



March 2022

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

**A**s they attempt to fill the emptiness in their souls, many citizens of planet earth frantically run after drugs, food, sex, achievements, possessions and entertainment. It's been said the most frenzied attempts in human history in a quest to find and secure happiness have occurred in 20th and now 21st century North America.

Ironically, the more intense efforts to secure happiness become, it seems animosity, division, hatred, racism and violence increase at the same time. *From the beginning of history*, humans have measured and weighed success and happiness through things that can be seen, felt and physically experienced. *From the beginning of history* humans have removed, violently if necessary, anyone or anything that stands in the way of their "success."

*From the beginning of human history*, humans have hated and despised those who differ with them ...strife, conflict and horrific wars have therefore resulted. History stands as a stark testimony to the fact that life is empty apart from God and our hearts and souls can never be filled without Christ and his Cross.

It is only through the Cross of Christ that human life might find ultimate meaning, fulfillment and purpose. **There is no authentic Christianity without the Cross!**

The path to true, abundant and fulfilling life in our risen Lord runs through the Cross and the empty tomb. There is no spiritual new life in Christ unless there is self-sacrifice, suffering and spiritual death. Picking up our own cross and following Jesus means accepting that life will involve self-sacrifice and service of others and that life is more than surface happiness and creature comforts.

*It is to the Cross that the Christian is challenged to follow his Master: no path of redemption can make a detour around it.*—Hans Urs von Balthasar

**The Cross of Christ is the Jesus Way**—the Cross of Christ means following him and picking up our own respective crosses, whatever they encompass and include. Our cross might include cancer, heart disease, grief and loss of loved ones, physical handicaps and financial struggles. The Cross of Christ involves serving others in the name of Jesus, helping them when we would rather be chasing our own happiness and feeding our own physical and emotional appetites.

*He gave himself wholly to you: He left nothing for himself.*—Early church father John Chrysostom (347-407)

Real life—meaningful and purposeful life—life in Christ—is only found in following Jesus. Jesus said that we **cannot** be his disciples unless we deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him. ***Life in Christ is cruciform—life in Christ is following his Cross and not denying the cross that we carry.***

The Cross of Christ rejects hatred and violence, embracing instead a way of self-sacrifice and service, voluntarily considering the needs of others to be as necessary and important as our own (Philippians 2:3-4).

I recall an old story from back in the day(s) when people who were planning a trip went to see a travel agent. A “good” church-going widow lady had just inherited her parents’ estate and decided to travel the world before she got too old to do so. One of her friends suggested a travel agent whose name was Patrick O’Riley.

She went to see Patrick O’Riley at his office and explained she wanted to take the trip of a lifetime. Knowing her beliefs, Patrick suggested the Middle East and perhaps Egypt, with all of its ancient history. The lady frowned and said, “I don’t think I could put up with the smells of all those animals and those primitive people. And there are lots of Muslims there as well.”

Patrick said, “Well, how about India? It is a world apart, with a rich history.” The lady again declined his offer: “Oh no, from what I understand India is full of diseases and as a Christian I despise those pagan Hindus.”

Patrick then thought this Christian lady might like to visit the Holy Land, where Jesus walked, but she again turned down that idea: “All those Jews! I don’t think I could get along with them. Look how they treated Jesus.”

Patrick then thought, well maybe she would like Ireland, his native land. When he suggested Ireland the lady said, “No, I hear that it is damp and cold and it is filled with Catholics.”

Patrick realized then he wouldn’t be of much help to this lady, but as an Irish-Catholic he couldn’t resist one final thought: “Well then, madam, how about going to hell? From what my priest tells me it is hot and dry and full of Protestants.”

John 3:16 tells us that God so loved the world he gave us his Son. What many highly judgmental religious folks miss is the next verse (3:17), where we read that God didn’t send his Son to condemn the world. Sadly, that’s just what Christ-less religion does. Condemn.

The New Covenant places a priority on what the cross of Christ is and what it portends. Paul preached Christ and him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). Christ followers in the first century suffered and endured persecution for the cross of Christ (Galatians 6:12). The Law of Moses, the old covenant, was “nailed to the cross” (Colossians 2:14).

Paul of course was not talking in these passages about a piece of lumber. Paul was using what we immediately recognize as a symbol, a figure of speech—a word or term that means far more than its literal definition.

The love of God is fully revealed and demonstrated on and through the Cross of Christ. *The Cross of Christ is the crux—the center—the fulcrum—the hinge—of all human history.* The story of the Cross is the gospel. There is no gospel without the Cross—indeed there is no Christianity without the Cross!

We understand and come to know, in ever-deepening ways, of the love of God by the Cross of Jesus Christ. That’s how he once and for all, conclusively and forever, demonstrated his love for all humanity. *God’s love is the greatest love, and God’s love is best understood in a cruciform way.* God’s love values the needs of his children and self-sacrificially serves them, rather than condemning them.

*The world takes us to a silver screen on which flickering images of passion and romance play, and as we watch, the world says, “this is love.” God takes us to the foot of a tree on which a naked and bloodied man hangs and says, “this is love!”—Joshua Harris*

From a biblical perspective, everything in the Bible before Jesus leads up to the Cross, and

everything after the Cross is understood and interpreted in the light of the Cross. Our faith is cruciform—our faith is Cross-shaped—our faith is Christ-centered.

The love of God, expressed in its transcendent beauty for you and me on the Cross, produces God's love in our lives. Through the reality and beauty of the love of the Cross of Jesus Christ the love of God flows in and through us:

*This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ has laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.—1 John 3:16*

The giving and generous heart of love and mercy, flowing from the Cross of Christ, to, in and through us, is desperately needed by our world today. Anger and bitterness characterize our world, our nations, our states and provinces, and our culture. The young are divided from the aged, black divided against white, men and women are in conflict. With all this strife and rivalry comes name-calling and condemnation.

*We live as Christ-followers, caught in the cross-fire between conflicting ideologies and partisan politics, picking up our cross and following him, in the midst of all this division and animosity.*

The darkness in our world cries out for disciples of Jesus who will pick up their own cross and allow the Light of Jesus Christ to shine in them in such a way that the love of God flows in and through them into the lives of others. The world-at-large has had enough of violence, hatred and racism. Our world has had its fill of religious not-so-holy wars and feuds.

In the light of the Cross of Christ, in the Light of the love that shines from his Cross, because of and empowered by the cruciform self-sacrificial serving love of God, may we, each of us as we are able, be a committee of one to pass on the love of God.

May we be difference-makers in the midst of the darkness of hatred, racism and antagonisms. May we forsake criticism and judgmentalism and embrace our neighbors, so that we might shine the light of Jesus in the midst of a sad and desperate world and therefore point them to the Cross of Christ.

In Jesus' name,



Greg Albrecht  
President, Plain Truth Ministries

## CWR/PTM Prayer List—March 2022

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 my brother whose cancer has spread to his bones. Pray for his healing and comfort.—Maine*

*Keep being Christ-centered. Jesus' message is always needed. I keep your ministry in my prayers.—New Jersey*

*Please pray for my brother-in-law who has cancer all through his body. He is weak and helpless.—California*

*My son is still taking chemo for his cancer. Please keep him in your prayers.—Georgia*

*Please pray for my daughter. She was in a 4-wheeler accident and has broken ribs and an injured shoulder.—West Virginia*

*I need prayers because I now have a "tight chest" that makes it difficult for me to get a good, deep breath.—Oregon*

*Please pray for God to heal my broken arm situation which is giving me a lot of pain.—Arizona*

*Please pray for the healing of my arthritic wrist pain so I can continue to work.—California*

*Our prayers are with you as you work to help make Jesus real in our lives.—Michigan*

*Please pray for relief from aches & pains of old age (I'm 81) and pray for me to continue to take care of myself.—Maryland*

*Thank you for your prayers for me. I've had a huge improvement concerning my blood pressure and relief from the pain in my knees and lower back.—Saskatchewan, Canada*

*Please pray for me as I'm having seizures—pray the doctors can find out why.—Kentucky*

*Please pray for healing of my right fingers and left foot (gout). Also please pray for improvement in my business as an accountant.—Louisiana*

*Please pray for my son and daughter-in-law who are newly married and going through some financial struggles. Also please pray that my son will do well in his certification exams.—Arizona*

*I need your prayers. I feel like my days are numbered. I'm trying to find God but I'm not sure I'm going about it in the right way.—Colorado*

*Please pray for my son as he has cancer. Thank you for this prayer list and all who read it.—West Virginia*

*Please pray for my brother who is suffering from depression.—Michigan*

*I'm widowed. Please pray that God will help me "find my feet" financially and emotionally.—Illinois*

*I am praying for all of you at PTM. I'm blessed to be a part of this work. Please pray for me as I have a lot of health issues. If it wasn't for God being with me, I couldn't make through each day.—Alabama*

*Please pray for all who are struggling to survive and for all the little children that they will come to know their Lord and Savior and how much he loves them.—New York*

*Please pray for my eyes. I had cataract surgery and still have been having problems with them.—North Carolina*

*Please pray for my niece who is grieving for the loss of her husband, who passed away completely unexpectedly. She needs comfort and answers from God.—Virginia*

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.