

# The Amish Voice



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## Excommunication and Shunning Members of the Church

—Joe Keim

Warning! Before you read the following article, I would like to say a few things:

- ◆ A few will read this article and become upset, possibly even angry.
- ◆ Others will read this with an open mind, consider what is being said and possibly even be blessed by it.

Having said that, can I urge you to consider two very important thoughts before you react?

- ◆ I could very well be wrong on some interpretations of Scripture and am willing to be challenged with your views and understanding of excommunication and shunning.
- ◆ Let's not forget that in the end, God has the last word — not me or you. And because God has the last word, we will be much further ahead IF we base our views and understanding of excommunication and shunning on His Word; not ours.

Excommunication and shunning, as most of us know, was one of the main reasons why Jacob Amman split away from the Mennonites in late 1600's. In fact, let's visit parts of that history before we get into our main study today.

### *Division between Jacob Amman and Hans Reist*

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The year was 1690, and two men, who were leaders in the Mennonite Church, began to struggle over some religious practices that were taking place in the church. Their names were Hans Reist and Jacob Amman. In 1693, Amman, in a confrontation with

Reist's followers, excommunicated Reist and his leaders, causing a shock throughout all of the Mennonite communities in Western Europe. Jacob Amman was causing divisions within the Mennonite church.

After years of banning and excommunicating nearly half of all Mennonites, some calmer heads began to reason with Jacob Amman. After much soul searching, and considering of the consequences that he had caused within the Mennonite church, Jacob Amman and some of his leaders decided to try to rejoin the mainstream Mennonite church.

In order to show repentance, Jacob Amman excommunicated himself and his leaders. In 1699, and again in 1700, Amman tried to rejoin the Mennonites. The Mennonites felt it was not possible, since there would always be differences and separation by doctrine and interpretation of scripture and traditions.

#### **Some Facts On Jacob Amman**

- ◆ Jacob Amman had excommunicated over half of the Mennonites.
- ◆ The Mennonites excommunicated Jacob Amman
- ◆ And finally, Jacob Amman excommunicated himself from his own group.
- ◆ Jacob Amman, spiritual leader and founder of the Amish faith, died while he was still excommunicated from the Mennonites.

## Is Excommunication and Shunning Biblical?

This question is answered in one of three ways, depending on who you ask. View #1 and #2, as outlined below, are extreme opposites, however, view #3 describes a more balanced Biblical view. Let's take a close look at all three views.

### View #1

There are churches who turn a blind eye toward Scriptures that teach excommunication and shunning. In fact, if the pastor or church elders, I am about to describe, would so much as dare use discipline on one of their members, they would lose half of their membership; maybe even get sued.

In the case of this view, *church discipline* is a phrase that no one dare speak, not even in the most sinful of situations.

Besides that, it is often much easier for the troublemaker to uproot and move on to another church in the area. After leaving the first church and attending the new one for awhile, they stir up more trouble, and eventually, they do it all over again; they move on to the next church.

These troublemakers are never at one church long enough to become established and usable in ministry. And secondly, the new church, in which the troublemaker has just joined, is so disconnected from all other churches in the area, that no one is aware of what happened at the previous church.

The Bible is very clear, when the church allows a little bit of sin to dwell in the camp, it will eventually effect everybody. It is just like cancer, if left unattended, you can bet, it will destroy your whole body.

*...know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 1 Cor 5:6*

The point is this: the church must wake up and learn something. Leaven is a type of sin in

the Bible. Therefore, if the church member and his/her shameful sin are allowed to remain in the church, it will spread throughout the whole membership. If the church continues to accept the person who is living in open sin, others will begin to feel that they, too, can be acceptable even if they sin. If there is no restraint upon sin, then sin will grow. If sin is accepted, then sin, not righteousness, rules.

Note what Scripture says: it takes only a *little* leaven, not much, for sin to grow. Accepting just one member who lives *in sin* will cause others to begin living worldly and sinful lives.

To the church, living and practicing under View #1, may I remind you, the Bible has some clear words written for you.

*Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened... 1 Cor 5:6*

May I also remind you what happened to Achan in the Old Testament? Joshua informed the Children of Israel in Joshua 6:18, "do not take anything from the City of Jericho or you will bring a curse on the whole camp."

Achan got sticky fingers, and when he saw some gold and silver shekels, he picked them



up and hid them in his tent. He probably thought to himself, I will never get caught and no one will ever know. However, he forgot that the Lord was watching.

When God handed out the blame for Achan's sin, He did not ONLY blame Achan, He blamed ALL the children of Israel. Look what God says:

*But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan...took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel. Joshua 7:1*

- ◆ How many people got blamed for one man's sin? Everybody.
- ◆ How many people did the Lord God become angry at over one man's sin? Everybody.

God got angry at every single person in the camp; even those who were completely in the dark and unaware of Achan's sin. Verse 5 tells us that because of Achan's sin, thirty six men died.

When the thirty six men died, Joshua and the elders of Israel rent their clothes, put dust on their heads and fell on their faces before God.

Notice how God responds to Joshua and the Elders of Israel.

*And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: **neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you.***

—Joshua 7:10-12

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Since our beginning in 2000, many people have written to us, asking to be added to our mailing list, while others have sent us names of their friends and family members. We think it is important for us to tell you that the cost of *The Amish Voice* is \$.45 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 along side of us, by helping with expenses, it would be a great benefit as well as highly appreciated. In order to continue receiving the Amish Voice, please keep us informed of any changes to your address.

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One man's sin caused thirty six innocent men to die! Truly, it makes a person wonder how many innocent church members are suffering severe consequences because nothing is being done to purge out the sin that has sprung up with in the camp.

And, might I add; maybe that is why we see so little power in many of the main stream churches today. And maybe, just maybe, that is why we see so many of our prayers go unanswered. These are just some honest questions we should ask ourselves.

Something else to consider; is it possible that many churches fall under the judgment that Christ spoke of in Revelation 3?

*And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; ... I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue [vomit] thee out of my mouth.*

*Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*

*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door [of the church], and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

—Revelation 3:14-20

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## View #2

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In our second view, I would like to take a look at some of the practices and views of another type of churches. They are in fact quite opposite of the view we just covered.

The churches in our second view, use Scriptures, such as Matthew 18:17, I Corinthians 5, and I Timothy 1:20 to put the fear of God into anyone who would dare to go against

the rules and regulations that have been set forth by the leadership of the church. And, once that member has been excommunicated from the church, they become a marked person. From that point on, they are noted and shunned, not only by their home church, but also by most of the other churches in the area. And unless that person comes back to the same church that excommunicated him/her, the ban will not be lifted.

Over the years, there have been some extreme cases where certain members in these churches have taken their own lives, because they saw no way out of their emotional and mental misery. Their thinking has been described in the following ways:

1.

If I leave the church, I will be excommunicated and shunned by my own family and friends. And, at the end of my life, God will cast me into hell, as payment for having opposing views and understandings of the church and it's rules.

2.

If I continue to live my life within the church and it's strict guidelines, my days will continue to look dark and bleak. So much so that the only way out; the only relief is to take my life.

### Three Questions to Consider

1.

Does God give the leaders of the church full rights to establish any rule and regulation they want, and then force it on the members of the church?

2.

Does God, under any circumstances, allow church leaders the right to turn a member over to Satan and shun him or her for breaking a man-made rule?

3.

Is there a difference between a man-made rule, such as, "Thou shalt not drive a car" and a God made rule, such as, "Thou shalt not commit adultery?"

Surely every reader of this article would agree that God's rules, if broken, will carry consequences.

But what about man made rules? What if they are broken? Does God care? For instance, suppose I was an elder of the church and one day I came to you and said, John,

from now on I don't want you to use any more power tools, including the chain saw, power drill and air nailer. Suppose that I would come to you a second time and say, John, from now on you are only allowed to wear certain colors of clothing; your shirt can only have three buttons in the front, no lay down collar, and no short sleeves.

- ◆ Kerosene lanterns on your buggy are ok, but no battery operated blinking lights.
- ◆ Phone shanty on the corner of your property is ok, but mind you, no phone in the house.
- ◆ You must shave your mustache off, however, the beard must go uncut.
- ◆ A couch in the living room is allowable, but it is against the rules to have a back or arm rests on the side.
- ◆ Running the washing machine with a gasoline engine is acceptable, but to do so with electricity is wrong.

*One man might argue, but these rules are nothing more than little fences that keep us from loosing control and breaking God's commandments.*

*Another might respond, "well, I don't actually believe that keeping our man made rules will get us to heaven."*

*A good follow-up question might be, "so you don't believe that the rules will get you to heaven?"*

*No, he would answer.*

*What happens if one of the members refuses to keep the rules?"*

*In my lifetime and experience, the popular response would be, "well, then we as a church would have to take action. And if things did not turn around, we would need to eventually excommunicate and shun that member."*

Excommunicate that member for what? For breaking a man made rule?

Until just a couple years ago, I did not realize it so much, but that kind of mind set is very similar to what was happening in the Jewish culture, during Jesus' time. Please allow me to explain.

The Jewish leaders created thousands of little fences in order to keep their people from breaking God's commandments. And

in time, those little fences became more important than anything God ever said. In fact, Jesus clearly said to them, "...ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." Let's read the whole passage.

*For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And He said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. —Mark 7:8-9*

We can read throughout the gospels and the book of Acts that these man-made fences would, in time, become the very reason why Jesus and the Apostles got excommunicated and shunned from the synagogues. In fact, these fences eventually became the very cause for why they died on crosses, got beheaded, were dipped in boiling oil and cast into the rivers.

Jesus had told His followers...

*They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. —John 16:2*

How desperately sad, that these leaders, who should have been studying and preaching God's Word, turned on their own flock and cast them out of their fellowship; not because they broke the commandments of God, but because they broke their own man-made rules.

Consider what happened in the situation, following this paragraph. Jesus is standing in front of Pilate with a crown of thorns on His head. He is being accused by His own people, who want Him dead! Notice particularly the part of the verse that is underlined.

*When the chief priests [leaders of the synagogues] therefore and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, Crucify Him, Crucify Him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye Him, and Crucify Him: for I find no fault in Him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law He ought to die... —John 19:6-7*

In a nut shell, this is what they said; we [the synagogue] have our own set of rules; this man, Jesus Christ, does not measure up to those rules! Therefore, we want Him dead!

Questions:

1. Would Jesus measure up to our church standards today?
2. What would happen if He attended our services next Sunday, and at the end of the sermon, He started healing people?
3. Would He be allowed to preach in our church services, even if He was not chosen in a lot?

Chances are, if Jesus Christ came to church and was not dressed plainly or have His hair cut a certain way, He would be put in a different category immediately.

The church people might even start saying and hearing things like, look! He came to church without a hat! His suspenders are made out of elastic instead of denim. He's wearing a mustache! Oh, and did you hear what His name is? He claims to go by the name Jesus, and you know as well as I do, that is not a common name. My, how worldly! If He thinks that He will become part of this church, He's going to have to change His name to a more simple one, such as Eli or Atlee.

So when does it become right to excommunicate and shun a member of the church?

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## View #3

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One thing is for sure, where there are people, there is sin and disagreement. It is bound to happen! Someone once said, if you do find a perfect church, don't join it, because the moment you join it, it will become imperfect.

To point fingers at another church member too quickly, is to forget the true statement that says, but for the grace of God, there go I.

Oh, you may not have a problem with lusting and you may never have come close to committing adultery, but possibly you have other problems, such as anger and bitterness.

Every person on the face of this planet has at least several weaknesses and if at the right time and at the right place, you will break every single time.

*And why beholdest thou the mote [speck] that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam [plank] that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say*

*to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

—Matthew 7:3-5

Most of us would be wise to read and study the previous passage before we take any action at all. However, there are those times when a born again member in the church makes some very poor choices and get's tangled up in a sin, such as the ones we read about in Galatians 5:19-21 and a few other places in the New testament.

When that happens, I truly believe that we have to ask ourselves two questions before we as a church do anything with the erring member.

1st: *Was this a one time sin or has it happened many, many times?*

2nd: *Has the person showed true sorrow for the sin which was committed, or is he or she filled with pride and doesn't care?*

Let's just say that the person is truly sorry for the sin they committed. *Note: True and complete sorrow cannot be faked. True repentance is so visible that you would have a hard time missing it.*

What should the church do?

*They have a member who has sinned a terrible sin, maybe it happened once and maybe it happened several times, however, the truth is, the sinning church member is very broken over his/her sin. S/he has wept bitterly and asked God and the church for forgiveness.*

What should the church do?

*Should they immediately forgive and forget? Should they forgive and still put the person through a period of excommunication and shunning?*

Before either one of us answers that question, let's turn to the following Scripture passage for our answer:

*And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be*

stoned: but what sayest thou? —John 8:3-5

Dear friend, this woman was caught in the very act of adultery. And, oh did the power hungry church leaders come alive. In fact, they shouted for all to hear: *Moses commanded us to stone people like this!*

By the way, I should point out that this woman was most likely a member of the Jewish synagogue. One thing is for sure, she was considered by the leaders as one who should be living under the law of Moses.

Let us now turn and see how the Lord Jesus handled the matter.

*...Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.*

*So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, he that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.*

*When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more. —John 8:6-11*



There are two things I would like to point out about the actions that Jesus took in the passage of Scripture we just read.

#### One

Jesus did not say, “woman, because of your sinful behavior, I am going to ask the syna-

gogue to excommunicate and shun you for six weeks. During that time, we as members are going to watch you very closely to see if you are really serious about your sorrow and repentant heart.

#### Two

Jesus did not condemn, or for that matter, even question her. What He did do is give the sinning woman a *second chance*.

Aren't you glad that we serve a God of second chances? But wait, our heavenly Father, according to the next Scripture passage, is about giving the sinner who repents many chances.

*And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. — Luke 17:4*

Let's say that you caught a church member in the very act of sinning a great sin, similar to the one that we just read about in John chapter 8. And let's pretend also that, at this point, no one else in the church is aware of anything that happened. Just you and the sinning church member are the only ones that know. What should you do?

- ◆ Should you run and tell it to the leaders of the church?
- ◆ Should you start gossiping all over the neighborhood, letting everybody know what so and so is into?
- ◆ Should you forgive and tell no one about what you just witnessed?

Let's again consider the words of our Lord Jesus, as He sets some clear guidelines concerning these very questions.

Notice, there are three steps, that according to Jesus, you should take in dealing with the sinning church member.

*[STEP 1] Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*

*[STEP 2] But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.*

*[STEP 3] And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. —Mat 18:15-17*

Wow! Could Jesus have made it any plainer then that? Three very clear steps in dealing with a sinning church member. Notice too, it is not until the last step in Jesus' outline that you take the sinful situation to the whole church. And if I understand Jesus correctly, it is only then that the church excommunicates and shuns the unrepentant sinner.



Let's please ask ourselves another question: according to Jesus in Matthew 18, would excommunication and shunning have been necessary if the sinning member had repented on step 1? Step 2? How the about step 3?

The answer should be obvious, but just in case it isn't, according to Jesus' own words, the sinner should not be excommunicated and treated as an unbeliever until all three steps have been completed and the sinner has still not shown any sign of sorrow or repentance. And, might I remind us all, it never works to do [STEP TWO AND THREE] before [STEP ONE], such as happens in many of the plain churches. Not only does it not work, it is not how God intended it to be.

In ending, I would like to challenge us both with two simple questions:

*Is there a difference between man-made rules and God-made rules? Or do they, if broken, carry the same level of punishment?*

*Is it ever, under any circumstance Biblical to excommunicate and shun members for breaking a man-made rule?*

— — — — End of Article — — — —

Written by Joe Keim for the Amish Voice

## Our Eyes: Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Do you realize that without our eyes you would not be reading this now? Without our eyes you would be unable to see any of God's creation. Psalms 19:1 says:

*The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork.*

God shows Himself to us, in part, by what we see.

Your eyes work all the time they are open. It may seem automatic to you and I, but there is a lot that goes on in your eyes that you would miss if you lost them. They take in lots of information — shapes, colors, movements, and more. Then they send the information to your brain, so the brain knows what's going on outside of your body.

The eyelid protects the eye without you thinking about it. When you step into bright light, the eyelids squeeze together tightly to protect your eyes until they can adjust to the light. And if you move your fingers close (but not too close!) to your friend's eyes, they will blink. Your friend's eyelids shut automatically to protect the eye from possible danger. Also don't forget eyelashes. They work with the eyelids to keep dirt and other unwanted stuff out of your eyes.

The white part of the eyeball is called the sclera (say: sklair-uh). The sclera is made of a tough material and has the important job of covering most of the eyeball.

Think of the sclera as your eyeball's outer coat. Look very closely at the white of the eye, and you'll see lines that look like tiny pink threads. These are blood vessels, the tiny tubes that deliver blood, to the sclera.

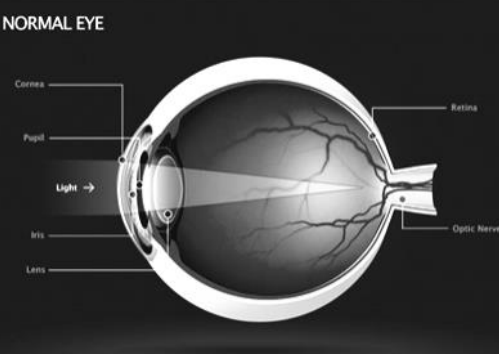
The pupil is the black circle in the center of the iris, which is really an opening in the iris, and it lets light enter the eye. To see how this works, use a small flashlight to see how your eyes or a friend's eyes respond to changes in brightness. The pupils will get

smaller when the light shines near them and they'll open wider when the light is gone.

These next parts are really cool, but you can't see them with your own eyes! Doctors use special microscopes to look at these inner parts of the eye, such as the lens. After light enters the pupil, it hits the lens. The lens sits behind the iris and is clear and colorless. The lens' job is to focus light rays on the back of the eyeball — a part called the retina (say: ret-i-nuh).

The retina uses special cells called rods and cones to process light. Just how many rods and cones does your retina have?

Answer: We each have about 120 million rods and 7 million cones — in each eye!



Rods see in black, white and shades of gray; they tell us the form or shape that something has. Rods can't tell the difference between colors, but they are super-sensitive, allowing us to see when it's very dark.

Cones, on the other hand, sense color and they need more light than rods to work well. Cones are most helpful in normal or bright light. The retina has three types of cones. Each cone type is sensitive to one of three different colors — red, green, or blue — to help you see different ranges of color.

Rods and cones process the light to give you the total picture. You're able to see that your friend has a black coat and is wearing a straw hat while he leads a brown horse.

Think of the optic nerve as the great messenger in the back of your eye. The rods and cones of the retina change the colors and shapes you see into millions of nerve messages. Then, the optic nerve carries those messages from the eye to the brain! The optic nerve serves as a high-speed telephone line connecting the eye to the brain. When you see an image, your eye "telephones" your brain with a report on what you are seeing so the brain can translate that report into "cat," "apple," or "bicycle," or whatever it is you see.

The eye has its own special bathing system — tears! Above the outer corner of each eye are glands, which make tears. Every time you blink your eye, a tiny bit of tear fluid comes out of your upper eyelid. It helps wash away germs, dust, or other particles that don't belong in your eye.

Tears also keep your eye from drying out. You can see the opening of your tear duct if you very gently pull down the inside corner of your eye. When you see a tiny little hole, you've found the tear duct.

What a great God we have! He has taken so much care in making just one part of us to work perfectly and meet our needs. If He cares this much about our body (and He does!), how much more does he care about our soul?

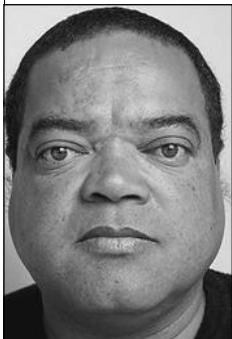
In 2 Peter 3:9 we read:

*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

The same God who took much time in creating us, wants us to know Him better so that we may spend eternity together.

*By Robert McCallum, Ashland OH*

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In this combination picture of before and after, Claudio Paulo Pinto pops his eyeballs out of their sockets, in Belo Horizonte, 210 miles north of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Saturday, Sept 16, 2006.

Pinto can pop his eyeballs about 3/8 inch out of their sockets, a national record for eye-popping according to Rank Brasil, an organization modeled after the Guinness Book of World Records that lists Brazilian records. Pinto says he's been doing this since he was nine years old and "it doesn't hurt a bit."



## A Good Attitude Will Change Your Life!

John is the kind of guy that is always in a good mood and always has something positive to say. When someone would ask him how he was doing, he would reply, 'If I were any better, I would be twins! If a friend was having a bad day, John was there telling the friend how to look on the positive side of the situation.

Seeing this style really made me curious, so one day I went up and asked him, 'I don't get it!' 'You can't be a positive person all of the time. How do you do it?'

He replied, 'Each morning I wake up and say to myself, you have two choices today. You can choose to be in a good mood or...you can choose to be in a bad mood, I choose to be in a good mood.'

Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim or...I can choose to learn from it. I choose to learn from it.

Every time someone comes to me complaining, I can choose to accept their complaining or...I can point out the positive side of life. I choose the positive side of life..

'Yeah, right, it's not that easy,' I protested. 'Yes, it is,' he said. 'Life is all about choices. When you cut away all the junk, every situation is a choice. You choose how you react to situations. You choose how people affect your mood.



You choose to be in a good mood or bad mood. The bottom line: It's your choice how you live your life.'

I reflected on what he said.. Soon thereafter, I left my place of employment to start my own business. We lost touch, but I often thought about John when I made a choice instead of reacting to it.

Several years later, I heard that he was involved in a serious accident, falling some 60 feet from a tower. After 18 hours of surgery and weeks of intensive care, he was released from the hospital with rods placed in his back.

I saw him about six months after the accident. When I asked him how he was, he replied, 'If I were any better, I'd be twins...Wanna see my scars?' I declined to see his wounds, but I asked him what had gone through his mind as the accident took place.

The first thing that went through my mind was the well-being of my soon-to-be born daughter,' he replied. 'Then, as I lay on the ground I remembered that I had two choices..

I could choose to live or....I could choose to die. I chose to live.'

'Weren't you scared? Did you lose consciousness?' I asked.

He continued, '...the paramedics were great. They kept telling me I was going to be fine. But when they wheeled me into the Emergency Room and I saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and nurses, I got really scared. In their eyes, I read 'he's a dead man'. I knew I needed to take action.'

What did you do?' I asked. Well, there was a big burly nurse shouting questions at me. She asked if I was allergic to anything 'Yes, I replied.' The doctors and nurses stopped working as they waited for my reply. I took a deep breath and yelled, 'Gravity' Over their laughter, I told them, 'I am choosing to live.. Operate on me as if I am alive, not dead.'

He lived, thanks to the skill of his doctors, but also because of his amazing attitude....I learned from him that every day we have the choice to live fully.



Attitude, after all, can make all the difference for each day!!!

The apostle Paul writes:  
*for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be eased [without], and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do ALL things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

—Philippians 4:11-13

—Story continued from back page—  
 Who cast Jonah into the sea?

...sold Joseph to Egypt?

*And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. ... And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth...So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God...*

—Genesis 45:4-8

Five chapters later, Joseph reminded his brothers again that it was God who sent him to Egypt, not them.

*But as for you [brothers], ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. —Gen 50:20*

And because Joseph understood the true Sovereignty of God, he was also able to say to his evil brothers, "Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them" —Gen 50:21

*In Proverbs 16:9, God tells us very clearly, "A man's heart deviseth [plans] his way: but the LORD directeth [establishes] his steps."*

Are you going through a difficult time in your life? Have you questioned whether God even cares about you? Maybe, just maybe, the reminder of what happened to Jonah and

Joseph will help you gain a new perspective of your situation. I pray it does.

Just like Jonah understood who cast him into the sea; just like Joseph understood who sold him into Egypt, so we MUST understand who it is we battle against each day.

*For we [you and I] wrestle not against flesh and blood [other human beings], but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. —Ephesians 6:12*

The next verse tells us:

*Wherefore, take onto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. —Ephesians 3:13*

# The Keys of the Kingdom

— Jonathan Helmuth

*And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. —Matt. 16:19*

This scripture verse is one of the most misunderstood but important verses in the Bible. Jesus was giving his disciples keys. The keys of the kingdom of heaven lock or unlock the mysteries of this realm to us.

The Catholic Church understood this verse to mean that Jesus was giving Peter unequivocal authority to make decisions and rules. Later the protestant church decided he was not giving this right to Peter but he was giving it to the church. I would like to propose to you that he was doing neither.

The context of this scripture verse is in the context of Jesus asking his disciples in verse 13: "Who do men say that I am?" They then proceed to tell him that some were saying he was John the Baptist and others were saying Elias and others Jeremias or one of the prophets. Then he asks them, "But who do **you** say that I am?" Simon Peter answered with, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Peter had just come into agreement with heaven who Jesus really was. Jesus responded to this with, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Notice that the revelation was from heaven toward earth or to Peter.

He then proceeds to tell him that his name

was Peter and that upon this rock he would build his church, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. It is in this verse that the Catholic Church gets the doctrine that Jesus was ordaining Peter as the Vicar of Christ. He is not saying this at all. He is saying that upon a person receiving a personal revelation from the heavenly Father who Jesus really is, he would build his church. He was not just a prophet as others were saying but indeed he was **the** Christ, the Messiah. Even the gates of hell will never prevail *or hold out* against it, (*this revelation*).

He then starts the verse of our text with the word and which connects this verse with the afore mentioned scripture verses.

The keys of the kingdom of heaven are about us coming into agreement with the heavenly realm not heaven coming into agreement with us. If heaven would have to come into agreement with us, Jesus would have had to come into agreement with what Peter said a few verses later. Jesus was showing his disciples that he would be killed and raised from the dead a few days later; but Peter rebuked him and said, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be." Jesus had to rebuke Satan, who was using Peter as a voice for himself.

Here is a better interpretation of this passage: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth must be what is already bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth must be what is already loosed in heaven."

Also, if this verse was saying that whatever

we decide on earth, heaven would have to agree with us; the Lord's prayer would have said, "Thy kingdom come, our will be done in heaven as on earth." 1 John 5:14 would have said, "If we ask anything according to our will he heareth us."

We are like harps with our strings out of tune. We must allow the Holy Spirit to bring us in tune with the Word. When this is accomplished we will come into harmony with God, bringing forth a sound that will resonate in the earth and in the heavens, bringing glory and honor to our king.

In John 5:19 Jesus says it this way:

*Verily, verily I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." And in John 12:49 he says, "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. —John 5:19*

So even Jesus didn't do or say anything that he first did not see or hear his heavenly Father doing or saying.

In conclusion: our Father wants to have a relationship with his children. We must find out through prayer and reading of the scriptures what his will is and come into alignment with it. Then the blessing of God will be upon us and we will be a true representative of the kingdom of heaven.

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**Has the Amish Voice been a blessing to you? If so, would you consider making a donation to help cover the postage and printing?**

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2. Reminder: Don't forget to let us know if your address changes



In these days the question arises more frequently than ever before. Recently when the "World's Squarest Teenagers" was shown on British TV, their visit to a mosque had the statement from a Mosque leader to the Amish teenagers that they didn't believe Jesus was the son of God, but a prophet.

When Jesus asked his disciples in Matthew 16:15, who they said He was, Peter replied:

*And Simon Peter answered and said, **Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.** And Jesus answered and said unto him, *Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.* <sup>18</sup>*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* —*Mathew 16:17-18**

Here is the foundation rock of where the church is anchored; that is the firm belief that Jesus is Christ or Messiah, the son of God. Without this truth, everything we know about salvation falls apart. Our hope totally lies in His ability to deal with our sin. Take away this truth and the entire church's efforts at explaining salvation are rendered useless. Jesus is only a prophet? That takes out the foundation stone of Christianity.

Now when I was young, I was taught that Jesus Christ is the son of God. My father and grandfather before that believed it. That is a good thing. However, that does not tell me why that is true. What I aim to do is show how any of us can find a base for that belief.

We really believe Jesus was actually the son of God. And we need to say so to an unbelieving world. To a Muslim, or an unbeliever the statement seems far-fetched, even blasphemous. Indeed, the statements made by Jesus were either true or totally offensive. How can we tell the difference?

When a person comes to our country and claims to be sent by the official government of Germany, we need to check their credentials. This can be done by a phone call to the foreign affairs department of Germany and asking whether they sent so and so. Also, Germany might have sent advance notice that the diplomat was coming.

No person ever can by his own insistence

assure you of his official status. If for instance a doctor said he was a doctor, but had no valid certificate, he would soon be removed from his office. Someone higher up has to say and certify the person is a doctor, or we simply have an imposter. Who then, can validate Jesus as the Son of God? Obviously, only the Father.

The first indication of a coming Messiah is found in Genesis 3:15.

*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy **seed** and her **seed**; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

The word "seed" is singular in the Genesis rendition. One person is seed, whereas numerous people would be "seeds."

*Galatians 3; 16 says, Now to Abraham and his **seed** were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy **seed**, which is Christ.*

### This is God telling Adam what is to come

During Old Testament times, there were numerous predictions of a coming messiah.

*Isaiah 7:14 says; Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.*

This is like a foreign nation announcing the coming of an important person so we will not miss him. To fit the criteria, the Promised Redeemer had to be born of a virgin.

### This is God speaking through Isaiah

Luke chapter 1 tells us of the angel announcing the birth of Jesus to his mother Mary. Angels are messengers from God. He said; *"You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."* This is God speaking through angels.

*Luke 3;21-22 says; Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the*

*Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.* Here you have a voice (God) from heaven telling us Jesus is His son. This also happened in the transfiguration.

Matthew 17 verses 5 says; *While He yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*

Now we have God Himself speaking to the issue. Matthew was an apostle that was with Jesus throughout his ministry. Mark also records this in the same way in Mark 9; 2. Mark was not an apostle, but lived in the same time frame as Jesus. Matthew's account is first hand experience, not hearsay.

Next we have Jesus himself saying to Peter in Matthew 16;13-17: *When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.*

Then when Jesus was being tried before Caiaphas, the high priest, he stated under charge of oath the following:

*Matthew 26;63b-64: ...But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."*

Next issue of the Amish Voice: the reason why this doctrine is so important.

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## The Forbidden Bible

1. Did you know that the first English translations of the Bible were banned?
2. Did you know that the first printed copies of the New Testament in English had to be printed in Germany and smuggled into England in bales of cotton?
3. Did you know that the Bible translator responsible for this was burned at the stake for the crime of translating the Scriptures into English?

Bishop Stephen Bradley observed: *"We are in danger of forgetting truths for which previous generations gave their lives."*

### The Oxford Martyrs

On 16 October 1555, just outside the walls of Balliol College, Oxford, a stout stake had been driven into the ground with fagots of firewood piled high at its base. Two men

were lead out and fastened to the stake by a single chain bound around both their waists.

The older man was Hugh Latimer, the Bishop of Worcester, one of the most powerful preachers of his day, and the other Nicolas Ridley, the Bishop of London, respected as one of the finest theologians in England.

More wood was carried and piled up around their feet. Then it was set alight. As the wood kindled and the flames began to rise, Bishop Latimer encouraged his companion: *"Be of good cheer, Master Ridley, and play the man! We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out."*

Hundreds in the crowd watching the burning of these bishops wept openly.

The place of their execution is marked today by a small stone cross set in the ground in

Broad Street, while nearby in St. Giles stands the imposing Martyrs Memorial, erected 300 years later in memory of these two men and of Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who 4 months after their execution suffered the same tortured death by burning, in the same place, and for the same reason.

### Faith and Freedom

On one day in 1519 seven men and women in Coventry were burned alive for teaching their children the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the Apostles' Creed – in Eng



### Pennsylvania Deitsh Testament

If you would like to obtain a New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs in Pennsylvania Deitsh, they are available for \$13.95 post-paid from the Committee for Translation, 3864 Township Road 162, Sugar Creek, OH 44681. Phone 330-852-4663.

You do not need to send money ahead of time; they will bill you with your order. Your local Christian bookstore may also have them available.

In making this translation, the committee's purpose was two-fold: 1) to adhere as closely as possible to the Textus Receptus Greek text, which is closely associated with Luther's (German) and the Authorized (English) version, the two versions most commonly in use by the Amish, and 2) to make the translation in fluent everyday Pennsylvania Deitsh as it is spoken in the home.

The translation procedures and principles used in this translation are basically those employed by the Wycliffe Bible Translators, and the exegesis closely follows their series of in-house "Exegetical Helps". The final manuscript was checked for exegetical accuracy by New Testament Greek specialists from the Translation Department of the Wycliffe Bible Translators.



## Cherokee Legend

### Do you know the legend of the Cherokee Indian youth's rite of Passage?



His father takes him into the forest, blindfolds him and leaves him alone. He is required to sit on a stump the whole night and not remove the blindfold until the rays of the morning sun shine

through it. He cannot cry out for help to anyone.

Once he survives the night, he is a MAN. He cannot tell the other boys of this experience, because each lad must come into manhood on his own.



The boy is naturally terrified. He can hear all kinds of noises. Wild beasts must surely be all around him. Maybe even some human might do him harm. The wind blew the grass and earth, and shook his stump, but he sat stoically, never

removing the blindfold. It would be the only way he could become a man!

Finally, after a horrific night the sun appeared and he removed his blindfold.

It was then that he discovered his father sitting on the stump next to him.



He had been at watch the entire night, protecting his son from harm.

We, too, are never alone. Even when we don't know it, God is watching over us, Sitting on the stump beside us. When trouble comes, all we have to do is reach out to Him.

Moral of the story: Just because you can't see God, doesn't mean He is not there.

For we walk by faith, not by sight.  
—2 Corinthians 5:7

## Buggy Wrecks



Since May of 2010, we have been tracking some of the buggy accidents that have happened in the United States. Thus far, we have read of a total of 18 accidents. As you can see in the photos, it makes you wonder how some of these people ever got out alive. In fact, some of them did not make it out alive.

Here are some recent headlines:

- ◆ November 28, 2010: Bombay NY — Several occupants of an Amish buggy and the horse pulling it escaped injury Tuesday afternoon when the buggy collided with a train Tuesday afternoon on County Route 2 in Bombay.
- ◆ November 22, 2010: Diggins MO — One person is recovering after a van slams into an Amish buggy. It happened Sunday evening on Highway 60 near Diggins. Troopers say three people in the buggy were turning onto NN and were waiting on the passing train. The horse became spooked and lunged, knocking the buggy over.
- ◆ October 18, 2010: VIROQUA, Wis. -- Passengers in an Amish wagon escape serious injury after an elderly man rear-ends the wagon with his car.
- ◆ October 4, 2010: ASHLAND OH — An Ashland girl was killed and four family members were injured Sunday afternoon when their buggy was hit from behind by a pickup driven by Christopher Wells, of Greenwich. Clara Brenneman, 8, died from her injuries at Ashland Samaritan Hospital.
- ◆ September 21, 2010: Elkhart IN — Rescue crews feared the worst Monday afternoon while responding to an accident after a fast moving car rammed a horse and buggy.
- ◆ September 15, 2010: Mt Vernon OH — An Amish man had only a minor hand injury as the result of his buggy being hit this morning about 9. The mishap was on Martinsburg Road, about a mile north of Martinsburg, when a car came over a hillcrest, saw

the buggy and attempted to swerve around it.

- ◆ September 14, 2010: Wexford CO — Two people are in the hospital after two cars crashed into an Amish buggy.
- ◆ September 1, 2010: Geauga County OH — Several people were injured after an SUV crashed into an Amish buggy Wednesday evening, officials said.
- ◆ August 21, 2010: Blair WI — An Amish woman was killed and a companion injured Thursday evening after a car slammed into the back of a buggy, the second such collision to happen in Trempealeau County this summer.
- ◆ August 18, 2010: Clare County MI — Clare County sheriff's deputies are investigating a Wednesday morning collision between an Amish buggy and a pickup truck. A man, woman and their three children were inside at the time of the collision. Authorities said the five people were either thrown from the buggy or jumped out following the impact.
- ◆ July 21, 2010: Centerville OH — Two people suffered minor injuries Tuesday when a motorcycle collided with an Amish buggy in Crawford County.
- ◆ June 22, 2010: Eau Claire — Four people are injured when a semi struck the back of an Amish horse and buggy.
- ◆ June 10, 2010: Lancaster County — A collision between a pickup truck and an Amish horse and buggy sent 4 people to area hospitals.
- ◆ May 28, 2010: Millersburg OH — A box truck rear-ended an Amish buggy, ejecting two women and an infant.
- ◆ May 15, 2010: Mt Hope WI — Authorities in SW Wisconsin are looking for the driver who struck an Amish buggy and fled, leaving one buggy passenger in the road with severe injuries.
- ◆ May 12, 2010: Springfield, MO — Two men are reported injured following a bizarre Missouri car accident involving two cars and one buggy.

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## Important Announcement!

2010 was a great year for us and the Amish Voice. We appreciate the testimonies and financial gifts that people have sent in to help with the cost of printing and mailing this publication. The cost to mail one copy is \$.45. It's always exciting to receive notes and phone calls from people, asking if they can be added to the mailing list as well.

We also recognize the fact and are well aware that some who receive this publication are not interested in receiving it any longer. If you fit this description, please know that we will remove your name from the active list, if you let us know. All you have to do is write "REFUSED" on the outside cover, put it back in your mailbox and it will get mailed back to us. This let's us know that you are no longer interested in receiving it. Again, we have no desire to anger or be a pest to anyone.

If you have just recently started receiving the Amish Voice, I would encourage you to NOT form a negative opinion too quickly. In life, you sometimes have to eat the chicken and spit out the bones, meaning that you may not always agree with everything.

We would like to encourage our readers to share their thoughts and short articles with us. If asked, we would be more than happy to keep your name and location anonymous.

## Who Cast Jonah into the Sea? —by Joe Keim

You often hear Christians talk about how Jonah was cast into the sea by the men who ran the ship. And, that of course is backed up with the following Scripture in Jonah 1:15.

*Then said they unto him [Jonah], What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? ... And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: ... So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. —Jonah 1:11-15*

However, Jonah gives us a SECOND perspective, several verses later in chapter 2.

*I [Jonah] cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and He heard me; ... For thou [Lord] hast cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all Thy billows and Thy waves passed over me. —Jonah 2:2-3*

The answer, in case you didn't catch it, God cast Jonah into the sea. It's just that He used human beings to do the casting.

Who normally gets the blame for it?

The men on the ship do!

Oftentimes, such as in this situation, we are so earthly minded that we forget the fact that God is Sovereign (King of kings and Lord of Lords). And as is so often the case, when situations like Jonah happen, we jump to immediate conclusions and think we know all the "why's", "how's" and "where's" of things. Chances are, if we could see what God sees, we would often be wrong.

Here is a second Bible story that often gets taught with the wrong perspective in mind:

As children (and even adults), we are often taught that it was Joseph's evil brothers that sold him to Egypt. But, was it really the evil brothers that...

—turn to page 7 for the rest of the story —