

CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

Features

- 12 Weathered Love** *True love grows deeper as time goes by.*
- 14 Yoke of Legalism** *How performance-based religion traps and enslaves.*
- 20 American Apocalypse** *Why are some Christians “anxious for Armageddon”?*
- 25 Who are the Two Witnesses of Revelation?** *The answer may surprise you.*
- 27 Two Shades of Grace** *Two completely different lives transformed by God.*
- 28 Relationships: Grace Required** *Insight on building “barrier-free” relationships.*
- 29 Pictures of a Father** *A poignant story of betrayal and forgiveness.*

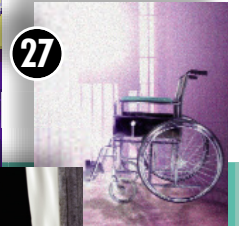
20



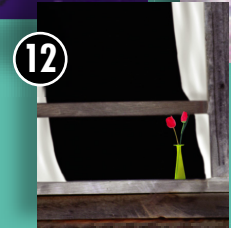
29



14



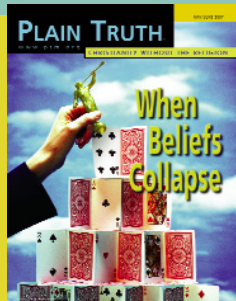
27



12

Departments

- 3 Letters**
- 15 He Asked Me to Remind You** *Steve Brown*
- 17 Commentary** *Greg Albrecht*
- 24 Tender Mercies** *Ruth A. Tucker*
- 26 Parodies of Piety** *Jim Fowler*
- 31 Growing Places** *Susan Reedy*



6

Cover Story

What happens to spiritual life when beliefs collapse? What happens to the soul when its foundations are rocked? Can spiritual health survive even after a devastating upheaval?

COVER IMAGE BY CORBIS PHOTOS AND MARV WEGNER—PTM

About This Issue

In this issue we are delighted to welcome Jim Fowler, a new columnist. Jim will not only appear regularly as a columnist (“Parodies of Piety”), but he will serve as our editorial/theological consultant. I first met Jim Fowler last year, and I quickly realized that we have many mutual beliefs and dreams. Our compatibilities have made Jim a wonderful new addition to our team. Jim is a pastor, with a pastor’s heart, as well as being widely published. He brings many academic achievements and insights to be shared in many of the ongoing ministries of PTM. You’ll want to take some time to “chew on” his column. Welcome, Jim!

What happens to spiritual life when beliefs collapse? What happens to the soul when its foundations are rocked? Can spiritual health survive and even thrive after a devastating upheaval? Managing Editor Monte Wolverton explores this topic in “When Beliefs Collapse.”

As the evening news continues to alert us to the bloodshed in the Middle East, British author and pastor Stephen Sizer examines “American Apocalypse—Anxious for Armageddon?”

This season brings a focus on parents and on marriage, through days dedicated to mothers and fathers and the anniversaries many celebrate in May and June. In “Pictures of a Father,” Bill Vossler shares a poignant, spiritually palpable story which may help you heal from dysfunctional relationships you have experienced. Rich Maffeo reflects on love and marriage in “Weathered Love.”

As always, we appreciate your feedback. Let us know how we can improve our service. Tell us what you like and what you don’t. We’ll be back in your mailbox in two months with more spiritual nourishment for your soul.

—Greg Albrecht, Editor-in-chief



MISSION STATEMENT

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

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE

For an introductory one-year subscription in the U.S.A. or Canada, call toll free 1-800-309-4466, or visit www.ptm.org. Single copies or back issues: U.S.\$4. Following initial one-year introductory subscriptions, *Plain Truth* is an automatic benefit for PTM contributors.

Subscriptions outside of U.S.A. and Canada are U.S.\$29.95 a year; credit card orders only.

TO UPDATE YOUR ADDRESS

Be sure to notify us immediately of any change in your address by calling us at 1-800-309-4466, visiting our website at www.ptm.org/change (please have your old mailing label available for reference) or writing us at *The Plain Truth*, Pasadena, CA 91129 (please include your old mailing label and your new address). U.S. Postmaster: Send address changes to *The Plain Truth*, Pasadena, CA 91129.

TO SEND A LETTER OR E-MAIL

Write us at Letters to the Editor, *The Plain Truth*, Pasadena, CA 91129, email us at managing.editor@ptm.org or fax us at Letters to the Editor at 626-358-4846.

The editors reserve the right to print or not print comments so addressed, in whole or in part, as deemed in the public interest, and to print your name and edit the letter for clarity and space. We will protect the confidentiality of correspondence that we deem to be of a personal nature. Correspondence published by Plain Truth Ministries does not necessarily reflect the opinions of Plain Truth Ministries.

ADVERTISING

Please direct inquiries about advertising rates to Skip Dunn; Phone: 626-298-8013; Fax: 626-358-4846. Advertising in *Plain Truth* does not imply editorial endorsement or agreement with the beliefs and teachings of Plain Truth Ministries.

EDITORIAL STAFF

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Greg R. Albrecht
MANAGING EDITOR: Monte Wolverton
ART DIRECTION AND PRODUCTION: Marv Wegner
ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Laura Urista
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR: Skip Dunn
EDITORIAL CONSULTANT: Jim Fowler



Escape from Slavery

Your March/April 2007 issue contains many interesting and provocative articles. The story of Harriet Tubman was so well written that I clipped it out and filed it for future reference, as it told of this remarkable woman. Thanks for this article.

California

After reading your March/April 2007 issue, I am beginning to realize that you are definitely filling a spiritual need for people such as myself, who have been hurt (and also perhaps hurt other people) spiritually because of captivity to religion and legalism. I believe you are doing a very worthwhile work of helping wounded spirits heal from the effects of religious bondage of various forms. I commend all of you at PTM and will endeavor to sacrifice and contribute more to your wonderful work.

Canada



Why I Don't Go to Church Anymore

Your March/April 2007 *Plain Truth* went a hair over the line, in my opinion. I agree that a lot of churches, doctrines, etc. are unbiblical, but you are getting a little too far into it. I agree that it's healthy to discuss the pitfalls of organized religion, but I have just had too much of it now. Please cancel my subscription.

Colorado

Thank you for the article "Why I Don't Go to Church Anymore" by Wayne Jacobsen. I was a pastor for twenty-seven years in an evangelical church. I have never thought about not going to church on Sunday morning. But after reading your article and giving it a lot of thought,

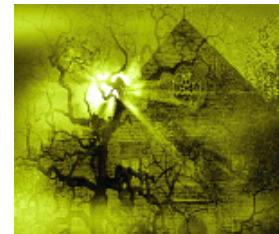
I must agree, "church is something we are—not someplace we go."

Oregon

I must comment on the article "Why I Don't Go to Church Anymore." I was surprised the editors passed this article off as "plain truth." The author should locate Hebrews 10:25 (in any version) which definitely states believers should not forsake assembling themselves together as the day approaches. To ignore this scripture and write a negative article like this is a big mistake. I must complain.

California

- *Hebrews 10:25 is not a foundational statement that demands church be "held" in a building with other people. Many mistakenly have the idea that we must "go to" church—but church is more than a building to which we travel. Church is what we are. We are the body of Christ. While some suggest that Hebrews 10 is saying that we must never miss a church service that is held in a geographical location, there is no imperative here that tells us that we can only worship in the physical presence of a church building with lots of other people. Jesus said that he would be with us, even when only two or three are gathered together (Matthew 18:20).*



Christians and Superstition

First of all, thank you for the pleasure of reading your magazine. As soon as I finish an issue, I anxiously await the next one! I have a question from the Jan/Feb 2007 issue. In your cover story you talk about "practicing more harmful superstitions without knowing it...silly practices maintained by well-meaning Christians." You give, as one example, saying "God bless you" after a sneeze. What's the harm in blessing someone, regardless of the reason? To suggest not saying it because it has superstitious origins seems legalistic to me, and that's a surprise coming from you all at PTM.

Email

- *Yes, the list of superstitions we published in the Jan/Feb 2007 PT includes*

“a few silly beliefs and practices...” As you say, not saying “God bless you” because it has some tainted origins is itself legalistic. We are free in Christ about such traditions and conventions. We are not free, however, to imply to someone else that they are required to say “God bless you.”

Going Above and Beyond

I whole-heartedly agree with Greg Albrecht’s “Commentary” in the Jan/Feb 2007 issue. I think the word “love” is left out too much. If you do things (works) for the love you have for the Lord, then it is just for the pure love and joy of doing so, and rewards do not even enter into your thoughts. You are simply doing God’s will to please him and are humbled at the privilege of knowing him and the offer to receive his mercy and unfailing love. But if you are thinking about what you will receive in return, this is unprofitable.

Texas



Christianity Without the Religion

I just wanted to thank you all for the good work you are doing in Christ. I wanted to let you know that a local radio station is now airing *CWR* twice a month. I simply download it from the Internet and send it to the local Christian radio station. They love it and are happy to give it airtime when they have an open slot.

Canada

I appreciate worshipping online with you and everyone at *CWR*. I very much enjoy your method and approach to teaching the Bible, with stories and humor, but always with deep respect for the Bible. I also want to thank everyone at PTM for all the resources and great reading material.

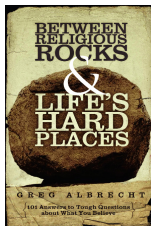
Iowa

After listening to today’s message, it dawned on me why Jesus came to this earth when he did. There never was or would be again a more “religious” group of people than the Pharisees. And religion being the single most detrimental thing to people’s relationship with God, his timing was right on! I always thought that with modern technology more people could have been reached. But reaching people was never the obstacle—the obstacle was the deception that Jesus’ sacrifice was incomplete.

Ohio

I can’t tell you how much your ministry means to me. I attend *CWR*, read your books, *Plain Truth* magazine and monthly letters, and I am pleased to financially contribute to PTM. I am 84 years old, and I still live in my home alone. I have taught an adult Sunday school class for 52 years. I receive so much helpful insight and enlightenment from your ministry helping me to be a more effective teacher of the gospel. I will continue to serve the Lord to the best of my ability as long as I can.

North Carolina



Between Religious Rocks and Life’s Hard Places

As a pastor I have started to reach out to Christians who no longer go to church, but who are really interested in God and Christianity. Many of these wonderful people are, for one reason or another, disenfranchised from organized Christianity. They hang out at McDonald’s, so that’s where I meet them. I took your new book along with me and read them some of your answers. One of the big hits was the Q&A titled, “Movies, Beer and Rock ‘n Roll.” This book is going to help many—thank you for the warm and humble tone in which it is written.

Illinois

I have asked many questions of pastors and religious authorities in my 50 years on this earth. I have never had the positive and uplifting experience I am now having reading your book, *Between Religious Rocks and Life’s Hard Places*. For the first time I feel like I am beginning to see a glimpse of God’s grace. All my life my questions have been met with yelling, belittling and even anger—that I would presume to even ask a question of an authority. Thanks for helping me see a little more about the one true God—religion completely misrepresented him to me.

Texas

You have confronted the “elephant in the living room.” Some people have a hard time daring to challenge the status quo when it comes to religion. Thanks to you all at PTM for showing the way!

North Carolina

- See the back cover of this issue for details about how to order *Between Religious Rocks and Life’s Hard Places*.

COPYRIGHT & POSTAL INFORMATION

The Plain Truth is published bimonthly by Plain Truth Ministries, Pasadena, CA 91129. Copyright © 2007 Plain Truth Ministries. Printed in U.S.A. All rights reserved. Standard flats postage paid at Pasadena, CA, and at additional mailing offices. Volume 72, Number 3: May/June 2007. Unless noted otherwise, scriptures are quoted from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers. *The Plain Truth* is a U.S. trademark.

CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

Worship with us, 24/7, at our church without walls, a church without the religion. A relevant, timely, Christ-centered worship service is available right now at www.ptm.org. *Christianity Without the Religion* is a pending U.S. trademark.

OUR WEBSITE

Visit our website at www.ptm.org to browse *Plain Truth* archives for past articles, to find out more about Plain Truth Ministries and our other resources, to subscribe and to update your address.

SUBMISSIONS

The Plain Truth rarely publishes unsolicited manuscripts. Please review our writers guidelines at our website (www.ptm.org) before submitting queries. Include SASE with query. The publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited artwork, photographs or manuscripts.

PLAIN TRUTH MINISTRIES

The Plain Truth is published by Plain Truth Ministries (PTM). If you are interested in learning more about PTM, please request a copy of *Plain Truth Ministries...Helping Change Lives Around the World* by calling us at 1-800-309-4466, visiting our website at www.ptm.org or writing us at Plain Truth Ministries, Pasadena, CA 91129.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Plain Truth Ministries gratefully accepts tax deductible contributions to further the ongoing work of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. We accept contributions in U.S. funds by check or credit card. Call us at 1-800-309-4466, or write us at Plain Truth Ministries, Pasadena, CA 91129.

MEMBER  EVANGELICAL PRESS ASSOCIATION

MEMBER
NRB