



May 2019

Dear CWR/PTM Friends and Partners,

His mother told the little four-year old boy he should learn to forgive those who *trespassed* against him. Her son had never heard the King James word “trespass”—but he realized *trespass* must be something someone did/does that is really bad. So he translated the word “trespass” into one of the worst things he had been taught not to do. A few days later, when he was having dinner with his parents, his mother asked him what he had learned about forgiveness. The little boy summarized what he knew about forgiveness so far: “God wants us to forgive those who pass gas (his translation of *trespass*) on us.”

Forgiveness involves passing over those who pass gas on (or around) us! God’s love living in us leads us to look past and pass over the flaws and sins of others. When we forgive others, we do so in the name of Jesus, our Passover lamb who lives within us.

Forgiveness means loving and accepting and attempting to reconcile even in the midst of a less than perfect situation, made all the messier by notoriously and obviously flawed human beings (including you and me!). A realistic understanding of our own imperfections enables us to be grateful for the love of others, and of God, and it helps us love others as God loves us. *Friendships and relationships survive and they thrive when forgiveness is given and received.*

When it comes to marital love, so many people are not willing to forgive. They blame their husband or wife for all marital difficulties and off they go “looking for love in all the wrong places.” They fail to forgive the imperfections of their spouse and they fail to realize their own imperfections and they start looking for their “soul mate”—thinking that someone somewhere will make them deliriously happy, without stopping to consider the self-sacrifices on their part needed to make that someone happy.

In her 2003 New York Times best-selling book, *My Sister’s Keeper*, Jodi Picoult shares a portrait of love, tolerance and forgiveness in a distressed family... *You don’t love someone because they’re perfect... you love them in spite of the fact they’re not.*—Jodi Picoult, *My Sister’s Keeper*

“Dear Abby” once included this short letter in her newspaper advice column: “Dear Abby: I am divorced, 50 years old and I would like to meet a man who has no bad habits.” Abby gave her a short reply: “So would I.”

Perfect people don’t exist. The world is filled with imperfect people, filled with flaws and shortcomings. God’s love enables us to be gracious and forgiving, to overlook and look beyond the obvious and the real problems—in some ways God’s love is willingly blind. God loves us, knowing exactly who we are and what we have done, but he chooses to ignore and wink at the obvious, because he sees something deeper in us than the human eye can perceive.

It’s certainly no news flash to conclude that forgiveness, tolerance and compassion in our world seems rare, almost on the brink of extinction. So many people are isolated in self-contained interest groups, self-absorbed in their immediate culture, interests, traditions and customs. Many

prefer to only watch a cable news network and only read newspapers that reassure them that what they already believe is true. They socialize with people who have the same biases and prejudices as they do. They attend church because the church teaches what they have always believed. People who live in holy huddles embodying all they presume to be true, correct and righteous can never imagine that they “pass gas”—but they are quick to point out those who do!

There’s a story about the alienation between old and young that illustrates the deep divides in our society. It’s about an older gentleman who owned a classic Cadillac about the length of a small yacht. The old man was in a parking lot, trying to carefully back his “boat” into a parking space when a young teenager zipped in with a little “Smart” car and stole the parking place.

The teenager, who had not been taught to respect seniors, jumped out of his little car and said, “You’ve got to be young and quick to zip in and out of parking places, Pop.” The senior citizen continued to back up his massive Cadillac, rolling over the mini-electric car like a tank, flattening it like a pancake. He smiled at the shocked young man, “And you have to be old and rich to be able to do what I just did, son.”

As hard as it is for us to fathom, God really does love the whole world. He loves the ones who drive little electric cars the size of a shoebox and those who pilot their gas-guzzling battleships around parking lots. He loves old and young, rich and poor...he loves us all. **The world is not perfect, and, in terms of his love, that’s OK with God. Come to think of it, you and I are not perfect, and in terms of his love, that’s OK with God too!**

God doesn’t love or not love you and me because of where we go to church (that is a building) or even if we do not. I do not attend a brick-and-mortar building, but by the grace of God I am the church—church is not a place I go but what I am as Jesus lives in me. God’s love is not measured out in direct proportion to how much we study the Bible, how long we pray or how aligned we are with “correct” doctrine. God is not that concerned with how many “right” answers we have.

God is not as interested as we think he is with all of our doctrinal squabbles and arguments. God is not that concerned with the dogmas in which we take such great pride... that’s neither his emphasis nor his priority. God’s deepest desire and supreme concern is love. He wants us to embrace his love that he freely gives, and yield to him so that his love lives within us in such a way that we are enabled to love him and our neighbor.

God’s love is amazing because he loves us anyway. *God’s love is always and forever* in spite of the fact that we are imperfect. *God’s love is always and forever* in spite of the dizzying roller coaster ride of contradictions and struggles that our life amounts to.

The pastor had just given a sermon which he knew would afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted. He had just poured out his heart, the new heart God had given him, talking about the amazing grace of God. He knew that there were wonderful people sitting in front of him who were so indebted to and enslaved by the law that they would only get upset by the notion that God’s love and grace is not predicated upon how observant and obedient a person might be. And true to form, someone in attendance really did get upset about the grace of God.

The sermon was over, the congregation was standing, singing a final hymn when an usher handed the pastor a note. The note had been written by that person in the audience who was furious about the message the pastor had given—it contained one word, in block letters: FOOL!

The pastor did not want to let his immediate reactions to get the better of him and thus further

upset the anonymous note writer, but he felt he should say something before the congregation was dismissed. So as the final hymn concluded the pastor walked to the platform and told everyone about the note he had just received and the one word message, a response to his sermon from someone who was obviously displeased.

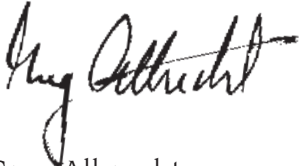
The pastor also had a wonderful sense of humor, so he said, with a twinkle in his eye, “*I have received notes in the past from people who forgot to sign their name, but this is the first time I have ever received a note from someone who signed their name but forgot to say what was on their mind!*” The congregation laughed, appreciating how their pastor gently and kindly handled the insult, forgiving the disrespect so that instead of yielding to the toxic poison of retribution, he yielded to the gracious and healing waters of God’s grace so that they continued to flow, in his ministry and in the lives of those he served. That unplanned conclusion to his sermon about God’s grace was God’s grace in action! Forgiveness is one of the primary fruits and products of God’s love.

This world today is filled with people who are overwhelmed by the expectations placed on them. They know they cannot measure up to the standards placed on them, and trying to find some healing and help, they turn to God. Sadly, Christ-less religion places even greater burdens on those who are seeking forgiveness as it explains that God is a monster, filled with wrath and punishment. Thanks be to God for his grace, which assures us his love, mercy, grace and forgiveness is like a river that washes away shame, guilt, impurity and sin—the gospel of Jesus Christ is a healing medicine and a soothing balm.

This is the world that you and I join arms together to help. These are the people who hunger for the love, mercy, grace and forgiveness of God. *This is the mission of CWR/PTM—to explain who God is and that he is not mad at us, but rather, for some strange (to us) reason, he really does love us.* Don’t ever think, for a second, that what we are joined together to do through the ongoing work of CWR/PTM is unimportant or insignificant or that your part doesn’t matter!

And remember—*you and I are not perfect, and neither is anyone else, but that’s OK with God!*

Your friend and brother in Christ,



Greg Albrecht

President, Plain Truth Ministries

P.S. Here’s a note of thanks from a friend in Texas who appreciates the ministry of PTM, which you help to provide!

“You—PTM/CWR—have changed my life over the past 10-15 years. I listened and read for many years, agreeing but not really ‘getting it.’ I am amazed at how in the last two years or so my perceptions and beliefs about God have changed for the better. I still marvel at His grace and I am perplexed at how He is so unlike us. He is actually love, mercy and grace! I am thankful that (as you have said) God is God and we are not! Of course, I know you were not directly responsible for changing my life—God did that—but I believe he used you!”

CWR/PTM Prayer List—May 2019

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.

My granddaughter is dying from a brain tumor. Doctors say there is nothing more they can do for her. Please pray for a miracle, which only our loving God can do.—Alberta, Canada

I'm requesting prayers for my mother and stepfather, as they are getting up in age. Please pray for relief from their arthritis pain.—Arizona

I request prayers that my legs will be healed enough so that I may walk better. I am 90 years old and well-worn out, but I would like to do more.—New York

Please pray that my husband's ulcer on his left foot heals. Also, please pray for relief from the pain I'm experiencing in my back, leg and hip.—Massachusetts

Please pray for my daughter-in-law who lives in Michigan. She is suffering from spinal cancer.—Oklahoma

I request prayer for an ongoing soft tissue injury in my right arm which inhibits my ability to work.—Wisconsin

Please pray about my ongoing problems from Lyme disease, and for all the health concerns of my family.—Maryland

Please pray for the healing of my migraine headaches and A-Fib problems, and please pray for relationships in our family to be restored.—Tennessee

Please pray for relief from severe pain on the right side of my body (neck, hand and leg).—South Carolina

Please continue to pray for my wife's recovery from lung cancer.—New York

Please pray for my friend who fell and is now paralyzed from the neck down, and for another friend who is suffering with lung cancer.—Pennsylvania

Please pray for my brother, as he is HIV positive.—Wisconsin

I appreciate prayers on my behalf as two types of cancer have been found in my prostate.—California

My cancer is spreading—please pray for me be completely healed.—Ontario, Canada

Thank you for all the prayers you have sent up for me. I don't know how much longer I have left. But I am looking forward to going home from this land of pain and suffering.—Illinois

I'm going to have my third heart surgery soon. Please pray for me.—Texas

Please pray that my cancer is gone and that I won't need further treatments.—Pennsylvania

Please pray for my mother's overall physical, mental and spiritual health.—Texas

Please pray for my son, who injured his back and cannot work at present.—Ohio

Please pray for my wife who is suffering knee and hip pain.—Washington

My son lives in Virginia in his car because he can't find a job and no one wants to rent to an unemployed person. Please pray for success in all areas of his life.—Louisiana

Our Father in Heaven: We thank you for your grace, mercy and love. You love each of these individuals, and we thank you in advance for the answers you will provide for each request. With thanksgiving for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, our suffering servant who heals us, in whose name we pray—Amen.