



June 2017

Dear Friend and Partner of CWR/PTM,

*A familiar captivity is frequently more desirable than an unfamiliar freedom.—C.S. Lewis*

When many who are comfortable with their cherished religious practices and ceremonies hear about CWR (Christianity WITHOUT the religion) and how we as a ministry champion “religion-less” Christianity, they often accuse Christianity WITHOUT the religion and “religion-less” Christianity as being nothing less than permissiveness and immorality.

It’s a serious accusation—one the organized religion of Jesus’ day used to condemn him. As you know, the religious leadership of Jesus’ day insisted that Jesus was spending too much time with the low-life dregs of society (as labeled by the religious establishment). Jesus was accused of being a drunkard and of not being serious enough about religion. It’s a grave accusation to claim that the grace of God is immoral—one to which Paul resoundingly responds:

*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age... (Titus 2:11-12).*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is not about freedom to express and rapaciously indulge our physical appetites and senses—the **grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is about freedom from artificially imposed contrivances that allow religious institutions to manipulate us with fear and human authority rather than faith and trust in God.**

But, just as the Israelites in the wilderness were now free from all the religious superstitions of Egypt, they yearned for their familiar captivity in Egypt rather than the unfamiliar freedom given them by God. The Israelites discovered that it is far easier to be given physical freedom than it is to embrace spiritual freedom, and therefore live free, by the grace of God. They were physically free, but they remained in spiritual bondage.

The Latin word *religio* means “bind fast”—*religio* has the sense of holding things together, keeping everything under control. By contrast, Paul assures us that we are free in Christ, and exhorts us not to allow ourselves to “be burdened again by a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1).

Within Christ-less religion, structure, standards and procedures invariably take the focus away from Jesus so that humans begin to worship form rather than substance. Enslaved by Christ-less religions, like the Israelites who had been granted their freedom by God, humans quickly return to golden calves for their security and safety, rather than to rest in Christ. *Structure, standards and procedures* of Christ-less religion often morph into concrete, dogmatic, unquestioned legalisms, and those legalisms then become the focus of faith. Captives of Christ-less religion define their relationship with God based on attendance in a specific building, saying the right prayers, performing the correct rites and rituals and observing the right days, months and seasons (religion that Paul condemns as spiritual slavery in Galatians 4:10).

Jesus is our identity when we follow him—when we embrace God’s grace, Jesus is the heart and

core of our faith. On the other hand, the identity of prisoners and slaves of Christ-less religion is found and expressed in the golden calves of religion, which are cheap counterfeits—cheap trinkets—baloney, balderdash and double-talk.

Christ-less religion makes mountains out of mole-hills—Christ-less religion places a premium on ornamentation, appearances and baubles, so that, as Jesus said, the outside of the cup (either an individual, congregation or denomination) glistens and sparkles all the while greed and self indulgence grows like untouched, left-over contents of a coffee cup (see Matthew 23:25). Christ-less Christianity appropriates the name of Jesus Christ and identifies itself more with the power of its hierarchy and its rules and regulations and less by the content of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christ-less religion is all about form and appearance, rather than the substance and inner life of Jesus Christ.

*Religio* is attractive and it works because, as noted in our initial quotation from C.S. Lewis, “a familiar captivity is frequently more desirable than an unfamiliar freedom.” When the focus turns from Jesus toward *religio*—like that golden calf Aaron made for the nation of Israel, Christ-less religion makes its own golden calves to bind (*religio*) people under its institutional controls and authorities.

Many find themselves in bondage by *religio*—in captivity to the way they have always done something—always prayed, always studied the Bible, always “attended” a brick-and-mortar church and “always” performed cherished ceremonies and rituals. They are in bondage to wrong-headed notions of who God is and what he is like. I love the following story, which illustrates how easy it is to assume God is in the hip pocket of a particular church/denomination.

A Pentecostal Christian was once invited by his friend to attend a staid Presbyterian church, where the services resembled a quiet library. The Pentecostal man was used to exuberant services at his church, which resembled an enthusiastic crowd at a basketball game. So when the Presbyterian pastor made a particularly inspiring point in his sermon, the Pentecostal man yelled out “Praise the Lord!”

This passion troubled the solemn Presbyterian congregants. When the high-spirited visitor continued to voice his agreement with compelling statements made from the pulpit by yelling out “A-men” and “Hallelujah,” the Clerk of the Session (like a deacon in less severe and liturgical churches) came down the aisle and whispered to him, “You have to keep quiet! The pastor is right in the middle of his sermon.”

The Pentecostal man responded, “Keep quiet? How can I do that? I’ve been given the Holy Spirit!”

The Clerk of the Session said, “Well, you didn’t get it in this church.”

Our identity as Christ-followers is not primarily because we are members of an earthly religious institution—our identity in and with Jesus is directly related to his incarnation. He is for us and with us—the Son of God, God of very God, of the same substance of the Father, crucified for us and raised from the dead for us. He and he alone is our faith, our peace and our rest.

Religion-less Christianity is all about *faith alone, grace alone and Christ alone*—ALL JESUS ALL THE TIME! Jesus Christ is the head of his universal body—all who believe him, trust him, live by his faith in and through the grace of God (whether we are members of an institutional church or not) are part of his body.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is a **thunderbolt from heaven** (to use one of Luther’s phrases)

against all religious programs, prohibitions, priests, propaganda, prescriptions, procedures and performances (ran out of “p” words—feel free to suggest others!).

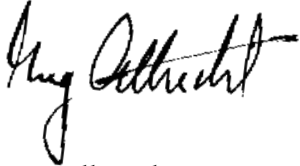
Grace and peace are given to us by the grace of God, a grace which itself invests us with divine faith, that we might trust and be assured of our relationship with God, against all religious attempts to dislodge or disorient us. The good news is that God has come to be one of us, with us, and he has done for us what we can never do for ourselves. The good news is that the righteousness of Jesus has been given and applied to us by the grace of God, who has qualified and rescued us and brought us “into the kingdom of the Son he loves” (Colossians 1:12-13).

If every church building on earth were destroyed, if every Bible were confiscated, if no professional ministry or priesthood were able to officiate at baptisms, catechisms, weddings and funerals, if no pastors or priests could deliver sermons—Jesus would still be here. The kingdom of heaven exists, grows and thrives because of the King of the kingdom. Even if all that we visibly associate as being “the church” suddenly ceased to exist, the universal, invisible body of Christ would still be alive and growing on planet earth.

As Christ-followers our responsibility is to point toward the cross of Christ. Our job is to help bulldoze all religious walls that divide and separate us from Jesus. Our job is to call big business religion into question and to accountability. Our job is to insist that always and forever Jesus is at center stage, in the spotlight, for Jesus alone is our foundation and our core. God “does not live in temples made by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything” (Acts 17:24-25). By God’s grace, we are centered in Jesus... “in him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

Thank you for all of your prayers and your donations to help us proclaim this much-needed message to so many who are in the grip of Christ-less religion—until next time, may you ever grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Your brother in him and because of him,



Greg Albrecht,  
President, Plain Truth Ministries

P.S. Here’s an encouraging note of thanks from someone who is being blessed by the efforts of PTM/CWR. Thank you for so willingly being on our team and so generously supporting this life-changing ministry through your continued prayers and offerings!

*You are a spiritual lifeline—I can’t tell you in just a few words about all the hard knocks my family and I have experienced “in the name of God.” This ministry is healing, refreshing and amazing. Thank you again and again!*  
—United Kingdom

## CWR/PTM Prayer List—June 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 for my sister who has Parkinson's disease and my cousin who has lung cancer.—Oregon*

*Please pray for my wife who has been suffering with painful headaches for many years.—New Hampshire*

*I have Parkinson's disease and I fall often. Please pray that I don't sustain broken bones or head injuries.—Virginia*

*Please pray for my daughter who is suffering with depression.—Tennessee*

*We have fallen into hard times. Please pray for us and our family.—Nebraska*

*Please pray for my sister-in-law who is very sick and on life support.—Ohio*

*I just broke my lower right leg and I request your prayers for healing and comfort.—North Dakota*

*My mother has a spot on her lung and suffers from severe arthritis and my sister has heart conditions.—Tennessee*

*Please pray about our farm situation. The price for grain we need to sell at harvest is unbelievable.—Kansas*

*I am requesting prayers for my health problems and that I can find a good apartment to live in.—Georgia*

*Please pray for healing of heart palpitations and that my spine will become normal with no more arthritis.—Florida*

*Please pray for my sister-in-law who is going through a very difficult divorce. Her husband is manipulative, aggressive, intimidating and harassing.—New York*

*Please pray for my husband of 58 years who is suffering from anemia, pneumonia and dementia.—Kentucky*

*Please pray for my brother who has an infection in his left arm. He could lose the only good arm that he has because he is paralyzed in his right arm.—West Virginia*

*Please pray for unity and love as well as salvation for my entire family.—Texas*

*Will you please pray for my sister who suffers from pain in her back? Thank you.—Minnesota*

*I cannot grasp anything with my left hand—my fingers have no strength. Please keep me in your prayers.—Florida*

*I would greatly appreciate prayers for my son and his wife—that there can be forgiveness on the part of each of them and hopefully reconciliation.—Oklahoma*

*Please add me to your prayer list. I have Mesothelioma (lung cancer caused by asbestos).—Indiana*

*Please pray that I won't suffer any more painful headaches. Dental issues may be the cause.—Wisconsin*

*I ask for your continuing prayers for my wife who is being treated for lung cancer.—New York*

*Please pray for my sister who is suffering from cancer of the blood vessels.—Ohio*

*Please pray for my son-in-law who had colon cancer surgery.—Kentucky*

*Please pray for my wife who suffers from anxiety attacks, fibromyalgia and spinal problems.—Tennessee*

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.