

CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

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Cover Story

The efforts of

psychologist Robi Sonderegger and Australian based Family Challenge Charitable Trust are helping to counter ignorance and religious superstition in Northern Uganda with the love and compassion of authentic Christianity.

COVER IMAGE BY FAMILY CHALLENGE AND MARV WEGNER—PTM

About This Issue

It's here again—the season when we traditionally gather with good friends and family to give God thanks—and to celebrate his Son's arrival in this world. One of the main things we North Americans give thanks for is the freedom and security we enjoy. Yet, the sad truth is there are still many people in chains—physically and spiritually. Two major articles in this issue confront that dilemma—our cover story, "Hope in the Heart of Darkness" and "Spiritual Terrorism: What Can Happen When Marriage Is Redefined." In the first article, author Lee Cloney writes about the horrors of political and religious tyranny visited on Ugandan children. In the second article, Steve Reynolds tells us of another form of religious tyranny that exists in America's heartland. These are deeply disturbing problems—but they are no match for the compassion of Jesus, a compassion we see illustrated in Martin Davis' "Jesus and the Stone Throwers."

It is Jesus' compassion that sends people like Dr. Robi Sonderegger to Northern Uganda to rehabilitate traumatized children (our cover story). Jesus' compassion impels us not to be overly concerned about the timing of his return (Roger Palms' "Nearer Now") but to be doing his work while we are here. Jesus' compassion invites us to join in his mission with others who are like-minded ("How to Find a Good Church" by Hank Hanegraaff). And finally Jesus' compassion calls us to discover the true meaning of the coming Advent season (John Leo's "In Search of Christmas" and Linda Moore's "Redesigning Christmas"). As this is the season to give gifts, we are pleased to give our readers and listeners a dynamic new website. Webmaster Marv Wegner has created an attractive, new redesign, making it easier than ever to access the vast reservoir of resources at www.ptm.org. We hope to see you there. Until then, we at PTM wish you a Christ-centered Christmas and a blessed new year.

—Monte Wolverton, Managing Editor

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Plain Truth Ministries proclaims authentic Christianity without the religion. We:

- Center our teaching on Jesus Christ and God's amazing grace
- Give hope to those burned out by religion
- Warn about and describe religious devices and detours, potholes and pitfalls that can lead us away from God
- Combat the deadly virus of legalism
- Base our ministry upon the essential, main and plain core teachings of historic Christianity

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Caught in the Power Trap

I just needed to comment on the article "Caught in the Power Trap: My Struggle With Power" by Dan Schaeffer. The author refers several times to the power he has over his wife. Scary! As a Christian woman working in the Domestic Violence field, this reconfirms to me how often this belief system leads to a man abusing his family, and the wife continuing to accept it, believing she is doing her part as a submissive wife. I lived that way for ten years, believing that my ex-husband was the head of our home and that what occurred in our home ultimately fell on his shoulders, so my part was to pray and submit. I asked God to help him to stop abusing me and our four children. That prayer was answered one night when I literally ran away for my life. Thankfully, I have been richly blessed with a true Christian man who shares the leadership of our home. Neither of us has power over the other. We each are directly accountable to God to love, honor and protect each other and our marriage. We have been married for 17 years and our children are grown. We love your magazine and read it from cover to cover. Thank you so much!

**Nancy
Email**



Escape From Cult Control

I received your magazine in the mail today and read the article entitled, "Escape From Cult Control." I wasn't surprised, but I was quite angry over what I read. People being controlled by church leaders to the point where it destroys their homes, marriages and relationship with God is a common problem. It shouldn't be, but it is.

I have come across numerous people who, like Cassie and her family, have suffered under the hands of a control

freak who is not rooted in the word of God.

I want to encourage Cassie, and others like her, to not forsake their relationship with God. Please pray, fast, seek counsel. Do whatever it takes to rid yourself of the scars. God can take this experience and use it for good in your life.

We wouldn't make any major changes in our lives without seeking out as much information as we can. Why go to a church without making sure that it fits your spiritual needs and is truly the place that God wants you to be?

**Pastor Walton
Ohio**

- For more on this subject, see "How Do I Find a Good Church?" on page 30 of this issue.



Religion Taught Me Rules...

Please cancel our subscription. Your magazine may be encouraging born again saints to remain in the flesh, as in your article, "Religion Taught Me Rules...But Grandma Taught Me Grace." Smoking is a physical addiction, and Christ can set us free from such, as he did my husband many years ago. We have nothing against dancing, as David and others did so in the Bible, but gambling is another addiction it is best to leave alone. Some of the thoughts in your articles leave growth in Christ at the baby level, and we are all to move forward, maturing in our faith and living out the Word of truth by doing what it says.

Iowa

Former Legalist

I am one of those former "legalists" who has had their spiritual eyes opened because of the fine articles in your magazine. I have been a Christian for 20 years, and only now am I able to understand what a hold religious legalism has had on my life. Although I know that we don't have a license to sin, I now know that God's forgiveness is complete, and his love is constant. Thank you for your great work.

**Jeff
California**

Christianity Without the Religion

Your response to the letter criticizing "Christianity Without the Religion" in the September/October issue was right on target. Here are some additional minor points that could have been added: 5) Tendons, not ligaments, connect muscles to bones. A ligament binds bones (or other structures) together to hold them in place. 6) Religion and ligament have the same root in Latin; however, in Greek, the words that are translated as religion and ligament have no noticeable connection. 7) If you must use an analogy with ligaments, use the one already in the Bible (Colossians 2:19). In this example, Christ is the Head. Most interestingly, the context of this verse discusses people who have lost contact with the Head through—you guessed it—self-imposed religion!

**Adela
Oregon**



The Long, Dark Night of the Soul...Depression

Thank you for your article on depression in the July/August *Plain Truth*. Despite being a believer, I have been beset by depression. Though helpful, no amount of faith, meditation, atonement, positive action or prayer has been able to sufficiently alleviate my symptoms. I have, in the past, railed against pharmaceuticals as a solution, as I have a history of turning to alcohol and marijuana for self-medication. No doctor I know of endorses any type of alcohol or illicit drugs as a cure for depression, as they are counterproductive to therapy.

Thirteen years of sobriety have been, for me, an important prerequisite toward recovery, as well as counseling and participation in groups. I finally agreed to drug therapy, as a cautious course of action toward relieving chronic depression and nagging thoughts of suicide.

In my case, these pharmaceuticals, properly used, have helped alleviate my symptoms. I am told there is a lot of unnecessary suffering that can be helped with medication, especially in conjunction with other courses of action. These are not mind-altering, nor are they "happy pills." They have simply been another step that I needed to take in the process of my

survival. I believe they have helped me be a contributing member of my community—more loving and helpful, as I desire to be—and not simply a statistic.

**Bob
Arizona**



www.ptm.org

Do you agree with the Preterist view that the book of Revelation was written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD? Some commentators say it was written around 90 AD, while the Preterists give an earlier date. The Preterist view seems to be quite convincing. Can you shed some light on this?

**Eric
New Brunswick, Canada**

- *There are compelling arguments in the Preterist viewpoint of biblical prophecy in general—more particularly so for Matthew 24 than for the book of Revelation.*

The Olivet Prophecy could have been completely, or virtually, fulfilled in 69-70 AD with the slaughter of the Jews as the Romans conquered Jerusalem.

However, the date of the writing of Revelation, from our perspective, is a little more vague. Two emperors could be connected to the events that formed the background for the original readers of the Apocalypse. Nero reigned from 54-68, and as the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 69-70, Preterist interpreters often see Nero as the one whose name totals 666 and whose dastardly persecution of Christians would be part of the revelation from Jesus to John. However, in terms of the date of the writing of Revelation, Nero and his persecutions could have been in the past tense (by some three or four decades) and the savage current treatment of Christians by Domitian (81-96) could have formed the immediate, contemporary backdrop against which Revelation is given.

In Revelation Revolution—the Overlooked Message of the Apocalypse, Greg Albrecht argues that the exact date on human calendars as to when the events either happened, or will happen, may distract from the Christo-centric emphasis we ought to gain from this amazing book. There is no doubt that extreme dispensational ideas (a.k.a. the Rapture of Left Behind) have contributed to much confusion and misunderstanding. See the back cover of this issue for details on how to order Revelation Revolution.

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