

### CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

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## Cover Story

*Jesus came to "release the oppressed" (Luke 4:18). Many Christians are physically enslaved and oppressed because of their faith. But many more are also enslaved by religious ideas—believing that their observance of rules, regulations and rituals will somehow make God more pleased with them.*

COVER IMAGE BY DESIGN PICS AND MARV WEGNER—PTM

## About This Issue

At this time of year, when we celebrate the newness of life we have been given in the resurrection of our Lord, we also celebrate the long physical life of one of our readers. At 105, Mrs. Merle Opperman, pictured here, of Cedar Rapids, Iowa is the oldest *Plain Truth* reader—so far as we know.



We hope she and all of our readers enjoy the exciting and inspiring lineup of articles in this spring issue. Here's a sampling of what you'll find:

Our cover story, "Release the Oppressed," calls attention to PTM's Day of Prayer for Religious Captives on March 12th (see the back cover of this issue for details). Greg Hartman's article reminds us that millions of people worldwide are held captive by religious legalism, and they desperately need our prayers.

Sandra Cox, in "Spring Into Life," reminds us what it means to drink the true Living Water. Dale Ratzlaff's "You Can Trust the Bible" gives us a clear picture of how God's Word came to be—and what to look for in a good Bible translation.

In "Rejoicing Comes in the Morning," actor, speaker and author Bruce Marchiano shares with us excerpts from his award-winning book, *Jesus Wept*, and helps us understand where God is when we are hurting and suffering.

Hank Hanegraaff, in "The Resurrection: History or Hoax?" affirms with historical fact what hundreds of millions of Christians already believe to be true—that the tomb is empty, and Christ the Lord is risen!

This truth gives hope to us all at this time of year—and hope for countless others in the world who Jesus will set free. We pray these insights will help you enjoy a rich and meaningful Easter celebration.

—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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## It's Not Easy Being Green...and Christian

Your feature articles in the Jan/Feb 2006 *Plain Truth* did not meet the quality of discussion I have grown to expect in your publication. Regardless of your position regarding the impact of man on our environment, your articles were as shallow as one typically reads in any newspaper. You made the same errors the media usually makes by failing to acknowledge the significant differences between a conservationist, such as Teddy Roosevelt, and an environmentalist, such as members of Green Peace and dozens of similar activist organizations.

Teddy Roosevelt was not an environmentalist! He was an outstanding conservationist, as are most members of such organizations as the National Rifle Association (NRA). Good Christians are good conservationists as dictated by the Bible. This is not the agenda of most environmentalists, and the two should not be confused as you did in your articles.

**Ronald  
Email**



## Getting Over a Bad Church Experience

I can't tell you how much I appreciate the work that PTM is doing. I used to be a Word Faith preacher, leaving the pulpit because I knew something was wrong—at that time I didn't know exactly what or just how much I believed and taught was wrong.

I have read your book, *Bad News Religion*, and I am a frequent visitor to [www.ptm.org](http://www.ptm.org). Your resources, your answers to questions are so balanced and Christ-centered. And just yesterday I received my Jan/Feb 2006 *Plain Truth*—the entire issue is great, but the article "Getting Over a Bad Church Experience"

is superb. May God bless your ministry—it is unique and is just what many need.

**Ohio**

I have just been introduced to this ministry, and so far it has made my heart joyful and my spirit renewed to see a ministry out there that is doing something about the cultic/religious bondage that is suffocating the Body of Christ today. I myself am a victim and survivor of such a "Christian" cult doctrine and leader, and I have let the Lord spend the last seven years reprogramming my relationship with him—repairing the damage and restoring my faith. I will look forward to reading more about ministering to those still hurting and hostage to religious bondage. Thank you again for your work and service of love.

**Thomas  
Email**

Thanks so much for the article on getting over a bad church experience. I thought I was the only one who didn't want to go to church for that very reason. I have had many bad experiences with churches, and I really didn't care if I ever went to church again. However, that doesn't mean that I don't love God. I love God with all my heart and soul. But what I saw in these churches made me question religion and question the people that attend these churches. I will always have reservations about churches, but I'm getting better at all this. Thanks for letting me know there are more people out there like me.

**Beth  
Email**

Overall I thought the article in the Jan/Feb 2006 edition of the *PT* by Lawrence Pile was thought-stimulating. However, as a pastor, I would appreciate the *Plain Truth* articles to be encouraging and helpful to the pastoral ministry, instead of shooting ministers in the foot. Some of the suggestions given to readers looking for a new church were not very wise. Is it a legitimate reason to leave the church because the church does not have "adequate services" for children, or worship style that is not to your liking, or the service time is inconvenient?

As a pastor of a small church, I am continually struggling with members that are thinking of leaving for these reasons. I encourage them to look beyond the inconveniences and be pioneers for our little church and help to build it to be a place that has adequate services for future members. Also, having a list of ex-

members would be very counter-productive. That would be like a businessman having a list of dissatisfied customers for potential new customers to call.

No matter how ethical a businessman you were, if you handed out such a list, I guarantee you would not get many new customers. We are all human, and so are pastors. We do not treat everyone as perfectly as we should. I don't think I or any minister should feel ethically bound to give a new potential member such a list. To suggest that declining the request is a red flag is just plain bad advice.

**David  
Ohio**



## Hope in the Heart of Darkness

Thank you for the article in your Nov/Dec 2005 issue, titled "Hope in the Heart of Darkness." I first heard about the "night commuters" of Uganda last year while waiting in my accountant's office and flipping through the pages of *Smithsonian* magazine.

I was so horrified about the atrocities I read about that I asked to take the magazine home to finish and comprehend what I read. Can you imagine your children becoming "night commuters" who must leave their homes each night to escape the threat of kidnapping?

We know that Christ will avenge the savage acts being done to these little ones who are abducted and forced to do horrible, unspeakable things. But what does the Lord want us to do here and now?

1) Pray for God's protection over the children and the people involved in the conflict. Pray for Joseph Kony, the leader of the LRA and the soldiers. Pray that Jesus makes himself known to them in a powerful way and thwarts their evil acts of violence and brings them into a relationship with him.

2) Support organizations like World Vision and others providing relief in Uganda.

3) Contact your legislators, tell them your concerns and ask them what we in North America can do to help the people of Uganda.

I am thankful that *Plain Truth* is bringing this crisis to the attention of the Christian community.

**Karen  
Pennsylvania**

## www.ptm.org

I bought an MP3 player a week or two ago. I walk to work and wanted to listen to music and to, among other things, your PTM broadcasts. I managed to download two of your broadcasts and a couple of songs from elsewhere. On the way to church yesterday my 9-year-old son borrowed the MP3 player and was quite engrossed listening to what I thought was music. When we got to church I asked him to get a move on. He said he was listening to something quite interesting about thanksgiving and he wanted to hear the rest of it! It was one of your broadcasts from around Thanksgiving Day. Pretty good when a 9-year-old finds your material compelling! Though I suspect the podcasts on legalism would not be quite as interesting to him.

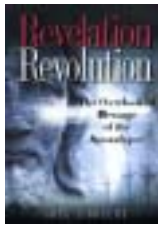
**Professor  
Montreal, Canada**

A friend introduced me to your website, and I am so glad she did. I like the common sense you use to reach people in a non-criticizing way. I now know how wrong some of the teachings of my former church were. I do attend another church now and am happy. Your answers show more open, common sense about God, and that he is not such a hard and distant Being. It's my ideas that need to change. His were always right.

**Cindy  
Email**

Thank you for being there. For far too long I avoided Christian churches, reading or listening to all things Christian. Thanks to PTM I've been renewed in hope and faith. Thanks so much!

**Todd  
Arizona**



## "Revved up" About Revelation Revolution

I am really excited about the approach you are taking to the book of Revelation. I have always believed that there was more to it than I had been taught. But I figured I was too ignorant to figure it out myself. I too believe God's grace is sufficient—yesterday, today and tomorrow.

**Tattoo Jim, Chaplain  
Highways & Hedges Motorcycle Ministry  
Arkansas**

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