

Testimony of Ira & Lydia Ruth

Greetings to all in the name of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. The one who died on the cross so our sins could be blotted out and that we could be washed white as snow.

I grew up on an Amish dairy farm and was taught at a very young age to get up early in the morning and go out to help with the milking. I appreciate very much that we were taught to pitch in and help. I was the third child in a family of ten children. I grew up feeling very unloved although I do not hold that against my parents as I do not feel they were taught what love is in their childhood, especially my father who grew up in a very abusive household.

The first I recall having a very real experience with the Lord was

when I was fourteen years old. I was very rebellious even at that age and was doing things against my parents' wishes. I remember one week especially that things did not go well at home. I decided that Sunday night after everybody is at home and sleeping, I am going to slip out and leave home. My oldest brother usually came home from the youth gatherings around two o'clock so after he came up to his bed and was asleep I slipped out and left. I can only imagine to a small extent what my parents must have gone through the next morning, because I know they loved their children very much. That was one day I will never forget as long as I live. By that evening I realized what a big mess I was in and finally I knelt down beside the small creek that went through our woods and asked God to get me out of this

mess. I went back home that night after everything was dark in the house. Neither of my parents was sleeping and we stayed up talking a little while. After that things went somewhat better until I started with the youth group at the age of sixteen. At that time I was again very rebellious and pretty much did things the way I wanted to do them. Things did not go well at all between my parents and me. At the age of seventeen I started working three days a week for a neighboring farmer which did relieve the tension between us somewhat. At the age of eighteen, I asked Lydia Ruth for our first date. I do believe the Lord was watching over us and guiding us as I was very inexperienced. After that things again settled down a bit at home as I now had something to look forward to in my life.

At the age of twenty, I joined the other youth in our church district for instruction and baptism. I was baptized that fall into the Amish church because I thought that was the thing to do and also because I wanted to be married the next year. The Amish church districts only have baptism every other year. We were married the next fall at the age of twenty-one. After that things did change quite a bit between my father and me.

Two years after we were married we started farming on Lydia Ruth's father's farm. We had moved into the other end of the farmhouse after we were married. I looked at farming as a challenge and a way to possibly fill this void that was within me. All the other things such as the youth group, our courtship, and marriage had only served to fill that void partially. It was not long after we started farming that I was pushing the church lines with equipment that the church did not approve of. After three years on the first farm we moved onto another farm nearby that had room for more cows and also had more acres to farm. By this time I was very much questioning the standards of the Amish church. I wanted bigger equipment to get my work done on time and to stay ahead of the other farmers around us. By this time I had gained the reputation of being a hard worker and of getting my work done on time and also of doing things my way even if they did not line up with church standards. One question I always had in my mind was that if it is wrong for me to have this equipment and I could not go to heaven because of that, how then could anybody else, who had the same piece of equipment, go to heaven? It was very confusing for me because the picture I had of heaven

was a place where everybody was together as one big happy group. That was not the picture I was getting from the Amish church. I also knew in my heart that I was not prepared to go to heaven. In the spring of 2007 we moved onto my home farm in another church district that had stricter rules on farm equipment and I was asked to get rid of some equipment that had been alright in the other districts were we had been before, or face being punished by the church leaders. By this time things did not make sense at all to me. The void in my heart seemed to be getting bigger. I was very much searching for answers to the questions I had but had no idea where to turn to. We had been taught that to leave the Amish church was going out into the world which was a sin that could not be forgiven unless that person came back and confessed that he had done wrong and wanted to obey the rules of the church.

Things kept building up inside of me to the extent that I hardly knew what to believe anymore. I tried reading the Bible but it was just a book to me and did not at all make sense.

In January of 2009 I met brother Daniel King at a horse sale in Harrisburg. We had been in the same youth group in our younger years. I had learned to know and respect him back then as being different from the average young man but had no idea why he was different. After we were married I heard that he left the Amish church and thought I would like to talk to him but did not know where he was or how to contact him. I remember very well when he talked to me at the horse sale. When I realized who he was, relief just washed through me. I asked quite a few questions and I very much liked the answers I got. Here were finally some answers to my questions that lined up with God's Word.

Through that meeting we met some true believers and I for the first time in my life had the plan of salvation really explained to me. I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour! I found something that will fill that void in my heart. Glory, Hallelujah! I have been born into eternal life through Jesus Christ my Lord!! I continue to be amazed at the perfect way the Lord works if we can completely, and wholly surrender to His will. One promise that I really hang on to is that if we love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength He will give us the desires of our hearts. My foremost desire is to serve the Lord in all that I do and to give Him all the honor and glory.