



January 2023

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation is come: The old has gone, the new is here!—2 Corinthians 5:17

This New Year of 2023 is a great time to remember that we, as Christ-followers, and CWR/PTM Friends and Partners, are friends of Jesus and we are, by God's grace, New Creations! God creates us as new creations out of what we were. He makes us "something" in terms of our spiritual worth when before we were, by comparison, "nothing."

He finds us and we discover him, in the process we lose "the old" and we gain, by his grace, "the new"! **We become new, which truly is something, by ceasing to be what was old, that which was nothing in comparison.**

Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.—Mark 8:34-35

Just before saying this, Mark tells us that Jesus had told his disciples that he would go to Jerusalem and "suffer many things"... "be killed and after three days rise again" (vs. 31).

Peter wasn't having any of that kind of defeatist talk. He challenged the logic of Jesus dying—that would be losing!

As Peter perceived it (indeed, how humans at large perceive it) the kingdom we are promised is filled with winning—with victory over obstacles and conquest over trouble and difficulty.

We hear a great deal of that kind of talk in Christendom today—but not enough about picking up our cross and following Jesus.

Jesus told Peter to get out of his way (vs. 33). Jesus told Peter the kingdom was bigger and deeper than anything Peter could possibly imagine.

The kingdom of God, Jesus told Peter and the rest of the disciples, involves the entire world being turned upside down. If they wanted to achieve greatness and win in this life, then they were following the wrong teacher.

If they wanted to win spiritual battles by virtue of their own initiatives and energies, if they perceived the kingdom of God as an achievement they could gain by their own efforts, then they were dead wrong (and so are we, if that's our take on the kingdom of God).

Jesus told the disciples and all who listened to him that the gospel was all about losing their lives for the kingdom because he was the only One who could transform them from the sick, dying and toxic world, both physically and spiritually, and make them NEW.

No amount of good works on our part can move us out of the old into the new. If our

focus is on qualifying for the kingdom of God, then we are only digging a deeper and deeper hole of spiritual futility.

We become new, which truly is something, by ceasing to be what was old, that which was nothing in comparison.

Before Jesus—before grace—we were dead spiritually. Now we are alive in Christ, as our risen Lord lives in us.

As Martin Luther said, “The law says ‘do this’ and it is never done. Grace says, ‘believe in this,’ and everything is already done.”

The good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that the kingdom of God is a gift of God’s amazing grace, for those who surrender all, for those who trust in faith alone, grace alone and Christ alone.

The good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that the kingdom of God doesn’t accept the counterfeit money printed by religion—religious money is not accepted in God’s kingdom. Religious money won’t punch your ticket for the kingdom of heaven.

We don’t gain the kingdom of God as a result of using the money we earn in religious salt mines to buy our way into it. We are given the kingdom of God by virtue of God’s grace—the kingdom of God cannot be gained or earned or deserved – only given.

We need not spend our lives in fear worried if we measure up one day, somehow, some way, we might barely squeak by the Pearly Gates into God’s kingdom of heaven. **We live by faith, not by fear! We live *by faith in the Son of God, who loves us and gave himself for us!***

We hear a lot of talk today about how people identify. They seem to think they have a choice to identify as someone other than who they are, whether that be in terms of gender or race.

The truth is we all have a choice as to how we identify, but the only One who can transform us from who we are into who we can be, in Christ, is God.

I prefer to speak of the high calling God extends to us as following Christ. To use the language so common today, I identify... as a Christ-follower. That means I willingly lose all that I am so that God might transform me into a NEW CREATION.

We become new, which truly is something, by ceasing to be what was old, that which was nothing in comparison.

While I secondarily also identify as a Christian, the definition of Christian is so muddled and muddied—it’s so confusing and complicated—I favor the clarification that the term “Christ-follower” brings. Unfortunately, in the minds of so many people, the name “Christian” brings many negative ideas to mind, and sadly, we realize those ideas are the product of many within Christendom at large.

For the same reason, I refuse to identify as a religious person, for I do not perceive my relationship with God as defined by things I might do to gain God’s love and acceptance and to maintain it.

I am an ir-religious Christ-follower...what about you?

I am, by the words of Jesus, his friend (John 15:13-15) and so are you!

I also recall that our choice to “identify” as a Christ-follower is only because Jesus chooses us first (John 15:16). We do not find Jesus, he finds us. We do not impress Jesus with our goodness, he reaches down and scoops us out of the gutter, mess and pigpen of our lives and offers to cleanse us and transform us—if we will accept his transformation!

May we together join our hearts and our hands as we move forward into this New Year, following Jesus. May we resolve to yield ourselves to him, to leave the old behind and be all that he has transformed us to be—NEW CREATIONS IN CHRIST!

May this New Year of 2023 be a wonderful year of serving in his name, as together we join our hearts and hands in the ongoing work of Plain Truth Ministries in proclaiming Jesus, the Center of our faith.

With grateful hearts we give thanks for the beauty and majesty of the gospel, a mysterious (to the human mind) revelation of God’s love and grace.

With grateful hearts we resolve to move forward into this New Year, following the Center of our faith, who is Jesus, the One who holds all things together. Truly, in him we move and breathe and have our being!

Your fellow Christ-follower and brother in Christ,



Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

PS. We’re pleased to share this note of thanks from a friend in Texas, who is being blessed by this ministry YOU help to provide!

I just wanted to say I spent a great deal of my life persuaded that Jesus was dead. This caused me a lot of grief, which I’m still struggling with at times. But thanks to CWR/PTM for being there and reminding me that Jesus lives and because He lives, I can face tomorrow. I am moved by your consistent message of “all Jesus all the time” and I am maturing with that knowledge every day.

CWR/PTM Prayer List—January 2023

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 granddaughter's husband who was in a head-on car collision. He has lots of cuts and bruises and a broken right leg. The surgery on his leg took four hours and his leg is still very painful.—Ohio

Thanks for your prayers for my son who is still doing chemo for the cancer throughout his body. Please also pray for me that I, as his mother, will be able to take care of him. I'm age 85, and my son is 60.—Georgia

Please pray for my son and his family. They are having a rough time, adding to his alcohol abuse.—Arizona

We are so thankful for your teaching about God's love. We pray for everyone involved with PTM.—Puerto Rico

My prayer request is for complete healing of my eyes, body and soul. Thank you for your prayers!—Florida

Some time ago, I had a life-threatening pulmonary embolism (blood clot in my lungs), and now I'm on a blood thinner for life. Please pray an upcoming scan will show the clot is completely gone.—Texas

Thank you for your prayers concerning my health situation. I had a lot of tests to see if I might be able to have a heart procedure done. I'm waiting to hear back from the doctors.—Louisiana

Thanks for all of your resources (printed and on-line). They are very much appreciated and truly helpful and uplifting. We pray that God will continue to bless your efforts in spreading his Good News!—Ontario, Canada

Please pray for me as I have several health issues, including diabetes, OAB and prostate.—Missouri

Please pray for my granddaughter who is going to have a baby soon and for my other granddaughter who is moving to Tennessee.—Arkansas

Thank you for your much-appreciated work. It's a breath of fresh air in this seriously polluted earth. I pray for your ministry always.—Washington

Please pray for me... I'm so messed up spiritually and worried about the future.—North Carolina

It's such a blessing to receive your monthly letters and magazines. Your ministry renews my mind and gives me so much encouragement, since my husband died two years ago and my son a year ago. May God bless your great work of spreading the gospel all over the world. My prayers are with all of you at PTM.—Louisiana

Please continue to pray for more rain here in the Southwestern US. And please continue to pray for my physical and spiritual health. Thank you so much!—Arizona

Please pray for an end to the war and all the suffering in the Ukraine.—Maine

Please pray that I will be able to obtain a VA loan to purchase the house I've been living in for the past ten years. Thank you for your prayers.—Louisiana

Please pray for all the wildfire victims in California, hurricane victims in Florida and all the flood victims in Texas and elsewhere.—Texas

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.