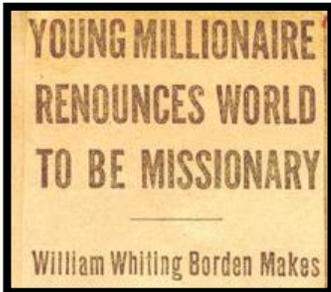


As I write these words I'm at Skycroft for my semi-annual retreat to "ponder the meaning of life" and to catch up on various church projects. I'll be back in the middle of the day tomorrow. With respect to "the meaning of life," I want to share some thoughts from two authors I appreciate.



Many of you have read Randy Alcorn's book, *Heaven*, and for those who haven't, I commend it to you. Some years ago, Randy visited Egypt on a family mission trip, and while they were there, Randy's hosts took him to visit an abandoned graveyard located at the end of a garbage-lined alley. The host pointed out one tombstone in particular—that of William Borden (1887-1913), heir to the Borden dairy estate. William was a millionaire by the time he was twenty-one, but he renounced his fortune and gave nearly all his wealth to missions.

A passionate follower of Jesus whose life motto was "**No Reserves. No Retreats. No Regrets,**" William's heart's desire was to take the gospel to Muslims in China. On his way to China, William stopped in Egypt to study Arabic, but four months later he contracted spinal meningitis and died at the age of twenty-five. Randy described the visit to Borden's grave like this:

"I dusted off the inscription on the headstone of Borden's grave. After describing his love for Christ and his commitment to and his love for the Muslim people; and his sacrifices for God's kingdom, the inscription ended with some words I wrote down on the spot—and I have never forgotten them to this day. The inscription ended with, '**Apart from faith in Christ there is no explanation for such a life.**' And then I thought, **Lord, what's the explanation for my life?**"¹

Another author I'm coming to appreciate is Gary Haugen, an attorney who served on the Executive Committee for the National Initiative for Reconciliation in South Africa, chaired by Desmond Tutu. After that, he began working for the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights in New York, and then moved to DC to work with the Department of Justice.



In 1994, the DOJ sent Gary to Rwanda to serve as the United Nations Officer in Charge of the genocide investigation, an experience that propelled him to found the International Justice Mission, a Christian organization that frees people trapped in sex trafficking:

"I vividly remember when I finally had to make a decision to abandon my career at the U.S. Department of Justice to become the first employee of a not-for-profit organization that didn't yet actually exist called International Justice Mission. I had worked for three years with friends on the idea of IJM and was very excited, in theory, about this dream of following Jesus in the work of justice in the world. But then I had to actually act. I had to walk into the Department of Justice and turn in my badge. . . . I tried to be very brave and very safe. That is to say, I walked in and asked my bosses for a year-long leave of absence. . . . My bosses politely declined.

¹ Randy Alcorn, at the 2004 Bethlehem Conference for Pastors. See www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=15641525.

“I was suddenly feeling very nervous. . . . What was I really afraid of? As I thought about it, I feared humiliation. If my little justice ministry idea didn’t work, no one was going to die. If IJM turned out to be a bad idea and collapsed, my kids weren’t going to starve. We’d probably just have to live with my parents for a while until I could find another job, but with my education, odds are I would soon find a job. The fact is, I would be terribly embarrassed. Having told everybody about my great idea, they would know that it was a bad idea or that I was a bad leader. Either way, it would be humiliating.

“So there it was. My boundary of fear. I sensed God inviting me to an extraordinary adventure of service, but deep inside I was afraid of looking like a fool and a loser. This was actually very helpful to see, because it helped me get past it. When I am [older], do I really want to look back and say, *Yeah, I sensed that God was calling me to lead a movement to bring rescue to people who desperately need an advocate in the world, but I was afraid of getting embarrassed and so I never even tried?*

“Fear is normal, even among the earnest and devout, and it can be overcome. But first we must see the opportunity it provides—a revelation that only comes as we step to the precipice of action.”²

And as Gary continued to “ponder the meaning of life,” his thoughts then turned to parenting: “After we have poured into our children all the good food and shelter and clothing, after we have provided them with great education, discipline, structure and love, after we have worked so hard to provide every good thing, they turn to us and ask, ‘Why have you given all of this to me?’

“And the honest answer from me is, ‘So you’ll be safe.’

“And my kid looks up at me and says, **‘Really? That’s it? You want me to be safe? Your grand ambition for my life is that nothing bad happens?’**

“And I think something inside them dies. They either go away to perish in safety, or they go away looking for adventure in the wrong places. Jesus, on the other hand, affirms their sense of adventure and their yearning for larger glory.”³

How much better, first of all to live boldly for God’s Kingdom Advance ourselves, and then to teach our children to so live after us:

NO RESERVES. NO RETREATS. NO REGRETS.

Dave



² Gary Haugen, *Just Courage* (InterVarsity Press, 2008), pp. 129-130.

³ Haugen, pp. 124-125.

The Joshua Code: Fifty-Two Verses Every Believer Should Know **O.S. Hawkins (Thomas Nelson, 2012)**

Week ten:

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

“In our previous chapter we examined the filling of the Spirit. We now turn our attention to the fruit of the Spirit. Fruit is the delectable product of that which is created by the inner life of the vine. On the eve of the Crucifixion, the Lord Jesus put it thus: ‘Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me’ (John 15:4). Earlier on a Galilean hillside, He had said, ‘By their fruit you will know them’ (Matthew 7:20). The fruit we bear as believers is evidence of His abiding on the throne of our lives. . . .

The nine fruits listed here are a cluster describing the evidence of the life of Christ within us. The fruit is singular here because it is the outcropping of one’s life within. The fruit represents what we are rather than what we do. Here we are reintroduced to the principle of being before doing. What we do is determined by who, or whose, we really are!

“The fruit described in Galatians is a triad: three clusters with three fruits each. They are reflected in a countenance that is obvious, conduct that is orderly, and a character that is obedient.”

A Countenance that is Obvious: *“Love, Joy, Peace”*

A Conduct that is Orderly: *“Patience, Kindness, Goodness”*

A Character that is Obedient: *“Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-Control”*

NOTE: As usual, if you want to know the rest of what Dr. Hawkins has to say about these verses, you’ll have to get the book ☺.

