



October 2023

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

“If some great catastrophe is not announced every morning, we feel a certain void. ‘Nothing in the paper today,’ we sigh.”—Paul Valery, French poet, 1871-1945

Long before the advent of cable news, with its 24-hour news cycle—long before our frantic and frenzied culture where “news” is immediately reported (never mind the factual details, because networks and “news” sources want to say “you heard it here first”) Paul Valery commented on the oh-so-human tendency to love hearing and reading the horrifying and the sensational.

“If it bleeds, it leads” was popularized a little more than a century ago by newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst and has been the mantra of newsrooms for many decades now. *“If it bleeds, it leads”* panders to and produces fear-based media reporting – reporting that initially arrests the attention of the viewer or reader and then seduces them into becoming a captive to the kind of stories it tells and the one-sided perspective the “news” source offers.

“News” is a money-making industry, in which truth and facts receive less importance and priority, because what sells is of utmost importance. Thus, watching the “news” on cable television can be a risky pursuit, undermining physical, emotional and spiritual health. Unwittingly, people are being used and made merchandise of in order to serve those who profit from the enterprise of “news.” Watching the “news” on cable television can become an addictive drug, which is exactly what the networks are selling. “News” has become the drug of choice for millions of “informed” North Americans.

“If it bleeds, it leads” actually leads to dehumanizing results. Gruesome and appalling stories can cause viewers and readers to become desensitized, hardening them to suffering and heartache. The German word *schadenfreude* describes the sickening emotional response of enjoying the suffering of others who are not on the same “team” or “side” or who represent a different race or culture or nationality. In our time the way in which our media “reports” what is generically called “news” can lead to *schadenfreude*.

“If it bleeds, it leads” reduces the human capacity for empathy and compassion, and dulls or even deadens love and mercy. Fear-based “news” preys on our anxieties and then holds us hostage. It is in the best interests of the “news” business to keep readers and viewers in a perpetual state of anxiety and fear! Not that long ago news reporting involved factual, well-researched accounts of what happened, with commentary that was fair, balanced and grounded by integrity. Journalists were taught to present both sides of a story, but today, in many cases, one side and one side alone is presented to readers and viewers who read and listen because they desire to hear their biases and prejudices confirmed.

The devious practices of “newspapers” sold at the check-out stands of grocery stores have now swamped and overcome the conventional news media at large, because stories that shock and startle drive ratings. Salacious tales that arouse and provoke (often containing fiction) sell, while

careful accounts filled with as much objectivity as possible are ignored and passed over.

Fear-based media is now such a staple of our culture so that, as Paul Valery said, for many, if a day passes during which they do not read, see or hear of a catastrophe or electrifying story of some kind, they feel a certain void. **Fear-based media fills us with junk food for the soul.**

Never forget! There's always political and religious advantage to be wrung out of old and new fears. Many seize power and advantage and maintain it on the premise that many people need someone to hate, someone to condemn and someone to blame for all the unfairness, injustice and misery that faces them every day. The power brokers of politics, the economy and religion produce a scapegoat for the masses to hate, never mind if the scapegoat is real or imagined. Don't fall for their dirty, manipulative tricks! Instead:

"Cast all your anxiety upon him for he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

Our prayer to our heavenly Father is for our daily bread, not our daily dread! (Matthew 6:11)

Here are three Christ-focused and Christ-centered steps you might ponder, when it comes to your exposure and addiction to what masquerades as "news" in our world today:

- **Consider** limiting your exposure to "news" media.

"News junkies" can find themselves in a negative state of mind, depressed about the future, and overly worried about things about which they have no control.

Am I advising that we "hide our necks in the sand" and pretend that this world is not one completely mixed-up place? No, not at all. But I am suggesting that we are what we eat, spiritually and emotionally, and junk food "news" doesn't make for a healthy person.

When we stop and ponder our world, and stop listening to and believing those who influence and make merchandise of us, we discover the world keeps on going, even without our stewing and fretting. We cannot stop the world, but we can remove ourselves from the merry-go-round, the hamster wheel that goes nowhere fast.

We can gain perspective and realize the world will keep on doing what it is doing, with or without our worry and anxiety, and conclude we cannot change this sad old world. We can give thanks that God, in his wisdom and love, will fix this world which so desperately needs changing. He will bind up the wounds and heal the grief-stricken broken hearts.

- **Consider** exposing yourself to media to which you normally don't gravitate.

It's always beneficial to look at the world through fresh eyes—through the eyes of people we don't know much about. When I first arrived in England as a young college student, I well remember reading English newspapers and wondering whether they were reporting on the same events that American reporters were! They were, of course, but with a slightly different perspective.

- **Consider** having a media-free day or two, or maybe even a week!

After you live without the "news" for a little while, evaluate how you feel, without the "fix" of catastrophes, hyperbole and disasters. When you engage in a "news fast" you may more deeply experience another world that you missed, one that is filled with courage, love, grace and GOOD NEWS! Prove, if to no one other than yourself, that you are not addicted to the "news."

Briefly stated, the **good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ** is that there is an alternative way of

life that stands in complete contrast and opposition to the dominant way of life normally chosen by humans.

On the one side, ponder the “news” reports on the kingdoms of government, religion, economic and military powers. These kingdoms rise and fall, they are temporary, and in order to remain on top of the heap, they operate on greed, hatred, fear, violence and control. These temporary kingdoms of news and social media cycle through recurring themes of war, protest, injustice, crime, and enlightened causes in a frenzied dance of revenge and retribution, shame and intimidation, enslavement and deception, lies and propaganda—all in order to achieve their ends.

On the other side, the GOOD NEWS is an eternal kingdom characterized by God’s love, grace, mercy, justice and peace. The eternal kingdom of God is about forgiveness, mercy and non-violence. The kingdom of God is all about loving everyone, including one’s enemies.

Jesus offers us his rest and the peace of God—he has no interest in keeping us in a perpetual state of anxiety and fear! Jesus, the king of the kingdom of God, is an entirely different kind of king who serves those who follow him rather than demanding their service. The GOOD NEWS of Jesus Christ offers us a way to be loved and accepted and saved from a life of fear, oppression and shaming.

“So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Our world is desperate for some eternal GOOD NEWS. Our temporal world is sliding deeper and deeper into fear, hatred, recrimination and contempt. Those who live on the margins are increasing in numbers, they are overwhelmed with sickness and grief, with loss and heartache, with poverty and addictions.

We thank God that he has allowed and empowered us, as Friends and Partners of CWR/PTM, as team-mates and fellow workers, to bring the uplifting and positive message of hope and inspiration to our world—the gospel message of **GOOD NEWS**.

We tell the story of **GOOD NEWS**. We share **GOOD NEWS** with the world. Instead of “*if it bleeds, it leads*”—the maxim of earthly “news” industries—CWR/PTM believes “*He Leads Because He Is Risen.*”

In the midst of the darkness of our world, by the grace of God, we are enabled, with all of you as our collective Friends and Partners, to reflect the Light of Jesus Christ—to point toward the One who personifies **GOOD NEWS**! Thank you for the part you play in our ongoing worldwide work.

Your fellow servant and co-worker in Christ,



Greg Albrecht

President, Plain Truth Ministries

CWR/PTM Prayer List—October 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 good friend whose wife died a few months ago. Now he needs to find a place with cheaper rent.—Texas

Please keep me and my family in your prayers. My sister has heart failure and severe back pain.—Virginia

Please pray for my brother who is an alcoholic and suffers from severe depression.—Michigan

Please pray for me. I'm now 98 years old and I have a heart problem—my aorta is shutting down and my memory isn't as good as it was. I pray for everyone at PTM daily.—Pennsylvania

Please continue to pray for me not to despair but allow Christ to continue to work in my life. Thank you!—New York

Please remember me in your prayers. I am with you all and you are in my prayers. I love PTM.—Georgia

Please pray for my sister who continues to struggle with many health issues. She's on dialysis twice a week which zaps her energy. Her diabetes has progressed so much that she is now unable to walk more than a few steps, so she gets around in a wheelchair or just sits in her apartment. She just recently had a fall and her leg isn't healing.—North Dakota

Please pray for me. I am having problems with my kidneys and my liver—pain now and testing in the near future. Thank you all for your prayers.—Colorado

I have Family Medical Leave (FMLA) due to depression, which may be ending soon and FMLA won't make a decision. I talked to my employer who had me try for a medical leave thru their Human Resource department, but then they told me to get the FMLA settled. My job is in jeopardy. I need the ability to take a day off now and again. I'm overwhelmed with my work sometimes. Please pray for me.—Wisconsin

Please pray for a friend of mine who, as a young woman, has just been informed that she has stage four terminal cancer which no known treatment can cure. But we do have a heavenly Great Physician!—Nebraska

Please pray for my health to improve so that I can be there for my 5-year-old grandson and help him learn more about Jesus. In my life it's all about Jesus. I just love where I am at in my mind and soul now. Thanks to Pastor Greg and CWR/PTM for helping to keep me grounded in Jesus.—Delaware

I am still grieving the death of my wife. I thought I would be "over" it by now, but after almost 18 months I still have days when I can hardly get out of bed given my depression. I appreciate all your prayers!—New Jersey

My husband has numerous issues, some genetic, some via disease and some via past accidents. His life is one long battle, punctuated by visits to doctors and pharmacies. We pray for relief and for healing. Thank you!—North Carolina

I am a recovering alcoholic—by God's grace I have not touched the stuff for ten years, but it is a HUGE temptation. I realize that many of us have other temptations, which do not afflict me and this helps me pray for them.—Florida

My brother has had Parkinson's and is slowly "slipping away." We are still able to communicate, and most of the time he is willing and more than that, he welcomes me to talk with him about God. Please pray for him as he suffers from this horrific disease and for me as I do my best to help him know the reality of our loving God.—Texas

Our entire family is visiting our mother who has only months to live. Most of us have never had such an experience, and we want to say the "right things" and avoid saying the "wrong things." Please pray that God will give us the best words to say.—Canada

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.