



January 2018

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

On or just before January 1, fresh calendars are opened with almost as much anticipation as unwrapping a Christmas present. We page through a new calendar, admiring its twelve uncluttered months and 365 unplanned days. And we experience the liberation of setting aside the calendar for the year that has just ended, with all of the days and events we are all too happy to put behind us. The New Year is a time of a **new beginning and a fresh start**.

Remember your school days? For students, each new school year offers new challenges, new experiences and new opportunities—new teachers, friends, classes and textbooks. School life is a continually unfolding new frontier—for that matter, no matter what your age might be and what challenges you battle and confront, **life is always an unfolding new frontier**. Fresh starts are woven into the fabric of our lives.

Jesus is always and forever on our journey with us—when we stumble and fall, as we will invariably do, he is always there, extending his hand, always offering us a new beginning and a fresh start. He is always embracing and helping us as we continue to move forward with him. He is our focus—our strength—our all in all. *“For in him we live and move and have our being”* (Acts 17:28).

For Christ-followers, *life in Christ is a journey, not a guided tour*. **We are not seated** on a luxurious tour bus looking out the windows as Jesus, our tour guide, tells us what is happening outside of the bus. **We are walking** with Jesus. Walking with Jesus means we are on a path toward something. We have a goal, and *we are moving forward*. Jesus is the path and the road upon which we walk.

Jesus rescued us from the darkness that once enveloped us so that now we walk in and with him—in his Light. He is our Energy and our Inspiration. He is our Destination. He is the Path. He is our ALL IN ALL.

Of course, physical surroundings and external circumstances change each New Year on *The Jesus Way*. Each New Year some of our fellow pilgrims on *The Jesus Way* are still with us, while other former fellow travelers have passed into eternity. We all change—we age—we grow weary—but **one thing never changes**. Jesus is always and forever with us—he remains—always and forever.

Each New Year is an opportune time to take stock of our life in and with Jesus. This is a great time to remember that *“we run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus...”* (Hebrews 12:2). As a New Year begins we are well served to remember Jesus’ invitation to *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28).

Here’s a New Year’s question we can ask (call it a resolution if you wish): Am I truly resting in Christ? Am I fully persuaded that I can trust God and fully embracing his grace?

It is so easy to be burdened with anxieties and stress. The sheer amount of pressure and stress and the accelerating pace of change can be breathtaking and bewildering. It is so easy to be sucked into the “hurry up and get where you need to be going” syndrome that surrounds and defines life in

North America. You may remember some of the lyrics from “I’m In A Hurry (And Don’t Know Why)” by Alabama:

*I’m in a hurry to get things done
Oh I rush and rush until life’s no fun
All I really gotta do is live and die
But I’m in a hurry and don’t know why.*

My family moved to Southern California in 1956 when I was a young boy of nine years-of-age. For me, moving from a small town in southeast Texas to Southern California was almost like moving to another country.

So much was different. One of the differences was the pace of life in general, accented and illustrated by what they called freeways in California. Freeways were (and are) non-stop—no traffic signals or stop signs.

I remember the 1956 California freeways as busy, but I also remember a distinct time of day called rush “hour.” **Rush “hour”** was literally defined as one hour in the morning before 8:00 am (or 9:00 am in some cases) and then, in the afternoon, the hour just following the time the work day ended—normally 5-6 pm.

Within a few years, when I reached my teenage years, **rush “hour”** had expanded to at least two hours at the beginning and ending of each day. Over the last five decades **“rush hour”** on Southern California freeways has gradually expanded, inexorably slowing down and suffocating travel, so that now it seems **“rush hour”** is all the time—perhaps with the exception of 1-4 am.

This New Year is an opportunity for each of us to consider whether we have become caught up in either a physical or spiritual **“rush hour”**—or both! This New Year is a superb time to take stock and ask ourselves if we are too busy to savor the grace of resting in Christ.

We might ask what forces or desires or motivations are driving us live our lives frantically—who or what is trying to persuade us that busier and faster is better? **Remember, Jesus invites us to rest in him, not rush with him!**

Resting in Christ, as a Christ-follower, means of course following him, in the direction he takes us and the pace he chooses. If we are in a rush and pass him, then we are not following him but instead we are blazing the trail, effectively telling him to hurry up and follow us!

Take a deep breath—pause for a moment—take a break from any **“rush hour”** you might be caught up in. Disengage for a moment and consider who you are and where you are going. We are Christ-followers. We are God’s own children. And we are, as his children, always and at once a new creation. God is not finished with us—he is working on us, in us and through us, so that *“though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day”* (2 Corinthians 4:16). God washes us, day by day, of all the dirt and debris that we pick up along the way.

We are who we are, in Christ. Our identity is not self-proclaimed nor is it earned or deserved by our performance. We are God’s very own children, *“born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God”* (John 1:13). All that we are and all that we are becoming is by and through the grace of God, lived in us by the life of our risen Lord.

Each New Year fresh challenges and new concerns will become part of the landscape through which we will move forward, following Jesus. **As we move forward we are confronted with changes. Changes**

become more difficult as we age—it seems that time and the speed of change is speeding up—ever more reason to rest in Christ and give him your cares.

In his book, *The Pendulum Years: Britain and the Sixties*, Bernard Levin described the incredible changes that happened in the United Kingdom during the decade of the 1960's. "Fashions changed, changed again, changed faster and still faster: fashions in politics, political style, in causes, in music, in popular culture, in myths, in education, in beauty, in heroes and idols, in attitudes, in response, in work, in love and friendship, in food, in newspapers, in entertainment... What had lasted a generation now lasted a year, what had lasted a year lasted a month, a week, a day" (my emphasis).

In his twilight years, George Keenan (1904-2005), an American diplomat and historian, observed: "A life is too long a span today for the pace of change. If a man lives more than half a century, his familiar world, the world of his youth fails him like a horse dying under its rider, and he finds himself dealing with a new one which is not really his... We old people are guests of this age, permitted to haunt its strange and sometimes terrifying halls—in a way part of its life, like the guests in a summer hotel, yet in a similar way detached from it...we shall be leaving it; the personnel who will remain are its youth" (my emphasis).

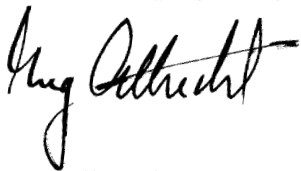
Always and forever, as we make our fresh start, as we put one foot in front of the other, walking with Jesus day by day, Jesus is with us. He is assisting us as we experience changes, and many of the changes as we age are not altogether pleasant!

But with Jesus we can and we will meet the bewildering changes and the unwelcome challenges of a New Year—as we rest in him and embrace the grace of God.

Linus, one of the characters in the ever popular Peanuts comic strip, once shared this wisdom: "Life is like a ten-speed bicycle. Most of us have gears we have never used." So if this finds you shifting some gears, make sure you focus on Jesus, make sure you are resting in him and embracing the grace of God!

Together we will move forward in this New Year!

Your fellow pilgrim, your brother in Christ as together we begin 2018,



Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

P.S. We share this note of thanks from someone who is being blessed by the ministry of CWR/PTM which you help to provide with your prayers and financial support.

We appreciate so much your love for Jesus and others, your heartfelt way of expressing the truth of God's powerful love and grace. We pray that God will continue to bless everyone involved with CWR/PTM.—British Columbia, Canada

CWR/PTM Prayer List—January 2018

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 ask God to heal my cataracts and glaucoma that I have in both eyes.—New York

Please pray for the healing of my lower back as my left leg is numb around the shin area.—Wisconsin

Pray for healing of physical and emotional abuses from family domestic violence.—Georgia

Please pray for me as I'm on dialysis three times a week. It is very stressful and sometimes painful.—Tennessee

Pray for a friend who is a single mother to find a good job so she can support herself and her teenage son.—Maryland

Pray for my daughter who is recovering from substance abuse and my grandchildren who are still using drugs.—Kentucky

Please pray for me that God will take away this spirit of fear from me. I'm suffering with bouts of depression.—Texas

I'm requesting your prayers for the healing of my foot and ankle. I fell and chipped a small bone there.—Minnesota

Please pray for the condition of my right eye which requires corrective surgery.—Louisiana

Please pray that all my aches and pains diminish and that my family be in good health.—Arizona

Please pray for children in a most heart-breaking situation where an adult, who says he's Christian, is causing much harm.

Please pray for God's protection from harm—physical, emotional and other.—British Columbia, Canada

Please pray that God will establish His kingdom on earth in His perfect and optimum way and time.—New York

Please pray for me to know how to use godly wisdom in working with my husband on his problems.—Mississippi

Please pray that God will intervene that I don't go completely blind. My eyesight has really diminished.—Nevada

Please pray for growth in my self-employment as an accountant and tax professional.—Louisiana

Please pray for my niece's husband who was diagnosed with cancer.—Ohio

Prayers are needed for my neighbors in the next town who experienced a tornado. Thankfully no one was killed, but unfortunately some suffered damage to their homes and cars.—Texas

Please pray for my wife who has problems with her heart and also her lungs.—Kentucky

Please pray for my wife, as she has terminal cancer.—Minnesota

Please pray for my son, age 34, who is currently in jail.—Louisiana

Please pray for me—I'm 78 years old and have terrible memory problems.—Virginia

Please pray for my grandson. Cancer has reoccurred and he starts three rounds of chemo within a few days.—Tennessee

We adopted siblings from Bulgaria and this comes with many challenges. Please keep us in your prayers.—South Dakota

My husband is suffering from complications from brain tumors. I have heart disease and infections. Please pray.—Texas

Please pray for my daughter who is in constant pain from fibromyalgia and migraines.—Arizona

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.