



June 2019

Dear CWR/PTM Friends and Partners,

Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of the joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.—John 16:20-22

Many biblical passages use the analogy of a woman in labor to illustrate the inevitability of birth when “the time has come.” In these words to his disciples on the eve of that greatest of all demonstrations of the love of God and the unbearable pain of his crucifixion, Jesus contrasts the distress of a woman before she gives birth compared with her joy as she delivers a child.

As we follow Jesus we encounter distress and affliction just as a mother agonizes and labors until the moment of delivery, when euphoria and ecstasy of new life replaces agony and distress. Following Jesus involves our spiritual death, so that we may live a new life in and by our risen Lord (Romans 6:1-7)—as Paul so eloquently describes, “*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me*” (Galatians 2:20).

Author Brené Brown explains that many completely misunderstand God, *expecting Jesus to be like an epidural* and take the pains of childbirth away. But the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that *Jesus is more like a midwife standing next to us, coaching, encouraging and urging us to push.*

Jesus never promised to take all hardship and suffering away (by giving us an epidural) but he promised to always be with us during pain and adversity (like a midwife). “*Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me*” (Matthew 16:24). We are not called to skip down a primrose path protected from difficulty and discomfort, rather “*To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps*” (1 Peter 2:21).

“The Way and the Truth and the Life” (John 14:6) has suffered on our behalf—he has “been there and done that”—he doesn’t magically remove all pain but he stands next to us as our midwife.

Many believe that the only reason for suffering and pain is disobedience and evil deeds, but while suffering and pain is a penalty we pay for our bad decisions and behaviors that’s only part of the picture.

If you have ever raised children, you will know that *children can cause heartache and grief*. It doesn’t take long after a person commits their life to a husband or wife to realize the person they hoped would make their life an unending dream of lollipops and roses can also bring trials and trouble...then it takes a few more years before a husband or wife realize they too can bring anxiety and anguish to their partner! *Love includes suffering.*

Christianity is not a life of ease and comfort. History proves that Christianity has thrived when it was a minority, when it was persecuted and when it was not popular. Following Jesus is not the

path of least resistance—it's more like swimming upstream. Suffering and pain in our walk with Christ empowers us to serve others in Jesus' name, as Paul poignantly describes in his second letter to Christ followers in Corinth:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ (2 Corinthians 1:3-5).

Never forget people all around you and me are waiting for the comfort of God we can pass on to them. They may be known to you and me already, or they may be people we have not yet met. They might be family and friends, they might be strangers, but you and I can comfort them *“with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.”*

In his popular book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Steven R. Covey tells about a life changing experience, when he realized that a stranger who irritated him was someone whom he might, in some way, help and serve. It was about a time when Covey was riding the subway in New York one Sunday morning...

“A man and his children entered the car. The children were soon yelling back and forth, throwing things...it was very disturbing. And yet, the father sitting next to me did nothing. It was difficult not to feel irritated. I could not believe he could be so insensitive as to let his children run wild and do nothing about it. It was easy to see that everyone else on the subway felt irritated, too.

“So finally, with what I felt was unusual patience and restraint, I said, ‘Sir, your children are really disturbing a lot of people. I wonder if you couldn’t control them a little more?’ The man lifted his gaze as if coming to a consciousness of the situation for the first time and said softly, ‘Oh, you’re right. I guess I should do something about it. We just came from the hospital where their mother died about an hour ago. I don’t know what to think, and I guess they don’t know how to handle it either.’

“Can you imagine what I felt at that moment? Suddenly I saw things differently, and because I saw things differently, I thought differently, I felt differently, I behaved differently. My irritation vanished. I didn’t have to worry about controlling my attitude or my behavior; my heart was filled with the man’s pain. Feelings of sympathy and compassion flowed freely. ‘Your wife just died? Oh, I’m so sorry. Can you tell me about it? What can I do to help?’ Everything changed in an instant.”

Never forget that God “comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God” (2 Corinthians 1:4). Paul tells us in this first chapter of 2 Corinthians that God is **the God of all comfort**. In the physical realm the word *comfort* again returns our thoughts to mothers, who wipe away the tears of the children for whom they labored and sacrificed in order to give them life. The word *comfort* of course returns our thoughts to our Father, the God of all compassion and comfort, who says to you and me, *“as a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you”* (Isaiah 66:3).

Never forget that your own suffering and sorrows might have prepared you for a time such as this—a time like the time of your life right now! As you yield to him, there are a myriad of ways in which God might use you right now, to encourage, comfort, reach out, and inspire others.

All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it's not only around us, it's within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We're also feeling the birth

pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy. (Romans 8:22-25, The Message Bible, by Eugene Peterson)

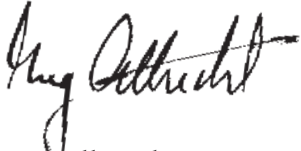
When Paul wrote his letter to the Christians in Rome that we know as the book of Romans, he had endured some 20 or more years of relentless persecution and suffering. He had followed Jesus Christ through thick and thin. He yearned for the completion of his own journey in Christ, not simply because it would end his suffering and pain but because of his joyful expectancy, like a pregnant woman nearing her due date.

At the end of the eighth chapter of Romans Paul speaks of the ongoing experience of being bombarded by crisis and catastrophe, of affliction with sickness and disease, of persecution and torture. He concludes:

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?.... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.—Romans 8:31-32, 35, 37-39

Never forget—God is with you. In Christ, God is one of us. Our faith is not in vain. God will never leave or forsake you or me.

Your brother in Christ,



Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

P.S. We share this note of thanks from a friend of PTM who lives in North Carolina.

I've been reading and listening to your ministry for about five years now. When I first came into contact with you, I remember reading a favorable comment by someone who described your ministry as "a breath of fresh air." At the time, I thought that description was too good to be true. But then, over a few years, I discovered I was living out my faith in what seemed like a septic tank and that what you were saying truly is "a breath of fresh air." You are like an air-freshener, bringing the fresh fragrance of God into my life. Keep it up, please.

CWR/PTM Prayer List—June 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.

Thank you for all your prayers. My mom has been cured of terminal cancer. We just got the CT scan results and the tumor is completely gone!—Pennsylvania

Please pray for my spiritual growth in Christ and for the physical healing of my lower back and right knee.—Louisiana

Please pray that my daughters and grandson will find permanent jobs and have peace of mind.—Massachusetts

Please pray for me. I'm on my second chemo treatment and I'm having a difficult time with it.—New York

We've been greatly stressed this past year with health, family and financial issues. We appreciate your prayers.—Florida

I pray for more and more people to follow PTM to learn the truth about God and accept Him. God is so good to us.—Texas

Thank you and your staff for your kind words and prayers as I struggle with Parkinson's.—Virginia

We thank you for all you do. We depend on the CDs and other materials you send us. I'm 89 and my wife is 86. We've been married for 68 years. We pray for God's blessings on everyone involved with PTM.—Wisconsin

Please pray for my aunt as she is now refusing to eat and take her medications. Her health is declining and she has been put on hospice.—Pennsylvania

My family lives in a very noisy and unsafe neighborhood. Would you please pray that God would take us out of this extremely stressful area?—New York

I need your prayers so I can get to know my Heavenly Father and my Lord Jesus Christ more each day. God seems to be so far away at times.—Colorado

I pray for all your efforts in helping to make changes in the lives of those so inclined.—Ontario, Canada

I have a lump near my kidney and suffer from lower back pain. I also have a torn bicep, which seems to be a permanent injury. Thank you for your prayers.—Wisconsin

Please pray that I will know the truth about the Way, the Truth, and the Life. I'm both terrified and excited about the possibilities of what can happen as I change my theology, but it's really hard when you've been indoctrinated.—Arkansas

Pray for my two daughters to have a better relationship and treat each other with love and kindness.—Ohio

Thanks for your prayers especially the last three years—they have kept me going. Please pray for peace in my life.—Illinois

My husband has suffered with an infection for quite some time. He will be having surgery soon. Please pray that the surgery will help and that he will feel good again.—Virginia

My husband and I are suffering with a lot of various health issues. Please pray for God's strength and for the courage to trust in Him.—Michigan

Please continue to pray that I can learn what grace looks like in the workplace.—Colorado

Please pray that God gives me His forgiveness so that I can pass it along to others.—New Jersey

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.