

# **Randy Alcorn Explains Why Faith and Finances Are Inseparable**

After believers tithe 10 percent, can they just do whatever they want with the other 90 percent? Randy Alcorn says no—and he says God does too. Learn what it means to integrate your faith with your finances.

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# **This Powerful Prayer From 'God's Not Dead 2' Will Inspire You**

In *God's Not Dead 2*, Grace (played by Melissa Joan Hart) finds herself in an impossible situation. She turns to God with her problem and says this simple but profound prayer. Christians worldwide will be able to relate to this.

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# **This Live Elevation Worship**

# Performance Gives God the Glory

Some days it can be hard to give God the glory. Remind yourself that God deserves all praise and honor—whether in victory or in persecution—with this live performance by Elevation Worship.

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## Kim Walker-Smith Begs for Glimpse of God's Glory in Powerful Anthem

Ready to hear your church's next great worship song? In this single from her new album, *On My Side*, Kim Walker-Smith asks God for a glimpse of His glory. Don't miss it!

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## Jentezen Franklin: 'We Are Guilty of the World's Greatest Crime'

Jentezen Franklin says every day believers commit the world's greatest crime—and they don't even know it. This powerful

teaching clip will take you back to the roots of Christianity and remind you of God's greatest calling on your life.

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## **Hilarious Video Satirizes Church-Hunting Culture**

What if there were a TV show that helped believers find the perfect new church? Christian comedian John Crist highlights how church hunters can easily get distracted by absurd and man-made differences.

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## **7 Prophetic Prayer Insights in Response to Manchester Suicide Bombing**

In what Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May is calling a "callous terrorist attack—one of the worst ever in British history—a suicide bomber struck at an Ariana Grande concert on Monday night. The attack left 22 dead—including children—and 59 injured.

This is not only a tragedy that goes down in the nation's history as one of the worst attacks ever—it has also wreaked havoc on the nation's political process. General election campaigning has been suspended.

May acknowledged the difficulty of the days ahead after the “sickening cowardice” and vowed Britain’s “spirit would never be broken ... terrorists would never win and our way of life would always prevail.”

Now is a time to grieve, but we must let our grieving lead us into travailing prayer—not shock and silence. This is another heartbreaking attack, but we must not lay down our weapons in this hour. Underground intercessors, I am calling you to rise up and pray for those who are too stunned to lift up a petition today.

We must stand together against the principalities and powers that are manifesting in the dastardly deeds of wicked men who are deceived by a false God. We must not shrink back from the spiritual war that is raging in the nations.

This is certainly a sign of the times. Although we can’t pray away end-times drama, we can make intercession as the Lord leads as we know it’s not His will that any should perish—even the suicide bomber.

Here are seven prophetic prayer insights.

1. Pray for protection. Claim Psalm 91 over your Britain, over your nation and over your life. Turn Psalm 91 into the base of prophetic prayer. Let that be a jumping-off point for you to release prophetic declarations of protection.

2. Pray for specific prayer strategies to combat terror. We are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but we are wrestling (see Eph. 6.) We need new moves in the spirit to combat the rise of terror. We need our intercession to wax prophetic—moving beyond mere petitions based on the written Word of God.

3. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you release laser-focused prayers that penetrate the darkness that’s working to cover the earth, including praying for a release of God’s glory (see

Is. 60:2). Pray that God's glory will overtake the terrorists and they would surrender to Him.

4. Pray against the spirit of fear gripping people in the nations in the midst of growing terror manifestations. Luke 21:26 tells us people will faint from terror in the last days. God did not give us a spirit of fear (see 2 Tim. 1:7). Fear solves nothing.

5. Pray police, armed forces, intelligence agencies and more would have prophetic insight and tactics to not only bring terrorists to justice but to prevent attacks before they happen. Pray they would have a spirit of wisdom upon them.

6. Ask the Lord to release angels on assignment to war in the spirit realm against principalities and powers over nations (see Dan. 10).

7. Pray in the Spirit, since we don't know how to pray as we ought (see Rom. 8:26). {eo}

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## **15 Biblical Ways Believers Can Know if They're Operating in God's Special Grace**

1. Common grace blesses all men; special grace saves only some men.

As we have seen in part I of this article, in the created order, God bestows His love, mercy, grace and goodness to every creature through what He provides to this world (See ). However, we also see that Jesus is only the Lord and Savior of those who believe (Rom. 10:9,10). The first is common, the

second is special or saving grace

2-Through common grace, we partner with nonbelievers; in special grace, we partake as members of Christ with other believers.

Once Christ-followers understand common grace, it releases them to serve with other citizens (whether they are believers or not) for the betterment of the community; however, when it comes to having an organic, intrinsic connection with our Lord and Savior, only other Christians are connected to Christ's body in nature and essence (Read 1 Cor. 10:16,17).

3- Through common grace, nature is controlled; through special grace, His Spirit is bestowed.

The Word of God teaches us that the universe is held together by the word of Christ's power (Col. 1:17; Heb.1:3). In that sense, Jesus continually sustains the created order by His common grace and love. However, only those who are His elect, blood purchased children, are able to drink of His Spirit (Read Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 12:12,13).

4-Through common grace, there are natural gifts; through special grace, there are spiritual gifts.

Through common grace every human being who ever lived (wicked and righteous, saved and unsaved) were hard wired by God to perform certain functions. This resulted in them being endowed with natural gifts and abilities so they can make a positive contribution to the world. On the other hand, Christ-followers not only have natural gifts through physical birth, but they also have access to the gifts of the Spirit through their spiritual rebirth (Read 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Rom. 12:3-7).

5-Through common grace, we become citizens of the earth; through special grace, we become citizens of heaven.

By His sovereign will and power, God predestined all people to

live at a certain time, region and place (Gen. 10,11; Acts 17:26); hence, by His will, we are established in certain communities as citizens of the earth. However, once we are born of His Spirit, we become citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20) and become part of Mount Zion, the City of the living God in the heavenly Jerusalem and belong to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven (Heb. 12:22, 23).

6- Through common grace, people understand natural law; through special grace, people understand the lawgiver.

Through God's common grace, He bestowed wisdom by illuminating the minds of great scientists (Like Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein) to unlock the mysteries of natural law as well as creativity to develop the computer sciences to men like Bill Gates and Steve Jobs. Psalm 111:2 says that the works of the Lord are great and to be studied by all who delight in them. However, it is one thing to study His works and quite another thing to know His ways. We can know about God without knowing Him personally. Only through special saving grace can we know Him experientially (Jer. 9:23,24; Phil. 3:4-12; 2 Pet. 3:18).

7-Through common grace, we build institutions; through special grace, He builds His church

Through common grace, the impetus to build every institute of culture originated, whether it be human government (Gen. 9:5,6), business (Gen. 2:15; Deut. 8:18), skill for the labor force (Ex. 36:1), higher learning and schools (Deut. 6:6-9), and hospitals (the compassion and care shown by the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:29-37 inspired the creation of hospices and eventually hospitals in western civilization). However, only Jesus can build His church (Matt. 16:16-19) through the saints He has saved and sanctified through His special grace (Eph. 4:11-16).

8. Through common grace we admire human ability; through saving grace, we adore His creativity.

Like most other people, I admire and love music, sports, art and all creative human endeavors. However, once I was born of His Spirit (through special grace) my focus shifted from worshipping and serving created things to worshipping and serving the creator (Rom. 1:25).

9. Through common grace we co-exist with people; through special grace, we love our neighbor.

Most people of the world cohabitate on several levels, through cooperation, collaboration or merely through tolerating their neighbor. The ability most people in the world have to live together in community irrespective of religious, ideological and ethnic differences are truly a result of the miracle of common grace. However, through special grace, Christ followers are called to unconditionally love their neighbor and even lay down their life for others (Luke 10:29-37; 1 John 3:16).

10. Through common grace, people develop their mind; through special grace, we grow in the Spirit.

Through common grace. God has given a measure of common sense, rationality, logic, comprehension and illumination to every person born into this world. This enables humankind to engage in speech, develop languages, grammar, categories and other means of communication that enhance societal cohesion. Common grace also enables humans to be self-aware, analyze data, conceptualize abstract ideas and break them down into practical steps for implementation. However, only through special grace can a person grow and live by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:1-14; 1 Cor. 2: 6-14; Gal. 5:16,17) as well as understand the things of God that are beyond human comprehension and thought (Is. 55:8,9; 1 Cor.2:9-14).

11. Common grace, is temporary; special grace is eternal.

At the consummation of human history, when Jesus fully redeems all of creation, every common thing will become special (Rom. 8:19-22). Hence, common grace is a temporary arrangement since

it has both a beginning and an end. Conversely, special grace awaits a new heaven and a new earth, the home of eternal righteousness (2 Pet. 3:10-13). In eternity, there will be no more marriages, no more biological families, no more politics and business as we know it; however, Christ's bride, His church, will continue on to live and reign forever with Christ (Rev. 19:7, 8; 21:1-14).

12. In common grace, we propose principles; in saving grace, we proclaim the gospel.

In the natural world, we have to understand natural law, and principles of operation for every area of human discipline. However, the primary obligation of Christ-followers, whether directly or indirectly through word and deed is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8; Rom. 1:16).

13. In common grace, we tap into human potential; in special grace, we partake of divine power.

In common grace, we have the innate ability to use our God-given gifts and abilities to succeed in this world. However, through special grace, Christ followers don't only depend upon their natural abilities, but are able to tap into His divine power through His precious promises (2 Pet. 1:3,4)

14. In common grace, all people can serve in leadership; in special grace, only godly, theologically sound leaders should serve in leadership.

In the world, we have all sorts of people, godly and ungodly serving humanity through politics, law, business, the arts, the military, the police, sports and education; however, in the church, the criteria for serving in leadership is very high when it comes to emotional maturity, handling finances, raising a family and having sound doctrine (1 Tim. 3:1-15). Christians make a tactical mistake when they place the same theological criteria for people in the world as they do the church, especially when it comes to partnering with them for

the betterment of the community. I can partner with all leaders in my community if we have a common cause or goal, irrespective of their religion and ideology; however, when it comes to matters in the church I can only partner with leaders who fit the biblical criteria as found in both testaments (For an Old Testament passage, read Ex. 18:21-23).

15-In common grace, we know God as Creator; in special grace, we experience Jesus as Lord and Savior

Finally, all people will be held accountable to know and serve God because He has already revealed Himself to all men through creation (Ps. 19; Romans 1:18-23). However, once a person is born of His Spirit, they not only recognize Jesus as creator but also as Lord and Redeemer. At the close of human history, the common and profane will be swallowed up by the holy and the sacred, and every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Rom. 14:10-12; Phil. 2:1-12.).

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# Carrying God's Presence

# Begins With This Small Choice

One morning when my husband and I were on our way to work, the Lord gave me a simple command. My husband was driving, and I was holding a gift from him in my lap—a pot of my favorite flowers, mums that look like daisies.

I was admiring them and picturing how they would look in my classroom. I knew my students would be blessed by this lovely expression of spring. I thought, *Oh God, these are so beautiful!*

The Lord responded to my expression of delight in a still, small voice that said, “Give those flowers to Merry.” Merry was the teacher whose classroom was next to mine.

By all appearances, Merry was the model Christian school teacher. She was stoic, disciplined and strict, with the highest academic standards. She rarely smiled and didn’t give an inch.

Unfortunately, the students did not appreciate her selfless efforts, and her contract had not been renewed for the following year. Nevertheless, Merry was determined to work out the terms of her contract to the best of her ability. It was an agonizing time for her as she faced the students that were responsible for her dismissal day after day.

I empathized with Merry, but I was not particularly receptive to the Lord’s directive. “What?” I replied. “But Lord, these are my flowers. Art gave them to me. They are special.”

I waited. Silence. The Lord did not reply. Finally, I said to my husband, “Art, I think the Lord wants me to give these flowers to Merry.”

“Well, you better do what He says.”

I was hoping he would say, “That’s not God.”

We continued our journey in silence while I tried to bargain with the Lord. "OK, Lord," I said. "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll stop by Merry's room to see how she's doing."

When I arrived at Merry's door, she was already in her classroom, arranging some flowers in a vase. I thought maybe I was off the hook. "Look, Lord, she already has flowers!" No response from Him.

I greeted her. "Hi, Merry. How are you doing?" She answered, "I'm OK." She did not smile, but continued purposefully arranging the flowers. "How pretty," I commented. "Who gave you the flowers?"

"Oh, these aren't for me," she explained. "One of my parents has been helping me in the library all year, so I stopped by Albertson's this morning and picked these up for her. It's just a little thank-you."

My heart leaped within me. Suddenly I understood. Instead of thinking about herself and her circumstances, she was thinking of blessing someone else—and the Lord wanted to bless her in return. He wanted her to know how pleased He was with her.

Pointing to the pot I carried, Merry asked, "What are those flowers? They're beautiful."

Instantly, I handed them to her and said, "These are for you. They're from the Lord." It was as though the floodgates of heaven opened. "He wants you to know how much He loves you and how pleased He is with your heart. He has not forgotten you. He is with you. He will see you through this."

At that, my stoic colleague broke. She began to sob, releasing the pain she had kept hidden in her heart. A sense of peace and joy came over her, just as it had on me. She had never allowed herself to show or receive affection before, but that morning, she allowed God to embrace her through my arms.

When students began to enter the room, I left. But on the way to my own classroom, I realized what the Holy Spirit had just taught me through the experience: Nothing is hidden from our God. He sees it all. He knows those who need His touch—and those He can use to carry His presence. He looks for willing vessels to be His hands, feet and mouthpieces on earth.

I thank Him that He made me willing that day. And I challenge you: Will you be a carrier of His presence to this generation? Will you choose to become God-conscious rather than self-absorbed so He can show you what He sees and help you to love with His love? Will you acknowledge that everything you have is His and surrender it for His sake?

God just may have another Merry He wants to touch through you.

### **Prayer Power for the Week of March 26, 2017**

*This week, ask the Lord to direct you to where He can use you to be His hands, feet or mouthpiece and carry His presence. Ask Him to help you stay sensitive to His still small voice and leading. Surrender everything to Him so that it's at His disposal and ready to be released as a blessing at any time. Continue to pray for the persecuted church, those in leadership over us and for revival to ignite in our nation and spread around the world. Read 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2. {eoa}*

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# **The Secret to Eternal Thanksgiving**

I have always believed that if there is only one secret to living a full, rewarding and joyful life it is found in the decision to just be thankful, all day, every day.

This one singular heart attitude, that of choosing to live in a place of gratitude, holds more sway over the quality of your life than does your income bracket, your street address or even the pain of your past.

Determining to be a person of sincere praise and appreciativeness will frame your life in a beautiful and miraculous way. Gratitude will erase days of pain and create days of blessing.

Thanksgiving will enlarge the small places of your life into rooms of grand bounty and sweet strength. Praise will turn the gray and blah of humdrum responsibilities into sparkling opportunities of service in the kingdom of God.

It is in choosing to be thankful, sincerely and joyfully thankful, that ordinary days turn into holidays.

Days that are identified by wretchedness and wreathed in ugly become events of heavenly inspiration and sweet remembrance when we use the paintbrush of gratitude to change their color.

This is your life. You will never have another. This life is your only chance at joy, your only opportunity for destiny and your only occasion for capturing a delightful heart.

You must discover the power of thanksgiving if you long for your life to make a difference. If you are thankful for even the small things in life, you have discovered an eternal treasure.

If you can look at a sunset and bask in its presence, you have tapped into treasure.

If you can giggle back at a baby with a silly grin on your face, you have tapped into treasure.

If you can make snow angels with the little girls in your life, you have tapped into treasure.

If you can catch fireflies with a freckle-faced boy, you have tapped into treasure.

If the glory discovered in vibrant rainbows, in the majestic roar of the ocean's waves and in the morning song of the bird cause you to well up with praise, you have learned how to value the truly important commodities in life.

Conversely, if you choose to focus on your deficits rather than on your gifts, you will always be miserable. If all you do is whine and complain and worry, you are the only one it wounds and ultimately subtracts from.

Did you know it doesn't really matter what your circumstances are? Once you begin to lock into this miraculous lifestyle of thanksgiving, although your circumstances may never change, you will change. You change from being in bondage to disappointments and pain to living a life of the joy found only within the gates of His powerful presence!

The moment you become grateful, it changes the atmospheric conditions of your life. Thanksgiving will take you out of your human pain and place you in the very courts of His presence. What a miraculous possibility!!

*"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise; be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations" (Ps. 100). {eoa}*

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