



GREG ALBRECHT

*“Can I do this faith journey on my own?”*

**Q**uestion from a reader: Just over three years ago, I finally realized that the reason I could not find a spiritual home was not my supposed rebellion but that I was seeing through the sham of religion.

My query is this: can I do this faith journey on my own? I am 73 years old and live alone. I have a precious, close relationship with God, but I feel guilty for not being “in fellowship.” The thought of church makes me physically ill (there is a very serious reason for that reaction).

Greg’s book, *Rejecting Religion—Embracing Grace* has helped me to work through many issues that came with the realization I had been well and truly duped by fundamental evangelicalism. It’s been a huge journey!

**R**esponse from Greg: While religious traditions, buildings, rituals and ceremonies are not necessary in the life of a Christ-follower, loving God and loving neighbor are central products of the life of our risen Lord—products of the love he lives in

us. We are not alone because Christ is in us, and his life in us will spread his light into the lives of others. Others we positively affect are those most naturally in our lives—as common as people we meet shopping, at doctor’s offices, commuting to and from destinations, etc. Our Christ-centered dispositions then lead us to exude his love—to be kind, gentle and patient. While such a Spirit-led life does not guarantee deep and lasting friendships, it will produce relationship at some level—as simple as having a cup of tea with another. Your faith journey may then be shared with others informally, with or without the benefit of an organization. You may share your faith in a variety of ways—we speak of this mutuality as fellowship. If you never attend or join a brick-and-mortar church again, you might still find, share and give such fellowship through joining and serving a charitable group or volunteer work to help others.

**R**eaders’ reply: Your words certainly resonate with this journey I am on.

When I say “living alone” I must add that I live in what is called here an “over-50s active lifestyle resort,” a community of about 200 people within a small semi-rural community. Since moving here about 20 months ago, I have sought out residents who claim to be “Christian.” What an interesting exercise! None of them want to move from their particular brand, so each remains separate. Given your comments on how I can express God’s love and acceptance of all people, I now understand why I can relate to each of them, regardless of their brand, including those who have no desire for God. I relate as a follower of Jesus. Here in my community, I also have the privilege of being the editor of our monthly newsletter—through which I have been sharing God’s love and joy as much as appropriately possible for a diverse group. The response has been positive and it has been encouraging to have meaningful conversations with many people about tough times they face and their understanding of God.

As part of my “coming out” from fundamental evangelicalism, I have become



much more relaxed in talking with those who give little thought to God—the “wretched sinners” we used to avoid like the plague unless we planned to convert them to Jesus. But those people are far more respectful and accepting of me than those with whom I’ve tried so hard to connect within churches. They are open in their conversations with me. God has been working with me in ways I had not known, in keeping with his promise that he knows what he is doing with me. After chatting the other night with a few people from a club, I was concerned about mixing with those so far removed from church.

But that was exactly what Jesus did, and he was accused of being a glutton and drunkard, friend of sinners (Matthew 11:18-19), and he went on doing just what he was doing.

My question has always been, “How can all of us, in and out of the church, come to know Jesus if we’re afraid to talk about him?”

**R**esponse from Greg: I am thankful to read your thoughts about how the light of Christ may shine in and through you to others who do not consider themselves “Christian.”

As you know, sometimes such folks are much

easier to talk with since they do not have “as many barnacles on their boat.” Jesus presents counter-intuitive ways of serving him, ways we don’t even notice as formal moments of sharing or teaching, but as our normal day-to-day way of life—indeed, the *Jesus Way*. We live out this way of life—our life in Christ—because Jesus regards all men and women as brothers and sisters, not only those who attend worship services in a church building or pray a certain way.

We love the world because God loves the world (John 3:16).

Of course, that means we love both those who attend formal church services and those who don’t, those who identify as Christians and those who do not. We love all because to do any less is, by definition, not following Jesus.

The Church is not a building to which we travel but the life of Christ, the hope of glory, shared in mutual love. By God’s grace, we are, together, the body of Christ, loving all, as we can, where we can, without discretion or exclusion. □

*Among Greg Albrecht’s leadership roles at Plain Truth Ministries, he is passionate about responding as a pastor to those who journey with us.*

“WHY DOES HE  
EAT WITH TAX  
COLLECTORS  
AND  
SINNERS?”  
MARK 2:16

Art by Sieger Koder

