



February 2018

Dear CWR/PTM Friends and Partners,

The nature of God—who he is, and how he is—is without doubt the most misunderstood topic within all of Christendom. *If God is filled with wrath and retribution, then any number of Christ-less teachings and practices make sense—but God IS NOT wrath. God IS love.*

Love is the one word definition of God. God is love, he is not filled with wrath, therefore:

- 1) God the Father was not looking for payback from God the Son on the cross;
- 2) There is no such thing as eternal conscious torment in hell;
- 3) God is not mad at you and me, and
- 4) God does not expect us to do the impossible, which would be to earn and deserve his love.

This is the month when Valentine's Day is celebrated—and it is the month when Christians around the world focus on the life of Jesus, who came to serve and give himself for us. Let us turn our attention to love—most specifically *let us turn our attention to God's love*, an incredible gift given to us by his grace.

One of the many shocks of married life is when a husband or wife (hopefully both arrive at the conclusion at about the same time) discover that most of what they knew about love when they were first married was erroneous and flawed.

Young people are indoctrinated, from movies to music, to believe in love as a shallow, empty, short-lived emotion based on feelings alone—when and if they hear about the enduring, never-ending love of God that flows like an unending river, they have been subtly trained to believe that such a love is silly, illogical and impractical.

Young *people are taught* (and let's not leave older folks out—they are taught the same concepts, and sadly, age does not always overcome youthful delusions) *that love can be fallen into and fallen out of.* We are taught that love is measured by our own happiness—while we are taught to love and serve others, **most of all we are taught to love me, myself and I.**

But God's love is not "You make me happy, you make me feel good, you give me what I want... therefore I love you." That's not loving someone else—**that's you loving you.** God's love is not based on making us happy (or us making him happy)—it's not based on feelings—it's not based on satiating human senses. God's love is not one big romantic, emotional trip with candles being lit, violins playing and rose petals being thrown into the wind.

God's love says: "*I've seen the ugly side of you and I'm not going anywhere. I know all there is to know about you and I still love you anyway.*"

God's love says: "*I am going to love you forever—you can't make me stop loving you.*"

God's love says: "*Nothing you can do, positively or negatively, can make me love you more or less than I already do. My love does not depend on what you do or fail to do.*"

The kind of love that a man and woman have for each other that is pumped into our brains and hearts by our society, by our media and our music, and yes, even by many of our churches in terms of God's love for us—is **conditional love**. We have been brainwashed into believing we are loved as long as we can be who and what the object of our "love" want us to be. That's conditional love—and it's absolutely the opposite of the love taught in the Bible.

Two humorous examples come to mind that unmask the short-lived, self-centered feelings/needs/desires that masquerade as "true" love in our culture:

1) A comic strip depicts a soldier reading a letter from the girl he left behind. She wrote: "Dear John, As you sit out there in your foxhole in the desert, trying to stay alive, fighting a life or death battle every day, my heart goes out to you...." The next and final frame of the comic strip displays the remaining part of that sentence: "...the rest of me goes to Jimmy's Country and Western Dance every Saturday night."

2) A woman received this letter from her former fiance who dumped her, ending their engagement on the very day of their wedding:

"Dear Lisa, No words can express the sorrow and unhappiness I have caused myself (and of course you as well) with my stupid decision to end our engagement—on the day we were to be married. Over the last six months since then I have cried myself to sleep every night about my really dumb decision. Please say you will take me back. Please forgive me. I love you! I love you!

Yours forever, Mark

P.S. Congratulations! I heard you won the lottery last week."

Many of the Old Testament prophets not only delivered a prophetic message, they also acted out, like an actor on a stage, the message God directed them to deliver and proclaim. God assigned Hosea the role of marrying a woman who had been a prostitute.

At some point in their marriage, Gomer, Hosea's wife, left him and their three children—degrading herself and humiliating her husband by returning to her profession of selling her body. When Gomer's depraved life left her diseased, wasting away and barely alive she was offered for sale at a slave auction. God told Hosea to go and buy back his former wife.

When the auctioneer shouted "What am I offered for this woman named Gomer?" there was an awkward silence. No one wanted this bedraggled, sickly, used and abused woman cowering before them on the auction block.

And remember, while Gomer had her own set of inherited dysfunctions, as we all do, we cannot cast Gomer as a complete victim.

She may have been what today is called a "sex addict"—but whatever her motivation or obsession, the Bible indicates that Gomer made a decision to reject hearth and home—she walked away from being a wife and a mother to walk on the wild side.

When Hosea's voice booms out "I will buy her" it is not the voice of Hosea we hear, it is the voice of our loving, gracious and forever forgiving heavenly Father. This entire drama was all about the no-matter-what love of God—a love offered and given to us in-spite-of the way we have behaved—in-spite-of how we have turned our back on him.

God doesn't love us because of our perfection. He doesn't love us because of all the ways we make him happy and how we provide for him. God loves us anyway.

Jesus didn't show up at our slave auction because we deserved his love—he didn't show up because we had earned the right for him to shower us with his love. He didn't show up because of our dazzling beauty—he bought us with his precious blood when we were dirty, abused and abandoned, when nobody else wanted us.

As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem (Luke 9:51).

Jesus knew what was waiting for him in Jerusalem, but *he resolutely set out for Jerusalem* anyway. He did so because of the love of God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) for ALL humanity. He went to his Cross because of love.

God's love for you and me is resolute, relentless, unwavering and unshakable. God's love for you and me is not subject to feelings or momentary flights of fancy. God's love is not based on how well we measure up. God's love is a rock. *Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.*

God loves us, always and forever, no matter what—that's what Jesus showed on his Cross in Jerusalem. During this time of the year we resolutely set out for Jerusalem with Jesus as we pick up our cross and follow him.

During this time of the year we are reminded of his suffering and his sacrificial love—reminded and refreshed with and about the matchless and supreme love of God, showered upon us by his grace.

With thanksgiving for you—with love for you—as my fellow Partners and Friends in this ministry, as my brothers and sisters in Christ,



Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

P.S. Thank you for your continued prayers and financial support of CWR/PTM. Here are a few letters from folks who are being blessed by the resources *you help to provide* through this ministry.

The Plain Truth and CWR magazines and your monthly letters help me greatly. I pray God will continue to bless everyone involved with CWR/PTM.—New York

I pray that God continues to bless PTM/CWR and its members. Thank you for showing us who Jesus really is and that He is with us in everything we do and say.—West Virginia

Thank you for all the resources that PTM/CWR sends—they are very encouraging to me.—Tennessee

CWR/PTM Prayer List—February 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 pray for my wife that her cancer continues to decline. Thank God, she has been improving daily.—New York

Thanks for the monthly prayer list; keep it coming. And thanks for all the work you do; it's such a blessing.—Ontario, Canada

Please pray for my weak eyes and my ears and also for my husband who lives in a rest home.—Texas

Please pray that I will have more forgiveness and faith.—New Jersey

Prayer for my continued faith in Jesus Christ and my spiritual growth.—Louisiana

Thank you for your comfort, ministry and prayers following my wife's death.—California

Thank you for reaching out for the lost souls who are trapped in religion and looking for the real God.—Washington

I need prayers as I'm suffering from acute depression and PTSD. This is a very difficult time in my life.—Tennessee

Please pray for my mother, who is distraught from the passing of my father and the passing of her mother.—Arizona

Thank you for spreading the love of God and Jesus. I pray God will continue to bless PTM/CWR.—Massachusetts

Pray for the grace and strength to overcome my hoarding.—New York

Please pray that I can find a part-time job and for my sister-in-law, who has health problems.—Texas

PTM is always there for me. During my grief for my father's passing you reached out. You are an answer to prayer.—Rhode Island

Thanks for your prayers for my 7-year-old great granddaughter. Her condition is not getting worse.—Arkansas

I'm doing better but have a way to go before my health is fully restored. Please keep me in your prayers.—Illinois

Please pray that I may attain the goals God has created for me to walk in and to do it joyfully.—Oklahoma

Please pray for my health issues—muscular pain in my left shoulder and pain from a kidney stone.—Arizona

I will be having heart surgery soon. Your prayers are much appreciated.—Nevada

Please pray for a good friend who just lost his wife from Alzheimer's disease.—Texas

Please pray that my back, hip and leg pain be healed and also pray for my husband who is a diabetic.—Massachusetts

Please pray that my wife's knee surgery goes well and that she has a quick recovery.—Florida

Please pray for all of us on Social Security, for an increase in monthly checks. It would greatly bless us all.—Kentucky

Prayers for the entire body of Christ and also for the members of our local congregation.—Mississippi

Please pray for me to be able to find a good apartment soon where the rent is based on my income.—Georgia

Pray for healing of my right eye which requires surgery, and my right hip which requires a third hip replacement.—Louisiana

Please pray for my son to get the job he is requesting in construction. Thank you!—California

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.