



Words of Wisdom
from the Simple Life

Amish Proverbs



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Bestselling author of *The Choice*

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from the Simple Life

EXPANDED EDITION

Suzanne Woods Fisher



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To my mother, Barbara Benedict
Woods, who raised her children on
Pennsylvania Dutch sayings.
This one is her favorite:

"Every mother crow thinks her own little
crow is the blackest."

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Acknowledgments

These collections are drawn, with permission, from a variety of sources: The Sugarcreek Budget, Proverbs of the Pennsylvania Germans by Dr. Edwin Miller Fogel, the Pennsylvania German Dictionary by C. Richard Beam, and the sayings and adages I grew up hearing from my grandfather's Old Order German Baptist Brethren family.

My grandfather—we called him Deardad—was famous for pointing out to me with a frown that “young folks should use their ears and not their mouths.”

Another saying I grew up hearing was, “Choose your love and love your choice.” That one belongs to my mother.

Introduction

The Amish in Their Own Words

Most every culture has proverbs that are unique to it. Whether called maxims, bromides, truisms, idioms, expressions, sayings, or just an old saw, proverbs are small, concentrated packages that let us peek into the window of a people's values and beliefs. They give us insight into a culture, its faith, folklore, history, language, mentality, psychology, worldview, and values. These pithy sayings are not meant to be universal truths. They contain general observations and experiences of humankind, including life's multifaceted contradictions.

"Proverbs," radio Bible teacher J. Vernon McGee once said, "are short sentences drawn from long experience."[\[1\]](#)

The ancient Eastern world—Egypt, Greece, China, and India—is thought to be the home of proverbs, dating back to collections from as early as 2500 BC. King Solomon, who reigned in the tenth century BC, gathered many of them from other sources as well as edited and authored others. Over five hundred were compiled into the book of Proverbs in the Bible. Proverbs were used in monasteries to teach novices Latin. Often colorfully phrased, at times even musical in pronunciation, proverbs served as

teaching tools for illiterate populations that relied on oral tradition.

Interestingly, the proverbs have played a surprisingly prominent role in the speech of the Pennsylvania Germans, which includes—though isn't limited to—the Amish. "It is natural that the Pennsylvania Germans should use the proverb extensively," writes Dr. Edwin Miller Fogel in his book *Proverbs of the Pennsylvania Germans*, "because of the fondness of the Germanic peoples for this form of expression. The proverbs are the very bone and sinew of the dialect."[\[2\]](#)

"The ones that are common in the community are most likely in the oral tradition," says Dr. Donald B. Kraybill, senior fellow at the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College, Pennsylvania. "Not particularly Amish, but part of the broader rural tradition of the area."[\[3\]](#)

The Pennsylvania Deitsch dialect (which is called "Penn Dutch," though it has no relationship to Holland) originated in the Palatinate area of Germany over four hundred years ago and was brought to Pennsylvania in the 1700s with a wave of immigrants: Lutherans, Mennonites, Moravians, Amish, German Brethren, and German Reformed. Penn Dutch was, and is, an oral language; even today, people from different states can understand one another since the language has remained close to its origins.

"Most of what they [German immigrants] knew, they brought here from the Old World," explains C. Richard Beam, retired full professor of German at Millersville

University. "The proverbs were an integral part of Pennsylvania German culture. The further back you go, the richer the language."

The cleverness of a proverb, though, can be lost in translation. Here's an example: Wer gut Fuddert, daer gut Buddert. "Good feed, much butter." Here's one that comes through a little smoother: Bariye macht Sarige. "Borrowing makes sorrowing."

Beam worries that the language has been watered down and diluted over this last century, as the external culture has crowded out its rich heritage. Raised in Pennsylvania, Beam says that all four of his grandparents spoke Deitsch as their first language. "We spent time with aunts and uncles and grandparents. That led to a richness of the culture, a preservation of the language. This was prior to radio and television." Beam is now 84 years old. "There's a saying I was raised with: 'Every time the sheep bleats, it loseth a mouthful.' That applies directly to the culture today." The dialect is losing words, he says. "Language doesn't stand still."

Today, only the Old Order Amish and the Old Order Mennonites have retained Deitsch as their first language. The Old Order Amish is a society that does not permit higher education. Theirs is a culture learned from the simplicity of their ancestors' lifestyles, and the Amish value this heritage. This simple lifestyle, passed virtually unchanged through the generations, provides an ideal base for the continual use of proverbs.

Within the last century, the use of proverbs in modern

American society may have diminished, but not so for the Amish. In fact, the opposite is happening.

The Sugarcreek Budget is a weekly newspaper for the Amish-Mennonite community that began in 1890. Scribes from all over the world send in a weekly letter to the Ohio headquarters. At the end of most letters, a proverb is added, like a benediction. "The trend began about five to eight years ago," explains editor Fannie Erb-Miller. "We started to allow a saying on the end of a scribe's letter, and then it just caught on. Now, almost all of the letters have one. Early on, letters didn't include them. Mostly, they're sayings that pass from generation to generation. The proverbs are very relevant. They can speak to you. They can hit you."

The proverbs in this book, like all proverbs, come from many sources—most of them anonymous and all of them difficult to trace. It is not unusual to find the same proverb in many variants. The saying "Bend the tree while it is young; when it is old, it is too late" is a variation on the Bible's "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6 KJV).

God plays a prominent role in Amish proverbs, as does nature: weather and seasons, agriculture and animals. In our modern world, the rural savvy may seem outdated. But look a little deeper. The proverbs are every bit as relevant in the year 2012 as they were in 1712: Der alt Bull blarrt als noch means "The old bull keeps on bellowing," or to give it a twenty-first-century twist, "The

old scandal will not die down.”

These sayings and proverbs, dear to the Amish, can help the English (non-Amish) better understand them. For example, here are two proverbs that reveal how the Amish value the virtue of patience: “Only when a squirrel buries and forgets an acorn can a new oak tree come forth,” and “Adopt the pace of nature; her secret is patience.”

Proverbs are just as useful in our life today as they are to Old Order Amish families. They’re just as relevant to us as they were to the Israelites in King Solomon’s day. They help point us toward wisdom, toward good judgment, toward God’s teachings. To please God, we must know what he values: What does he care about? What does he love? What does he hate? Proverbs teach us about God.

That is the ultimate goal of the proverb: to help others learn by experience and live wisely, pleasing to God. By perpetuating these same phrases, we constantly remind ourselves of their importance and their power to prevent us from forgetting the lessons they hold.

One thing is certain: there is no such thing as a simple proverb.

Time



*Don't hurry, don't worry, do your
best, leave the rest!*



Linda sat with her son in the emergency room of their local hospital, waiting to be seen by a doctor. Her son had twisted his ankle playing a game of basketball, and she worried he might have caused serious damage to it.

After ten minutes, her son grew fidgety and impatient. "This is going to take forever," he moaned.

Seated across from them was a young Amish couple. The wife had taken a spill and hurt her shoulder. They sat calmly, though Linda noticed the wife wince in pain whenever she shifted in her seat. Finally, the nurse came out and motioned to the Amish man. He jumped up to help his wife rise to her feet. Linda heard him say to her, "Now, Katie, that wasn't too bad a wait. Only an hour."

After the Amish couple left the waiting room, Linda nudged her son with her elbow. "Do you see the difference? You expected to be seen immediately. They expected to wait."

To the Amish, waiting isn't a verb. It's an attitude. They wait for spring to plow and plant, for autumn to reap and harvest. They know that the seasons can't be rushed. They wait for the rain to come and nourish their crops. Much of their three-plus-hour church service is a time of silent waiting: they wait in expectation before God, rich with the promise of what is to come.

"Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him" (Ps. 37:7 KJV) is a biblical principle the Amish take to heart. Waiting on the Lord is the same thing as trusting him. All that they have belongs to him, including the minutes and hours and days and years that make up their lives.

Time is just viewed differently for the Amish than for the English. It's not as important.

"In Indiana," says Dr. Joe Wittmer, raised in an Old Order Amish home, "the English move their clocks forward an hour in the spring and back an hour in the fall, but we never moved ours forward or back at any time. We went by 'sun' time and I don't remember being concerned about what time it was. Time was not important and we had only one clock in the house and it wasn't running most of the time. We based our time on 'sun up,' 'noon,' and 'dark' time."[\[4\]](#)

The Amish recognize patience as a key part of God's character. Conforming their will to God's will is what being

Amish is all about. One way they try to conform is to purposefully slow down the tempo of life—an obvious example: they ride in a buggy pulled by a horse.

"We were never in a hurry," says Dr. Wittmer. "It's difficult to be in a hurry in a horse and buggy."

They have a deep connection to the rhythms of nature through their farm, even if it's just a few acres to grow their own fruits and vegetables. They eschew time thieves: television, radio, newspapers. It's as if they live their life with an unlimited amount of time, as if they have a toe in the door to eternity.

Common sayings promote patience as a virtue:

*It takes a century for God to make a
sturdy oak.*



Harvest comes not every day.



*A handful of patience is worth more
than a bushel of brains.*



You can't make cider without apples.



Don't count your eggs before they are laid.

What a contrast to the English perception of time: there's never enough of it! Time is viewed as an enemy or, at the least, as an irritating constraint. We try to beat the clock, and use technology or machinery to speed up tasks. In an ironic twist, time seems even more elusive despite more gadgetry that promises us more spare time.

The Amish can teach us to slow down. Time is not something to be mastered but a boundary to be respected. They remind us that Christians should look at life from a different perspective because we are part of a different kingdom—one that stretches into infinity.

"Run the race with eternity in view" and "What we do in this life echoes in eternity" are frequently quoted in sermons. And one thing the Amish know to be true: unlike humans, God is not in short supply of time. There is no limit to his days or his patience or his joy.

*Morning does not dawn with the first
bird's song.*



*If you keep waiting for the right time,
you may never begin.*



To stay youthful, stay useful.



*You only live once, but if you work it
right, once is enough.*



*Many times we are climbing
mountains when we ought to be
quietly resting.*



Do more of less.



*The years can fly past like a flock of
birds.*



*One thing you can learn by watching
the clock is that it passes time by
keeping its hands busy.*



*We move forward, into the future, one
day at a time.*



*Patience is a virtue that carries a lot
of wait.*



*In autumn sunshine, prepare for
winter's cold.*



A task takes as long as it takes.



*Regrets over yesterday and the fear of
tomorrow are twin thieves that rob us
of the moment.*



Enjoy today . . . it won't come back.



You can't make good hay from poor grass.



Live each short hour with God and the long years will take care of themselves.



To master this life, spend time with the Master.



This would be a wonderful world if people showed as much patience in all things as they do in waiting for a fish to bite.



*Today has one thing in which all of us
are equal: time. All of us drew the
same salary in seconds, minutes, and
hours.*



*The person who kills time has not
learned the value of life.*



No time is lost waiting on God.



*There's only a heartbeat between time
and eternity.*



Worry wastes today's time, cluttering

*tomorrow's opportunities with
yesterday's troubles.*



*Beware of the barrenness of a too-
busy life!*



*If you wish to be happy, we'll tell you
the way: don't live tomorrow till
you've lived today.*



*What we are when we are old is what
we learned when we were young.*



The only preparation for tomorrow is

the right use of today.



*Things that steal our time are usually
the easiest to do.*



*What a new year brings us depends a
great deal on what we bring to the
new year.*



*One of these days is none of these
days.*



*Memories are a keepsake no one can
steal.*



*Hold tight to what is eternal and
loosely to what is temporal.*



*Cooks and bakers know the secret to a
good day is patience.*



*Don't worry what you could do if you
lived your life over; get busy with
what's left.*



Constant change is here to stay.



Life in the fast lane is normally a blur.

Money



*Those who would have money are
troubled about it, those who have
none are troubled without it.*



A few years ago, I called an Old Order Amish farm in Pennsylvania to make a reservation to stay for a trip I had planned. I left a message on an answering machine and received a return call just a few hours later from a woman named Viola Stoltzfus. Viola called from the phone shack down the lane from her farm. Every few minutes, her gentle voice—with just a trace of an accent—was drowned out by the clip-clop sounds of a horse and buggy passing by. After Viola wrote down the dates of my visit, I asked her how much money I should send to reserve the room.

“Well,” she said, “we’re too busy to make a breakfast for you. So, just send me a donation.”

Nonplussed, I had absolutely no idea how much to send, so I wrote out a check for the amount I was spending at an airport hotel the night before. As I sealed that envelope to Viola and stuck a stamp on it, I couldn't remember ever feeling so good about writing someone a check. Why? Viola offered me two things that are in short supply in a secular world: She wasn't trying to unduly profit off of my visit but to receive a fair exchange for goods and services. And she trusted me to decide what that would be worth.

"As the work, so the pay," goes the saying.

It's not that the Amish aren't money savvy; they are. But their goal in life isn't to accumulate wealth. Money is a tool, not a goal. They want only to support their family in an environment that best reflects their values. They believe in ownership of land, hard work, frugality, honesty, and industry. But they strive to prevent affluent living, keeping up with the Joneses, and social status. In fact, they don't even value the indicators of success that we prize: income, education, luxuries, and symbols of prosperity. To the Amish way of thinking, "If fools have much, they spend much."

Many proverbs warn of the dangerous effects of affluence: corruption, laziness, friendlessness. Suspicion surrounds wealth. Many proverbs reflect this mistrust: The rich are poor payers.



Where there's money, you'll find the devil.



A full purse never lacks friends.

Instead, the Amish give their highest respect to those who care well for their homes and families and community, those who raise their children so they will grow up wanting to become Amish, and those who help the next generation settle on farms. "It is a wealthy person, indeed, who calculates riches not in gold but in friends."

The Amish put the brakes on accumulation and all of the distractions and complications that come with it. There's a point where enough is enough, especially if it interferes with what is truly important to them: faith, family, community. That's where they draw the line.

Enough is enough is a rare concept for our modern world. A curious finding by a 2009 study shines a spotlight on one result of affluence: the higher the income, the less time a family spends together.[\[5\]](#) The decline in family time, the study found, coincided with a rise in Internet use and the popularity of social networks. The study found that, whether it's around the dinner table or just in front of the television, American families are spending less time

together.

The Amish remind us that there is goodness and satisfaction in a simpler life.

Where is your line drawn? When is enough, enough?

*What is not worth thanking for is not
worth having.*



Soon got, soon spent.



*Those who let God provide will
always be satisfied.*



*A person may hoard up money, he
may bury his talents, but you cannot
hoard up love.*



*Money talks, but it doesn't say when
it's coming back.*



You get what you pay for.



*If you're careful with your pennies,
the dollars will take care of
themselves.*



*He who has no money is poor; he who
has nothing but money is even poorer.*



The debt that is paid is best.



*You are only poor when you want
more than you have.*



Penny wise, pound foolish.



*Where love is, there riches be, keep us
all from poverty.*



*Fortune knocks once, but misfortune
has more patience.*



Thoughts are tax-free.



An industrious wife is the best savings account.



Generosity leaves a much better taste than stinginess.



It's not what you make but what you save that gets you out of debt.



That which controls your heart controls your life.



*It is worse to have an empty purpose
than it is to have an empty purse.*



*If you want to feel rich, just count the
blessings that money can't buy.*



*Statistics show that women spend 85%
of the consumer dollar, children 15%,
and men the rest.*



*Wisdom enables one to be thrifty
without being stingy, generous
without being wasteful.*



*Most folks tend to forget that even a
bargain costs money.*



*How we spend Christmas is of greater
significance than how much we spend
for it.*



*Poverty and health are better than
sickness and wealth.*



Money burns a hole in the pocket.



*Loving does not empty the heart, nor
giving empty the purse.*



*The boy who gave the loaves and
fishes didn't go hungry.*



*The values we leave our children are
more important than the valuables we
leave them.*



*Jesus wants to be Lord over our
thoughts, words, deeds . . . and
wallets.*



*There are two kinds of leaders: those
who are interested in the flock, and
those who are interested in the fleece.*



*If money could buy happiness, people
would still wait till it went on sale.*



*The blacksmith's horses are always
shod the worst.*



*Every spiritual investment will bear
eternal interest.*



*It is better to be short on cash than
short on character.*



The devil dances in an empty pocket.



Money does not go as far as it used to, but it's just as hard to get back.



Letting go of earthly possessions enables us to take hold of heavenly treasures.



One man's money is as good as another's.



A loaded wagon creaks, an empty one rattles.



*To be poor is not disgraceful but
unhandy.*

Faith



*A happy life and eternal salvation is
spoiling the devil's calculation.*



Mary Miller is a thin, attractive Amish woman of 46, a mother to eight children born within a span of eleven years. During the day, Mary wears a starched white organza prayer cap over her tightly pinned hair bun. In the night, she wears another covering. Why does she wear a head covering at night? "In case I wake up in the night and need to pray," Mary explains in a tone that suggests it should be quite obvious. "And with eight children, I do. Often."

Religion is 24/7 for the Amish. Everything they do, especially the manner in which they dress, is based upon their faith. Their simple clothing—a tradition of the Amish and the reason they are also called the Plain People—is a

tangible reminder that they are a people set apart, belonging to the Lord. The Kapp or "head cap," worn by every woman and even by infants, might be the most symbolic garment of all. As girls become young teens, they start to wear the cap: black for Sunday dress and a white cap at home. After marriage a white cap is always worn. The style and size of caps can vary among church districts, but it is essentially the same cap as that worn by the Palatine women of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Back in those days, the Amish were perceived as radicals.

To a modern world, the Amish still seem radical. Their deep commitment to faith is why they choose to live separate from the world. They believe the ways of the world oppose God. They eschew accumulating materialistic goods because it leads them to pride. Their Plain clothes serve to keep them separate from the world by creating a unifying identity. Their dependence on a caring community is intended to reflect the body of Christ. Their emphasis on humility reminds them that God alone is worthy of praise. Try to pay an Amish person a sincere compliment and you will most likely get a soft-spoken deflection in return: "Oh, I don't know about that."

The Amish take temptation to pride very seriously. "Because of our tendency toward pride," says David Miller, Mary's husband, "we need the cross, the Spirit, and the example of Christ." The Lord's Prayer holds great meaning to the Amish and in it Christ's petition: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

The admonition of Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall," is taken seriously by the Amish. Many proverbs warn of pride that leads to disaster: "The crowing hen comes to no good end" is pretty clear.

"Nothing in front and nothing behind" means a person is proud and has nothing to be proud of.

David has made a lifelong practice of memorizing Scripture. He likens the Scriptures to "plumb bobs"—the weight that always holds a builder's plumb line straight and true. David seeks to measure his own thoughts, feelings, and behavior by God's Word—regardless of the circumstances. "Standing your ground is easier," he says, "when you are grounded in God's Word."

Most Amish believe the adage that "The cornerstone of faith is truth, not tolerance." They take Scripture literally and don't rationalize or justify behaviors that the Bible labels as sin. Evil is evil, and the source of evil is the devil, for whom they have a healthy respect. Traditional sayings make the devil sound active and nearly ever-present: Speak of the devil and you'll hear the flop of his wings.



*You need not call the devil, he'll come
without calling.*

And no one is immune to temptation: "Even a saint is

tempted by an open door.”

But the focus of the Amish life is not solely on avoiding temptation. It is on pleasing God, conforming to his will, living a faithful life, and hoping for an eternity in his presence. After all, to their way of thinking, “The best way to escape evil is to pursue good.”

*Bibles that are coming apart usually
belong to people who are not.*



*It may be difficult to wait on the Lord,
but it is worse to wish you had.*



*He who bows lowest in the presence of
God stands straightest in the presence
of sin.*



Faith is the bridge over which we can

*cross all the unknown waters of
tomorrow.*



*In creation, God spoke and it was so.
He used his finger to deal with the
devil and he made bare his mighty
arm to save us.*



*You can't stumble when you are on
your knees.*



*God speaks to those who are quiet
before him.*



*Faith in God is like a kite—a contrary
wind only raises it higher.*



A heart at peace gives life to the body.



*When fear knocks at the door, send
faith to answer!*



*Doubt has never changed anything.
Belief changes things.*



*Walk softly, speak tenderly, and pray
fervently.*



Let your life story be for God's glory.



*When you get to your wit's end, you'll
find God lives there.*



*When I have nothing left but God,
then I find that God is all I need.*



*We are never worthless, but
unworthy.*



*Faith produces a way of life that
pleases God.*



*If you want your life to be a reflection
of Christ, you need to take time to
reflect on Christ.*



*A faith worth having is a faith worth
sharing.*



*If you sense your faith is unraveling,
go back to where you dropped the
thread of obedience.*



*Faith is like an umbrella; it protects
us through the storms of life.*



Faith gives us the courage to face the present with confidence and the future with expectancy.



F-A-I-T-H: Forsaking all, I trust him.



Be faithful and leave the results to God.



If you are true to your faith, there are things you give up for your faith.



We should not put a question mark where God puts a period.



*Wherever we go, God is there.
Whenever we call, God is listening.
Whatever we need, God is enough.*



*Every moment of worry weakens the
soul for its daily combat.*



*When you find time on your hands,
put them together in prayer.*



*Know the Bible in your head, stow it
in your heart, show it in your life, sow
it in the world.*



*Do not ask the Lord to guide your
footsteps if you are not willing to
move your feet.*



*The future is as bright as the promises
of God.*



*Every miracle Jesus does starts with a
problem.*



*Put everything in God's hand and
eventually you will see God's hand in
everything.*



Worry ends where faith begins.



*God meant for the Bible to be bread
for our daily use, not just cake for
special occasions.*



*If God brings you to it, he will bring
you through it.*



Prayers go up, blessings come down.



*All our tomorrows must pass before
God before they ever reach us.*



*The closer you walk with God, the less
room for anything to come between.*



Courage is faith singing in the rain.



Faith makes things possible, not easy.



*Faith is like stepping out at God's
command onto what appears to be a
cloud and finding it to be solid rock.*



*Love is the reason behind everything
God does.*



*Faith rests on God, receives from
God, responds to God, relies on God.*



*We wouldn't long for heaven if earth
had only joy.*



*If you don't want the fruits of sin, stay
out of the devil's orchard.*



*If God calls you to be a missionary,
don't stoop to be a king.*



*Though you may ask God to do
something **for** you, he generally wants*

*to do something **in** you.*



*Christians must keep the gospel, but
not to themselves.*



*For faith to prosper it must
experience impossible situations.*

Children & Family



*A child can read a parent's character
before he can read the alphabet.*



In the Old Order Amish district in Indiana where Joe Wittmer was raised, the birth of a baby was greeted with love, joy, and "sweet coffee."

"Siess Kaffi," says Dr. Wittmer, "is what neighbors do when a new baby arrives. The mom is given a week or so to rest, then folks start coming by with a meal and to see the new baby. They all have 'sugar in their coffee.'"

Some say there is no better babyhood than that enjoyed by an Amish baby. The Amish baby is an integral part of the family from the moment of birth. Even when asleep, the infant is often held in someone's arms. The Amish rarely, if ever, use babysitters. It's customary to take the baby with them wherever the parents go, even to long

church services.

Dr. Wittmer says he's never known of a time when the birth of a child is an unwelcomed event. "A baby means another corn husker, another cow-milker, but most of all, another God-fearing Amishman. The birth is always seen as a blessing of the Lord."

Children are considered a gift from God, and family size attests to that: the average Amish family has seven children. Parents practice no birth control and pray for children. With such a high birthrate, the Amish have become the fastest growing population in the United States. As of 2009, the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania calculated there are over 233,000 Amish.[\[6\]](#) Over half the population is under eighteen years of age.

"Children are the poor man's wealth," says one proverb.

If faith is the cornerstone of Amish society, the home is the foundation. Marriage among the Amish is highly esteemed, and raising a family is like a professional career for adults. Divorce is virtually unheard of. One father wrote in Family Life magazine, "Children have only one childhood. We can fail in business and oftentimes start over and make good. But if we fail in the teaching and training of our children, we never get another chance."

Being family-centered is a long-held and deeply cherished Amish standard. "I can't put into words all that a home means to the Amish," says Dr. Wittmer. "It's almost something too deep for words. Family is number one." While in his Rumspringa (a term used for adolescence that

is translated as "running around"), Joe Wittmer found the game of basketball. He went to high school, then to college. "I didn't go to get an education but to play basketball," he says. "I always had a plan to go back." But the path he started on led him to graduate school, where he eventually earned a doctorate in counseling psychology.

Does he regret leaving his heritage? "Would I trade? No. But I've always had that void."

Dr. Wittmer remains in close touch with his family. He was never baptized as a church member, thus he was not excommunicated. Today, he lives in Florida, but when he returns to Indiana, a large family reunion is held for him. "Over one hundred people," he says with a grin. "Everyone brings a dish. They all come."

Amish roots are strong, much more so than in contemporary American families. Many Amish live within several miles of their childhood homes. A typical Amish child may have two dozen aunts and uncles living in the area, plus dozens of cousins. Extended families are a blessing to each other and often live on the same piece of land.

"Youth likes to play, and old age to scold" sounds like something the middle-aged generation might mutter under their breath after a long day.

Sharing concern for a child's upbringing is a chief benefit of growing up in a thick network of extended family. "Parents and grandparents," says Laura Mast, an elderly Amish woman with fifty-two grandchildren and counting, "have the biggest job in the world. We have to

teach the young to love the Lord." Properly raised children ensure a bright future for the Amish. These children will one day provide a home for their aging parents, as Laura's son and daughter-in-law are now doing for her.

What's Laura's best child-rearing advice? She answers with these proverbs: "Children need models more than critics" and "Children live what they learn and learn what they live." Another, she says, is "Always treat children in the direction you wish them to grow, not as they now are."

But even more important than providing an Amish-style social security, parents' greatest desire for their children is to share their hope for a heaven-bound future. One proverb that Erik Wesner, author of the popular blog Amish America, often hears is "Our children are the only treasures we can take to heaven."

*A house is made of walls and beams;
a home is made of love and dreams.*



*A wife will make or break a
household.*



*Summer is the season when children
slam the doors they left open all
winter.*



*Put the swing where the children want
it. The grass will grow back.*



*A father ought to help his son to form
the habit of doing right on his own
initiative rather than out of fear of
serious consequences.*



More is caught than taught.



*Raising boys is as easy as digesting
iron.*



*If you let your children have their own
way, you must not complain if they
give you trouble.*



*The most important things in your
home are people.*



*Tomorrow's world will be shaped by
what we teach our children today.*



Keep your feet under your own table.



*If parents don't train their children,
the children will train the parents.*



*There's a peg for every hole and a lid
for every pot.*



*A happy home is not merely having a
roof over your head but having a
foundation under your feet.*



*Hands build houses, love builds
homes.*



Children are natural imitators. They act just like their parents in spite of the effort to teach them good manners.



A man needs a woman to take care of him so she can make him strong enough for her to lean on.



Relationships are fragile, handle with prayer.



A child will not inherit his parents' talents, but he will inherit their values.



*Children's ears may be closed to
advice, but their eyes are open to
examples.*



*A mother is a gardener of God
tending to the hearts of her children.*



*Your children are the heirs of your
lifestyle, your daily witness to your
values.*



Bend the tree while it is a twig.



The right temperature at home is

maintained by warm hearts, not hot heads.



A mother's patience is like a tube of toothpaste. It's never quite gone.



Mothers write on the hearts of their children what the world's rough hand cannot erase.



To lead your children in the right way, you must go that way yourself.



Your companions are like buttons on

*an elevator: they will either take you
up or down.*



*A grandmother is a little bit parent, a
little bit teacher, and a little bit best
friend.*



*The values we leave our children are
more important than the valuables we
leave them.*



*Mother makes dinner but God makes
the night.*



Don't pour out the child with his bath.



*When children are little you have
them in your lap; when grown up, on
the heart.*



Love a child, chastise him.



The burned child is afraid of fire.



*A broken home is the world's greatest
wreck.*



*Every father should remember that
someday his sons will follow his
example instead of his advice.*



*The family that works together, eats
together, and prays together, stays
together.*



*The best fathers not only give us life—
they teach us how to live.*



*A father's love is a feeling of security
in turbulent and busy times.*



*If we have perfect parents, we would
not have a need for God.*



*The apple will not roll far away from
its tree.*



There's a black sheep in every family.



Such a father, such a son.



*Before you question your husband's
judgment, consider who he married.*

In Word & Deed



*The person who thinks too little
usually talks too much.*



Edna is a soft-spoken, gracious woman in her nineties. Born and raised in Ohio, she was the eldest in a large Amish family. "I never heard my parents use the words 'I love you,'" she says. "But I knew they did. It just wasn't the Plain way. It wasn't until I married [a non-Amish man] that I started to use those words. It was difficult at first, even to tell my own children I loved them." She looks up. "But I think they knew that I did."

Her daughter, Judy, is by her side, bobbing her head in agreement. "We knew, Mom."

A theme in Amish life is to live by example, not by words. Expressions of sentiment are rare, not necessarily because the Amish don't have deep feelings, but because

it seems worldly to air one's emotions. Words are not cheap to the Amish. "Where water is deepest, it is stillest" best sums it up.

Threaded throughout many Amish sayings is a great emphasis on filtering one's speech: "You can't hang a man for his thoughts, but you mustn't think too loud." Careless talk and gossip are frowned upon. "Think ten times, talk once," or "What one is ashamed to do one should be ashamed to say." Or here's one that makes you wonder about who coined it and why: "A woman's tongue is the last thing about her that dies."

To the Amish, how a person acts says more about their faith than what they say they believe. The lack of emphasis Plain People place on evangelism is often misunderstood. Setting an example of a holy life, they feel, makes a better witness than mere talk. Rather than proselytize, the Amish provide practical help when natural disasters strike.

For example, busloads of young Amish men from the Lancaster area traveled to Pass Christian, Mississippi, to help rebuild homes after Hurricane Katrina. To their way of thinking, "You can preach a better sermon with your life than with your lips."

The messages behind "Actions speak louder than words" or "Kind actions begin with kind thoughts" seem so ordinary that we almost pass them by—but we shouldn't. Think of the impact of a good deed or a kind word. "Good deeds have echoes."

There's a biblical proverb behind this way of thinking:

"Your own soul is nourished when you are kind; it is destroyed when you are cruel" (Prov. 11:17 LB). What is a nourished soul? It's one that feels inner joy and peace. Not smugness or pride or self-righteousness, but a deep-down awareness that you are doing the work of God. The Amish believe that we are made in the image of a God who is by nature good. Doing good is God's work.

To quote an Amish scribe in *The Budget*, "God doesn't ask us to be successful, only faithful."[\[7\]](#)

A fault mender is better than a fault finder.



An unkind remark is like a killing frost—no matter how much it warms up, the damage is already done.



Whoever talks about others will also talk of you.



He talks much when the day is long.



It's easy to talk if you're not in those shoes.



To belittle is to be little.



Talking won't fill the belly.



*Some people are like buttons,
popping off at the wrong time.*



*A smile is a curve that can straighten
out a lot of things.*



*All that you do, do with your might.
Things done by halves are never done
right.*



*Swallowing words before you say
them is so much better than having to
eat them afterward.*



*When you speak, always remember
that God is one of your listeners.*



*To mistreat God's creation is to
offend the Creator.*



Repeating hearsay brings dismay.



*One way to save face is to keep the
lower half of it shut.*



*The best helping hand is the one at
the end of your arm.*



*Politeness is to do and say the kindest
thing in the kindest way.*



*It is easier to preach a sermon than to
live one.*



*Even though you can hide from the
earth, heaven sees you act.*



*Cut h off of “habit” and you will have
“a bit” left. Cut off a and you still
have a “bit.” Cut off bit and you will
have “it” conquered.*



*Why is it so hard to say “I broke it”
and so easy to say “it broke”?*



*Kind words and kind deeds keep life's
garden free of weeds.*



*It takes 73 muscles to frown and only
14 to smile. No wonder grouchy
people are always tired.*



*To overcome sin, starve the old nature
and feed the new.*



*A person who gets all wrapped up in
himself makes a mighty small
package.*



He talked much but said little.



Three are too many to keep a secret.



*Open your ears to God before you
open your mouth to others.*



*A gossip can't be telling the truth all
the time—there isn't that much truth.*



*Great ideas don't seem to come from
swelled heads.*



Good intentions spoil if not used.



*If you find it difficult to stand for
what's right, try kneeling first.*



*Think all you speak, but speak not all
you think.*



*When we give others a piece of our
mind, we have no peace left.*



*Beware of your thoughts; they may
become words any minute.*



*Advice is like cooking. You should try
it before you feed it to others.*



*Deal with the faults of others as
gently as your own.*



*Be slow to anger and quick to forgive,
and you will have friends for as long
as you live.*



*It takes some folks a long time to tell
you they have nothing to say.*



A negative attitude is like a flat tire.

*You won't get very far without
changing it.*



*If you cannot be thankful for what you
have received, be thankful for what
you have escaped.*



*The best way to have the last word is
to apologize.*



*Four things never return: the spoken
word, the sped arrow, past life, and
neglected opportunity.*



*The easiest way to make a mountain
out of a molehill is to add a little dirt.*



*Words break no bones, but they can
break hearts.*



*What other people think of you is
none of your business.*

Work Ethic



*A good name, like good will, is earned
by many actions and lost by one.*



The Washington Post ran a story about a woman in southern Maryland who wanted to have a modular house built.[\[8\]](#) She asked friends and relatives for a recommendation for a good contractor. She finally settled on one: an Amish builder with an excellent reputation. She drove out to the builder's farm (since he was Amish, he had no phone) and described to him the kind of house she wanted. Happily, she agreed to the price tag he gave her, far lower than she had expected. In fact, commercial builders had quoted two to three times the price of the Amish builder.

But there were two parts of the arrangement that shocked her. One was the builder's waiting list: two years.

The other was that there was no contract, no deposit required. Only a handshake to seal the deal. The transaction was based on trust.

If there is one characteristic the Amish are admired for, it is their strong work ethic. The Amish brand sells. It's even become a source of controversy as non-Amish businesses try to capitalize on the brand by labeling their products as Amish ones. "A general rule of thumb," says Erik Wesner, a scholar who studies the Amish and runs the Amish America blog, "is that if it says Amish, then it ain't."

Instilling a work ethic starts at a young age. Teaching a child to work and accept responsibility is one of the most important traits Amish parents hope to instill in their children. Traditional sayings strongly emphasize the renowned Amish work ethic: He that cometh first to the mill, grindeth first.



*The morning hour has gold in hand,
woe to those who heed it not.*

Perseverance is encouraged: "If you don't give up, you haven't lost."

An Amish child begins "choring" at the age of four or five, and the care of farm animals plays a big role in teaching daily responsibility. Boys and girls learn to feed

chickens, gather eggs, and bottle nurse the calf. At a later age, most children are given charge of an animal—usually a calf or heifer—that will become exclusively theirs. The fate of the animal is linked to the care and attention it is given. The child learns the direct consequences of feeding, growth, birth, breeding . . . or neglect and disease. And in the natural course of events, they learn about death too. “He cares more about the wool than he does about the sheep” is an insult. It says that how an individual treats animals can unmask the truth about his character to others.

After Amish teenagers leave school at eighth grade and begin working, they customarily give their paychecks to their parents until they marry or turn 21. Parents provide a small allowance and bank the remainder. When a child marries, most parents will then help with the purchase of a farm or the start-up of a business. Amish parents believe that too much money at too young an age only leads to temptations. “Give the child a finger and he will want the whole hand” is an old-fashioned way of saying that providing too much can de-motivate a child. Here’s another one: “Give a child his will, and a whelp his fill, and neither will thrive.”

Laziness ranks as a cardinal sin. “Yes, tomorrow and not today, is what all lazy people say.” “A lazy donkey will work itself to death sooner than a busy one” is another way of saying that laziness kills quicker than activity. “A lazy sheep thinks its wool heavy” describes a person who can’t take care of their own obligations.

Let's turn this around. While laziness is a disgrace, working hard—with integrity and honesty—is a cherished characteristic, even if these qualities cause a person to be taken advantage of by others. The Amish live by the proverbs "It is better to suffer wrong than to commit wrong" and "A man is happier to be sometimes cheated than to never trust." If they are wronged, so be it. They will not fight in wars. They will not sue anyone in a court of law. To the Amish way of thinking, vengeance belongs to God. They conduct modern business the old-fashioned way—with a handshake, a word of honor, and trust.

One stroke fells not an oak.



*A truly happy person is one who can
enjoy the scenery of a detour.*



*Advice when most needed is least
heeded.*



*Those who can't forget are worse
than those who can't remember.*



A heart at peace gives life to the body.



*Those who fear the future are likely to
fumble the present.*



A bird is known by its feathers.



*The soundness of your ideas is more
important than the sound of your
words.*



Don't believe everything you think!



It is better to give others a piece of your heart than a piece of your mind.



The key to contentment is to realize life is a gift—not a right.



A man should not grieve overmuch, for that is a complaint against God.



No mill, no meat.



No pains, no gains.



*They must hunger in frost that will not
work in heat.*



Harvest comes not every day.



Don't spend a dollar to save a penny.



*Contentment is not getting what we
want but being satisfied with what we
have.*



*People who reject law and order
change their minds when they can lay
down the laws and give the orders.*



*If you put your finger to the fire, it
will get burned.*



*You don't need to get sick to get
better.*



*God's best is known by surrender—
not struggle.*



Contentment and trust are

characteristics of a sanctified life.



*If we don't stand for something, we
will fall for anything.*



Half done is far from done.



Everything begun but nothing done.



*Every bird pipes according to the
shape of its bill.*



*If you can't see the bright side, polish
the dull.*



*God has work for all his children,
regardless of age or ability.*



*You cannot be truly a son of God
without resembling the Father.*



*The trouble with doing nothing is it's
too hard to tell when you're finished.*



*Pride in your work puts joy in your
day.*



The laborer is worthy of his hire.



*The one thing that is worse than a
quitter is the man who is afraid to
begin.*



*If you want life's best, see to it that
life gets your best.*



*The laborer's fare always tastes
sweetest.*



Oiled machinery runs smooth.



The last cow closes the door.



*No man can do nothing and no man
can do everything.*



*The lazier a man is, the more he's
going to do tomorrow.*



*Common sense is often wisdom
clothed in work clothes.*



*Burying your talents is a grave
mistake.*



*The person who says it can't be done
should not interrupt the person doing
it.*



A man must walk before he can run.



Fortune favors the bold.



As the work, so the pay.



*Everyone must carry his own hide to
the tanner.*



What costs little is little esteemed.



*If everyone sweeps before his own
door, the whole street would be clean.*



Don't hitch the cart before the horse.



A thin meadow is soon mowed.



*Many people fail to recognize
opportunity because it comes
disguised as work.*



*Excuses are the nails that hold
together the house of failure.*



*The right train of thought can take
you to a better station in life.*



*If you don't have time to do a job
right, you're going to have to make
time to do it over.*



*Pray for a good harvest but continue
to hoe.*



*Rust ruins more tools than overuse
does.*



*Even a woodpecker has found the way
to progress is to use your head.*

Handling Adversity



*The higher the mountain, the deeper
the valley.*



In late November 2008, Daniel Troyer was told by his doctors that he needed surgery to repair a valve in his heart. The surgery took place a few weeks later. The very next morning, an icy and cold December day, Daniel's eight-year-old grandson was hit by a car as he walked to school. He was killed instantly.

Later that week, still recovering, Daniel was able to attend his grandson's funeral. The Old Order Amish bishop concluded the service by saying not once, not twice, but three times, "God always has a plan."

The Amish believe that God is sovereign over this world—everyone and everything in it. "Adversity is just part of life, and you cope with adversity by accepting it," says Dr.

Joe Wittmer, author of *The Gentle People: An Inside View of Amish Life*. Such yielding to God's will is a distinctive Amish trait.

Non-Amish Christians typically (maybe not accurately, but typically) believe that their faith will deliver them from adversity. The Amish believe they will be delivered in adversity. When bad things happen, they don't question if God exists or why he would allow such a thing. "That does not mean that they do not grieve a death, for example, but their grief always seems lighter to me," says Dr. Wittmer. "Maybe because it is shared by the entire community. An individual really has no control over adversity or much of anything else, for that matter."

A traditional saying that means no one can tell what a day may bring forth is "Hale at morn and dead by night."

Rather than question God's ways—which the Amish would perceive as prideful—they strengthen their faith by dwelling on God's character and the hope for eternity. Notice in these sayings how the focus is on God's provision to endure a difficult circumstance: God is there to give us strength for every hill we have to climb.



*Never doubt in the dark what God has
shown you in the light.*

Trusting God turns problems into opportunities.

The Amish are no strangers to adversity. They are descendants of European Anabaptists, who in the late sixteenth century were the radicals of the day, persecuted and martyred for their beliefs. A secret police force of "Anabaptist hunters" was organized to spy on, locate, and arrest Anabaptists for their nonconformist beliefs. The Amish found refuge in remote parts of France, Switzerland, and Germany, and farmed land that no one else wanted. Even today, at every church service, they sing centuries-old hymns that recall those days of persecution.

With such a background of hardships, self-sufficiency became a core value for the Amish. Today they don't purchase insurance policies, they don't accept any government subsidies or pensions (though they do pay taxes), they don't send their children to public school.

"It's your own fault if you leave the table hungry" or "When the cover is short, you must pull up your legs" reflect the attitude that the Amish don't expect this world to cater to them. In a matter-of-fact way, they expect the rain to fall on the just and the unjust: "This is the way of the world—one has the stockings, the other the shoes."

But the Amish do take care of their own. Mutual aid is

provided to help in times of medical or financial difficulties. The barn raising might be the best metaphor to illustrate how the Amish handle adversity. When a barn burns down, they don't dwell on why it burned, they gather together to rebuild. And then they praise God: for the lumber, the nails, the caring community that skillfully puts it together, the animals that will inhabit it, and for a chance to start again.

*God won't lead you where his grace
can't keep you.*



*Lightning doesn't strike every time it
thunders.*



*Hope for the best, prepare for the
worst, and take what comes with a
smile.*



*Nothing is all wrong: even a clock
that has stopped running is right
twice a day.*



*Someday the scales of justice will be
perfectly balanced.*



There are lots of ways to cut a cake.



*Learn from your failures, or you will
fail to learn.*



*The best way to escape evil is to
pursue good.*



Just when the caterpillar thought the world was over, it became a butterfly.



We value the light more fully after we've come through the darkness.



You can never tell which way the train went by looking at the tracks.



God could save us from trauma, but instead he sends us a Comforter.



*Instead of complaining that the
rosebush is full of thorns, be glad that
the thornbush has roses.*

A decorative horizontal line with a blue square in the center and a light yellow glow.

*Life can be compared to rowing
across a swift stream. We must
continue our efforts of paddling
against the current, or we shall drift
downstream to the rocks and rapids
and not reach the other shore.*

A decorative horizontal line with a blue square in the center and a light yellow glow.

*All the water in the world cannot sink
our boat as long as it's on the
outside.*

A decorative horizontal line with a blue square in the center and a light yellow glow.

*Be like the teakettle; when it's up to
its neck in hot water, it sings.*



You can tell when you're on the right track. It's usually uphill.



Defeat isn't bitter if you don't swallow it.



Forgiveness withheld is like drinking poison and waiting for the offender to die.



God wants to use you stumbling and all, but he can't if you refuse to get up.



The anvil outlasts the hammer.



*No clouds are so dark that God
cannot see through them.*



*When once a dog has killed a sheep, it
will be blamed for the death of every
sheep.*



*Even a clever hen will lay outside the
nest.*



*Gray hairs do not weigh any heavier
than the rest.*



*Some may see a hopeless end, but as
believers we rejoice in an endless
hope.*



*Greatness lies not in trying to be
somebody but in trying to help
somebody.*



*In order to mold his people, God often
has to melt them.*



*If you removed the rocks, the brook
would lose its song.*



*Heaven's delights will far outweigh
earth's difficulties.*



*Adversity reveals character;
prosperity hides it.*



*No house without a mouse, no barn
without corn, no rose without a thorn.*



*No burden so great as that which is
self-made.*



A long life hath long miseries.



*You can never tell where the trouble
lies.*



*Life is not a problem to be solved but
a gift to be enjoyed.*



*If you aren't happy today, what day
are you waiting for?*



*A hen does not quit scratching just
because the worms are scarce. She
scratches that much more to make her
living.*



*Those who bless God in their trials
will be blessed by God through their
trials.*



*Patience is accepting a difficult
situation, without giving God a
deadline to remove it.*



*God orders our stops as well as our
steps.*



Poor or rich, death levels all.

Education



No man is his craft's master the first day.



Naomi Weaver grew up in Holmes County, Ohio, in a large Amish family. In September of 1962, as the new school year started up, Naomi's father decided she had enough public schooling and kept her home. Her birthday was in the fall, anyway. So what's a month or two?

The truant officer held a different point of view. He paid a visit to Naomi's home with a police officer and had her father arrested. Naomi's father spent a day in the county jail.

"After that," Naomi said, "I went to school every day! Until I turned sixteen. Then, happily, I quit." Naomi laughed at the memory but admitted it wasn't so funny when her dad was taken away in a police car.

Although the Amish are peaceable people, they can be surprisingly stubborn. There are some areas that they will not budge on. Take, for example, higher education. "Rub up against a black kettle and you will become black" summarizes the Amish view of public education.

For the first half of the twentieth century, Amish children attended public schools. For most of rural America, that consisted of one-room schoolhouses. Under local control, these schools posed little threat to Amish values. But the massive consolidation of public schools after World War II sparked clashes between the Amish and state officials—such as the one Naomi's dad faced. After legal skirmishes in several states, the United States Supreme Court gave the green light to the eighth-grade Amish school system in 1972, permitting Amish youth to complete formal schooling at the age of fourteen.

Small, parochial schools are critically important to the Amish; they help preserve the culture by reinforcing values and insulating "scholars" from contaminating worldly ideas. These one-room schools prepare children for meaningful lives in Amish society by teaching cooperation, responsibility, hard work, and basic skills for living. Their goal is to support Amish ways.

"If education is to be judged by its achievements, the Amish may have one of the most effective instructional systems in the world today," writes Dr. Joe Wittmer.[\[9\]](#)

Though the classroom work ends at the eighth grade, an Amish education carries on at home. Children continue to learn trades and homemaking skills, all steeped in the

same ethics of working hard and responsibly. In fact, much of the Amish educational process takes place at home. Amish parents believe it is their obligation—not the state's—to educate their children. School and church are an extension of home; however, the chief models of the Amish culture are Mom and Dad.

The Amish have a suspicion about higher education. "He knoweth much who knows that he knows nothing" or "He who knows least hast most to say" or "Those who hold their heads too high haven't much in 'em" reflect a disdain for the pridefulness that the Amish believe often accompanies higher education.

Don't misunderstand. The Amish highly regard learning—but not for its own sake. Education is purposeful, and experience makes for the best teacher. "Experience keeps a dear school, but fools learn in no other," one proverb explains. The Amish value learning by doing and are remarkably adept at finding specific information to learn a new skill. Because they have no exposure to other media, the Amish spend much more time reading than most Americans. Illiteracy is virtually nonexistent.

"Being lifelong learners is very important to them," says Dr. Wittmer. "They have to learn new skills all the time. They've learned how to work hard since they were young children. They've gotten up in the cold with a lantern to milk the cows at 4 a.m. That's the way they've done it, they still work hard. They apply that same work ethic to learning new skills."

Walnut Creek, Ohio, is home to Carlisle Press, a small

Amish-run printing company. The owner adds this message to the back of each book: "Marvin Wengerd is a member of the Amish and he represents one of the many young Amish entrepreneurs who are developing new businesses apart from farming while at the same time remaining faithful to their Amish traditions. He and the employees of his company are dedicated to producing a quality product for their customers. They are mostly self-taught in the printing business and continue to expand their knowledge about printing."

Learning, for the Amish, is not attached to a report card or SATs or getting into the right college. Learning is attached to life.

*Knowledge is the power of the mind.
Wisdom is the power of the soul.*



*Young folks should use their ears and
not their mouths.*



Learning is far more valuable than

education.



*Some read just enough to keep
themselves misinformed.*



*Experience keeps a dear school, but
fools learn in no other.*



Experience costs gold.



*Remember, when you talk, you only
repeat what you already know; if you
listen, you might learn something.*



One can learn something new every day.



Knowledge is power, but like power, it must be hitched to something effective.



Take a fancy to a thing or you can't learn it.



You're never too old to learn.



You can't get no learnin' in an armchair.



A man cannot be robbed of his learning.



Whoever acquires knowledge but does not practice it is like one who plows a field but does not sow it.



Instruction may end in the classroom, but education ends only with life.



Strange how much we've got to know before we know how little we know.



Experience is a hard teacher. She gives the test first, then the lesson afterward.



A good teacher works to capture a student's attention so he can direct it toward God.



Today—read a sound book, think a good thought, live a blessed life.



That person is truly wise who gains his wisdom from the experience of others, thereby saving himself from learning by experience.



*Children's ears may be closed to
advice, but their eyes are open to
examples.*



It is easy to learn what you like.



Easy to learn, soon forgotten.



*The first step to wisdom: Silence. The
second step: Listen.*

Community



The only time to look down on your neighbor is when you're bending over to help.



When Judy, a sixty-something woman with salt-and-pepper hair, was diagnosed with breast cancer, she faced a rigorous schedule of surgery and radiation. Her husband, friends, and neighbors were with her each step of the way. Her husband attended every doctor's appointment and kept a notebook filled with detailed notes of what the doctor said, so they could refer back to it at home. Her friends brought meals after the surgery and on radiation days and prayed daily for her recovery.

"Having everyone's support and practical help felt like the warm blanket you get wrapped up with after surgery," says Judy. "The circumstances of having cancer hadn't

changed, but the love and care of others helped me get through it.”

People need people. Everyone needs a community. Isn't that what is behind the exploding success of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter? People seeking people. We have a longing to be needed and to belong to something bigger than ourselves. It's just the way God wired us. The sayings “No one is strong enough to bear his burdens alone” and “Compassion puts love into action” reflect Judy's experience.

Most people think of community as a place, a geographical location. In reality—for Amish or non-Amish—communities are much more than a physical place. They are the world where people live, work, raise their children, and go to church.

Community is an extremely important aspect of Amish life because the Amish's religious values emphasize the importance of living together as a body of believers. It's one of the reasons the Amish remain tied to the horse and buggy—it creates an invisible boundary. They need to live in close proximity to each other to maintain face-to-face contact with family, friends, and neighbors. Even the size of the church district is kept intentionally small so that all members are within one hour's ride of each other. When a church district gets too large to accommodate members in a home (the Amish worship in homes), it will divide into two.

The Amish world revolves around a local turf. The same people frequently work, play, and worship together. They

join together to help raise a barn, to sew a quilt, to build a new schoolhouse, and then to maintain it.

"After a threshing frolic [a work party to help a farmer thresh his crop]," says Dr. Joe Wittmer, who was raised in an Old Order Amish home, "we'd have a thresher meeting to settle up. If one farmer had help for three days and another for four, he'd pay up for that extra person. It was a time of celebration, that the crops were in. And we'd always have homemade ice cream."

With each event, Amish people attach more deeply as a community, belonging in a way beyond measure. Such is the saying "People with a heart for God have a heart for people."

The Amish live together, worship together, socialize together. They help each other—as friends, neighbors, relatives, all members of a church district. Community, for the Amish, is not made from a place. Community is made up of familiar faces and helping hands.

*Love enables us to walk fearlessly, to
run confidently, and to live
victoriously.*



Community is like an old coat—you

*aren't aware of it until it is taken
away.*



*The best vitamin for making friends is
B'.*



*It is better to hold out a helping hand
than to point a finger.*



We cannot catch our neighbor's foxes.



Two cannot quarrel when one will not.



Tackle the problem, not the person.



Cheerfulness greases the axles of the world.



A small leak will sink a large ship.



Too many people limit their exercise to jumping to conclusions, running up bills, stretching the truth, bending over backward, lying down on the job, sidestepping responsibility, and pushing their luck.



*A friend is never known till a man has
a need.*



Develop a forgiving attitude.



*We can stop forgiving others when
Christ stops forgiving us.*



*Our duty is not to see through one
another, but to see one another
through.*



*If you listen through the wall, you'll
hear others reciting your faults.*



Details beget more details.



*Love always finds a home in the heart
of a friend.*



*The waves of hatred beat in vain
against the rock of love.*



*Prosper and you'll have lots of
friends.*



Those who are to get together will get

together.



Love will find a way.



Two heads are better than one.



*Let every man alone and you'll be let
alone.*



Watch a person as a cat does a mouse.



Howl with the wolves or they will tear

you to pieces.



*Go far from home and you will have a
long way back.*



*When it comes to doing things for
others, some people stop at nothing.*



*Mentioning the faults of others does
not rid us of our own.*



*There is no greater love than the love
that holds on where there seems
nothing left to hold on to.*



*Before you flare up at anyone's
faults, take time to count to ten—ten
of your own.*



*The person who sows seeds of
kindness will have a perpetual
harvest.*



*Don't let anger fester for too long.
Make the first move toward
reconciliation.*



*He who talks to you about others will
talk to others about you.*



*Swallowing pride rarely gives you
indigestion.*



*Many things have been opened by
mistake, but none so frequently as the
mouth.*



*Friendship is a plant which must often
be watered.*



*Love's power to forgive is stronger
than hate's power to get even.*



*Love God completely, love others
compassionately, love yourself
correctly.*



*People who care about each other
take care of one another. It's not a
duty, it's a pleasure.*



*Freedom is not the right to do as you
please but the liberty to do as you
ought.*



*Tiny snowflakes sticking together can
accomplish great things.*



*A Christian without a church is like a
bee without a hive.*



*A song coupled with service makes a
beautiful sermon.*



*If you won't admit you've been wrong,
you love yourself more than truth.*



*Indignation is the poison we drink to
kill our friends.*



*May our lives be like arithmetic:
friends added, enemies subtracted,*

sorrows divided, joys multiplied.



*The only people with whom you
should try to get even are those who
have been kind to you.*



*Apple butter, just like relationships,
takes time to boil, time to cool, and
time to turn out wonderfully.*



*There is a vast difference between
putting your nose in other people's
business and putting your heart in
other people's problems.*



*When you dig another out of their
troubles, you find a place to bury
your own.*



*The real secret of happiness is not
what you give or what you receive,
it's what you share.*

Character



*Friendships cemented together with
sin do not hold.*



There's a beautiful body of water in England called Mill Pond, where swans frequently make a stop on their annual migration. Stretched across one corner of the pond are overhead power lines. A number of swans have been killed because they didn't see the power lines as they approached the pond to make a landing. After neighbors complained, the power company installed red flags on the lines. The swans, now alerted to the danger, avoid the lines. Since the red flags were installed, not a single swan has died.

Proverbs are meant to act like those red flags that were provided for the swans' protection. With enough repetition, the Amish principles of simple living should pop into a

person's mind when he sees danger ahead. The Amish understand a biblical truth: paths that lead to sin—like those power lines—can be nearly invisible, yet have devastating consequences to one's character.

Maintaining a person's character begins—and continues—with a decision, so these red flags create “advanced decision making.” Under pressure, a well-developed character can stand firm and respond by knowing God's way. The best way. Tempted to lie to get out of a tight spot? Up pops the red flag: “The LORD detests lying lips” (Prov. 12:22). Decision made! Such principles of wisdom have been so engrained through repetitive use of proverbs and sayings that, when one is faced with a critical crossroad in daily life, vital messages trumpet out good judgment.

Easy to remember, proverbs can clarify the difference between right and wrong, good and evil; they help an individual avoid moral mud puddles. With rich and colorful language, these sayings evoke vivid word pictures: “You can smell scorched soup from afar” is a reminder that gossip spreads like wildfire.

“Much straw but little grain” is a person who is all talk but no substance.

This one needs no explanation: “They who trim themselves to suit others will soon whittle themselves away.”

The Amish believe that no one is born with an innately good character . . . and pride is every human being's “default button.” It's where our natures tend to slip.

Curiously, many common sayings have to do with a mule facing the consequences . . . of being mulish: "Wherever an ass falleth, there will he never fall again" means you can put a mule in a dilemma only once. Can't you just picture a father trying to teach his son to learn from a mistake and not repeat it?

Here's a favorite: "'One must remember where it comes from,' said the farmer when the mule kicked him." Wouldn't you love to know the story behind that one?

One of the main tasks of the Christian life is to grow out of folly and into wisdom. Wisdom flows from good character. But part of the process of developing a good character involves making mistakes. Many bromides take a tongue-in-cheek approach to life's mishaps.

"Every hen will lay an imperfect egg now and then" implies that accidents happen in the best of families. "Even a clever hen will lay outside the nest" means that everyone makes mistakes.

But a man who doesn't learn from his mistakes?

Well, as the saying goes, "He went through school like the mule through the mill; in at one end and out at the other."

Now that is cause for concern.

*Good character like good soup is
usually homemade.*



*Remember that wherever you go,
there you are.*



*Enthusiasm is contagious and so is
the lack of it.*



*A truly humble person is not easily
offended.*



*You can tell a man's character by
what he turns up when offered a job—
his nose or his sleeves.*



Don't crow too soon.



*You can look a man into the face but
not into the heart.*



Fat hens lay few eggs.



*He who has never done anything
wrong has never done anything right.*



*Better to die honest than to live in
disgrace.*



Before asking for another talent, be sure you make use of what you have.



No one raises his own reputation by lowering others'.



Doing what's right today means no regrets tomorrow.



Contentment is discovering the value of what God has already given to me.



Carry God's Word when you are young and it will carry you when you

are old.



*Truth can be trampled to the ground,
but it will always stand back up.*



*Either the world is changing us or
we're changing the world.*



*To lead your children in the right
way, you must go that way yourself.*



*Intelligence is like a river—the deeper
it is, the less noise it makes.*



*The best way to succeed in life is to
act on the advice we give to others.*



*A good tree will not bear strange
fruit.*



*We may face situations beyond our
reserves but never beyond God's
resources.*



An old sore is hard to heal.



*Courage is something you can never
lose, because courage is something*

you can always choose.



*You are richer today if you have
laughed, given, or forgiven.*



*The key ingredient to a great loaf of
bread is patience.*



A clear conscience is a soft pillow.



*Straight ahead is shorter than round
about.*



Not all is gold that shines.

Just for Fun

If you are under the impression that the Amish don't have a sense of humor, well, "have another think" . . .

Every family tree has a little sap.



"Don't get caught" is the eleventh commandment.



If you get to be as old as a cow, you'll learn s'more anyhow.



The poor man sleeps soundly; he need

have no fear of thieves.



Better to break an arm than a neck.



*Whoever is afraid of doing too much
always does least.*



*Those who have no children know
best how to raise them.*



*If the grass looks greener on the other
side, fertilize.*



Short hair is quickly brushed.



*If you can swallow a pill while
drinking from a water fountain, you
deserve to get well.*



Kissing wears out, cooking don't.



*A woman's work is not seen unless it's
not done.*



*Nothing is quite so annoying as to
have someone go right on talking
when you are interrupting.*



*In the kingdom of the blind, one-eyed
men are kings.*



Don't sell a poor horse near home.



*The world has too many cranks and
not enough self-starters.*



*Sometimes elbow grease is the most
valuable tool in the kitchen.*



Burn the candle by day and you'll

have to sit in the dark at night.



*Doing nothing is the most tiresome
job in the world because it's
impossible to quit to take a rest.*



Even the devil does not know it all.



*Confidence is the feeling you have
before you fully understand the
situation.*



*If everything is coming your direction,
you are in the wrong lane.*



*A wooden spoon compels even the
strangest of ingredients to get their
acts together.*



*An honest cook serves her food with
the burnt side up.*



*Daylight saving time is based on the
ancient idea of lengthening a blanket
by cutting off one end and sewing it
on the other end.*



*One of the best things to have up your
sleeve is your funny bone.*



Firewood heats you twice—once when you cut it and again when you burn it.



A perfectionist is someone who takes great pains and gives them to others.



Memory is that thing which reminds us we have forgotten something that we cannot remember.



Winter is the season where we keep the house as hot as it was last summer when we complained about it being too hot.



*Marriages are made in heaven—but
then so are thunder and lightning.*



*Few things have a shorter life span
than a clean garage.*



*Middle age starts on the day you
become more concerned with how far
a horse will go rather than how fast.*



*By the time most folks get to greener
pastures, they can't climb the fence.*



There are three kinds of ignorant people—ignorant, very ignorant, and hopelessly ignorant.



Other people's food always taste best.



A stink is still worse for the stirring.



If you could know everything in advance,you would soon be rich or crazy.



An old woman's dancing doesn't last long.



Even a cat may look upon a king.



*Mice with the shortest tails are
soonest hidden.*



A miss is as good as a mile.



Bacon and rind are of a one kind.



Moths always destroy the best.



A fox may grow gray but never good.



*You can't hatch chickens from fried
eggs.*

Notes

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Suzanne Woods Fisher first became interested in the culture of the Plain People through her grandfather, W. D. Benedict, who was raised in the Old Order German Baptist Brethren Church (also known as Dunkards) in Franklin County, Pennsylvania. She has a warm relationship with her Dunkard cousins and asks them many, many questions, which they patiently answer. She is the bestselling author of *The Choice*, *The Waiting*, *The Search*, *The Keeper*, and *The Haven*, as well as nonfiction books about the Amish, including *Amish Peace*. She is also the coauthor of a new Amish children's series, *The Adventures of Lily Lapp*. Suzanne is the host of the internet radio show *Amish Wisdom* and a columnist for *Christian Post* and *Cooking & Such* magazines. She lives in California and loves to hear from her readers. Find her online at www.suzannewoodsfisher.com.

Well done is better than well said.



*The only people with whom you should try to get
even are those who have been kind to you.*



Some folks don't exaggerate, they just remember big.

Chances are good that during your life you've run across some good advice. And it's very likely that much of it originated with an Amish proverb. Through firsthand research and personal relationships, Suzanne Woods Fisher has collected more than 400 proverbs that uncover the rich heritage, folklore, faith, values, history, and essence of the Plain People. These proverbs serve as teaching tools and maxims for practical living—but they're not just for the Amish. They're for anyone who seeks God's wisdom and truth for everyday circumstances.

Ranging from the simple to the profound, from the serious to the humorous, these sayings will stick with you through life's joys and sorrows.



Suzanne Woods Fisher is the bestselling author of *Amish Peace*, as well as many novels about the Amish, including *The Choice*, *The Waiting*, *The Search*, *The Keeper*, and *The Haven*. Suzanne is a Christy Award nominee and is the host of an internet radio show called *Amish Wisdom*. She lives in California.

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