read *In Light of Eternity* to her. She had read it several times. I believe her motive was to encourage her son to read it, knowing it would help him deal with her death.

Her husband, son, father and I were with her at the end—a traumatic experience for her 19-year-old son. That night, just after her passing, Alex picked up the book and said, "Mom wanted me to read this to her, but she went too fast and I didn't get to do it. I believe she wanted me to read it." He

took it to his room and read it. In the morning he said, "I'm so glad I read this book as it has helped me so much." Then he told his dad, "You have to read this too."

Both Chris and Dawn passed to the other side with dignity and they shared the Good News with others. My husband and I are so proud of them.

Reed & Mary Ketring

(Letters printed by permission.)



"By concentrating on eternity, there is a sense of urgency to share the Good News with others, especially those I love so much."

Note: Dawn Lechler is one of several dozen people—all of whom are now with Jesus—Randy's new book *Heaven* is dedicated to.

Giving Less Than a Tithe? by Randy Alcorn



The concepts behind the firstfruits... are as true today as they were in the Old Testament.



To me, giving less than a tithe is simply not an option. Someday I'm going to stand before God and give an account of my life (Romans 14:12). On that day I do not want to have to explain why, being indwelt with the Holy Spirit and having lived in the most affluent nation in human history, I failed to give at the very minimal level of those who did not have the indwelling Spirit and owned far less than I.

Maybe you believe the tithe was an Old Testament standard, and we're no longer under the law but under grace, so tithing isn't a requirement for us. Okay. Let's say you're right. Now, do you really think God doesn't have a will for New Testament Christians when it comes to giving, or that he has lowered the bar of what he expects of us? Since studies show the average Christian gives just over 2% of his income to the Lord, does that mean that grace is only a fifth as effective as the law? Or is something fundamentally wrong with our approach to giving? Are we failing to learn what real grace giving means because we children of grace are failing to start at the minimum level God started his children under the Old Covenant?

The concepts behind the firstfruits—the ownership and worthiness of God and the servanthood and indebtedness of man—are as true today as they were in the Old Testament. And surely the gratitude of God's people should be far greater on this side of Calvary than the other!

I view the tithe of 10% as I view a child's first steps. His first steps are not his last, neither are they his best, but they are a fine beginning. So is the tithe. Tithing is for many the first toddler's step of stewardship. It is the training wheels on the bicycle of true giving. It may not be a home run, but it gets you on base—which is a lot further than the majority of church members ever get.

Two reasons commonly given for not tithing are: "I can see it's right to tithe, but I must pay off my debts first." Why am I in debt in the first place? Is God responsible for my unwise or self-serving decisions that may have put me there? And even if I have come into debt legitimately, isn't my first debt to God? If we obey God and make good our obligations to Him, He will help us as we seek to pay off our debts to others.

"I can't afford to tithe." Of course I can. What if my salary was reduced by 10%? Would I die? And if tithing is God's will and He promises to provide for those who trust and obey Him, won't He allow me to get by on 90% rather than 100%? In fact, am I not a lot safer living on less inside the will of God than living on more outside it?

Never put off obedience. The moment of conviction and enlightenment is the moment to act. To procrastinate is to disobey. Trust Him enough to begin this life-changing, eternity-impacting adventure of giving. Scripture makes clear that in many



cases God blesses us financially when we generously give (Proverbs 11:24-25; Luke 6:38). "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously" (2 Corinthians 9:6).

When God prospers us in this way it is not merely to give us new toys and more beautiful homes but to allow us to give still more: "You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion" (2 Corinthians 9:11). God's extra provision is usually not intended to raise our standard of living, but to raise our standard of giving.

R. G. LeTourneau was an example of a man who understood God's purpose for blessing him financially. An inventor of earthmoving machines, LeTourneau reached the point of giving 90 percent of his income to the Lord. As he put it, "I shovel out the money, and God shovels it back to me—but God has a bigger shovel."

My family has personally experienced God's "bigger shovel." His abundant material provision to the giver. In some cases it is obvious—such as an unexpected check in the mail or being given something just when we thought we were going to have to buy it. One time when we really needed it, it came

in the form of catching an error in figuring our bank balance that had been greatly in the bank's favor.

In other cases God's provision is less obvious. A washing machine that should have given up the ghost a decade ago keeps on working. A car with 180,000 miles on it runs for two years without so much as a tune-up. A checking account that should have dried up long before the end of the month somehow makes it through. As God miraculously stretched the oil and bread of the widow in Elisha's day, and as He made the clothes and sandals of the children of Israel last forty years in the wilderness, I am convinced He sometimes graciously extends the life of things that otherwise would have to be replaced.

My family often thanks God for His behind-the-scenes provision, including preventing accidents and incidents that would have been very costly. We need to give careful thought to our ways, and ask ourselves if we

would do better to give more to the Lord and ask Him to maximize what we keep, rather than trying to hang onto more, only to have it leak out our pockets.

As we learn to give, we draw closer to God. But no matter how far we progress in the grace of giving, Jesus Christ remains the unmatched giver. It was He who left the wealth of heaven to make the supreme sacrifice to deliver us from eternal poverty and grant us eternal riches.

No matter how much we give, we can never out-give God.

Developed more thoroughly in Randy Alcorn's Money, Possessions, & Eternity.



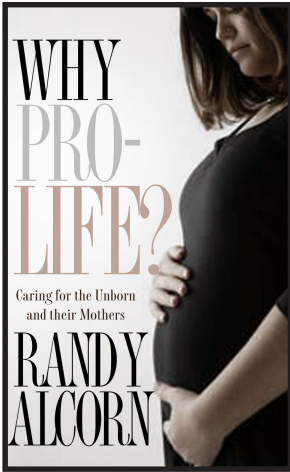
Bible League Courier Team March 18-28, 2005



Note: From time to time we receive inquiries from people who, after reading Safely Home, would like to assist in getting Bibles into China. This unique opportunity is provided through the Bible League, so we wanted to let our readers know about it.

The Bible League is looking for Christians to help deliver Bibles into China. If you are interested in this strategic ministry, please contact the Bible League, Bible Courier Trip Team, PO Box 28000, Chicago IL 60628, or call 708-367-8745.





Why ProLife? is an invaluable resource for anyone trying to help a friend or family member understand the pro-life point of view. In clear, compelling language, Randy Alcorn lays out the case for life, appealing powerfully to both the reason and the emotions.

—Charles W. Colson

Why ProLife? Human Life Begins...When?

We're all engaged in the ongoing battle for the minds and hearts of people. The issue is of immense importance. Does a child have the right to live? Does a woman have the right to understand what abortion really is, and the devastating effects it will have not only on her baby, but her?

In *Why ProLife? Caring for the Unborn and Their Mothers*, Randy Alcorn has chosen the most vital issues addressed in his much larger reference work, *ProLife Answers to ProChoice Arguments*. He has distilled and extensively rewritten the most central questions and answers in concise and readily understandable form. After receiving valuable input from a variety of prolife leaders, Randy wrote a brand new, fresh little 120-page book, with twenty short chapters, which will serve to get the word out to many people who would not pick up a larger and more detailed work.

Randy is an enthusiastic fan of not just one approach, but a broad spectrum of prolife efforts. He deliberately sought to write this book in a way that would be usable by all prolife ministries—whether focusing on women or babies, whether in cities or on campuses, or in hospitals or pregnancy centers, and whether they emphasize prolife education, political involvement, post-abortion counseling, abstinence, adoption, or any other aspects of pro-life ministry.

Why ProLife? addresses the questions central to the abortion debate in a concise, straightforward, and non-abrasive manner. Trying to follow Jesus, who came to the needy full of grace and truth (John 1:14), Randy has sought to present the truth in a spirit of grace. He hopes to engage many who are unthinkingly “pro-choice,” helping them to root their beliefs in reality, not sound bites and bumper-sticker slogans. He hopes to further educate the many who are nominally pro-life without really understanding what this means, and who often don't speak, act or vote consistently with their professed beliefs. He sought to further enlighten, equip and offer a pass-along communication tool to those who are truly pro-life, who work within their churches and organizations and causes such as yours.

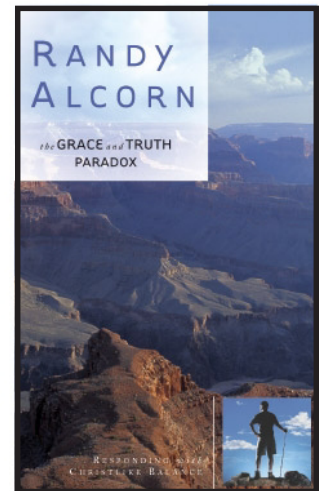
The book is designed in a size, format and price to support efforts of ministries, churches and individuals. It can be used as a fund-raising giveaway—in fact, the book specifically encourages readers to contribute to prolife causes. It can be distributed at banquets, donor mailings, events in centers and communities, etc. Some churches will use it related to Sanctity of Life month (January) and Sanctity of Life Sunday. It can be used in hundreds of different formats.

This special early release ministry version is available for distribution and sale through bookstores and other retail outlets in late December. However, ***Why ProLife* will be available to “ministries only” from September through December 31, 2004 at a special discount of 80% off the retail price of \$10.99.** The only stipulation is that orders are placed in case quantities (24 per carton). Your cost per carton at this discount is \$52.80 (\$2.20 per copy) plus freight. Please contact Cliff Boersma, Special Markets Manager at Multnomah Publishers (1-800-929-0910), or EPM (503-663-6481) to place your order.

New Study Guide Available for *The Grace & Truth Paradox*

LifeWay Press has made a new study guide available for Randy Alcorn's book, *The Grace and Truth Paradox*. This study will teach you the meanings of grace and truth as revealed in God's Word and will illustrate the way Jesus balanced these qualities as He related to people. You will discover your tendency to express either grace or truth, and you will learn how to maintain a better balance in your life. By learning to show grace and truth, you can redemptively reflect Jesus' character as you offer others both the hope and need for salvation in Him. Retail cost is \$6.95. Contact EPM to order the books at a 20% discount price of \$5.56.

Note: Similar Study Guides will be produced on Randy Alcorn's other LifeChange books, The Purity Principle (December, 2004) and The Treasure Principle (April, 2005). Check our website for availability at www.epm.org.



My Grace Is Sufficient

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

(2 Cor. 12:9)

It had pleased God to remove my youngest child under circumstances of peculiar trial and pain; and as I had just laid my little one's body in the churchyard, on return home, I felt it my duty to preach to my people on the meaning of trial.

Finding that this text was in the lesson for the following Sabbath, I chose it as my Master's message to them and myself; but on trying to prepare the notes, I found that in honesty I could not say that the words were true; and therefore I knelt down and asked God to let His grace be sufficient

for me. While I was thus pleading, I opened my eyes and saw a framed illuminated text, which my mother had given me only a few days before, and which I had told my servant to place upon the wall during my absence at the holiday resort where my little one was taken away from us.

I did not notice the words on returning to my house; but as I looked up and wiped my eyes,

the words met my gaze, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

The "is" was picked out in bright green while the "My" and the "thee" were painted in another color.

In one moment the message came straight to my soul as a rebuke for offering such a prayer as, "Lord, let Thy grace be sufficient for me"; for the answer was almost as an audible voice, "How dare you ask that which is?" God cannot make it any more sufficient than He has made it; get up and

believe it, and you will find it true, because the Lord says it in the simplest way: "My grace is (not shall be or may be) sufficient for thee."

"My," "is," and "thee" were from that moment, I hope, indelibly fixed upon my heart;

and I (thank God) have been trying to live in the reality of the message from that day forward to the present time.

The lesson that came to me, and which I seek to convey to others, is, **Never turn God's facts into hopes, or prayers, but simply use them as realities, and you will find them powerful as you believe them.**



*Never turn
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believe them.*

*Excerpted from Streams In the Desert
by Mrs. Charles E. Cowman (Grand
Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing
House, 1996), p. 234-235, article written
by Prebendary H. W. Webb Peplow.*

International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church—November 14, 2004

An estimated 200 million Christians worldwide suffer interrogation, arrest and even death for their faith in Christ, with another 200 to 400 million facing discrimination and alienation.

The International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP) is a global day of intercession for persecuted Christians worldwide. Its primary focus is the work of intercessory prayer and citizen action on behalf of persecuted communities of the Christian faith. Prayer is also encouraged for the souls of the oppressors, the nations that promote persecution, and those who ignore it.

Prayer changes things. Exactly what happens is a mystery of faith. God invites us to present to Him our requests and to pray without ceasing. Persecuted Christians often plead for prayer to help them endure. The most we can do is the least we can do—pray. We also encourage continuing prayer and educated involvement on behalf of persecuted Christians.

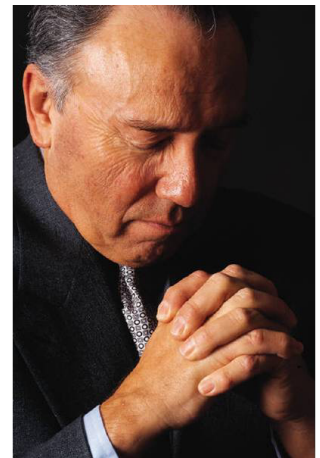
How did IDOP Start?

The IDOP began in 1996 through the efforts of the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF) in cooperation with a variety of denominations and faith-based organizations. From a core group of approximately 7,000 churches, the IDOP has grown to be the largest prayer day event of its kind in the world.

What are the goals of the IDOP?

- Increase awareness of the persecuted church worldwide
- Lead in prayer on behalf of the persecuted church
- Promote ongoing and appropriate action on behalf of the persecuted church

Information obtained from Open Doors, a ministry to the persecuted church. For more details, or a free IDOP kit, visit their website at www.opendoorsusa.org or call 888-5-BIBLES-5 (524-2535)





My heart was taken captive by God's promise of a new heavens and New Earth—a new material universe—without death, suffering and curse.

Questions & Answers About Heaven

by Randy Alcorn

You are considered a leading authority on the subject of Heaven. How did you become interested in doing an in-depth study of this often-misunderstood place?

I grew up in a non-Christian home. As a boy I had a passionate interest in astronomy. I would be out in the cold night searching the moon and planets and stars and galaxies—the physical heavens—with my telescope. My heart was stirred, and I wondered what the universe was all about. I remember being in junior high and looking at the great galaxy of Andromeda, over two million light years away, and crying, wondering what was behind it all, and who I really was.

In high school I heard the gospel for the first time and came to Christ, then led my mother to Christ. Years later, as a young pastor, my mom was dying, and every day I would read to her the last two chapters of Revelation. My heart was taken captive by God's promise of a new heavens and New Earth—a new material universe—without death, suffering and curse. I began to look forward to seeing again in the new world my mother and my friends who had died. That was nearly twenty-five years ago, and I have contemplated and studied Heaven ever since.

You speak about Heaven around the country. What do you find is the biggest misconception people have about Heaven?

They imagine that we will remain disembodied spirits in the afterlife and that Heaven won't be a tangible, earthly place. They mistake the intermediate heaven, where we go when we die, for the eternal Heaven, where we'll live with Christ as resurrected beings on a resurrected Earth, as part of a resurrected culture. Our unbiblical assumption that Heaven won't be a real, tangible, earthly place blinds us to what Scripture actually says.

Rarely do we hear descriptions that capture what the Bible portrays as a New Earth, with animals and trees and rivers and mountains, and eating and drinking, buildings and walls, with a great city where resurrected people come in and out of the gates, engaged in meaningful relationships and productive activity. Our ideas of Heaven are based more on Platonism and Eastern Mysticism, rather than Christianity, which is centered in the anticipation of God's

ultimate redemptive purpose—resurrected people living on a resurrected earth with the resurrected Jesus.

What is the most frequent question you get asked about Heaven?

There are dozens of questions I'm repeatedly asked, but here are the top five:

- 1) Will we still be ourselves, with our memories of this life?
- 2) Will we know our loved ones and have ongoing relationships with them?
- 3) What will we do, and won't Heaven be boring?
- 4) Will we have bodies and eat and drink and travel and explore and play—in other words, will we live truly human lives?
- 5) Will there be animals—and is it possible that the pets we've loved will be there?

I answer each of these questions and many others in my *Heaven* book. The Table of Contents (www.epm.org/heaven-toc.html) makes it easy to find where to look for those answers. Readers will be surprised to see that there are some very clear biblical indications about some of the things most people think we can't know about Heaven.

Newsweek did a survey awhile back in which 76 percent of Americans said they believe in Heaven. What kind of Heaven do you think the majority of people believe in?

They think of a peaceful passive place, somewhere up in the clouds, where there's nothing to do but float around. Their notion of Heaven isn't a real place, but sort of an endless out-of-body experience. (In utter contrast to the Christian doctrines of the resurrection and the New Earth.) They think Heaven is good in that it's free from pain and suffering, but they think of it as largely boring, certainly not intriguing and endlessly enthralling, as the Bible makes clear it will be.

When they think of being with God, this makes them uneasy. Many people don't realize that God is the ultimate source of all joys, and that all secondary joys—including our physical pleasures and the fun of human relationships—are derived from Him. Of course, if a person doesn't really know Jesus as their Savior, they "don't get it" when it comes to the joy that's found in his lordship and friendship, and the excitement surrounded with living forever with

the most loving and utterly fascinating person in the universe.

Many of today's bestsellers, including Mitch Albom's *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* and Alice Seabold's *The Lovely Bones* paint their own versions of Heaven. Why do you think our culture is so fascinated with Heaven?

Scripture says that God has set eternity in human hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Every culture and religion believes in an afterlife because God has built that innate sense into us. We know we were made for something more than a life where pleasures and joys are mixed with suffering and death. Something in us is nostalgic for Eden and longs for the New Earth.

Mitch Albom's bestselling novel portrays a man who feels lonely and unimportant. He dies, goes to Heaven, and meets five people who tell him his life really mattered. He discovers forgiveness and acceptance. It sounds good, but the book fails to present Jesus Christ as the object of saving faith. Instead, it portrays a Heaven that isn't about God, but about us. A Heaven that's not about God's glory, but our healing; not about God's unfathomable grace to undeserving sinners, but our goodness and self-importance. Man is the cosmic center; God merely plays a supporting role. This sort of Heaven, of which the Bible knows nothing, is an imaginary place of therapeutic self-preoccupation rather than preoccupation with the person of Christ.

Scripture shows that we are made for a person and a place. Jesus is the person. Heaven is the place. We'll never be satisfied with any person less than Jesus, and any place less than Heaven.

How should we live today, in light of our knowledge of Heaven?

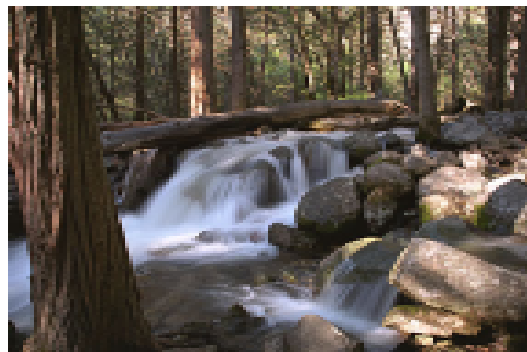
We're told that we are aliens and strangers in this world, and should be longing for a better country (Hebrews 11:13-16). However, that better country isn't up in the clouds—it's down on the New Earth.

Scripture says, "in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13). Yet very few Christians I've spoken with really *are* looking forward to the New Earth God promises us. We have denied ourselves and our children a major doctrine of Scripture, spoken of repeatedly in the Old Testament prophets. We have somehow overlooked the promise of Romans 8 that Christ's redemption extends not merely to human souls, but to the whole creation that groans for redemption, having fallen on our coattails, and waiting to rise in our resurrection.

Revelation 21-22 promises God will come down from Heaven and dwell with us on the New Earth, which will have nations and rulers and cultures and dwelling places, where people will do exactly what God commanded the first man and woman to do on a perfect earth—rule it to God's glory.

The next verse says, "So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this [the new universe], make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him" (2 Peter 3:14). Anticipating a coming world in which all right choices will be rewarded by God inevitably changes the way I live today.

Once I grasp what the New Earth means, I can't help but look forward to it, and this creates a fundamental paradigm shift. For instance, I can look at the beauty of a waterfall, forest, flowers, rivers, animals and people and manmade wonders and not say "But I shouldn't love these things, because this world is not my home." No, I should say, "God has revealed himself to me in these things. While the world as it now is—under sin and curse—is not my home, the New Earth filled with beauties such as these—no longer under sin and curse—will be my home forever! I will not be reunited with disembodied loved ones floating in clouds, I will walk the earth again—or for the first time with those who died young or were handicapped—with those I've loved who know Jesus." This will bring an indescribable hope and joy and vitality to our lives.



We'll never be satisfied with any person less than Jesus, and any place less than Heaven.

Lord, your no answer to physical healing meant yes to a deeper healing—a better one. Your answer has bound me to other believers and taught me so much about myself. It's purged sin from my life, it's strengthened my commitment to you, forced me to depend on your grace. Your wiser, deeper answer has stretched my hope, refined my faith, and helped me to know you better. And you are good. You are so good.

Ah, this is the God I love. The Center, the Peacemaker, the Passport to adventure, the Joyride, and the Answer to all our deepest longings. The answer to all our fears, Man of Sorrows and Lord of Joy, always permitting what he hates, to accomplish something he loves.

*Excerpts from The God I Love by Joni Eareckson Tada
(Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003)*



A. W. Tozer on Worship...

Wonder and Awesome Fear

So I said, "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Isaiah 6:5

I have said it before and I will say it again: This low concept of God is our spiritual problem today. Mankind has succeeded quite well in reducing God to a pitiful nothing!

The God of the modern context is no God at all. He is simply a glorified chairman of the board, a kind of big businessman dealing in souls. The God portrayed in much of our church life today commands very little respect.

We must get back to the Bible and to the ministration of God's Spirit to regain a high and holy concept of God. Oh, this awesome, terrible God, the dread of Isaac! This God who made Isaiah cry out, "I am undone!" This God who drove Daniel to his knees in honor and respect.

To know the Creator and the God of all the universe is to revere Him. It is to bow down before Him in wonder and awesome fear.

—*Men Who Met God*, 79-80

Wasted Religious Activity

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the Lord." Psalm 122:1

There is probably not another field of human activity where there is so much waste as in the field of religion...

In the average church we hear the same prayers repeated each Sunday year in and year out with, one would suspect, not the remotest expectation that they will be answered. It is enough, it seems, that they have been uttered. The familiar phrase, the religious tone, the emotionally loaded words have their superficial and temporary effect, but the worshiper is

no nearer to God, no better morally and no surer of heaven than he was before. Yet every Sunday morning for twenty years he goes through the same routine and, allowing two hours for him to leave his house, sit through a church service and return to his house again, he has wasted 170 twelve-hour days with this exercise in futility.

I need only add that all this tragic waste is unnecessary. The believing Christian will relish every moment in church and will profit by it. The instructed, obedient Christian will yield to God as the clay to the potter, and the result will be not waste but glory everlasting.

—*Born After Midnight*, 100-101, 103

Honor This Purpose

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless." Genesis 17:1

Without argument, most things are at their best when they are fulfilling their purpose and design.

For instance, a piano is made with a specific purpose: to produce music. However, I happen to know that someone once stood on a piano in order to put a fastener of some kind in the ceiling. Some artistic women have used piano tops as family picture galleries. I have seen piano tops that were cluttered filing cabinets or wide library shelves.

There is an intelligent design in the creation of a piano. The manufacturer did not announce: "This is a good piano. It has at least 19 uses!" No, the designer had only one thought in mind:

"This piano will have the purpose and potential of sounding forth beautiful music!"...

Do not miss the application of truth here. God was saying to Abraham, "You may have some other idea about the design and purpose for your life, but you are wrong! You were created in My image to worship Me and to glorify Me. If you do not honor this purpose, your life will degenerate into shallow, selfish, humanistic pursuits.

—*Men Who Met God*, 23

EPM Information:

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