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The General Epistle of James

Teacher's Outline and Study Bible™

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|---|--|--|--|
| <p>1. Judging others is slander, speaking evil of brothers</p> | <p>V. TEMPTATIONS & TRIALS: COMMON TO ALL, BUT ESPECIALLY TO THE GIFTED, 4:11–5:6</p> <p>A. Temptation 1: The Judge—Judging Others, 4:11-12</p> <p>11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that</p> | <p>speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.</p> <p>12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?</p> | <p>2. Judging others violates the law of God</p> <p>3. Judging others sets one up as judge, as a lawgiver</p> <p>4. Judging others usurps God's right & authority</p> |
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Section V TEMPTATIONS AND TRIALS: COMMON TO ALL, BUT ESPECIALLY TO THE GIFTED James 4:11–5:6

STUDY 1: TEMPTATION 1: THE JUDGE— JUDGING OTHERS

TEXT: James 4:11-12

AIM: To understand and avoid the evil of criticism.

MEMORY VERSE:

“Speak not evil one of another, brethren” (James 4:11).

INTRODUCTION:

God hates all sin, but there are a few sins that are constantly and strongly condemned by Scripture. Judging others—criticizing, backbiting, gossiping, speaking evil, and talking about others—is one of the sins that Scripture consistently and severely condemns.

Temptations and trials commonly confront all of us, but some are especially common to the gifted. And note what the first temptation is that confronts the person who is especially gifted: judging others. Condemning or criticizing others is one of the most evil of all sins, a sin of terrible pride. Why? Simply this: the person who judges and condemns another person is committing the original sin—the foolish sin of trying to take the very place of God. God will never allow such a sin. Pride will always be met with swift judgment. Note four unmistakable facts about judging others.

OUTLINE:

1. Judging others is slander, speaking evil of brothers (v.11).
2. Judging others violates the law of God (v.11).
3. Judging others sets one up as judge, as a law-giver (v.11).
4. Judging others usurps God's right and authority (v.12).

1. JUDGING OTHERS IS SLANDER, SPEAKING EVIL OF BROTHERS (v.11).

Note three significant points.

1. “Speaking evil” means to criticize, judge, condemn another person. It means to tear down another person; to lower his image and reputation in the eyes of others. The word usually means to talk about a person behind his back, when he is not present.

2. Note that a brother has sinned. He has broken the law of God. He has failed, and his failure is known. It is public knowledge, and he is being judged and criticized for his failure. He is being talked about. Now, if we are forbidden to speak evil of a person who is actually guilty of sin, how much more are we forbidden to speak against a person just because we dislike or disagree with him?

Note what the Scripture says: this is evil speaking. It is just as much an evil as the failure of the other person. Therefore, the person who judges another is as guilty as the sinner.

3. The exhortation is strong: Christian believers are not to judge or speak evil of one another. The reason is clear: we are brothers, brothers of Christ and of one another. All of us are of the family of God. Therefore, we are to love, support, and build up one another, and not tear down one another.

When we criticize a brother or sister in Christ, we are slandering one of God’s own children, slandering a son or daughter of God. This alone should keep us from speaking evil of our brothers in Christ.

Think about something else as well: there is never a spirit of evil speaking in the truly humble and loving person. There is only a loving compassion for others, especially for those who have come short and fallen. Therefore, when we speak evil of another person, it means that we are neither humble nor loving, but the very opposite: prideful and hateful. We are evil speakers.

ILLUSTRATION:

The great evangelist, John Wesley, knew what damage evil speaking could do, both to the work of the Kingdom and to his ministers. The following was found in the handwriting of John Wesley after his death and was signed by him, his brother Charles, and several other fellow ministers in the Methodist revival.

“It is agreed by us whose names are underwritten:

1. *That we will not listen to or willingly inquire after any ill concerning each other.*
2. *That if we do hear any ill of each other, we will not be forward to believe it.*
3. *That as soon as possible we will communicate what we hear by speaking or writing to the person concerned.*

4. *That till we have done this we will not write or speak a syllable of it to any other person whatever.*
5. *That neither will we mention it after we have done this, to any other person.*
6. *That we will not make any exception to any of these rules unless we think ourselves absolutely obliged in conscience so to do.”*

—From the personal writings of John Wesley—
SOURCE UNKNOWN

Did John Wesley go too far? Was he too serious? Not according to the Bible. “And who are we to argue with the Bible?”

QUESTIONS:

1. How is judging others rebellion against God?
2. Consider Wesley’s rules about gossip. What rules do you follow already? Which of these do you need to adopt?
3. How does humility keep you from speaking evil?

2. JUDGING OTHERS VIOLATES THE LAW OF GOD (v.11).

Note exactly what Scripture says:

“He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law” (v.11).

This is a shocking statement: talking about and slandering a brother is speaking evil of the law. What does this mean? When a person talks about and condemns others, he is violating the greatest of all laws, the royal law of love, the law that plainly declares that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves (Js.2:8). The criticizer and backbiter himself becomes guilty of transgression, and his transgression violates the great law that commands us to love one another. In fact, the criticizer and backbiter does more harm than the person he is judging. The criticizer and backbiter is speaking evil of the law; that is, he is condemning another person for some failure while he himself is breaking the law. He is saying that the law of love is not all that important, that it can sometimes be ignored, neglected, abused, or violated. The person who talks about others is a double hypocrite: he not only ignores the great law of love by talking about others, but he also slanders others for their failure. He is, as Scripture says, speaking evil of the law. His speaking evil against his brother does not uphold the law of love; it speaks evil and tears down the law of love.

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Ga.5:14).

“If ye fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well” (Js.2:8).

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the “royal law of love”? How can you keep this law when there are people you strongly disagree with or disapprove of?
2. What does criticism reveal about the person criticizing others? What steps can you take to be less critical?

3. JUDGING OTHERS SETS ONE UP AS A JUDGE OR AS A LAWGIVER (v.11).

Again, note exactly what the Scripture says:

“He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother... judgeth the law” (v.11).

How is this possible? How do criticizing and backbiting and judging a brother make us judges of the law? When we criticize a brother, we are saying that the law he has broken is important, very important—so important that he should not have broken it— but the law of love is not important enough to keep us from criticizing him. We judge the law he has broken as important and the law of love as not so important. Note: this is a very common practice. We choose which laws should be kept and which can be occasionally broken. It may be the laws governing gluttony, anger, worship, sex, what we look at and desire, drunkenness, covetousness, or the great law of love being discussed in this passage. But no matter what the law is, we judge the law when we choose...

- which laws are important and which laws are not so important
- which laws are binding and which laws are not so binding
- which laws deserve our utmost attention and which laws do not deserve so much attention
- which laws should be kept and which laws can occasionally be broken

When we choose what laws we will obey, we set ourselves up above the law of God. We make ourselves the judge of the law; we make ourselves lawgivers. And note: this is not our function. Scripture declares plainly that our duty is to obey the law, not to be judges of the law. This is exactly what the

end of verse 11 says: *“If you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge.”* We are not to criticize our brother or sister. Contrariwise, we are to do the very thing our brother or sister is to do: keep the law of God.

“And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgement of God” (Ro.2:3).

“For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified” (Ro.2:13).

ILLUSTRATION:

We are all guilty under the Law and need God’s mercy. But having received mercy does not qualify us as judges. We must stay humble, realizing that we are in continual need of God’s grace, as the following poem so well states:

WHEN I SAY I AM A CHRISTIAN

When I say ... “I am a Christian”
I’m not shouting, “I am saved.”
I’m whispering, “I was lost!”
That is why I chose this way.

When I say ... “I am a Christian”
I don’t speak of this with pride.
I’m confessing that I stumble
and need someone to be my guide.

... When I say ... “I am a Christian”
I’m not bragging of success.
I’m admitting I have failed
and cannot ever pay the debt.

... When I say ... “I am a Christian”
I do not wish to judge.
I have no authority.
I only know I’m loved.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN³⁶

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is judging another person a sin against God? What is your attitude supposed to be if you see someone break a law?
2. How can being thankful for your salvation keep you from being critical?

³⁶ Ken Krivolahvek. *Rejoicin’ an’ Repentin’*. (Olathe, KS: KLK Ministries, 2002), p. 118.

4. JUDGING OTHERS USURPS GOD'S RIGHT AND AUTHORITY (v.12).

This verse is clear and forceful; it is a very strong warning to the criticizer and backbiter.

“There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?” (v.12).

God alone is the great Lawgiver, and Scripture declares: “There is [only] *one* lawgiver.” He and He alone has given the laws that are to judge and condemn our neighbors. Note closely: when we judge, criticize, and backbite our brothers, we are usurping God’s right to judge men. We are setting ourselves up in the place of God, making ourselves God—claiming the right to sit in judgment upon our brother. No person, not one of us, has the right to sit upon the throne of God’s judgment. Judgment and condemnation—criticizing, talking about, and picking out the shortcomings and failures of any brother—are God’s right and His alone. No one has the right to judge but God Himself.

This is very strong language. God is not going to tolerate a person setting himself up as the judge, as God Himself, over someone else—not when the one who sits in judgment is but a mere sinful man who is ever so short himself.

Note one other fact as well: judging, condemning, criticizing, and talking about a person destroys the person. This is exactly what this verse says. There is only one Person who is *able to save and destroy*—only one Person who can judge and criticize another person as being either good or bad, as either worthy of being saved or destroyed—and that Person is God. God and God alone can save and destroy, not man. Not one of us is able to know and judge the whole truth about a person. Therefore, “who are you that you judge another person”—who do you think you are? God?

APPLICATION:

There are several reasons why we should never criticize another person.

- 1) All the circumstances and all the facts are never known. What happened and why it happened are not fully known. And unfortunately there is something seldom remembered: when people emerge from the closed doors and enter the public, the one who does the talking does not always reveal the true facts. The spirit of talking to others is the spirit of self-justification. The spirit of silence is the spirit of caring and compassion, which desires no hurt for others.
- 2) All people—religious as well as non-religious—come short, fail, and fall. And we all sin often (1 Jn.1:8, 10). No one is ever exempt from sin. When we criti-

cize and judge, we have a problem: we forget that we are sinners. When we acknowledge our own true condition, we act with care and compassion toward all who come short. The believer must always remember that his righteousness is Jesus Christ, and he is always dependent upon Christ’s righteousness (2 Co.5:21; Ph.3:8-16).

- 3) All there is to know about a person is never known. How, then, can we criticize? Think about childhood for a moment. So much goes into influencing a human life that only God can know a person, know him well enough to judge him. Certainly we can never know one another well enough to pass judgment.
- 4) Judging others usurps God’s authority. When a person criticizes another, he is saying that he is worthy and has the right to be the judge over other lives. He is claiming the right to be God, which is ridiculous.

“Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Mt.7:1).

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is judging others such a prideful sin?
2. When tempted to criticize someone, what can you do to prevent yourself from speaking—or even thinking—the judgmental words?

SUMMARY:

A few critical words, an air of superiority, a look of rejection—all of these can cut a brother or sister ever so deeply. Judging and criticizing others is a terrible evil. As believers, we must take great care to avoid condemning one another. The work of Christ, of His church, cannot move forward in an atmosphere of criticism and disapproval. For this reason, we must not attack or pass judgment on others. We are to work alongside one another in unity. James strongly warns us to repent of our critical attitudes and to always remember:

1. Judging others is speaking evil of brothers.
2. Judging others violates the law of God.
3. Judging others sets one up as judge, as a law-giver.
4. Judging others usurps God’s right and authority.

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:

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I'm Still Your Mom

When you no longer listen or care what I say...

I'm still your mom.

When you decide I'm old fashioned and want to go your own way...

I'm still your mom.

When you talk back, complain and we argue...

I'm still your mom.

When you figure you know more than I do...

I'm still your mom.

When you move away and take a piece of my heart with you...

I'm still your mom.

I will love you as much as the first day I held you in my arms...

I'm still your mom.

I will pray for you and make sure your wings are strong enough to soar...

I'm still your mom.

I will want what's best and will sacrifice my plans for yours.

I'm still your mom.

I will always have room for you and a hug to welcome you.

I'm still your mom.

Until my very last breath, I'll keep carrying your love with me.

I truly thank God every day for the privilege and joy it is to be called — *Your Mom.*





I just want to keep my children innocent as long as possible,” she said.

We all do. What kind of parent doesn’t want to protect their children? But judging by the number of sexually abused children in our circles, I wonder if we really know how.

In years gone by, we’ve been taught to keep our children “innocent” by refraining from telling them the facts of life until they are well into their teens – or right before they get married. It is called “The Talk.” Has it worked? Is innocence the same thing as the ignorance of all things sexual?

We live in a world where sex is boldly proclaimed, and brazenly advertised and sold on a daily basis. Pornography is easily accessible, thanks to the internet on our cell phones and the magazines in the checkout lines. You don’t have to drive far to see plenty of billboards that are worse than the pictures published in the first porn magazines.

On top of all the junk floating around “out there,” we have a huge problem within the church – sexual abuse. More and more children are being victimized every year, not by people from “out there” but by family members and church members within our circles.

Parents, it’s time that we dig our heads out of the sand. Our children are being exposed to sexual things long before they hit their teens. There are children as young as two who are being raped and abused. Boys are being shown pornography before they turn ten. We have girls growing up who don’t even remember ever feeling innocent. I wish I could say that the situations that I just mentioned are few and far between, but they aren’t. It is becoming far too “normal.”

It is time to admit that our strategy isn’t working. Judging by the epidemic of abuse in Anabaptist communities today, it is not a stretch to say that keeping our children ignorant about the facts of life has actually “fed” the abuse cycle.

Innocence is not ignorance. Innocence has more to do with HOW a child finds out about the facts of life than with HOW MUCH they know. A child does not lose their innocence when we, as parents, explain sex and puberty in a pure, undefiled manner as God intended sex to be. On the flip side, when abuse occurs and the child is conditioned to believe that sex is something dirty and shameful, innocence is definitely lost. Untold damage to their view of God and their view of sex happens when a child is abused, whereas the facts of life, simply told in a safe and loving environment, and in an age appropriate way, produces phenomenally different results.

There is nothing a perpetrator likes more than an ignorant child who has no sexual knowledge. Why? Because the child can be taught anything and everything about sex – the perpetrator’s way. Abuse can go on for years when sexual things are introduced in this way. The sexual deviations become “normalized” in the child’s mind because there is nothing to compare it to. Furthermore, without a healthy view of their bodies and sex, children often hide the abuse from parents and caregivers because they don’t know any better. Ignorance gives the perpetrator power, while healthy and pure facts of life from parental figures gives that power to children by helping them to say, “NO” and helping them to distinguish between good touch and bad touch.

Countless abuse survivors will tell you that they were not taught about good touch and bad touch. Their parents tried

to keep them innocent by ignorance and it didn’t work. When the abuse started, they were confused. It didn’t feel right, but, “Uncle Jim says it is okay and that this is what love is,” so they accepted it as normal behavior. On the other hand, I have talked to moms who have been open with their children about sexual things; they have told them what to do in a bad situation and have answered their questions about the facts of life. And many times, it is those kinds of conversations that have saved children from abuse.

I do not want my children to find out about sex and their bodies from anyone other than my husband and myself. In order to do that, it means starting before they are two years old. It means teaching them the proper names for their private body parts in normal everyday life. It means answering their many questions about where babies come from and why mama’s belly is so big. (Yes, I’m currently carrying our third child.) It means explaining life to them and keeping the lines of communication open with our children. It means listening to them and hearing their hearts. It means reminding them that when God made their bodies, He said, “It is very good.”

We all want to protect our children’s innocence. None of us want to find out that our child knows far more than we told them because of a pervert in our circle of family or friends. In this day and age, it means having “talks” instead of “the talk” because innocence does not equal ignorance.

Let us step up to the plate, parents. And may God help us to protect the “little ones” that He has so graciously given us to love.



Conviction

—by Joe Keim

Cain was very angry with his brother, Abel. At some point, his anger turned into hate, which led Cain to murder his own brother.

What was the root cause of Cain's hate? The answer might surprise you. Read on...

In 1 John 3:11-13, we read:

"...love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous."

Why did Cain murder his brother?

Because he was convicted by his brother's life.

Those of us who compare our unworthiness with others, often try to ease our conscience by silencing the one through whom the conviction comes. We do that, rather than change our behavior.

In a court room, it is a normal for the guilty one and his attorney to try and discredit any witness who gives damaging testimony against their client. If the witness can be discredited, then their testimony and its conviction go out the window.

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From a reader:

Something has been struggling in my heart that I have been praying about for quite some time. It seems that we have many people including leaders, who do not make the firm distinction between our salvation and our way of life.

Our way of life can be a great benefit to us as a way of community and sharing our bountiful blessings, but it can be a great stumbling block if we persist in believing that people who aren't either of this order or perhaps leave this order are of the world.

The world, according to the Gospel, is lust of the flesh, eyes, etc. and the pride of life in particular. Are we not being proud of our way of life if we convey the message that if you are not Amish, you are lost? We need to be abundantly careful that we are not living in the mindset of a cult.

The Gospel makes it clear in no uncertain terms that our salvation can only come from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Any other form of self-righteousness is pride. Our works should be a result of our faith and should never be confused with our way of life. Let us pray for faith, forgiveness, grace and deliverance of the Holy Spirit to our hearts and minds.

We love hearing from our readers...your suggestions, responses, articles, disagreements, poems, letters, testimonies, ideas, lessons that you have learned, or anything else that you would like to share with us. We will try to publish much of what you send! We just love hearing testimonies of how people's lives have been changed by Jesus and how the *Amish Voice* is helping you grow in your walk with God.

WRITE TO US!

The Amish Voice, 575 US Highway 250, Greenwich, OH 44837

After the publication of my article in January's *Amish Voice* ("From the Peace Barn: Amish and Born Again"), I received phone calls from readers in North Carolina, Indiana, Virginia and Wyoming. I enjoyed every conversation. Some were with Amish folks and some were with *Ahamish* folks. I'll explain the difference later. I first want to continue from my previous article explaining a few more reasons I admire the Amish people whom I know.

My wife and I live in the heart of Pennsylvania's third-largest Amish community in a remodeled 1890 barn that became our home about a year ago. Most all of the remodeling work was done by skilled local Amish craftsman who have all become our friends.

Our Amish community is one of the more conservative ones. Many things are forbidden that are permitted in other Amish communities, such as personal phones (community pay phones are permitted). Nevertheless, as seems to be the case in every Amish group, our Amish neighbors are hard-working, honest and considerate. For example, I noticed several years ago—when we first began remodeling our old barn—that whenever I walked into a room where my Amish carpenters were working, they would immediately switch from speaking Pennsylvania Dutch to English so that I could understand their ongoing conversation. I never had to worry that they were secretly talking negatively about me in a language that I don't understand!

I also admire Amish families I've met. They often have lots of children, and those children are well-behaved. From a young age they are involved in family chores. The elderly are respected, and infirm parents are cared for in the homes of their adult children. These are all good things.

Although I am sure Amish families and communities face many of the normal struggles of human relationships, they seem to maintain a decent degree of harmony. If everyone in the world were Amish, no doubt our planet would be a much better place.

Among those who phoned me in response to my previous article in *The Amish Voice* were (1) current Amish, (2) Amish who are considering becoming Mennonite, and (3) former Amish who are striving to serve God. Each had a different story to tell.

One, who was formerly Amish, told me that he didn't want to ever leave the Amish, but he was excommunicated because he became interested in learning more about the Bible, so he participated in Bible study and was subsequently born again (something Jesus said one must experience in order to enter the kingdom of heaven).

One, who is considering becoming Mennonite, has been having trouble with his local ministers because of his perception of their unequal application of their *Ordnung* among church members. His adult children left long ago and joined a Mennonite church.

One, who is still Amish, is greatly burdened for his Amish neighbors and community because he has been born again and is concerned that most of them are not.

All three of the people that I have just described are among the "Ahamish." That term, of course, is one that I invented. So, who are the Ahamish? You are probably familiar with the expression, "Aha!" When someone suddenly discovers something they hadn't previously realized, they often say, "Aha!" Ahamish people are Amish folks who have done just that. They have discovered something they previously didn't realize.

In every case, Ahamish people previously didn't realize their need to be born again. They knew they had been born into Amish culture and were expected to conform in every detail. They knew about the Bible and they were familiar with many of its stories. They had been baptized as teenagers when they made their vows. They attended church gatherings every other week all their lives.

In every case, however, they ultimately came to a realization that they were life-long sinners who deserved punishment, and that there was no hope of them earning salvation and eternal life. They discovered that God loved them so much that He gave His only Son to die for their sins on the cross. They came to believe Jesus' promise that, "*Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16). And when they *truly* believed in Him, not just *said* they believed in Him as they did when they made their vows to the church, but *truly* believed that He is God's Son and the Lord, they repented of their sins and experienced a spiritual rebirth that transformed their lives.

What changed? They immediately experienced a joy and peace they had never known before. They knew all their sins had been forgiven and that God's Holy Spirit had come to live inside them to empower them to live pure and holy lives. They knew they were children of God and that He had become their spiritual Father. They knew they had eternal life. They wanted others to enjoy the same wonderful blessings, so they started telling their Amish family members and friends about what had happened to them, because born-again people cannot keep quiet about the miracle they've experienced. That is when some started getting into trouble. Some were eventually excommunicated.

Please understand that a person can be Amish, but not be born again. Please also understand that one can be Amish and also be born again if their particular Amish community allows it. I know of such communities, and there is one about 30 minutes from where I live.

Beyond that, according to the Dordrecht Confession (to which all Amish groups subscribe), one is actually not *truly* Amish unless one is born again. Following is the sixth article of the Dordrecht Confession:

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 [membership], 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.

The Confession's sixth article mentions

both "being born again" and "regeneration." Regeneration is another word for being born again. Yet one of the Ahamish folks who phoned me explained that many of the Amish people whom he knows become very troubled when he tells them about being born again. I asked him why they would be troubled about something that is clearly mentioned as a necessity by Jesus in John 3:1-8, by the apostle Peter in 1 Peter 1:3, and in Article 6 of the Dordrecht Confession. He said that they are tragically ignorant of those facts. I could not help but wonder why.

Another way of describing the difference between being Amish and Ahamish is that one can be Amish simply by an outward conformity to Amish culture. Being Ahamish, however, is not external, but internal. An Ahamish person may appear, on the outside, to be just like every other Amish person, but on the inside, he or she has become "a new creature" in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

Everyone needs an internal change of the heart to be accepted by God. Remember, God said, "*man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart*" (1 Sam. 16:7). God also said, "*I the Lord search the heart*" (Jer. 17:10.) What does God see when He looks at and searches a heart that has not been born again? He said through Jeremiah, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*" (Jer. 17:9).

When God asked "*who can know it?*" regarding people's "deceitful" and "desperately wicked" hearts, He obviously wasn't questioning His own knowledge. He knows *every* heart, which is why He declared that human hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked. Those who *don't* know that are those who are *deceived* by their desperately wicked hearts.

And although I wrote in both my last article and this one about the many

good qualities I've observed in Amish communities, I write now with tears in my eyes that I've also seen another side—but only to a small degree that God has seen it. I'm talking about *some* Amish hearts. When Amish people persecute, shun, and excommunicate other Amish people *because they've been born again*, they show that their hearts are deceived and desperately wicked. They show that *they* are not born again. They are acting just like the Catholics and Protestants hundreds of years ago who hated the original Anabaptists because all of them were born again! What a tragedy that the formerly persecuted Anabaptists have now, in some cases, become the persecutors!

Yet through His great mercy offered through the sacrificial death of His spotless Son, God offers to anyone a new, pure heart, a heart that *wants* to obey Him:

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you... And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezek. 36:26-27).

The apostle Paul was one who certainly received a new heart from God, and Ahamish people can all identify with him. Paul was initially a very religious Jew who persecuted the early Christians, all of whom were of Jewish origin, just like him. *He persecuted his own people* because he thought he was right and they were wrong. God opened his eyes to his own deceitful and wicked heart. He then realized it was the exact opposite of what he had thought! The people that he thought were wrong were actually right, and he, who previously thought he was right, was actually wrong! Those whom he was persecuting were righteous, and he was unrighteous!

After Paul's conversion, religious Jews started persecuting him. He tried to

help them see that true Jews (just like true Amish people) are those who, like him, had been born again:

“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom. 2:28-29).

For the most part, the Jews in Paul’s day were outwardly religious and outwardly circumcised. The apostle John wrote about them, *“They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:43).* That is, they lived their daily lives for the approval of their fellow Jews, just as so many Amish people are focused on maintaining the approval of other Amish people.

Notice, however, that Paul believed that “true Jews” have “circumcised hearts,” a phrase that refers to being born again by the work of the Holy Spirit and the subsequent inward transformation. *True Jews, as Paul wrote, are not seeking the praise of people, but the praise of God.* And it is no different for true Amish people. And that is why true Amish people—the Ahamish people as I’ve been calling them—are willing to forsake the approval of other Amish people if necessary. What matters to them is the approval of God, and they strive to keep *His* laws rather than man-made rules that can’t be found anywhere in the Bible.

You can take a pig, scrub it clean, tie a pretty bow around its neck, and sprinkle it with perfume...but it will still be a pig! That is the picture of the religious person—whether Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, or Amish—who has not been born again. Externally, they look good. But internally, they have the same old nature.

All religious people who have not been

born again—if they will be honest in their hearts—know that they stand condemned before the God who searches and knows everyone’s heart, because they know their inward thoughts that they hide from everyone else. They also know—if they are honest with their hearts—that they are putting on a show for all of the other religious people in their group whose approval they seek. Again, this is true of all religious people, whether they are Jewish, Protestant, Catholic or Amish. If they aren’t aware of what I’ve just described, it is one more proof of what God said through Jeremiah about how deceitful and desperately wicked human hearts are. Pride is often what blinds them.

Do not think that I am pointing a finger because I don’t have personal experience of that very thing myself. I was once a religious church-attender who had fooled myself that I was a pretty good person. When I was confirmed in my church as a teenager, I even confessed publicly that I believed in Jesus Christ. Looking back now, however, I realized that I was just saying words as I attempted to please my parents and the other people at my church. I didn’t really believe in Jesus, and the reason I am sure of it now is because He was not my Lord. I was striving to please others, not Him.

One day, however, God opened my eyes, and I finally saw myself as God saw me—as a proud, self-deceived hypocrite with a desperately wicked heart. What a glorious day that was! I realized that I had nothing good in myself to offer God - and so I feebly responded to His call to repent of my sins and truly believe in Jesus. When I did, my life was dramatically changed. I had no idea at the time that I had been born again, because I had never heard that phrase or read it in the Bible. But I knew that I was a different person.

Like all people who are born again, I now look at my life in two sections: before I was born again and after I was born again. I started reading the Bible and I slowly learned what had happened to me. I eventually realized that I had been born again, and that God’s Holy Spirit was living in me. I started telling other people, because I could not keep quiet. As the apostle Paul wrote, *“We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, ‘I believed, and therefore have I spoken’; we also believe, and therefore speak” (2 Cor. 4:13).* That is one test of an authentic new birth. Born-again people are concerned about other people who are not born again, because being born again is a requirement for heaven according to Jesus. If you are not concerned about other people being born again, that is a sure sign that you are not born again yourself.

What about you? Have you been born again? Are you religious or righteous? Do you truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, as evidenced by your desire to please Him, even if you must forfeit the approval of others? Are you a cleaned-up pig or a “new creation in Christ”? Are you Amish or Ahamish?

The good news is that you can be born again today. You could start by praying for God to help you see your heart as He sees it. Once He does, you will be ready to cast yourself onto the Lord Jesus Christ completely for forgiveness, salvation and a new life. The Lord is full of mercy! He will not turn you away!

If you are already Ahamish or have just started your new Ahamish life, I would love to hear about it. You can call me at: (412) 722-3075
or write to me at:

David Kirkwood,
P.O. Box 33
Smicksburg, PA 16256

END

Feedback and Response

1

Dear Amish Voice, greetings of love in our Savior's name, Jesus Christ. "Amen! Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen" (Revelation 7:12). I enjoy your newsletter, *The Amish Voice*. – LaGrange, IN

Dear Friend,

Your words are precious and encouraging to all of us. Thank you for taking the time to sit down and let us know that *The Amish Voice* has been a blessing to you. We often pray that

God would use us to make a difference in this generation. In recent weeks, we have had some of our readers ask if they could write articles for *The Amish Voice*. We are excited to say, you are reading some of those in this issue.

Please know that we have updated your address and look forward to ministering to your heart as each one of us prepares for that face-to-face meeting with our loving and merciful Father.

– Joe Keim

2

In response to the article: *From the Peace Barn: Born Again and Amish* (January 2022 issue)

The idea that an Old Order Amish Church Ordnung is just a set of man-made rules might be true if we choose to think so, but it can also be viewed as being Biblical principles applied to everyday life that we submit to God and his Bride, which is the church. That submission to God and the church must include the very important part (the repentance and New Birth from the inborn nature of man) or it is all in vain, just as sinful man with no hope in eternity.

Another thing I differ is on the point of TV and cellphone being alright for a newborn Christian who is filled with the Holy Spirit. What if another person came into your home, maybe your child, and behind your back would view all that the devil provides and have his mind corrupted beyond repair? Who would answer for his soul at the judgment day? I am sure you realize that there are some born-again Christians that are a little weak and would benefit from less dangers.

I don't mean to imply that I disagree on more than just a few points, otherwise I think you're mostly agreeable with the Bible. I don't want to justify corruption creeping into any denomination. --RM

Thank you for writing!

I understand what you are saying, because I was there myself. I always thought that the Ordnung was protecting me from dangers of the world. When I started reading the Bible, some verses really bothered me, like:

"But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Mt 15:9).

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rm 10:3).

I wondered if I was trying to establish my own righteousness with Ordnung. Philippians 3:9 tells me that it causes self-righteousness.

"And be found in him, not having

mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Then, I wondered if I was trusting in not having some material things to keep me safe. I thought of John 14:6, and then I realized that the righteousness of God is by faith in Jesus Christ.

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference" (Rm 3:22).

It was just like Abraham who was also justified by faith.

"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was

counted unto him for righteousness" (Rm 4:3).

I also realized that anything can be used for evil, even animals. I know flesh wants to do what it is not supposed to. That is why it is important to be led by the Holy Spirit - so that we have the power to say "no" to Biblical sins.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rm 8:14).

"But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law" (Gal 5:18).

To my understanding, there is no such thing as "lost without hope" in Scripture as long as a person is living, because we have all sinned.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rm 3:23).

Feedback—Continued on Page 13

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May

Book of Romans (Romans 8:8-39)

Taught by Michael Pearl.

In the Hands of a Rapist

Kidnapped from a Kmart parking lot, Margy Mayfield spent the next 10 hours with a violent and dangerous criminal. Stephan Morin had never known anything but driving hatred, until he experienced the love of Christ. What happened on their journey is nothing short of miraculous!

How to Deepen Your Love

Chip Ingram shares the missing link to most failing marriages and why it's central to enjoying the marriage that you've always hoped for.

Pornography, A Sexualized Culture

(Part 1 of 2 parts)

We live in a sexualized culture where God's good and perfect design for sex has been twisted and perverted. Pornography is not only a degrading of women made in God's image, pornography is a degrading of God's purpose in representing the gospel through marriage. Pastor John Marino expounds on reclaiming the importance of sex in God's design.

June

Book of Romans (Romans 9)

Taught by Michael Pearl.

Ask You Father in Heaven

God's lavish invitations to ask Him for good things, with the promise that He will give them, is unimaginably wonderful. Message by John Piper.

How to Strengthen Your Hope

Let's face it—marriage is a lot of hard work! Where do you find hope to keep going and stay faithful to your commitment? In this message, Chip Ingram brings a simple, very doable plan to help you find hope—even within an unstable relationship.

Pornography, A Sexualized Culture

(Part 2 of 2 parts)

We live in a sexualized culture where God's good and perfect design for sex has been twisted and perverted. Pornography is not only a degrading of women made in God's image, pornography is a degrading of God's purpose in representing the gospel through marriage. Pastor John Marino expounds on reclaiming the importance of sex in God's design.

July

Book of Romans (Romans 10-11)

Taught by Michael Pearl.

Put in the Fire for the Sake of Prayer

God can put His people through the fires of suffering to awaken our appetite for prayer. Message by John Piper.

How to Multiply Your Joy

The honeymoon is over, the glow is gone, and married life can seem pretty harsh after a while. Is there a way to connect with your mate in a way that rekindles the flame? Is there a way to change the way you communicate that helps you actually look forward to talking and spending time together? Join Chip Ingram as he shares a communication technique that helped save his marriage and has kept it strong ever since.

World Religions

What are the four largest world religions: One of the four might surprise you! Join Pastor John Marino as he gives a presentation to a local college on world religions and has the opportunity to share the gospel.

This publishing work is registered as a charitable organization in the USA. We welcome your articles, testimonies, and questions, We reserve the right to edit or decline any material and are not responsible for the return of any articles.

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

A theme that has recently been returning to my mind time and time again has been the believer's ability and resource to live for Christ. An aspect that has been troubling as I live out the realities of the gospel in the details of life is how often I am prone to live out of my own strength and ability as I "live for Christ."

It's remarkable, how we easily lose sight of what it means to live for the glory of God in the nitty-gritty details of life. We wander into mechanical moralism: going through services and ministries to merely "satisfy" some sort of rank, duty-driven assumption that we believe we need to accomplish. It turns us into apathetic people-pleasers all the while continuing to struggle with pride, lust, anxiety, depression, and a host of other sins that easily beset us from living out the gospel in all of its fullness. We miss out on the supernatural joy, rest, and fulfillment that comes through the inheritance of those who are "in Christ." So, how do we avoid this, or how can we harness the power and live totally devoted and consumed with God in the everyday monotony?

I think the answer comes down to this: the same grace that saves you is the same the same grace that restores you, and is the same grace that transforms you. Or to put it another way, God saves and sanctifies you and me.

Romans 8:30 states, "*Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*" From this, we see this clear fact: God supplies everything we need for our total salvation. Although we believe and hope in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, salvation in its totality – from start to finish – is a work from God in our lives. God is actively working in and

through us to accomplish His glory and purpose. But how do we factor in to this? Surely we have to do *something!* I think I can explain this with one more passage from God's word.

Philippians 2:12-13 says, "*Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*"

Let me point out a few brief aspects of this passage. First, there is a clear command to live out the gospel reality that was previously stated in Philippians 1:27-2:11. Because of Christ's example of humility, we are to live humbly and strive for unity with one another based on our unity with Christ. Then comes Paul's command: work out your salvation with fear and trembling. This is not saying work *for* your salvation - for that would be clearly contradictory to the gospel. Instead, we work out, or live out, the gospel realities set before us by Christ and instilled in us by the Holy Spirit. The *how* to work out our salvation is clearly stated and immensely important. We do this with fear and trembling. These two terms are used in **worship instances when we encounter the immensity of the Triune God.** How do we live out our salvation? By living in a constant worship and closeness to the Creator of the Cosmos! This is further explained and supported by the next verse which tells us that it is God, the one who spoke life into existence, who is **working in us!** Living the Christian life has never been about what you and I do. It has always been about *being* with the One who provides us life and trusting in His power in us to transform us into the image of His Son. Do you want continual fulfillment in living and serving Christ? Worship

and rest in God in every moment, finding joy in all circumstances knowing that He is working in you for His good pleasure.

To illustrate this, think of a bathroom sink faucet and an old fashioned well pump. The sink faucet pours out water with little to no effort, yet you can experience the fullness and freshness that is the water. The old fashioned well pump, on the other hand, takes considerable amount of energy to pump the water out. It may be refreshing for a bit, but not nearly as refreshing as the water flow from the sink faucet.

So it is with the Christian life. When we trust, rest, and worship God who is already at work in us and who empowers us to live for Him, we experience the fullness of joy that can be had in this life without any burnout. When we strive to find satisfaction by our own effort, we may be satisfied, but only for a moment and it will lead us into despair and a downward spiral of spiritual anorexia. Brothers and sisters, let this not be said of us!

Cling to Christ, worship Him in fear and trembling, and rely on His grace that bountifully produces in us life and satisfaction in Him.

Feedback—Continued from Page 11

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rm 14:12).

The way I understand it is that we only submit to God and His Word. I would encourage anyone to study the Scriptures to see what it does say. God bless!

—Ray Burkholder

END

Have you ever noticed that some people understand Scripture differently than you do? You can discuss Scripture and think that you agree, but the next time that you talk about the same issue, it is like water rolling off a duck's back; it just doesn't seem to sink in. I'm not talking about a slight difference of interpretation. I'm talking about a general understanding of Scripture.

Interpreting Scripture outside of context is a big problem. Many people can memorize whole books of the Bible almost word for word, but they still don't understand Scripture. Perhaps it is because of spiritual blindness.

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

A person won't understand Scripture until they have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior!

"But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:14-17).

It is not with water baptism, or anything else, but by believing the gospel unto salvation. Then, the spiritual blindness will disappear.

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

"Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:17).

In Luke 24:31-32, we read:

"And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, 'Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?'"

Luke 24:45 says:

"Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures."

Ephesians 1:17-19 says:

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his call-

ing, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power."

See? We can't just grab the Bible and think that we will understand it. We have to have a God-given, spiritual understanding. (Salvation is a free gift according to Ephesians 2:8,9)

"For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead" (John 20:9).

"And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken" (Luke 18:34).

It is obvious that there is more to it than just picking up a Bible and thinking that we will understand Scripture. We must also pray for Jesus to open our hearts and minds and to help us to understand and discern Scripture, Bible studies, etc. If we have a closed mind that has already been made up on how we will believe before we pick up the Bible, we are wasting our time to even attempt to read it.

Are we reading Scripture to memorize it, or to learn from it? It is very important because the Bible is also written for false teachers. How will we discern what we are hearing in church if we don't know what the Bible says? Are we just trusting in what we hear to be the truth? How does it match with what the Bible says?

Some people believe that a preacher is automatically inspired by God. The question then is whether it is the gods of this world (Satan) or the real God?

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers

among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.” (2 Peter 2:1-2).

Are you just following along? Or are you sure that what you hear matches the words of the Bible?

“And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, (twist) as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2 Peter 3:15-16).

We must also learn how to rightly divide God’s word.

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

This is very important. This is why people are spiritually blinded and don’t understand the Scriptures; it is because they are not born again. Do you know of Jesus? Or do you know Jesus? There is a big difference.

“Jesus answered, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water (water sack in a natural birth) and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh (1st birth, natural); and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’” (2nd birth, Holy Spirit) (John 3:5-6)

This is believing in the Gospel.

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:” (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10: 9, 13).

Once we have his Spirit in our hearts, the Scriptures open up to us.

“Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit” (1 John 4:13).

“Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (2 Corinthians 1:22).

“He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 4:8).

We see that when we are born again by believing in the gospel, God will put his Spirit inside of us. We will start to understand Scripture a lot differently than we did before because we will be a new man.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Do you see that? We will become a new person. Praise the Lord!

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Do you see what that says? It tells us to STUDY to be approved of God. Many people want to do things that they think will be pleasing to God, but many people won’t even read their Bible, let alone study it. Why not? Is it because someone doesn’t think that it is a good idea?

What are you going to say when it is just you and God standing there, and He asks you why you didn’t do as His book instructed? Are you going to say that someone told you not to?

“Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?” (Galatians 5:7).

“Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things” (2 Timothy 2:7).

Will you know everything once you have a spiritual understanding? No. It takes studying and meditating, but gradually you will be amazed at what you have learned. It is not as hard as you think. There are plenty of resources available to help nowadays.

If anyone would be interested in learning more or doesn’t know where to get help or to get started, please contact this publication, and they will help you.

“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20).

END

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Your Beyond Blessed Wife

—By Megan Shetler

As your workday ends and I see 5:00 come closer on the clock, I know you will soon be home. You will provide me with a break and baby assistance until bedtime. All four boys watch out the window when I say, “Daddy will be home soon.” I wonder if you know how excited they are when they see your truck pull in. As you cross the threshold, the spirit of the house is changed. Your presence brings new life into our home. After chasing them around all day, with baby in arm, your tranquility cleanses my stress away. You are the undeviating peace in our family.

If your day was unpleasant, you don’t let our boys see it in your actions or on your face. I know you though, and sometimes I can see that your day was frustrating and that all you want is to relax. That is definitely a challenge when we have five little ones depending on us for dinner, play time and tucking in each night.

When the kids are finally in bed, and the house is quiet, you listen to me vent about my stressful day. I ask about your day, but you’re never one to complain. You are wonderful at listening to me, when you know that is what will calm my evening. I appreciate that more than anything. You always know how to lift me when my spirit is falling.

You always have a dedicated plan for the weekends. Most others are relaxing, or out having fun. Your plans are always to get one step closer to being the best provider your family needs. You are normally working on projects around the house, on customer jobs, or working on getting the next job ready to begin.

You are always concerned about making sure that your employees will have ample and steady work. That is quite selfless. Work won’t come around by itself, after all. Getting things done and having them done right is something that most people admire and strive to implement in their own lives. We both have that drive for excellence. It may be in different areas, but that is what makes our bond so strong: picking one another up in our weak seasons.

When you aren’t with your family, you are helping others with whatever assistance they may need. I need you to know that your conscientiousness is not overlooked; not just by me, but by those you pass your generosity on to as well. You are a true friend.

Your hard work never goes unnoticed. I know sometimes that I say you’ve got the easier job of the two of us because you get to leave the house everyday, and you often agree with me. Our five

children (all under 6), can be quite the handful. But, the grass is always greener on the other side. Right? Or maybe it’s just better to find the beauty of where you’re at, and not envy another’s journey. Each path has a meaning and purpose.

Honestly, I couldn’t do what you do. You always have your needs come last and never take a break. You love us more than anything and I know you do it all for your family. Being shunned by your family made you stronger. The road was painful at first, but I believe it also made you see the world in a new light; to show and give more love than you ever saw or received; to let your children know that you will always love them, as Jesus loves us.

I feel your struggle, and your strength. I see everything you do for our family. Just know that all you do is appreciated beyond measure. You love and provide as God instructed, with a joyful manner all throughout.

After working all weekend, sleeping four hours, and then starting out again at 2 A.M. on a cold Monday morning, I just needed the world to know how lucky and thankful we are that God blessed us with you.

Love,
Your Beyond Blessed Wife