



Sowing Seeds for Eternity

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Letter to an Amish Bishop

—Samuel Girod

Dear Friend:



The following letter was written by MAP missionary, Samuel Girod, to an Amish bishop. In the letter, he shares his testimony:

Dear Gideon and Family,

My name is Samuel Girod. I was born on April 2, 1982, the oldest of thirteen children: five boys and eight girls. I am from Vevay Indiana, where my Dad has been the bishop since 2000. In the Amish Directory, I noticed that you are a minister as well as a Bishop. I'm sure those roles create some big shoes to fill. I felt led to write you a letter to share about what God has done in my life and about how much He has blessed me.

I grew up in a small church made up of about fifteen families. In 1995, I experienced my first church split. I was thirteen years old, and during the split, I lost contact with around 180 cousins on my Mom's side of the family. We haven't reconnected since.

In 1996, we started fellowshipping with a church in Berne, IN; Jerry Troyer and Pete Eicher were the leaders. In 2004, there was a split. My family and I faithfully followed Pete Eicher until 2007. Then, eventually, we split from his church, and decided to go out all on our own. Everyone either shunned us, or we shunned them.

At this time of my life (2012), I wanted to settle down and marry, but I was related to most of the girls in our church. The only chance I had was with a girl that was ten years younger than me. I had dated several girls when we were in fellowship with the other churches, but I had to break

up with them for different reasons. At one point, I was with a girl that I really thought was going to be the one that I would marry, but it was at that time that I experienced another church split. As a result, we broke up.

In 2009, my sister was pen pals with a girl in Daviess County who had a sister that was also single. This girl was part of a more modern church. I thought that I could take a chance and ask this girl to be my girlfriend, but before I did, I asked my preachers (including my dad, who was the bishop) for permission. My preachers said that they would have to pray about it. I thought, "Wow! Maybe God is on my side."

It wasn't until about a month or two later that a member of the church came to my house to talk to me. This man was not a preacher and was not related closely to anyone else in the church. He asked if I was dating a girl behind the church's back, and I said, "No, the preachers know about who I am dating." He responded by telling me that it was wrong and that if I were to marry her, he would have to shun and excommunicate me.

I responded by asking, "What if she gives herself under our ordnung?" To this question, he responded that I would still be excommunicated. I couldn't understand! It was all because my girlfriend had indoor plumbing, kitchen cabinets, gas lamps, and several other things that we weren't allowed. Instead of causing another split, I decided to break up with my girlfriend. I held on to a lot of anger and bitterness toward this man for five years, and even though I didn't realize it, I couldn't have a good conversation with him.

I was with no hope of ever getting married because our church would keep growing a little, and then it would split. It seemed like that is all I had experienced

for twenty-one years. I was missing something and didn't know what it was.

My life seemed so hopeless. At thirty years old, I had half-ownership in my dad's construction company and owned fifteen acres with a barn and a house that I had built on it. I had another piece of investment property as well, and should have been happy and free, but I wasn't. I was so empty inside.

I tried drinking to take away the emptiness. It didn't work. Then, I tried to be the perfect church member and appease everyone by showing what a good man I was. I was still so empty inside and very unhappy. Nothing seemed to fulfil whatever I was missing. I had everything an Amish man could ever have as far as material things, but I didn't have a wife. I thought that would fix all my problems and emptiness.

In September of 2012, I met someone who shared the true Gospel with me. He told me that it would fulfill my emptiness like nothing else in this world could. I'd like to share what happened to me that afternoon on September 24th. It changed my life for all of eternity.

I was asked if I knew whether or not I was going to go to heaven when I died. I responded by saying that I hoped so, but that I couldn't know. He asked me what I thought I would need to do in order to go to heaven. Of course, my answer was that I needed to do the best that I could. He asked me how many sins I had to commit in order to keep me from going to heaven. One, two, ten, twenty or one-hundred? Then, he showed me Romans 3:23:

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

After reading this verse, I saw and realized that we have all sinned, and we have all fallen short. In Romans 3:10, we read:

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Letter to Bishop...Continued

“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.”

According to this verse, no one is right. Boy! Did that confuse me! I had lived my life as righteously as I could for thirty years, and now, according to the Bible, I was realizing that no one was right.

As Joe Keim was witnessing to me, I kept insisting that we had to have a line to keep us in check (ordinances), and that we couldn't just believe and be saved like he was trying to tell me. Then, Joe asked, “Do you believe the Bible?”

Every so often when something was said during our conversation, Joe would go back to that same question and kept asking me, “Do you believe the Bible?” I would get so frustrated and say, “Yes, I do!” Joe would then say, “Don't believe what I say; just believe what the Bible says, and get rid of everything you've ever been taught.” It shocked me to have that new mindset, but Joe kept pointing toward the Bible and saying repeatedly, “Just believe what the Bible says and not what anyone else says.”

I then asked which of the churches out there were right; many are shunning one another and holding grudges for years and years, and I didn't know who was in the right, and who was in the wrong.

We read Romans 6:23, *“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

I realized we are not sinners because we sin, but rather, we are sinners because we are born with a sin nature. Since the fall of man back when Adam and Eve sinned against God, God cursed the earth and mankind. It was then that I was told we

need a Savior to be righteous. Jesus told Nicodemus that we need to be born again to even see the kingdom of God, let alone enter the kingdom of God.

On that day, I realized that church membership, parental obedience, baptism, and following ordinances would not make me a child of God. I needed to put my faith and trust in Jesus, who would save me. For many, that sounds too simple to be true, but according to the Word of God, that is what is true.

John 1:12-13 says: *“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood (even if our parents were Christians, that doesn't make us Christians), nor of the will of the flesh (by our own power), nor of the will of man (by doing what we were taught or forced to do by tradition), but of God.” (It is simply an act of God, and through God alone; no one else can save anyone else. It's from God for us to be children of God.)*

I realized that there is a right way, and that there is absolute truth. It was so simple that I still didn't want to believe it,

but the person that is right is Jesus, and He is the way, and the truth. By believing in Him and trusting Him, we are made right through Jesus. It is not in ourselves but in Jesus alone - nothing else, because I simply deserve hell and condemnation.

Romans 3:23 says, *“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

Since I was born with a sin nature, I realized that I am to die. According to that Scripture, the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is free. I was asked what I had to do to get something free? Did I have to pay for it? No, because then it wouldn't be free. Do I work and trade labor? No, because then it would be earned. I simply had to receive it for it to be a free gift. I realized that Jesus dying on the cross for me was a free gift, and believing it by faith makes me born again and a new creature with a renewed mind.

I would like to encourage you to search the Scripture to see if what I said is true. I am just a simple human being. I do make mistakes, but God's Word should be where we get all of our answers.

— God Bless, Samuel Girod

