

CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

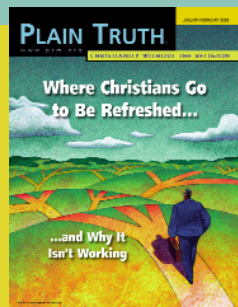
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Does the Bible command all Christians to be leaders? What was Christ's example of leadership? We offer insightful articles about Christian leadership by two experienced pastors: Where Pastors Go to be Refreshed... by Glen Moyer, and Do Not be Called Leaders... by Wayne Jacobsen.

COVER IMAGE BY GREG HARGREAVES

About This Issue

2008—a new year—and a presidential election year in the United States. It's a year when many of us will be thinking about qualities of leadership as we decide on a human leader of the United States for the next four years. So what better way to start the year than with our cover stories on leadership by pastors Glen Moyer and Wayne Jacobsen? Except in this case, we're talking about Christian leadership—and of course that's different than political leadership. Or is it? Don't be too sure of the answer.

Speaking of leadership, you're about to meet two energetic young leaders with a passion for helping the poor people of Guatemala—Ryan and Heidi McAnnally-Linz. Find out what they're up to in "Just Apparel—Investing in Guatemala's Future." Wealth and power are often associated with leadership, and you'll learn nearly everything you ever wanted to know about a Christian perspective on money in Rachel Ramer's "Wealth: Getting It, Keeping It, Giving It, Surviving It." Surprisingly, business leadership may be able to teach Christian leadership a thing or two about grace and generosity, as you'll see in my article, "Raspberry Lattes and Grace."

Our usual group of outstanding columnists also illuminate some aspect of Christian leadership in this issue. Consider Greg Albrecht's "The Cure for Religion." Imagine what a difference it would make in the world if every religious leader were to be cured of religion! Finally, be sure to read the two-page spread on pages 6 and 7 of this issue, titled "If You Like *Plain Truth* Magazine, You'll Love Plain Truth Ministries." Some of our readers aren't aware that PTM is the publisher of *Plain Truth*, and this short feature gives an overview of everything we do at PTM. If there's anything you're missing out on, please let us know. PTM will be here for you throughout this new year and, God willing, the next...and the next....

—Monte Wolverton, *Managing Editor*

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Eternal Torture—Divine or Human Vengeance?

Having come out of a church that believed hell is the torturous place we all go to for eternity because of sin, I am in total agreement with your article in the November 2007 *PT*, "Eternal Torture—Divine or Human Vengeance?" Although I don't attend any church at present, I love the *PT* articles, and I have come to a place where I practice Christianity without the religion.

I've met a few local ministers in the small town where I live. They are fine men, but all are a part of that religion that teaches eternal torture. I just can't go along with the teachings of these churches and feel that God is a loving, kind God. If Jesus died for our sins, then he must have a plan to ultimately deal with them in a loving way. I scratch my head when Christians talk of eternal torture and in the same breath talk about God's grace.

There are things we don't know about what happens after death, but I know that God will show us, and it will be far more magnificent than we imagined. With all my heart, I can't see an eternal, everlasting torture for the wicked. But I do see judgment, correction and complete destruction of evil.

Thanks for a well written, hopeful and encouraging article.

Texas

If there is life beyond death, it will be at the resurrection. I believe hell involves perishing, not preserving. But the torture doctrine has been prevalent for 1,600 years. Remarkable!

Kentucky

I was very interested in your article about hell. It is not outside our holy God's character to punish sin. It does not contradict his nature of love, but rather reinforces it. How can a holy and pure God turn a blind eye to our blatant rebellion against him?

But most of the condemnation you speak of stems from religion—people—not the Bible.

Texas



Global Warming— or Hot Air?

The *Plain Truth* staff should be commended for having the courage to address both sides of global warming in the September/October 2007 issue. I agree that the global warming debate is hardly a done deal, and there are plenty of politics and other special interests driving the true issues away from the facts. Once again, *Plain Truth* offers a balanced overview of the issue with workable suggestions. I would like to see people go after the big multinational companies like Exxon, Shell and Nike to make them start treating their workers and host countries with more respect rather than ravaging their poor people and local environments.

New Jersey



The Assignment

I just finished reading "The Assignment" by Deborah Jeanne Sergeant in the September/October 2007 issue. What came to my mind was the wonderful interpretation of Hebrews 13:2 that the story portrays. Thank you for printing this article!

Missouri



No Curfew: Are You Crazy?

Thank you for the article by Glen Moyer, "No Curfew: Are You Crazy?" in

the September/October 2007 issue. My parents were of the mind that by the time my sister, brother and I were old enough to date, we were responsible enough to make our own decisions.

My best friend, however, did have a curfew, and typically her brother was our driver. I can't count how many times they were grounded for being late, and they couldn't understand why I was not.

The rule in our house was: "Tell us who you're with and where you'll be." While my best friends parents' saw mine as too careless and flexible, I now see that they were confident enough in me that I was a well adjusted person when I left home.

I was never able to fully explain to my husband why I agreed with my parents' rule. Now I have your article—thanks!

Email



Trapped in the Watchtower

I continue to grow as a Christian because of PTM. I recently read your article about Jehovah's Witnesses [in the July/August 2007 issue] about whether or not they are Christian. I thought your answers were complete and insightful.

I grew up in Salt Lake City, Utah, and when I was young I used to attend the Mormon church. I stopped attending just after age ten because I was being pressured to convert my best friend, who was Catholic, in order to "save her from hell."

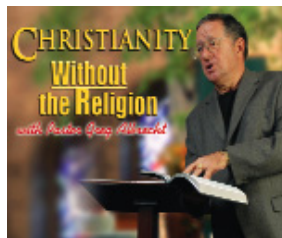
Even at that young age, I realized something wasn't right about teaching young children that all other religions were an "abomination" and that members of other churches were not fit for heaven. Since leaving the Mormon church, even as a child, I was treated with contempt, as an outsider. Friends who I used to play with could no longer play with me. I was told I was going to hell and that I could never have God in my life or go to heaven if I didn't belong to the Mormon church.

I see so many parallels in Jehovah's Witness beliefs and Mormon beliefs—multiple gods, salvation by works, denial of the deity of Jesus, exclusive claims that they are the "only true church," etc. In my experience I've known many people in Mormonism confess that if you are not Mormon or don't hold their beliefs, you are "anti-Mormon" and therefore an outsider.

What a tremendous blessing that the true gospel and message of Christianity is

so free to everyone in God's word, the Holy Bible. I pray for those churches who attempt to hold the gospel as their own exclusive property and twist the word of God to fit their own traditions and beliefs, that they will find the truth. Thank God that the truth is plain!

Email



Christianity Without the Religion

Thank you for coming up with such a brilliant idea to take people to church. In countries like Iran, where Christianity is prohibited, you get killed for becoming Christian. Having such an awesome way of learning and asking questions and growing in faith in the privacy of your own home is the most intelligent way of evangelizing and bringing people to our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you, for caring and making this available to my sisters and brothers in Iran, the land of terror and forced evil religion.

Expatriate Iranian living in California

I regularly attend *Christianity Without the Religion* online services and read the material on your website. I am glad that we, by God's grace, have been brought out of legalism. Messages to safeguard against legalism should continue to be preached. Thank you for your work of love.

Philippines

I want you to know that I appreciate everything you do. I love to listen to the *Christianity Without the Religion* worship services on your website. They help me in my everyday life. PTM is like a church to me, and I love to get your magazines and visit your website. This is the teaching I want my three children to grow up knowing. Thanks for all your hard work!

South Carolina

I just want to say that your message of God's grace has done much to give me peace of mind. Although I now am a Lutheran, I was raised Catholic and for much of my life feared losing my salvation if I didn't "measure up." You have greatly put my mind at ease on this subject. You can be sure that as long as I am able to do so, I will support your ministry. Thank you again for everything.

Pennsylvania

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