



April 2017

Dear CWR Friend and Partner,

Doubting Thomas told his fellow disciples that he would not believe Jesus had actually been resurrected unless he could see and touch Jesus and thereby prove the resurrection. Thomas had to see in order to believe. So Jesus, in one of his post-resurrection appearances to his friends, accommodated Thomas, telling him, “*Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.*” Thomas said to him, “*My Lord and my God.*” Then Jesus told him, “*Because you have seen me, you have believed: **blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed***” (John 20:27-29).

Living in this scientific and technological age people demand proofs before they believe anything that runs counter to their pre-accepted beliefs. People want something they can touch, weigh, measure and test before they commit to belief.

But ironically, many of the beliefs people hold near and dear have never been held to the same standard of scrutiny. Proof is not always necessary for belief—we humans value any number of beliefs in spite of the absence of proof, or even in spite of proofs against that particular belief.

In the realm of Christ-centered faith, believing is seeing! Embracing the grace of God, trusting in and believing Jesus, and following him results in spiritual healing and spiritual vision not otherwise realized or experienced.

The vast majority of Christ-followers who have ever lived never saw Jesus in the flesh—we have not touched his side as Thomas did. Many, if not most, of those who first read the Gospel of John never actually heard Jesus teach nor did they see him perform a miracle. By God’s grace we in this 21st century can join *those who have not seen and yet have believed.*

For centuries many have defended the resurrection of Jesus as historical fact and zealously provided proofs that it actually happened. But the desire to “prove” the resurrection to be true often causes many to become so focused on the details that they miss the big picture—“they fail to see the forest for the trees.”

Offering “proofs” for the miracle of the resurrection is not a Christ-centered end in and of itself. A long list of well-reasoned proofs and cogent arguments will not transform a skeptic who denies the resurrection into a believer. After all, *history and experience demonstrate that people refuse to believe that which they are not inclined to believe.* Placing a primary emphasis on “proving” the resurrection may even detract from faith and belief.

Faith dies from proofs, just as true love perishes when it demands proofs of another’s love. If God had first to prove himself in men’s eyes, he would no longer be God. Therefore there can be signs of the resurrection, which the believer accepts with gratitude, but never proofs that would convince unbelief.—“The Gospel of Matthew” (Eduard Schweizer, 1913-2006)

Proofs are not the foundation of our faith. **Jesus alone is the foundation of our faith.** The gospel

is not about intellectual assent to historically proven details—the gospel is not centered on miracles, but on belief in Christ—the gospel is *faith alone, grace alone and Christ alone*.

In the “resurrection chapter” (1 Corinthians 15) Paul does not attempt to “prove” the resurrection of Jesus, but he assumes the resurrection as fact. He simply states that Jesus is risen, and he calls the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus the gospel—that focus and that foundation is of “first importance” (1 Corinthians 15:3).

Paul is humbled by his belief in the risen Lord, so that he says *I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle...* (vs. 9). Paul is filled with thanksgiving for the transformation the risen Lord worked in his life, so that *by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect*. Like you and me, Paul was a mess before Jesus rescued him and transformed him by the grace, mercy and love of God.

We believe Jesus was resurrected—we believe Jesus is our risen Lord. But, no one knows, not even those who spend a lifetime “proving” the resurrection to be a historical fact, exactly how it happened. We do know what the resurrection can do and what can happen in the lives of those who believe that **He Is Risen**. The power of the resurrection does not lie in historical details and proof but in the lives that are transformed by our risen Lord!

Easter is all about a conscious choice to believe—Easter is all about embracing the grace of God. Easter is not about intellectual assent to a historical event nor is it centered in an academic exercise of “proving” the resurrection—*Easter is all about believing* the greatest miracle of all—Jesus’ resurrection from the dead.

Easter is no more a time for us to “prove” the resurrection to “unbelievers” than it was to Jesus. In fact, many within Christendom seem to interpret and “use” the resurrection as a trump card against those who disagree with their religious dogmas and doctrines. But Jesus did not rise from the dead so that those who deem themselves to be “saved” can “use” his resurrection to argue that the “unsaved” should join the winning side before it’s “too late.”

In his post-resurrection appearances Jesus appeared primarily to those who had believed in him before his crucifixion, those he called his friends, even though those very friends left him and abandoned him, and cowered behind closed doors in fear that they too would be crucified. After his resurrection Jesus appeared to his friends—those who had already believed in him. If we are to accept the desperate attempts of many evangelicals to “witness” and save “the lost” as “gospel truth” we must ask why our risen Lord did not take the time to appear to any of the Pharisees who had engineered his crucifixion in an attempt to “evangelize” them.

The beckonings of God are just that—beckonings, not bludgeoning, not batteries of irrefutable evidence, not the tyranny of unanswerable logic. Always there is freedom for our choosing and response. One item about the resurrection of Jesus has sometimes been overlooked: he showed himself after death only to those who loved him. He did not appear in Pilate’s palace, for empire politics give him no welcome; nor in the High Priest’s court, for churchly pride leaves him no room; nor in the market place, for money-itch is not reverence. Easter sermons must not be over-preached, and their proofs should never overprove, for God’s beckonings are always by hint and gleam, lest we be coerced.—George Buttrick (1892-1980)

Easter is the greatest leap of faith that anyone will ever take. The power of the risen Lord lies in his ongoing life, rather in proofs that he actually rose from the dead. The power of the risen Lord is in transformed lives—you and I have experienced unconditional love, forgiveness, liberation and

by his love, mercy and grace—and though we have not seen him, **WE BELIEVE!**

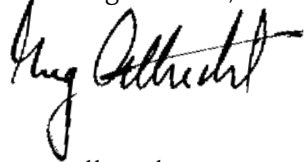
The Resurrection is a huge leap of faith, for after all, anyone can be born, but no one apart from Jesus rose from the dead. The message of Easter is radical, transforming, counter-intuitive and life changing. *Easter means that nothing is impossible for God.* Easter means love triumphs over hatred. Hope triumphs over despair. Suffering is not the last word. Above all, Easter proclaims that Jesus alone is Lord. **HE IS RISEN!**

One of my favorite stories about Easter goes back to the funeral of Sir Winston Churchill (held in St. Paul's Cathedral in London on January 30, 1965) planned down to the last detail by Churchill. Following the final benediction of the state funeral, with dignitaries from around the world in attendance, a bugler stationed high in the dome of St. Paul's played the "The Last Post"—the equivalent in the British military of the American "Taps"—universally recognized, in the English speaking world, as a mournful signal that indicates the end of the day. But then—a surprise!

Following Churchill's instructions, immediately following the playing of "The Last Post" yet another bugler played "Reveille"—the bugle call that wakens soldiers at dawn. The message Sir Winston left with those who mourned his loss was clear—no matter how final death may seem, the Son of God has risen, and death will not have the final word.

WE BELIEVE HE IS RISEN!!

Believing in Him,



Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

We want to share these three letters of gratitude from people who appreciate the ministry of CWR/PTM, which you support with your offerings and prayers. Thank you for your faithful support of this ongoing ministry!

Thank you for all the love you send us through your ministry. I pray God will continue to bless you—keep up the wonderful work you all do!—New York

PTM/CWR is one of the best resources I've come across for learning about God's grace and warning about the dangers of toxic religion. Thank you for all the work you do. Keep it up!—Ohio

We really appreciate and enjoy all the materials we get from CWR/PTM. The magazines just seem to get stronger and deeper with good news. We pray that this ministry will continue to bless many others in the coming year—and we pray for you and everyone involved in CWR/PTM.—Alabama

CWR/PTM Prayer List—April 2017

These requests for prayer represent just a few of the thousands we receive and pray for. We invite you to join us in praying for these and the others that space does not permit us to include here. Thanks for joining with us as a CWR/PTM Prayer Partner.

Please pray about my digestive issues that I have been dealing with for over a year.—Nebraska

My sister has fallen and sustained serious injury—she can't walk. Please pray for her.—California

Please pray for me. I'm 85 years old and have so many problems and pain in my back, knee and right arm.—Texas

Prayer support so that my daughter's final year in college will be less difficult and that she will be more at ease with all the stress.—Arizona

Please pray for my healing—I struggle with severe hip and rib pain.—Minnesota

Please pray that my mom finds a house to rent that she can afford. Thank you!—Georgia

Please pray for me as I also have prostate cancer. I can identify with Grant Corriveau's article "Strange Land of Dread and Denial."—British Columbia, Canada

Please pray for my great granddaughter who is autistic and won't eat healthy food.—West Virginia

Please pray for me—I'm taking care of my 95-year-old mother who is suffering from dementia. This has entailed multiple trips to the emergency room at the hospital and multiple stays at the rehab center.—California

My sister, my niece and I need to have our finances bolstered something fierce. We need your prayers!—Texas

Please pray for a dear friend of mine who has abdominal cancer.—Pennsylvania

Please pray that my neck can be straightened out. It causes me a lot of pain.—Kentucky

I am on dialysis three times a week. Your prayers for my healing would be greatly appreciated.—Tennessee

Please pray for my sister. She has cancer and is having a really rough time with it.—Florida

Please pray that God will heal me of colorectal cancer. Thanks for your prayers.—Ontario, Canada

I am requesting your prayers for my husband. He is very anemic and weak.—Alabama

There are so many in this world who are broken in body and spirit. They need our prayers. Thank you for including these prayer lists every month.—Illinois

Please pray that the Holy Spirit will guide me in every decision and step that I take to recover from our present financial difficulties.—Missouri

Please pray for my 19-year-old great nephew who has liver cancer, and pray for his family who need financial help.—West Virginia

Please pray that I will be able to find the right apartment for myself that isn't so expensive.—New York

I request prayers for healing so that I would have good health soon and be able to find a good apartment to live in. Thank you so much for your prayers!—Georgia

Dear God: We bring you many requests and needs. You know each of these individuals, and we thank you in advance for the answers you will provide for each request. With thanksgiving for your love and grace, we pray in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ—Amen.