

PLAIN TRUTH®

CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION®

2018...Setting Our Sights On the Horizon

By Greg Albrecht

The need for the Christ-centered, grace-based ministry of CWR/PTM is as great as it ever has been! The need is NOW! We can't wait for tomorrow—the hunger for the grace of God is staggering, the darkness of religious captivity is horrendous and the cries from slaves of legalistic religion, who desperately need freedom in Christ, is deafening! Can you see? Can you hear?

The words of Jesus to his disciples ring true to us in this New Year of 2018: *Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest* (John 4:35).

We have closed the books on 2017, and now we **set our sights on the horizon** of our collective ministry, looking forward to serving Jesus Christ in the months ahead of us. Many of you are such

gracious and generous supporters—thank you so very much!

Supporting Our Collective Mission

As we look forward into 2018 together, we not only anticipate serving old friends—we also look forward to sharing the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ with many new friends all over this world! But as we anticipate serving more people, we must also plan for more expenditures.

Paul exhorts us, *The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For Scripture says, "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages"* (1 Timothy 5:17-18).

Paul encourages and admonishes support for elders who *direct the affairs of the church well*. This is no blanket, all encompassing, absolute directive about a requirement to

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give and donate. In keeping with all New Testament teaching about giving, Paul does not demand "tithing." As Christ-followers, we make our own decision about how and when we give, and as we do, we are motivated by the mind of Christ and transformed hearts, not "reluctantly or under compulsion" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

With the word "**well**" in 1 Timothy 5:17, Paul introduces the thought that

our giving can and perhaps should be careful, selective and dependent upon how Christ-centered and grace-based a ministry or church might be. What a particular spiritual entity might have represented to us in the past is not in view here—whether we were baptized or married in a particular building, or whether our grandparents were members of a church or part of a ministry—is not relevant to Paul's encouragement about giving. Paul is not talking about supporting a social club where people feel comfortable because everyone has similar past memories and interests. He is talking about supporting a meaningful and relevant, Christ-centered ministry or church.

Wise and Informed Choices

Based on Paul's qualification of "*well*," *we can then safely assume that we should make wise and*

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"We Believe..."

***We believe in the Father—
Creator of heaven and earth.***

***We believe in Jesus—the Eternal
Son of God, who was incarnated
through God the Holy Spirit, fully
God and fully human, who
suffered, was crucified and buried,
who rose again and ascended to
heaven and shall come again in his
kingdom of which there is no end.***

***We believe in the Holy Spirit, our
Comforter and Counselor, who
together with the Father and Son,
is one God and who lives within
those who believe.***

***We believe in the universal body
of Christ, composed of all who are
in Christ, whether visible or
invisible to one another, a
universal body that transcends
any and all earthly organizations
and denominations that are legally
incorporated as churches.***

***We believe in the forgiveness of
sins—undeserved, by grace, not by
merit.***

***We believe in the Resurrection—
Jesus rose from the dead, and as
our risen Lord he lives in us now
and will come again and resurrect
the dead in Christ.***

***We believe in Life Everlasting—
eternal life is the gift of God.***

This "We Believe" statement is our CWR/PTM affirmation of faith. Some might call it a creed. The word "creed" comes from the Latin word "credo" which means "I believe."

By its nature, a creed is a short and succinct summary—not intended to explain all details and answer all questions.

The first three summary statements of the Apostles' Creed

and of the Nicene Creed explain the nature of the One God, who exists eternally as Three distinct divine Persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

God is one in essence and three in Person. Each divine Person is distinct, each divine Person is fully God and they exist harmoniously, in union and united as One God.

Who God is and what he is like is critically important and foundational to our faith as Christ-followers.

While no one knows the exact date of the origin of the Apostles' Creed, and while few think the actual Apostles wrote it, it is felt to be an accurate reflection of the teachings of the Apostles, thus its name "Apostles' Creed."

By linking this creed with the Apostles, the intent was to communicate its direction and intent coming directly from the disciples, who were eye-witnesses to all that Jesus taught and did.

The Apostles' Creed is probably the earliest and it is certainly the shortest of these two most well known and widely accepted summaries of Christian belief.

The Nicene Creed dates to the Council of Nicea, originally convened in 325 A.D. (its official councils and meetings continued for well over 100 years) because of further questions and disagreement about the Triune God (they asked specifically whether Jesus and the Holy Spirit are equally and eternally Persons of the Triune God, or somehow less than God the Father).

"Believe" and "belief" are foundational terms and concepts in these early Christian creeds because belief is central to life in Christ.

John highlights *belief* in that all time favorite and well-known, much-memorized summary of the gospel in his Gospel—the Gospel of John, chapter three and verse sixteen:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him...

Belief is central to our faith—what **We Believe** is the absolute core and center, the bull's-eye of our faith.

We Believe in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit as the basis of our faith, with all other practices and traditions not as important as being centered in the Triune God.

C.S. Lewis said this of our faith and belief as Christ-followers:

Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance, and if true, is of infinite import. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important.

Of course, memorizing and reciting words of the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed is not one and the same as heartfelt faith and belief. External behavior and belief may flow from a deep internal spiritual oasis—but not always!

Many within the world of Christendom memorize and recite historic creeds, yet effectively deny the essence of the love of God, and do not exemplify it. Christ-followers believe in God with living faith. □

—Greg Albrecht

Join us for the complete message of "We Believe" at the audio teaching ministry of Christianity Without the Religion, the week of January 7, 2018.

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informed choices in our giving—if we believe a ministry is doing a good job proclaiming the kingdom of God and the King of the kingdom, then we want that ministry to thrive. We don't want that ministry or church to close its doors. Perhaps I am somewhat biased as I lead CWR/PTM, but it seems to me that is part of what Paul is saying as he cites the principle iterated in Deuteronomy 25:4—"do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain."

In biblical times, ears of corn were spread on a threshing floor and oxen were then walked around a pivot in the center. As the oxen walked in circles, their hooves separated the grain from the husk, thus the oxen "treaded out the grain."

Let's keep the "ox" healthy, well nourished and able to continue its work, in the case of CWR/PTM, of proclaiming *The Jesus Way*—keeping our focus on *faith alone, grace alone and Christ alone*. Let's do our part to help the "ox" proclaim *all Jesus all the time!*

The elders who direct, teach, preach and encourage a grace-based, Christ-centered path, who serve Jesus in keeping our eyes on our Chief Shepherd, are worthy Paul says, "of double honor" (1 Timothy 5:17). I don't take this to mean that elders should receive paychecks that enable them to live a life of luxury—I take the sense of Paul's teaching to speak of the quality of the Christ-centered ministry they provide.

Preaching and teaching *well* is worthy of double honor because Christ-centered guidance sets the good ship *Christianity* (and all on board) on course in the right direction.

Preaching and teaching *well* is worthy of double honor because the good ship *Christianity* needs course corrections so it doesn't run onto the rocks or hit an iceberg, spiritually speaking.

If you believe that the ongoing and



If you believe the ongoing ministries of CWR/PTM are providing and broadcasting the Bread of life to people all over this world, and doing it well, then help us continue this work!

combined ministries of CWR/PTM, with all the resources we freely provide, are desperately needed in this world, then please do what you can to support us. If you feel our combined efforts, which of course include the many expenses we have in this worldwide media ministry, are important and vital in our world today, then **please open up your heart and your checkbook.**

If you believe that CWR/PTM is "treading out" Christ-centered, grace-based grain (indeed the Bread of Life) that feeds people all over this world in the name of Jesus, then please help that "ox" keep up its work.

If you believe the ongoing ministries of CWR/PTM are publishing, providing and broadcasting the Bread of life to people all over this world, and doing it *well*, then help us continue this work!

My Request

Please give thoughtful and prayerful consideration to

- 1) continue giving, if you already are;
- 2) increase your giving, in amount and consistency, if you are able;
- 3) start giving if you have not already done so.

My dear friends,

• on behalf of all those to whom we minister, all over this world—

• on behalf of many who will never be able to give one penny to financially support our efforts, given where they live and/or the depressed economic situation that is part of their lives—

• on behalf of all those whose only contact with us is electronic—as print and postage costs prohibit us from sending printed hard copies of our resources around the world indiscriminately—

• on behalf of all those new readers and listeners we constantly hear from, who tell us our collective efforts and generous giving in the name of Jesus are helping to change and transform their lives, **don't muzzle the ox.** These new readers and listeners are indeed part of *the fields that are ripe for harvest!*

Join us as friends, partners and ambassadors of the kingdom of God—help, give, pray and contribute as you can—as Jesus inspires and moves you.

Help us help others! Pass along the grace God has given you, and as the light of Jesus shines within you, help us reflect that light in dark places all over this world!

Thank you—from the bottom of my heart,

Greg Albrecht



Reckless Love

by Greg Albrecht

Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it (Matthew 10:38-39).

When Christ-followers take up their cross and follow Jesus, losing their own interests in the greater cause of serving Jesus, by the grace of God they begin to experience the “reckless” love of God. **Reckless love** is the self-sacrificial, serving love of our Savior, and as a priority of life in Christ, **reckless love** stands opposed to a greater commitment on our part to safety and security.

Don’t get me wrong—let me clarify right away with a disclaimer! The desire for self-preservation is part of what it means to be human. It is natural to desire safety and security. The desire for self-preservation keeps us from danger and helps us avoid hazards that could be detrimental to our health.

But the desire to protect and preserve ourselves can grow into a priority that threatens our devotion and service to Jesus. *Safety and security are of course opposed to losing life for any reason—including losing one’s life for the sake of Jesus.*

“Losing” one’s life in the name of Jesus is “reckless love.”

Enslaved to Finding Security and Safety or Being Free in Christ?

Though some legalistic Christians may define God’s grace in such a way, when we speak of “reckless” love we are not speaking of a foolhardy, daredevil and irresponsible life. The **reckless love** of which we speak is the willingness to lose our life in serving Christ, whatever that may entail.

When safety and security become our priority in life, above all else, then we are doomed to a life of slavery rather than freedom. Safety and security, as the number one priority in any life, will lead to fear and bondage—ensuring a life based on this life and this life alone. Safety and security as the priority in life can become a god other than the one true God.

But Jesus, in his cross and through his resurrection, presents another value—another perspective—another way of living life. Jesus tells us that our only hope, if we accept God’s invitation to live in his grace and love, is to spiritually die to our own desires and goals (Galatians 2:20) so that we might live in Jesus, and he in us. Our ultimate goal as Christ-followers is

to set aside competing interests that war with our service to Jesus. Our ultimate hope is Jesus, who, when we die in and with him, resurrects us to new life—he becomes our risen Lord.

Jesus tells us that he has conquered death and the grave, and we need not live fearfully, as if our own inevitable physical death is the end of everything. Because of our risen Lord we are free to live lives *out of and because of* the **reckless love** of God.

That’s why Jesus said, *Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it (Matthew 10:39).*

Reckless love is making oneself vulnerable, which of course is the very definition of why God in Christ came to this earth, and what he did while he was here, culminating in the cross of Christ and his resurrection.

The love of God, as we see revealed in and through Jesus, is **self-abandoning love**. We see Jesus who recklessly gave himself away in love—he didn’t “save” his life, living it cautiously out of fear that he might lose it, but rather, gave himself away in love.

Everyone knows that dying on a cross is unsafe—but that’s exactly what Jesus did. Jesus’

death on the cross is the perfect illustration and demonstration of God's reckless love.

As Christ-followers (as Jesus lives in us and as we live in him) we need not hoard our love. In fact God's love and grace by its very definition is dynamic—it is going someplace—it is alive! As Christ-followers we give away the love of God, passing on the grace he has given us!

The Reckless Samaritan

During these turbulent times we now live in, fear pervades our world. We fear terrorists. We fear the North Koreans and the Iranians. We fear cancer. We fear criminals and the crimes they commit.

Fear breeds fear, and it can produce a potentially spiritually unbalanced commitment to safety and security. When we are paralyzed by fear, we can turn security and safety into a god. Fear enslaves us, as we hunker down in places where we feel safe. Fear depletes us of energy and courage. Fear is contagious—fear breeds more fear.

Of course, perfect and absolute security and safety that will make us immortal is impossible because humans are frail and mortal and prone to accidents and disease. When all is said and done, earthly safety nets are a mirage. No military—no matter how technologically superior and overwhelming in size and strength—provides ultimate safety and security to its citizens. History has proven that lesson over and over again.

We build safe cars, but people still die in accidents. We spend enormous amounts of money and energy developing new medicines, but people still die. We pray and we give and we study our Bibles and we try to be the kind of person we believe God wants us to be, but bad things still happen to us.

Consider the message and lesson of the Good Samaritan, considering his actions we might also call him the **Reckless Samaritan**. You remember the story—the Samaritan happens on a man who has been mugged, beaten and left for dead (Luke 10:25-37).

Before the "**Reckless Samaritan**" came by on the road, others happened on this poor, unfortunate crime victim—including two religious authorities—a priest and a Levite. These two religious professionals understood the dangers of stopping to help, thinking this man was acting as if he was in desperate need, but in actual fact other robbers may be waiting in the bushes to rob them. Perhaps they reasoned that they should keep themselves safe so they could serve in their jobs as religious professionals. They decided to *pass by on the other side* (Luke 10:31-32).

But the **Reckless Samaritan** saw this man in need and cast all caution to the wind—he determined the need of the man to be greater than his own need for safety and security.

In the interest of serving and loving his fellow man, he expressed **reckless love**. Those in the original audience who heard this parable no doubt characterized the **Reckless Samaritan** as acting imprudently or even foolishly, much as those who are determined to live by God's grace are often condemned by legalistic Christ-less religion as disregarding and disrespecting law.

Free in Christ to Live by the "Reckless" Love and Grace of God

When we are free in Christ (Galatians 5:1) we live by God's grace—which, like the wind, can be unpredictable. As Christ-followers we live as we are directed and led by Jesus Christ. **Reckless love**, as we experience it in and through the risen life of our Lord Jesus Christ, it not one long grinding life of "you must do that" and "you ought to do this" and "do this and you will be rewarded."

Reckless love as we serve Jesus, is not a predictable life—it is a life dedicated to serving others in his name. Freedom in Christ, the reckless love of God, is the life we live once we say "yes" to Christ, surrendering religious notions of



trying to earn something from God on the basis of our hard work and performance.

When Jesus empowers us to love others as he loves us, he is living God's **reckless love** within us—he is inviting us to a way of life where we give lavishly and generously, in such a way that we love others unconditionally.

Reckless love is the love of God which loves without expectation of return in kind—**reckless love** is love that is given and extended with no guarantee of a similar love being received. *God's love is so reckless and vulnerable and self-abandoning that it loves that which is unlovable, and that is the very thing that makes God's love what it is.*

And, thank God, when we talk about God's love being so reckless and vulnerable and self-abandoning that it loves that which is unlovable, that unlovable is not "them"—it's you and me! **Thank God for his reckless love!**

When we live in Christ and he in us, we are no longer enslaved to qualifications, calculations and self-protection. This is the **reckless love** of God. This is the life of trusting in our crucified and risen Jesus of Nazareth.

The **reckless love** of God, as it is lived out in our lives in the life of our risen Lord, is not a life determined to please and appease God governed by distress, wariness or worry. The **reckless love** of God is illustrated in our lives when Christ moves us, empowering us to step out and love others, as he loves us. □

"Good News" or "Fake News"?

CWR/PTM has been challenging the "fake news" of Christ-less religion for many years, helping those we serve to fill in the blanks with the "good news" of God's amazing love and grace.

Here are just a few letters of thanks we received this past year which highlight the impact CWR/PTM is having on the lives of many people around the world.

I just want to give thanks and appreciation to our Heavenly Father for the teaching that you provide through daily radio, and all your other resources available on the Internet. It really helps me out of my deeply rooted religious thinking. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for all you do at CWR/PTM.—Finland

Thank you for the tons of material you have sent us over the years. There are not enough words to thank you for all you have contributed to our lives and our authentic Christian growth in amazing grace, knowledge and understanding. May our awesome God continue to bless this work! —Alaska

I don't know what would have happened to my life if God had not brought you into it with your wonderful news of the love of God, the grace of God and the amazing life He has planned for us. I am now living in a wonderful world of peace, joy and love I never could have dreamed of. Please keep spreading the good news!—Kentucky

I've learned more from PTM/CWR than I've learned in a denominational church for over 32 years. I now have a wonderful relationship with God. Thank you! —Texas

Thanks for your wonderful work for our Lord. You present the gift of grace with clarity and simplicity like no other ministry.—Ontario, Canada

I thank you so much for all you do at CWR/PTM. May our great God continue to bless you and your co-workers for the good you are doing through this ministry. —Louisiana

I will forever and always thank our God for His inspiration,

encouragement, comfort, love and warmth and for his very peace working in and through Plain Truth Ministries.—Virginia

I don't know what I would do without the spiritual knowledge that PTM has led me to these many years. The fog in my brain is starting to clear from my past. I never get tired of thanking you at PTM for the inspiration you provide. You mean so very much to me.—Florida

Thank you to everyone at PTM/CWR! I appreciate all the articles that encourage me to question the religious status quo and to prove all things and hold fast to that which is good—and that is Jesus Christ alone! I am so grateful for your ministry and for the ONE and ONLY. —Wisconsin

I enjoy reading CWRm and Plain Truth magazines and your monthly letters—they are so encouraging and enriching. I am so glad for your ministry. God is using you to reach many people and I pray that you are truly blessed. I am enclosing a donation for your ministry, focusing on God's grace. Keep up the good work.—Ohio

We deeply appreciate your donations and prayers, helping to support the ministry of CWR/PTM. Please continue to **help us help others** experience the life-changing good news of God's love and grace, as you are able.

Thank you and may God bless you!

FAKE NEWS?

Fake

Genuine

TH_PLAIN TR_TH...

and nothing but.

Christianity Without the Religion
Plain Truth Ministries

FILLING IN
THE BLANKS

CWR/PTM



A Bond of Friendship

Bless the Lord who crowns you with tender mercies (Psalm 103, NKJV).

I grew up in a remote area of northern Wisconsin, our closest neighbors Native Americans. Some three miles away was the home of another Native American, Mr. O'Mara, where my father took tools and farm machinery to be repaired. My schooling began at the one-room Gaslyn Creek school. Among my two dozen school mates were Beulah and Duane Arbuckle. Like the rest of us, they were poor, their parents trying to eke a living out of hardscrabble farmland. But unlike the rest of us, they too were Native Americans.

The little school closed after my first grade year and along with my siblings, I continued my education in the town of Spooner. So also did Beulah and Duane. Younger than they, I never really got to know them, but I remember feeling sorry for them because they were Indians.

How things have changed in the past half-century. Today my granddaughter Kayla takes great pride in the fact that she is 1/64 Native American. Her great grandfather (one-eighth native) grew up not even knowing about his heritage because his mother was so ashamed.

No longer. He collects material and sends it to Kayla and she files it away for a major college term project. And among her various self-descriptions on Facebook, she lists Cherokee. Actually, from my side of the family she's approximately 1/64 Russian, but she makes no mention of that. And I don't blame her. I would gladly trade my Russian blood for Native American—perhaps Choctaw if I could choose.

There are many reasons for my esteem for the Choctaw and their advanced civilization that pre-dated European settlers on the American continent. But there is one story that has particularly captured my attention.

The year was 1847, early spring in the impoverished Choctaw settlements of Oklahoma. News had come of the devastating Irish potato famine—the “Great Hunger” as it was often called. Although the terrible potato

blight had begun some years earlier, it was not widely published until a journalist reported appalling eye-witness accounts of children and whole families found dead of starvation on the dirt floors of their thatched hovels.

Some of those who heard the news imagined these Irish peasants were too lazy to do the arduous work of providing for themselves and their children. The Choctaw, however, saw it very differently. Indeed, the Choctaws were the first of the so-called “Five Civilized Tribes” to be uprooted from their homes and driven hundreds of miles on a death march to a land in the West that was strange to them. Unlike certain other native tribes, they were deemed “civilized” because of their advanced culture. They possessed homes, farms, schools, civic government, and had lived for centuries in what is now known as the Deep South. But white men (and women) were greedy for land.

Backed by the military and President Andrew Jackson, they were forced to leave the only homes they had ever known. Thousands starved, their bones strewn along the Trail of Tears. In fact, of the more than twenty thousand Choctaws who began that forced march, fewer than half survived the journey. Their once prosperous culture was devastated.

Those who arrived in Oklahoma might have wished they had died along the way. Poverty plagued the tribe for decades and continues today. Thus it is worth noting that only sixteen years later, when the Choctaws learned of the starvation and poverty in Ireland, they called a meeting in Scullyville, Oklahoma where it was decided to collect funds for the suffering and starving people of Ireland.

Out of their own poverty they raised \$170—truly sacrificial giving—and sent it on to the American relief organization for Ireland. No ordinary gift—one still remembered and celebrated today.

Tender mercies: 170 dollars, 170 years later—a bond of friendship between two tribes, the Choctaw and Irish. □

—Ruth Tucker



Quotes & Connections



"Love means to love that which is unlovable, or it is no virtue at all; forgiving means to pardon that which is unpardonable, or it is no virtue at all."—G.K. Chesterton

"The disciple of Christ cannot lose: when he gives all, he gains all; when he loses his life, he finds it." —David Watson

"The historic Christian doctrine of the divinity of Christ does not simply mean that Jesus is like God. It is far more radical than that. It means God is like Jesus."—Elton Trueblood, 1900-1994. Dr. Trueblood was a Quaker author and theologian who served as chaplain at Stanford and Harvard.

The love described in 1 John 4 is "...incomparably the greatest psychotherapeutic agent—something that professional psychiatry cannot of itself create, focus or release." —Gordon Allport (1897-1967) Dr. Allport spent virtually his entire academic career at Harvard, as an undergrad and then graduate student, and then on the Harvard faculty from 1930-1967. He is regarded as a founding figure of personality psychology.

"Love is an abyss of illumination, a mountain fire. It is the condition of angels, the progress of eternity." —St. John Climacus

The CWR Bible Survey is a fascinating journey through the 66 books we call the Bible—a journey designed to help you discover the good news that God has for each of us. Available only in pdf form online at www.ptm.org/survey.



Coming Soon!

From the trials of flight training to the triumphs of flying for one of the world's great airlines for 30 years, Captain Grant Corriveau has been continually *Uplifted* by his love of flying, and by those with whom he has shared his experiences en route. His memoirs share that *Uplift* with readers.



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Plain Truth Ministries proclaims Christianity without the religion. We express our Christ-centered ministry as *faith alone, grace alone and Christ alone*.

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