

The Amish Voice



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PART VII—What Is The Church

The Church: Structured, Organized, and Perfect

We serve a God who is very structured and organized in all that He does. His works are always done on time; they are always perfect and very professional.

We don't think of it too often but scientists tell us that **the UNIVERSE in which we live in is filled with billions of flying objects.** For instance, we are told that our universe contains as many as several million stars within just one GALAXY, **such as the Milky Way.** Then we are told that the number of GALAXIES may number as many as 100,000 or more.

Within this mind boggling mass of GALAXIES, we also have the **sun**, the **moon**, and **eight known planets**; one of those planets is called **planet earth** and that of course is the planet on which we humans live and survive on.

People who study the universe and its contents, tell us that **the objects within the universe are constantly moving at a very high rate of speed.**

The distance around planet Earth is 25,000 miles and it rotates every 24 hours.



Therefore, if you were to hang above the surface of the Earth at the equator without moving, you would see 25,000 miles pass by

in a 24 hour period. That is just over 1,000 miles per hour—it takes one 24-hr day for the sun to make a complete rotation.

Not only is our planet spinning at a rate of 1,000 miles per hour, but we are told that the Earth is moving around the Sun at about 67,000 miles per hour—it takes one year for the earth to go around the sun.



Whenever I think of all the tons and tons of materials which are spinning, rotating, and going on all around us in the universe, I can't help but also wonder how is it possible that the sun, the planets and galaxies don't come crashing in against our planet earth.

But than about as soon as I think that thought I am reminded that our **ALL KNOWING** and **ALL POWERFUL** God is very **STRUCTURED, ORGANIZED, and PERFECT** in all that He ever created.

It is probably fair to say that God had all of "eternity past" to sketch out His creation plan and in doing so He came up with a **PERFECT** plan that was completely **ORGANIZED** and **WORKED 100% PERFECT!**

In the first chapter of Genesis, we can read **FIVE TIMES...** **"and God saw that it was GOOD"** and when we get to end of the chapter (verse 31), we read... **"And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was VERY GOOD"**

By the way, according to scientists *"the odds of being killed by space content is 1 in 5 billion"* And Why is that? Because whenever God does something, He does it in a very **STRUCTURED, ORGANIZED and PERFECT** way.

Now, it would not surprise me at all to find out some day that God took just as much time in planning out the church as He did in planning out the universe and it's belongings—maybe even more time. You see, I believe that it is very, very clear in scripture that the Lord's church is every bit as **STRUCTURED, ORGANIZED and PERFECT** as the universe and it's belongings.

The Bible says in Ephesians 4:4-6...

*There is **ONE (church) BODY, and ONE SPIRIT, ... ONE HOPE ... ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM; ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.***

My friend, there is only "**ONE BODY.**" There are not two bodies nor several bodies of believers. However, in this imperfect world,

there are many different denominations and churches. But note what God is doing: **God is creating only one body of people (from all types, backgrounds, and nations) who trust and follow His Son.** When a person places their trust in Jesus Christ for salvation, God does six things to the believer that place him into the body of Christ:

1. **God gives a new birth to the believer**—causes him to be born again (John 1:12-13; John 3:3-6; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 5:1).
2. **God makes a complete new creature**, a brand *new man* out of the believer (2 Cor. 5:17; Ephes. 4:24; Col. 3:10).
3. **God places His divine nature into the believer** (2 Peter 1:4).
4. **God puts His Holy Spirit into the believer**, actually we are told that His Spirit enters the believer's body. The believer's body becomes a temple for

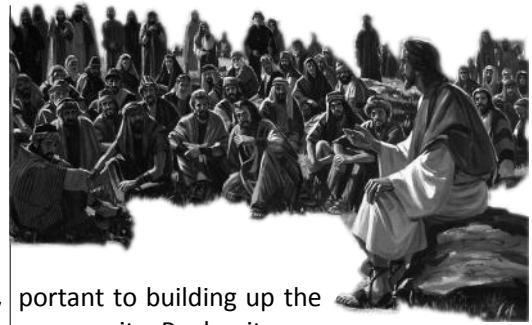
the presence of God's Spirit (John 14:16-17; 1 Cor. 3:16; 1 Cor. 6:19-20).

5. **God causes the believer to bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit** which is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, control (Galatians 5:22-23).
6. **God places the believer into the new body of people He is creating, that is, into the body of Christ, His church.**

The Bible tells us in 1st Corinthians 12:13...

*"For by **ONE SPIRIT** are we all baptized into **ONE BODY**, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been **ALL** made to drink into **ONE SPIRIT**"*

Although the Lord's church is one unified body, each of its members has a **special gift** to be used for the good and growth of all. No one is overlooked; everyone is im-



portant to building up the community. Paul writes...

But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (Eph. 4:7)

God in His wisdom did not make believers photocopies of one another. Instead, each believer has at least one special ability, given **according to the generosity of Christ**, to be used to accomplish the work of the Kingdom.

And now friend, I would like to get right to the heart of our message today. Just look

Heart to Heart with Joe



I have been thinking a lot about how people are so busy in life these days. It seems that everyone is continually running like crazy in order to make ends meet.

And I have noticed that because of our busyness, we often don't have time to recognize God in our lives. We forget that He is even there until we really need Him and then we go running to Him, thinking that He should immediately drop everything else and attend to our need. How sad and selfish of us.

In Psalms 46:10 we are told, **"Be still, and know that I am God..."**

Sadly, many of us are far from "still". We "do all the work" and give God none of the credit. We believe that by "working hard" and by "taking courage," we can survive and thrive by the sweat of our own brow. In a sense we are trying to live life all on our own, without depending on God.

This command—**"be still"**—forces us to be reminded of two things: (1) that we are completely and totally helpless without God and (2) that Almighty God wants ALL of our devotion and worship.

You see, more than anything else, God desperately desires to have a living relationship with you and me. He wants to be recognized as the One who gave His only begotten son to die on the cross for our sins. He wants to be thanked and appreciated for all the things He provides for us on a daily basis. He wants to be INVOLVED in every part of your and my life.

In Exodus 34:14, the Bible tells us, **...for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:**

And with that in mind, I would like to challenge you to spend some time each day, **"being still and knowing that He is God"** Read His Word every day! Give Him Glory and Honor and Praise, for He alone is Worthy to be Worshipped forever!

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W E Since our beginning in 2000, many people have written to us, asking to be added to our mailing list while others have send us names of their friends and family members. *The Amish Voice* is a free subscription and is totally funded by readers from across our great country, who appreciate the ministry and care to support it.

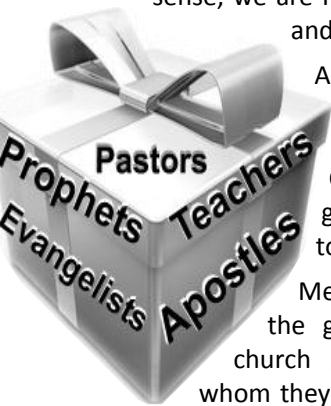
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how STRUCTURED, ORGANIZED, and PERFECT our God laid out the plan for His church. **In Eph 4:11, the Bible says...**

And He gave SOME APOSTLES;
and **SOME PROPHETS;**
and **SOME EVANGELISTS;**
and **SOME PASTORS AND TEACHERS**

Here we are reminded that not only did the Lord establish the church but He has for generations sought out certain people, such as you and I, to come along side and help Him build His church. You see, in some sense, we are His hands, His feet, and His mouth piece.



Also note the words, "**He gave**" It is Christ and Christ alone who gives spiritual gifts to men.

Men cannot work up the gifts, nor can the church give the gifts to whom they think should have them. Christ alone possesses the spiritual gifts to give to men.

The Bible says...

He gave ... SOME APOSTLES

Gift #1. The word "apostle" means to send out. An apostle is a representative, an ambassador, a person who is sent out into one country to represent another country.

A) The apostle was a man chosen directly by the Lord Himself or by the Holy Spirit. He was a man who had either seen or been a companion of the Lord Jesus. (cp. Matthew 10:1-2; Mark 3:13-14; Luke 6:13; Acts 9:6, 15; Acts 13:2; Acts 22:10, 14-15; Romans 1:1).

B) The apostle was a man who had been an eyewitness of the resurrected Lord (Acts 1:21-22; 1 Cor. 9:1).

He gave ... SOME PROPHETS

Gift #2. This is the gift of speaking under the inspiration of God's Spirit. It includes both prediction and proclamation, and neither one should be minimized despite the abuse of the gift.

There is no question, the gift to predict

events has been abused to the point of the ridiculous. However, the abuse of a gift does not eliminate the fact that the Spirit of God sometimes gives believers a glimpse into coming events in order to prepare and strengthen them to face the events.

However, the major function of prophecy is clearly stated by Scripture, and the fact should be heeded by all believers:

"But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort" (1 Cor. 14:3)

He gave ... SOME EVANGELISTS

Gift #3. The evangelists were the traveling ministers, similar to the missionaries of today. They went to non-Christian people and proclaimed the gospel to them, often being the first to start a church in a particular area (Acts 21:8; 2 Timothy 4:5).

"And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him" (Acts 21:8; cp. Acts 8:26-40)

He gave ... SOME PASTORS



Gift #4. This word means shepherd. The behavior of a shepherd can be seen by looking at the references to Christ as the shepherd of believers. The pastor is an under-shepherd to the Chief Shepherd, Christ Jesus our Lord.

The shepherd knows the sheep: He knows each one by name. This is said to have been a fact among shepherds and their sheep in Jesus' day. Shepherds actually knew each sheep individually, even in large herds. The fact is certainly true with Christ and His sheep.

"I am the good shepherd, and KNOW MY SHEEP, and AM KNOWN OF MINE" (John 10:14)

The shepherd feeds the sheep even if He has to gather them in His arms and carry them to the feasting pasture.

"He shall feed the flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Isaiah 40:11)

The shepherd guides the sheep to the pasture and away from the rough places and high cliffs.

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. (Ps 23:1-2).

The shepherd seeks and saves the sheep who get lost.

"For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?" (Matt 18:11-12)

The shepherd protects the sheep. He even sacrifices His life for the sheep.

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11)

The shepherd restores the sheep who go astray and return.

"For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25)

The shepherd rewards the sheep for obedience and faithfulness.

"And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:4)

The shepherd will keep the sheep separate from the goats.

"And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left" (Mat 25:32-33)

He gave ... SOME TEACHERS

Gift #5: The function of the teacher is the gift to instruct believers in the truth of God and His Word. It is the gift to ground people in doctrine, reproof, correction, and righteousness. **Teaching is a high calling, one of the greatest of callings.** Teaching is ranked second only to the spiritual gifts of apostle and prophet (Acts 13:1; 1 Cor. 12:28; Ephes. 4:11).

Every apostle and prophet and pastor has the gift of teaching, but every teacher is not an apostle or prophet or pastor.

The specially gifted people who are named in Ephesians 4:11 were given to the church for one ultimate goal: to equip God's people. The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers were given to the church to furnish and equip the believers to do the work of the ministry, which results in **building up the church.**

Ephesians 4:12-13 says clearly that the very reason God gave these "FIVE" special gifts to the church is so that...

(verse 12)

^(A) For the perfecting of the saints, ^(B) for the work of the ministry, ^(C) for the edifying of the body of Christ:

(verse 13)

Till we all come ^(A) in the unity of the faith, and ^(B) of the knowledge of the



Son of God, ^(C) unto a perfect man, ^(D) unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

God has given His church an BIG responsibility—that is to GO and make disciples in every nation (Matthew 28:18-20).

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even

unto the end of the world. Amen. (Mat 28:19-20)

God calls us as members of His body. No one should be a bystander or an onlooker. Everyone must do *the work of ministry*. Some of us can do one task; some can do another.



Together we can obey God more fully than any of us could alone.

A healthy and God honoring church is one who is continually reaching out to their home community first, and then on further out until they have reached ALL nations of the world. Reaching out involves preaching, teaching, nurturing, giving, building, and many other tasks.

Fulfilling this command, all on your own would be impossible. That is why God calls us as members of his body. NO ONE SHOULD BE A BYSTANDER, AN OBSERVER. Everyone must do *the work of ministry*. Some of us can do one task; some can do another. TOGETHER WE CAN OBEY GOD MORE FULLY THAN ANY OF US COULD ALONE.

How long should we keep this up? The Word of God very clear in *Ephesians 4:13—keep it up...*

TILL WE ALL COME...

- A. ...in the unity of the faith
- B. ...of the knowledge of the Son of God,
- C. ...unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

A. The gifted individual of God works to bring about a perfect unity among God's people. He is called...

- to bring peace to the church.
- to lead people in oneness of spirit.
- to shepherd people out of divisiveness, murmuring, grumbling, griping, and all the other sins that go against perfect unity.

Phil. 1:27 says, ...stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel".

B. The gifted individual of God works to bring about the knowledge of the Son of God.

John 17:3 says, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent"

C. The gifted individual of God works to bring about a perfect man, one who measures up to the fulness of Christ.

Hebrews 6:1 says, "...let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God"

In conclusion of our study, I would like to say that one of the saddest things that could ever happen to the local church body, is...

1. We are unsure what our gift is
2. The local church where I attend is structured in such a way that even if I knew what my gift was, I would not be able to use it.

If you are interested in discovering your gifts, we have a 108 questionnaire called "SPIRITUAL GIFTS INVENTORY", that you can order from us for \$4.00 each (includes postage). If answered properly, you will be able to get a good idea what your gifts are.

Here are some sample questions that you will find in the 108 questionnaire...

1. I have a consuming passion (strong desire, great concern) to reach lost souls.
2. I can spot (discern, point out, recognize) sin when other people can't.
3. I desire to give direction (guidance, instruction) to those under my care.

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— the end —

Written by Joe Keim

Simple Thoughts From Eli

What is a Believer?

In the book of **Acts 16:31** it tells us of a sermon by Paul and Silas to the jailer;

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

It seemed too easy to preach such a short sermon and have such a large impact on the life of their jailer. Surely many of these Roman rulers had personally met and heard Jesus in their



earlier years. How could anyone not believe what they had seen with their own eyes? But there is more to it! Lets examine what the difference is between believing about and believing on.

I believe about Hitler. I remember when he was alive and saying all kinds of things. History has recorded the facts. Many people alive today heard him and knew what he stood for. That does not make them or me a follower. Now whether you believe about or on Hitler makes a huge difference. If you believe about him, fine, most of us do. But if you believed in him you would study to see what his ideas and instructions were for all kinds of situations. You would diligently copy his thinking and make it part of your life. We know it says in **James 2:19**

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

So we see believing *that there is one God* is not going to save anyone. There is obviously more.

Believing in Jesus involves looking at

what HIS teaching and commands are. If Jesus is LORD as he says, then my believing must allow him to directly affect my life. If I decide Jesus had some good ideas and I will follow some of his commands, am I then a disciple? Of course not. But now if I say and determine that I am going to set my life on a course that makes me a believer in Jesus Christ, and that in spite of failures (sin), my life shall honor Jesus, I am still a disciple. A disciple says sin must decrease. That is what is meant by dying to self. Selfishness is the cause of almost all failures. Therefore, self must decrease, Christ must increase. Faith (believing) is known by action.

Unfortunately, action can be there without faith. Some very good things are done by people who are not believers in Jesus Christ. How then shall we tell the difference? It is confusing if we only look at the good works. As for me, I listen to what you say as well as what you do.

ACTS 10:43 *To him (Jesus) give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*

I now emphasize the words "whosoever" and "believeth" in the verse above. Whosoever is absolutely anyone. Believe in Him and not simply about. Find out who He is and what He claims. We cannot call on the Lord for mercy if we don't know who He is. We can't know who he is unless someone tells us whether in print or by voice. If someone tells us, how do we know he is telling the truth? I look for personal experience of what God has done in the person's life.

Jesus changed my life. Can He change yours?

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Unexplainable Power

John 3:11 *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.*



When is the last time God did something in your work life that can only be explained as God? Was it yesterday? Was it just last week? A month ago? A year ago? The answer to this question may mean several things. If it has been some time since you saw God's activity in such a way that you know it was His hand, you may not be trusting to a level that requires faith. You may not be risking enough for God to show Himself.

The converts in the early Church changed the world they lived in because of what they saw and heard. It was the power of the gospel that changed lives, not what they learned from mere teaching. This power drew people to Christ. Things happened that could not be explained as anything other than the activity of God. Is that the kind of faith you are experiencing in your life?

Many of us live a wholesome, moral life, but those we associate with do not see this activity as anything that cannot also be achieved by themselves. That is why many are not drawn to our lives. God's power is not evident. The Lord has been challenging me to trust Him at levels I have never trusted before. This level of trust has placed me in a vulnerable position. However, the blessing of this relationship is that I see the activity of God as never before, and those close to me see it as well. It builds their faith and draws others to investigate.

Sometimes the activity of God comes in unusual ways. God often sets up scenes that appear to be negative on the front end, but God has orchestrated these events for His glory.

- Without Pharaoh's pursuit of Israel at the Red Sea, there is no miraculous deliverance.
- Without Lazarus's death, there is no rising to life.
- Without Goliath, there is no underdog story.
- Without Peter stepping out of the boat, there is no miracle on the water.
- Without Judas' betrayal, there is no resurrection.

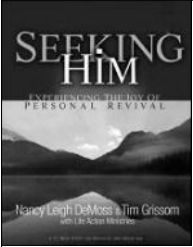
God wants to show Himself in ways you and I cannot imagine. Let God demonstrate His power in your workplace today. Then, you will see "all men drawn unto Me."

~ TGIF Today God Is First by Os Hillman

Book & Bible Study Section

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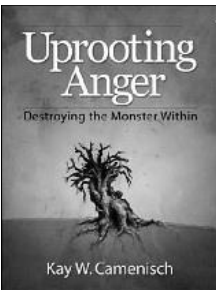


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- Emphasizes our dependence on God for change,
- Exposes the roots from which anger grows,
- Encourages application of the Word, and Gives tools for combating anger.

Did you Know?

1. If you shouted in space even if someone was right next to you, they wouldn't be able to hear you.
2. Only 55% of all Americans know that the sun is a star
3. Lightning bolts can sometimes be hotter than the sun. (about 50 000° F)
4. It takes only 8 minutes for sunlight to travel from the sun to the earth, which also means, if you see the sun go out, it actually went out 8 minutes ago.
5. At the distance at which our sun is located from the center of the Milky Way galaxy, Earth and the rest of our solar system are moving at a speed of about 170 miles per second around the center.
6. All the coal, oil, gas, and wood on Earth would only keep the Sun burning for a few days.
7. More than 1 million earths would fit inside the sun.
8. In Devon, Connecticut, it is against the law for someone to walk backwards after sunset

Amazing Facts In The Bible

What was God doing before He created the universe?

Our simple and limited minds find it hard to comprehend that before the universe was created, God existed alone. We know from John 1:1 that Jesus also existed: ***"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"***. Christ was intimately united with the Father, so as to partake of His glory and to be properly called by the name God. He has himself explained it in John 17:5: ***"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was"***

We also know that the Holy Spirit was present before we were created. Genesis 1:2 describes the Spirit as One who ***"moved up-on the face of the waters"***.

So, before time even existed, God existed in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Trinity existed in perfect harmony and flawlessness, having all they needed in one another. David said in Psalms 16:11 that joy and pleasures forever more, are in the presence of God. That means to be in the presence of God carries with it an overwhelming sense of joy, fulfillment, and pleasure. Before creation, God felt complete joy and fulfillment as He perfectly beheld and communed with Himself. God has and always will experience complete joy because He has complete and perfect knowledge of Himself.

So before He created the universe, God experienced absolute satisfaction in Himself. God dwelt joyfully alone in eternity as the Trinity. These three were together in fellowship with one another from all eternity. They loved each other. We know at some point they discussed the redemption of mankind (Ephesians 1:4-5; 2 Timothy 1:9; John 17:24), but everything else lies in mystery.

Question: "What does God look like?"

God is a spirit (John 4:24), and so His appearance is not like anything we can describe. Exodus 33:20 says, ***And He (God) said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.*** As sinful human beings, we are incapable of even seeing God in all His glory and living. His appearance is utterly unimaginable and too glorious to be safely perceived by sinful man.

The Bible describes God appearing to people on various occasions. These should not be understood as describing exactly what God looks like, but rather as God revealing Himself to us in a way that we can understand. Two passages that powerfully describe God's appearance are Ezekiel 1:26-28 and Revelation 1:14-16.

Ezekiel 1:26-28

...and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of His loins even upward, and from the appearance of His loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow

Continued on next page...

that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of One that spake.

Revelation 1:14-16

His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shineth in His strength.

These passages represent Ezekiel’s and John’s best attempts at describing the glory of God that they witnessed. They had to use symbolic language and images to describe that for which human language has no words, i.e., “as the appearance of,” and “was as,” etc.

1 John 3:2 says, *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; for we shall see Him as He is.*

Some day my friend, we will be able to perceive God in all His glory—that is if we are born again and know Him.

— The End of Amazing Facts —

NAIL IN THE FENCE

There once was a little boy who had a bad temper. His Father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he must hammer a nail into the back of the fence. The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence.



Over the next few weeks, as he learned to control his anger, the number of nails hammered daily gradually dwindled down. He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence. Finally the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper.

The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone. The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence He said, "You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one.



Smart Splinter Remover

Just pour a drop of Elmer's Glue-All over the splinter, let dry, and peel the dried glue off the skin. The splinter sticks to the dried glue.

Lutherans To Apologize to Anabaptists

Article printed from: The Christian Century Magazine
August 12, 2008

The Lutheran World Federation is preparing to formally ask for-giveness from Anabaptists—Mennonites, Amish and similar believers—for 16th-century persecution, including torture and killings.

The decision to prepare the statement was made by the LWF Council, the world body's main governing agency, which met in Arusha, Tanzania, June 24-30.



Anabaptists, whose name means "re-baptizers," were the radical wing of the Protestant Reformation and were persecuted by both Lutherans and Catholics. They emphasized believer's, or adult, baptism, even for those who had been baptized as infants.

Much of the Lutheran persecution of Anabaptists was based on writings by key figures in the Lutheran movement such as Martin Luther and Philipp Melancthon, as well as condemnations in Lutheran confessional documents such as the Formula of Concord and the Augsburg Confession, which are still considered authoritative for Lutherans today.

Last year, a statement by participants in the Lutheran-Mennonite International Study Commission noted that the 16th-century condemnations do not figure prominently in the reading of the Reformation among Lutherans today. Added the communiqué: "The history of persecution has, however, been deeply imbedded in the memory of Anabaptist descendants and requires careful joint processing in order that obstacles may be removed for the sake of better understanding and closer relations between Mennonite and Lutheran churches today."

The statement seeking forgiveness is expected to be ready for the LWF's 11th assembly, to be held in July 2010. The LWF represents 68 million Lutherans in 141 member churches in 17 countries, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

In 2006, the ELCA formally apologized for Lutheran persecution and repudiated the use of government authority "to punish individuals or groups with whom it disagrees theologically."

~ David E. Anderson, RNS

Natural Healing

Achy Muscles From A Bout Of The Flu?

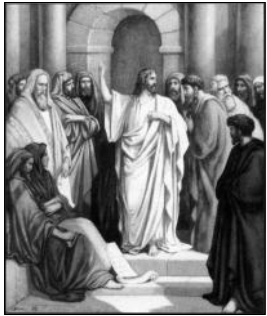


Mix 1 Tablespoon of horseradish in 1 cup of olive oil. Let the mixture sit for 30 minutes, then apply it as a massage oil, for instant relief for aching muscles.

The Greatest Commandment

Matthew 22:34-40 says,

*But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. ³⁵Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, ³⁶**MASTER, WHICH IS THE GREAT COMMANDMENT IN THE LAW?** ³⁷Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with **ALL thy heart**, and with **ALL thy soul**, and with **ALL thy mind**. ³⁸This is the **FIRST** and great commandment. ³⁹And the **SECOND** is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. ⁴⁰**ON THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS HANG ALL THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS.***



I **LOVE** to read Jesus' response to these preachers of the day when they asked him "I gotcha questions," because he never responded how they wanted him to or how they expected him to.

YOU SEE THEY EXPECTED JESUS TO GIVE A LIST OF THE LAWS THEY WERE SO PROUDLY CLINGING TO. Instead Jesus didn't even mention anything listed in the law they were referring to, but he said the greatest commandment I want to leave you with is to **LOVE**. "**LOVE** God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength (this is listed in Mark 12) and then **LOVE** your neighbor as you **LOVE** yourself." So **LOVE** is important. I have been thinking about and studying about what this **LOVE** looks like.

Let's start with loving God. I am supposed to **LOVE** God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. How can we **LOVE** someone we have never met? I know for me, I started to become filled with **LOVE** for God when I realized what He did for me. Do you know that after Adam and Eve sinned in the garden every single person who was ever born was doomed to hell? That is until God decided He **LOVED** His creation too much to let that happen and that is when He decided to do the only thing He could do and

that was to offer the only perfect sacrifice for the sins of mankind. That sacrifice was Jesus! Jesus had to die an absolute horrific death and He did that in our place.

We should be the ones hanging from the cross because we are the ones who have sinned, but Jesus chose to go there for us. We all know this scripture, but have we really grasped its full meaning?

John 3:16 says *For God so **LOVED** the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

This makes me want to shout from the highest rooftop, "Thank you, Jesus! I **LOVE** you!" over and over again. It makes me want to **LOVE** everybody, but I have come to realize not everyone wants my **LOVE**. So I **LOVE** and I **LOVE** and I pray God will use the **LOVE** He has put inside of me to touch the hearts of people all over the world.

1 John 4:7-21 says *⁷**BELOVED**, let us **LOVE** one another: for **LOVE** is of God; and every one that **LOVETH** is born of God, and knoweth God. ⁸He that **LOVETH** not knoweth not God; for God is **LOVE**. ⁹In this was manifested the **LOVE** of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. ¹⁰Herein is **LOVE**, not that we **LOVED** God, but that he **LOVED** us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹**BELOVED**, if God so **LOVED** us, we ought also to **LOVE** one another. ¹²No man hath seen God at any time. If we **LOVE** one another, God dwelleth in us, and his **LOVE** is perfected in us. ¹³Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. ¹⁵Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. ¹⁶And we have known and believed the **LOVE** that God hath to us. God is **LOVE**; and he that dwelleth in **LOVE** dwelleth in God, and God in him. ¹⁷Herein is our **LOVE** made perfect, that we may have boldness in*

*the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸There is no fear in **LOVE**; but perfect **LOVE** casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in **LOVE**. ¹⁹We **LOVE** him, because he first **LOVED** us. ²⁰If a man says, I **LOVE** God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that **LOVETH** not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he **LOVE** God whom he hath not seen? ²¹And this commandment have we from him, that he who **LOVETH** God **LOVES** his brother also.*

1 John 5:1-5 *¹Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that **LOVETH** him that begat **LOVETH** him also that is begotten of him. ²By this we know that we **LOVE** the children of God, when we **LOVE** God, and keep his commandments. ³For this is the **LOVE** of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. ⁴**FOR WHATSOEVER IS BORN OF GOD OVER-COMETH THE WORLD: AND THIS IS THE VICTORY THAT OVER-COMETH THE WORLD, EVEN OUR FAITH. ⁵WHO IS HE THAT OVER-COMETH THE WORLD, BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD?***



I would have to say 'to love' is more important to God than anything else in the world. Will you ask God what this love looks like in your life? I know I have and I will continue to ask God to teach me to love more.

God bless you from Texas where triple digits are the norm of the day in July!

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Forgiven

One day a while back, a man, his heart heavy with grief, was walking in the woods. As he thought about his life this day, he knew many things were not right. He thought about those who had lied about him back when he had a job.

His thoughts turned to those who had stolen his things and cheated him. He remembered family that had passed on. His mind turned to the illness he had that no one could cure. His very soul was filled with anger, resentment and frustration.

Standing there this day, searching for answers he could not find, knowing all else had failed him, he knelt at the base of an old oak tree to seek the one he

knew would always be there. And with tears in his eyes, he prayed: "Lord- You have done wonderful things for me in this life. You have told me to do many things for you, and I happily obeyed. Today, you have told me to forgive. I am sad, Lord, because I cannot. I don't know how. It is not fair Lord. I didn't deserve these wrongs that were done against me and I shouldn't have to forgive. As perfect as your way is Lord, this one thing I cannot do, for I don't know how to forgive. My



anger is so deep Lord, I fear I may not hear you, but I pray that you teach me to do this one thing I cannot do - Teach me To Forgive."

As he knelt there in the quiet shade of that old oak tree, he felt something fall onto his shoulder. He opened his eyes. Out of the corner of one eye, he saw something red on his shirt. He could not turn to see what it was because where the oak tree had been was a large square piece of wood in the ground. He raised his head and saw two feet held to the wood with a large spike through them. He raised his head more, and tears came to his eyes as he saw Jesus hanging on a cross. He saw spikes in His hands, a gash in His side, a torn and battered body, deep thorns sunk into His head. Finally he saw the suffering and pain on His precious face. As their eyes met, the man's tears turned to sobbing, and Jesus began to speak.

"Have you ever told a lie?" He asked.

The man answered - "yes, Lord."

"Have you ever been given too much change and kept it?"

The man answered - "yes, Lord." And the man sobbed more and more.

"Have you ever taken something from

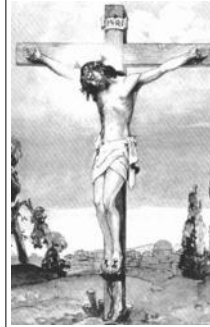
work that wasn't yours?" Jesus asked.

And the man answered - "yes, Lord."

"Have you ever sworn, using my Father's name in vain?"

The man, crying now, answered - "yes, Lord."

As Jesus asked many more times, "Have you ever..." The man's crying became uncontrollable, for he could only answer - "yes, Lord."



Then Jesus turned His head from one side to the other, and the man felt something fall on his other shoulder. He looked and saw that it was the blood of Jesus. When he looked back up, his eyes met those of Jesus, and there was

a look of love the man had never seen or known before.

Jesus said, "I didn't deserve this either, but I forgive you."

It may be hard to see how you're going to get through something, but when you look back in life, you realize how true this statement is. Read the following first line slowly and let it sink in. If God brings you to it - He will bring you through it. When Jesus died on the cross, he was thinking of you!

From a strictly mathematical viewpoint

Ever wonder about those people who say they are giving more than **100%**? What does it mean to give MORE than **100%**? We have all been in situations where someone wants you to give over **100%**. How about achieving **101%**? What equals **100%** in life?

Here's a little mathematical formula that might help you answer these questions:

If

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Is represented as

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26

Then

H-A-R-D-W-O-R- K

8+1+18+4+23+15+18+11 = 98%



And

K-N-O-W-L-E-D-G-E

11+14+15+23+12+5+4+7+5 = 96%

But

A-T-T-I-T-U-D-E

1+20+20+9+20+21+4+5 = 100%

Look how far the love of God will take you

L- O- V- E-O-F-G-O-D

12+15+22+5+15+6+7+15+4 = 101%

Therefore, one can conclude with mathematical certainty that: While Hard work and Knowledge will get you close, and Attitude will get you there, it's the Love of God that will put you over the top!

John 4:7 *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*

1. Who is the coming "world ruler"?
2. What is his role in end-time prophecy?
3. Will his appearance have any connection with the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem?

In Revelation 13:1 the apostle John states,

"And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy."

The ten horns of John's vision correspond to the ten toes of Daniel's image in chapter 2 of the Book of Daniel. Let's investigate this account and see its importance in our discussion concerning the "coming world ruler." Nebuchadnezzar, the king of ancient Babylon, had a dream. However, he could not recall its content. Therefore, he called in his magicians, astrologers, and soothsayers, saying, not very politely, I might add, "Tell me what I dreamed, or I'll kill you." That certainly got their attention. However, they were at complete loss:



They could not fulfill this bizarre request. However, Daniel, a young Jew and a man of prayer, fell on his knees three times a day before his God Jehovah and received the answer.

It would be good if you would read (Daniel 2:27-28, 31-35, 37-41)

before reading the rest of this article

In this passage (**Daniel 2:27-28, 31-35, 37-41**), we see that Daniel gave King Nebuchadnezzar an outline of world history down to the last days-events that have taken place precisely as God said they would. Daniel said,

"You, King Nebuchadnezzar, are the head of gold (Babylon), but there will be two nations pictured by the arms of silver (the Medes and the Persians) who will destroy you. Then there will be a kingdom of brass (Greece), pictured by the stomach, which will destroy the Medes and the Persians. Next, the kingdom of iron (Rome), pictured by two legs, will smash Greece."

Why two legs? Because at one time in history, the Roman Empire was divided, having headquarters both at Rome and Constantinople. Again, a historical fact.

Notice carefully that the only power not put out of existence is the Roman Empire. At the end time, the iron again manifests itself in the toes of the image.

Edward Gibbon's masterpiece *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* reminds us that Rome was never destroyed but rather lost its prominence because of degradation and sin. This historical fact fits the clay of deterioration. Nonetheless, the Roman Empire will be revived in the last days through an alignment of ten Western nations, pictured by the ten toes of Daniel's image and the ten horns in the Book of Revelation. (See my book *Final Mysteries Unsealed* [Nashville: Word, 1998], 225 pages of verse-by-verse explanation of the Book of Daniel.)

In verse 44 of chapter 2, Daniel says,

"And in the days of these kings [the confederacy of ten Western nations] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."



This refers to the return of Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, which we know is very near.

Consider Daniel 2:34 again:

"Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces."

What, or better who, is the stone that smashes the image when the ten Western nations have aligned themselves?

Acts 4:11: "[Christ] is the stone which was set at naught of you builders."

First Corinthians 10:4: "And that Rock [or stone] was Christ."

Since 1948, we have witnessed a coming together of Western nations in the form

of the Community or "Common Market." The movement began with Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands joining in economic alliance. Then France, Italy, and West Germany joined in 1957. In 1972, three additional members—Denmark, England, and Ireland—were received. Then, on January 1, 1981, Greece became the ratified tenth member. However, Ireland and Denmark were never part of the old Roman Empire. What about them? The answer is simple.

Daniel 7:8 states,

"I considered the horns [at the end time], and, behold, there came up among them [the ten] another little horn [number 11!], before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots."

Once a ten-nation Western union has been formed, number eleven comes to power, plucks up three of the first ten, and replaces them with his own and two others. Later the majority of the globe is under his control. This leader will be the world dictator and infamous Antichrist—the final world ruler.

In Revelation 13:1, John says,

"I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea."

The sea speaks of nations, and the ten toes of Daniel's image and the ten horns of Revelation 13:1 describe a grouping of ten nations. Because this prophecy is now in the early stages of fulfillment, the stage is being set for a powerful world leader who works through this grouping of Western nations until he is able to assume worldwide prominence for his "greatness." We know that he will come from the West because Daniel 9:26 states that he is of the people that destroyed the city and the sanctuary. Who are these people?

As we have already seen, in A.D. 70, Titus, the Roman general from the Western nations of the old Roman Empire, entered Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple, and drove a million of God's people, the Jews, to every part of the earth. Now the prophet says that it is of this people that the Antichrist shall come.

The Inadequacy of Law-Based Living—Part I

Despite the books and chapters of the Bible dedicated to teaching believers their freedom from the law, Christians still try to find victory and comfort through law. The *flesh* drives them to self-righteousness and performance, forgetting that only the righteousness of Christ living through us is valuable to God. Below are five characteristics of law-based living you may want to ponder. We will cover five more next article.

Rules become ends in themselves—freedom is restricted for no purpose or an outdated purpose.

The Pharisee's rulebook, *Talmud*—likely started out good to protect righteous living but became a rulebook without heart or spirit. The rules were not about love and they didn't work the greater purposes of God. In Romans 13:9-10, Paul writes that all commandments are summed up in one statement, *Love your neighbor as yourself*. He goes on to say that *love is the fulfilling of the law*. Many churches have their own *Talmuds*, which are no different in heart from the Pharisee's rulebook. If a way of life isn't about love it becomes a rule for rule's sake.

Man-made rules will always end up taking precedent over God's principles—Jesus clearly taught this in **Matthew 15:1-9**. In **verse 8 and 9** He says,

This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Man-made rules become confused with God's rules—People totally lose touch with what is God and what is man. Many groups diligently obey their *rules of right-*

eous living, never knowing that their heart is far from the heart of God.

Man-made rules restrict the believer's freedom in Christ—Law creates fear of living by the Spirit, as in, "if we allow a little freedom, people will take too much, so don't allow freedom." This is NOT what Christ taught!

Paul writes, ***Stand fast therefore in the FREEDOM wherewith Christ has made you free (Gal. 5:1).***

Some groups protect their laws by teaching people not to ask *why*. *Why* can be asked rebelliously if a person's heart isn't right, but living by the *spirit* means understanding *why you do what you do*. Four-year-old Rachel was crossing the street to visit our home. My wife bellowed out the window to her, *Rachel, you didn't look both ways before you crossed*. Rachel stopped, ran back across the street, looked both ways and re-crossed the street. Rachel didn't know the *spirit* of the rule.

Rules cannot produce a righteous life. Some people think that living by the Spirit is license for sin and loose living. I say the opposite: living by the Spirit is a far higher standard of love, purity and holiness. This is because living by the Spirit is based on a heart passion to please God, not on restrictive rules.

Read the challenge of **Colossians 2: 20-23**,

Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of

wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh.

Wherever there are rules, there are loopholes to the rules. Rules can be used to justify wickedness—"What's wrong with this or that?" If no rule restricts it, it must be okay. Law violates the heart of righteousness. There is no law against the Spirit (Galatians 5:23). Those who walk by the Spirit don't ask, *What's wrong with this?* They ask *How can I please the Lord and walk in love?*

~ Bruce Lengeman

Door of Hope Ministries

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You are invited to Take Back Your Life (TBYL).

Sponsored by Door of Hope Biblical Counseling Ministry located in Columbus, NC.

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The dates for the next two conferences:

- September 8-12
- October 20-24.

Other meetings:

- Women's conference, Oct. 2-4
- Oregon TBYL, Nov. 4-7.

During this past conference, on the next to the last day in the men's session, I asked how many of them are going back home significantly changed. Immediately almost every hand went up. One Amish man said, *It was the best week of my life!*

Hope to see you there!

Our Readers Respond

Please remove my name from your newspaper, the Amish Voice. It is very deceiving. The community does not need this. I would like to see this paper stopped completely. This is not the way I was taught.

Hello, thank you so much for the Amish Voice. My husband and I really enjoy the

issues as it has helped strengthen our faith. It speaks of God's truth in terms easily understood. Keep up the excellent work and may God bless you richly in all your work for Christ. Rejoicing in Him!

Would you please quit sending your mission paper to our community? As lots of it

gets pitched in the stove and not read anyway. A big waste of money.

Sir, Sometime ago I heard about your newsletter, the Amish Voice. Please send me a copy once, or put me on your mailing list. Is there a subscription price? Thank you very much.

Noteworthy News

Flashing Lights and Orange Emblems On Their Buggies

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has plans to defend a group of seven Amish men from Mayfield Kentucky, who were charged for not displaying slow-moving vehicle emblems on their horse-drawn buggies.

Like in most other Amish settlements, this community has been ordered by the state to add flashing lights and orange emblems to their buggies.

The men have stated that using the emblems and lights would violate their religious beliefs that prohibit possessions that are too worldly.

Relationships Strained Between Amish and The State of Wisconsin

In Wisconsin, a court battle appears to be shaping up involving a two-year-old state law which makes farmers register their animals with the state, to avoid outbreaks such as the 2007 pseudo-rabies.



State Officials say the Amish in that area oppose animal registrations because a so-called "mark of the beast" goes against their religion.

On the other hand, several other Amish farmers were fined for not wearing orange during deer season. Those who were fined said that the bright orange clothing goes against their religious beliefs.

In another Wisconsin area, an Amish couple was told last month to shut down a mail order candy-and-jam business because it was not licensed.

In yet another Wisconsin area, an Amish man was fined \$10,000 for not getting a building permit.

Amish Noise In PA

The controversy is over the Hostetler family's sawmill, furniture store and dog kennel. About a year ago, the Hostetler's

neighbors took them to court but not much happened until recently when the Hostetler's were again notified that they are to appear back in court.



Noah and Mary Hostetler said since the judge had ordered them to quiet down earlier in the year, they have done everything they could to control the noise. They even added a silencer on their blower at the sawmill and stopped working on Saturdays. But some of their neighbors are saying it is still not good enough.

Neighbors still want a wall constructed between the furniture store and their homes. They say the barking dogs are also still a nuisance.

As for the Hostetlers, they say that they are not violating any laws but that they will wait to hear what the judge has to say.

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