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Beliefs of Our Fathers: Humanity

Chapter 7

This continues a study on the beliefs of our forefathers, based largely on the 1632 Dordrecht Confession of Faith. This section tells about Ecclesiology, or the study of the Church. This has been edited for space.

Humanity

Anthropology

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (Genesis 2:7)

Introduction

Where did we come from? Why are we here? What is the purpose of life? These questions have occupied the minds of all human beings throughout history. An elderly man once said to me, “See all these books I have?” Bookshelves filled one whole wall of the room from floor to ceiling. He owned books on every religion, books about man’s view of life, and books from men who have travelled the world. He said, “I have read every one of these books, searching for the purpose of life, yet I have not found it.”

One book in the center of all the others was the Bible—the Holy Scriptures,

written by the Creator of the world. When I asked him, the man confessed that he had not yet read that book.

How astonishing! It was the only book on his shelves that held the answers he looked for, but he had no interest in what the all-knowing God had to say.

Our Anabaptist ancestors were interested in going to the Source of life for their answers. They were willing to die for reading and studying a Book forbidden to the common man by the state church for fear that they might find the truth that contradicted church tradition. They might not have understood the Bible well because it was new to them, but they studied it fervently and understood who they were and what their purpose was on earth.

What the Anabaptists Teach

Article 1 of the Dordrecht Confession of Faith:

“Of this same one God, who worketh all in all, we believe and confess that He is the Creator of all things visible and invisible, who in six days created, made, and prepared heaven and earth and sea and all that in them is; and that He still governs and upholds the same and all His works through His wisdom, might, and

the word of His power.

“And when He had finished His works, and had ordained and prepared them, each in its nature and properties, good and upright, according to His pleasure, He created the first man, the father of us all, Adam; whom He formed of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so that he became a living soul, created by God in His own image and likeness, in righteousness and holiness, unto eternal life. He regarded him above all other creatures, endowed him with many high and glorious gifts, placed him in the pleasure garden or Paradise, and gave him a command and prohibition; afterwards He took a rib from Adam, made a woman therefrom, and brought her to him, joining and giving her to him for a helpmate, companion, and wife; and in consequence of this He also caused, that from this first man Adam, all men that dwell upon the whole earth have descended.

On marriage: “We confess that there is in the church of God an honorable state of matrimony, of two free, believing persons, in accordance with the manner after which God originally ordained the same in Paradise, and instituted it

Himself with Adam and Eve, and that the Lord Christ did away and set aside all the abuses of marriage which had meanwhile crept in, and referred all to the original order, and thus left it.

“In this manner the Apostle Paul also taught and permitted matrimony in the church, and left it free for every one to be married, according to the original order, in the Lord, to whomsoever one may get to consent. By these words, in the Lord, there is to be understood, we think, that even as the patriarchs had to marry among their kindred or generation, so the believers of the New Testament have likewise no other liberty than to marry among the chosen generation and spiritual kindred of Christ, namely, such, and no others, who have previously become united with the church as one heart and soul, have received one baptism, and stand in one communion, faith, doctrine and practice, before they may unite with one another by marriage. Such are then joined by God in His church according to the original order; and this is called, marrying in the Lord.”

What the Scriptures Teach

Marriage

In the beginning God created the heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1). Since God was the only one present at the beginning of time, He is the only one able to tell us who we are, where we came from, and why we are here. Scripture tells us that God created the heaven and earth for His own pleasure (Revelation 4:11). He formed the earth to be inhabited by His special creation, the children of men (Isaiah 45:18; Psalm 115:16). He gave man dominion over the earth as a steward, to care for and to have authority

over it (Genesis 1:26).

God fashioned Adam and Eve differently from the rest of His creation. He made man *a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour* (Psalm 8:5). They were lower because they had bodies like the animals of flesh and blood, covered in skin; but they were higher than the animals, because they were made in His likeness. *God created man in his own image . . . ; male and female created he them* (Genesis 1:27). God is spirit and has no physical body (John 4:24). God’s spiritual image speaks of Adam and Eve’s inner self. He made them moral, spiritual beings housed in a physical body. They were a reflection of God Himself. That does not imply that they were God. A reflection is never the real thing.

Even the most intelligent animals do not have an ability to communicate with God, nor do they make choices based on God’s moral code. *All flesh is not the same flesh* (1 Corinthians 15:39). Animals are programmed by God to do what they do by instinct. On the other hand, mankind was made with a mind that can communicate and reason with God and grasp His spiritual views. Mankind has emotions in order to feel all the pleasures God intended for them. They also have a will with which they can choose to love God and each other, to obey God, and to treat each other with respect. Scripture reveals that mankind was made to have a relationship with their Creator and with each other as indicated in Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3:16–19:

That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height. And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

God intended to enjoy mankind’s fellowship and permit them to enjoy His. They were chosen above all God’s creation to model the character of God with their ability to glorify God by thinking purely, loving purely, and choosing purely—a physical, visible representation of the invisible God. This is man’s highest purpose on earth. This is what Jesus modelled for us when He came to earth for those short thirty-three years.

God’s original purpose for man to occupy, dominate, and enjoy God’s Paradise also included marriage between a man and a woman. Genesis 2:18 indicates that man needed someone with whom he could communicate, love, make choices, and worship God: *And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.*

The animals were not adequate to fill this role as helper, so God created from Adam a special help meet, one made from his own body in the image of God. *The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man* (Genesis 2:21–22). Eve was made physically different from Adam in order to multiply

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the human race. She was to be Adam's wife and the mother of all mankind, equally sharing the image of God, but in a different role. God commanded that man should *leave his father and his mother, and cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh* (Genesis 2:24). He also commanded them to *be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it* (Genesis 1:28).

God's desire for marriage has been corrupted. Everything from divorce and remarriage and homosexuality to bitterness and resentment and lack of communication and love have all been enemies of God's intention for marriage.

Because marriage has been corrupted by sin, God gave us many instructions in the New Testament on how to have the wonderful, agreeable union He planned for man and woman.

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. (1 Corinthians 11:3)

Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify [set apart] and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. (Ephesians 5:21-28)

Just as Christ wants His bride, the Church, to be without blemish, a husband is to spend time with his wife, teaching her from Scripture and praying with her. By doing this, he can help her become a

better wife. The husband is the priest of his home. He has a God-given responsibility to study and teach his family the Word of God. We see in 1 Peter 3:1-7 God's instructions to spouses of disobedient or unbelieving husbands and wives:

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

God meant marriage to be a picture of His own relationship to the Church. Christ is the faithful, loving husband who protects His wife, the weaker vessel, from the wiles of Satan and leads her into godliness in order to present her spotless before His Father. He gives His life for the Church. The Church is the wife who helps her husband with his goals and plans, building him up with praise and giving him his rightful place as head of the home. She uses all her God-given gifts and talents to meet the needs of her husband and home.

Obviously, God's plan for marriage cannot work unless the husband and the wife are rightly related to their Creator—

born again in the Holy Spirit. A marriage between a believer of the gospel and an unbeliever can cause chaos, because they are enemies in the Lord. Marriage is the merging of two bodies into one, just as God joins all believers of the gospel into one body with Christ. A body can never have two heads, because it wouldn't know which to follow. So God chose man to be the head because Eve was deceived and Adam was not, just as Christ is head of the man and the Church (1 Corinthians 11:3). A man cannot lead his wife into godliness unless he has first been cleansed by the blood of Christ.

Submission is about respecting each other in humility and love, and it begins with our submission to God, who owns, loves, and cares for us. Ephesians 5:21 instructs all believers to submit to each other in the fear of God, which leads us to wisdom. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding* (Proverbs 9:10).

Men and women are different. They need to accept these differences, because God displays a different side of Himself through each of them. In general, men display the leader/protector side of God. They tend to think first and feel later. Women are likely to display the compassionate side of God. They tend to feel first and think later. Men and women were not made to be the same, although God says in Galatians that they are equal in His sight. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus* (Galatians 3:28). In our relationship with Jesus, we are spiritually equal. We are equally responsible to put our faith in the blood of Christ and study His Word. We equally receive blessing for our obedience and chastisement for our disobedience. God uses us equally in His kingdom, but in different roles. Someone once said that men and women are like chocolate and nuts. They are good alone, but even better when together.

Continued
Next Page

God's original plan for mankind was altered by the choices Adam and Eve made. Eve was deceived when she stepped out from under Adam's God-given headship. She was not made to take ultimate responsibility. *For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression* (1 Tim. 2:13–14). On the other hand, Adam stepped out of his leadership role of protecting his wife by following her into disobedience. He actually led her to sin by not leading her away from it.

Christ, the second Adam, is our only hope for restoring God's order. *For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive* (1 Corinthians 15:21–22). It is impossible for men or women to do what God intended them to do without the Holy Spirit dwelling in them.

Children

Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed. (Psalm 127:3–5)

As in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14–30, parents are made stewards of the children God has gifted to them, and they will be judged on how much they invest in their children's lives. If raised in a godly manner, children will bring much joy and blessing to their parents (Proverbs 20:7; 31:28).

We are admonished to be like children when it comes to faith in Christ, because children are very trusting and want to please their parents. They can be led to Christ at an early age because of their trusting confidence in adults. They can just as easily be led into evil for the same reason. Fathers: take advantage of the time you have with your young children to promote a desire for godliness in them.

My father faithfully read and explained the Bible to us and prayed for us every day he was able, and on the days he couldn't, my mother would read to us. By God's grace, it is possible to raise God-loving children.

Despite their perceived innocence, children are born in sin with Adam's nature. Even before they can speak, they show their defiance, and "no" seems to be their first word. While we must have much patience and grace for our children, we ought to start teaching them from the time they're born. As Paul said to Timothy: *Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus* (2 Timothy 3:14–15).

Children are commanded to obey their parents, and this is the first commandment that has a blessing attached to it. This makes sense, because obedience extends your life by keeping you from danger and sin, which could shorten your life. Once we are out of the home, God expects us to never stop honoring our parents with love and respect.

Children are great imitators. They copy everything their parents do. So you see, you can determine whether you want loving children who openly share their thoughts with you, or harsh, angry children who distance themselves from you. Act out what you want your children to be, and they will copy you. That's why God has said, *Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord* (Ephesians 6:4). Making unreasonable and inconsistent demands on your children will only frustrate them, which results in bitterness and anger. I wonder if some parents put more care and effort into raising their crops than they do in raising their children. Do we want to raise a crop of undesirable children?

Husbands and wives, I admonish you to prayerfully decide what kind of children you want to raise, and then go to the Bible to find out how to do it. Over and over, you will find that love and kindness is the answer. Usually, how a husband treats his wife is how his sons will treat women, and how the wife treats her husband is how the daughter will treat men.

God's purpose for mankind is still to bear His image—through our own lives, through our relationships with our spouses, and through our relationships with our children. Because of sin, we do need restraints—God-given restraints. Parents restrain children from acting out their sinful nature in the home, and teachers restrain children from acting out their sinful nature in the school. We were all born with a conscience as our inner restraint, which needs to be developed as we grow older. We have God-ordained civil law or government to control our sinfulness in the social world, and we have the local church as our spiritual restraint. The first and foremost restraint, though, is the Holy Spirit, who works through our conscience. Are you listening to Him?

Prayer

Father in heaven, help us be the mirrors You intend us to be, showing forth Your glory and grace to all those around us. May we always be open for Your empowering Spirit to fill us and work through us, for our corrupted flesh could never reflect Your goodness. Change our thoughts to bring about Your will. Change our actions to show people who You are, and use our mouths to preach Your gospel. Give us the grace to love our spouses and children as You do and to train them to love You. May our lives bring glory to the name of Jesus Christ in our homes, our schools, our churches, and in public. In the name of Jesus we ask this. Amen.

End

I don't know about you, but for myself, I try so hard to be the perfect wife, the perfect mom, the perfect housekeeper... only to find that I fall short. Very short. So far below my expectations that I feel hopeless.

Depressed. Frustrated. At myself and life in general.

Countless times I've remarked to my husband, "How can you love me when I'm so imperfect?" or "I wish I'd be the perfect wife and mom."

Countless times he's answered, "I'm so glad you aren't. Because then I'd have to be perfect too!"

Then one day not too long ago, this whole "perfection problem" kind of blew up. We were on our way home from an overnight stay without our one-year-old, so we had time to talk without interruptions. My husband asked a question. A fairly simple question: "What was God's purpose in creating you?"

"For His glory," I replied.

"How do you bring Him glory?" he prodded further. (By the way, he's excellent at asking good, hard questions.)

He went on to explain that God created man in His own image, and gave man a free will. When God created the angels, he did not give them a free will. Why?

God did not intend for mankind to be perfect (perfect, as in making no mistakes or never sinning.) Otherwise, He would have created mankind without the ability to choose to sin. So, in other words, before man was even in the making, God knew that man would choose to disobey,

and that we'd need a Savior. And He was perfectly okay with that. In fact, that was His plan all along. He wasn't looking for perfect robots, but redeemed children.

He still isn't looking for perfect little angels. We weren't created to be perfect. We were created to bring glory to God by being redeemed through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Did you get that? You don't have to try to be perfect for God to love you. He loved you even before you made the choice to follow Him. He died for your sins even before you knew you needed Him. What is more freeing than that?

From Genesis to Revelation, the story is the same: REDEMPTION—A loving, merciful God, seeking to restore relationships with His creation to Himself. We bring Him glory by allowing Him to pen a redemption story for us.

The problem with perfection is that perfection doesn't need God. If something is perfect, it doesn't need any help. It's perfect. It's flawless.

Why do we try so hard, then, to have the perfect family? To be the perfect church member? To be the perfect _____ (You fill in the blanks.) Why?

Maybe its because we don't really understand God's love. We think we somehow have to earn love. But the fact remains the same—God's love is not dependent on how perfect we are.

Ephesians 2:1-10 explains how that while we were "dead" in our sins, Christ died for us. Our salvation is not earned by

our good deeds, or by perfect performance, but by the blood of Jesus. And then it goes on, saying, "*But we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.*"

Hmm—so good works are important?

When we realize who we are in Christ, that we were created to bring glory to Him by being a part of His redemption story, it will change us. No longer will we try to be perfect in order to be loved. Instead, we will love Him so much, and be His hands and feet—His workmanship.

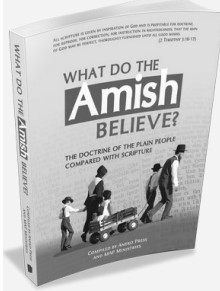
Yes, there are times the Bible does talk about being "perfect" or being "made perfect." In the Greek, the word perfect (when used in that context) means "complete or mature." It gives the idea of growing up into a mature Christian. It doesn't mean that we are perfectly flawless, or that we never sin.

The truth of the matter is this: God longs for a restored, redeemed relationship with us. That's why He created us. Praise God, for we no longer have to perform to be loved by Him. Instead, when we accept His love for us, we love Him. When we love Him, obeying His commandments doesn't seem hard anymore. There's freedom! Instead of an attitude of "I have to do this" it's "I want to do this because Jesus loves me so much!"

Will you let Him write a redemption story for you? Now, if only I could really get hold of this concept—enough, so that it goes from my head to my heart.

End

Amish Beliefs



Do your beliefs line up with those of our Anabaptist forefathers? In this 160-page book, *What Do the Amish Believe?*, nine authors took the time to go back and study the original beliefs of our forefathers and compare what they believed to what many of us believe today. A \$5 donation covers

the cost of printing and postage.

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Feedback and Response Section

Amish Voice,

Please take us off your mailing list. Why is the *Amish Voice* not written in German instead of English? Something's not right about that since the main language for any Amish anywhere is German.

Sincerely, A. B., PA

As always, we will honor your request and cancel your subscription to the *Amish Voice*. However, before we separate ways, I would like to share a few thoughts concerning languages.

According to Genesis 11:1, there was a time when the whole world spoke one language. But then, one day, the people got together and decided to make a name for themselves by building a tower that would supposedly reach all the way to heaven. This upset the Lord, so He confused their language, and they were not able to understand each other. Today, there are approximately 6,500 spoken languages in the world.

Some questions for us to consider:

Do you ever wonder what language is used in heaven? Is it Hebrew, Greek, German, PA Dutch, or English?

Is one language more holy than another?

John 3:16

Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt, daß er seinen eingeborenen Sohn gab, auf daß alle, die an ihn glauben, nicht verloren werden, sondern das ewige Leben haben.

In the community I grew up in, some ministers believed that German was more holy than all other languages, including our mother tongue: PA Dutch. Therefore, while preaching, ministers used as many German words as possible and frowned on people who read from a Bible translated in English.

It was hinted to me one time that German is the language that God, Jesus, and the angels in speak in heaven. I believed it so much that I felt guilty whenever I read the Bible in English. I eventually stopped reading the Bible altogether because my guilty conscious kept me from reading the English translation, and I had such a hard time understanding the German translation. So I was growing up, not reading the Bible at all.

I look back now and wonder: "Were there others who struggled with the same issues as me?" I'm guessing so. A few years ago, I felt a deep desire in my heart to pass out English translated New Testaments to an Amish community in Wisconsin. A day later, the members of the community got together and burned every single copy. Why? I was told they would not accept anything other than

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Bibles, translated in German. I also recall being at a funeral in northern Indiana where a deacon had such a hard time reading from the German Bible that he finally laid it down and asked attenders to read the passage at home.

Of course, my question would be: if you don't understand German, or you understand English better than German, why not just read the Bible in English? Did we not attend school for eight years so we could learn how to speak, read, and write in English? If PA Dutch is a SPOKEN dialect, and German is the least understood, why not turn to English – our best understood language in written form? This should be even more true when it comes to God's Word and our final and eternal destination.

Some more questions for us to consider:

If a Russian speaking woman asked you for a Bible, would you not hand her one in the language she understood best?

If you prepared to go on a trip around the world, would you choose to navigate using a map written in PA Dutch, German, or English?

Think about it! If you don't want to get lost or end up in enemy territory, you would obviously grab a map written in a language you understand best. Why? Because taking chances of losing your life is out of the

**Continued on
Next Page**

We love hearing from you, our readers. We want to hear from all of you—with your suggestions, responses, articles, disagreements, poems, letters, testimonies, ideas, lessons you have learned, or whatever you want to say. Please write to us—and we will try to publish much of what you send. We would love to hear your testimonies of how you have been changed by Jesus and how the *Amish Voice* is helping you grow closer to God.

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question. You want to get to your destination unharmed, on time, and as quickly as possible.

Then why are some adamant, inflexible, and so determined to enforce the Bible in a language we do not understand very well? Is language so much more important than knowing Jesus and the way to God?

Five hundred years ago, when the Catholic church was in a similar situation, the church leaders rejected Martin Luther's German Bible. Instead, they continued to enforce the Latin translation. And just like German in our

day, Latin had become a least understood language of their time. Therefore, the common man made two very important mistakes: he stopped reading his Bible, and he relied on church leaders to tell him what God requires. In their situation, the church leaders had become so corrupt and focused on traditions that the pure and simple gospel of Jesus Christ was lost. Yes, lost! And, because it was lost, men and women like us did not know the way to God.

Languages are a tool by which we communicate with each other. Languages change from one generation to another. Dictionaries need to be updated all the time. The language that

is most popular today may not be five hundred years from now.

First Cor. 14:8-11 says: *For if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise, ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air. There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. Therefore, if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.* — Joe Keim

End

Should We Vote?

—By Billy Graham

The Bible doesn't directly command us to vote—because people who lived in Bible times couldn't vote. They lived under kings and emperors who weren't elected by popular vote.

But the Bible does command us to be good citizens—and one of the ways we do this today is by voting. In fact, if we don't vote, we are failing to fulfill that God-given responsibility to be good citizens. The Bible says that Mordecai,

Esther's uncle, was honored because he worked for the good of his people (Esther 10:3). Shouldn't we also work for the good of our nation?

Some people won't take the trouble to vote because they don't believe their vote will make any difference. But that isn't true; you might be surprised to find how many elections have been determined by only a handful of votes. But more than that, what would happen if most people

felt that way? Then our future might be determined by only a small minority of people.

Don't look on voting only as a responsibility, however. Look on it also as an opportunity—an opportunity hundreds of millions of people in our world wish they had. Above all, pray for our nation during this crucial time. The Bible reminds us, *Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord* (Psalm 33:12).

Why and How to Vote

Why should Amish people care about voting?

The issues on the ballot impact the lives of all Amish people in many ways. On a local level there are important issues involving ordinances imposed on farmers, small businesses, and even alcohol. On a state and national level, citizens must choose leaders who will set laws concerning abortion, religious liberty, and gun rights, and who will appoint judges ranging from local courts to the Supreme Court.

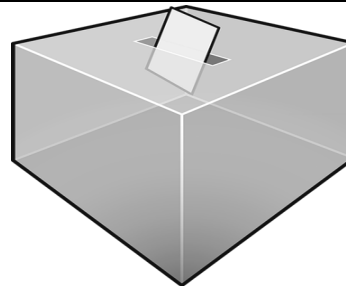
Am I eligible to vote?

Are you a citizen of the United States?

Have you been a resident of your state for at least 30 days? Are you at least 18 years of age? If so, then you're eligible to vote.

How do I request a voter registration form?

Call Amish PAC's hotline at 717-690-1620. We'll ask which state you live in and send you one by mail. If you already have the form filled out but don't know where to mail it, we can look up the address of your county's local voter registration office.



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November

The Landmine of Sexual Sin, Parts 1 and 2

The Bible teaches that sinful activity carries serious consequences. This is especially true of sexual sin. No matter what the world may say, sexual sin is a devastating landmine that speeds you along a path of shame and destruction. That is why it is so crucial to understand the devastating consequences and protect yourself against it. Charles Stanley teaches you how to receive God's forgiveness for past failures and how to live a life of purity that honors Him.

The Power of Prayer: How to Pray with Absolute Confidence, Parts 1 and 2

Listen to Chip Ingram as he talks about praying with confidence. When you need to hear from God—you're faced with a big decision, a relationship is failing, a doctor report comes in with news you didn't expect—how can you pray and know for sure that He will hear you?

December

Made Free from the Law, Parts 1 and 2

Duane Sheriff explains that we have been made free from any religious law or standards that would keep us bound to guilt and shame. There is no rule we can keep, nothing we can do or not do, that could earn us God's grace. Living according to rules and standards may keep us doing what is right, but it never changes the real source of the problem – the condition of the heart.

Transformed, How to Become the Person You've Always Longed to Be, Parts 1 and 2

Chip Ingram discusses the Miracle of Life change. How do

you know if you are spiritually mature? Chip gives God's four-fold criteria for measuring spiritual growth. It's not complicated and it'll set you on a path of genuine life-change.

January 2020

Religious but Lost

Charles Stanley teaches that there are many people who fill the benches of churches on Sundays who are good, upstanding, and moral people. From the outside, they appear to be Christians because of their behavior. However, they are lost. In this message, Dr. Stanley uses the life of Nicodemus to illustrate how someone can be religious but lost. Learn the difference in this intriguing message.

Made Free from the Law, Parts 3 and 4

Duane Sheriff continues his teaching from last month, explaining that we have been made free from any religious law or standards that would keep us bound to guilt and shame. There is no rule we can keep, nothing we can do or not do, that could earn us God's grace. Living according to rules and standards may keep us doing what is right, but it never changes the real source of the problem – the condition of the heart.

Male and Female Communication

Emerson and Jonathan Eggerichs from Love and Respect Ministry respond to an inquiry and talk about why the key to a successful marriage is, in fact, not communication. Learn what they believe is the key to a successful marriage.

Martin Luther on Galatians

We also plan to add a section of the reading of Martin Luther's Commentary on Galatians each month!

Contact The Amish Voice

- 1. Comments and Questions:** If you have any comments, prayer requests, suggestions, ideas, or questions, or if you want to send us an article or your testimony to be printed in the *Amish Voice*.
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Q. What is homosexuality?

Homosexuality is the manifestation of sexual desire toward a member of one's own sex or the erotic activity with a member of the same sex. (The Greek word *homos* means "the same.") A lesbian is a female homosexual. More recently, the term "gay" has come into popular use to refer to both sexes who are homosexuals.

Q. How do we know if the practice of homosexuality is right or wrong?

That depends upon who is answering the question. The Christian point of view is based solely upon the Bible, the divinely inspired Word of God. A truly Christian standard of ethics is the conduct of divine revelation, not of statistical research nor of public opinion. For the Christian, the Bible is the final authority for both belief and behavior.

Q. What explicitly does the Bible teach about homosexuality?

This question I consider to be basic, because if we accept God's Word on the subject of homosexuality, we benefit from His adequate answer to this problem. I am concerned only with the Christian or biblical view of homosexuality. The Bible has much to say about sexual sins in general. First, there is **adultery**. Adultery in the natural sense is sexual intercourse of a married person with someone other than his or her own spouse. It is condemned in both the Old and New Testaments (Exodus 20:14; 1 Cor. 6:9–10). Christ forbids dwelling upon the thoughts, the free play of one's imagination that leads to adultery (Matthew 5:28). Second, there is **fornication**, the illicit sexual acts of unmarried persons, which is likewise forbidden (1 Corinthians 5:1; 6:13, 18; Ephesians 5:3). Then there is **homosexuality**, which likewise is condemned in Scripture. The apostle

Paul, writing by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, declares that homosexuals "shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9–10). Paul does not single out the homosexual as a special offender. He includes fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, covetous persons, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners. Then he adds the comment that some of the Christians at Corinth had been delivered from these very practices: *And such were some of you: But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God* (1 Corinthians 6:11).

All of the sins mentioned in this passage are condemned by God, but just as there was hope in Christ for the Corinthians, so is there hope for all of us. Homosexuality is an illicit lust forbidden by God. He said to His people Israel, *Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination* (Leviticus 18:22). *If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them* (Leviticus 20:13). In these passages, homosexuality is condemned as a prime example of sin—a sexual perversion. The Christian can neither alter God's viewpoint nor depart from it. In the Bible, "sodomy" is a synonym for "homosexuality." God spoke plainly on the matter when He said, *There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel* (Deuteronomy 23:17).

The whore and the sodomite are in the same category. A sodomite was not an inhabitant of Sodom nor a descendant of an inhabitant of Sodom, but a man who had given himself to homosexuality, the perverted and unnatural vice for which Sodom was known. Let us look at the passages in question: *But before they lay*

down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house around, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them. Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof (Genesis 19:4-8).

The Hebrew word for "know" in verse 5 is *yada*, a sexual term. It is used frequently to denote sexual intercourse (Genesis 4:1, 17, 25; Matthew 1:24–25). The message in the context of Genesis 19 is clear. Lot pled with the men to *do not so wickedly*. Homosexuality is wickedness and must be recognized as such, or else there is no hope for the homosexual who is asking for help to be extricated from his perverted way of life.

Q. You said that sexual intercourse outside of marriage is condemned in the Bible. How do you explain marriage ceremonies in which two persons of the same sex are united by an officiating clergyman or justice of the peace?

There are cases on record where a marriage license was issued to persons of the same sex. I recall one such incident in Phoenix, Arizona. A marriage license was issued in the Maricopa County clerk's office to two men 39 and 21 years old respectively. The two men are reported to have "married" in a private ceremony. However, to call a union of two persons of the same sex a "marriage" is a misnomer. In the Bible,

Continued
Next Page

marriage is a divinely ordered institution designed to form a permanent union between one man and one woman for one purpose (among others) of procreating or propagating the human race. That was God's order in the first of such unions (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:24; Matthew 19:5). If, in His original creation of humans, God had created two persons of the same sex, there would not be a human race in existence today. The whole idea of two persons of the same sex marrying is absurd, unsound, and ridiculously unreasonable. A clergyman might bless a homosexual marriage, but God won't.

Q. Some church leaders say that the Bible does not clearly condemn homosexuality. How do these church leaders arrive at such a conclusion?

Some . . . have totally ignored the Scriptures as the guidelines for Christian behavior in regard to homosexuality. [There are a] small segment of Roman Catholic priests who, having vowed themselves to celibacy, that is, to abstain from marriage and sexual intercourse, have found sexual gratification in homosexual acts.

However, religious sex perverts are plentiful among Protestants. Protestant leaders on both sides of the Atlantic have gradually eased away from the Scriptures. In England, men like Bishop John Robinson, in his book *Honest to God*, made a play on the term "The New Morality," which in reality was a plea to open the door to immorality, making it respectable and thus acceptable. The Bishop went so far as to describe the unscriptural adulterous relationship as "a kind of holy communion." This modern concept of Christian ethics rejects totally the precepts laid down by God in His Word. It is blasphemous and atheistic. Recently in America, ten homosexually oriented religious organizations . . . met

at Kirkbridge, a retreat and study center near Bangor, Pennsylvania. The retreat was entitled, "Gay and Christian." But the two terms, "gay" and "Christian" are mutually exclusive, incompatible, and incongruous.

Representing the women at that retreat, Nancy Krody, a lesbian, spoke on "The Lesbian Christian Experience." Here again is a misnomer. A practicing Christian, from the biblical viewpoint, will not be a practicing homosexual. Of course, I make the distinction between a professing Christian and a practicing Christian. Calling one's self a Christian does not make one a Christian. Malcolm Boyd speaks about "The Gay Male Christian Experience." Boyd, a Protestant clergyman, says he has been a homosexual secretly for years. Only recently he made a public announcement of his homosexuality. He claims that his public announcement of his homosexuality has brought him back to the church. Boyd does not tell us what he means by the "church"!

Following is one point on which the speakers at Kirkbridge agreed: "A monogamous homosexual relationship characterized by fidelity, honesty, and love is possible, desirable, and honoring to God." Any evil condemned in Scripture cannot be honoring to God. Homosexual religious leaders attempt to smooth over the breaks and rough places with Christian terminology so that a euphoria predominates, but God is not in it. A truly born-again person, who loves and understands the Bible as God's revelation to him, will not condone an evil that God condemns. *If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him* (1 John 2:29). *Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity* (2 Tim. 2:19). Practicing homosexuals

are engaged in a divinely forbidden evil.

Q. Why do homosexuals refer to themselves as "gay"?

The word "gay" means merry, exuberant, bright, lively. More recently it has been adopted by homosexuals. In its original use, it did not have this double meaning. The clever adaptation of the word "gay" by homosexuals has robbed it of its pure meaning, thereby corrupting a once perfectly good word. I never use the word "gay" when referring to homosexuals. There are many bright, exuberant, merry people in this world who are not sexual perverts.

Q. You made reference to 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. What is the meaning of the word "effeminate" in verse 9?

There are certain words in every language that can be used in a good or bad sense. In the context of this verse, the use of "effeminate" is obviously in a bad sense. It is listed among other evils that are condemned. It describes feminine qualities inappropriate to a man. It is normal and natural for a woman to be sexually attracted to a man; it is abnormal and unnatural for a man to be sexually attracted to another man. Many male homosexuals are effeminate, but not all. Nor are all lesbians unduly masculine.

Q. Are there other Scriptures in the New Testament that deal with homosexuality?

Yes. Romans 1:24-27, 1 Timothy 1:10, and Jude 7. If one takes these Scriptures seriously, homosexuality will be recognized as an evil. The Romans passage is unmistakably clear. Paul attributes the moral depravity of men and women to their rejection of *the truth of God* (1:25). They refused to *retain God in their knowledge* (1:28), thereby dethroning God and deifying themselves. The Old Testament had clearly condemned homosexuality, but in Paul's

day there were those persons who rejected its teaching. Because of their rejection of God's commands, He punished their sin by delivering them over to it.

The philosophy of substituting God's Word with one's own reasoning commenced with Satan. He introduced it at the outset of the human race by suggesting to Eve that she ignore God's orders, assuring her that in so doing she would become like God with the power to discern good and evil (Genesis 3:1-5). That was Satan's big lie. Paul said that when any person rejects God's truth, his mind becomes *reprobate*, meaning perverted, void of sound judgment. The perverted mind, having rejected God's truth, is not capable of discerning good and evil.

In Romans 1:26-31, twenty-three punishable sins are listed, with homosexuality leading the list. Paul wrote, *For this cause God gave them up into vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet* (Romans 1:26-27). These verses are telling us that homosexuals suffer in their body and personality the inevitable consequences of their wrong doing. Notice that the behavior of the homosexual is described as a vile affection (1:26). The Greek word translated "vile" (*atimia*) means filthy, dirty, evil, dishonorable. The word "affection" in Greek is *pathos*, used by the Greeks of either a good or bad desire. Here in the context of Romans, it is used in a bad sense. The *vile affection* is a degrading passion, a shameful lust. Both the desire (lusting after) and the act of homosexuality are condemned in the Bible as sin.

Q. There are those persons who say that homosexuality, even though a perverted form of the normal, God-ordained practice of sex, is a genetic problem, constitutionally inherited. Is there evidence to support this view?

I read in a periodical that in June 1963 a panel of specialists in medicine, psychiatry, law, sociology, and theology participated in a conference on homosexuality called by the Swiss Evangelical Church Union. That group reached the conclusion that homosexuality is not constitutionally inherited; it is not a part of one's genetic makeup. The ill-founded and unverifiable myth that homosexuality results from genetic causes is gradually fading away.

There are possibly a number of different ways in which homosexual practices could begin. When boys and girls reach puberty and the genital organs develop, it is not uncommon for boys to experiment with boys, and girls with girls. In prisons where men and women are denied access to persons of the opposite sex for long periods of time, some are introduced to homosexuality for the first time.

A young Christian woman came to our office in Detroit for counseling. She became involved in lesbianism when her marriage began to fail. She was introduced to her first homosexual experience by a divorcee who was her neighbor. After six months of practicing lesbianism, she was convicted of her sin and sought help. We were able to show her from the Bible that she was sinning and that God stood ready and willing to forgive and cleanse her. She confessed and forsook her sin, and continues to this day to live a happy, normal Christian life.

Homosexuality must be accepted for what God says it is—sin. Some homosexuals will attempt to circumvent

the plain teaching of the Bible with the insipid reply that they are the way God made them. There is not the slightest bit of evidence in Scripture to support this false concept. God never created man with a so-called "homosexual need." No baby is born a homosexual. Every baby is born male or female. In every place the Bible refers to homosexuality, the emphasis is upon the perversion of sexuality. The practicing homosexual is guilty of *leaving the natural use of the woman* (Romans 1:27), meaning that his behavior is *against nature*, as in the case of the lesbian (Romans 1:26). Inasmuch as homosexuality is opposed to the regular law and order of nature, the genetic concept must be ruled out completely. If homosexuality were a genetic problem, there would be little hope for the homosexual simply because there is no way that the genes in a person can be changed.

Q. Are there contributing factors to homosexuality for which a homosexual might not be responsible?

Yes, I believe there are. I have not done much research in this area; however, studies made by others showed varied deviations from the average or normal parent-child relationship. For example, clinical cases show that some homosexuals have not had a normal or natural relationship with the parent of the same sex. In some instances there has been a wide gap between father and son. There are those boys who have been neglected by their unaffectionate fathers. The boy who has not had a good and wholesome relationship with his father could have an unfulfilled need for a father relationship with a man. Now that need will not start out as a sexual one, but there are cases on record in which the sexual relationship has developed.

I know one case of a homosexual adult who seduced a thirteen-year-old boy whose father had forsaken him. Before

Continued
Next Page

the boy's contact with the older man, he had no knowledge whatsoever of homosexuality. The older man seduced the boy.

Lesbianism has been known to follow this same pattern. Some mother-daughter relationships are not conducive to a normal social and sexual development. One young woman came to her pastor seeking help. She had gotten involved with a lesbian in the community where she lived, a woman twenty-one years her senior. The girl's parents had a defective marriage that ended in divorce when the daughter was ten years old. Her mother became bitter and resentful against all men. She convinced her daughter that men were not to be trusted, and that man's one goal was to exploit women sexually. The daughter grew up with a fear of men, a fear totally unwarranted. She was an easy victim of the seductive older lesbian. The good and wise pastor showed the counselee from the Bible that homosexuality was sinful and that God condemned it. She confessed her sin to God and received Jesus Christ as her Savior and Lord. Today she is happily married to a fine Christian man.

Q. Do you believe that the homosexual controversy is causing problems for the churches of America?

Evil in any form is a problem in the church. It always has been. The greater problem, however, is the church's failure to discipline evil when it arises. Karl Menninger's book *Whatever Became of Sin?* deals directly with that point. There are ministers, priests, and rabbis who never talk about sin. There was a time when the minister of God's Word preached the whole counsel of God. Today, many pulpits are silent on the sin question. Sin has become fashionable and therefore acceptable. When sin gets

its victim into serious difficulty, the psychiatrist and psychologist tell him he is sick. The church must face the fact of sin squarely.

Q. Does the Bible tell us how the church should deal with sexual sins?

In Old Testament times in Israel, God dealt severely with homosexuals. He warned His people through Moses, *If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them* (Leviticus 20:13).

Seek ye out of the book
of the Lord, and read.



Isaiah 34:16

Every Jew knew that homosexuality was an abomination, a disgusting practice to be loathed and hated. This was God's attitude toward that evil practice. He hated it to the extent that He considered it worthy of punishment by death. Now God loved His people Israel dearly, and it was from His great heart of love that He chastened them. The Epistle to the Hebrews says, *For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth* (Hebrews 12:6). When God issued His law forbidding homosexuality, and the punishment for those persons who violated that law, He did so in order to prevent them from sinning. However, when anyone broke the law, the offender paid the penalty due him. God is a holy God who hates and judges sin.

Parents who love their children will not refrain from warning them of prevailing evils, nor will they fail to chasten them

when they disobey. The church today not only tolerates sin, but in some instances condones it. God does neither. In the New Testament, the principle of discipline was applied with apostolic authority.

In the church at Corinth, the young man who was committing fornication with his stepmother was excommunicated. Paul instructed the church to take that action *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . and with the power [i.e. the authority] of our Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Corinthians 5:1–8). In Romans 1:21–32, where Paul shows the Gentile world in its downward plunge into sin, including the sin of homosexuality, verse 32 concludes with the words, *who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death*. Worthy of death, yes. But today we are not under law, but under grace. People used to hear and heed the Gospel truth, the message that God is holy, man is a sinner, and that through faith in the substitutionary death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, sinful people can be born again and thereby delivered from the guilt and penalty and practice of their sins.

Q. Do you have any suggestions or recommendations for the church?

Nothing is more foundationally essential for the church and the world than a return to the truth. Recently I read where someone said we are suffering from a famine of the worst kind, "a truth-famine." Our modern culture is in a degenerating, deteriorating stage caused by a departure from the truth. And I must say unequivocally that truth does not exist independently of God, His written Word—the Bible, and His Son Jesus Christ. Truth is in no sense of man's imagination or contrivance. Man in his fallen state does not know truth, and that is why he continues to go on sinning.

A civilization without the truth is

doomed to oblivion. Every ancient civilization that ignored God and His laws has crumbled. Our present civilization is well on the road to doom. We cannot survive independently of God and His Word. The church must return to the truth, the whole truth, the sum total of truth founded and grounded upon Him Who said, *I am the truth* (John 14:6). In our Lord's high priestly prayer for His own, He prayed, *Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth* (John 17:17). There must be in our churches the clear exposition of the Scriptures and a continuing exaltation of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ if our civilization is to be saved from the disasters that overcame past civilizations. Any civilization with a philosophy or a doctrine that denies the real truth cannot survive.

Q. Do you see any prophetic significance in the recent homosexual upsurge?

Yes, I do. However, I would suggest caution on this point. It is not uncommon for preachers to attach a prophetic meaning to every earthquake, riot, war, moral scandal, or political disaster, labeling all such events as "signs of the times." The modern homosexual upswing is one phase of a declining trend in morals. When the disciples asked our Lord, *What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the consummation of the age?* He told them that *iniquity shall abound* (Matthew 24:3, 12).

There is today a permissiveness and a

promiscuity in sexual behavior unprecedented in the history of America. There is little restraint upon the widespread material containing pictures and writing depicting erotic behavior intended to cause sexual excitement. This would be included in our Lord's prophecy about abounding iniquity.

There is also a prophetic statement in Paul's second epistle to Timothy that has some bearing upon the subject we are discussing. Paul said, *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection* (2 Timothy 3:1-3).

Homosexuality is an unnatural affection, practiced by persons *that defile themselves with mankind* (1 Timothy 1:10), translated in the New American Standard Version as "homosexuals." I conclude, in the light of these Scriptures, that the rise of homosexuality is very definitely a trend that indicates the approaching end of the age. . . .

Q. What should be the Christian's attitude toward the homosexual?

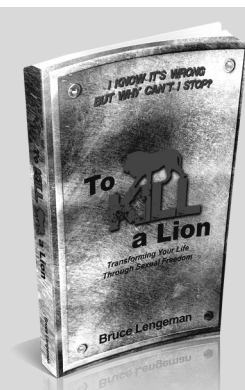
We must always keep before us the fact that homosexuals, like all of us sinners, are the objects of God's love. The Bible says, *But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us* (Romans 5:8). *Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for*

the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). The Christian who shares God's love for lost sinners will seek to reach the homosexual with the gospel of Christ, which is *the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth* (Romans 1:16). As a Christian, I should hate all sin, but I can find no justification for hating the sinner. The homosexual is a precious soul for whom Christ died. We Christians can show him the best way of life by pointing him to Christ. Our Lord said, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature* (Mark 16:15). We are obligated to take the gospel to all.

Q. How can we help Christians who get involved in the practice of homosexuality?

We can help them by seeking to draw their attention to what God says in His Word. In a kind and loving spirit, we can show them that they are wrong. However, the homosexual must admit to the fact that he is living in sin and that he has the desire to be made free from it. Without a genuine conviction of God's displeasure and a strong desire to do God's will, there is no hope. A truly born-again person cannot continue to practice sin without reaping the results of miserable unhappiness brought on by loss of fellowship with God, the fear of retribution and the anxiety produced by guilt. The homosexual must ask himself, "Is the temporary gratification of the flesh worth all the penalty and losses I must suffer?"

End



Do you struggle with lust or other sins and addictions?

To Kill a Lion, written by Bruce Lengeman, is designed to help men find the roots of their sexual addiction. The theme is, "Men cry out, 'I know it is wrong, but why can't I stop?'" *To Kill a Lion* will help men understand their own sexuality and what makes it operate "out of alignment" with God's

design. You'll learn why it is healthy to be sexual as a man, but in a pure and Godly way. Though this book was not written for women, many are reading it and getting understanding of things they never knew about sexuality.

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The price of the book is \$17 (includes S&H).

as the use of ungodly control and manipulation. Every one with sin needs to repent and turn to Jesus. He said, "I am the way the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Are you looking forward to meeting God?

If our church keeps growing, doesn't that mean that we are on the right track?

Just because a church has a lot of members does not necessarily mean that they are on the right track. Nicodemus was a leader of a very large growing church and yet his church people rejected Jesus (John 3:1-12). Walking on the right track means hearing the voice of Jesus and doing what He says. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice" (John 10:27-29). Do you hear His voice?

Is it possible to honor my father and mother if I leave the church congregation that I grew up in?

Honoring means to highly value and respect. Everyone needs to maintain their family relationships as much as possible. If you choose to go all out with God you will most likely come into conflict with the traditions of men. This may put you at odds with members of your own family (Matthew 10:32-39). Making church rules that go against God's Word is wrong. If we made promises to something that isn't okay with God then we should repent and break any wrong agreements with it. Are you fully committed to God?

I have always done it this way and I am not changing?

If we are on the right track this is a good mindset, but if we are off track then this is a terrible mindset and will lead us

astray. Saul (later Apostle Paul) was killing Christians believing he was on the right track. He would have completely missed God's will if he had not changed his mind (Acts 9:1-9). Would you be willing to change if you discovered you were wrong?

The Plain community has a lot of good Godly values that we don't want to lose, such as community, family values, work ethics, etc. However there are some things that need to change and be brought back into Godly order. Our heart is to preserve that which is good in the Amish heritage and to bring it under the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Let's all work together to bring positive change and honor God. If you have any questions or comments feel free to call one of us.

One Kingdom Community
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End

Christmas Preparations

—By Grace

Christmas! How exciting! How fun! Plans! Food! Parties! I love, love, love parties. Ask my husband. We have parties here at home. Large ones twice a year! Spring party! Anniversary party! We send out invitations. Many come. Sometimes hundreds.

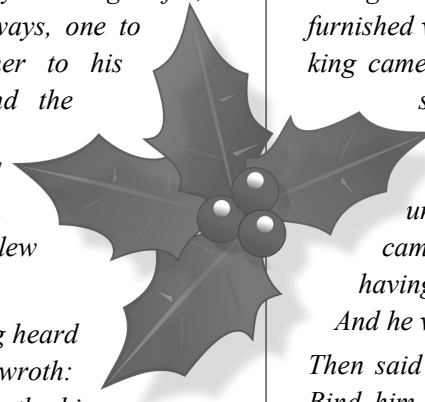
But what if we had planned for a party and no one came? (That happened to me!) Well, the Lord is preparing a great feast for those who are ready to meet Him. Will we be ready?

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the

marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad



and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen. (Matthew 22:2-14)

So, as we prepare for Christmas, Let's prepare our hearts to meet our Lord. Cleanse my heart, O Lord. Forgive my sins. Prepare me to meet You. Amen.

Sincerely,
Grace

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Ashland, Ohio
Permit No. 188

Friendly Questions and Answers

The following is a letter that was sent to many Amish households in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. We have been given permission to reprint it here.

Dear Friends,

Greetings in Jesus Name, the Name above all names, the King of all kings, the Lord of all lords and the Bishop of all bishops. Thank you for all of the positive responses to the previous letter. We are delighted to respond to the questions, thoughts, and comments that you had.

Here are some answers to your questions.

Don't you believe in the bann and meidung?

According to scripture, the apostle Paul recommended excommunication for the person that was living in sexual sin. He addressed fornication (sexual sin), covetousness (greed), idolatry (something held of higher importance than God), a railer (talking about someone in an abusive way), a drunkard, and extortioners (taking something of value by force) in 1 Corinthians 5:11.

Titus addressed that we need to reject heretics (Titus 3:10). A heretic is actually someone who rises up against the doctrines of Jesus Christ.

In Acts 24:14, the Apostle Paul explains how he was being falsely accused of

heresy by the religious people, while all along he was in the will of God. Is it possible that people are being called heretics today without actually being in heresy?

Some people believe that the doctrine of excommunication (bann and meidung) is needed as a foundation stone for their church. This actually should not be considered as a foundational stone of the church, or something needed to hold the church together, because Jesus Christ is the foundation of His church (1 Corinthians 3:11). He holds His church together through grace and truth (John 1:17).

If someone is born again (the Spirit of Jesus in them) and serving God, how can it be right to excommunicate and shun them?

If someone shuns them, aren't they shunning the Spirit of Christ that is in them (Matthew 25:40)?

How can Christ be divided?

Jesus Christ prayed in John 17 that all his followers would be one, even as He and His Father are one. Does this mean that everyone that is born of His Spirit is called to work together? (Yes) Do you shun people that have the life of Jesus Christ in them?

What is the world?

The Bible says that the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). In simple terms, anything that would burn up in 10,000 degrees of heat is of the world. Everything that does not burn up will be exposed and will have to face God. Any desire that is in us that is not of God is also of the world. Any baptized church member that did not get born again of the Spirit is also of the world (John 3:5). Are you worldly?

On judgment day, will I be able to get into heaven if I keep the church ordinance (ordnung) the way that the bishops asked me to?

The Bible says there is one mediator between God and man, and that is Jesus Christ. Too many times we have evaluated our life based upon an ordinance of a church to see if we are clear before God, which is actually a false guideline to go by (Mark 7:7-8). If we really want to know how we stand before God, we should do like King David did when he said, "Search me and try me and see if there be any wicked way in me" (Psalm 139:23-24). This may expose pride, jealousies, bitterness, unforgiveness, anger and gossip, as well

Continued on Page 15