



MAP ♦ 575 US Highway 250 ♦ Greenwich, OH 44837 ♦ (419) 962-1515 ♦ March 2026

## The Secret of the Strength

-- by Peter Hoover

### CHAPTER 21 On to Christian Families

On the Koppensstraat in the Dutch city of Briel, Anneken Jansz led a sheltered life in the large house of her parents. They had money, and she was their only child.

Anneken, in the flower of her youth, met a young man called Arent. He was a barber-surgeon, and their love led to marriage. They should have been happy, but money, parties, nice dresses, and expensive wines did not meet the longings of their hearts. Then one night, another youth came to the Jansz home. His name was Meynaert, and he spoke of following Christ.

Before he left, he baptized Arent and Anneken upon the confession of their faith. Because they got baptized, Arent and Anneken had to flee. They left her parents' home and escaped across the English Channel to London. There, a baby, Esaias, joined their family, but Arent took sick and died. Anneken packed her few belongings and returned to be with believers in the Netherlands.

Back in the Netherlands, on a wagon loaded with people travelling from Ijs-

selmonde to Rotterdam, Anneken and a companion, Christina Michael Barents, sang Christian songs. It was a cold morning in December. A passenger suspected that they were Anabaptists and reported them as soon as they got to the city. The police arrested them as they boarded a boat to Delft.

For one month, the women were in jail. Anneken cared for Esaias, now a year and three months old, and wrote a confession of faith. Then they sentenced the two women to die.

On the morning of the planned execution day, Anneken woke up early and wrote a letter:

Esaias, receive your testament:

Listen, my son, to the instructions of your mother. I am now going the way of the prophets, apostles, and martyrs to drink from the cup from which they drank. I am going the way of Christ, who had to drink from that cup Himself. Since He, the shepherd, has gone this way, He calls His sheep to come after Him. It is the way to the water-spring of life.

This is the way the kings from the land of the rising sun came to enter

the holy age. It is the way of the dead who cry from beneath the altar: "Lord, how long?" It is the way of those who are sealed in their foreheads by God.

See, all these had to drink from the cup of bitterness like the one who rescues us has said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him" (John 13:16). No one comes to life except through this way. So go through this narrow gate and be thankful for the Lord's chastening.

If you want to enter the holy world and the inheritance of the saints, follow them! The way to eternal life is only one step wide. On one side is the fire, and on the other side the sea. How shall you make it through? Look, my son, there are no shortcuts. There is no easier option. Every alternate route leads to death. The way of life is found by few and walked upon by fewer yet.

My child, don't follow the crowd. Keep your feet from the way of the majority because it leads to hell. But if you hear of a poor, needy, and rejected little group that everyone

makes fun of and hates, go there! When you hear of the cross, there is Christ!

Don't draw back from the cross. Flee the world. Hold to God and fear Him alone. Keep His commandments. Remember His words. Write them on your heart and bind them to your forehead. Speak of them day and night, and you will become a fruitful plant. Keep your body holy for the Lord's service so that His name will be made great in you. Do not be ashamed to confess Him before men. Do not be afraid of men. Rather leave your life than depart from the truth.

My son, struggle for what is right, unto death! Put on the armor of God. Be a true Israelite. Kick injustice, the world, and all that is in it away with your feet and love what is from above. Remember that you do not belong to the world, just like your father and mother did not belong to it. Be a true disciple of Christ and have no community with the world.

Oh my child, remember my instructions and do not leave them. May God let you grow up to fear Him. May the light of the Gospel shine in you. Love your neighbors, feed the hungry, and clothe the naked. Do not keep two of anything because others are sure to need what you do not. Share everything God gives you as a result of the sweat of your brow. Distribute what He gives to you. Give it to those who love God and hoard nothing, not even until the next morning; then God will bless you.

Oh my son! Lead a life that fits the gospel, and may the God of peace make you holy in body and soul! Amen.

Oh, holy Father, sanctify the son of your maidservant! Keep him from evil for Your name's sake.<sup>1</sup>

After writing the letter, Anneken folded it and tied it up in a piece of cloth along with a few coins she had left. She dressed Esaias, and at nine o'clock, in the white winter sunlight, they led her and Christina down the street of Delft toward the city gates and the River Schie.

Crowds of people lined the streets. On the way, Anneken called out: "I have a baby, five quarters of a year old. Who will take him?" A baker, a poor man and father of six, reached out and took Esaias. Anneken gave him the folded piece of cloth with the coins and the letter. Then they tied the women up, broke the ice, and threw them into the river to drown.

It was January 24, 1539.

### A Spiritual Family

During the violent years of the Anabaptist revival, ordinary family ties took second place. Many, like Anneken Jansz, suffered the rejection of well-to-do families for their decision to follow Christ. Many, like her, also lost their marriage partners and needed to give up their children. But they willingly suffered the grief of giving up earthly family ties for the joy of belonging to the family of God. Even the joy of marriage gave way to the "union between God and man that weighs a thousand times more than the union between men and women."<sup>2</sup>

Peter Rideman wrote:

Marriage takes place in three grades or steps. The first grade is the marriage of God with the soul of man.

The second grade is the marriage of

the spirit with the body. The third grade is that of one body to another, that is, the marriage of man with woman. Bodily marriage is not the first, but the last and lowest grade. It is visible and serves as a picture of that which is invisible, that of the middle and highest grades. Just as man is the head of the woman, so the spirit is the head of the body and God is the head of the spirit.<sup>3</sup>

### Natural Families

God's adopted children become one spiritual family. But within this spiritual family, there are natural families too.

The one who follows Christ is ready at all times to give up natural family ties—parents, children, or marriage partners—for His sake. But Jesus Christ did not reject or minimize family life. He obeyed His parents, respected the families of His followers, and blessed their children. In all this, the Anabaptists chose to follow Him instead of the Church of the Dark Ages.

For a thousand years, the church of the Dark Ages had taught that the relationship between men and women was evil, that it was holier to stay single than to marry, and that the Holy Spirit left the room during the act of marriage. The marital relationship was forbidden on Sunday because it was the day of the resurrection, on Monday in honor of the faithful dead, on Thursday because of Jesus' arrest, on Friday for the crucifixion, and on Saturday for the Virgin Mary. That left only Tuesday and Wednesday. But even then, Catholic couples needed to confess what they did in private. The "sin" of the marital relationship was put nearly on the same level as adultery or immoral perversion.

The Reformers did not break with this position altogether, nor with Augustine of Hippo's ideal of marital relationships without passion. Martin Luther, in his

book *The Estate of Marriage*, wrote:

Intercourse is never without sin, but God excuses it by His grace because the estate of marriage is His work and He preserves in and through the sin (of intercourse) all that good which He has implanted and blessed in marriage.

The first Anabaptists could not accept such a dual position. They saw enforced celibacy and a frowning on the act of marriage as another "sure sign of the Antichrist." They believed that Christian marriage is God's order and design. Large families of home-educated children, wives who found joy in submission to their husbands, grandparents, handicapped and older single people who received loving acceptance, became part of their way of life.

Hans Betz wrote:

The Scriptures tell us that every man should have a wife for his body, a wife to bear him children, so that they can be multiplied on this earth. God already commanded Adam and Eve to get busy in this way in the Garden of Eden. Marriage should be held in the same honor today, in purity and according to God's command. Marriage is honorable and good for all. The bed of the married couple is not defiled. In fact, God takes pleasure in it.<sup>4</sup>

Due to persecution, there were many Anabaptist widows and orphans, but there were also many weddings. Some people who lost their partners soon married again to care for their children. But others lived for years without knowing whether their partners were dead or alive.

### Celibacy

Those who lived in an unmarried state received the full support of the Anabaptist brotherhood. In fact, the first Anabaptists saw value in celibacy, even

though they did not think it should be enforced. They were quick to appoint single brothers as servants of the Word and to send them out as messengers to preach and baptize. Single sisters stood out for their dedication to the work of the church community, and many witnessed to their faith at the price of their lives. Jakob Hutter, before they burned him at the stake on February 25, 1536, at Innsbruck in Austria, wrote to the believers in the Tirol:

I also need to speak to you about marriage because there are so many single brothers and sisters among you. My desire is that every one of them would know how to handle and keep themselves.<sup>5</sup>

Celibacy, when practiced among the Anabaptists, took place in the wholesome context of the Christian home and community, never in separate institutions. The Anabaptists expected men and women, both single and married, to uphold the New Testament ideal of moral purity.

### Wholesome Teaching on Marriage

The first Anabaptists did not think, like Luther, that everyone should get married to put an end to sexual immorality. Rather, they taught the necessity of following Christ in a holy walk of life both within and without marriage. Marriage is not a concession to man's evil nature. It is a holy institution, a picture God gave to show His love for the church.

Swiss Anabaptists published a booklet on marriage as early as 1527. Dirk Philips later wrote another book on the subject. Godly marriage and home life were put into proper perspective by many other Anabaptist writers, such as Peter Walpot, who wrote:

It is a command of God to honor father and mother and to keep mar-

<sup>5</sup>From Jacob Hueters Schreiben an die gmain im oberland...ca. 1535

riage intact, and it is natural to love one's children and one's wife. But Christ said: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37).

Christ says that what God has joined together, man should not take apart. It is important that we investigate carefully whether it is God who has led a man and a woman together or if they simply came together in the world. Many come together as prostitutes and rascals and have a priest (who is usually a rascal too) marry them. Can this be God's work?

Those who have been brought together by the devil live under the devil's power. Where greed and money have led to marriage, shall such a marriage be of God? The one who separates himself from an evil marriage to follow Christ is not separated by man but by Christ and His Word. Even though we may call it a marriage separation (Ehescheidung), it really is no separation of a marriage, but those who get divorced apart from Christ and his Word, simply on human grounds like the rascals of this world get divorced, do what is wrong and sinful.<sup>6</sup>

The first Anabaptists looked at marriage vows like they looked at baptismal vows. They believed that there was no way of breaking them without incurring condemnation. Anabaptist couples committed themselves to each other for life and worked out problems as they came along. Divorce was not an option for believing couples. Menno Simons, in his book *The True Christian Faith*, wrote:

I write this so that everyone might wake up, repent, and lament before God for his past disgraceful conduct. I write it that they may defile no

<sup>6</sup>Fünff Artickel...1547

<sup>1</sup>Abridged from *Der blutige Schauplatz oder Märtyrer-Spiegel der Taufgesinnten* (Scottsdale, 1915). The English *Martyrs Mirror* does not include the complete account of Anneken Jansz.

<sup>2</sup>Die Fünff Artickel darmb der GröBt Streit ist Zwischen unns und der Wellt, 1547.

<sup>3</sup>Rechenschaft, 1540

<sup>4</sup>Ausbund, 102:7-8

longer their neighbors' beds, nor violate young women. Let everyone live in honor, each with his own wife, the unmarried keeping from all immorality. If an unmarried brother cannot restrain himself, let him seek a godly wife in the fear of God. If he has committed fornication but not yet married another, let him honor the girl he disgraced. Let him lift her up from shame, marry her with Christian love according to the word of God, and teach their children and children's children what Tobias taught his son: "Beware of all harlotry and take not a strange woman. Keep to your own wife."

### Directions for Young People

"Those who give themselves in marriage," counselled Anabaptist leaders in Strasbourg, "shall do so with the counsel and knowledge of the elders. They shall begin marriage in the fear of God and inform their parents of their plans."<sup>7</sup>

"The church community will not marry young people of believing parents without their parents' consent," decided the leaders of the Dutch Anabaptists. "But parents must have a valid reason to refuse consent. In the case of young people who have unbelieving parents, they shall seek their advice and honor them. But if their parents refuse to give consent for marriage, the believing young people will submit themselves to the judgment of the brothers."<sup>8</sup>

### The Place of Children

Even in heavy persecution, the first Anabaptists dedicated much time to their children. Menno Simons wrote:

Admonish your children daily with the Word of the Lord. Set a good example. Admonish them to the extent of their understanding. Constrain and punish them with discre-

tion. Use moderation without anger or bitterness so they do not get discouraged. Do not spare the rod. Use it when necessary and think on what is written: "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Prov 13:24). An unrestrained child becomes headstrong like an unbroken horse. Do not turn him loose when he is young, or he will be stubborn and disobedient when he grows up. Correct your son. Keep him from idleness, or else you will be put to shame on his account.

If you believe that the end of the righteous is everlasting life, and if you believe that the end of the wicked is eternal death, then do your utmost to lead your children right. Pray to God for grace. Pray that He would keep them on the straight path and lead them with His Spirit. Watch over your children's salvation as you watch over your own souls. Teach them. Show them how to do things. Admonish them. Warn, correct, and punish them as occasion requires. Keep them away from undisciplined children, from whom they hear only lying, cursing, fighting, and mischief. Direct your children to reading and writing. Teach them how to spin and do other useful jobs suitable to their age. If you do this, you will live to see much honor and joy in your children. If you do not do these things, heaviness of heart will consume you. A child left to himself disgraces both his father and mother.<sup>9</sup>

### A Married Monk?

Many loving letters written by Anabaptist prisoners to their husbands or wives have been preserved. And the great love they shared becomes apparent in the accounts of wives and husbands encourag-

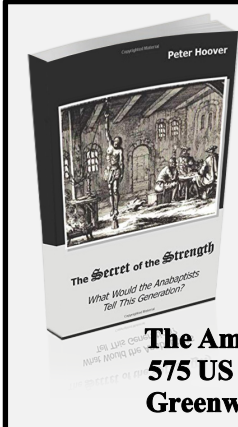
ing one another before or during their executions.

Michael Sattler and his wife were a case in point. Michael had been prior of a Benedictine monastery and his wife had been a Beguine nun. But on May 15, 1527, he told the German court:

When God called me to be a witness to His Word, I left the monastery and took a wife according to God's rule. I did so when I contemplated the unchristian position in which I was, and when I saw the monks and priests in such great pride and luxury, seducing this man's wife, that one's daughter, and the other one's maid. Paul said that in the last days men would forbid to marry and command to abstain from foods which God has made to be enjoyed with thanksgiving.<sup>10</sup>

Michael Sattler and his wife, travelling home together from a meeting of Anabaptist leaders, fell into the hands of the authorities. After they burned Michael at the stake, they turned their full attention on his wife, coaxing, threatening, and pleading with her to recant. But she refused to listen to them. She kept the type of Christ and His church unbroken until they drowned her in the Neckar eight days later.

Willing to build with Christ, or if necessary, to forsake with Christ their family ties, the first Anabaptists moved...



To request a **FREE** copy of *The Secret of the Strength* write to:

**The Amish Voice**  
575 US Highway 250  
Greenwich, OH 44837

<sup>10</sup> From the eye-witness account of the trial by Klaus von Graveneck.

## Breaking Free From Legalism

- by Joe Keim

Jesus already did, we fall into the trap of legalism.

### The Focus of Legalism

In a legalistic environment, the focus shifts from Jesus Christ to you and to what you are or are not doing for God. People often feel they must constantly perform, even when their health, family, or spiritual peace suffer.

Jesus warned about this kind of religion when He said,

*"For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers"* (Matthew 23:4).

God never intended for His children to live under heavy burdens of guilt and pressure. He wants us to serve Him out of love, not out of fear.

### Control and Fear

Legalistic leaders often feel the need to control. They discourage questions or independent thinking. If someone dares to challenge them, they may accuse that person of rebellion against authority. But true spiritual leadership points people to Jesus, not to man.

*"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty"* (2 Corinthians 3:17).

When the Holy Spirit is in charge, there is freedom, not control and fear.

### Leaving Legalism

If you ever decide to leave a legalistic environment, you may be accused of walking away from God or losing your faith. Sadly, this is a tactic used to keep others from questioning or leaving. They cast doubt on your motives, so others will stay quiet and in the system.

But God calls His children to freedom.

*"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage"* (Galatians 5:1).

We are called to live by grace, not under bondage.

### Legalism can be Deceptive

Legalism can develop gradually and often goes unnoticed. It frequently hides behind good intentions, trying to be holy, disciplined, or obedient. But over time, it replaces relationships with rules, and joy with judgment.

Paul warned of this danger, saying, *"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ"* (Colossians 2:8).

When human traditions take the place of Jesus Christ, spiritual life begins to die.

### True Freedom in the Spirit

Legalism will never bring life or lasting change. It goes against the very freedom the Holy Spirit gives. Transformation happens when the Lord Jesus lives through us, not when we try to live up to a list of rules.

*"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death"* (Ro 8:2).

God's grace does not make us careless; it makes us thankful. Gratitude leads to obedience born out of love, not fear.

### Conclusion

If you find yourself in a legalistic environment, do not be afraid to seek the freedom Jesus offers. The Christian life is not about trying harder; it is about trusting deeper.

Let us help one another come out from under the grip of legalism and walk in the freedom and joy that comes from knowing Jesus personally.

*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed"* (John 8:36).

The author invites you to text or call with questions or comments!  
(419) 651-6813

<sup>7</sup> Artikel und Ordnung...1568

<sup>8</sup> Besluyt tot Wismar, 1554

<sup>9</sup> Kindertucht, ca. 1557

## Embracing Masculinity

- by Jesse Kauffman

For most of my life, I judged and rejected masculinity.

As a boy, I was bullied and mocked by other boys. On top of that, many of the male authority figures in my life felt harsh and cruel. My own dad was part of that picture back then, though today I can honestly say he's amazing and I love him dearly. Then there were certain employers, the bishop and ministers who excommunicated me, and even school board members at the schools where I taught. Three times at three different schools, I was rejected as "not qualified" to return for a second year. Each rejection cut deep.

Everywhere I looked, men in authority seemed to be tearing me down, not building me up.

And what did I conclude? That men were only about sports, hunting, guns, and other hobbies I despised. Camping or "roughing it" in the wilderness? Forget it. I mocked the idea so hard that guys eventually stopped even inviting me, because they already knew I would scoff.



So where did I steer instead? Toward the softer, more feminine side of me.

I poured myself into music, art, reading, acting onstage in musicals (yes, even stage makeup with the ladies), and dancing. I enjoyed being around girls, but only as a friend. Even my body language had a softer edge without me realizing it. No, I wasn't gay. Yes, I was definitely attracted to girls. But they mostly

saw me as the nice, handsome friend, not someone they were romantically drawn to. And since I lacked masculine confidence, I rarely pursued them either.

Then God brought Carlos Campos into my life. He called it out immediately: I wasn't actually balanced; I was avoiding masculinity. And the only way forward was to face it. He challenged me to start doing the very things I had judged and dismissed, and to do them with other men.

So I did.

-  I completed a Spartan Trifecta Race in one weekend.
-  I shot guns.
-  I trained in Krav Maga.
-  I played rough sports.
-  I worked out and jogged.
-  I even went hunting and bagged my first deer.
-  I learned to embrace the outdoors in ways I once mocked.

Did I love every second of it? No. But what I did love was the result.

I felt alive. The hoo-rah came out of me. I felt like a man because I did something hard, something painful, something that cost me blood, sweat, and tears, and I overcame it.

*"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13).*

So, how did this connect to me getting married?

Irina told me straight up: the first time she saw me on video, she thought I looked boyish, only friend material. But as I rose in masculine confidence, her perspective shifted. Suddenly, I wasn't just a nice guy. I became attractive to her. That confidence opened the door for us to connect, and eventually, I won her heart.

Here's the truth I had to face: In judging other men, I had judged masculinity itself. And in doing so, I rejected that part of me. I became unbalanced.

Today, I can see it's not about being all masculine or all soft. It's about balance born out of forgiveness and healing. Embracing both the strong and the gentle. Both grit and grace. Both the Spartan race and the musical stage. Just as Yeshua embodied "grace and truth" (John 1:14), we too are called to live in fullness, not in halves.

I don't know who this is for, but if it resonates with you, hear me: Forgive the men who hurt you.

*"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Colossians 3:13).*

Stop rejecting the masculine. Get out there and push yourself to do something hard. Sweat. Strain. Hurt a little. Conquer a challenge.

You might be surprised by what it unlocks in you. And who it attracts!

## Embracing Femininity

- by Irina Kauffman

Femininity was modeled beautifully to me when I was growing up. I saw women who were gentle, kind, capable, and full of warmth. Yet at the same time, I also saw how many men treated women as if they were objects, servants, or exten-

sions of their own needs. I watched women being controlled, dismissed, or treated like they were only there to please. Somewhere inside, I made a silent vow: I will never be that woman. As a teenager, I loved feminine clothing,

but also hid under baggy clothes to not be noticed. I did not want to be seen. I did not want to be taken advantage of. Then came the moment at age nineteen that changed everything. I was raped. That single event planted seeds of hatred

toward men and a deep rejection of my own femininity. My softness did not feel safe. My beauty did not feel safe. My womanhood did not feel safe.

So I made a decision. I will be strong. I will be independent. I will never be controlled.

When I showed interest in politics, I heard, "This is not for women. Learn to cook, sew, clean, and stay within your lane." That pushed me further toward independence.

I poured myself into education, earned a master's degree in architecture, worked as an architectural designer, invested in real estate, and provided for myself.

I fixed things. Used power tools. Rented properties. Handled everything alone.

My dad taught me to be capable and strong. He built our house, invented things, and showed me that a woman can learn to do anything a man can do. I am grateful for that.

But there was a cost. In protecting

myself from the kind of men I feared, I also rejected the very men who could have loved me. I rejected masculine leadership, masculine presence, masculine pursuit. My desire for marriage was strong, but my energy pushed men away. I hated men, yet longed for one good man. It created a painful contradiction inside of me.

In my late thirties and early forties, something softened. God began calling me back to the feminine heart He created in me. Not the weak version. Not the controlled version. Not the abused version. But the healed version. The queen version. The version that carries warmth, wisdom, peace, connection, and presence.

When I got married, I had to learn what it meant to trust again. To allow my husband to lead. To release control. To let him carry responsibility. To stop being the woman who does everything because she has always needed to.

It has been beautiful and challenging. It has been healing. And it continues.

My independence was powerful, but my femininity became even more powerful once it was healed.

Today, I see that true femininity is not weakness. It is strength with softness. It is wisdom with peace. It is influenced without force. It is the glow that comes from a healed heart, not a hardened one.

And the truth is this: You can desire love and still be afraid of it. You can long for a husband and still reject men because of old wounds. You can crave connection and still push it away.

Healing femininity is a journey.

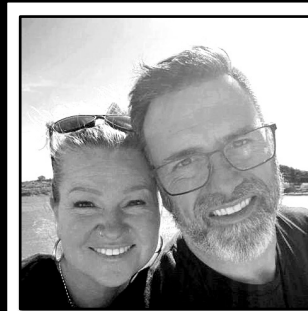
For me, it has been worth every step.



What about you? Have you ever found yourself rejecting part of your femininity because of pain? I would love to hear your story.



## Creating Extraordinary Marriages



**Carlos & Chantel Campos**  
Founders of the EpicYourLife  
Community for Married Couples

<https://www.skool.com/epicyourlife>



**Jesse & Irina Kauffman**  
Single 2 Married  
Community for Singles

<https://www.skool.com/single2married>



Carols & Chantel Campos, "The Amish Matchmakers," are marriage mentors and Kingdom builders. They have helped thousands rediscover God's design for marriage: healing wounds, restoring covenant love, and equipping couples to build a lasting legacy together.

Jesse & Irina Kauffman are the stewards of "Single 2 Married," a Spirit-filled community helping singles prepare for covenant marriage through healing, identity, and purpose. Together, they equip men and women to walk in God's design for relationships and legacy.

### Three Things God Cannot Do

Dear reader, ETERNITY IS A VERY LONG TIME TO BE WRONG! With this in mind, carefully read what God's Word, the Holy Bible, says about your eternal destination.

He cannot lie. The Bible reads, *"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;"* (Titus 1:2).

He cannot change. The Word of God also states, *"For I am the LORD, I change not..."* (Malachi 3:6).

He cannot allow anyone into heaven unless they have been born again. Scripture affirms this truth, *"...Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (John 3:3).

### The Holy Bible

*"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:"* (2 Timothy 3:16). On the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, Tom Lavis wrote this article in the Johnstown, PA Tribune-Democrat:

*"If the world is looking for a sign of hope in the turmoil that erupted on September 11, 2001, it may have found it. Teams of emergency personnel who responded to the crash of Flight 93 near Shanksville made an amazing discovery that shocked and inspired them. Resting not far from the smoldering, 25-foot-deep crater where 40 innocent victims perished, firefighters found a Bible that was barely singed."*

This remarkable article reveals that God has preserved His Word in this contemporary world so we can know His mind. *"For who hath known the mind of the*

*Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ"* (1 Corinthians 2:16). Critics have tried to discredit the Bible. The devil questions it, God-haters have attempted to burn it, educators ridicule it, and our federal government has tried to remove it from all their institutions. However, the true God of heaven has preserved His Word forever! It could be that God just wanted to show the world that even a literal fire that consumed everything in just minutes could not burn what He has established as truth! *"For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding"* (Proverbs 2:6).

### THE BIBLE IS THE MIND OF GOD THROUGH THE MOUTH OF JESUS

The Word of God has delivered redemption's plan to all of humanity, *"...and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God..."* (Amos 4:12). Bible Christianity is a personal relationship with the God of heaven, through Jesus Christ (God the Son), and confirmed in the hearts of Christians by God the Holy Spirit. *"We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error"* (1 John 4:6).

Only Bible-believing Christians have the assurance of eternal security; all other religions demand good works for their god and never disclose how much is enough. Jesus said, *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28). A follower of a works-oriented religion once said that he flies on two wings; the wing of hope and the wing of fear! *"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind"* (2 Timothy 1:7). Since God does not give the spirit of

fear, then it must come from Satan—the mastermind behind all works-oriented religions. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast"* (Ephesians 2:8-9). The peace (rest) Jesus offers comes with trusting His work on the cross as your ticket to heaven for eternity; nothing more, nothing less.

Please do not stop reading now! Without Jesus Christ in your life, you will have to pay for your own sin; *"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Romans 6:23).

*"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."* (Hebrews 2:9)

*"The Bible is the only textbook that the Author is present every time It is studied!"*

### The Triune God

The fundamental truth of Bible Christianity rests securely in the trinity, *"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one"* (1 John 5:7). This verse gives assurance that each person of the Godhead has a distinct individuality. They function separately from each other but will NEVER contradict the others. Therefore, because God consists of three different persons, He is sometimes referred to as the TRIUNE GOD.

### God the Father

The first person of the Triune God is God the Father. Jesus explains where He came from in the book of John: *"I*

*came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father"* (John 16:28). Notice how scripture confirms that God the Father was still in heaven while Jesus conducted His earthly ministry. Jesus does not claim to be the Father; He gives God the Father the glory for the work He performed; *"...the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works"* (Jn 14:10).

### God the Son

God the Son is the second person of the Triune God; *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"* (John 1:1). In this passage, we see how Jesus, God in the flesh, took the form of a human being so He could pay for the sins of all mankind; *"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14). The "Word" is capitalized because it is one of the many proper names given to Jesus in the Bible; *"...the Word was made flesh..."* that is Jesus!

As prophesied in Isaiah 7:14, Jesus came into the world in the form of man through the virgin birth; *"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."* Furthermore, Scripture clarifies the eternal status of Jesus; *"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever"* (Hebrews 13:8).

Many passages in the Bible teach the doctrine that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. Here is another example of this truth; *"But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever..."* (Hebrews 1:8). Notice in this passage that God refers to the Son as God. Jesus is the original image of a human being long before the creation of Adam.

The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is the

only way to Heaven; *"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6) (underline added). Due to the eternal consequences, it is crucial to understand why Jesus has the authority to make this statement:

*"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."* (Colossians 1:12-20) (underlines added)

This passage clearly explains that Jesus is the creator of all things. Genesis 1:1 says, *"In the beginning God created..."* thus, Jesus is not only the Son of God, but He is God the Son, *"For by him were all things created...."* Since Colossians 1:16 says that Jesus created all things, and Genesis 1:1 proclaims that God created, who then is God? Unmistakably, JESUS IS GOD. The Apostle Paul again makes it clear that Jesus is God:

*"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of*

*angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."* (1 Timothy 3:16)

Again, by divine inspiration, the Apostle Paul affirms the truth that Jesus is God the Son to the believers in the church of Corinth:

*"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (Jesus)."* (2 Corinthians 5:20, 21) (Underline and explanation added)

There is one more verse that confirms beyond reasonable doubt the truth that Jesus is God; *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28) (underlines added). Notice that God purchased the "church of God" with the blood of God, the blood of God the Son—Jesus!

Because Jesus is God, and since He lived a sinless life while on the earth, He is the only one who could and did sacrifice His innocent body for the sins of every person that has ever been born. *"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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved"* (John 3:16-17). Because scripture established who the man Jesus Christ is, and since He says ye must be born again to go to heaven, it is of the UTMOST IMPORTANCE to discover what He means when He said, *"...Ye must be born again"* (John 3:7).

The major separating factor from all other religions and Bible Christianiny is the fact that Jesus is God!

## Eternity is a Long Time to be Wrong

- by Mike VanHorn

### God the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit

We have established Jesus's authority as God the Son. Now, Jesus declares God the Holy Ghost as the Third Person of the Triune God; "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

Observe in this passage all three distinct parts of the Trinity—the Father sent the Holy Ghost in the name of Jesus.

Next, notice that Jesus, the image of the invisible God, was teaching His disciples concerning His death, burial, and resurrection when He made this statement, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

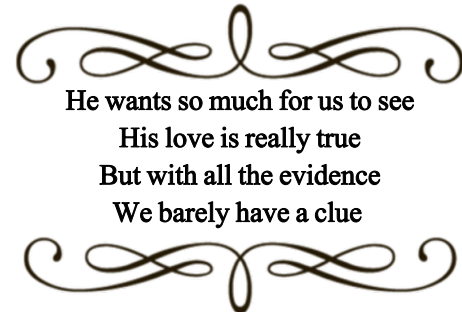
*Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:16-17). When God the Holy Ghost dwells in someone's heart, He can easily instruct that person's spirit in the paths of righteousness. It is then up to them to choose to live according to the Holy Spirit's direction.*

CONTINUED IN MAY ISSUE

## Agape Love

- by Kathryn Search

There's a heart of infinite love  
Which reaches down to man  
But, oh, we have a tarnished view  
Of our great Creator's plan  
The Father sent His Son to us  
To give us such a glimpse  
Of what His glory's all about  
And yet we are so dense



We have so much more to learn  
Of what love is all about  
But as we open up our eyes  
We'll begin to sing and shout  
Because when that love is in our heart  
And we understand it more  
Our love for all will grow intense  
As we near the heavenly shore

## The Law Cannot Cure Sin

- by Ray Burkholder

The law cannot prevent bad behavior. The law cannot eliminate sin. It can only reveal sin.

Scripture is clear:

*"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20).*

Yet the natural man's solution to the evils of society is always the same: make more laws.

- Want to prevent immorality? Make a law.
- Want to stop bad language? Make a law.
- Want to reduce cheating and crime? Make a law.

But writing laws without dealing with the **\*\*root problem—sin—\*\***is destined to fail.

This is evident in our highly litigious society, which also has one of the highest incarceration rates in the world. Crime is handled by locking it behind bars—out of sight, out of mind. Yet crime remains, because the source of the problem remains.

You cannot legislate sinners into righteousness.

The best laws in the world cannot separate people from sin:

*"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin..." (Romans 5:12).*

*"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin" (Romans 7:14).*

Even God's own law, holy and perfect, could not eliminate sin:

*"...for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law" (Galatians 3:2).*

Like a floodlight in a dark alley, the law exposes sin for what it is—exceedingly sinful, ugly, and filthy. As a result, all the whole world stands guilty before God:

*"That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Romans 3:19).*

In fact, adding more law does not curb sin; it intensifies it:

*"The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law" (1 Corinthians 15:56).*

Guilty? Yes, everyone of us. And yet, the law, despite all its holiness, cannot change a man:

*"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh..." (Romans 8:3).*

God's Solution: Christ, not Law. God did what the law could never do.

*"God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:3-4).*

- The law condemns the natural man.
- The gospel creates a new man.

- The law exposes sin.
- Christ puts sin to death.

- The law restrains behavior outwardly.
- The gospel changes the heart inwardly.

This inward, spiritual transformation is what the world desperately needs, not more laws. The law is holy and just, but it can only diagnose the disease. Only the gospel cures it. Sin is not

dealt with by legislation, chains, or prison bars, but by the nails of the cross.

We do not need to change our laws. We need to change men's souls. And no law can do that.

Today is the day to be set free!

*"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).*

The Gospel That Saves

*"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel...how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)*

*"In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13)*

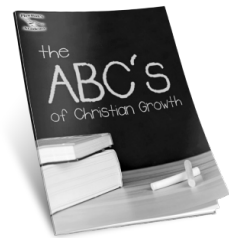
*"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).*

Sin is conquered by faith in Christ, not by law. Life comes through the Spirit, not legislation.

Trust in Jesus Christ's finished work today!



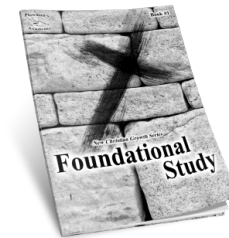
## WANT TO STUDY GOD'S WORD? FREE Bible Correspondence Courses!



**ABC's of Christian Growth:** Assurance, Bible, Church, Daily Walk, Enemy, Family, God, etc., all the way to Witnessing and Zion! (24 lessons)



**Bible Basics:** What does the Bible say about forgiveness of sins and being born again? (1 lesson)



**Foundational Study:** New Birth, Forgiveness, Friends, Prayer, Brokenness, Wisdom, Lying, Salvation, Judgment, The Christian Home, victory, and more! (3 lessons)



**Verse by Verse:** Travel verse-by-verse through parts or all of the Biblical books of John, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 John, Titus, and Luke. (9 lessons)

Send a note to let us know:

- Your name and address and which course you would like to study
- We will mail the first lesson of the course to you. When you have completed the course, mail the review sheet back to us. We will grade it and send it back to you along with your next lesson!

Send note to:

Plowman's Academy  
575 US Highway 250  
Greenwich, OH 77837

## Sermons Over the Phone

Dial the phone number.  
Enter the access code.  
Choose the sermon. Enjoy!

**Dial-in Number: (641) 715-3800**  
**Access Code: 478499#**

New sermons are  
available each month!

### March

#### Hope Talks: Reflecting on Death and Heaven

Haley and Dustin sit down with Matt McCullough, pastor of Edgefield Church in Nashville and author of Remember Heaven.

#### How the Parables of Jesus Wrecked Religion (part 1 of 3)

But grace: It shocks, offends, and frees. Grace throws a party. Legalism: It stands in the corner, arms crossed, hating every second of it. Message by Andrew Farley.

#### A Life-Giving Relationship with Christ's Body (part 3 of 4)

Have you ever held those big ropes that boats use to tie onto docks or lower anchors? Join Chip Ingram as he identifies the 'ropes' that hold great marriages together and makes them stronger when the going gets tough.

#### Get Out of Your Head: The Remedy for Anxiety

As we look around our world, there's much to be fearful of, so how do we avoid being overwhelmed with panic? In this program, guest teacher Jennie Allen unpacks how, even in financial uncertainty, health crises, political and social unrest, we can fight back against anxiety.

### April

#### Hope Talks: He is Risen! Reflecting on the Easter Story

Haley and Dustin walk through some of the passages and events of Passion Week, discuss what Jesus' death and resurrection mean for us practically, and share some biblical and historical pieces of evidence for the resurrection.

#### How the Parables of Jesus Wrecked Religion (part 2 of 3)

The outcasts get a hug. The sinners get a seat. And the self-righteous? They're still in the kitchen, finishing their dinner. Message by Andrew Farley.

#### A Christ-Like Relationship to Personal Attacks & Injustice (part 4 of 4)

We all carry around emotional wounds. What happens when deep hurt comes from your spouse? How we act toward our spouse in arguments or tense circumstances is vital to the health of our relationships. Chip Ingram teaches us how to respond well to pain and injustice – especially when it comes from our mate.

#### Get Out of Your Head: The Remedy for Cynicism

Are you skeptical and always waiting for the other shoe to drop? Jennie Allen shares why this mindset is toxic to our thought life, reveals how pervasive cynicism is, and the ways it steals our joy.

### May

#### Hope Talks: Finding Your Purpose in Life

For many, finding purpose happens gradually over time with setbacks, questions, and ongoing discovery. Trying to answer, "Why am I here? What is my purpose?" can feel overwhelming.

#### How the Parables of Jesus Wrecked Religion (part 3 of 3)

But grace! It shocks, offends, and frees. Grace throws a party. Legalism: It stands in the corner, arms crossed, hating every second of it. Message by Andrew Farley.

#### Life Lessons: Pursuing Your Purpose

There are tons of tests and assessments to help you discover who you are and what you are supposed to do. Chip Ingram asks what you do after that. Chip will help you pursue God's purpose and confidently live it out every day.

#### Get Out of Your Head: The Remedy for Pride

C.S. Lewis once said, "Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man." Guest teacher Jennie Allen continues her series by describing the subtle dangers of self-importance and how we can shift our focus onto making a genuine difference with our lives.

This publishing work is registered as a charitable organization in the USA. We welcome your articles, testimonies, and questions. We reserve the right to edit or decline any material and are not responsible for the return of any articles. The cost to print and distribute *The Amish Voice* is \$.75 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 alongside of us by helping with expenses, it would be a great benefit, as well as highly appreciated. Thank you. —Joe Keim, Executive Director

## God's Creation: Your Body!

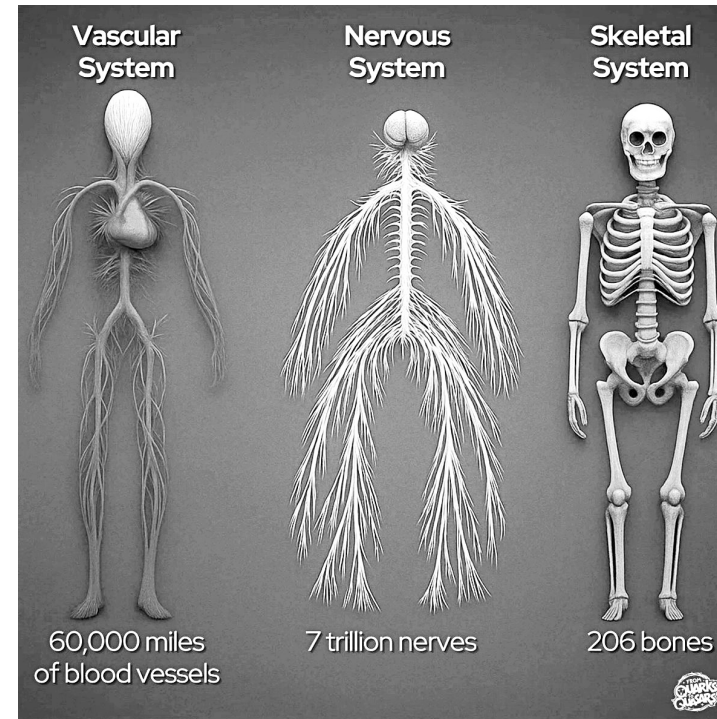
God's creation of our human body is incredible.

**206 bones**  
**7 trillion nerves**  
**60,000 miles of vessels**

All running 24/7.

Start with your **vascular system**: an estimated 60,000 miles (96,560 km) of arteries, veins, and capillaries snake through you right now. That's enough to circle earth more than twice. Your heart pumps blood through this entire network every minute of every day, delivering oxygen, nutrients, hormones, and carrying away waste.

Then there's your **nervous system**, a full-body electrical grid that contains about 7 trillion nerves, constantly transmitting signals from your brain to your body and back again. These messages move at speeds up to 268 miles per hour. Every blink, every heartbeat, every moment of memory or movement depends on them.

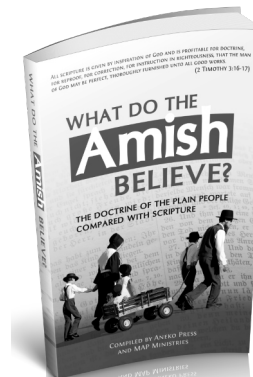


Holding it all together is your **skeletal system**, made of 206 bones. Far from just scaffolding, your bones protect organs, store calcium, produce blood cells, and anchor every muscle. Without them, there's no movement, no structure, not even a place to keep your brain safe.

What's even more amazing is these systems are talking to each other constantly. Blood feeds nerves. Nerves fire muscles. Bones respond to pressure and repair themselves when fractured. Your systems form an intelligent network that adapts to everything from hunger to danger to joy.

***"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well"*** (Psalms 139:140).

Do your beliefs line up with those of our Anabaptist forefathers? Nine authors examine and compare the original beliefs of our forefathers to what many of us believe today.

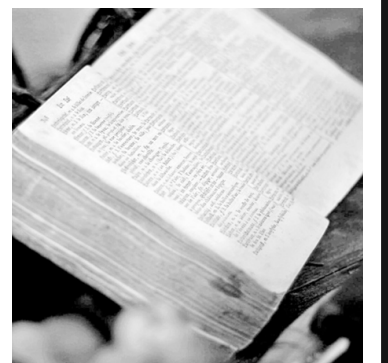


To order, send \$7 to:  
The Amish Voice  
575 US Highway 250  
Greenwich, OH 44837

### Phone Sermon Series Distracted: Galatians

series by Andrew Farley - <https://andrewfarley.org>

Paul wrote Galatians warning churches not to turn away from the true gospel of Jesus Christ. False teachers were convincing them they needed to keep the Old Testament law to be right with God, but Paul firmly taught that salvation comes only by God's grace through faith in Jesus, not by works. Galatians makes it clear that the Christian life is about faith working through love, not about keeping a list of rules. Available through 2026.



**Dial: (641) 715-3800 / Access Code: 932227#**

## Members-Only Baptism

- by Simon Fry  
<https://simonjrywordpress.com>

Shelly grew up in a non-Mennonite church. One of her closest friends from school was Mennonite, and she invited Shelly to visit her church. So Shelly went and really enjoyed it. She continued to attend and made lots of friends.

When she got saved, she wanted to get baptized. She told her parents that she wanted to get baptized and become a member of the Mennonite church. Her father was unhappy with her decision. "It's one thing to attend there, but as long as you live under my roof, I will not allow you to become a member of a Mennonite church."

She countered with, "Well, can I get baptized there at least? I'll wait to become a member until I am old enough to be on my own." So her dad agreed to let her be baptized there.

When Shelly talked to the ministry about her desire to be baptized, she was dismayed by their response. "I'm very sorry, Shelly. We can't baptize you unless you are willing to become a member of our church. That is just our policy here."

"But why?" questioned Shelly. "I don't want to go against my dad's wishes, but I also don't want to wait to get baptized until I'm old enough to move out."

"We're sorry, Shelly. We only baptize people who become members of our church. How can we hold someone accountable if they don't become a member?" the ministers told her.

\*\*\*\*\*

Henry's wife turned her back on God, left him for another man, and took their two children, a son and a daughter, with her. She got custody, and Henry only got to have them every other weekend. So Henry brought them to church every other Sunday and taught them about God every chance he could.

When they reached their teens, his children both gave their lives to God. Henry was so excited. They wanted to get baptized, and his daughter wanted to wear a head covering. When their mother heard about this, she refused to let her.

So Henry asked if their church could make an exception for his daughter and baptize her anyway, even though she did not wear a covering.

But the church refused. What kind of example would that set for other girls in the church if this one were allowed to be baptized but did not wear a head covering?

So Henry's children were turned away, and they had to find another church to baptize them.

Both of these examples, and others like them, happen occasionally in Mennonite circles. People are turned away because of circumstances that they can't control. I've seen it happen in my church, and I've heard enough bitter complaints against Mennonites from others who have experienced rejection from Mennonites, that I know it has not been just a few isolated incidents.

I have wept over the hearts that have been wounded and turned away by our dogmatic approach to keeping our church rules. If our traditions hurt others and turn them away from obeying the Bible (we are commanded to repent and be baptized), maybe we need to repent of our traditions and align our theology with God's commands.

Does Scripture give requirements that must be met before baptism? Baptism is not salvation, but it represents what happens during salvation. Is becoming a member of a church a requirement for salvation? Must you be walking in obedience to every command before God can save you?

Baptism is to follow our salvation experience as an outward statement of what has happened inwardly. If it is only a symbol of our salvation experience, why do we place more expectations for baptism on the new believer than we do for salvation?

If our reasons for church membership are for accountability, then should that be something separate from baptism? Is accountability ever a requirement for baptism in Scripture?

Romans 6:3 says,

*"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?"*

Are we baptizing converts into Jesus Christ, or into "Faithful Mennonite Church"?

By requiring membership in order to get baptized, we are saying that we will not baptize anyone who is not Mennonite. So, since baptism represents salvation, we are also saying that we don't believe that anyone can be saved unless they are Mennonite.

Acts 10:44-48 gives us an example of a time when something like this occurred.

*"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord..."*

These Jews were not sure that the Gen-

tiles (who had just received the Holy Ghost) should be baptized with them. Peter's response to them was,

*"Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" (Acts 10:47).*

Is our Mennonite versus non-Mennonite belief any different than the Jew versus Gentile belief here? Do saved non-Mennonites not have the same Holy Ghost in them that we do? Who are we to "forbid water"?

Paul also addresses this in 1Cor. 12:13.

*"For by one Spirit are we ALL baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."*

And in Ephesians 4:4-5

*"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism."*

"...Baptized into ONE BODY,...ONE faith, ONE baptism."

There doesn't appear to be any wiggle room here. There is only one kind of baptism. There is only one faith and one Body of Christ into which we are baptized.

If it's wrong to refuse baptism to someone who has the same Holy Ghost in them that we do, then it is time to repent and reform. When church tradition and Biblical commands contradict, we need to do as our forefathers did and make a radical reformation to align with Scripture.

## When Priorities are Wrong

- by John Weaver

Growing up, I received much instruction which focused on outward appearance. Tiny details of clothing were taught to be very important. We followed and upheld each rule as if it were gospel, when, in fact, the gospel was largely ignored in the rules and regulations.

I am grieved that the focus was on making appearance the priority, while ignoring what God prioritizes. An example was in quoting Romans 12:2.

*"Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."*

Many times, I heard the first six words quoted, but then the quote abruptly stopped right in the middle of the sentence. "Be not conformed to this world." God then says we need a renewed mind, and that it will transform us.

The teaching I received was to keep rules and look different so I would not be like the world. I was never taught anything about the mind. How I wish I had been taught to bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). The result was an undisciplined mind.

Our mind is where both good and evil begin. No one can see into our minds; therefore, others cannot regulate or control our minds. Uncontrolled thoughts will defile us. Because I never learned to control my mind, I suffered the consequences: negative thoughts about others, morally impure thoughts, etc.

Colossians 3 tells us that if we are risen with Christ, we are to set our affections (thoughts) on things above, not on things on the earth. The chapter continues to teach about putting off, mortifying evil thoughts, and many other things that come out of the mind or heart. Then, we are to put on. Again, what we are to put on has nothing to do with our outward appearance, but rather mercy, kindness, meekness, forbearance, forgiveness, and more. These are all things of the heart that start in the mind.

Many times, I ask God to give me a renewed mind, to give me a pure mind, to give me the kind of mind that transforms. These are things that transform from the inside out. Never does the outward appearance transform the inside. It is the pure, renewed mind that is set on things above (not on things upon the earth) that changes us more into the image of Christ.

So, to not be like the world, we need a new mind and a new heart. It is disastrous to try to have a pure heart or life by making the outward appearance the priority. All you get is a wolf in sheep's clothing. No matter how much wool you use to cover a wolf, it is still a wolf. No matter how much plain, drab, or uncomfortable clothing you put on an unregenerate person, that person is still alienated from a holy God.

In Hebrews 10, God gives us an exceeding great and precious promise. Talking about the New Covenant, God said,

*"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them" (Hebrews 10:16).*

When God writes His laws in our minds, then truly we have a renewed mind that brings forth a transformed life. Praise the Lord Jesus!



Moving? Receiving duplicate mailings?  
Not interested in the Amish Voice?

Please help us update our database by noting  
any corrections directly on your address label,  
and then returning it to us at:

575 US Highway 250 - Greenwich, OH 44837

## Can Atheists Live a Moral Life?

- by Jonas Brenneman

The question often arises about morality and whether atheists can be good moral people. The short answer is, yes, atheists can live moral lives. Some surpass the moral lives of religious people who have a very strict moral code they aspire to live by. In this essay, I want to examine the value of following a moral standard and how it differs for an atheist and a Christian.

Oftentimes, we like when others are moral people, but if we are honest with ourselves, we don't always enjoy being moral people ourselves. It seems to hinder personal freedom and pleasure.

There are over four million roads in the United States, and more than 250 million cars on these roads. The numbers are staggering. If you sit and watch the cars at any major intersection, it seems like a miracle that more people don't get into accidents every day.

But, somehow, so many cars driving so close to each other are able to avoid contact and arrive safely at their destination. What protects them from each other? It is a system of laws put in place to ensure that many cars can be on the roads at the same time while maximizing safety. As long as drivers observe the laws of the road, they are relatively

safe. The laws are not there to take away from the driving experience, or to hinder people from getting to their destination, but instead they help get people to their desired destination.

Morality works on a similar principle to this concept. It is not in place to restrict freedom, nor to take the fun out of life, but instead it helps people have the best of life. Let's consider the aspect of freedom. Many people feel as if morality keeps them from having true freedom, but usually when they say freedom, they are talking about the ability to do what they want, how they want, and when they want to. This is not freedom. This is anarchy. Anarchy



is destructive to self and others, and in the big picture of things, takes away freedom and pleasure.

Let's go back to the analogy of the road system. As long as a person stays within the prescribed rules of the road, they can travel with freedom across the country and enjoy many things along the way. But the instant they decide to forgo the laws, they are putting themselves and others at risk. The same principle applies

in morality. As long as a person stays within the bounds of morality, they have much more freedom for themselves personally and are in less danger of harming those around them.

It becomes very evident that morality is good, even for a person who does not subscribe to any religion. What is not as clear is the motivation for morality. For the Christian, the goal is to become more like Christ, who is the model of morality, and the ultimate desire of Christians is to be as much like Christ as they can. For the atheist, it is more ambiguous. It might be because of an instinctiveness within that tells them this is beneficial for them, or perhaps it is a more thought-out philosophy that makes them realize morality is better than anarchy.

Using the analogy of the road system, the atheist is one who remains faithful to the laws and ways of the roads, but drives aimlessly about, not heeding the signs that point to a specific location. The Christian also stays within the laws and ways of the road, but they have a definite location in mind, which is to arrive at the place of being Christ-like. So, rather than just remaining within the structure but not having a destination, Christians observe the signs that tell them which direction to go in order to arrive at their destination.