

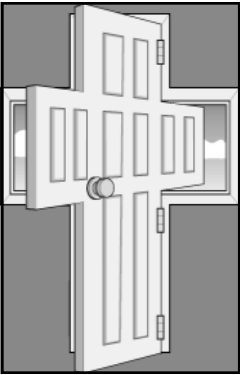
# THE AMISH Voice

PO Box 128, 575 State Route 250 N, Savannah OH 44874

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May 2007

## How You Can Know God



**What Is Missing in Our Lives?** Purpose, meaning, a reason for living—these are all things we desire and search for in life. Regardless of the steps, each one of us takes to find purpose and meaning in life, we still feel empty, unfulfilled. That is because there is a spiritual emptiness in each of our lives. We each have a hole in our heart, a spiritual vacuum deep within our soul—a “God-shaped blank.” Material things won’t fill this hole, nor will great success. Relationships alone cannot satisfy this emptiness. In fact, even religion cannot fill the void in our heart.

There is only one way to fill that void. This way will not only help us to have a life that is full and rich on this earth, but—more important—will give us the absolute hope of spending forever in the presence of God. Before we can truly appreciate this good news though, we need to understand the bad news, which is a serious problem we all have.

### The Problem Is Sin:

The Bible clearly identifies our serious problem as sin. We are not sinners because we sin. Rather, we sin because we are sinners! We are born with a nature to do wrong. King David wrote, **Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. (Psalm 51:5).** Because we are born sinners, sinning comes to all of us naturally. The Bible tells us, **The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9).** This sinfulness spills out into everything we do. Every problem we experience in our world today can be traced back to our refusal to live God’s way—all the way back to the Garden of Eden! Adam made his choice, and he suffered the consequences of it, setting the pattern that all humanity would follow. The Bible explains, **Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; (Romans 5:12, 18).**



“That’s not fair!” you may say. Why should we suffer because of what someone else has done? Yet, given the opportunity, each one of us would have done the same thing as Adam. In fact, not a single day passes that we do not face the same test that was set before Adam. God has given us the freedom to choose between two separate paths: the path that leads to *everlasting life* and the path that leads to *everlasting death*. The Bible says, **I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: (Deut. 30:19).**

**Without A Leg To Stand On:** Someone may say, “But I live a good life. I try to be kind and caring to others. I live by the Ten Commandments.” But the truth of the matter is that the Ten Commandments, or the law, as they are called in the Bible, **were not given to make us good but to show us how bad we are.** The Bible tells us, **Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:20).** The main purpose of the law is to make us realize how sinful we are. You might say that God’s law was given to “shut our mouths” and show us that we desperately need his help and forgiveness for our terminal condition as sinners.

*Look at the passages below to get a better understanding of the nature and seriousness of sin.*

1. **We Have All Missed the Mark.** Romans 3:23 says...“**for all have sinned**” Right before this in (v-10) it reads...“**As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:**. What exactly is “God’s standard” that Romans 3:23 says we have failed to meet? God’s “standard” is 100% perfection. **Jesus said, Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:48).** In other words, anyone who is not as good as God is not acceptable to Him.
2. **Sin Is An Act That Is Done On Purpose** (see Ephes. 2:1-3). Another word for sins in Ephes. 2:1 is *transgressions* or *trespasses*. This word speaks of a *moving away from truth*. Because sin is a planned action, we cannot blame our sin on our society or our environment or our mental or physical state. Everyone has chosen to do what was wrong. **If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8).**
3. **The Price For Our Sin Is Death (Separation from God, Rev 20:14-15).** According to the Bible, we have offended a Holy God. We have not done this once or twice, but so many times that we are unable to keep count. **Romans 6:23 says, “The wages [price] of sin is death . . .”** Because we have all repeatedly sinned, we have earned the punishment of death, which is eternal torment and punishment in a place called hell.

Amid all this talk about sin and death, there is some good news. God has given us a way to escape the punishment of our sin. He has made it possible for us to have a real relationship with him and enjoy the hope of eternal life without punishment.

## **The Answer Is Jesus Christ**

God understood our problem and knew that we could do nothing about it. Because God loves us, he sent his own Son, Jesus Christ, to earth, to bridge the gap of our sin that separates us from Him.

### **WHY JESUS CAN BRIDGE THE GAP**

There has never been anyone like Jesus. For starters, Jesus was not conceived in the womb of his mother through natural means. Rather, he was supernaturally conceived in the womb of a young virgin named Mary (Mat 1:23). Because of his supernatural conception, Jesus, who is wholly God, also became wholly human.

Though Jesus is God, he chose to lay aside the privileges of his deity to live on earth as a man. The Bible, describing the sacrifice Christ made in becoming a man, says that Jesus “made Himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal’s death on a cross” (Phil. 2:7-8). It is extremely important to note that Jesus did not cease to be God when he came to earth. He simply laid aside his divine privileges and walked the earth as a man. In doing so, he was personally able to experience the scope of human emotions, ranging from happiness to deep sorrow. He felt what it was like to be tired, cold, and hungry.

When the Israelites of the Old Testament sinned, they would have the high priest go into the Temple and offer an animal sacrifice to God to atone for their sins. In a symbolic sense, this was a way of putting one's sins on the animal, which stood in the place of the guilty person. The Bible teaches, **“Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission [removal] of sins” (Hebrews 9:22).**

The sacrificial rituals carried out by the Israelites in the Old Testament foreshadowed what Jesus would do when he came to this earth. He took the sin of the world upon himself when he hung on the cross so many years ago.

Numerous Old Testament prophecies pointed not only to his birth and life but also to his death, including the way in which he would die.

Jesus knew from the beginning that he had come expressly to die for the sins of humanity. He also knew that this sacrifice would be made on a Roman cross. He began his final journey to the cross of Calvary at a place called Caesarea Philippi, and he often spoke of his coming death with his disciples. Scripture records in Matthew 16:21, **From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.**

He was eventually arrested on false charges after Judas Iscariot, one of his own disciples, betrayed him. But it was no accident. If humanity was going to be put in touch with God and have the barrier that separated them removed, something drastic had to be done. In some sense, Jesus took hold of a Holy God with his one hand, and with the other hand he took hold of the sinful human race. As the nails were pounded into his hands, he bridged the gap for us! We must not forget, however, that three days after his death on the cross, Jesus rose from the dead!

## **WE PUT JESUS ON THE CROSS**

The requirement of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross shows just how major our situation was as fallen people. It's been said that you can tell the depth of a well by how much rope is lowered. When we look at “how much rope was lowered” from heaven, we realize how grave our situation really was.

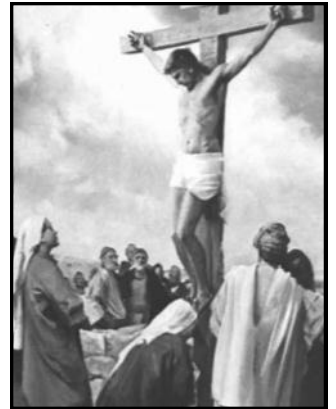
For that reason, you and I can't blame the people of that day for putting Jesus on the cross. We are just as guilty as they. In reality, it was not the Roman soldiers who put him on the cross, nor was it the Jewish leaders: it was our sins!

Read the verses and notes below to see exactly what Jesus did for us.

- 1. The Greatest Display of Love** (see Romans 5:6-8). Jesus did not die for us while we were his friends, but while we were his enemies. Yet, in spite of all of this, God proved his love for us by dying on the cross. In this verse, the Apostle Paul explains that Jesus did not simply die for humanity as a whole, but that he died for us as individuals. Elsewhere, **Paul writes, “[Christ] loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).**

Whenever you are tempted to doubt God's love for you, take a long look at the cross on which Jesus died. Then realize that, it was not nails that held him to the cross, but His great love for you.

- 2. Forsaken That We Might Be Forgiven** (see Luke 23:32-49). Many of us have heard this story at some point in our lives. Yet the importance behind this heart wrenching scene is often missed or misunderstood. This was not simply some “good teacher” being crucified for his beliefs. It was God in human form who hung on that cross, bridging the gap between sinful people and a holy God.



Matthew's Gospel tells us that when Jesus hung on that cross, he cried out, "**My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?**" (**Matthew 27:46**). Many Bible scholars believe that those words marked the exact moment at which God placed the sins of the world upon his Son. The Bible, speaking of God, **says, *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: (Habakkuk 1:13)***. For that reason, the Holy Father had to "turn his face" and pour out his wrath upon his own Son. On the cross, Jesus received the wages that were due us. The ear of God was closed to Jesus for a time that it might never be closed to us.

- 3. Christ, the One and only Mediator [Go-between]** (see 1 Tim. 2:5-6). Why is there only one mediator who is qualified to bridge the gap between God and people? Haven't there been other religious leaders who have claimed to have the way to God? Haven't some of them also died as a result of their message?

While the answers to these questions may be yes, the truth is that not one of these other leaders was fully God and fully human. That is why Jesus alone is qualified to deal with sin. Jesus said in John 14:6, "**I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father except through me**". Acts 4:12 tells us, **Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.**

Though it is true that you must believe Jesus died on the cross for your sins in order to receive eternal life and be a true Christian, there is still something else you must do.

### **The Response: Accept God's Offer**

**To know Jesus Christ personally and have your sins forgiven, you must believe that you are a sinner separated from God and that *your only hope* is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came and died for your sins. There are two things you must now do to enter into a relationship with the God from whom you have been separated.**

#### **1. TURN FROM YOUR SINS**

As Jesus began his ministry on earth, his first message was "**Repent ye, and believe the gospel**" (**Mark 1:15**). In some sense, Jesus was telling the people to admit their sinning, change their minds, and change the direction of their lives.

Look at it this way. In the past, we have been blinded by our sins, causing us to run from God. As we repent, we do a "U-turn" and start running toward him.

In Acts 26:18, the apostle Paul summed up this change in a few words when he quoted Jesus, who had said that **people must turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God's people, who are set apart by faith in me.**

You see, there are some things only God can do and some things only you can do. Only God can remove your sins and give you the gift of everlasting life, but only you can turn from your sins and receive Jesus as your Savior. That brings up the second thing you must do to respond to God's offer.

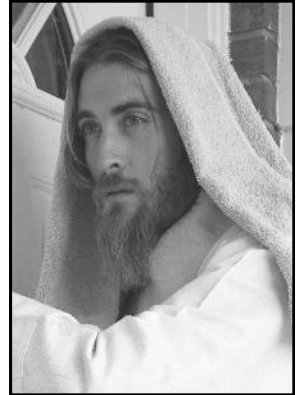
#### **2. BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST AND RECEIVE HIM INTO YOUR LIFE**

Having seen the horror of your sin and having decided to turn from it, you then must believe in and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Becoming a Christian, however, is far more than following the ordinance letter or trying to live by certain standards. Jesus said that you must be "**born again**" or

more literally, “**born from above**” (John 3:3). This spiritual rebirth happens when we personally believe in Jesus Christ, receive him by inviting him into our lives, and turn from our sins. In other words, we ask Jesus to come and take up residence in our lives, making the changes he deems necessary. **A person must take this all-important step in order to become a child of God.**

Notice that this offer is yours for the asking, and it is free. You don’t have to work for it, trying to clean up your life before you make this life-changing decision. The Bible says, “**The [free] gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord**” (Romans 6:23).

Being a Christian also means having a relationship with the living God. **In Revelation 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.**” To better understand the meaning of this verse, it is important to understand the culture at the time it was written. Eating together in Bible times was a long, drawn-out affair. People would not sit on chairs behind tables in a formal setting as we do, but they would sit on the floor, reclining on pillows around a low table. The relaxed mood made meals a time when you would not only satisfy your hunger but also receive an enjoyable serving of table conversation. You would share your heart and life with those who sat beside you.



Thus, when Jesus says that he will “**share a meal**” with us, it implies closeness, and friendship. He offers this to us, but we must first “**hear Him calling**” us.

To hear God calling us, we must know how he speaks. One way in which God speaks to us, is described in the Bible as a “still, small voice.” This could be described in another way as that tug you may have felt on your heart from the Holy Spirit showing you your need for Jesus. He may even be speaking to you right now! It is at that point that you must “open the door.” Only you can do that. Jesus will not force his way in.



**RECEIVING JESUS CHRIST INTO YOUR HEART:** If you are ready to turn from your sins and believe in Jesus Christ so that you can receive the forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life, then take a moment to bow your head and pray a prayer like the one below:

*God, I’m sorry for my sin. I turn from it right now. I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He paid for all my sin when He died on the cross in my place. Jesus, I invite you to come and be my Lord and friend. Help me to follow you from this day on. Thank you for forgiving and receiving me right now. Thank you for giving me the gift of everlasting life. Amen.*

**WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR YOU:** What actually happens when Jesus Christ comes into your life?

**(First), he saves you from your sins and the punishment you deserve.** This is called salvation, or rebirth, and has to do with what takes place in your heart: God gives you new life. **II Corinthians 5:17 says, Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.**

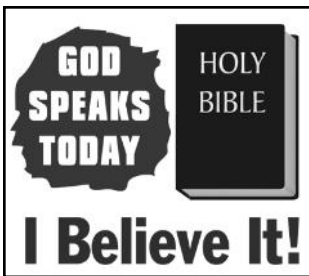
**(Second), he justifies you.** Justification has to do with your standing before God and includes the complete removal and forgiveness of your sins. Think about it! When you receive Jesus Christ into your life,

you are completely forgiven. God's Word tells us in **Acts 13:38-39...Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man [Jesus] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things...** Speaking of our sins, God says in Hebrews 10:17...**"And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more"**. What a wonderful promise!

### **To understand justification more fully, read the following Scriptures.**

- **God forgave you:** (Colossians 2:13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he *quicken*ed [made alive] together with him, **having forgiven you all trespasses.**
- **God calls you His child:** (1 John 3:2) Beloved, **now are we the sons of God**, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him...
- **God gives you bold access to the Throne of Grace:** (Hebrews 4:16) **Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace...**
- **God has Reconciled you to Him:** (2 Corinthians 5:18) And all things *are* of God, **who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ...**
- **God has Redeemed you (bought you back):** (Galatians 3:13) **Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us...**
- **God has given you everlasting life:** (John 5:24) Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, **hath everlasting life**, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.
- **God has removed you from under His condemnation:** (Romans 8:1) *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...
- **God has delivered you from the power of darkness:** (Colossians 1:13) Who hath **delivered us from the power of darkness**, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son:
- **God has made you complete in Christ Jesus:** (Colossians 2:10) And **ye are complete in Him**, which is the head of all principality and power:

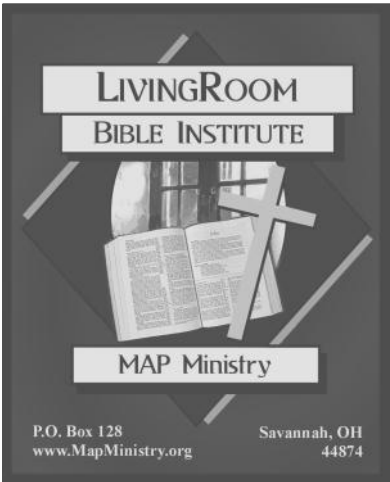
### **His Promises Are Not Based upon Your Feelings:**



**1 John 5:13 says, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life"**

There will be times as a Christian when you may not "feel" God's presence. You may even be tempted to doubt that he has come into your life. But remember, (1 John 5:13) does not say, "*These things have I written unto you that ye may feel like ye have eternal life*" That is because feelings come and go.

Nor does the Bible say, "*These things have I written unto you so that ye may hope—if God is in a really good mood—that ye have eternal life*" NO!—Eternal life is yours! Today! Stand on God's promise to you. If you are born again, you have been forgiven, justified, redeemed, delivered, reconciled and assured of salvation. **Now that is reason to rejoice!**



How often have you desired to know and understand the Word of God in a deeper way, but you really didn't know where to start or even how to go about it? How many times have you attempted to really get into studying God's Word but for some reason or another, you were not able to stay with it? Could it be that if you had a daily guide to go by, that you might have a better chance of staying with it and learn more?

If you answered "yes" to any of the above questions, then we would like for you to consider the **LivingRoom Bible Institute**. It is a 2-3 year, in-home—Bible study course that takes you all the way from the book of Genesis through Revelations. It contains very simple outlines and questions from each chapter of the Bible. The understanding and knowledge that you will gain from doing the **LivingRoom Bible Institute** will change your life for all eternity.

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  - [4] Items you will need: Bible, writing tablet, Bible dictionary and commentary.
  - [5] Write out all your answers on a writing tablet. Each time you finish a book of the Bible, you will send it (writing tablet) back to us for grading. After grading your work, we will return it back to you for your own records. There are no tests involved and it is not possible to fail on any one of the courses.

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**Note:** At your request we can send you the complete "OT101: Genesis Study Guide" as a free sample, along with more information on the **LivingRoom Bible Institute**.

# Lost Souls!

**Lost Souls!** Can you get a faint idea of the measureless depths of the meaning in these two small words? What oceans of tears! What overwhelming bursts of wailing, and what gnashing of teeth! What eternities of despair! Hopelessly and eternally **lost!**



No chance for a light to shine out on their devil-begirt, furnace-heated, pall-shrouded pathway! **Lost** to happiness and holiness! **Lost** to God and the redeemed! **Lost** to heaven and hope! **Lost!** And no hope of ever being found! Not a dim, distant hope of ever being anything but more hopelessly and despairingly **lost** during all the eternities to come!

From woe to more woe; misery to worse misery; ever, always **lost! Lost** because they would be **lost Lost** while Jesus was seeking them; but they would not be found! They gained the shadow and lost the substance; gained the briers and lost the flower; gained famine and lost plenty; gained foes and lost a friend; gained eternal damnation, and lost eternal life.

**Lost** amid the outer darkness! **Lost** in the smoke of torment! **Lost** in the lake of fire and brimstone! **Lost** amid the Howling raids of tormenting devils! The shrieks of the damned "a horrible tempest," ten thousand thunders! **Lost! Lost! Lost!** The bells of eternity are tolling the funeral hymn. Time warns you. The Bible warns you. The Spirit warns you. Will you be **lost?** Decide now, while Jesus calls you. Let go of your religious pride and ignorance and trust Jesus! **Do not be forever lost.**

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