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## The General Epistle of James Teacher's Outline and Study Bible™

### CHAPTER 4

#### IV. TEMPTATIONS & TRIALS: TRIUMPHANTLY OVERCOME, 4:1-10

##### A. The Causes of Temptation & Wrongdoing, 4:1-6

1. **Lust, evil desires: The passion for pleasure & gratification that rages within the body**
2. **Distrust: Seeking something & never trusting God or asking God for it**

From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?

2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

3. **Praying amiss: Praying with the wrong motive**

4. **Worldliness: Friendship with the world**

5. **Conclusion: The cure**

- a. Knowing that the Spirit of God yearns over you with jealousy
- b. Knowing that God gives the humble believer grace & more grace, but God opposes the proud

### Section IV TEMPTATIONS AND TRIALS: TRIUMPHANTLY OVERCOME James 4:1-10

#### STUDY 1: THE CAUSES OF TEMPTATION AND WRONGDOING

**TEXT:** James 4:1-6

**AIM:** To identify the causes of and the cure for wrongdoing.

**MEMORY VERSE:**

*“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith,*

*God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6).*

#### INTRODUCTION:

What causes temptation and wrongdoing? We are continually faced with temptations and trials, and all too often we find ourselves yielding and doing wrong. We want to do right, but often we do not. We give in. We yield to temptation, to our fleshly desires. This passage begins a new division in the book of James, the all-important discussion on temptations and wrongdoing, the specific target of these six verses, and how to conquer them. But before we can conquer temptations and wrongdoing, the specific target of these six verses, we must understand what causes them. Where does the rebellion within our spirits come from? Scripture gives us four causes:

## OUTLINE:

1. Lust, evil desires: the passion for pleasure and gratification that rages within the body and its members (v.1).
2. Distrust: seeking something and never trusting God or asking God for it (v.2).
3. Praying amiss: praying with the wrong motive (v.3).
4. Worldliness: friendship with the world (v.4).
5. Conclusion: the cure (vv.5-6).

### 1. LUST, EVIL DESIRES: THE PASSION FOR PLEASURE AND GRATIFICATION THAT RAGES WITHIN THE BODY (v.1).

What is the cause of temptation and wrongdoing? This Scripture says that the first cause is lust, lust warring within our bodies. What does “lust” mean? It means to crave pleasure; to crave gratification. The picture given here is that of constant warfare. Our bodies are a battlefield of wants and desires. Every person knows what it is to experience this warfare, to have his flesh yearning and yearning after something. Lust is strong and difficult to control. In fact, few people control it completely.

The point is this: man is a walking civil war; lust after lust wages war within him, seeking gratification and pleasure. Man senses one desire after another and wants to lift the restraint, to cut loose and enjoy the pleasure of the lust. It may be the lust for...

- more food
- more sex
- more money
- more property
- more recognition

Now note the result of our lust: it is fightings and wars. Remember: the greatest need that man has is for peace. Just imagine what the world would be like if men lived in peace with each other and with God. There would be no restlessness and uneasiness within the human soul and no fights and wars between men. There would be no sin or evil committed against others—wife, husband, neighbor, or anyone else—because all men would be at peace with God as well as with each other. Again, the greatest need man has is for peace. Yet, when we look at the world, what we see is anything but peace.

So, where do these fights and wars come from? What causes them? Unless we know, we can never deal with and conquer them. We must heed the Scripture: fighting comes from lust—the passion for pleasure and gratification raging within our body and its members.

## A CLOSER LOOK # 1

(4:1-3) **Lust—Desire:** the word is used three times in verses 1-3. In verses 1 and 3 the word lust means out of your sinful, sensual pleasures. In verse 2 the word means a yearning passion for.<sup>29</sup>

Note that desire, lust, a yearning passion for is not always evil. In verse 5 the Spirit “lusts to envy.” In Luke 22:15 Christ desires (yearns) to eat the Passover with the apostles. What is it that distinguishes a good desire from an evil desire? At least two major things:

1. Motive: if one desires the necessities of life, his desire is good. The necessities— food, clothing, shelter, love, care—are essential for the fullness of life. When a man seeks God for these things, God provides the necessities.
2. Greed: desiring food is good, but if one desires food to “consume it upon [his] lusts,” that is, he desires more and more food, it is a wrong passion. It becomes sinful, sensual pleasure. Desiring love is good, but if one desires love to consume it upon his lusts, that is, he desires more and more love, it is a wrong passion (1 Th.4:5).

## QUESTIONS:

1. Why is it so difficult to control our desires
2. How do our desires make it difficult to have true peace within?
3. What makes a desire sinful? How does trusting God for your needs help you to avoid sinful desires?

### 2. DISTRUST: SEEKING SOMETHING AND NEVER TRUSTING GOD OR ASKING GOD FOR IT (v.2).

What is the cause of temptation and wrongdoing? Unbelief! Distrust! An individual does not know God in a personal way, know Him to the point that he can ask and call upon God to meet his needs. He does not have meaningful trust in God. He basically distrusts God.

1. The word for lust or desire in verse two is a different word than the word for lust in verses one and three. The word in this verse means a yearning desire or passion. Sometimes the desire is good; sometimes it is bad. For example, to desire food is good, but to desire excessive food is bad. This is the very point of this verse.

There is nothing wrong with our basic desires; they are to be met. But they are to be met by our trusting and depending

<sup>29</sup> A.T. Robertson. Word Pictures in the New Testament, Vol.6, p.49.

upon God, acknowledging Him as the Source and Provider of every good and perfect gift. It is when we ignore, neglect, and deny God that our desires run loose and wild. It is when God is shoved aside that we begin to desire and crave to the point that we lie, steal, cheat, fight, kill, and go to war to gratify our desires and pleasures.

2. Second, note this: there are different levels of desires and lusts. Three levels are given in this verse.

- ⇒ You lust, and have not.
  - ⇒ You desire to have and kill, and cannot obtain.
  - ⇒ You desire to have and fight and war, yet you have not.
- a. Some continually desire but they do not have. They do little to fulfill their deepest desires. They do little beyond indulging the basic desires for comfort and ease. They have broader and deeper desires, but they are just unwilling to do what is necessary to fulfill them. Most tragic of all, they do not sincerely call upon God and trust in Him to help them in meeting any of their desires, not even the desires for the basic necessities of life.
  - b. Some desire so much that they lie, steal, cheat, and kill to gratify and obtain their desires. The desire may be for a person, recognition, or land. But no matter what it is and no matter how much of it is gotten and possessed, it does not satisfy the lust or desire. The person simply craves more and more, not being able to obtain what he is after, even after all his sinful effort.
  - c. Others desire to such an extent that they are willing to fight and go to war to gratify their desires. They want something so much—some power, some land, some position, some vengeance—that they are willing to throw a whole company or nation of people into a fight or war in order to satisfy their desire and gratify their pleasure. Imagine wanting something so much that one will kill and destroy the life of another person and, in the case of war, the lives of millions in order to get it.

3. Also note this: man's deepest desires are never satisfied apart from God. A person must trust and call upon God in order to have his innermost desires fulfilled: "Ye have not, because ye ask not." There are three reasons why trusting and calling upon God are necessary for these desires to be fulfilled.

- a. Man's deepest and most restless craving is spiritual. God has made man a spiritual being, a being who is restless until his spirit is at peace with God. Man may deny, ignore, neglect, and reject this fact; nevertheless, the denial of truth does not do away with the truth.

God has made man a spiritual being, a being with a soul that craves for spiritual satisfaction:

- ⇒ Man craves for God, for the fellowship and communion, the care and security of His presence.
- ⇒ Man craves for life, life that is both abundant and eternal.
- ⇒ Man craves for a perfect world.

Man desires these things; deep down within his soul he desires spiritual satisfaction, and his spirit is restless—ever craving more and more—until the spirit is satisfied with the knowledge of these things.

- b. Man's spiritual desires and cravings cannot be satisfied with physical and material things. Man's cravings are never satisfied. They have to be controlled. If man feeds his cravings and continues to feed and feed them, he is eventually consumed by his lusts. The problem is this: man misunderstands the craving. It is an inner craving, a spiritual craving that gnaws away at him. No physical thing can satisfy that spiritual craving. Only the Spirit of God can meet the need. Throughout history men have desired everything, yet they have never been satisfied within. Why? Because what they desired was never sought from God and did not come from God.
- c. Man is not able to control his desires, not completely and not always. Man must have the presence and power of God to control all his lusts and desires. No matter what man may think and claim, history is clear evidence of the uncontrolled desires of men. In fact, any thinking and honest person can testify to his lack of control and discipline over desires and lust. We corrupt our minds, thoughts, and bodies and we hurt, disrupt, and destroy others by our uncontrolled desires and lusts. It is our uncontrolled desires and lusts that are carrying every one of us to the grave. The only escape—the only victory over the corruption of desires and lusts—is God. We must trust God and call upon God. We must consult with God about our desires and wants...
  - talk with Him
  - ask His opinion
  - ask His will
  - ask if the desire is good or bad
  - ask if the need is a true need or simply the lust for pleasure or gratification

We must learn to commune and fellowship with God—to walk in Him, live and move in Him, seeking and asking His opinion, will, and help every step of every day. This is what God wants from all of us,

leaders and citizens alike, ministers and laymen alike—God wants to fellowship and commune with us. He wants our acknowledgement—our worship and honor and praise of Him as the Lord and Father of the universe. Fellowship and communion with God—trusting and calling upon Him—is the only way we can ever fulfill the deepest and innermost desire of our hearts. And once the spiritual craving is satisfied, all of the other desires of our lives will be fulfilled and controlled by the presence and power of God in our hearts. Prayerlessness—not knowing God and not praying to God—is the second cause of temptation and wrongdoing.

**“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Ga.5:24).**

**ILLUSTRATION:**

When we foolishly try to fulfill our desires in our own way, we are not trusting God. God is willing and certainly able to meet every need we have. But we must trust *His* plan—we must trust *Him*.

*A man was once being [led] by a guide over a dangerous Alpine trail. At length they came to a place where a great rock jutted out over the [cliff], leaving only the fragment of a pathway. The guide laid hold on the rock with one hand and put his other hand down on what was left of the trail, the hand extending out over the abyss. He told the other man to step on his hand and forearm and thus pass around the rock in safety. The man hesitated and was afraid; but the guide said, “Do not fear to stand on my hand. That hand has never yet lost a man.”<sup>30</sup>*

God will always provide a way out of danger or a way to escape temptation— if we will *ask* Him, and *trust* Him, and *follow* His plan.

**QUESTIONS:**

1. What experiences have taught you to depend upon God to meet your desires?
2. Why can we never find true and lasting fulfillment apart from God?
3. What is absolutely needed for us to control our lusts and desires?

**3. PRAYING AMISS: PRAYING WITH THE WRONG MOTIVE (v.3).**

What is the cause of temptation and wrongdoing? Scripture

<sup>30</sup> Clarence E. Macartney. *Macartney’s Illustrations*. (New York, NY: Abingdon Press, 1946), p. 401

says it is praying amiss. What does it mean to pray amiss? What is a wrong prayer? Scripture tells us that we ask for things so that we can gratify our lusts and pleasure. We ask for the wrong reasons, with the wrong motives. Scripture further says that this is the reason our prayers are so often not answered. We seek God’s blessings so that we can have more comfort, more enjoyment, better food and clothing, more acceptance and recognition.

What is the right motive for prayer? How can we pray and know that God will give the desires of our heart? *By asking for the glory of God*. When a person wants something from God, he must want it so that he can glorify God. We must always remember that what God is after is communion and fellowship with us, for us to draw closer and closer to Him, learning more and more about Him and worshipping and serving Him more and more. This is the way God is glorified, by our walking closely with Him and honoring and praising His name. Therefore, if we want anything from God, we must want it so that we can glorify Him—so that we can draw closer to Him and make Him better known to others.

1. If a person wants health, life, strength, or a strong testimony, it must be so that he can glorify God.

**“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Co.6:20).**

2. If a person wants to bear fruit in his life and work, or in his church and upon his land, it must be so that he can glorify God.

**“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit” (Jn.15:8).**

3. If a person wants the basic necessities of life—food, clothing, and shelter, or purpose, meaning, and significance, or assurance, confidence, and security—or if he wants more position, authority, or money, it must be so that he can glorify God and the Lord Jesus Christ in his life and testimony.

**“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will [glory], he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him” (1 Jn.5:14-15).**

**ILLUSTRATION:**

*One day a lady was giving her little nephew a lesson. He was generally a good, attentive child, but on this occasion he could not fix his mind on his work. Suddenly he said, “Auntie, may I kneel down and ask God to help me to find my marble?” His aunt having given her consent, the little boy knelt by his chair, closed his*

eyes, and prayed silently. Then he rose and went on with his lesson contentedly. ...The next day, the lady said, "Well, dear, have you found your marble?" "No, Auntie," was the reply, "but God has made me not want to."

God does not always answer our prayers in the way we wish or expect, but if we are sincere, He will take from us the desire for what is contrary to His holy will.<sup>31</sup>

#### QUESTIONS:

1. What does it mean to pray amiss?
2. What must be the focus of all our prayers?
3. In what ways can you glorify God today?

#### 4. WORLDLINESS: FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD (v.4).

What is the cause of temptation and wrongdoing? Worldliness. James uses strong language. He calls the people adulteresses and adulterers. He means two things.

1. Being an adulteress or adulterer means that a person is guilty of spiritual adultery. Jesus Christ holds His relationship with us in the highest regard. Our relationship with Him is to be so close that it can be described only by the closeness and intimacy of marriage. In fact, our relationship with Christ can be even closer and more meaningful than marriage. We are to know, believe, and understand Christ just as we are to know, believe, and understand our husbands and wives. But with Christ there is far more of a bond and relationship than what we can have with each other as men and women on earth. Jesus Christ actually lives within our bodies in the person of the Holy Spirit. We are to live, move, and have our being in Christ and He in us. This is the reason believers are called *the bride of Christ* (2 Co.11:1-2; Ep.5:24-28; Re.19:7; 21:9).

We must never forget that our Lord gave His life and died for us. He has done everything He can to save us and to create a relationship with us. And it cost Him unbelievable pain—the pain of the cross—the pain of bearing all the sins of the whole world—the pain of bearing the wrath of God against those sins—the pain of God the Father forsaking and rejecting Him when He bore our sins—pain that defies description—and it was all for us. Therefore, we must not commit spiritual adultery against Him by turning to the world. Spiritual adultery is:

- ⇒ not obeying the commandments of the Lord
- ⇒ idolatry, the worshipping of other gods
- ⇒ unclean works and sinful behavior
- ⇒ giving oneself to detestable and abominable things
- ⇒ forgetting God and turning one's back upon Him
- ⇒ refusing to turn to God and not knowing the Lord
- ⇒ forsaking God
- ⇒ disbelief in Christ
- ⇒ being ashamed of Christ and His Words

***"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him" (He.2:3).***

2. Being an adulteress or adulterer means that a person is committing physical adultery. The people of James's day lived in a generation just like all other generations, a generation where immorality and all forms of sexual vices were running rampant. As Jesus said, "This is an adulterous generation"—a generation that is so full of sexual immorality that it can be characterized as adulterous. Some believers had apparently been caught up in the immorality of the world, living impure lives. They were called adulterers and adulteresses because that is just what they were. They were having affairs behind closed doors and in the dark.

3. Note a third thing, the question asked by Scripture: "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?" What does this mean? Just what Scripture says: the person who is a friend of the world is the enemy of God. What does it mean to be a friend of the world?

- ⇒ It means to live for this world and the things of the world: houses, property, clothing, money, position, power, popularity, recognition, and anything else in this world that people focus upon and put before God.
- ⇒ It means to seek the things of this world so much that you will deceive, lie, cheat, and steal to get them.
- ⇒ It means to seek the fleshly pleasures and partying of this world.

Everything in this world passes away. This world is physical and material; therefore, it has the seed of corruption in it. Because of this, it stands against God. It is not eternal or holy and righteous like God. Therefore, any person who is a friend of this world also stands against God. He stands against all that God is.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. Why is the church, that is, believers, called "the bride of Christ"?

<sup>31</sup> Walter B. Knight. Knight's Master Book of 4,000 Illustrations. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), p.486.

## QUESTIONS (continued):

2. What is at the root of spiritual adultery? How can you guard against slipping away from the Lord?
3. Why is it impossible to be friends with the world and with God at the same time? In what ways can the true believer let go of the world more and more?

## 5. CONCLUSION: THE CURE (vv.5-6).

What is the cause of temptation and wrongdoing? This passage has told us there are four causes:

- ⇒ lust: the passion for pleasure and gratification
- ⇒ distrust: desiring something and never trusting God or asking Him for it
- ⇒ praying amiss: praying with the wrong motive
- ⇒ worldliness: friendship with the world

These are the causes of temptation and wrongdoing. Now, what is the *cure* for temptation and wrongdoing? There are two cures.

1. Believers must know this: the Spirit of God yearns over us with jealousy. Note that this point is a question: “Do you think...?” The point being made is something that we *must think about and know*. The Holy Spirit who dwells in believers...

- lusts, yearns, desires, and longs after us
- yearns with envy and jealousy over us

When does the Holy Spirit yearn over us with jealousy? All the time, but in a special way when temptation confronts us and we do wrong. The Holy Spirit is always yearning over us and He is always jealous over us. But if we turn away from Christ and become friends of the world—if we become adulterers and adulteresses—the Spirit of God does not cast us off and turn away from us. He loves us and cares for us and wants to save us. He yearns and longs for us with deep, intense jealousy—yearns and longs for us to return to Christ and to give Him our full devotion.

### APPLICATION:

God has placed His Spirit into the hearts of believers to lead them through all the temptations and trials of life and to convict and lead them to repentance when they sin. The Holy Spirit yearns for and covets souls; He wants no believer to turn away from Christ.

***“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against***

***the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Ga.5:16-17).***

2. Believers must know this: God gives the humble believer grace and more grace, but He resists the proud. Grace simply means the favor and blessings of God. When the believer faces temptation or does wrong, God meets the believer’s need, no matter what it is: strength, wisdom, power, perseverance, patience, forgiveness. The believer does not deserve God’s grace and blessing, but God loves him. Therefore, God gives him whatever he needs. In fact, God gives more grace, that is, an abundance of grace, overflowing grace.

But note a biblical fact: God has to stand against the sinner and his evil. God has to oppose and resist and eventually put him to the most terrible shame.

However, the glorious gospel is this: God gives grace and more grace to the humble. The person who turns to God and away from the world and his wrongdoing will receive all the grace from God he will ever need—and then some. God will look after and care for him just like a child—loving, nourishing, nurturing, feeding, clothing, sheltering, and protecting him forever and ever.

***“For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Lu.14:11).***

### ILLUSTRATION:

God has a way of humbling the proud and blessing the humble at the same time, as is illustrated in the following humorous story:

*An older brother always made fun of his younger siblings. The elder son prided himself in being so much smarter than his “dumb” little sister and brother. One of his favorite tricks was to make fun of them in front of his friends by offering them the choice between a nickel or a dime. He would hold out his hand with a nickel and a dime then tell them to pick which one they wanted. Each time the two little kids would go for the nickel. The young teen would then die laughing with his friends. One friend had seen the trick a dozen times so he pulled the two little kids aside and asked why they always chose the nickel. Their response was priceless. With a mischievous smile they agreed, “If we picked the dime he would quit giving us all of those nickels.”<sup>32</sup>*

If we stay humble, we will continue to receive God’s mercy. But pride will be our downfall every time.

<sup>32</sup> Raymond McHenry. *McHenry’s Stories for the Soul*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), #1537

## QUESTIONS:

1. When we are tempted, what does the Holy Spirit long for us to do?
2. How does the Holy Spirit help you when you fail?
3. Why must we put aside pride in order to receive God's grace?

## SUMMARY:

What do you struggle with? What cravings lie hidden within your soul? What desires want to master you? God longs, yearns to give you the grace to stand strong in the time of temptation. He will not leave your needs and desires unmet. As James says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God." This is the Good News of the Gospel: God is ever-present to forgive your sin; to meet your need; to satisfy the longing within you

What do you need today? Our heavenly Father, the Source of every good gift, has a plentiful supply. Seek Him now. He will help you to:

1. Put aside lust and evil desires: the passion for pleasure and gratification that rages within the body and its members.
2. Put aside distrust: seeking something, and never trusting God or asking God for it.
3. Put aside praying amiss: praying with the wrong motive.
4. Put aside worldliness: friendship with the world.
5. Accept His cure for your desires.

## PERSONAL JOURNAL NOTES:

(Reflection and Response)

1. The most important thing that I learned from this lesson was:
2. The thing that I need to work on the most is:
3. I can apply this lesson to my life by:
4. Closing Prayer of commitment:

**END**

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# What Does the Bible Say About Dealing With Mental Illness?

—by [www.gotquestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)

In general, mental illness is considered to be a disorder affecting one's mood, thinking, and behavior. The term *mental illness* covers a broad range of disorders from mild depression to schizophrenia, but for the purposes of this article, we will define *mental illness* as a condition that impairs a person's ability to think, feel, process, and respond to life situations in appropriate ways. Our brains are physical organs like lungs and kidneys and are subject to illness and damage just as other organs are. However, because our brains control everything we do, their malfunction can distort our perceptions, leading to hurtful or harmful thoughts and actions. Mental illnesses can distort our view of God and others. Sometimes mental illnesses contribute to our sinful behavior. God has compassion for our struggles. He can help us learn to manage mental illness and even bring healing.

Mental illness is still not fully understood by medical professionals and may have a variety of contributing factors. Some factors are physical, such as brain abnormalities, hormonal imbalances, and neurotransmitter impairments. Even things like nutrition, exercise, and sleep affect mental health. Proper medication and competent therapy can help alleviate those symptoms. Other mental illnesses are brought on by traumatic events or abuse in childhood. Sometimes a "coping mechanism" that was helpful in one situation gets carried into later life where it is no longer useful or adaptive. Also consider the way our behavior feeds into our physical health and our physical health feeds back into our behavior. Sometimes unhealthy behavior causes our bodies to be unhealthy, which in turn leads to more unhealthy behavior; the cycle is difficult to break. Sometimes our own sin

contributes to mental illness. When we obey Scripture's commands, we can bypass some aspects of mental illnesses and know better how to respond when we do encounter mental illness in ourselves or in someone else (Romans 12:2). Often, multi-layered treatment is best because multiple factors are contributing to a mental illness.

Mental illness has another factor that is not often considered in designing treatment programs. Much of what we call mental illness has a spiritual component that, if left unaddressed, keeps a person in bondage. Human beings have a spirit. To be created in God's image means we have life that is unlike the life of animals or plants. Our lives are directly connected to God's life. Acts 17:28 says, "*In him we live and move and have our being.*" When we are disconnected from God, we cannot live as whole beings. We sense the void and try to fill it with other things. But those things ultimately fail us, and that can contribute to mental illness. Of course, the first step in becoming spiritually whole is to receive eternal life through Jesus Christ. But even for those people who have a relationship with God through Jesus, we still sometimes have misperceptions about who God really is that can negatively affect our view of ourselves, others, and the world and contribute to mental illness. Sin can also get in the way of our fellowship with God and negatively affect our mental health. We are better equipped to handle mental illness when we are steeped in God's truth and in active relationship with Him.

Spiritual sickness is often a big part of mental illness. When our spirits are healed and whole, our minds can think clearly. Psalm 23:3 says that our Good Shepherd "*restoreth my soul.*" While

many mental illnesses are directly caused by brain abnormalities, many others are due to souls that need restoration. Unforgiveness (2 Corinthians 2:10–11), bitterness (Hebrews 12:15), fear and anxiety (Philippians 4:6–7), and low self-worth can all cripple our souls. When our souls are wounded, we cannot think clearly. We see every life event through a distorted filter. A sunny day only reminds us of the day we were hurt. The sight of a happy couple walking down the street brings a surge of fury due to an unhealed wound. Casual remarks, normal life stresses, and inconsiderate treatment can all cause a person with an unhealed soul to react like a person with mental illness. When we continually give in to those wrong thoughts, we perpetuate our own struggles.

While Jesus directly healed people who were considered mentally ill, He also recognized demonic control in others and cast the demons out (e.g., Mark 1:34; Luke 11:14). The demoniac of the Gerasenes was a man psychiatrists would call mentally ill (see Mark 5:1–20). He was out of control, behaving in unacceptable ways, and today we would confine this man to an institution. But Jesus went directly to the real problem. He ordered the legion of demons to come out of the man. After they did, the man was "in his right mind" (verse 15). While not all mental illness is due to demonic involvement, there may be people diagnosed with mental illness today who are experiencing some sort of demonic influence. Such people need, first and foremost, the spiritual deliverance that surrender to Jesus would offer them.

Just as we have compassion on those who are physically ill, we must also have compassion on those who are



mentally ill (Matthew 14:14). Just as we seek help when we are physically ill, we should also seek help when we are struggling with our thoughts, emotions, or behaviors. We need not judge the specific cause of mental illnesses in others; rather, we are to pray for them and offer support (James 5:14). We cannot assume that a mental illness is a result of sin or demonic influence;

however, we should not ignore those possibilities when trying to help someone or when seeking help ourselves. We have many tools to help with treatment of mental illness, including medicine, psychiatry, community support, and education. We need to be careful not to neglect the spiritual aspect of mental illness. We can share the truth of God with those struggling with men-

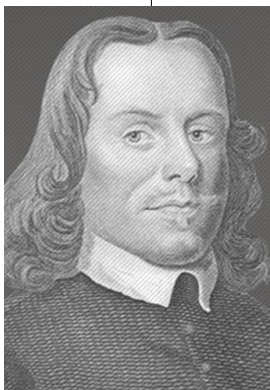
tal illness, encourage them as we are able, and support them in prayer. When we're struggling with mental illness, we need to be vigilant to continue to seek out God's truth, to come to Him in prayer, and to allow other believers to support us in our time of need (2 Corinthians 1:3-5; Romans 12:9-21; Galatians 6:2-10; John 13:34-35).

## John Bunyan

—by Treg Spicer

I have always been a fan of Peter Pan. I think it is because I've never grown up. I enjoy all books, movies, and even cartoons of Pan. There are many, but one of those movies that my daughters insisted on watching was *Tinkerbell*. I quickly became a fan of Tink! Tink was innovative, resourceful, and adventurous. Despite her gifts, she never felt that she matched up to the other fairies because she was only a Tinker.

This cartoon depicts the life of a well-known pastor (except for the fairy part). While other authors in his day were very wealthy and living a comfortable lifestyle, he was trying to make ends meet as a pastor, traveling tinker (worked on pots and pans), and writer. It didn't help that he spent a total of twelve years of his life in prison.



I am talking about John Bunyan.

Bunyan was born in 1628 to a tinker. At age sixteen, he enlisted in the army. After the army, he followed in his father's footsteps, becoming a tinker.

While on a job, he overheard four ladies having a conversation about God and the church. It so intrigued him, he had to engage in the conversation. Their passion for spiritual things was something he had never seen. It ended up causing him to leave the Church of England and join their fellowship. It was there that he found Christ.

The tinker joined the church and within four years was drawing crowds "from all parts" as a lay minister. "I went myself in chains to preach to them in chains," he said, "and carried that fire in my own conscience that I persuaded

them to beware of."

His preaching also drew attention from the authorities. When asked to stop preaching, Bunyan responded that he would rather remain in prison until moss grew on his eyelids than fail to do what God commanded. His second wife (his first had died), Elizabeth, did all she could to fight for his release. She also was left to manage a home and four step-children, one of whom

was blind, with little to no income. Bunyan still could not walk away from his calling. "O I saw in this condition I was a man who was pulling down his house upon the head of his wife and children; yet thought I, I must do it, I must do it."

Still, the imprisonment wasn't as bad as some have imagined. He was allowed visitors, spent some nights at home, and was even allowed to sneak out and preach to the "unlawful assemblies" at times in secret. More importantly, the imprisonment gave him the incentive and opportunity to write.

*The prison freed the pen.*

**How could a man keep it together in such circumstances?**

**Because Bunyan was able to:**

**1. See the goodness of God even in prison.**

I love what David says in Psalm 27:13-*"I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."* Even in the midst of the most devastating circumstances, God is always good.

We might not always see His goodness, but it is always there. His goodness

does not mean there will not be finical difficulties, death, or imprisonment, but it does mean His grace will get us through.

**2. Recognize what he had was more than he deserved.**

Bunyan had little to nothing, yet that was often more than he felt he deserved. Bunyan was one of the few who has ever taken his readers into the battle of his thoughts and mind. He struggled with sin and that struggle weighed heavily upon him.

Bunyan was not one who would look up and cry, "Why me!" He was one who would look around and say, "Why not me?"

**3. See a cause greater than his circumstances.**

Was it easy? No! The fire that burned in Bunyan's soul was enough to light the darkness in the prison. He knew his calling and would not allow circumstances to dictate his outcome.

Our purpose should drive us. It should get us out of bed every morning. God gave Bunyan a purpose. Bunyan made the most of it even when it seemed impossible.

**The end of the story.**

Bunyan was finally released from prison, his prison masterpiece soon became one of the most popular publications of the day.

Bunyan was able to trade in his pots and pans for a pen and became a famed author and pastor.

*Pilgrim's Progress* has been called by many the most printed and most translated English book. Without a prison, there would have been no Pilgrim!

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## January

### **Book of Romans (Romans 7:7-25)**

Taught by Michael Pearl.

### **Friends: Love Worth Finding** (part 2 of 2)

Pastor Adrian Rogers reveals why we must guard our teenagers' friendships and help them become admirable friends to others.

### **4 Seasons of Marriage Love and Respect** (part 3 of 3)

Emerson and Jonathan Eggerichs explore who marital paradise is lost and why couples feel like they have left Eden to live in a jungle of sorts. Scripture indicates that couples will have trouble in this life—so why are husbands and wives unprepared? Learn to anticipate and accept the four seasons of marriage so they can be navigated successfully.

### **Church Membership** (part 1 of 2)

In this two part series on church membership, Pastor John Marino discusses the importance of committing to the local church. Does the Bible call us as Christians to be merely spectators - or does the commitment to the church go deeper than that?

## February

### **Book of Romans (Romans 8:1-10)**

Taught by Michael Pearl.

### **What to Do When You Are Not Okay** (part 1 of 2)

Debra Fileta helps you better understand your emotions, and intentionally pursue a path to mental and spiritual wellbeing.

### **Saying “Thanks” versus Being Grateful** (part 1 of 2)

We can say “thanks” but not be grateful. We can mouth words, but our hearts are elsewhere. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 3:2 that people can be “lovers of self...ungrateful.” We can even sing a song of thanks while in a worship service at church, but inwardly dwell on the hurt and offense we feel toward someone who wronged us the day before. Message by Emerson and Jonathan Eggerichs.

### **Church Membership** (part 2 of 2)

Final sermon of a 2-part message by Pastor John Marino highlighting the importance of committing to the local church.

## March

### **Book of Romans (Romans 8:10-14)**

Taught by Michael Pearl.

### **What to Do When You Are Not Okay** (part 2 of 2)

Debra Fileta helps you better understand your emotions, and intentionally pursue a path to mental and spiritual wellbeing.

### **Saying “Thanks” versus Being Grateful** (part 2 of 2)

We can say “thanks” but not be grateful. We can mouth words, but our hearts are elsewhere. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 3:2 that people can be “lovers of self...ungrateful.” We can even sing a song of thanks while in a worship service at church, but inwardly dwell on the hurt and offense we feel toward someone who wronged us the day before. Message by Emerson and Jonathan Eggerichs.

## **Conscience**

Join Pastor John Marino and J.D. Crowley in this message on the conscience. (J.D. Crowley is the co-author of the book, *Conscience: What it Is, How to Train it, and Loving Those Who Differ*.)

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The cost of *The Amish Voice* is \$.50 a copy and is totally funded by readers from across our great country who appreciate the ministry and care to support it. If the Lord would lay it on your heart to come alongside of us by helping with expenses, it would be a great benefit, as well as highly appreciated. Thank you. —Joe Keim, Executive Director

# Is God a God of Mercy or of Wrath?

—by John Weaver

The answer is, “Yes,” but God is a lot more of a God of mercy than what He is often portrayed as.

Many know that the Bible states that God is angry with the wicked. Few know that Jesus said that God “*is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil*” (Luke 6:35).

I grew up being taught that God was ready to pour out His wrath upon His children for any transgression. Very little was ever taught about His mercy which endures forever. I, along with many others, formed a completely incorrect concept of God.

Multitudes followed Jesus because He had the words of life. He portrayed a God who so loved us that He gave His only son to die and rise again so that we

could have eternal life. Jesus taught that faith and believing in Him would give us eternal life. Faith motivates obedience and brings forth good fruit and good works.

Jesus was merciful to sinners, encouraging them, not condemning. He reserved condemnation for the Pharisees who rejected Him and set up a system of salvation based on traditions, keeping rules, and, in general, being a genuine hypocrite.

The Pharisees did not attract converts. When a sinner gets a glimpse of the mercy of God, he will be more prone to give up his life and accept Jesus than when he is presented with a God who can hardly ever be pleased.

Jesus had harsh criticism for the people

who made the kingdom of God into a lot of demands, put heavy burdens upon others, and yet were not willing to keep them themselves.

It is my greatest joy to serve Jesus, who I see as a kind, loving savior. He is not demanding or harsh at all. He will gently guide me by His Spirit, and show me the way. In short, I serve my God out of love instead of fear. Fear brings torment.

The wrath of God is not for His children who serve Him, even though imperfectly. The wrath of God is reserved for those who reject His mercy and go their own way, living for the flesh and sin.

*“Turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness”* (Joel 2:13b).

# Guilty of Murder

—by Ann Peachey Detweiler

Conservative Anabaptists know where they stand on the abortion issue. We are not afraid to stand up for those innocent babies who have never seen the light of day. But what we fail to realize is this: In a sense, we are taking part in the murder of the innocent when we sweep sexual abuse “under the rug.”

We have a problem. A big problem.

Go to any counseling center in our circles and they will tell you that childhood sexual abuse is rampant in conservative communities across the world. The numbers of sexually abused children in our churches are no different than that of the world. Somewhere between 30-50% of girls will be abused by age eighteen, and 1 in 10 boys are being abused.

Brothers and Sisters, we are killing the spirits of our children. They are being crushed, their innocence stolen. In their eyes, they are worthless.

In God’s eyes, they are worth fighting for.

Will we keep trying to cover up? Will we

continue to treat this epidemic as if it isn’t there? Or will we begin taking necessary steps to protect and guard our children’s purity?

Matthew 18:6 has some sobering words for us: *“But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”*

Sexual abuse effects a person on every level of their being: body, soul, and spirit. The implications are huge; it is like putting on a pair of sunglasses and seeing the world in a completely new way. The child’s view of God is severely damaged, especially if the abuser was someone they trusted. Sexual abuse is a really good way to offend a child.

We wonder why our young people are leaving. May I suggest that it might be related to this? They see the inconsistencies. They see their abuser in church every Sunday. He is sitting piously on the front pew, “drinking” in the message. Or

maybe he is the Superintendent or the Sunday School teacher.

What would happen if the people of God actually loved God enough to hate what God hates? What would happen if the secrets that have been hidden for decades would be brought to the Cross? What would happen if the many little boys and girls were believed and understood and cared for? What would happen if both the victims and the perpetrators would meet Jesus?

Maybe our light for Jesus would shine brighter. Maybe we would actually have people knocking on our doors, wanting Jesus too. Maybe, just maybe, our children would want what we have.

We have become good at putting on a “holy” front. But Brothers and Sisters, it’s time for the darkness to meet the Light.

It’s time to expose our sin.

It’s time to get rid of our guilt and shame.

It’s time to meet Jesus.

In 1880, George Washington Hazlett purchased 109 wooded acres near Smicksburg, Pennsylvania, which he began clearing with the hopes of one day operating a farm. In the process, he felled many old oaks, and he hand-hewed their trunks into long posts and beams for a future 50-foot square bank barn. Some of the hemlocks that he harvested were sawn at a local mill into rough-cut planks for barn siding. By 1890, George had assembled everything he needed to build his barn, including quarried foundation stones, and with the help of friends, he erected a structure that still stands today, 130 years later.

In the 1940s and 50s, my great Uncle Clyde, George Hazlett's grandson, built two rustic living quarters in either side of that barn, complete with a kitchen, living room, bedrooms, plumbing and gaslights in every room. Uncle Clyde spent most of his summers at his converted barn, which I enjoyed visiting many times as a child. My siblings and I loved to hike the trails Uncle Clyde had cleared in his wooded acres, and swimming and fishing in the Little Mahoning Creek that bordered his property was always a special treat.

I would never have imagined it as a child, but my wife and I now reside at that barn, which we remodeled over the last few years into a lovely home that still features George Hazlett's skill in the many exposed hand-hewn posts and beams. We've named it "The Peace Barn" because of the peaceful ambiance. The Peace Barn also highlights the skill of many local Smicksburg Amish carpenters and craftsman, who have done 95% of all the remodeling work, and who have become friends in the process.

It was in the early 1960s that a few Amish families moved from Ohio to

the Smicksburg area, and today there are over 550 households that share about 20 surnames. The Smicksburg community is the 3rd largest Amish settlement in Pennsylvania and the 11<sup>th</sup> largest in the U.S., consisting of almost 3,000 souls.

We've come to know quite a few of our Amish neighbors, and we're thankful to be living among them. They are friendly, considerate, hardworking, honest and sincere. As Christians, my wife and I share many of the same values held by our Amish neighbors that stem from their Anabaptist heritage. I've jokingly told a number of my Amish friends that my wife and I are "half Amish," as we raised our children without a TV, never sent them to public schools but rather schooled them ourselves, have been involved in churches that met in homes rather than church buildings, prefer rural living, and try, with God's help, to obey Jesus' commandments. On a few occasions, I've even told some of my Amish friends that I'm more Amish than they are, because I actually believe the 1632 Dordrecht Confession!

Concerning that last point, having studied the history, beliefs and practices of early Anabaptism when it began in the early 1500s, and having also read the 1632 Dordrecht Confession, I'm so sorry to say that the large majority of my Amish friends do not enjoy the wonderful spiritual blessings of the original Anabaptists. More than anything else, the original Anabaptists believed the Bible, and they consequently rejected anything that was taught either by the Roman Catholic Church or the Protestant Reformers that couldn't be found in the Word of God. They expressly rejected all human, religious tradition that contradicted the Bible's teaching.

One of those church traditions that early Anabaptists rejected—practiced by both Catholics and Protestants—was infant baptism, as they saw what anyone who honestly reads the New Testament easily sees, that the New Testament church, led by the apostles whom Jesus chose, never baptized infants, but rather, adults only. And they did so only after such adults repented of their sins and believed in the Lord Jesus. It was the persecutors of the early Anabaptists who consequently labeled them "Re-baptizers," because they baptized adults who had previously been baptized as infants in the Roman Catholic or Protestant churches.

Another church tradition that early Anabaptists rejected (as did all the Protestants) was the (primarily Catholic) idea that one could earn one's way to heaven by one's own works. They read in the Bible that "*by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast*" (Eph. 2:8-9). The early Anabaptists held to the biblical truth that "*all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" (Rom. 3:23), so no one is good enough to be saved by their own merits. Grace from God is essential for salvation of sinners. And the early Anabaptists believed that God extended His grace through His Son Jesus Christ, who died for their sins and made salvation available for all who would repent and become His followers.

Yet another church tradition that early Anabaptists rejected was the (primarily Protestant) idea that one could genuinely believe in Jesus but not obey Him. They read in the Bible that "*faith without works is dead*" (James 2:20) and that faith without works cannot save anyone (James 2:14).

The early Anabaptists also believed that anyone who repents of their sins and believes in Jesus experiences a spiritual rebirth that transforms him into a “*born again*” (1 Pet. 1:23) “*new creature*” (2 Cor. 5:17). They believed Jesus’ plain words, “*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*” (John 3:3). They believed that a spiritual rebirth was essential for salvation. It was the starting place for a true relationship with God. They believed that the new birth was not just a theological concept, but a living, experiential reality. People who experienced the new birth were genuinely transformed. They understood what the New Testament meant when it described true conversion as “*passing from death to life*” (1 John 3:4). It is a dramatic, inward change that affects everything in a person’s life.

The early Anabaptists also believed that the good works that are done by believers do not stem from human effort or outward conformity to an imposed and enforced Christian culture, but from the Holy Spirit, who literally indwells all those who truly believe in Jesus. They read and believed Paul’s words to the Galatian Christians about “*the fruit of the Spirit*” (Gal. 5:22), and his words to the Ephesian Christians: “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*” (Eph. 2:10).

All of these plain, biblical truths are found in Article 6 of the Dordrecht Confession, the 1632 Mennonite doctrinal statement to which all Amish people subscribe. It reads:

We believe and confess, that, since the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth, and, therefore, prone to all unrighteousness, sin, and wickedness, the first lesson of the precious New Testament of the

Son of God is *repentance and reformation of life*, and that, therefore, those who have ears to hear, and hearts to understand, *must bring forth genuine fruits of repentance, reform their lives, believe the Gospel, eschew evil and do good, desist from unrighteousness, forsake sin, put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*: for, neither baptism, supper, church, nor any other outward ceremony, can without *faith, regeneration, change or renewing of life*, avail anything to please God or to obtain of Him any consolation or promise of salvation; but we must go to God with an upright heart, and in perfect faith, and believe in Jesus Christ, as the Scripture says, and testifies of Him; through which faith we obtain *forgiveness of sins, are sanctified, justified, and made children of God*, yea, partake of His mind, nature, and image, as being *born again of God* from above, through incorruptible seed. Genesis 8:21; Mark 1:15; Ezekiel 12:2; Colossians 3:9, 10; Ephesians 4:22, 24; Hebrews 10:22, 23; John 7:38 (italics added).

In contrast to what is believed by so many Amish today—the idea that a person cannot be certain of his salvation, and if one is certain, it is an indication of pride—the original Anabaptists universally believed that those who repent and believe in the Lord Jesus have their sins forgiven and become born-again children of God, as we just read from Article 6 of the Dordrecht Confession.

How could someone who is spiritually reborn, has his sins forgiven, and has become a child of God, rightly say, “I don’t know if I will be accepted by God to enter heaven, because I am not certain I am good enough?” Such a

belief contradicts not only the Dordrecht Confession, but the entire message of the New Testament.

It is not prideful for people whom God has forgiven of their sins and made into His children to believe their sins are forgiven and that they are God’s children. Rather, it is an expression of faith, rather than of unbelief, in what God has said.

The truth is, it is prideful to even *hope* that one can be good enough to gain heaven, because God has declared that no one is good enough for that, which is why Jesus died for our sins. Hoping to be good enough to gain heaven is one sin, among others, that people need to repent of to be born again.

All these simple biblical truths are also affirmed in Articles 7 and 8 of the Dordrecht Confession:

Concerning baptism we confess that *all penitent believers, who, through faith, regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, are made one with God, and are written in heaven*, must, upon such Scriptural confession of faith, and renewing of life, be baptized with water....

We believe in, and confess a visible church of God, namely, those who, as has been said before, truly repent and believe, and are rightly baptized; who are *one with God in heaven*, and rightly incorporated into the communion of the saints here on earth. These we confess to be *the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, who are declared to be the bride and wife of Christ, yea, children and heirs of everlasting life*, a tent, tabernacle, and habitation of God in the Spirit.

All of these truths in the Dordrecht Confession are straight from the New Testament. How could someone who is regenerated by the Holy Ghost, made

one with God, has his name written in heaven, is chosen of God, has become a royal priest as well as the bride and wife of Christ ever rightly say, “I don’t know if I will make heaven, because I’m not sure I’m good enough?” What would you think of a child who said to his father, “I don’t know if I am your child, or if I have the right to live in this house with you?”

As I said earlier, this is the heart-breaking tragedy that I’ve witnessed among my Smicksburg Amish friends. And how sad it is for them to miss out on the greatest blessing that was enjoyed not only by all of their Anabaptist forefathers among the Swiss Brethren, but also Jakob Ammann (from whom the Amish derive their name), all of the early Amish believers, and not to mention all of the first Christians that we read about in the book of Acts, plus all true believers around the world since then, which include myself, my family, and many of my friends. I’ve personally met thousands of born-again followers of Jesus all over the world in more than 40 nations to which I’ve traveled. There is nothing better on earth than being born again by God’s Holy Spirit. It can happen to you!

Sadly, I’ve found that most of my Amish friends do not want to talk about these things. They seem to be afraid of being led astray and the consequent excommunication and shunning they would suffer. Their fear is even more tragic, as there is no reason why one can’t be born again and continue to live a traditional Amish lifestyle. Worse, the New Testament teaches that those who persecute born-again people prove that they themselves are serving Satan!

Through readers’ responses to some of my previous articles in the *Amish Voice*, I’ve been blessed to hear from a number of born-again Amish believers across the country who are enjoying the

wonderful blessings of being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and who know they are “new creatures” and children of God whose sins have been forgiven. And while they continue to live within traditional Amish culture, they’ve found new joy in the assurance of salvation and a relationship with the Lord they never dreamed of. Like all truly born-again believers in Jesus, they wish everyone was born again. They are the true “Old Order,” having now joined the “Original Order,” which is the *oldest* Order!

I have also learned that in 1971 another nearby Amish community was birthed from the Smicksburg community, nine years after its founding in 1962. The Troutville community has since grown to be almost as large as the Smicksburg community, consisting of more than 2,500 people. The Troutville *Ordnung* is definitely more liberal than the Smicksburg *Ordnung*. From the Troutville community, another community was birthed in 2005, which now consists of over 500 people. The Johnsonburg *Ordnung* is even more liberal than the Troutville *Ordnung*.

Of course, many members of the Smicksburg, Troutville and Johnsonburg communities are related to each other, which causes some strain among them due to the differences in each community’s *Ordnung*. But I have to confess that I have been pleasantly surprised to meet some members of the Johnsonburg community who are born again and who aren’t ashamed to say so. They love to talk about their personal relationships with the Lord, and it is evident that the Holy Spirit indwells them and is living through them. They often gather for Bible studies. They are full of joy, and no wonder, because they are certain that they are going to heaven as long as they don’t fall away from their faith. I’m looking forward to getting to know them better. They understand, just like

the original Anabaptists, that holiness is not outward conformity to a list of manmade rules, but that true holiness stems from a born-again heart, and it is the Holy Spirit within them who instructs and empowers them to do what is right and please God.

I’ll close by sharing a contrast I’ve observed between the Smicksburg and Johnsonburg Amish.

One day when three of my Smicksburg Amish friends were installing a floor in our barn, I showed them some video on my large-screen TV that was filmed from the International Space Station, which circles the earth 16 times every day. It is fascinating film footage, as you can see the curvature of the earth, as well as the oceans, land masses of continents, mountain ranges and cloud formations from a vantage point of 254 miles above it all. In the nighttime video footage, you can see the lights of large cities and small villages. My Amish friends really enjoyed seeing what they had never seen before.

I asked one of them, who is a local bishop, if it would be wrong of me to invite local Amish families to our house to watch an amazing documentary on my TV about how penguins live in Antarctica. (Many local Amish families take their children to the Pittsburgh Zoo, and it is considered to be an acceptable, educational and recreational activity.) He said that was a “gray area,” and expressed hesitation because “it could lead to other things.” That is, watching something harmless on TV could lead to watching something on TV that is not harmless. And he was correct. If you don’t watch anything on TV, there is no chance you might watch something bad. However, there is also no chance you might watch something good! (Eliminating all TV is somewhat akin to eliminating all sex in order to avoid fornication.)

I own a TV, and I don’t watch anything

that any Amish person would consider sinful. On the contrary, most Amish people would consider everything I watch on my TV to be morally uplifting. For example, my wife and I have recently been watching a dramatization about the life of Jesus called *The Chosen*. It is being viewed around the world by millions of people, many of whom previously knew nothing about Jesus. That is a good thing!

A television is not a dangerous thing to someone who is born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. If I was to begin viewing something on my TV that was not pleasing to the Lord, He would immediately convict me, because He lives in me by His Holy Spirit! Beyond that, I have no desire to view what displeases Him, because He has changed me when I was born again. So I don't need a set of rules to regulate my behavior. As the apostle Paul wrote, "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law" (Gal. 5:18).

My son and his wife, who live among the Johnsonburg Amish, recently had a local Amish family at their house who wanted to watch an episode of *The Chosen*. So, together they watched an

episode that was all about Jesus' miracle of changing water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana of Galilee. It is an uplifting dramatization that reminded all of them of Jesus' power and compassion. No harm was done! Rather, God was glorified. And because my son, his wife, and the Amish couple are all born again, there is no danger that the next time they get together they will be viewing an ungodly, worldly, sinful movie! None of them have any such desire.

And that is the primary difference between being born again and not being born again but trying to conform to a set of rules to try to please God. Until you are inwardly transformed by the Holy Spirit, you may limitedly achieve an outward appearance of holiness that is imposed on you by Amish culture. But on the inside, there is still impurity, and that impurity has a way of coming to the surface.

In future articles in the *Amish Voice*, I hope to introduce you to some born-again Amish Christians who are still living within Amish culture. If you are one of them, I would love to talk with you or meet you in order to hear and share your story with readers who are

not yet born again. Your story might help open eyes and hearts to the greatest blessing made possible by Jesus' death—eternal life, which is something the Bible teaches Christians can know they've possessed:

*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, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God (1 John 5:13).*

If you are interested in communicating, you can contact me at:

David Kirkwood  
P.O. Box 33,  
Smicksburg, PA 16256.  
Or call me at 412 722-3075.

It's time for spiritually-hungry Amish folks to recover their spiritual heritage and become members of the Oldest, Original Order, the one found in the New Testament! And it's time for born-again Amish folks to take the necessary risks to truly love their fellow Amish who are not yet born again by sharing with them how they, too, can experience the blessing of the new birth!

**END**

From a reader:

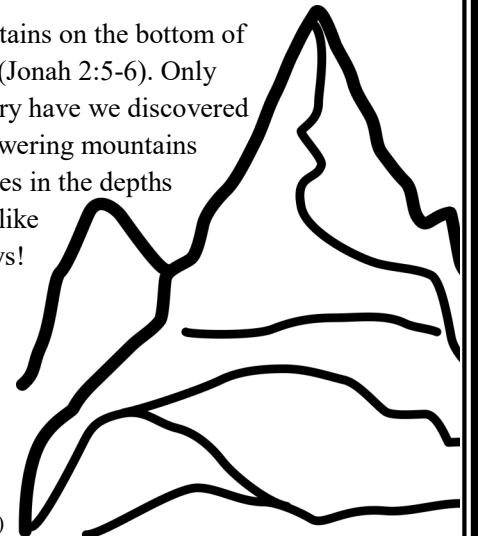
*Dear friends,*

*Greetings in Jesus holy Name, and His blessings are uncountable. I am writing this to tell you how much I appreciate The Amish Voice publication. I am an 88 year old widow and do a lot of reading, especially inspiring reading like this. So please keep it coming. I don't know who sent my name in or so on, but I hope you will keep it coming. Thank you so much and may God richly bless you all who have a part in this good publication. Keep on keeping on. Mail time is the highlight of my day. Love and Prayers to you all, —AMB*

## Did You Know?

There are mountains on the bottom of the ocean floor (Jonah 2:5-6). Only in the last century have we discovered that there are towering mountains and deep trenches in the depths of the sea...just like God's Word says!

Taken from:  
*101 Scientific Facts  
& Foreknowledge*  
(Eternal Productions)



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### Moving? Receiving duplicate mailings?

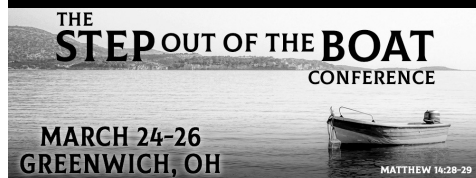
### Not interested in the Amish Voice?

Your address label is needed to make these changes. Please help us update our database by noting any corrections directly on your address label, and then returning it to us at:

575 US Highway 250 - Greenwich, OH 44837

## Step Out of the Boat Conference

—by Joe Keim



How do you respond when God's calls you to step out of your comfort zone and all you have to hold onto is the faith you have in God?

Regardless of how we respond, we are all faced with stepping out of our comfort zones at some point. Maybe it's buying a property. Maybe it's uprooting and moving to another part of the Country.

God rarely keeps us in the same season for long, because His desire is for us to grow in our faith and fully depend on Him.

### Some things I have learned about my faith in God:

1. It is very rare that God allows me to see the whole picture at once.
2. If I had all the details, it wouldn't require faith and dependency on God.
3. Stepping out and into the unknown is often a frightful experience.
4. I wonder how many God moments I have missed because I lacked faith and stayed in my comfort zone.

5. Some of the greatest and most amazing things that have ever happened in my life is when I stepped out in faith and fully trusted God to hold me.

### Four Bible characters who stepped out in faith:

1. By faith, Noah build an ark.
2. By faith, David killed Goliath with a sling shot.
3. By faith, Esther put her life on the line when she saved an entire nation from death.
4. By faith, Peter stepped out of the boat and walked on water.

It is by faith alone that we all believe there is a God, a heaven, and a hell. It is by faith that we believe it is through Jesus Christ alone that one must be born again to enter the gates of heaven. Pretty much everything in life requires us to take steps of faith. We cannot get away from it!

One of the best ways to increase our faith is to listen and hear what happened to others when they stepped out into the unknown and God did a mighty work through them. That is why we are having our second Step Out of the Boat Conference—March of 2022.

You will hear about 15 speakers, each share of a time when they stepped out

in faith. Let me tell you, it is a very, very moving and powerful time of testimonies, worship, and prayer! It will totally change your life forever!

### Conference Registration and Details:

**Date:** March 24 (starts at 7pm), 25, and 26 (ends at noon).

**Location:** Bethel Chapel, 575 US Highway 250, Greenwich, OH.

**Cost:** \$25/person, \$40/couple, \$60/family

**Food:** Friday morning light breakfast, Friday noon lunch, Friday evening dinner, and Saturday morning light breakfast will be provided.

**Registration:** You can either call our office at (419) 962-1515, or go to our website and register online. Go to the following website:

[mapministry.org/step-out-of-the-boat](http://mapministry.org/step-out-of-the-boat)

Greenwich, OH is just 15 minutes from Ashland where all the motels are located. Unless you know someone in the area, you will need to get a motel room as early as possible; otherwise, you may not get a room.

Bring yourself, your spouse, and your family. We can hardly wait to see you, and get to know you in person. It is going to be absolutely awesome this year. I promise, you will never be the same. Register today!