

# Take a Risk!

A monthly publication from Risk Takers *for Christ*

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Platinum  
Transparency  
2025

**Candid.**



## Lessons from the Amish - Part 1

by Rev. Dale Glading, President

By the time you read this blog post, my wife and I will be enjoying the culinary delights of Der Dutchman, a family-style restaurant in Sarasota featuring an all-you-can-eat smorgasbord. And not just any AYCE buffet, I'll have you know, but one featuring the kind of Amish cooking we both learned to love while vacationing in Lancaster County, PA... otherwise known as Pennsylvania Dutch Country.

Now that we live in Florida, we are 1,000 miles away from the promised land of roasted chicken and noodles, ham loaf, cabbage rolls, apple butter, friendship bread, and whoopie pies. But recently, we discovered that some of the Amish folks in PA, OH, IN, and MI despise the harsh winter weather up north as much as we do and have settled in Pinecrest, a small enclave on the outskirts of Sarasota. Whereas some of them are snowbirds, others have permanently relocated to southwest Florida and opened restaurants, craft shops, farmers markets and the like.

And so, while feasting on my second helping of meatloaf and my third piece of shoo-fly pie, I thought I would share a few lessons I have learned over the years from the Amish.

**1. The importance of self-reliance.** Should the United States ever suffer an EMP (electromagnetic pulse) attack that shuts down our power grid and sends us back to the Stone Age, there will be widespread panic, looting, and even bloodshed in the streets as pam-

pered Americans deal with the loss of air conditioning, refrigeration, and any form of mass communication. Just imagine what our country would look like after a week without functioning gas pumps, ATMs, or cell phones.

Meanwhile, the Amish would just keep on plowing and planting... and enjoying the canned meats, fruits, and vegetables they have prudently stored away.

**2. The importance of family and community.** When an Amish boy grows up and marries, his father usually subdivides his land so that his son can support his bride and growing family. Likewise, if the father isn't a farmer but rather a craftsman, he has spent years training his son to either take over the family business or start one of his own.

As for the Amish elderly, they aren't placed in nursing homes or assisted living facilities. On the contrary, the family simply builds an addition onto the main house and cares for grandma and grandpa until they pass away.

And whenever someone in the Amish community at-large has a pressing need, everyone and everything stops until that need is met. There are few things more sentimental and yet instructional than watching a group of Amish men erect a barn in a single day while their wives and daughters cook up a storm for the soon-to-be famished workers.

**3. The importance of minding your own business.** I saw a meme the other day that

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# Lessons from the Amish - Part 2

by Rev. Dale Glading, President

(Disclaimer: This article contains graphic details about a mass shooting in 2006 that may be disturbing to some readers. However, the story of love, redemption, and unconditional forgiveness is well-worth the read.)

Last week, we focused on four lessons we can learn from the Amish. In no particular order, they are: the importance of self-reliance, hard work, family and community, and minding your own business.

Ironically, of all the blog posts I have written and published over the past several years, I received more comments about that simple article than any other... and they were all favorable.

I'm guessing the reason why so many people enjoyed the piece and felt led to comment on it is because in today's fast-paced and seemingly out-of-control world, most of us long for simpler times. That's one of the reasons why Deanna and I just enjoyed a short getaway to celebrate our 40th wedding anniversary.

Instead of going someplace that offered glamor and glitz and attracted large crowds, we opted for a 100-year-old bed and breakfast in a small town in the middle of nowhere. Not only that, but we spent much of our time browsing the dozen or so antique shops in town and simply relaxing with a good book on the enclosed sun porch.

No deadlines... no schedule... and as little modern technology as possible. You could almost feel your blood pressure drop a few degrees.

Now, back to the Amish and yet another lesson they can teach us about their simple lifestyle as well as their faith-in-action. In fact, it may be the most important lesson of all.

Forgiveness.

It's a simple word and a simple concept, but extremely hard to implement let alone master. And yet, that is exactly what happened in the aftermath of the largest mass school shooting in Pennsylvania state history.

On October 2, 2006, Charles Carl Roberts IV, a 32-year-old milk tanker truck driver, left four suicide notes - one for his wife and one for each of his three children - and drove his pick-up truck to the West Nickel Mines School, a one-room schoolhouse in the Old Order Amish community of Nickel Mines in Bart Township, PA. Once

there, he took more than 20 hostages, some of whom either escaped or were eventually released.

The teacher, Emma Mae Zook, managed to run to a neighboring farm to call for help and within minutes, Pennsylvania State Police troopers were on the scene. Realizing that he was trapped, Roberts opened fire on the remaining hostages, all young girls between the ages of 6 and 13.

The first two victims were Marian and Barbara Fisher, ages 13 and 11, who courageously asked to be shot first so that the other hostages might be spared. Barbara was wounded, but Marian was killed. As soon as the police heard the shots, they rushed the schoolhouse but not before Roberts had fired his shotgun three times (including once at the state troopers) and his pistol 13 times.

Altogether, six girls died - two at the scene, one who was pronounced dead on arrival at Lancaster General Hospital, two sisters who survived until the following morning before being taken off life support, and one who passed away in 2024 from complications from the shooting. Four others were wounded.

Roberts fired his final 9mm bullet into his own head, killing himself instantly.

Janice Ballinger, a deputy coroner in Lancaster County, later described the scene that Roberts had left behind. "There was not one desk, not one chair, in the whole schoolroom that was not splattered with either blood or glass," she said. "There were bullet holes everywhere, everywhere."

Ballinger counted at least a dozen pellet-inflicted wounds in a single child before having to ask a colleague to take over for her. Other reports stated that three of the girls were shot "execution-style" in the back of the head and the others were all shot at close range.

Amidst the horror and ashes of this inconceivable tragedy arose a story of incredible Christian compassion and yes, forgiveness.

On the day of the shooting, the grandfather of one of the murdered girls was heard warning some young relatives not to hate the killer, saying, "We must not think evil of this man." Another Amish father was quick to point out that "He had a mother and a wife and a soul and now he's standing before a just God."

Jack Meyer, a member of the Brethren community living near the Amish in Lancaster County, explained to

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reporters: "I don't think there's anybody here that wants to do anything but forgive and not only reach out to those who have suffered a loss in that way but to reach out to the family of the man who committed these acts."

And that's exactly what the local Amish community did... in very genuine and practical ways.

A spokesman for the Roberts family said that an Amish neighbor comforted them hours after the shooting while also extending forgiveness. Amish community members also visited and comforted Roberts' widow, parents and parents-in-law. In fact, one Amish man held Roberts' sobbing father in his arms, reportedly for as long as an hour, to comfort him.

And yet, it didn't stop there.

About 30 members of the Amish community attended Roberts' funeral and Marie Roberts, the widow of the killer, was one of the few outsiders invited to the funeral of one of the victims.

Marie later wrote an open letter to her Amish neighbors, thanking them for their forgiveness, grace, and mercy.

"Your love for our family has helped to provide the healing we so desperately need," Marie Roberts wrote. "Gifts you've given have touched our hearts in a way no words can describe. Your compassion has reached beyond our family, beyond our community, and is changing our world, and for this we sincerely thank you."

In a final act of Christian grace and compassion, the Amish community established and administered The Roberts Family Fund to provide money to care for Roberts' widow and her three children.

Forgiveness is one thing. Offering gifts - and a shoulder to cry on - to the family of the man who slaughtered your daughters and granddaughters in cold blood is something few people can begin to understand or fully comprehend, let alone emulate.

Perhaps Marie Roberts said it best. By demonstrating how their world works, the Amish helped to change ours.

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## Twin Lessons from Canton, Ohio

by Rev. Dale Glading, President

Canton, Ohio is the home of the Pro Football Hall of Fame. As such, it hosts the annual Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

This year's inductions took place on August 2nd and the Class of 2025 included defensive back Eric Allen, defensive end Jared Allen, tight end Antonio Gates, and wide receiver Sterling Sharpe. Famed ESPN broadcaster Chris Berman served as the master of ceremonies.

Before Berman introduced the first inductee, he honored one of the Hall's other members who was sitting in the audience. Longtime Buffalo Bills head coach Marv Levy, looking as spiffy and spry as ever, was there to honor the new inductees the day before his 100th birthday.

Levy has lived quite a life. The day after he graduated from South Shore High School in Chicago in 1943, he enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Forces. After completing his basic training, Levy was assigned to the Apalachicola Army Air Field in Franklin County, Florida, but the war ended before his unit could be deployed to the Pacific.

After the war, Levy attended the University of Wyoming and Coe College, playing football for both schools as well as basketball and track for Coe, before earning a Master of Arts degree in English history from Harvard. From there, Levy began a long and illustrious coaching career that included stints at Coe, the University of New Mexico, the University of California at Berkeley, and William and Mary before advancing to the pro ranks with the Philadelphia Eagles, Los Angeles Rams, Washington Redskins, Montreal Alouettes, Kansas City Chiefs, Chicago Blitz, and Buffalo Bills.

It was with the Bills that Levy left an indelible mark, leading his team to a record four consecutive AFC championships, 1990-1993. Unfortunately for Marv and the Bills, they lost all four Super Bowls they played in, the first one being a one-point heartbreaker.

Asked about the importance of winning the Super Bowl, Levy famously replied, "This is not a must-win; World War II was a must-win." You talk about having the right perspective!

Another person on the platform that day in Canton spoke

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showed a frantic lady wearing a facemask asking an Amish man why he wasn't panicking about world affairs or the latest pandemic. His simple reply was, "Because we don't have cable TV."

In other words, so many of the things we concern ourselves with - and spend countless hours worrying about - don't really affect us and are beyond our control anyway, so why be bothered?

**4. The importance of hard work.** Amish folk eat lots of fresh fruit and vegetables, but also their share of red meats and rich desserts. And yet, their average life expectancy is just as long as those of us in the "real world" who gulp down multivitamins by the handful, drink fruit smoothies, and visit (or say we visit) the gym three times per week.

Maybe we should all sell our treadmills and buy a plow horse instead.

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about the things that mattered the most and how football was not #1 in his life. Here are a few excerpts from Jared Allen's induction speech...

Speaking directly to his wife, Amy, Allen said, "I'm reminded of what [Vikings chaplain] Tom Lamphere said when we were going through our premarital counseling. He said the two most important decisions you'll make in life is one, whether you follow Jesus or not, and two is who you marry. There's only two types of people. There's boat anchors who drag you down, and there's people who elevate you, and you are a true game elevator."

Apparently, Allen puts Jesus first, his wife second, and - from what he said next - his children third. How incredibly biblical!

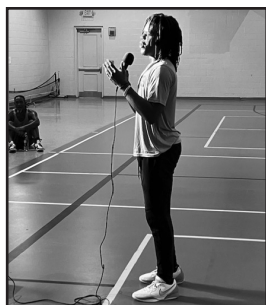
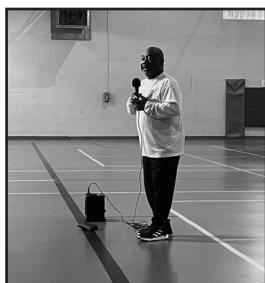
Addressing his two daughters, Allen had this to say...

"When I get called home to Heaven one day, if all they talk about is this gold jacket and my career, then I failed miserably as a father, a husband and a friend. You two are my legacy. You are both so talented, and I cannot wait to see what you decide to do to conquer this world. So always put Christ first, find your 'why,' dream big dreams and always pursue greatness in whatever you do."

I don't know about you, but I got goosebumps as I typed those words... and I trust you got a few yourself as you read them.

Thanks for the invaluable life lessons, Marv and Jared!

## Living H2O Photos



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