



June 2020

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

He is...a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief...—Isaiah 53:3 (KJV).

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered...—Hebrews 5:8 (KJV).

I memorized many biblical verses and passages early in life, all from the KJV. I switched to more modern translations like the New International Version (NIV) three decades ago, but over the past few years I find myself being drawn to the beauty of certain King James phrases and words.

Recently the passage in Isaiah 53:3 started reverberating in my brain—in particular that phrase “*acquainted with grief*.” The meaning of the Hebrew word the KJV translates as “*acquaint*” is based in “*knowing*.” **Knowing** has many senses—comprehending, perceiving and becoming aware through acquisition of facts and knowledge—learning through observation and comprehending, measuring and logical analysis. One side of knowing involves our brain—our cognition, reasoning, observation—it’s the cerebral kind of knowing.

The same Hebrew word defines another kind of knowing—knowing gained through the heart and emotions—the intimacy of knowing. **The intimate, emotional and heart side of knowing comes through acquaintances and friendship.**

As you probably “know,” the Old Testament speaks of sexual intercourse as “knowing.” The same Hebrew word used for a man and woman knowing each other in sexual intercourse is used to describe Jesus becoming aware, knowing and being acquainted with grief.

Our human minds are finite and there is much we do not cognitively fathom about how God, in the person of Jesus, became incarnate. I find myself focusing on this once-and-for-all miraculous event because it shines a spotlight and fully reveals the love, grace and mercy of God. We drink deeply from and of God when we consider the Incarnation.

Scripture reveals that God is all-knowing (omniscient) and yet also describes Jesus Christ (God the Son) as **learning** through his Incarnation (Hebrews 5:8). Isaiah 53:3 says Jesus is *acquainted* with our grief. How do we harmonize those truths? Answer: in Jesus Christ!

God is indeed *omniscient* and *omnipresent* (existing outside of time and space and thus anywhere and everywhere at once—without limitations) and *omnipotent* (having unlimited power and authority). And these definitions apply to God in Christ, the God man, very man and very God—Jesus, the Son of God.

The term **The Hypostatic Union** is a theological term that describes how Christ is God Incarnate—enfleshed—both fully human and fully God in one indivisible Person. Don’t worry, I will not send you a test next month about **The Hypostatic Union**!

The Hypostatic Union describes the miracle of **The Incarnation**—the staggering and breathtaking reality that God came down to become one of his created humans, and while there

were many reasons for doing so, one was to become “*acquainted*” with us. While God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, cognitively knows everything that can be known about humanity (how could he not?—he is our Creator) it is only in the Incarnation that God knows the human condition experientially and existentially.

It all started with the humble circumstances of Jesus’ birth—in a stable, laid in a manger—born with animals, amidst all the smells and unsanitary (as we would contrast that environment with a hygienic birthing ward of a hospital) conditions. He literally came down from perfection and holiness and eternity into the imperfection, mortality and pigpen of our lives. The all-knowing, omniscient God becomes flesh and “learns” what it is like to BE human from the get-go.

The human condition includes our experience of darkness—being in a pit, if you will. The Incarnation means Jesus came down and became directly and personally *acquainted with our grief*. He didn’t just peer down on us from the top of the pit of grief and sorrow in which we find ourselves. Rather, he crawled down into our pit and became one of us. Without change to his divine nature he became who and what we are. *He became acquainted with our grief* and he *learned*... *by the things which he suffered*.

Believing that we are alone and feeling empty is fundamental to our broken existence as spiritually blinded human beings—this deep and gnawing sense of spiritual alienation goes back to our first rejection of God in the Garden of Eden. Being created in God’s image means that we are the highest of all his creation—able to think, ponder, imagine, be creative, plan for the future...but more than anything else it means we desperately yearn to know that we are not alone. Jesus came to reconcile and reconnect us with God.

Unfortunately, loneliness is compounded and made far worse when humans seek to fill their spiritual void with something or someone other than God. Addictions of all kinds drive people into even deeper alienation and isolation. That said, there is no place too dark for Jesus, the Light of this world. There is no place of alienation where we might find ourselves which is too deep for Jesus to descend and find us.

He came down that he might get into the pit with us, and *become acquainted* with grief—a human grief Jesus *learned*—a grief God did not personally know (experience directly) before. That’s an amazing part of God becoming flesh.

Jesus not only became ACQUAINTED with us, he became our FRIEND. “*As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.... I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you...*” (John 15: 9,15-16, my emphasis).

Jesus came to know us and make himself known to us, personally and intimately, *as our friend*, Jesus became transparent—invited us in—hiding nothing from us. As he revealed the Father—he told us the “master’s business.” He did not make us his servants, but *offered us his friendship*.

Master-servant, boss-employee, parent-child, king-subject, general-private, rich-poor relationships are most often defined by withholding and hiding and even lying on both sides. A teenager doesn’t voluntarily tell their parent why they were out so late last night. The boss doesn’t tell the employees about the financial difficulties the company is facing, fearing the employees will all jump ship. The rich and powerful “insiders” don’t tell the impoverished and powerless “outsiders” their business because it serves the interests of rich and powerful people to let the poor and disadvantaged remain that way.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.—2 Corinthians 8:9

There are walls of separation and conditional self-interest in virtually all human relationships. But Jesus knocks down this wall of separation. Jesus climbs into the pit with us. ***The friendship Jesus offers*** you and me is not based on performance. ***The friendship of Jesus*** is offered to us even when he does not stand to gain from being our friend. True friends *like* you...and true friends *love* you. Jesus LIKES and LOVES you!

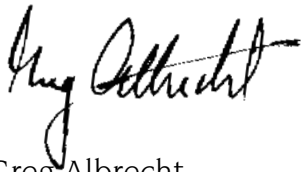
The ***friendship Jesus offers*** flows from the Father through him and to his friends...it is a ***friendship*** that is not predicated on our merits but on the gracious choice of Jesus. **He chooses to be our friend.** He offers ***his friendship*** to us, which we may accept or reject. He does not ask us to do something to earn or deserve ***his friendship***...we don't choose him, he chooses us.

As the Father loves me, so have I loved you... Jesus' love for his friends remains true, even though his friends become fair-weather friends, as they did when he was crucified. Even though some betray and abandon him, ***he remains their friend.*** **Jesus is our true friend**, and as he lives in us, he enables us to be not only his friends but friends of so many others.

"Friends" is a word CWR/PTM uses to describe our relationship with you, our "Friend and Partner." I have grave reservations about the way in which many brick-and-mortar congregations and denominations use the word "member" to describe those who affiliate with them.

Of course, we can be "members" of a brick-and-mortar church, or any of a gazillion physical entities and enterprises, but ultimately, we are first and foremost members of the universal body of Christ. **Jesus owns you and me—no one else does. Ultimately, we belong to him and him only. Jesus is truly our BFF—Best Friend Forever.**

Your friend in Christ,



Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

P.S. We share this note of thanks from a PTM friend in Massachusetts who is being blessed by the ministry of PTM, which YOU help to provide.

You have no idea how much your ministry means to me. I have been beat up and hung out to dry by life and by religion. I once heard you use an old cowboy idiom about a horse being "rode hard and put away wet." That has stuck with me as an accurate definition of my religious experiences and unfortunately, betrayals that happened to me in my employment and by several friends. I know what it's like to be thrown under the bus—used and then left behind. I am not bitter, because of God's grace. I am more of a Christ-centered person now than ever before because of your ministry. Over the past ten years or so you have been the most influential part of my spiritual life. Your focus on the grace, love and mercy of God has directed me to Jesus, and he has healed me. Thank you—keep up the good work!

CWR/PTM Prayer List—June 2020

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 the mental, physical and spiritual welfare of my mother and all other widows and widowers.—Texas

I went through a triple bypass heart surgery a few months ago. Please pray for a speedy recovery. I truly believe God was with me during the surgery, especially when my heart stopped beating. Praise the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.—Louisiana

Please pray for my wife's arthritis and advancing dementia, and pray for me as her primary care giver.—California

Please pray for my angry, alcoholic neighbor. He's lost almost all of his belongings and most of his friends and family members.—Wisconsin

Please pray for my blood pressure situation, which has been high for many years and creating other health problems for me.—Ontario, Canada

My daughter and husband need your prayers as they are having trouble paying their bills because people aren't paying them what they owe them.—South Carolina

I just found out that my two oldest brothers have cancer!! The oldest one, who is 78, is in hospice care now having very bad headaches since his cancer has spread from his lungs to his brain. My other brother is 77 and his cancer has spread to his pelvic bone from his prostate. Please keep them both in your prayers.—Maine

Please pray for my sister who has heart problems and her kids who are experiencing problems with a few family members.—Arkansas

Please pray for my wife who has eye problems and osteoporosis. Thanks in advance for your prayers.—Louisiana

I need prayers for my upcoming knee surgery as I have heart problems.—Kentucky

Please pray for my wife's health issues. Thank you for your prayers and concern.—California

I lost my husband, who died recently, and I am in poor health. Please pray that God will give me more strength.—Arizona

Please pray for a close family member who has recently been widowed that God's comfort, love and hope of the resurrection be given to her.—Minnesota

Please ask for God to give me more balance, flexibility, patience and forgiveness.—Texas

I have a lot of sinus problems and headaches. Please pray that I will get better soon.—Alabama

Please pray for the healing of my knees and hips. I can no longer walk well or work properly.—Florida

Thank you for allowing me to just "hang in there." I have reached my 91st birthday and my life is changing somewhat. Please keep me in your prayers.—Wisconsin

I thank God for Greg and Brad for their very helpful writings. I also praise God for comforting my dad and helping him through the passing of my mom. They were married 57 years.—Oklahoma

Please pray for my son and daughter-in-law. They are having financial problems and are both under a lot of stress at this time.—Pennsylvania

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.