



August 2019

Dear Friends and Partners of CWR/PTM,

He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.—John 1:11

When we read John's summary statement about Jesus being rejected by "his own" we normally think of the historic Jewish culture, race and religion into which Jesus was born...something that happened a long time ago, in the "olden" days. But consider this:

If Jesus arrived on earth today, many people who sincerely believe they are following him wouldn't even let him in their church buildings.

I have a friend who is a Hindu, who in the spirit of our light-hearted camaraderie at our local gym invites those of us who exercise with him to call him "Maharishi" (after the Indian who developed Transcendental Meditation). Given previous conversations, Maharishi knows I am a pastor, an author and a Christian teacher, so we often talk about faith.

"Maharishi" recently walked by me at the gym and stopped to say, "You know, Jesus is having trouble." I took the bait—"Oh really, what kind of trouble?" He replied, with a sly grin, "It seems to me that many churches are not allowing him to come in!"

I told Maharishi that I agreed with him and asked him if he knew that one of his countrymen, Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), the great non-violent activist, whose faith was also rooted in Hinduism, agreed with him? He said "No, I have never heard about that." I told him of a quote recounted many ways, so the precise words may not be correct, but it goes something like this:

"I like your Christ, but I do not like your Christians. You Christians are so unlike your Christ. If it weren't for Christians, I'd be a Christian."

Then I told Maharishi that there is a place in the Christian Scriptures where Jesus is depicted as standing outside a place where a church is meeting. The picture we get is that he is knocking on the door, but they won't let him in! To the church in the city of Laodicea, one of seven cities/churches described in the second and third chapters of Revelation, Jesus said:

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.—Revelation 3:20

Driving home from the gym after talking with Maharishi I imagined a conversation Jesus might have had then, and more importantly, is having right now with those who assume they are doing everything Jesus wants them to and believe they are faithfully following him:

Jesus: ***It seems you Christians are so busy with all your programs and your evangelism and your outreach activities you have no time for me.***

Church Member: *No time for you? You can't mean that! Why, everything we do is all about you. We witness to people because we want them to get saved. We try to help people find you! We try to get people to come to our church so that our church grows so more people get saved.*

Jesus: *I never asked you to go out and “get people saved.” You tell people how to “find” me? I didn’t realize I was lost. People don’t “get” saved—my salvation is a gift, not something people accomplish. How exactly can you “save” people? That’s my job. Do people find me or do I find them—do they “get” saved or receive and embrace my rescue?*

Church Member: *We tell immoral people to start living a moral life and when they do they can find you and get saved. Isn’t that a good thing? Don’t you think it’s important for people to know how to find you?*

Jesus: *You may not realize it, but you are constantly condemning others and doing so seems to make you feel good. I did not come into the world to condemn the world (John 3:17). You think people will find me if you condemn them? Where is the good news about forgiveness and redemption? Where is the emphasis on my love and grace? If I showed up at your church, you might not even let me in!*

So many people are caught in the trap set by Christ-less religion—they think that being in a church building and being busy with church activities are the priorities—they have been convinced that’s what Jesus really wants them to be doing. They think religious prescriptions will heal them spiritually and religious programs are how God wants them to spend their time.

So many people are addicted to Christ-less religion—they feel good after they get their Sunday morning fix, convinced that God is pleased and appeased for at least one more week. Many who assume they are Christians become engrossed with their narrow-minded, legalistic religious world—they become obsessed and consumed by what they are doing and completely miss what God is doing and the love and grace he invites them to receive.

Henri J.M. Nouwen makes a critically important distinction about knowing God, yielding to him and letting him love us:

“For most of my life I have struggled to find God, to know God, to love God. I have tried hard to follow the guidelines of the spiritual life—pray always, work for others, read the Scriptures—and to avoid the many temptations to dissipate myself. I have failed many times but always tried again, even when I was closer to despair.

“Now I wonder whether I have sufficiently realized that during all this time God has been trying to find me, to know me, and to love me. The question is not ‘How am I to find God?’ but ‘How am I to let myself be found by him?’ The question is not ‘How am I to love God?’ but ‘How am I to let myself be loved by God?’” —The Return of the Prodigal Son, page 106

I first started reading Henri Nouwen’s book because its title promises a focus on my favorite parable that so perfectly illustrates the gospel. When he hit rock bottom the prodigal son realized he was lost, he came to his senses and started home.

The father saw him, ran to him, finding and embracing and saving him. The elder son was working in the field, so wrapped up in all that he was doing that he resented his father lavishing love and grace on his brother.

Prodigal sons and daughters search for fulfillment and satisfaction in all the wrong places. God yearns for his sons and daughters in a far country to know it doesn’t matter what they have done. When prodigal sons and daughters come to their senses and repent, they can go home. Will they accept his embrace—will they accept the father’s forgiveness—will they let the father find them?

Elder sons and daughters work hard in the field. They assume their works are earning the father’s love when God’s love is not for sale. Just as he yearns for sons and daughters in a far country, God yearns for his sons and daughters whose efforts convince them they are saving

people. God invites and welcomes elder sons and daughters as well, even as they resent their brothers and sisters whom they assume to be permissive and immoral. Elder sons and daughters often assume they are close to the father because of their hard work, but in reality they can be just as lost as prodigal sons and daughters in a “far away country.”

Our mission here at Plain Truth Ministries is critically and urgently important, because people today are either 1) ashamed of how far away they are from God and convinced he will never have anything to do with them, or 2) enslaved by the illusion that God can be found, pleased and appeased through their efforts and religious performance.

Prodigal sons and daughters usually know they are lost, but they cannot believe that the father would ever find, love and accept them. Elder sons and daughters cannot believe that their religious efforts have taken them away from God into the “far country” of legalistic pride and condemnation of others.

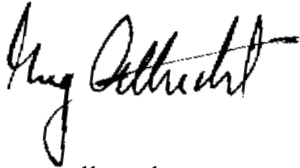
God wants to find, know and love all of us—the whole world. God longs to open the windows of heaven and pour out the lavish treasures of his grace that is never earned—for his grace can only be received and accepted.

Our mission here at Plain Truth Ministries is critically and urgently important because Christ-less religion so often completely twists and misrepresents God.

Please accept my personal thanks, from the bottom of my heart, for the wonderful, gracious and generous support you provide with your prayers and financial contributions. It is an honor and a privilege to serve with you, as we serve others, in the name of Jesus.

Our ongoing work, by the grace of God, is critically and urgently important.

Your brother in Christ,



Greg Albrecht

President, Plain Truth Ministries

PS. **THANK YOU** for your continued financial support, helping to “make sure this work keeps going.” Here’s a note of thanks from a friend of CWR/PTM who lives in Ohio.

Thank you for creating a safe haven for the spiritually wounded. I have the deepest respect for the people who write for Christianity Without the Religion magazine. I will be sending financial support again soon, because I want to make sure this work keeps going.

CWR/PTM Prayer List—August 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 friends struggle to break-free from the grips of addiction. Please keep them in your prayers.—Wisconsin

Please pray for a very dear friend to get help for his meth addiction.—Georgia

Please pray for me, my PSA level is high. Pray that it's not caused by cancer.—New Hampshire

Thank you for each and every letter and magazine you send us each month helping us better understand God's love for all of us. I pray for everyone at CWR/PTM.—Kansas

Please pray for my daughter-in-law who had a stroke. She is a heavy smoker and it's hard for her to quit.—Louisiana

Please pray for our pastor's wife, who has melanoma on her liver.—Minnesota

My wife is on her third round of medicine trying to get rid of a serious colon infection. I have back pain and a nervous illness. Please keep us in your prayers.—Arizona

Please pray for my marriage and that I may become financially stable this year.—Georgia

I pray that God lives in me and loves through me. Thank you for all the encouragement I receive from you knowing that God loves me. I pray for everyone involved with PTM.—Missouri

Pray for a friend who suffers complications from diabetes. He's had several mini-strokes and his mind isn't clear.—Ohio

Pray for my daughter-in-law who has cancer. Pray that God will give her peace and comfort her.—Illinois

Please pray that my legs will get stronger and please also pray for my eyesight.—New Mexico

Please pray for our grandson who has mental health issues.—Massachusetts

My wife died in 2017. My oldest daughter moved in with me. Boy, do we need prayers just to get along.—Indiana

I have been fighting shingles for 9 months. I nearly lost an eye and I have extensive nerve damage. I request everyone's prayers.—Mississippi

Pray for my daughter who has pain in her neck and back. She can't take strong meds. Also her car broke down and she can't afford to buy another. I recently had a small heart attack and need your prayers, as well.—Arizona

Please continue to pray for my husband. He is now almost completely helpless. I move him around the house in a wheelchair. I take him weekly for a shot to help build his red blood count, which continues to drop.—Alabama

Please pray for me as I have been recently diagnosed with schizophrenia and an anxiety disorder.—Wisconsin.

Please pray for me. I've had cancer and was taking treatments and then last month I had blood problems and now I don't know if I should keep on taking the treatments or not.—North Carolina

My son suffers from severe migraine headaches and he takes dangerous prescriptions to reduce the pain. The problem was caused by a roll-over accident that wasn't his fault. My wife also has anxiety disorders and tension headaches.—Florida

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.