

CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

Features

- 19** **The Shepherd's Call** *God calls his flock to delight in the greenest pastures.*
- 22** **Doing Church Jesus' Way** *Could Christendom be getting it more wrong?*
- 24** **The Good Fight** *Human love may disappoint us, but God's love will never fail.*
- 25** **A Parable for Troubled Times** *Ancient insight for current U.S. foreign policy.*
- 29** **The Cure for MFD** *Honor your parents—develop a meaningful relationship.*



24



25



19



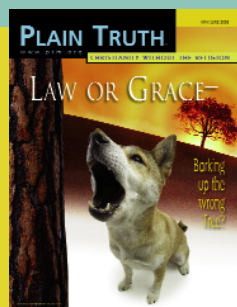
22



29

Departments

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



8

Cover Story

The Bible clearly teaches

that we died to the Law. Why, then, do so many Christians today still try to build a relationship with God based on rules? When we are in Christ, our lifestyle isn't governed by rules, but relationship. We aren't motivated by laws, but love!

About This Issue

In troubled times like these—with economic woes, violence and chaos swirling around us, we are thankful for the laws, rules and regulations necessary for a disciplined society and for orderly human government. Similar regimentations are found in the world's religions. Some believe religion needs external constraints to keep believers in order. But are religious regulations necessary in authentic Christianity? Are we “barking up the wrong tree” when we perceive our relationship with God to be based on law? Discover the truth in this issue's cover story by Steve McVey, director of Grace Walk Ministries.

In a similar vein, Tom Ehrich calls for today's church to abandon its notions of human power, law, dogma, institutionalism and exclusivism and start “Doing Church Jesus' Way.” Wayne Jacobsen reminds us that God is calling us not into some human institution, but into a relationship with him—a relationship where we can have complete confidence in his love, as Roy Borges affirms in his article, “The Good Fight.” Because of God's grace we need not fear any frightful developments on the world scene (and there are plenty of those) as attested by Alan Dowd's insightful commentary on the Book of Esther, “A Parable for Troubled Times.”

These are just the features—you won't want to miss our columnists, who continue with the theme of grace and how it defines our relationship with God. Speaking of relationships, May and June are the months of Mothers and Fathers days. My wife and I hope our kids and grandkids remember to give us appropriate recognition. We're pretty sure that at least one will remember, since our daughter, Monika Spykerman, wrote an article on the subject in this issue—“The Cure for MFD.” Even if she forgets to send us a card—this well-written, thought-provoking article will more than make up for it!

—Monte Wolverton, *Managing Editor*

COVER IMAGES BY DIAL-A-VIEW, DESIGNPICS, AND MARV WEGNER—PTM

Canada Post Publications Mail
Sales Agreement No. 40029726
The address of our lettership in Canada can
be used for the Canadian return address.
Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to
Plain Truth
7496 Bath Road Unit 2
Mississauga, ON L4T 1L2

MISSION STATEMENT

Plain Truth Ministries proclaims authentic Christianity without the religion. Our work is Christ-centered, based on God's amazing grace, giving hope to those burned out by legalistic religion.

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.

Initial, one-year subscriptions outside of the U.S.A. and Canada are U.S. \$29.95 a year; credit card orders only.

Following initial one-year introductory subscriptions, *Plain Truth* is an automatic benefit for ongoing PTM contributors.

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

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 Albrecht

MANAGING EDITOR: Monte Wolverton

ART DIRECTION AND PRODUCTION: Marv Wegner

ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Laura Urista

CIRCULATION DIRECTOR: Skip Dunn

THEOLOGICAL CONSULTANT: Jim Fowler



How to Rescue a Religious Hamster

The March/April article "How to Rescue a Religious Hamster" by Ron Benson is a much-needed article. It's very hard not to push others to freedom. But this only causes them to push back.

Only God could lead me out [of legalism] and it will only be by his Spirit that my friends and loved ones are led out. I must continue to love them even though they think that I've gone off the deep end.

Indiana



Where Pastors Go to Be Refreshed...

I really identified with Glen Moyer's article in the January/February issue about pastor conferences, and the unproductive nature of more and more programs in many congregations.

Been there, done that! I, too, yearned for something more in pastoral ministry before finally having to resign after 33 years of trying.

Arkansas

Glen Moyer's article "Where Pastors Go to be Refreshed"...IS my life. I have traded my passion for paperwork. I have one question: Just how long have you been watching me?

I feel you have gone through my garbage bags and followed me to every "How To" conference for the past five years. I'm signed up for three presently.

I've been in full-time ministry for over 25 years, and I work 24/7 for our church. The success of my church consumes my every thought.

What can I do to grow this church for God's glory?

I literally have ten stacks of information on my desk for future projects that *need* to be done in my church if we are to grow. Those stacks have been there for two years.

The pressure to offer the quality ministry that the mega-churches offer is overwhelming. Yet the harder I work, the more people leave for the local mega-churches. I don't resent it—I don't have time!

I appreciate you writing my life story. It's the plain truth!

I can imagine that being able to minister out of a fresh pool must be exhilarating. I'm not there yet. Maybe in one of the upcoming "creative-cutting edge" conferences it will hit me! I can only hope. Now I need to get back to work—Sunday's coming!

Tired in Texas



If This Were Your Last Year

I love Steve Brown's columns! I want to make a few comments about his January/February column, titled "If This Were Your Last Year." As a cancer survivor, I have been forced to contemplate my mortality, and I continue to do so. I do make an effort in some ways to "live like I was dying," and I would say that overall it has done me good.

I totally agree with Steve in regard to relationships with family, friends, humankind and of course with God. I have learned to put physical things in a different perspective.

One often hears the adage "live each day as if it were your last." However, I must admit that if I knew this were my last year (knew for darn sure), I would start smoking again (it wasn't lung cancer, but I quit anyway), eat everything that didn't eat me first and spend or give away my entire retirement fund! Indeed, my brother thinks we should come stamped with expiration dates like cartons of milk, so that we could more easily plan.

My point is just that in some ways it is good to live as though each year (or week or day) were our last, in other ways it may not be advisable!

Email



The Shack

I am a 53-year-old woman living in upstate New York who has been receiving *Plain Truth* magazine for some time. Your magazine is so on target, and I devour it the moment I receive it. I got a copy of the book, *The Shack*, which was advertised in the *Plain Truth*. I finished reading it late last night, and this morning I listened to your interview with author Paul Young via your website. Paul has been able to put into words what I have long felt about our Great God.

I have always believed there was another dimension where I belonged. That's not to say that I hate my life—just the opposite. I have an amazing family and group of friends, but I have also had this wonderful relationship with the three-in-one God. For over thirty years I have journeyed together with God, who has taught me constantly through people, experiences, music, books—life itself. I constantly yearn to be closer to God—to see as they see, feel as they feel—to be totally *one* in them.

The Shack is an amazing book filled with so much revelation about who God truly is and the type of relationship he wants with each and every one of his children.

I cannot put into words all that I'm feeling right now so I'll just say, "Thank You, Thank You, Thank You" to Plain Truth Ministries for getting the word out about this book and to Paul Young for writing this tale. My deepest thanks—I'm forever grateful!

New York

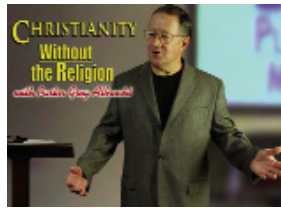
• See the ad on page 14 of this issue for details about how to order *The Shack*.

Don't Leave Your Brain at the Door

Between Ravi Zacharias Ministries and Plain Truth Ministries, I have found to my delight that I don't have to leave my brain at the door in the debate of God's Word—the Bible! You challenge me to think for myself and dig deep into the Word of God. I cannot say that I agree with everything, but after years of having to agree with everything we were taught without challenging doctrine, I now give myself time to kneel in prayer and ask for God's help. I try to be fair and look at both sides

of a doctrine, but always based on the Word of God. Keep up the good work!

Illinois



Christianity Without the Religion

I work the midnight shift, and it is very difficult to get to church. But, more importantly, it is what you teach in your online worship services that draws me in. I have lived in the legalistic community all of my life, and I *hated* every minute of it. I am beginning to climb out of that horrible prison of legalism. I truly believe God has been working hard to get me out of it and using your ministry, and your online church, *Christianity Without the Religion*, to help me find my way out of that mess.

Florida

Thank you for making the *Christianity Without the Religion* sermons available on CD and cassette tape. Greg's sermons are mind-boggling—I really like them!

British Columbia, Canada

I don't have a computer. Greg Albrecht sends me two CDs (four sermons) a month. I support Plain Truth Ministries and give money twice a month. I consider Greg's *Christianity Without the Religion* CDs as my church. I believe in the work of PTM.

Louisiana

We want to thank you for all the *Christianity Without The Religion* sermons on CD, the *Plain Truth* magazines, booklets, your monthly letters and all the other things we receive from PTM during the year. We are so thankful to be a part of this ministry. It is hard to put into words what we feel, but we have been touched by your great sermons.

Mississippi

A Big Stink About Legalism

Truly, you are on Jesus' side and in him and he in you. Yes, do continue, as you said in your January *PTM Partner Letter*, to "make a big stink about legalistic, authoritarian leaders." I ask God to fight for you in this. Thank you for standing up for what is right and for standing strong! God be with you as you serve him in this work.

British Columbia, Canada

COPYRIGHT & POSTAL INFORMATION

The Plain Truth is published bimonthly by Plain Truth Ministries, Pasadena, CA 91129. Copyright © 2008 Plain Truth Ministries. Printed in U.S.A. All rights reserved. Standard flats postage paid at Pasadena, CA, and at additional mailing offices. Volume 73, Number 3: May/June 2008. 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


PLAIN TRUTH
MINISTRIES

MEMBER
NRB