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## When the Religious System Clashes with Jesus Christ

—by Joe Keim

Dear Friend:

Let me just say, we appreciate the ones who have been called to pray for MAP and the people we write about. Your part in the ministry is valued beyond words.

When Ray and Martha got saved and chose to follow Christ instead of the work based, man-made system that they were born into, it cost them almost everything.

Most of their friends turned their back and walked away. Ray's carpentry business tanked overnight when his employees left—some had worked with Ray for years. The leadership of the Amish church excommunicated and began to shun them. Lastly, and by far the most heart breaking of all, happened when Ray and Martha's married children were pressured to go in and remove the last three unmarried children from Ray and Martha's home.

I've seen far too much of this kind of thing take place in our 23 years of ministry, but Ray and Martha's situation was the worst I have ever seen.

You'd think Burkholders did something very evil in the sight of God, committed a crime, or that they did not care for their family, or that they lived in unrepentant sin. But after more than two years of walking with Ray and Martha and communicating via text on a daily basis, I am fully persuaded that their choice to follow Christ is the only thing that caused all of this havoc.

In every church Esther and I go to, we pause during our ministry update and physically hand out cards to every member; the card lists all the names of Ray and Martha's children. We ask the church to pray for all eight children. Also, we encourage churches to invite Ray and Martha to come and share their testimonies. We are boldly and fervently claiming their children's souls for the Lord Jesus Christ. Thousands and thousands are praying. Recently, the youngest, Adam, called his parents and asked dad and mom to come and get him. We believe with all our heart that the rest will follow.



Ray Burkholder writes: *Hello, thought I would do a short update on our journey as we continue to serve the Lord. We have moved 30 miles north from our original home. We are settled in and it's quieted down into a daily routine. We have a great church family. So thankful for that!*

*As far as the family, our youngest son Adam called us one morning in December*

*and wanted to come live with us! Thank you Jesus for your goodness and mercy!! So we ended up having a great Christmas!!*

*We still have no contact with any of the other children. Two of our daughters sent us Christmas cards, but that's it. We still don't have any contact with both of our families either. We pray for them all daily and ask for more prayers!*

*For those interested in following along, we post monthly updates on our website; [armourofpeace.com](http://armourofpeace.com)*

*1 Thessalonians 1:6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: —Ray & Martha*

**Sewer Project:** the ministry sewer project has been completed. Yay!!!! We



shall never underestimate the Power of God again. Thank you all for praying, caring, and giving to this need. It is still paid in full. Thank you Lord!

**New Beginnings Homestead:** Mike and Kelly, our house parents, are moving back to PA; therefore, we are in search for house parents. If you know of missionaries or pastors looking for a place to minister, please let us know.

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**Rachel's Journey**

—by Rachel Stutzman

I learned a lot of good things through my years of growing up Amish in Canada. I learned to help out in the kitchen, cook meals, do laundry, and keep the house clean. It was expected that I would contribute to the family until I was 21, at which time I would keep my own wages, marry, and find a home with my partner. I really like how the Amish family sticks together tightly as one unit.

When I visited OH with my family in December of 2021, I started seeing Jonathan, who was also Swartzentruber Amish. The following February, he came to Canada to visit me and my family for two weeks. By March, we had both decided to leave the Amish culture and become English. In May, I was able to legally cross the border into America. Some of you prayed for me as I navigated crossing the border!

By this time, I had learned who God is and that the Bible is the only authority that we need to follow. I had gotten to the point where I didn't see any difference in staying Amish or becoming English in God's eyes. In August of 2022, Jonathan and I met with Joe Keim. He opened the scriptures and taught us directly from the Bible what salvation is. We read verses and talked about what each verse said. That is when everything changed for both of us! Looking back, I really don't know who I was before I got saved. I am completely different now! My desires have all changed. I have no desire to run around like Amish do with rumspringa.

I have a spiritual hunger and a goal to study the Word of God! My favorite verse is Romans 8:28. *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."*

By October, Jonathan decided to ask me to marry him! Our ceremony is planned for September of 2023.

I don't blame parents from wanting to protect their kids from bad things, from going off the rails, and from ignoring all of the good things, like faith in God. In fact, I can see myself doing this someday. However, one thing I don't miss about being Amish is being told that I would go to hell for different actions, or that there would be no hope for me if I did a specific thing. I now understand that we don't get to heaven through works, as the Amish believe, but through faith and repentance as the Bible teaches.

I don't think that I will ever regret my decision to come here. I have forgiven everything that happened in the past and am excited to see what the future holds. I am surrounded by people who put thought into life and search out what they can do to make their life better spiritually. I have learned more than I could have imagined and now feel blessed and have joy and hope. I believe this is because I am with godly people. The study of scripture and the appreciation and kindness are different with spiritual people, and it makes me feel more welcomed and loved.

While I was still living in Canada, my twin sister and I used to dream about being singers. I never thought it would happen because we were taught that we would go to hell if we left the Amish. With the encouragement of Jonathan and my cousin, I have recently recorded a song in my cousin's recording studio! This was such a dream come true! I hope to be able to record more in the future!



Another thing that I would like to do is to travel and explore the US. In May, I will take my first exciting vacation! I will be visiting Florida with a cousin and two girlfriends!

As we look to the future, I ask that you pray for Jonathan and I to have a happily-ever-after kind of marriage and family. I also ask that you pray for our families—that they could accept the way that we chose to live and that they would see that we are pursuing Christ in our lives.

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*Rachel is currently awaiting legal permission to stay in the US and work for MAP. We would love to have this delightful girl join our team. Won't you pray with us that our request gets approved?*