



June 2022

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

*“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you took me in, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.*

*“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’*

*“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these my brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me’” (Matthew 25:35-40)*

**T**his powerful description of the final judgment when the King of the kingdom separates sheep from goats arriving at his throne has puzzled Bible readers for many centuries. How is it possible Jesus equates the help his sheep give to others as their love and service for him, particularly when he is in no need of food or water or clothing? Jesus insists his sheep don't even remember helping him. How is that possible?

How many specific occasions when you had a drink of water do you recall? Do you remember all the dates and times when you put on a coat before leaving your house or apartment? Do you remember the last time you opened the door of a car or a store to allow another to enter before you? We don't remember habitual behaviors that we perform almost automatically.

The sheep in Matthew 25 tell the Lord they didn't specifically remember helping others, and we must assume it is because they helped others as a way of life, much like they took care of their own needs. *For those in whom Christ lives his life of service, helping others is so much a part of their lives they cannot isolate a particular instance of self-sacrifice.*

As you remember in this judgment about the sheep and goats in Matthew 25, those Jesus labels as goats (verses 41-45) have an opposite reaction to that of the sheep. While the sheep cannot recall individual acts of service and generosity, the goats remember specific times when they thought they were doing what God wanted! They keep score. They are impressed with what they do and they assume God will be as well.

Earlier in Matthew here's how Jesus explains Christ-followers do not inordinately focus on the inherent value and worth of how and when they help others:

*“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you (Matthew 6:1-4).*

**Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing!** *It is so easy* to present an appearance of piety that goes no deeper than the surface. *It is so easy* to place great value on our own deeds. It is so easy to be impressed with our own goodness!

*Jesus advises us to forget ourselves*—don't focus on how beneficial or wonderful or righteous our behaviors might be. Keep them secret...even from yourself (which is an impossibility of course, but the advice underlines how important it is to avoid the rat race of continually keeping score of good deeds in the endless quest to please and appease God).

When we are preoccupied with gaining approval from others (and even ourselves) it is so easy to drift away from the grace of God into Christ-less religion. *When our deeds loom large in our thoughts then there is little room for God's amazing grace.* **When we freely GIVE to others, it takes the focus away from us.** Thus, we should keep our own deeds secret, not letting the left hand know what the right is doing, while all the while placing the spotlight on the goodness and generosity of God.

When award-winning Hollywood leading lady Katherine Hepburn (1907-2003) was a young girl, the traveling circus came to town and Hepburn's father took her. According to the story, Hepburn remembers standing in line with her father to buy tickets, and as the line dwindled finally there was only a large family between them and the ticket counter. Along with their parents, eight well-behaved children were excitedly talking about all the clowns and animals they were looking forward to seeing.

The father and mother were waiting their turn to buy tickets for their family. They seemed proud parents as they prepared to share an evening of entertainment with their children. The ticket lady asked the man how many tickets he wanted. When the ticket lady told him the price for eight children's tickets and two adults he was shocked. He was not prepared for how much tickets would cost. Knowing they did not have enough money he and his wife immediately hung their heads in shame.

Katherine Hepburn's father saw all of this drama unfold. He took a \$20 bill out of his pocket, dropped it on the ground at the man's feet and then tapped the man on the shoulder, saying, "Excuse me, sir, this fell out of your pocket."

The man immediately grasped the act of kindness from a total stranger, and, reaching out with a two-handed handshake of thanksgiving for Katherine Hepburn's father, his lip quivered as he said, "Thank you, thank you, sir. This evening at the circus means so much to my wife and my family."

Having saved the man and his wife from an embarrassing, desperate and heartbreaking situation, Hepburn's father took his daughter by the hand and they walked back to their car and drove home. They had given away the money they needed to enjoy the circus. But, the story relates, though the teenage Hepburn didn't get to see the circus that night she realized a joy of giving far greater than any circus entertainment could provide.

The story is probably exaggerated, because similar stories are attributed to other people who gave away a \$20 bill. In addition, a \$20 bill is a dead-give-away that the story is probably contrived, because \$20 when Audrey Hepburn was a teenager was the equivalent of about \$300 today and no circus then, even for ten people, would have cost that much.

But the point of the story is not contained by its absolute historical accuracy—the point of the story is about the grace of responding to the needs of another "in secret." **Part of the grace of God is all about not letting your right hand know what your left hand is doing.** When we give to and serve others we can be released from religious agendas, and instead we can find the joy of getting caught up in the gracious agenda of God!

A similar story is told about Dorothy Day (1897-1980), a writer, social activist and humanitarian, who served the poor in homeless shelters she called “houses of hospitality.” In 1956, Day was told her shelter in New York City needed expensive repairs and the Fire Department would be forced to shut it down. She was on her way to court in order to contest the shut-down order when she passed a man on the street who appeared to be homeless.

It turned out the “homeless man” was a rich and famous poet and author who had read of the dilemma of Day’s homeless shelter in the newspaper. Wishing to keep his gift and his identity a secret, he dressed as a homeless man, and knowing that Dorothy Day would be heading toward court that morning, he walked up to her and passed on the exact amount needed to pay for the repairs for the homeless shelter. He gave without fanfare or recognition.

We may not have the opportunity to disguise ourselves. It may be difficult to secretly help another. We may not be able to convince one hand what the other is giving! But the point is this: *We can separate our own ego and pride from the good works in which we engage.* We can maintain our focus on God instead of the presumed increase in our own worth that our self-sacrificial actions produce.

The gospel of Jesus Christ does not include a proviso of inherent reciprocity on our part for the magnificent gifts of God. God, as he freely gives us his love, grace and mercy, neither demands nor expects back-scratching exchanges on our part by way of response.

God’s love, grace and mercy for you and me is not a business agreement wherein we mutually serve each other in a spiritually economic interchange that benefits us both. As Christ lives in us, we are empowered to pass on the gifts God has so freely given us.

In yet another passage in Matthew, Jesus instructs his disciples as they set out on a “training mission” to minister. He offers the day-to-day lifestyle advice of his kingdom and those who follow him: “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8).

Thank you for your freely given participation in the ministry of the gospel in which we are all so privileged to participate, together, as team members, brothers and sisters in faith!

Serving Him, passing on his grace to others, with you,



Greg Albrecht  
President, Plain Truth Ministries

## CWR/PTM Prayer List—June 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.

*My son, who has had more than two dozen chemo treatments is not able to work anymore, but he has not lost his faith. We really appreciate all your prayers for God's intervention.—Georgia*

*Please pray for my daughter's job situation and for me as I'm taking care of an elderly family member.—Florida*

*Please pray that my brother recovers from prostate cancer.—British Columbia, Canada*

*I injured my pinky finger with a fracture and deep laceration and a few days later I was terminated from my company. Please pray for a quick resolution of the issues, so I can be re-hired.—Arizona*

*Please pray for my mom, who is starting to undergo treatment for dementia.—Pennsylvania*

*Please pray for my blood pressure to go down. Thanks so much for all you do in this ministry.—Oklahoma*

*Please continue to keep me in your prayers. My right wrist was badly broken, requiring a plate and twelve screws. The X-rays now show that it's all healed. The blood on my brain will take a few months longer to heal. Thanks to everyone for your prayers and to God for his intervention.—North Dakota*

*Please pray for my heart condition and help the doctors figure out something to do. I need God's continuing peace and comfort at my age of 81.—Louisiana*

*I ask you to pray for all the people who serve us senior citizens in the facility where I live. Please pray that they would be encouraged and blessed as they support us.—Indiana*

*Please pray for me that I get more rest at night. Thank you for all your prayers.—Florida*

*Please pray for my two grandsons. One has severe anxiety issues and is unable to work. The other one has rotary cuff issues and may require surgery.—Kentucky*

*I so appreciate the monthly letters and magazines. My prayer is for God to continue to bless all of you at CWR/PTM with his insight.—Louisiana*

*Please pray that my blood sugar levels will stabilize. It's been a real struggle for me.—Arizona*

*Please pray for my grandson as he is facing potentially serious trouble as a middle-schooler.—Colorado*

*Please pray for my son that he will make the right decision about his family problems.—West Virginia*

*I thank God every day for you and your staff and I pray for His continued blessings on your ministry.—Florida*

*Please pray that we will all be filled with God's love, joy, peace and understanding.—California*

*Please pray for safe surgery and healing of my husband's shoulder that has been injured quite badly in a fall.—Idaho*

*The world is going through a period of darkness, despair and turmoil. I pray God continues to bless CWR/PTM's efforts to bring the true gospel of Jesus to the world.—New York*

*Please pray for my sister. Her husband was killed and she is having legal trouble with the insurance company to pay the death claim. She has five children.—Kansas*

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.