



25  
YEARS  
OF MINISTRY



*Sowing Seeds for Eternity*

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MINISTRY  
UPDATE

## Joe's Burden for His Family

—by Joe Keim

Dear Friend,

It was in the fall of 1987. Esther and I were 21 years old and nine months into our marriage. A few years earlier, we had come to the conclusion that **Jesus alone** could save the human soul with no amount of human effort added.

One Sunday, while Esther's parents were away at church, we packed a few belongings and moved to the city of Ashland, OH, with \$600 in our pockets. Jerry and Carol Gess, people we had never met or spoken to before, opened their home to us and helped us get started in the English culture. We needed SS cards, driver's licenses, and jobs.

My parents asked us not to come onto their property or influence my siblings in any way. Dad would occasionally visit and plead with us to reconsider and return to the church of our forefathers. He wrote letters warning us that our marriage would fall apart and our children would stray from God. He was sure it would happen, because in his eyes, we had left the only true church to run with the world. To him, the worldly church allowed sex outside of marriage, accepted divorce and remarriage, went to war, dressed immodestly, and didn't wear head coverings.

We weren't always confident. I was afraid that perhaps Dad was right. Maybe we would lose our marriage or our

children. We no longer had the Amish system to guide us or the security we once felt. I remember the day Esther and I realized that we were completely on our own, and if we died, we would not be buried with our family, friends, or church community. By age 24, we had purchased cemetery lots, caskets, and life insurance, just in case something happened to one of us.

Dad's harsh letters came often. Sometimes it would take me weeks to recover from his strong accusations and confident predictions. This drove us to the Bible. For the first time, we learned to underline and highlight verses that spoke to us. We both decided that **the Word of God alone** could be trusted.

During those early years, we earnestly prayed each day for my parents and my thirteen siblings. We set aside one day each week to fast and plead with the Father to save our family. One night, I found myself on my knees, face-to-face with my dad as he sat on the couch. I pleaded with him to believe the Word of God and give his life to Christ. He didn't say a word. He stood up, walked out the door, and left. It was 2 a.m.

Still, Esther and I continued to pray and fast. When our children were born, they joined us in praying for their grandparents, aunts, and uncles. We prayed for

each one by name, begging the Lord to open their eyes to salvation.

Eventually, Dad and Mom moved away from the homestead in Ohio and settled in Pennsylvania. There, they built a house and a small hospital to serve Amish people across America.

About twenty years after we started praying and fasting, a stranger contacted me. As I listened to him, I cried tears of the purest joy. He said, "Joe, I wanted to tell you that God laid your parents on my heart. I've been praying for them and sharing the gospel with them. Please pray, because I truly sense that God is moving in their hearts and opening their understanding of salvation."

After the phone call, I sat weeping. For years, I had carried the heavy thought that somehow, I was responsible for my parents' salvation, that it would take one of my letters or a face-to-face conversation for them to surrender their man-made system and follow Jesus.

In that moment, God showed me that He was using complete strangers to carry His gospel to my family.

Over the years, this happened again and again. I have counted six times. All came from complete strangers. Each of them reached out to say, "Joe, I just wanted to let you know, I met your par-

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### (...continued from front)

ents, and God has given me a very deep burden to share the gospel with them.”

I am confident that three of my Amish sisters and their husbands are saved. Four of my brothers have left the Amish, given their lives to Christ, and are now involved in churches, ministries, and raising God-fearing families.

A little over a year ago, I received a text message from the **sixth stranger** in PA that God had given a burden for my parents. While I have never met him in person, Brian and I texted back and forth and talked on the phone this past year. Several months ago, he sent a message that said, “You’re not going to believe this, but I have been with your parents for almost a full week. When I explained Eph 2:8–9 to your dad, he believed it. Joe, I really believe he understands and that he is saved.”

I thought, “*It’s very likely true that my dad is saved.* He has heard the gospel so many times over the years. Maybe he is saved but afraid of what others would say, or perhaps pride is holding him back from sharing openly.”

I was left hoping, praying, believing... but also questioning. Deep in my heart, I needed to hear it from my father’s lips. That would make it sure.

(Continued in the September Issue)

### Welcome Jennifer, our New Office Manager!

Hi, my name is Jennifer, and I’d like to take a few minutes to introduce myself. I am the new office manager at Mission to Amish People (MAP). My dear husband and I have been married for over 30 years and have 4 daughters ranging in ages from 17 – 27. I previously worked in banking for 20 years and “retired” at age 39. Balancing a 45 to 50-hour work week was an impossible task when my heart desired to focus on our family.



I grew up attending Sunday School and church services and gave my life to Christ at nine years old. In more recent years, my husband and I have taught Sunday School to children, teenagers, and young adults. We are also active in our church service in various roles.

When I entered the workforce for the second time, I wanted my position to be at a Christ-centered place. My path to becoming the MAP office manager began when I started as a cashier at Beyond Measure Market. I later assist-

ed in managing the deli and café staff, where busyness was common and friendships were forged. I was then asked to temporarily step into the office manager role at MAP. When I began to witness the Lord’s hand in this ministry, I truly felt at home.

I work alongside our staff and the precious volunteers who freely give of their time and talents to the SonLight Club. New lessons reach precious little ones every-other week, and I am in awe to be a part of the process! What an awesome God we serve! What an honor to be a small part of making sure these students receive Bible lessons and encouragement!

If you would like Amish or Mennonite children you know to become part of the SonLight Club, please email their name, address, and age to:

Jennifer@mapministry.org

If you would like to support Mission to Amish People, Scan this QR or go to:

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