

# PLAIN TRUTH®

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Who We Are...



Where We Are Going

By Greg Albrecht

**C**WR/PTM is a diverse team—our diversity provides strength and cohesiveness, by the grace of God. We each play individual roles, yet we are one team.

The body of Christ is one, yet composed of many individual members. We realize that teamwork involves the joint and collective efforts of a like-minded group who subordinate some of their own interests in favor of the greater good of the team. **Teamwork** is the concerted and singularly focused efforts of individuals who coordinate their work toward their common, targeted objective.

As Friends and Partners of

CWR/PTM, we are part of the body of Christ. Some of us attend brick-and-mortar churches and are members of specific denominations ...some of us do not attend any building on a regular basis and we are not affiliated with any denomination. Regardless of our earthly affiliations or lack thereof, we are all brothers and sisters in Christ, working together as **teammates** on the CWR/PTM team.

As individual members of the CWR/PTM team:

1) We know our collective purpose. Our goal is to serve others in the name of Jesus. We are service-driven. Our goal is to pass on his grace, love and mercy to others, in

the same way that it has been given to us.

We come together in the worldwide media ministry of CWR/PTM so that **we may do more together than any one of us could do alone**. We know that God's grace was not given to us so that we could tuck it away in a closet or bury it in a hole in our backyard. God's grace was given to us so that we might in turn give it to others, and that is our purpose as a media ministry. **We pass on what God has already given to us.**

Together we serve—we reach out to those who have been spiritually abused and abandoned.

We minister to those who are spiritually sick and blind, spiritually homeless, spiritually naked and famished. We minister to those who are spiritual prisoners. This is our vision—**our high honor and privilege—to serve others in great need, for we ourselves have been forgiven, loved, nourished and embraced by Jesus.**

2) We each have a role and a task. We know what we can do individually to contribute and help achieve our collective purpose. **As members of the team**, we “play our positions” in the roles where we have been placed. We do what we can where we are for the good of **our team**.

We are committed to one another and **our team**—most of all, we are committed to the Captain of our



## Chaos or Community?

**M**artin Luther King Jr. set out to redeem the soul of America from the triple evils of racism, war and poverty. MLK Jr. loved Isaiah 40:4-5:

*Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind will see it.*

*Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (published in 1967), was the fourth and last book written by Martin Luther King Jr. before his assassination in 1968.

In *Chaos or Community?* Dr. King pleaded for an end to violence, because violence always gives birth to the chaos of more violence—he raised our sights beyond the chaos that always results when violence and hatred spawns retribution and retaliation and he encouraged community.

This question asked by MLK Jr. rings true today, over 50 years later. It rings true in the middle of the deep and fractured racial chaos in our nation and in our world today. It rings true in the middle of our bitter, hostile, chaotic political divides...it rings true as we see the chaos of hatred and animosity that flourishes in the toxic soil of our media, our schools, our government and yes, in many of our churches.

When hatred and violence are examined over the long run of history, we discover religion has inflicted hatred and violence as well as being victimized by warfare and violence.

Jesus said that all who pick up the sword and live by violence will eventually die by the sword. Jesus insisted that his followers return

good for evil, that they turn the other cheek rather than repay violence with violence. Jesus taught his followers to pray for their enemies.

The root problem with religion is that people, in the name of God, turn their backs on him, busying themselves in efforts to recreate God in their own image. Within the religion that passes as Christianity many people “go to church” to hear and participate in something they already believe in. They reject Jesus, and the grace and mercy of God because all they want to do is be assured that all they believe and practice is in concert with God’s will.

Violence all over the world is a continuing and unceasing narrative. We see nation against nation, religion against religion, ism against ism...based in violence or the threat of violence. It all leads to *chaos, not community*.

We see unspeakable barbarism and brutality—much of it in the name of God. And once again, Christ-less religion is promoting and producing *chaos, not community*.

In *Chaos or Community?* Dr. King said:

*“The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it.*

*Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence you may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate.*

*In fact, violence merely increases hate.... Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars...*

*Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.”*

We live in the midst of a world that might be described as a seething cauldron, a boiling pot of hatred—we see dispassionate indifference about the plight of the young, the old, the disadvantaged, the alienated, the weak and the abused.

Multinational corporations pay their top executives hundreds of millions of dollars in annual salaries and benefits while the poor must dumpster dive for their next meal.

We live in a world where an obsession for pleasure addicts people via drugs and alcohol. The relentless quest for pleasure means a huge percentage of our youth are discarded and neglected so that they live aimless lives, amused with their games and devices, with instant gratification and quick thrills as their sole goal in life.

The great emptiness in North America, and in fact all the Western world today is more than a valley—it is a dark, bottomless pit dug by **racism, warfare and poverty**.

Our passionate obsessions, addictions, violence and lust for gratification of all our senses produces a loss of meaning—a loss of what it means to care and love and reach out to others. Jesus alone can restore and redeem us so that we do love one another and find spiritual meaning and significance in him. □

—Greg Albrecht

*Join us for the complete message of “Chaos or Community?” at the audio teaching ministry of Christianity Without the Religion, the week of January 20, 2019.*

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salvation, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We work in harmony in Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and God's commitment to us is the glue that holds us together.

**By God's grace we are imbued, empowered and enabled to have the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus:**

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others (Philippians 2:3-4).*

3) We will never give up. We will tenaciously persevere toward our goal. We are highly motivated—so highly that our motivation is from “on high.” We are driven and empowered and enabled by Jesus, our risen Lord, who lives within us. In Christ we will accomplish our objective come hell or high water.

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written, “For your sake we face death all day long: we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us (Romans 8:35-37).*

**All good teams sacrifice—as a unit and as individuals. We are self-sacrificial in our giving—we are generous and we are selfless.**

4) Our past mistakes, errors, fumbles and miscues are behind us. Only one thing matters—what we are doing now and tomorrow. Because Jesus encourages us, we have courage. **We are given Christ-centered courage so that we might stand with him and stand together during difficult and lonely times.**

5) Our focus is on Jesus Christ. He is our core, he is our center—he is our all in all. **Without Jesus we are nothing. With him we are everything.**

*Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:13-14).*



### **A Demeaning and Cynical Accusation of Our Team**

Some accuse ministries and churches of “only” asking supporters to “pray and pay.” While there is no doubt that prayer and financial support is important, it is not the only role we have as we serve on **the team of CWR/PTM.**

Can you imagine someone accusing a stay-at-home mother, not working outside the house, of “only” being a mother, without honoring her work in cooking, cleaning, nurturing, encouraging and teaching her children? **Only** being a mother?

Just as it completely devalues a stay-at-home mother by saying she has little to do, it minimizes and makes light of all the teammates, Friends and Partners in the ongoing ministry of CWR/PTM, by saying they “only pray and pay.”

**Only** praying and paying? Can you imagine someone making fun of the self-sacrifice of a soldier or anyone involved in law enforcement by accusing them of being impressed with “just” being a soldier, policeman or policewoman for the sheer vanity of wearing a uniform? What about the service, the protection and the laying down of one's life? When we serve in the name of Jesus, as valuable and self-sacrificing **teammates on the CWR/PTM team**, we are deeply involved and committed to Jesus, far beyond “only” praying and paying.

Prayer is vitally important in all of its facets and dimensions. One part of our prayer life, **as team members of CWR/PTM**, is prayer for the continuing work of our collective ministry. We pray for all those we serve, all those whose lives are being changed and positively uplifted, in and with and toward Jesus Christ.

And yes, we pray that adequate and necessary financial resources are available enabling the work of Plain Truth Ministries to continue, grow and flourish. So yes, our financial generosity (our paying if you like) is vitally important as well.

**Pray** and **pay** are “p” words—there are many other words that begin with the letter “p” that help describe how we yield to Jesus Christ in all facets of our lives. There are so many other ways, beyond *praying* and *paying*, in which we are involved in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We **participate** actively in the gospel, by discussing our beliefs and in passing on the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to friends and family. We **proclaim** the gospel in all that we say and do—we proclaim the gospel by reflecting the Light of the world, Jesus Christ, who shines his light within us that we might reflect it to others. We **persevere** in our role as team members. We never give up. There is no “quit” in our vocabulary.

## Who We Are

**Who** are we? We are old and young...we are male and female, black, white, brown and mixed.

**Where** are we? Members of **our team** live around this world, though most of us are located in North America. We live in apartments, duplexes and private homes. We live in assisted care facilities. Some of us are homeless and live in cars or trucks.

We are retired and semi-retired. We are widows and widowers. Some members of our team are physically well while others suffer on a daily basis with maladies, sickness and disease.

Some members of **our team** work in factories; others work in offices. Some work on farms, some work in retail establishments.

We have doctors, dentists and lawyers **on our team**—we have teachers and professors and students—we have artists and musicians. We have electricians and plumbers. We have janitors and gardeners and cooks and chefs and mechanics and construction workers.

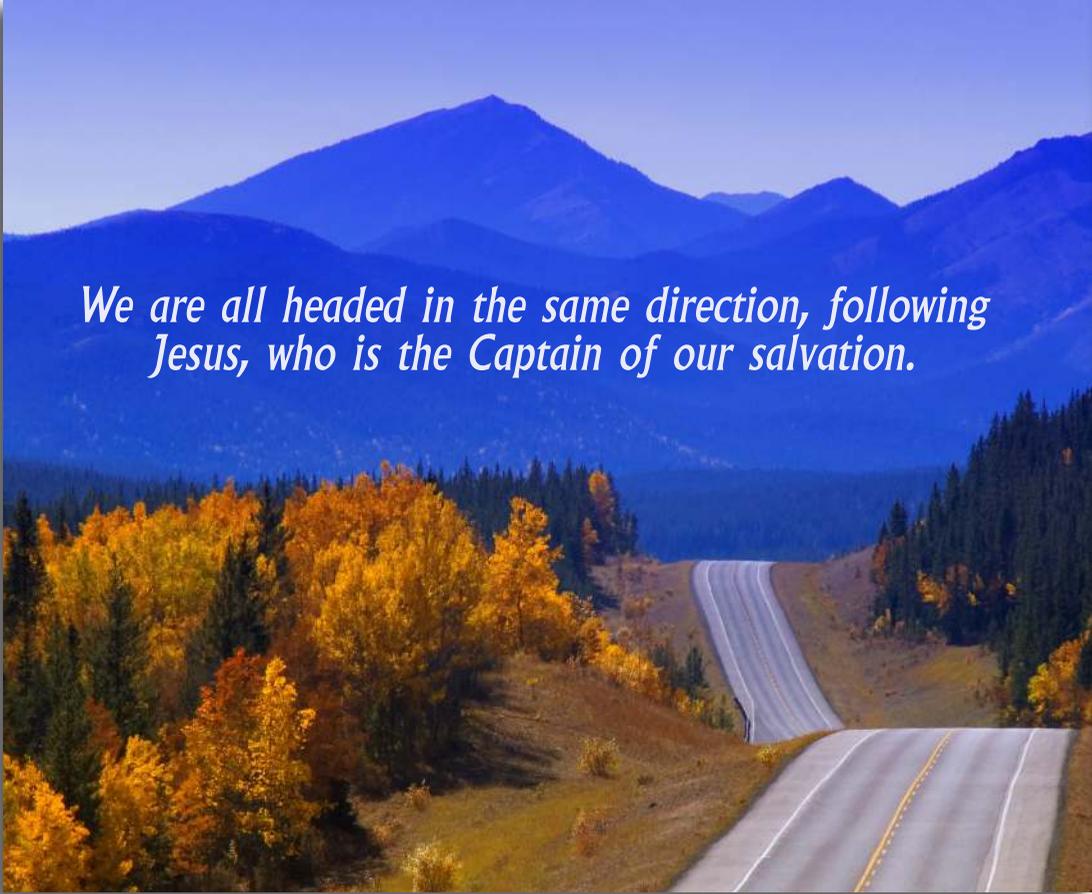
Some of **our team** serve in harm's way in the military and others serve as police officers and a few serve in select law enforcement capacities, such as the FBI.

We have airline pilots, retired and active, and we have long haul truck drivers, retired and active. We have pastors and priests and counselors and social workers **on our team**. We have elected officials **on our team**. **And most of all, YOU are on our team!**

## Our 2019 Pep Talk

As the player-coach of **our PTM team**, here's my locker room motivational talk, encouraging and inspiring us all before we charge out the door, headed for the field, to engage in the our collective work in this New Year of 2019:

*You and I are part of a special team. We have each made a commitment to do what we can on this team, and we are all united as one. As a team we*



*We are all headed in the same direction, following Jesus, who is the Captain of our salvation.*

*work together. Our ministry is accomplished by a team, and each one of you is a vital part of our team.*

*Don't excuse yourself from active involvement in our team because you think your role is not important. Don't start thinking that your contributions to this team are so small that they are meaningless. Don't underestimate what you mean to this team!*

*We need each and every one of you! We move forward as a team. We accomplish our goals and objectives as a team. **We are PTM.***

*We are all headed in the same direction, following Jesus, who is the Captain of our salvation. **We are PTM, and we are His.***

*We don't ask our teammates to do what we are capable of doing. We don't worry about how our teammates may not be doing their job or contributing their fair share.*

*We don't have time to bog down criticizing others and neither are we out to impress anyone with how great we are individually. **We are PTM.***

*We are all for one and one for all. **We are PTM.***

In the name of Jesus, thank you for your service. Thank you for being the hands and feet of Jesus in

this world. Thank you for reaching out through the many media ministries of CWR/PTM to serve so many around this world, in the name of Jesus.

And now finally, before we collectively take the field of 2019 together, before we face its challenges and adversities, I pray for you, with the apostle Paul:

*I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:16-19). □*

Serving with you, your brother in Christ, your teammate in him,



Greg Albrecht

# God Words

By Steve Brown

**H**enri Nouwen once wrote, “I am deeply convinced that the Christian leader of the future is called to be completely irrelevant and to stand in this world with nothing to offer but his or her own vulnerable self. The leaders of the future will be those who dare to claim their irrelevance in the contemporary world as a divine vocation.” I think I can do that.

The Apostle Paul made a powerful comment that I’m going to take a bit out of context. Evidently, one of the criticisms of Paul was that he was all talk. So Paul was angry and defending himself when he wrote, “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” (1 Corinthians 2:2-4).

I’ve been thinking of late about words in general and God words in particular. Those words are the words from which we create theology, doctrine and truth about

God. Words are also what we do when we defend, denounce and destroy in God’s name. Words—even God words—can often be irrelevant.

Jesus made a scary comment—especially for someone like me who talks all the time. “I tell you,” he said, “on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matthew 12:36-37). Why would he say something like that?

Paul said to the Ephesians “Let no one deceive you with empty words...” (Ephesians 5:6). People lie all the time about God. They do it for a variety of reasons...power, prestige, money, etc. If I can convince you, for example, that God is a monster and can make you feel guilty enough, I can take up a big collection and build an empire. That is fairly obvious.

But there’s more. Second, words are not reality but only point to reality. There is only one purpose for biblical doctrine and theology, and it’s not so we can know as much of it as possible in order to

impress others. The purpose of doctrine and theology is to point to Jesus. Insofar as words do that, they are good; and insofar as they don’t they are about as valuable as a “bag of chicken feed.” It’s what Jesus meant when he quoted Isaiah; “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me” (Matthew 15:8).

There is another reason for Jesus’ scary words about words. Third, words must become flesh or they don’t mean anything. Of course, John 1 is the perfect example when God not only talked about love but “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14) and loved us. Then you’ll remember what Jesus said of the Scribes and Pharisees, that the crowd should listen to what they said because they “sit on Moses’ seat, so practice and observe whatever they tell you” (Matthew 23:2-3).

Then in the rest of the chapter, Jesus says some very harsh things about the very people he had just said ought to be listened to. Why? Because their words didn’t reflect the reality of their deeds.

I fully believe that at the judgment seat of God when all

God's people stand before a righteous God he will have a lot to say about words. "You were all wrong," I suspect he will say, "and some of you were **really** wrong. But I've talked to my Son about you and he says you're covered. So welcome Home."

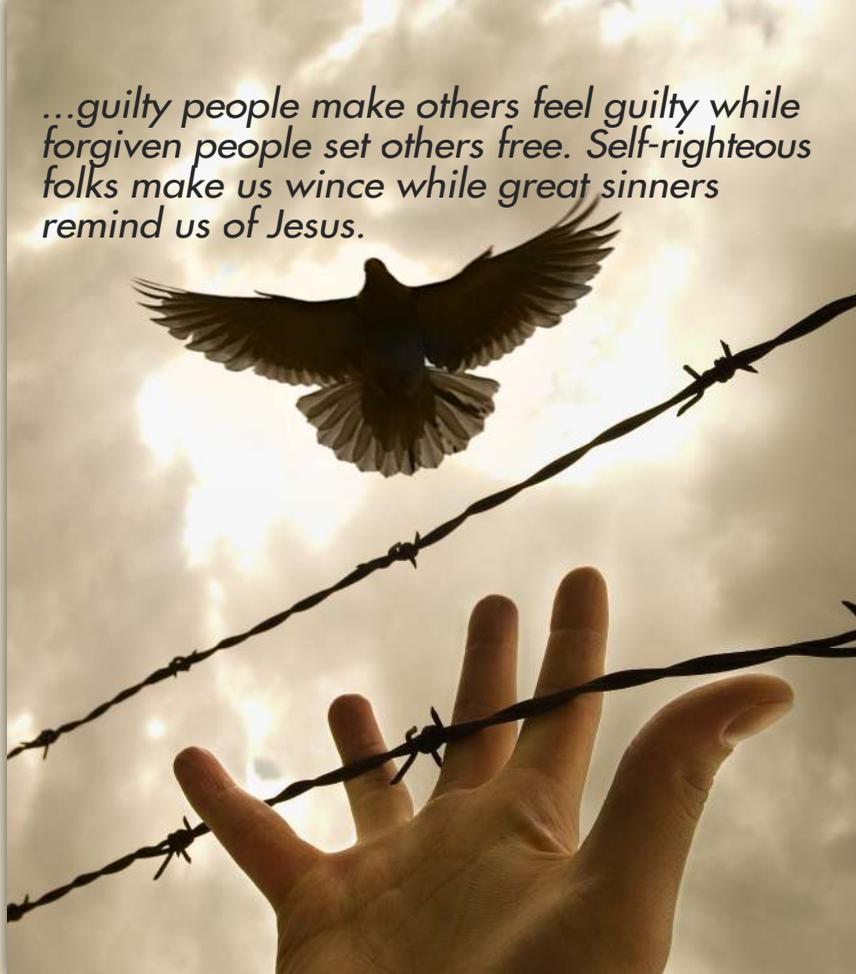
When our words reflect the "covering of Jesus" then those words are not ones that will judge us. They are words out of which we write a hymn of praise to God for the finished work of Christ. I'm not talking about "walking the talk" or being nice just to please Jesus.

Nobody has words that reflect their own goodness, purity and faithfulness. That's because nobody is that. I'm talking about the fact that loved people normally love more—guilty people make others feel guilty while forgiven people set others free.

Self-righteous folks make us wince while great sinners remind us of Jesus and our words reflect all of that. True Christianity is not just something you say—it's something you are. □

*Steve Brown is an author, professor and president of Key Life Network.*

*...guilty people make others feel guilty while forgiven people set others free. Self-righteous folks make us wince while great sinners remind us of Jesus.*



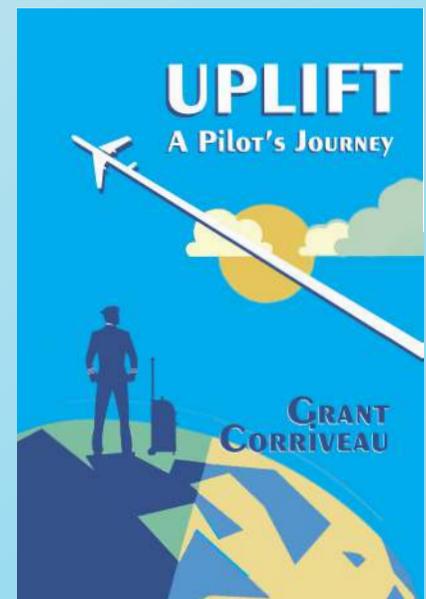
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## Undeserved Award

**T**housands of teachers in red T-shirts converged for the Raleigh Rally. We watched on the evening news. Try as we might, we couldn't spot daughter Laura, but we knew she was there. Excitement and enthusiasm defined the day—except for the dead seriousness of their cause. Most politicians—and not just in North Carolina—care more about corporate profits than education.

Laura, like teachers all over the country, receives a low salary in comparison to other professionals. And like her colleagues, she digs into her own pocket to purchase items needed in the classroom.

I write this while recovering from serious outpatient surgery. I'm glad my surgeon and anesthesiologist are well paid. And I can't imagine either of these two doctors having to purchase their own "tools of the trade."

Not that I'm suggesting that the teaching and medical professions are easy comparisons. If Laura has a bad day and inadvertently assigns the wrong homework, little harm is done. A doctor's comparable error can be catastrophic.

My surgeon has a sense of humor, putting me at ease before the anesthesiologist performs his task. But such is a small bonus alongside his surgical skills.

I think of Laura in that same way. An expert elementary teacher, her endearing sense of humor is an added bonus. She sparks laughter among her third graders and puts them at ease when they need it most. She's a clever mimic and a soprano soloist, and on occasion when the kids become too boisterous she will suddenly speak in another voice or sing out a few measures, startling them into silence.

They love her and respond well to her teaching, begging her at the end of the year to move up to the next grade with them.

But she always has certain ones who are behavioral challenges. This past school year "Danny" ranked high in this department.

He was the smallest boy in the class and he had a serious speech impediment—a

pronounced lisp. His tenacious spirit, however, didn't hold him back. He managed to elbow his way into the playground pack of third-grade boys who were impressed by his creative forms of misbehavior.

Throughout her many years of teaching, Laura has become an amateur child psychologist and she understood his need for having to prove his toughness or else be bullied.

Speech therapy had served him well. No more lisping—except when he became excited or was put on the spot. Danny was the cutest little kid in her class, and she loved him despite his penchant for mischief.

And though he hardly deserved a good behavior award, she chose him as student of the week for the last full week of school. All the other kids had gotten the recognition—some more than once. Now it was his turn. He was all smiles.

Hardly had the week begun, however, when true to form, he led a pack of lunchroom boys in a chair-tipping scuffle. Laura reprimanded those involved and took away their afternoon recess. Standard procedure.

But she called "Danny" aside. She told him how disappointed she was with him—especially for his misconduct right after having been given the student of the week award.

His shame was palpable. Tears began streaming down his face. He told her he was "so sorry to disappoint" her as only he could pronounce the words. And, of course, he addressed her with the proper Mrs.—her last name also an S-word. He begged her to take back the award because he didn't "deserve" to be "special."

Laura consoled him and insisted that she wouldn't be taking away his student-of-the-week designation. Still sniffing, he ended the exchange: I "swear" I "promise" I will be good.

Tender mercies for the little boy, tears of laughter for us as she in her inimitable way regaled us with the story. □

—Ruth Tucker



## Quotes & Connections



"I do not believe that any of us is good enough to buy a seat in heaven with the small coins of our virtue." —Lewis Smedes

"In the beginning the church was a fellowship of men and women centering on the living Christ. Then the church moved to Greece where it became a philosophy. Then it moved to Rome where it became an institution. Next, it moved to Europe where it became a culture. And, finally it came to America, where it became an enterprise." —Richard Halverson

"All religions are the same: religion is basically guilt, with different holidays." —Cathy Ladman

"To continue to eye God primarily in terms of laws, obligations and town ordinances represents a retreat to pre-Christian level of thought and a rejection of Jesus Christ and the total sufficiency of his redeeming work." —Brennan Manning

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