

# Eternal Perspectives

A family portrait featuring a man with a mustache and a blue and white striped polo shirt on the left, a young boy in a blue shirt in the center kissing a woman on the cheek, and the woman smiling on the right. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting.

with founder and author Randy Alcorn

Fall 2011

## Leaving a Legacy of Faithfulness

Teaching Your Children  
Wisdom from The Word

**ALSO IN THIS ISSUE**

The Leader's Character

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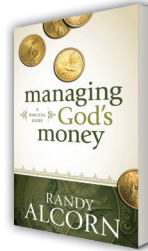
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### On Twitter?

Follow Randy Alcorn at [www.twitter.com/randyalcorn](http://www.twitter.com/randyalcorn)

## A Friendship from Facebook

Kelly and Joannah first got introduced through Randy's Facebook page. Both women are young widows, and when Joannah saw a comment that Kelly left on Randy's page that she could relate to, she sent Kelly a friend request. The two, pictured above, met for the first time earlier this year at a widows' conference. Randy and the EPM staff enjoy hearing from readers on Facebook, and would love to have you join the page. Go to [facebook.com/randyalcorn](http://facebook.com/randyalcorn) and click "like."



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including *Courageous*, *Safely Home*  
(10th anniversary edition), and  
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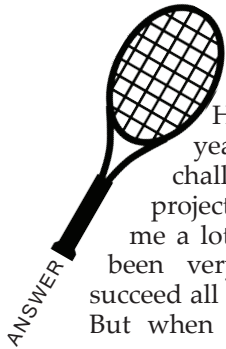
## In This Issue

Q&A with Randy on winning in sports..... page 3  
Recommended reading ..... page 4  
*Courageous*, Randy's new novel..... page 5  
Leaving a Legacy of Faithfulness ..... page 6

"If Only": Living with Regrets ..... page 10  
Teaching Your Children Wisdom from the Word ..... page 12  
The Leader's Character ..... page 14

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**QUESTION:** I'M A TENNIS PLAYER AND, LIKE MOST ATHLETES, REALLY LIKE TO WIN. HOW DO I KEEP A GODLY PERSPECTIVE WHEN I LOSE?



**T**rust the Lord and find your encouragement in Him. During the past year, I've had some big challenges with a writing project, and God has taught me a lot through it, though it's been very difficult. When we succeed all the time, we don't trust. But when we're not happy with

the results, we draw our strength more from God, because we sense a deeper need. Turn to him when you lose, and turn to Him and give Him glory when you win. This honors Him. The people who know how to handle winning with grace and humility are the ones who learn how to handle losing. You don't have to like losing, but you do need to grow from it. Jesus is there for you.

Regardless of the results, He most values your heart of dependence on Him, and humbly giving Him glory, win or lose. That is more important than anything. So do all you can to prepare and try to win, but do it in a way that pleases Him, and then no matter what happens He will say, "Well done"—as will your coach and all those who love you.



**What do I say to my atheist friend who says the Bible is untrue? He seems to be making some very good points.**

**ANSWER** (Compiled by Amy Campbell, EPM Support Staff)

Your question is a good one. And when friends oppose our viewpoint, it's a good time to look at the evidence once again ourselves.

There's a lot riding on the question of the Bible's reliability. If it is indeed untrue, as your atheist friend claims, then those of us who are Christians are staking our lives on a fairy tale. But if the Bible is indeed true, then your friend must face the fact that there's a God who loves him, sent His Son to die for him, and wants a relationship with him.

No matter what your friend throws your way, you can stand firm on the fact that the Bible is absolutely 100% true. Here are just a few reasons I compiled from various sources:

Events of the New Testament are supported by writings outside the Bible. Several ancient historians confirm the major events that are recorded in the New Testament, even though the historians were not believers themselves.

The Gospels, although written by four different men, all reliably account Jesus' life. Each of these eyewitnesses to Jesus' life (Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John) has a different style of writing but give the same facts about Jesus' life.

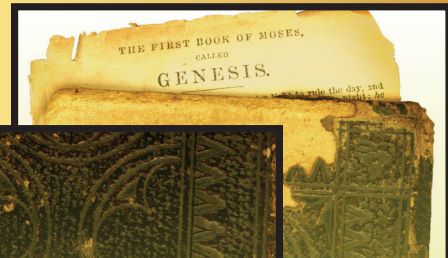
Archaeology backs up the Bible. Not one archaeological find conflicts with what the Bible records.

Hundreds of Bible prophecies have been fulfilled, often many years after the prophetic

writer has died.

Although the Bible is a collection of 66 books written by 40 or more different men over a period of 2,000 years, it is clearly one Book with perfect unity and consistency throughout. That's amazing!

So these are a few things for your friend to chew on. If you want to take a more comprehensive look at the subject, I recommend Josh McDowell's classic *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* as well as Lee Strobel's *The Case for Christ*. May your atheist friend ultimately come to know the God of the Bible. •



*For a more comprehensive list of recommended books on the authority and reliability of scripture, see:*

[www.epm.org/booksonscripture](http://www.epm.org/booksonscripture)

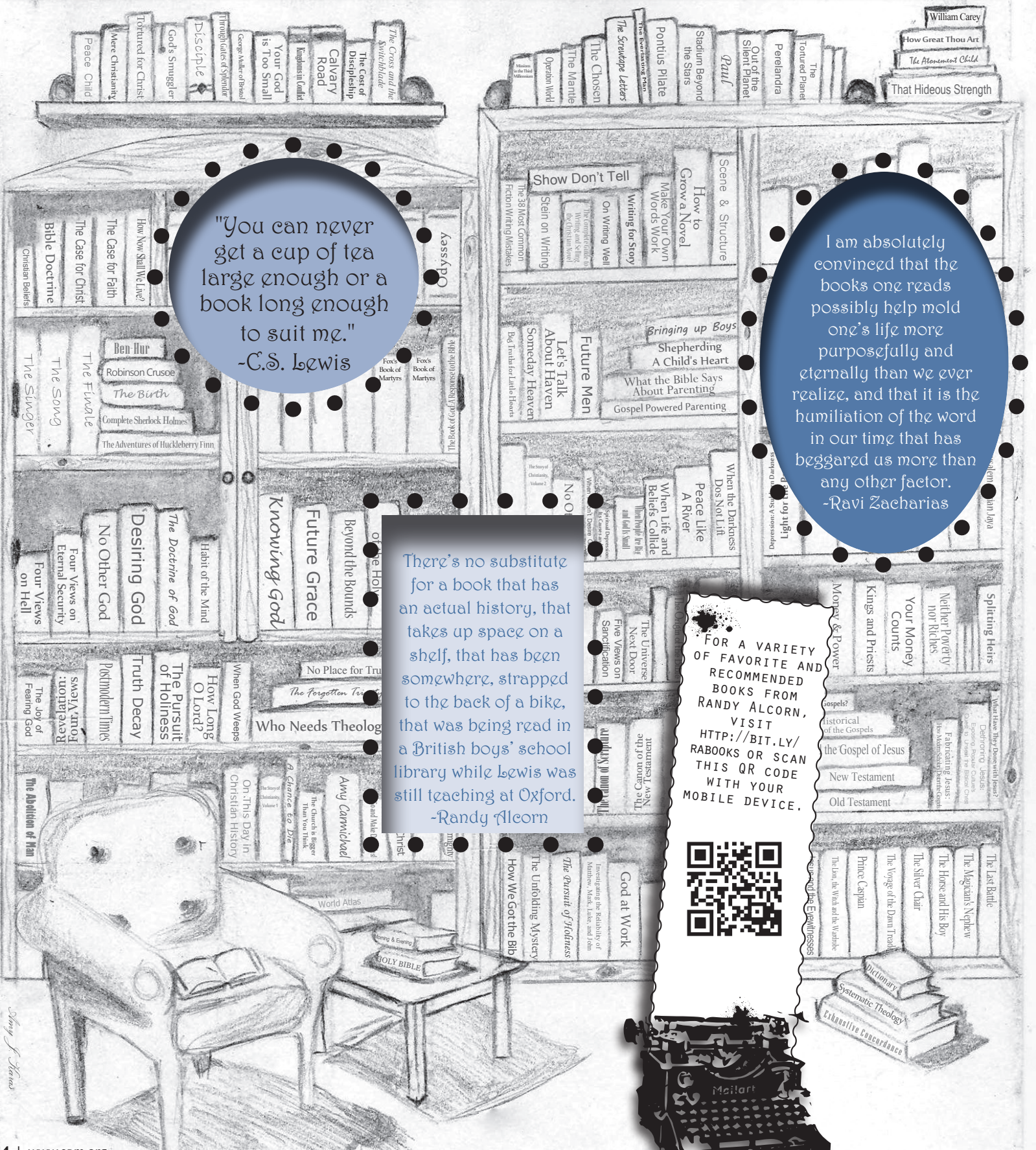
# B.O.O.K.S

"You can never get a cup of tea large enough or a book long enough to suit me."  
-C.S. Lewis

I am absolutely convinced that the books one reads possibly help mold one's life more purposefully and eternally than we ever realize, and that it is the humiliation of the word in our time that has beggared us more than any other factor.  
-Ravi Zacharias

There's no substitute for a book that has an actual history, that takes up space on a shelf, that has been somewhere, strapped to the back of a bike, that was being read in a British boys' school library while Lewis was still teaching at Oxford.  
-Randy Alcorn

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# The Leader's Character

By Randy Alcorn

The following are my answers to some questions on leadership I gave to Crawford Loritts for his book *Leadership as an Identity: The Four Traits of Those Who Wield Lasting Influence*. Although my answers primarily focus on leadership in the church, they can also be applied to any leadership role, including fathers leading their families.

## **How has brokenness affected your life and enriched your approach to leadership?**

To me, brokenness is more than just periodic times of intense emotional experience; it's an ongoing sense of inadequacy. When I come to a point, as I face life's difficulties, where I know I can't just fix things, including myself, it's a much-needed reminder that He's the Vine, I'm a branch, and apart from Him I can do nothing. Sometimes well-meaning people have tried to talk me out of my sense of inadequacy. Actually, this sense is vital to fruitful ministry. Furthermore, it's rooted in reality—in and of ourselves we are inadequate, and we must come to terms with that. When I don't recognize my inadequacy, I trust myself rather than Christ.

## **What are some of the things younger leaders need to be careful of with regard to the relationship between pride and their influence as a leader?**

God says He opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. So, do I want God to give me grace or to oppose me? Duh..... Pride is delusional. And it's never in my best interests. People easily sniff out pride, and they will not trust a proud leader. They may admire his skills, but that is not trust.

When I was a young pastor I thought I knew how to do everything. After many years, I realized how stupid I was. Young leaders need to seek out experienced leaders who are humble, and sit at their feet. They need to stay away from the proud, strutting leaders who stand under God's judgment and are time bombs soon to go off—"pride goes before destruction."

Wisdom and age should be partners, but it doesn't always work that way. Age with humility brings wisdom. Age with arrogance just brings a longer track record of being foolish.

## **In your view, what are the qualities of an authentic Christian leader?**

He loves God with all his heart, is quick to admit his flaws, listens to his critics and doesn't dismiss them. He humbly accepts people's thanks, but deflects praise to the only One worthy of it. He seeks God's face and listens to Him daily. A. W. Tozer said, "Listen to no man who has not listened to God."

## **What is the relationship between the tasks/assignments God gives to you as a leader and your walk with Him?**

God gives me no task except that which requires my dependence on Him to do it. Therefore, there is nothing I should regard as automatic. No conversation should be on auto-pilot—I need to ask His guidance, ask His wisdom and empowerment that I will say words pleasing to Him, not careless words I will have to give account for in the Day of Judgment.

The more conscious my dependence on Him, the more I will pray without ceasing. Throughout the day I often go to my knees asking Him to sustain me, as I research and write and interact with people. Even when I respond to emails I need his guidance. Just today I sent off an email, in response to a critic, and my thoughts were ill-conceived. I'd had an inkling, the still small voice of God, that I really shouldn't be saying what I was, that I was being defensive. But like a dope, I sent it anyway. I had to go back and make the situation right. It would have been easier, not to mention just plain right, to have obeyed Scripture in the first place by being slow to speak.

## **In what ways has God used what He has called you to do to reveal more of Himself to you and to the people you serve?**

Much of my life is invested in writing. In long lonely hours of writing, in the middle of the night, I have often asked God, "Is it worth it?" and He has gently reassured me it is. This happened regularly when writing my book *Heaven*. I have repeatedly experienced His grace and kindness when I've called out to Him...and a great sense of discouragement when I haven't. In these challenging times, Jesus has truly showed Himself to be my best friend, not just in theory, but in reality.

*(Continued on next page)*

!! To me, **brokenness** is more than just periodic times of intense emotional experience; it's an ongoing sense of inadequacy.



It's a much-needed reminder that apart from Him I can do nothing. !!

Not only do I call upon Christ to help me accurately handle His Word when writing nonfiction, I ask Him for ideas and direction to craft quality stories in my fiction-writing. He is the Creator, the Genius, the Master Story-teller, and I want to be a reflection of Him, even a pale reflection. I want my words to be tools of His Spirit.

Nothing's more thrilling than to hear people say that God has changed their lives through something I've written. If I imagined that was because of my genius, it would make me proud. But because I have repeatedly called upon Him for help in the process, when I hear these stories, I am filled not with pride, but sheer amazement and gratitude to Him.

### What have you learned about serving while leading?

That leading is serving and serving is leading. The shepherd leads by giving himself to the sheep. The Good Shepherd owns the flock, the undershepherds don't. We don't shepherd our flock, but His flock: "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers" (1 Peter 5:2). So overseers are servants caring for their Master's flock.

This is the ultimate paradigm shift. Peter then tells us we should not be "greedy for money, but eager to serve." Too many leaders are eager to be served, not to serve. We like to be called "servants," but resent it when we're treated like servants.

1 Peter 5 then describes leaders as "not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock." Examples of what? Examples of Christlike service, in which we put others before ourselves.

Leaders should never use God's flock to build their kingdoms and reputations in order to further themselves. Rather, they should set the example of humble service. We need more humble leaders, not self-promoting celebrities who know nothing of the servant-leader model exemplified by Christ.

### What gives longevity, "staying-power" to Christian leaders?

A long obedience in the same direction, to borrow a Eugene Peterson phrase, is sustained by the small choices we make each day. We need to be acutely aware of the cumulative nature of our little choices. What I eat and whether I exercise will determine the state of my body. Whether I read Scripture and great books, or watch TV and listen to talk radio, will make me into the person I will be five years from now. I should discipline myself today, not for discipline's sake, but for the purpose of godliness (1 Timothy 4:7, 8).

### Is there anything else on your heart that you would like to share about being a Christian leader?

I view leadership as a privilege, not an entitlement. Too many of us act as if we deserve a leadership role. We've worked hard. So what? The guy at the tire shop works hard, the young mother works hard, the farmer works harder than we do.

We have skills. So what? The athlete has skills, but where do they come from? God. "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). When we start thinking we're special, that we've earned people's respect, that we have a lot to offer, then we become proud. That means God is opposed to us, and we are operating outside of the grace that He only gives to the humble. That makes us a fall waiting to happen: "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18).

God knows the hearts of leaders. If we are in this for fame, money, or power over people (including the power of ego-feeding or sexual seduction), God knows and He will bring His hand of judgment upon us. "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).

But if we are broken, humble, quick to admit and confess our weaknesses and sins, He will shed His grace upon us, comfort us, and empower us. Then, and only then, we will be Christlike and Christ-exalting. Then, and only then, we will be leaders worth following. *R*



# HONOR BEGINS AT HOME COURAGEOUS

*Courageous* the movie, a major motion picture, will be in theaters September 30. Learn more at [www.courageousthemovie.com](http://www.courageousthemovie.com).

From the creators of *Fireproof* comes an inspiring new story about everyday heroes who long to be the kinds of dads that make a lifelong impact on their children. As law enforcement officers, Adam Mitchell, Nathan Hayes, and their partners willingly stand up to the worst the world can offer. Yet at the end of the day, they face a challenge that none of them are truly prepared to tackle: fatherhood.

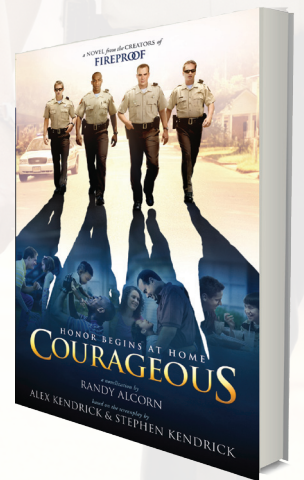
When tragedy hits home, these men are left wrestling with their hopes, their fears, their faith, and their fathering. Can a newfound urgency help these dads draw closer to God . . . and to their children?

## Read the *Courageous* novel

by Randy Alcorn, Alex Kendrick, and Stephen Kendrick

Purchase Randy's new novel *Courageous* from EPM for \$8.84 (Save 41% off the \$14.99 retail.) To read an excerpt and to order, go to [www.epm.org/store/courageous](http://www.epm.org/store/courageous).

*A page turner from the first chapter, the characters come alive as they struggle against the forces of evil as law enforcement officers and then against raging currents at home that take their children farther and farther away from them and from God. —D.C.*

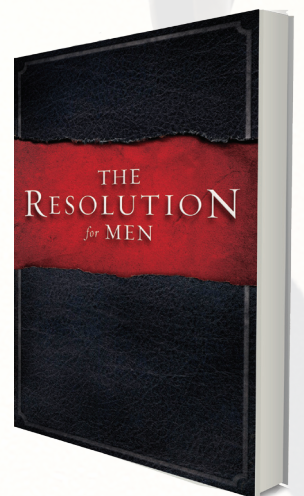


## Read *The Resolution for Men* book

by Alex and Stephen Kendrick, with Randy Alcorn as contributor

Written by Stephen and Alex Kendrick, screenwriters of *Courageous* and authors of the *New York Times* No. 1 best seller *The Love Dare*, *The Resolution for Men* strategically inspires men to reconcile with their past, re-engage in the present by taking full responsibility for their wives and children, and then move forward with a bold and clear resolution for the future. A great study book for men's ministries and small groups.

Purchase *The Resolution for Men* from EPM for \$8.84 (Save 41% off the \$14.99 retail) To order, go to [www.epm.org/store/resolution](http://www.epm.org/store/resolution).



# “If Only”

## Living with Regrets

by Ed Welch

It feels so right – so spiritual – to live with regrets. It means you feel bad for the wrong things you have done or think you have done, and that sounds like a good thing. If you forget those wrongs, you are acting like they were no big deal.

How many “if only’s” do you have in your life?

If you have a scrupulous conscience, you lost count long ago. For the rest of us, there are a few basic categories of regrets.

1. Things you did that were especially shameful, which means that they became public and the public did not approve of them. Perhaps you failed in school or work, had legal problems, or did something immoral.

2. Things you did that either purposefully or (more often) unintentionally hurt someone else. Car accidents, sexually transmitted diseases, poor parenting of a wayward child, and recklessness while intoxicated make this list. “If only I had left 5 minutes later I wouldn’t have hit that person.” “If only I hadn’t gone to that party” ...etc.

3. Things you think you could have done to avoid a catastrophe. If you have a specific moment when the course of your life took an irreparable turn for the worse, then you will be able to think of dozens of things you could have done differently. Bad marriage? You will review the list of old marital prospects and wonder why you didn’t pursue them. Most anyone who has known someone who committed suicide will be afflicted with regrets. “If only I had just called.” Most women who have been sexually violated ruminate, “If only I . . . (yelled, trusted my instincts that something was wrong, went with my friends)”.

I knew a woman who was so filled with regrets that the burden of them felt normal. The first “if only’s” registered as weights on her soul, but it’s like wearing ten-pound ankle and wrist weights all the time, after a while you no longer notice them. You feel sluggish and tired all the time, and everyone else seems to be going at a different emotional tempo, but, somehow, that’s normal.

Here is the paradox.

We live with regrets because we think we should. We think it’s the right thing to do—that it is our duty before God. But...

The Kingdom of Heaven is regret-free. The truth is that the triune God liberates us from past regrets. His will is being done. Bank on it. Neither your human limitations nor your sins hinder the good plans of your sovereign Father.

Let’s go one important step further. It is God’s will that you jettison past regrets. They only make you feel unqualified and, therefore, unfruitful.

Now to the line up. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Jonah, Peter and Paul, to start. They all had



good reason to have a bad case of the “if only’s”. King David is the most severe example. His sin with Bathsheba resulted in the death of their son and his conspiracy to cover up the adultery caused the death of her husband. (2 Sam.12) Even worse, his sin of numbering the people led to the death of 70,000 Israelite men (2 Sam. 24). His remorse was great, and his repentance sincere, but you won’t find lingering regret. In its place is doxology to the Lord who freely forgives sins.

Consider Jonah. He was an enigmatic character whose flight from the Lord nearly resulted in the death of an entire crew and did result in his being swallowed by a fish. A belly of a fish is an ideal place for regrets, especially when you know you brought it on yourself – “if only I would have just gone to Nineveh” – but instead it became a holy place where Jonah came to his senses and proclaimed, “Salvation is of the Lord.”

Regrets? What about Paul? He watched approvingly as Stephen was stoned to death. (Acts 7:59-8:1) He zealously hunted down Christians, sent them to prison and approved of it when they were put to death (Acts 26:9-11). Yet, after his conversion, though he clearly disapproves of these acts, he does not dwell on past sins, rather he writes: “But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13-14) The irony is that Paul isn't even talking about his sins, because he is so confident that his Lord is in control and his sins are completely forgiven. He is talking about the "good" things on his resume.

But, in the post-resurrection era, it is Peter who is our mentor in handling regrets. After all, he knew Jesus from the beginning, and assumed that his egregious sin of denying that on the night of Jesus’ arrest demoted him back to the rank of fisherman. Not that there is anything wrong with fishing, but Jesus had changed Peter’s vocation to fishing for people (Matt.4:19), and, for Peter, regular fishing signaled his own conviction that his sins disqualified him from Kingdom service. Peter assumed that his calling was no longer valid. But breakfast with Jesus and a walk on the beach changed everything.

Try to find a hint of regret or “if only’s” in his two letters. Instead, following King David’s lead, Peter opens with perhaps the most spectacular and eloquent statement of hope in the New Testament, which ends with this exhortation: “Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that

will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:13). He is reminding us that life in Christ rests in what Jesus has done and looks forward to what he will do. We are visionaries. We look ahead. We hope. We aim to be drawn by the beauty that is almost within reach rather than be restrained by the regrets of the past.

**H**earing anything here? Hope rising? If not, you believe that the Kingdom of Christ is where you pay for past sins, past indiscretions, or just being a human being who isn’t omniscient and omnipresent. You believe that if you store up enough regret and remorse you can finally sneak out of your self-imposed purgatory – though, as you already know, no matter how much you stockpile the stuff you always feel as though you must add a little more. That is not the Kingdom where Jesus reigns.

Maybe you believe your regrets will be your protective talisman to help make sure you don’t repeat past sins. That makes sense and sounds spiritual, but it’s a false gospel. It is the sweet mercies of God that compel us to fight sin. One way to identify the nefarious nature of regrets is that they do not give mercy the prominent seat at the table. These regrets might be so stubborn that they will only leave through repentance. While you have been repenting of your perceived contribution to past regrets, the real reason to repent is much closer to the present: you are saying, “Lord I don’t believe that you cover my past, though you probably cover the pasts of other people, and I certainly don’t believe that confidence in your goodness and hope for tomorrow is even permissible.” Call it unbelief. If you want to get nasty, call it pride, in which you believe yourself rather than the Lord. Either way, repent.

I have my own regrets—you have yours. God’s mercies are stockpiled even higher. •

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# Leaving a Legacy of Faithfulness: the Father as Model and Mentor

By Randy Alcorn

## *Modeling Your Role as God's Leader & Image Bearer*

*Now obey my voice; I will give you advice, and God be with you! You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God, and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do. Exodus 18:19-20 (ESV)*

God did not create human fathers, realize they were like him, and decide to call himself our Father. On the contrary, He created marriage and family to communicate not only Christ's love for his church, but also the Father and Son's love for each other.

When a child looks at his earthly father, he should be able to see the qualities of God. Though an earthly father is flawed, his likeness to the Father should be enough to instill in a child the proper fear and love for God. It is part of our nature to judge what we cannot see in light of what we can.

Consider how a child thinks. If my father loves and cares for me, then God loves and cares for me. If my father means what he says, then God means what He says. If my father would die for me, God would die for me.

On the other hand, if their earthly father is harsh or distant, then what will children think when someone says "God is your Father"? Based on what they know of a father, how will they view God?

Some readers of this newsletter are not fathers, but are mentors of boys or girls. Every parent needs to look for godly mentors to reinforce the training of their children. If you don't look for the right mentors, your children may find themselves drawn to ungodly, influential people.

When I was in eighth grade I had a football coach who was tough, but kind. When school photos came out, he signed one for me that said "To my favorite ball player."

I must have reread that sentence a thousand times over the next five years. I can still see every stroke of every letter in my mind's eye. I can't tell you what his spiritual beliefs were. But I can tell you that if he had shared them with me I would have listened to every word he said.

## *Modeling Humility for Your Children*

In 1 Peter 3, speaking to church leaders, God calls men to humility. In verse 3 he warns leaders not to be "domineering," but instead to be "examples to the flock." Leaders should "not lord it over" those under their authority. The Message paraphrases it, "Not bossily telling others what to do, but tenderly showing them the way."

Dads must be careful to recognize our power and speak humbly. Years ago when my daughters were teenagers, we were having a family discussion about some biblical doctrine. My wife shared her thoughts and both of our daughters did. Then I gave my opinion. Suddenly the discussion stopped. I said, "What's wrong?"

My daughter Karina said, "Dad, once you give your opinion, who's going to disagree?" When I explained they should feel free to disagree, Karina said something profound. "Dad, you're in the power position. When you say something, it's like the final word."

She was right, and I've never forgotten that. Fathers, we must learn to see ourselves as our family does. Without meaning to, without even being aware of it, we can come across as domineering, causing them to wilt rather than blossom.

A deep reservoir of proven relationship will tend to defuse the lording-it-over-them bomb. Encouraging our wives and children to tell us how they really feel will keep us from finding out too late—or never finding out at all. Let's ask while we still have time to do something about it.



### *Creating a Gospel-centered Home*

In his excellent book *Gospel-Powered Parenting*, William Farley states, “The most effective parents have a clear grasp of the cross and its implications for daily life. The implications are manifold. They include the fear of God, a marriage that preaches the gospel to its children, deeply ingrained humility, gratitude, joy, firmness coupled with affection, and consistent teaching modeled by parents daily.”

While a Christian family should maintain high moral standards, many fail to recognize that such standards are insufficient. They are not inherently life-changing for children. We must always take our children back to the cross, to the gospel of Christ. This should be the center of everything in family life. We need to teach our children the meaning of a new birth in Christ. They must see their deep need not merely to be outwardly obedient, but to be delivered from the power of sin, to be transformed on the inside, to become new creations in Christ. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV).

Many parents are mystified when their grown children seem to reject the faith they grew up with. Often what they are rejecting is a faith that never became theirs in the first place. We dare not assume that just because our children have heard the gospel and attended church, that they have had a transforming new birth experience. Rather, we must bear the fruits of our conversion, and both pray for and consciously lead them toward their own new birth.

A. W. Pink wrote,

The new birth is very much more than simply shedding a few tears due to a temporary remorse over sin. It is far more than changing our course of life, the leaving off of bad habits and the substituting of good ones. It is something different from the mere cherishing and practicing of noble ideals. It goes infinitely deeper than coming forward to take some popular evangelist by the hand, signing a pledge-card, or “joining the church.” The new birth is no mere turning over a new leaf, but is the inception and reception of a new life. It is no mere reformation but a complete transformation. In short, the new birth is a miracle, the result of the supernatural operation of God. It is radical, revolutionary, lasting.

## *Instilling a Biblical Worldview*

*All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies. Psalm 25:10 (ESV)*

Fathers are to be the primary influence in their children's education. A man's success as a father is largely determined by his commitment to inspiring and training his children to develop a right worldview.

Who is God? Who is mankind? What is God like? Does God have a plan? Do even bad events serve God's purposes?

In light of the great number of young people who reject their faith, we must encourage our children to think through these questions. Warm feelings toward the Christian faith won't sustain them when they find their faith attacked. But deeply rooted beliefs built on God's truth will allow them to hold fast to their faith.

Many kids are in college before they are faced with the questions, "If you were all wise and all powerful and all loving, would you permit children to starve and be abused? Well if you wouldn't, doesn't that suggest that there is no God, or if there is one he lacks either love or power or wisdom?"

A professor's eloquence may persuade your child that he has identified something you and your church are unaware of and would cause you to lose your faith if you only knew. If you have not been proactive in helping your child develop a deep faith based on a thorough knowledge of Scripture's truth, what will keep your child from doubting God?

Fathers, do you study Scripture in order to understand the world? Is your life consistent with God's Word? Are you deliberately passing on its teachings to your children?

## *The Day of Opportunity*

One day I picked up the phone and heard my Dad's voice: "I've called to say good-bye." Several months earlier, my 84-year-old father had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Then Dad added these horrifying words: "I've got a gun to my head. I'm sorry to leave you a mess."

I begged him to put the gun down. Twenty minutes later I threw open the door of his house. We raced to the hospital, where the doctors scheduled surgery for the next morning.

My dad was more closed to the gospel than anyone I'd ever known. I had prayed for dad's salvation for the 22 years I'd been a Christian. My daughters grew up praying for him. When I walked into dad's hospital room, I read to him from Romans for twenty minutes, and God used his Word to reach Dad's heart. Incredibly, Dad asked Christ to forgive his sins.

Only in those next four years did I know my father as a Christian. As his body and mind weakened, we had the best conversations we'd ever had.

My dad had some great stories, but when I was young he was rarely home, and seldom in the mood to tell them. His stories of working in the Texas oil fields, riding the rails during the Depression, and coming down a mountain in a truck with failed brakes, fascinated me. But by the time he became more open with me, he'd begun to lose his memories.

When he lay dying, Nanci and I, our daughters, and my brother, Lance, stood at Dad's bedside and watched as his pulse monitor steadily dropped, then went blank. My dad was gone.

Yet, because he had given his life to Jesus, we said good-bye knowing we would see him again. Despite the pain, I had an overshadowing peace and joy.

When I look forward to Heaven, I am profoundly grateful that my dad and I will continue to develop our relationship. I think he will tell me many stories I never got to hear.

If there's one lesson that sticks with me from my dad's life, it is this—don't miss your opportunity to invest in your children and grandchildren. One day that window of opportunity will close. Today is the only opportunity you can be certain of. Take it while you still can.

## *Finishing Strong and Hearing "Well Done"*

*Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers. Proverbs 17:6 (ESV)*

*The master said, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You*

*have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now; I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!* Matthew 25:23 (NLT)

If we delight ourselves in God, the desire of our hearts will be to hear his words of approval. What could be better than hearing him say "Well done" about loving our wife and raising our children?

There are many men who, when they get older, end up puttering around and wasting time that could be invested in younger men who could benefit from their wisdom. But the men who keep their minds and hearts keenest for God are those who mentor younger men for God's glory. I have invested in many younger men, and I always feel I come away the beneficiary.

*"We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done."* Psalm 78:4 (ESV).

One of the great ironies of our

culture is that fathers spend more time making money and less time with their children. Their children receive a rich inheritance, but a poor heritage.

"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" And what will it profit him if he leads a Fortune 500 company, but loses his own children?

Multimillionaire Andrew Carnegie said, "The almighty dollar bequeathed to a child is an almighty curse. No man has the right to handicap his son with such a burden as great wealth."

Without their parents' guidance, children will not learn wisdom. Without wisdom, wealth will only damage our children by subsidizing addictions, laziness, and immorality.

Let's be sure we give our children what they really need.

When I was a young pastor, each day I poured myself into endless church appointments and meetings. I found myself drained. One night, I was wrestling with my little girls, and the next thing I knew, I was waking


up. We all laughed. But it got my attention. I went to the elders of my church and said, "Something has to change. I have to stop giving all the best hours of my day to the church. I need to spend a lot of those best hours with my family."

By God's grace, I made the needed adjustments and became a better husband and father. Looking back, I made many mistakes, but overall, Nanci and I invested in our children, and sought to train them to follow Jesus. When we look at our daughters and their husbands and children today, we are deeply grateful to God for what he has done. And we are profoundly grateful that our sons-in-laws' parents raised them to fear and love God.

At the end of his life, no man says, "I wish I'd done more at the office and on the golf course." He says, "I wish I'd done more with my family."

So instead of one day looking back and wishing you'd done it, why not choose to do it now? *R*





**Teaching Your  
Children Wisdom  
from the Word**  
By Steven Ingino

The book of Proverbs could be considered a parenting manual. There are many passages in the Bible which speak about marriage, family, and parenting, but Proverbs focuses on imparting wisdom to children. What is wisdom? Wisdom is skillful living. More specifically, wisdom is the application of God's Word to life through Christ (Col. 2:1-3). As we live and obey God's Word, we experience peace with God, with ourselves, with others, and His blessings. As we make wise choices and seek to glorify God in all we do, we are rewarded for following His ways (Ps. 1; Josh. 1; Luke 11:28). And as we apply God's Word to our lives, we come to know Him better and impact people for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The following is a list of nine topics that you can teach your children from the book of Proverbs just as Solomon taught his children. I recommend that you go over one topic a day or a week with your child, looking up the Scripture references together and memorizing one or two verses from each topic.

### **1 Teach your children to fear the Lord.**

**1** Fearing God means that we honor, revere, worship, obey, serve, and respect Him. Fearing God also means that we do not want to displease Him. We fear the consequences of sin and doing that which God says is evil, wrong, hurtful, or dishonoring to Him and to others. John MacArthur writes that in order to teach children the fear of the Lord, we must teach them God's attributes (holy, faithful, good, all-knowing, all-present, all-powerful, loving, sovereign, unchanging, merciful, compassionate, just, righteous, etc). Only when they know who God truly is, can they revere Him (*What the Bible Says about Parenting*, 78).

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. (Prov. 9:10)*

See also Prov. 1:7, 14:26-27, 15:3, 15:16, 16:6, 19:23; Matt. 10:28.

### **2 Teach your children to guard their hearts and minds.**

**2** With so much deception and evil at our children's fingertips, be it through the internet or a TV remote control, we must protect them and help them guard their hearts. For younger children, monitor what they are watching and listening to. Use an internet filter. It takes diligence to have a pure heart, but the rewards are great (see Matt. 5:3-16). May our children's hearts be filled with His Word and His Spirit so that they manifest Christ's character and honor their Father in Heaven.

*Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life. (Prov. 4:23)*

See also Prov. 3:3, 22:11, 23:19, 28:26; Psalm 101:3-4, 51:10; Phil. 4:8-9; Jer. 17:9-10; Mark 7:20-22.

### **3 Teach your children to obey their parents (and parents must follow through with consistent and fair discipline).**

**3** *Hear, my son, your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. (Prov. 1:8, cf. 23:22-26)*

When your children disobey, they need to be disciplined not only because they are disobeying you, but because they are disobeying God's command to honor their parents (Ex. 20:12) and therefore they're ultimately disobeying God (see Prov. 3:11-12).

See also Prov. 4:1-2, 13:24, 19:18, 22:15, 23:13-14, 23:22-25, 29:15, 30:17; Eph. 6:1-3.

### **4 Teach your children to choose their friends wisely.**

**4** Your children may never rise above their friends. Studies show that peers will influence your children as much if not more than you do, depending on how involved you are as a parent. Teach them to select their friends with the utmost care.

*He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm. (Prov. 13:20)*

See also 1 Cor. 15:33, 5:6; Prov. 1:10-19, 2:10-15, 4:14, 8:13, 12:26, 16:28-29, 18:24, 22:24-25.

## 5 Teach your children to watch their words.

*He who guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul from troubles. (Prov. 21:23)*

See also Prov. 4:24, 10:11, 10:19-21, 10:31-32, 11:13, 12:18, 12:22, 15:7, 16:24, 17:20, 17:27-28, 18:21, 20:15, 25:18; Ps. 141:3.

## 6 Teach your children to work hard and be diligent.

*Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully. (Prov. 10:4-5)*

See also Prov. 6:6-11, 10:26, 12:24, 12:27, 13:4, 14:23, 18:9, 19:15, 19:24, 21:25, 22:13, 22:29, 24:30-34, 26:16, 28:19; Col. 3:22-25.

## 7 Teach your children to manage their money as stewards of God.

All of your money and spending should honor the Lord since He is our provider and owns all things (Ps. 23-24). Be a careful steward or manager (Luke chapters 12, 16) of what God gives you, since our time on earth is short and we will give an account to Christ regarding how we used the time, treasures, and talents He entrusted to us. Give generously to the church and use the rest wisely in a way that glorifies God. (See [www.crown.org](http://www.crown.org) for excellent resources you can use to teach your children about finances or Randy Alcorn's *Managing God's Money*.)

*Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine. (Prov. 3:9-10)*

*One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his good deed. (Prov. 19:17)*

See also Prov. 11:4, 11:24-28, 15:27, 16:16, 28:20, 22:7, 22:16, 23:4-5; Deut. 8; Matt. 6:19-21, 6:33, 16:24-27; 1 Tim. 6:6-19.

## 8 Teach your children to control their desires.

These last two topics should be taught at the appropriate age. It would likely be best to discuss these issues when your children are teenagers or even before they reach the teenage years, especially in light of today's sexually charged culture. Our children must learn the blessings of abstinence until marriage and God's design for sexuality.

*Do not desire her beauty in your heart, nor let her capture you with her eyelids. For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, and an adulteress hunts for the precious life. Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? (Prov. 6:25-27, cf. 5:1-14)*

See also Prov. 2, 5-7; Psalm 119:9-11; Matt. 5:27-28; 1 Cor. 6:12-20; Gal. 5:16; 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Rom. 13:14; 1 Pet. 1:14-16; 1 Tim. 4:12; Job 31:1.

See *True Love Waits* ([www.lifeway.com/tlw](http://www.lifeway.com/tlw)) for resources to teach your children about sexual purity, abstinence, and Biblical marriage. I also recommend *Passport2Purity* from [www.familylife.com](http://www.familylife.com) and Randy Alcorn's *The Purity Principle*.

## 9 Teach your children to enjoy their spouses.

While some may think that abstinence and purity reveals a God who is out to stifle our joy, just the opposite is true. Sex after marriage is celebrated by God in the Bible.

Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth. (Prov. 5:18)

See also Prov. 5:15-23; 1 Pet. 3:7; Eph. 5:22-33; Eccl. 9:9; 1 Cor. 7:3-5; Heb. 13:4 and the Song of Solomon.

A chapter from *What the Bible Says about Parenting* by John MacArthur was part of the inspiration for this article. This is a "must-read" book on parenting. I also recommend Barbara Decker's *Proverbs for Parenting*. It is an excellent topical arrangement of the Proverbs which you can use to continue disciplining your children in God's wisdom for everyday life. A two-part sermon series that expands upon these topics can be found at [www.ccctucson.org](http://www.ccctucson.org) (entitled "Sowing Seeds of Wisdom" under the MEDIA section) along with a study guide for parents with many of these verses written out. •

*Pastor Steve Ingino is a husband, father, and the Lead Teaching Pastor of Christ Community Church in Tucson, Arizona. He has a passion for the family and reaching the next generation for Christ. His book, Parenting: 7 Essentials for Children, is available at [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com).*

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