



December 2024

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

On **Monday**, a couple signed divorce papers. The end of 32 years together—now a fractured family, with three children, in-laws and many friends. What will happen now? Does this divorce matter to God? *So this is Christmas?*

On **Tuesday**, a husband and father left work, got on a bus to go home to his family. Two young people appeared, demanding his money, cell phone and wedding ring. He resisted, was beaten and stabbed and left to die as the teens left the bus. *Where was God?*

On **Wednesday**, a 60 year-old woman visited her doctor to receive news of her recent tests. She was shocked to hear her doctor inform her she had six months to live because an aggressive cancer has invaded her body. She had prayed every day for many years, mostly for other people ... and now, arriving home in tears, she asks God if he will please heal her. *So this is Christmas?*

On **Thursday**, a young policewoman was patrolling when she heard an emergency call in her squad car. She and her partner arrived to help bring peace to a domestic disturbance when it all went wrong. The irate husband pulled a gun, shooting and killing the newly married policewoman. When her husband, who also served in the police force, found out, he collapsed on the floor of their little apartment. He blamed God, who, it seemed to him, did not protect and serve his wife as much as she tried to protect and serve their community. *Where was God?*

On **Friday**, a small family gathered before the grave of Betty, a widow and a grandparent. Not counting the pastor, seven people; her two adult children, two grandchildren and three friends, gathered to grieve the loss of Betty. The pastor was comforting and said nice things about Betty, but her family and friends were all alone in their thoughts, united by a common thread of wonder—did Betty's life matter to God?

So This is Christmas? Where Was God?

On **Saturday**, Bert woke up to yet another day of depression and misery. He was barely alive in this "old folks home" and he wondered why. He was ready to give up. He asked God every night not to let him wake up the next day, but the next day, when the sun came up, Bert woke up for another day of pills and prescriptions and nurses and doctors. Bert knows there are millions just like him ... barely existing, depressed that no one seems to care—sometimes even wondering if God himself does. *So this is Christmas?*

On **Sunday** an exhausted, burned-out pastor staggered home from church. His church was shrinking—it was his life's work over the past 20 years—but he didn't seem capable of stopping the slow attrition and death of the congregation he loved and had served. He stumbled into his rocking chair while his wife made a late lunch and lifted his eyes to heaven: "Lord, do you even care what's going on?" *Where was God?*

Jesus knows. Jesus cares. Jesus loves.

When we are lost in hurt, pain and shame—when we grieve and mourn losses of loved ones—when we are victims of accidents and calamities—Jesus is right there next to us. He never leaves us. **He knows. He cares. He loves.**

Jesus is in little rooms where seniors spend their last days. Jesus is in the doctor's office when news of a terminal illness is announced. Jesus is in the next bed in a hospital ward, next to the person who has only a few days to live.

Jesus came, initially, in his incarnation as God in the flesh, for such a time as this. He came for the hurt, the pain, the suffering, the grief, the loss, the warfare and the agonies. He arrived in poverty, as a baby born in land occupied by a foreign military power. He died on a garbage heap, between two thieves. **He knows. He cares. He loves.**

Those of you, my friends, receiving this letter directly are specifically the people to whom I am writing, and to the degree I know you, and know of your needs, I am aware that you are facing similar issues.

I think of one of our PTM friends who received news that her son had been killed by his wife. After her daughter-in-law was arrested and incarcerated, her little grandchildren needed love and comfort and nurturing. I think of another PTM friend who received shocking news, some years ago, that her husband had died in a car crash. Consider the prayer list (as so many of you do—thank you!) that accompanies our monthly letters. The list of tragedy, pain and suffering is a nauseating and disturbing drumbeat of life. But thanks be to God, tragedy, pain and suffering is not endless.

The love and care of our Savior is endless and eternal—it is without boundaries and without any dimension we encounter on this side of eternity. God, revealed to us in his fullness in and through the teachings and life of Jesus, the Eternal Son of God, is love.

He came to us in his incarnation that he might personally know, that he might “taste the dust”—that he might experience our limitations, hurts and tears, only to be betrayed and die. As I wrote in our April letter, some six months ago as we focused on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, among other things *God is a crucified Jew who lived briefly, died violently and rose unexpectedly*. He did this, for us, **out of the overflow of his grace and love.**

In the same way, Jesus came to us in the most insignificant way possible—as a child born into poverty in an occupied and oppressed country. He was vulnerable from the beginning, and for that matter, a target for death by the edict of Herod, along with all other young boys age two and under born at a similar time in Bethlehem.

The beautiful gospel, the wonderful good news of the birth of Jesus is found in his weakness, humility, poverty, alienation, disenfranchisement and vulnerability. The birth of Jesus, followed by his life, his teachings, his death and his resurrection is the center and core of all we believe.

To reiterate a portion of my letter to you this past April: **IN HIS INCARNATION** God the Son, who was immortal and eternal, lived only a brief part of a human life. Long physical life was not central to his mission, nor is it to ours. He experienced life with us. **He knows, he cares, he loves.**

IN AND ON HIS CROSS God the Son revealed the fulness and totality of the love of God, willingly self-sacrificing himself as a lamb being led to the slaughter, embodying for us what the eternal and forever love, grace and mercy and forgiveness of God is all about. **He knows, he cares, he loves.**

IN AND BY HIS RESURRECTION God the Son rose from the dead, becoming our risen Lord, offering to live his risen life in us, and in so doing demonstrated he did far more than merely die—he defeated death and the grave. **He knows, he cares, he loves.**

An author once catalogued the most beautiful messages humans will ever hear, including “I love you”—“It’s a boy! It’s a girl!”—“Come home. All is forgiven”—“You passed the exam”—“Will you marry me?”—and he ended his list with “Merry Christmas!”

“Merry Christmas” means: **He knows, he cares, he loves.**

In an old legendary tale, a king had a dream. In his dream, he saw a huge pair of scales. The scales reached from the earth to the sky. On one side of the scales was a massive pile of gold, diamonds, precious jewels, beautiful homes and castles, huge farms filled with crops—all symbols of earthly, material power and possessions. On the other side of the scale was a nest of straw.

The riches on one side of the scale were so heavy and seemingly precious and important that they tipped the scales down to earth while the seemingly light and insignificant nest of straw on the others side of the balances was high in the air, so high it escaped the attention of people.

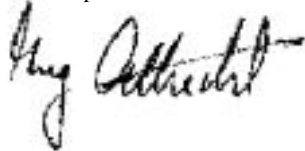
Then a woman came down from the heavens with a baby in her arms. She put the baby in the nest of straw. The scales started to move. The baby in the nest of straw outweighed the gold, jewels, riches and mansions! Then the king saw the baby touch the earth, and the material possessions and treasures so valued by the inhabitants of earth were now insignificant, irrelevant and inconsequential.

When Jesus was born, God came to this earth and tipped the scales. He turned everything upside down, so that what was once of great value (and still is for those who do not accept, embrace and know the love and grace of God) was now of little or no lasting value, while a little baby, born in a manger, into poverty, oppression and occupation, became the most valued, important priority of all life—for that was God in that pile of straw!

Whatever the challenges, whatever the suffering, whatever the loss, whatever the pain, whatever the tragedy—this is the time for you to remember the most beautiful words (actually the most beautiful *Word!*)—the most beautiful truth and reality of all: **He knows. He cares. He loves.**

Merry Christmas to you and yours!

In His precious and Holy name,



Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

CWR/PTM Prayer List—December 2024

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.

I'm 85 years old and I had a pin inserted in my hip six years ago. Now one of the screws is moving into the joint and causing me a lot of pain. Please pray for healing and relief.—Kentucky

Please pray for all those impacted by devastating wildfires in the western United States and elsewhere.—California

Please continue to pray for me. I had an aneurism in the main aorta of my heart, and the doctors aren't sure if there's anything they can do because of where it's located.—Louisiana

Thank you for all the prayers for those who are hurting and suffering. I'm so grateful for all you do.—Michigan

My wife fell down the stairs and she is suffering with pain in her head, shoulders and back. Please pray for her. —Indiana

Please pray for my brother-in-law who is battling alcohol and substance abuse.—Oregon

Please pray for my friend who struggles with continuing heart problems. And please continue to pray for all those who are suffering from war, famine and disease around the world.—New York

Please pray for my battle with anxiety, worry and paranoia. Pray for God's comfort and peace.—Manitoba, Canada

Please pray for Christians being persecuted all over the world.—Rhode Island

Please pray for guidance and wisdom in making decisions for my future, now that I'm retired.—Maryland

Please pray for my brother who is in a nursing home and my sister who has an eye disease.—Kentucky

Please pray for my wife's struggle with dementia. Pray that she can have peace and not agitation.—California

Please pray for my husband who was recently diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gehrig's) disease.—Maine

Please pray for my health. I'm having trouble getting appointments to see the specialists I need to see.—Alabama

Let us pray for peace on earth and for one another—we're all brothers and sisters in Christ.—Minnesota

Please pray for me, as I have high blood pressure and a nervous condition. Thanks in advance for your prayers.—Virginia

Please pray for our nation! I pray for everyone at CWR/PTM... may God continue to bless this work.—Colorado

Please pray for my troubles with high blood pressure, arthritis and kidney issues. I'm in a lot of pain and it hurts for me to walk due to the arthritis.—North Carolina

Please pray for my wife's heart problem. The doctors are having trouble determining the exact issue, even after inserting several probes.—Oklahoma

Please pray for my father who is 90 years old and is struggling with various health issues.—New York

Please pray for healing in my right leg. I still have complications from a triple heart bypass surgery I had five years ago.—Louisiana

Please continue to pray for my son to stay sober and pray for his marriage to be strengthened.—Arizona

Please pray for healing of my health issues including my vision troubles.—South Carolina

My 14-year-old grandson was in a three-wheeler wreck, crushing his face. Doctors say he will be blind in one eye.—Louisiana

Please pray for my grandson who is struggling with drug addiction, and for my niece who has bone and breast cancer.—Kentucky

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.