

The Amish

Transcript

Amish Man 1: Yeah, okay.

Interviewer: Okay, let's chat.

Amish Man 1: Tell the Cameraman to get lost! [Laughs]

Slate: The Amish will not pose for photographs or allow interviews on camera.

Interviewer: He doesn't come until tomorrow.

Amish Man 1: Good. That's good.

Interviewer: So tell me, I want to know first of all, about your family.

Slate: Many Amish people allowed us to record our conversations with them. The voices in this film are theirs.

Interviewer: Where did they come from, and how did they get here?

Amish Man 1: Oh, well when they came to America, they landed in Philadelphia, then Benjamin Franklin...

Slate: Summer. Intercourse, Pennsylvania

Tour Guide: Welcome to the Amish farm and house, my name is Don, I'll be your tour guide today. Talk a bit about the Amish, and where they come from. All goes back to the Protestant Reformation, 1517, Martin Luther...

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Slate: Rooted in the Protestant Reformation, the Amish church began in Europe and soon spread to North America. Today, Amish communities exist only in Canada and the United States.

Tour Guide: We'll start over here, with the wardrobe. Up to the age of one year old, a little girl, or a little boy in the Amish community will wear something like this.

Tourist 1: Why is it that the fashion seems to be frozen in time, and yet they're wearing flip-flops?

Tourist 2: Is there an identity as Americans, or...

Tour Guide: I'm sure the Amish would see themselves that way. They're not always seen that way by the surrounding community, and sometimes there's a little friction! They won't fly the flag, they won't pledge allegiance, they won't... you know, they don't vote on a regular basis.

Tour Bus Guide: Now look at these homes. All these homes on both sides, and the Amish are working on the roof up there. These are all Amish homes.... You want to get pictures? I'll just hold it a minute. You can get the pictures you'd like to have.

Amish people do not want you to take their photograph up close. They believe it breaks the second of the Ten Commandments. When we're riding along, and they're out in the field or along the road, that's all fine.

Slate: There are more than 250,000 Amish in the United States. Nearly 20 million tourists visit Amish communities every year.

Amish Man 2: It's a mystery to me, why they come by the millions to look at us. I guess it's the simple life, and the cute kids in the buggy and the cows in the pasture... and it's all visual. But anybody's kids are cute. Is it any different, say, than going to Disney World, or Yellowstone Park? Is it any different from that? For the tourist? Are they yearning for something? Are they seekers?

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Tour Bus Guide: Now the Germans came here, and they said, this looks like Germany, so we're gonna stay. They did. They didn't know it at the time, but this is the best soil in America. Down here on the left, is an Amish farmer...

Amish Man 3: The Amish people are the so-called salt of the Earth. And I'm not saying that we are, I'm just saying that we're supposed to be. And if we go back to Genesis, and the beginning of the Bible, why, we soon realize that man was driven out of the Garden of Eden, out on the land, and there he was to serve his time. And work the soil, with the sweat of his brow. When a man is working the soil, he is as close to God as he can get. That's the closest you can get to God, working the soil. And now we live in days where 85 percent of our people are no longer on the soil. So now what do we do?

Farmhand: Okay we're off!

Amish Farmer: Probably four and a half's okay. It's just that one row was extra thick there.

Slate: Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

Farmhand: Yeah. Well, we were stacking that one up, because we thought we were gonna run outta wagon!

Amish Farmer: Yeah.

Amish Man 4: In 1923, my great-grandfather purchased this farm. And it's been in our family since that time. We're the fourth generation, our children would be the fifth generation. Dad was kind of thinking of winding down, and I was undecided. But I started sensing that I was being drawn back to the farm. I saw that Dad needed some help. So, that's kind of how that started. And even when I started, I wasn't sure, you know, if I wanted to do this. I wouldn't recommend it to young guys who aren't married. I certainly wouldn't be at it for 25 or 30 years like I am now, without having a wife and children.

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Slate: Amish families began settling in Pennsylvania in the early 18th century. They speak a German-based dialect known as Pennsylvania Dutch and refer to non-Amish as "English."

Amish Man 4: My desire is that we can raise sons and daughters for the Lord. Whatever occupations they may choose, that's not... that's secondary. And yeah, it would be ideal if he would step in, take over the farm here in ten years. But it's very, way too premature to say that's what's going to happen. So we'll just take it a day at a time, a year at a time, and see what happens.

Karen M. Johnson-Weiner, Anthropologist: The Amish sense, is that God's followers, the faithful, are going to be a small number. And they are passing through this world, and the world is an evil place.

Slate: The Amish are Anabaptists -- Christians who practice adult baptism.

David Weaver-Zercher, Historian: In 16th century European life, the Anabaptists were unique because they believed in "Believer's Baptism," that is baptism as an adult, but what that really symbolizes is the understanding that making a Christian commitment and joining the church is something that you can only do voluntarily.

Donald B. Kraybill, Sociologist: And that put them at odds with the state. Baptism, adult baptism was a capital offense, and they got the medieval equivalent of the electric chair. Two thousand to 3,000 died as martyrs. The government appointed Anabaptist hunters that would go out, looking for them, so they would hold services in caves, hold services in the woods at night, and basically became an underground movement. And that has really stayed in the DNA of Amish culture and Amish history. It's not unlike slavery for African Americans. It's not unlike the Holocaust for Jews. So there's this sense of being a separated people, of being a minority people, of being cautious about what the outside world might do to you again.

Karen M. Johnson-Weiner, Anthropologist: They're in our world, but they're not part of our world. They're in the world, but not of it. And that's what they want to be. They are working

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together to actively live according to Christ's teachings. And the majority of the world is not doing that. So the sense is that, "We are pilgrims passing through this world, on the way to the eternal world. We don't get attached to this world; we don't get attached to the things of this world. We do our best, we try to serve God, and then we hope that will mean we are worthy of salvation."

Slate: LaGrange County, Indiana. In their late teens, young Amish must decide if they want to be baptized and join the church.

Donald B. Kraybill, Sociologist: Baptism is a very important step. It's probably the most important decision they will make in their life. They are on their bended knees, and they're making this lifelong pledge to God that they will stick with the Christian faith and they will stick with the Amish church for the rest of their life. It's an enduring commitment.

Amish Teen 1: I was standing in the kitchen, and my dad came up the stairs and came over to me and was like, "You know, you make me the happiest dad in the world." And put his arm around me, and gave me a hug. And I was all confused, because I didn't know what he was talking about. He was like, "I didn't know you were going to join church this fall!" And I was like, "Oh. Yeah. I guess I am!" He's happy that I'm joining church, and -- then it made me really happy too. I tried to tell myself, you know, during the service that, "It's just any normal church, I don't have to be nervous." But if I let myself think about it, and think of every step, I kinda get nervous.

When I was kneeling down on the floor, I remember thinking my feet hurt because I was sitting on them. And then I was like, "Man, all these people are praying for me." and just, wow! It just felt good. And I'm still down on my knees, and then one of the ministers brings the bucket of water and cups their hands above my head, and he says, "I baptize you in the name of the father," and then they pour water, "Son," pours more, and then "the Holy Ghost." I remember thinking "Whoa, there's a lot of water in my lap!" And then I'm baptized, and then he helps me stand up and says, you know, now I'm a member of the church, and "You are no

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more a stranger, you're a sister in the church now." I just wanted to go... flutter around and be happy, I guess. On the way home, I just wanted to sing.

Slate: Fall. Wayne County, Ohio

Amish Woman 1: This morning I got up at quarter 'till five, and I started getting the laundry together. Then I woke the girls at five o'clock, and they made breakfast. My husband gets up, and then the schoolchildren get up around 5:30. And by six o'clock or 6:15, we're ready for breakfast. This morning the girls made blueberries and pancakes and whipped cream and eggs. And then after breakfast we gather in the living room for devotions, which is Bible reading and singing and prayer. The day wouldn't seem to start right without it.

Home is the foundation for children to be taught about God and how to live, and to learn values and just everything that really goes with them later in life. I think if we want to be a Christian and live a godly life, we have to be submissive. I don't mean that I have to be doing all the work for everybody, or, you know, doing all the jobs nobody else wants to do, that's not what I'm talking about. You know, Jesus, when he was here on earth, he came and was a servant to mankind. And I think that's the example that he put forth for us. The more you can be a servant to other people, to your family, to your husband, to your children and others around you, I think that's the more happiness and peace of life you can have. And then we will be blessed. We'll feel blessed.

David Weaver-Zercher, Historian: Some people talk about Amish family values, well, you know in a certain sense, the family unit is not the most important social unit in Amish life. The Amish church is the most important social unit. And though most Americans, Christians who are involved in the church and take their church seriously, say they really value their church, it's a very different sort of understanding of what role that church plays in your life.

Slate: The Amish do not have church buildings. Families take turns hosting Sunday worship in their homes.

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Karen M. Johnson-Weiner, Anthropologist: The Amish basically see individuals as weak. It's only by joining with others in the church, by really giving yourself up to the church, by trusting that together that we'll gain the strength to lead a worthy life. It's only by doing that that you can hope to be worthy of salvation.

Amish Man 1: I just remember going to church and sitting in the back of the carriage, and we'd go to church. And mom would put on my straw hat, and my black coat, and my shoes, and I'd sit in the back with my sisters, my two sisters, and we'd go to church. And there's 175 districts in Lancaster County, give or take one or two, and we all have church every two weeks. We did that ever since the 1740s, when the first Amish services were held in America.

Gertrude Schlabach, Former Amish: You *had* to go to church. You went to church unless you were almost deathly sick. In the summertime they'd have it in the barn. In the wintertime, they'd clear out all of the furniture out of the rooms and set up benches. The ministers would make the start to go in, and then the older men, then the older women, and then the girls. The boys got to sit in the back, and *they* got to come in last. And then you sat down, and then somebody would start singing the slow German songs. It was all in German.

[Church songs]

And one of the ministers would get up and preach.

[Amish preaching]

They were not permitted to have any notes, at all. Everything had to be from memory.

Slate: The Amish have no trained clergy. Ministers must be male, and are chosen by drawing lots and serve for life.

Steven M. Nolt, Historian: Church isn't just something you go to on Sunday mornings, it's not just a place to receive sacraments, it's not just somewhere to assure your future in Heaven.

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But it's an everyday reality, today, that attends to your social and physical needs as well as your spiritual needs.

Amish Man 1: We go to church to increase our chance of salvation. We go to church to fellowship with other people. "Did you hear about Henry? He bought that farm next door to Joe's place." And "Did you see the runaway yesterday? Those horses ran off." And "Did you hear about what's going to happen next week? Jake Fisher wants to set up his barn." And there'll be some youngster saying that "the Philadelphia Eagles did this or did that." "Did you hear that Levi Fisher's had another baby, and it's a boy? Now they have seven boys." And missus so-and-so had another baby, and it's a girl. Now they have five girls. You can practically see, fairly well, every two weeks, if that family's happy or not. We're very transparent. We see practically everything everybody does.

"Unusual Occupations" series [archival, voice over]: Paradise! The heavenly name of a town in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Home of the people known as "the Amish." Now here's one place in the United States where the automobile is considered a needless luxury. For 250 years, the Amish have never changed location, mode of living, manner of dress, or type of occupation, which is farming. Single men shave, married men wear beards. The mustache is out. Public telephones contact the outside world, but there are no phones in the homes. Women wear white bonnets on weekdays, black ones on Sundays. Buttons are considered frivolous, so pins are used instead. The Amish religion governs every phase of life, even to dress... and blue is the popular color...

Saloma Furlong, Former Amish: Men were supposed to have hats with at least so many inches of brim on the hat. They were supposed to wear vests when they were out visiting, they could wear buttons on their shirts, that were, you know, that weren't too fancy. And the women had to wear coverings. I don't remember how he measured that, was it was how big the covering should be, or how much of the hair should be covered, but something to that effect. Dresses should be at least halfway between the knees and the ankles. They shouldn't wear colors that were not allowed in the community. Pink or red, or any of those really bright

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colors were not allowed. The Amish go over those rules, over and over again, every six months. It's a way of sort of maintaining that religion. And it keeps people thinking the Amish way.

Slate: Amish identity is shaped by a set of unwritten rules called the *Ordnung* that regulates everything from clothing to technology.

Karen M. Johnson-Weiner, Anthropologist: The *Ordnung* is the discipline of the church. It tells people, what you should be doing, basically, and how you should be doing it, and what's off limits. What kind of behavior is off limits, what kinds of material goods are off limits. You know, how you can interact with the world, and with whom in the world you can interact.

Amish Woman 2: To me, it's a way of life that protects, protects me from some of the outside things that I would definitely get into if I wouldn't have the boundaries. I'd like to have a camera. But I usually don't feel that it's worth it, worth it for me to throw everything else away for a few things that I'd like to have. The church sets boundaries. They don't feel that it helps you walk a Christ-like life. So if I would get some of those things, I would feel guilty. Because I've promised to help build the church and not have these things.

David Weaver-Zercher, Historian: Very early on, church discipline was important because in a time of persecution and trial, it was the way that you kept people from easily discarding the faith. The church was there not just to encourage you, and not just to help you think about what might be right; the church was there to actually provide discipline, and to warn you if you were on the wrong track.

Slate: A church community is made up of 25 to 35 families. Each sets its own *Ordnung* and the rules can vary widely. One church may allow bicycles. A mile away, another church may prohibit them.

Amish Man 5: We haven't bought into American consumerism! Staying with the horse, for instance, has determined the distance we travel. It's preserved all the small towns, that's where we go to do business. You go outside Amish communities in the Midwest and small

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towns are all dying, because there's a Walmart on the outskirts siphoning all of that money out of that community, and overnight into Arkansas.

By not having electricity, imagine all the aisles I don't have to walk down in a department store! Aisles of hair blowers, and dryers, and toasters, and all that. Hey! I don't have to walk down that, that's liberation! I don't have to make many decisions, the community has made the decisions. To me, that's liberation.

Saloma Furlong, Former Amish: It's all part of not ever questioning any part of the culture. And I could never do that. I was always asking, "Why can we hire taxi drivers to take us to Middlefield to buy our groceries, but I'm not allowed to have a bicycle that would pedal me there to get my own groceries on my own?" My mother would say to me, "Oh Saloma, you would just be so much better off, if you didn't ask these questions." So there would be no answer.

Amish Woman 2: I can remember feeling, feeling that this is what I want. Like I can remember the night that I feel I accepted Christ. I was outside. I was walking. Yeah. It's almost too personal to talk about. But there were some things that I had done that I knew weren't right, and I just remember crying out to God, and it just seemed like I was just flying. I could just... I was so free, you know I just knew God had forgiven me. Just knew he had. I felt that saving grace. And yeah, I just felt that I could -- I think I could live this life.

Donald B. Kraybill, Sociologist: I think the first 100 years, from the mid-18th- to the mid-19th century, the Amish felt more at home here.

David Weaver-Zercher, Historian: Amish people shared a lot of lifestyle similarities with people who were not Amish. So they were living in a largely Pennsylvania German culture, where people spoke Pennsylvania German, or Pennsylvania Dutch. They were farming, but many of their neighbors were farming. They were using horse drawn vehicles, but their neighbors were using horse drawn vehicles.

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Donald B. Kraybill, Sociologist: It was with the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the fads and the fashions that were becoming available. That's what troubled the Amish mind and troubled the Amish soul. The focus in the Amish society is on the community. Always on the community. In American life, the focus is on the individual. Getting ahead, freedom of individual choice, making a name for yourself, self achievement. All of those are in direct opposition to key values of the Amish way of life. Humility, community, cooperation, putting yourself under the church, and the authority of the church. And so that is the big wedge between these two different ways of life.

The first item of technology that created an issue was the telephone. Because if you have a phone and you can call, why visit? Why go and see the person? It connected them to the outside world. It meant that outsiders could come into their home, into their kitchen, via the telephone.

Slate: By 1910, most Amish communities had banned phones in the home, but permitted the use of public phones.

Donald B. Kraybill, Sociologist: And that is a principal that the Amish have used with a lot of technological developments, to have some kind of a firewall between you and the technology, but yet use it and access it. The main core of Amish motivation is to keep the local church together. If you give someone the keys to the car, they're going to go off to the city. Young people go off and get jobs. So to the Amish way of thinking, the car will fragment our community; it will splinter the community; it will pull us apart.

Slate: By the 1920s, most Amish were prohibited from owning or driving cars, but were allowed to travel as passengers. By mid-century, connection to the electrical grid was also banned.

Archival [voice over]: Now electricity does the chores for the Farmer's wife.

David Weaver-Zercher, Historian: If a technology is necessary, then okay, that's one thing, but if it's making life more convenient and making life easier, that doesn't seem like a real

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good reason to get something. In fact, working hard, and having our time taken up in labor, as opposed to leisure, that's probably the better way to err.

I think in the early 20th century there is a whole lot of thinking that industrialization and technology and progress are going to make lives easier, and make lives better. For the Amish to dig in their heels when this promise of a better life is coming along, makes them quite strange. Strange in the worst sorts of ways. I think people saw their backwardness as an embarrassing part of American life. By the 1920s and 1930s, the consensus is that we're probably seeing the last generation of people living like this.

Gertrude Huntington, Anthropologist: I was studying at Yale, and I decided, maybe I can work on the Amish. My professors thought it would be good if I documented them before they died out. Everybody I had interviewed had said only negative things about them. It was just after World War II. They were pacifists, so they hadn't gone into the army. Their neighbors had lost sons in the war. So they didn't like them because they didn't go to war. They didn't like them because they didn't want paved roads. They didn't like them because they didn't want electricity. And electricity was just coming into this rural area. And they didn't like them because they didn't want telephones. And if your neighbors would get a telephone, it didn't cost you as much to have a telephone line in. And they wouldn't do that. So there was no reason to like them.

Donald B. Kraybill, Sociologist: The Amish would say they are Americans. They are citizens. They pay their taxes. But they also keep the world at a distance. They see the world being based on force. They see their church community being based on love and nonviolence and patience.

Amish Man 5: I love this country. We have a country of great people. But the kingdom of heaven comes first. This trend in America, "Love America or leave it," you wave the flag. The flag is fine, but we're the only nation in the world that worships the flag. It's weird. It's very heathen. The kingdom we live in, we pledge our allegiance to God, and not the flag.

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Karen M. Johnson-Weiner, Anthropologist: The Amish shape themselves by rejecting us. And that's hard to get around if you're the group that's being rejected. I mean, they don't want to be like us.

News Anchor 1 [archival]: Steve, a shooting has been reported at an elementary school in Lancaster County...

News Anchor 2 [archival]: Lancaster County, number of people killed in a shooting, at a one-room Amish schoolhouse today, that word from a state trooper...

News Reporter 1 [archival]: People are gathering now, near the crime scene, blocked off by state police, investigating the carnage here in Lancaster...

Jeffrey Miller [archival]: Good afternoon. My name is Col. Jeffrey B. Miller, I'm the Commissioner of the Pennsylvania State Police. With me is Mr. Don Totaro, the Lancaster County District Attorney...

Slate: On October 2, 2006, a non-Amish man entered an Amish schoolhouse in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania.

Jeffrey Miller, State Police Commissioner: When we landed there, and walked around the fence, the first thing I saw were the troopers that came to greet me. And some of them had blood all over their clothing... Over their uniforms, so you knew that it was not going to be a good scene to survey.

Jeffrey Miller, State Police Commissioner [archival]: The call came in from a schoolteacher, stating a male entered the school, and had taken hostages. He apparently told the kids to line up in front of the blackboard. He began to tie the females, the children's, feet together. He then took the boys; there was exactly 15 boys there, between six and 13. He let them leave.

Jeffrey Miller, State Police Commissioner: Within 20 minutes of that call, we had troopers surrounding the school. And they were just breaking down the front door, and that's when the

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shooter looked and saw that the trooper was coming through the window, and was going to kill him. He turned the gun on himself. But he had already shot every single one of those girls.

Slate: The gunman shot ten Amish girls. Five died.

Mother of Victim (Amish Woman 3): It was about 11:15, when we found out about, what's going on. We didn't know if she's in a hospital somewhere. Or if she's at the school, because we knew there were some at the school that had died. Those five hours were a very long time, to not know whether our daughter had survived or not.

Janice Ballenger, Assistant Coroner: The families were obviously very distraught, not knowing where their children were, were their children alive, dead, they didn't know. We didn't know who was who. The girls all wear the plain dresses. They don't have any ID on them. Had they had things that children wear in public schools, I mean, even these -- the young ones now have cell phones, and backpacks and things. And these children did not have anything like that. There was no way to even begin to try to identify them.

Mother of Victim (Amish Woman 3): We were so ready to find out where she's at, if she survived, we just wanted to know. The hardest part was coming home, and telling the ones at home that she's gone.

Jeffrey Miller, State Police Commissioner [archival]: We have identified the suspect; we have a positive ID on him. His name is Charles Karl Roberts the fourth. He's 32 years of age, and he resides in Bart, Pennsylvania, which is very close to here. He is a truck driver, drives a tanker truck, works the night shift...

Slate: That same day, Amish neighbors visited the killer's family.

Dwight Lefever, Pastor to the Roberts Family: It was a very, very difficult place, and a very desperate place, and in the middle of that situation, eight, nine o'clock that evening, the Amish neighbor walked in. And one of the things that I share with people who I've been able to talk with, that, in a sense, grace walked in the door. And with grace walking in the door,

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hope walked in the door. And we didn't know it at the time, but that's what happened, that was the effect of him coming, and saying, "Chuck --" specifically, Charlie's dad, "-- we will forgive you."

Slate: Three days later, the Amish began burying the murdered schoolgirls.

Mother of Victim (Amish Woman 3): To me, when I think of forgiving, it doesn't mean that you have forgotten what he's done. But it means that you have released unto God the one who has offended you. And you have given up your right to seek revenge. I place the situation in God's hands and just accept that this is the way it was. And I choose not to hold it against Charles because it really doesn't help me anything anyway.

Slate: More than 30 Amish attended the burial of Charles Roberts. Among them were the parents of several victims.

Father of Victim (Amish Man 6): Somebody told us, invited us to go to Charlie's burial. And first I said, "Nah [sigh] I just don't think I could. I don't think I want to." But the Saturday morning came around, and we decided, "Ok, Yeah. We want to go." And I came home from the burial thinking, I was so thankful to God that I don't need to make a judgment on his soul. And there was just a wash of peace. For me it was like unloading baggage. It was just like, "Wow. I don't need to deal with this. This is God's territory."

Steven M. Nolt, Historian: Forgiveness requires giving something up, giving up your right to revenge, giving up feelings of bitterness, whatever you define it. For the Amish, that means that it is of a piece with so many other aspects of their life, because all of Amish life is structured around rituals of giving up, of self-surrender. I think for many of the rest of us, forgiveness is a hard thing because we think it's unnatural, because it's so unlike anything else we do. We're all trained to never give up anything. For Amish people, it's hard, but it's not unnatural.

Mother of Victim (Amish Woman 3): Obviously, sometimes we would like to say to God, "you made a mistake!" But we're taught that God doesn't make mistakes. It's a form of humbleness,

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in realizing that God is supreme, he's much bigger than us. I sometimes think of it, as my soul, my soul is kneeling before God. I might be working. I might be washing dishes, but my soul is kneeling before God, and saying, "Thy will be done." I cry. It hurts.

Slate: Winter. St. Lawrence County, New York

Steven Ballan, Assistant Public Defender: I came into work, and my boss said to me, "Steve, there's a trial out in Morristown today, on an Amish who didn't get a building permit. Here's the file, go do it." And I'm like, "What?" So I had the file, I drove up to Morristown, and I met with a young man up there, his name was Andy Miller.

Slate: In 2007, Andy Miller and five other Amish men were cited for violating state building codes. They had refused to submit building plans or install smoke detectors in their homes.

Steven Ballan, Assistant Public Defender: I pulled up to the courthouse, and there were 50 horse and buggies, everywhere. I went inside, and there was no room in the courtroom.

News Anchor [archival]: Old time beliefs met modern laws at the Morristown municipal building Thursday, more than 75 members of a nearby Amish community came out for a case about building permits. The Amish community says those requirements violate their freedom of religion. Town officials say some members of the Amish community...

Karen M. Johnson-Weiner, Anthropologist: There are a number of aspects of the building code that are problematic. The need for smoke detectors and now carbon monoxide detectors. That's putting your faith in a manmade device instead of God. What God wants to happen will happen. The Amish are building their homes according to way their *Ordnung* says they have to build. If, heaven forbid, a fire comes, sweeps through the house and something terrible happens, the child will be in a better place, the people will be in a better place, they'll be with God. Theirs is not an intellectual faith; it's a lived faith. In a very real way because everything they do is guided by their *Ordnung*, by their beliefs. In a way they're always in church.

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Steven Ballan, Assistant Public Defender: We're not talking about a religion that was created yesterday, to do something that is considered illegal. We're talking about a religion that's been in existence, and then the law changed, to make the way they live illegal. And I think that our country is built on a foundation that says that they should continue to be allowed to practice their religion.

Karen M. Johnson-Weiner, Anthropologist: For the Amish, there's this real sense that persecution comes as a kind of test of the faith. The world wants us to change, but as long as we stick to the ways of our our forefathers -- God's truth hasn't changed if we stick to our forefathers' ways, then we haven't changed either, and we're not drifting, and the church remains strong.

At the beginning of the 20th century, rural Americans went to the little local country school, up to the eighth grade. Both the Amish, and their non-Amish neighbors. And the little kids went to school and played together. And they were taught by a public school teacher. We changed. We changed. We began to consolidate schools. We began to lengthen the school year and to raise the age at which you could leave school.

Donald B. Kraybill, Sociologist: For the Amish, education should be practical. It was important to learn to read, to write, to spell, to do some arithmetic.

Karen M. Johnson-Weiner, Anthropologist: And that's what you go through the eight grades to get. The book learning is important, the schooling is important, but it's values that you get at home working with your parents that's the most important.

Donald B. Kraybill, Sociologist: They worried that if they sent their children to the public high school, the children would become individualistic, they would be exposed to outside ideas, they would leave the church, they would pursue other occupations. Amish elders worried that it would lead to the demise of their church.

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Karen M. Johnson-Weiner, Anthropologist: One of the local civil authorities, secular leaders, was saying, "Schools needed to prepare children for the world." And the Amish comment was "Which world? Not this one. This one is temporary."

Slate: By the 1950s, many Amish parents had stopped sending their children to high school. Over the next two decades, hundreds of Amish fathers were prosecuted in local courts.

Man leading the trial [archival]: You are charged with failing, on the 9th day of March, 1960 to send your child or children to a day school, whose subjects and activities are prescribed by the state council of education commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in violation of section 1327 of the school code.

Mr. Stoltzfus [archival]: I am here on your mercy.

Man leading the trial [archival]: I sentence you to five days in the county prison.

Karen M. Johnson-Weiner, Anthropologist: The world is persecuting us again, the world wants us to change. This change is not our faith, it's not how we should be doing things if we are to be "good Christians." And so, you go to jail.

David Weaver-Zercher, Historian: There was a lot of coverage in the *New York Times* and some other national publications, where the Amish became associated with the one-room schoolhouse. Even as it was disappearing, and perhaps in part, because it was disappearing, it held a very nostalgic draw on other Americans. This one-room school where all the children knew one another well, and where there was one teacher that loved her children, and not only taught them math, but taught them values. The Amish defending the one-room school really struck a chord with some Americans.

And from that point on, there's a much more sympathetic edge to the way the Amish were portrayed and talked about. People praise the Amish, for their self-sufficiency, for the way that even in the Depression they were able to were able to survive on the land, kind of a

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Jeffersonian sort of celebration of who the Amish are. And that doesn't entirely displace people's panning of Amish life as hopelessly backwards, but it becomes a much more prominent theme from the 1930s forward -- that the Amish represent something true and virtuous about American life that some others of us have lost.

Gertrude E. Huntington, Anthropologist: I really thought education was important. And the fact that they only went to eighth grade, I thought was such a shame and too bad. One day I was visiting one of the leaders of the community, and I said, "You know, I really am upset that you don't go to high school and that you don't let your children go on, even when they want to." And he said to me, "You see that field out there? It's owned by my neighbor. My son and his son are the same age. His son went on to high school. My son is already working on the farm. Some day my son will own that farm." And sure enough, the neighbor's son became an engineer and laid pipe in South America, and the Amish man's son bought the farm.

Justice Blackmun [archival from *Yoder* case]: Wisconsin against Yoder, and others. Mr. Ball?

Slate: In December 1971, the U.S. Supreme Court heard the case of three Amish parents who refused to send their children to a Wisconsin high school.

William Ball [archival]: Mr. Chief Justice, if it may please the court. The Amish do not want their children, and they do not want themselves to be exposed to the spirit of luxury, of ostentation, of strife, consumerism, competition, speed, violence and other such elements as are commonly found in our American life. Therefore education for them embraces a rejection of the higher learning and a positive emphasis...

Walter Cronkite, CBS News [archival]: In a unanimous ruling the Supreme Court has upheld the right of Amish parents to keep their children out of school after the eighth grade, in spite of compulsory attendance laws to the contrary. The court said the Amish, a devout religious sect, had shown their sincerity in their 250 years, and noted that the ruling for them does not apply to newly created groups.

Slate: Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

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Amish Man 4: I think he's going to have mixed feelings about leaving school. He likes school very well, but I'm looking forward to it. I've been farming 25 years, without a boy of my own around here. He's gonna miss that connection that he has with the other people at school. And he likes challenges academically. So to come home on the farm, and work for me everyday, will probably be a little adjustment for him. But, we stress simple, sound education. He's gotten that for eight years, and I'm satisfied that that's enough. And that he needs to move on and see what else life has to offer him.

Saloma Furlong, Former Amish: When I was a child, I loved school. I was in my element in school.

My desk was my little domain. At home there was not even one private space. Not a drawer, not anything. School was absolutely my best time. And it opened up a whole new world and a whole new way of thinking. When I was going into eighth grade, I knew that this was going to be my last year. And I didn't really allow myself to think about it until it was over. And when it really hit me was the first day of the school term, when my younger sisters and my younger brother started going to school. I remember going upstairs to my room, and I remember sitting on the edge of the bed and looking down at the woven rug at my feet and saying, "Now what? You know, I used to be able to get away from all of this." And I just saw my future as pretty much a long stretch of boredom. And then I heard my mother calling me, "Where are you? Wu bist du?" And I wanted to just yell back, "Where do you think I am?" Mom said, "Come on down. You need to help with the dishes." And so I made my bed and I went down. Picked up the towel off the counter and started drying dishes, and it was just one of those moments where I felt like, "If I could change this, I would." And I couldn't at that moment, but I did later.

I was 20 years old when I finally decided, "This is it, I need to leave." Once I was in Burlington, Vermont, I just remember the feeling I had when I woke up in my own little bed, in my own little room, that first morning. I felt like I was a whole new person. Like I could be

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anybody I wanted to be, and that I was no longer Amish. Not inside and not out. I got my dream job, as a waitress at Pizza Hut. And then I started dating.

David Furlong: She was more direct in a lot of ways. She was clearer in what she wanted to do. She was also a very good cook. And believe me that counted for something. And I think, you know, I was also experiencing her sense of freedom. And that's kind of an attractive thing.

Saloma Furlong, Former Amish: I knew, sooner or later, Mom would call. And she did. She called one night to say, "We're on our way to come and get you." She started speaking in the Amish language. She knew what she was doing. She was pulling me, right back into the world I'd left. Something changed in me, where I couldn't say no. The Amish life is not about saying no. It's about going along.

David Furlong: I got a phone call from her. It was a different person that I was talking to than I had known. She had switched off some part of herself.

Saloma Furlong, Former Amish: I was there for two years and eight months. And it was a very long two years and eight months. And then I realized, that no matter how hard I tried, this Amish life just doesn't fit me. I wanted freedom. I wanted to make my own choices about education, about my spirituality, about my relationships. David and I got married a year and a half later. Though I sent them invitations, nobody from my home community came. And none of my family. The life I knew was ending. I was letting people down. Especially my mother. She wrote to me, and said, "Well, today you were put from the church," meaning you are now shunned.

Slate: Shunning usually involves cutting off regular contact with those who have been excommunicated.

Karen M. Johnson-Weiner, Anthropologist: Shunning is the result of having made that baptismal promise. If I promise to God to uphold the *Ordnung* of the church, and you promise to God to uphold the *Ordnung* of the church, and then you break that promise, for me to

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continue to interact with you in the same way would be -- would make me break that promise.

Steven M. Nolt, Historian: And so, the Amish would say, "We mark that broken relationship with one another by saying that we're not going to share a common meal with this person. We're not going to engage in a business contract with this person."

Slate: Anabaptists who believed in strict shunning began the Amish church in 1693.

Steven M. Nolt, Historian: It can be quite painful, and even quite bitter. An individual, for example, might find that some other people still in the church won't talk to them. That's not at the heart of the teaching about shunning, but it is something that happens in some cases, because the pain on both sides can be so intense that it takes that form.

Donald B. Kraybill, Sociologist: They are welcome to come back. If they come back and make a confession, they can be fully reinstated into the church. So they would see it as an expression of love.

Amish Man 5: To the outsiders, the shunning seems harsh, and it can be harsh. We had it in our home. It is brutal. We'd love to sit at the same table to eat, and you cannot. Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter... they're not a part of the family.

Slate: Mansfield, Ohio

Levi Shetler, Former Amish: I was always kind of close to my mom. Closer, yeah. I was closer to my mom than my dad. I was kind of mama's kid, I guess. It was hard for me to leave my parents behind. I mean, I knew how hard it was when my brother left. And I guess that's kind of the reason I didn't get to leave earlier. I waited till I was 17 and I finally said, "I'm going to leave." I mean, I didn't understand all the rules, and I just, I didn't think, a lot of them didn't make sense.

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Me and my friend, we'd have phones and stuff. We were having a blast. That was everything to us, to have phones, radios and stuff like that. Of course our parents wouldn't, they didn't like that. My dad would like, he would catch us with them, we'd have to give it to him, and he would destroy them or burn them. For me, I wanted to experience a different life. I wanted to go out and drive a truck or something like that. I just thought that was -- oh, that would be cool.

I work construction work. We build pole barns. It's probably not my favorite thing to do, but it's something that keeps me going so it's all I need, I guess.

Levi Shetler, Former Amish: Hey Ben!

Ben: Yeah?

Levi Shetler, Former Amish: Let's eat.

Ben: [Praying before meal]

Levi Shetler, Former Amish, and others: Amen.

Levi Shetler, Former Amish: That last time I went back, it was really hard on my mom. I dunno, I thought she was gonna collapse. But... I just tried to tell her, you know, I'm just a human being, and it's not that bad. I'm just me, you know. I guess she hadn't seen me for a while, and I had a different haircut, and I looked different, so it was really hard on her. Then I talked to my dad for a while, and he told me that, if I don't want to come home to stay, he'd rather me just stay away. And I left after that.

Amish Man 5: Say there's a family of eight and a boy leaves. His place at the table is always set. And nobody else sits there. So three times a day he knows; "My place is set." That's a very powerful thing.

[Amish family singing]

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Slate: Spring

Amish Woman 4: My mom was a very gentle soul. She was always a servant to everybody else. She always made sure everybody was taken care of, except mom. She always tried to be the submissive woman. And already then I wasn't sure about that word "submissive." And then I married an abuser, and then the word "submission" just became a monster.

I was so proud of my first child. But I also remember, I would sit at the window rocking my baby. And sitting there alone, and I cried a lot. I knew things were not as they should be, but I kept telling myself, it's okay, it'll be all right. But I would cry a lot. I talked to my husband, and he'd say, "We're married, and I'm the head of the house." I'd say, "You know, the Bible says the father is the head of the home as Christ is the head of the church. But we also need to remember that Christ was not up here like a master with a big whip." Well, that didn't work well, because I was confronting him, and I was doubting his words of wisdom. I soon learned not to say those things.

They always say that we need to go to the church first, which I did. I went to the church and I asked for help. The very first thing that the minister said to me when I said, "We've been struggling with a lot of abuse, and I need help," he looked at me and he said, "So what did you do that caused your husband to treat you this way?" That was such a blow. That was such a blow. In fact it came to the point where the church actually had both of us not be able to go to communion until we can see where we have failed. And I felt like an outsider looking in.

Finally I reached the point where spiritually I just said, "I'm just done. I've just had it, Lord. I don't know what to do. But I have to be connected with the church again." I told my husband, "I'm going to go back to the ministers, and I'm just going to lay myself out and say, 'Here I am. I'll take any punishment you give me. I'll do anything. I just need -- I need the church so bad.'" And he said, "Well, if you do, you're on your own because I'm not going to do it that way." And so that's what I did. I went back to the ministers, and I just cried, and I just said, "I'll just do anything you tell me to." I acknowledged anything and everything that I could think of under the sun. And yeah, say yes to things that I didn't really think were maybe exactly right to say

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yes to. But I did it out of obedience because I felt God nudging me that way. And I got back in the church, without my husband. Obedience is not easy.

Slate: Mansfield, Ohio

Joe Keim (group meeting): Verse number three Rachel, would you read verse number three again?

Rachel (group meeting): "In the sweat of thy faith, thy shall eat bread, 'till thou return, unto the ground. For out of it you were taken, for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shall return."

Joe Keim (group meeting): Wow. What do you think about that? You never looked at each other as clumps of dust and... We need to be reminded, Benny, when I look at you, you're really just a clump of dirt.

Benny (group meeting): Aww man!

Joe Keim (group meeting): I'd like to ask Levi Shetler a question. How far ahead do you plan in your life?

Levi Shetler, Former Amish (group meeting): I don't really...

Joe Keim (group meeting): Do you have goals?

Levi Shetler, Former Amish (group meeting): Not really... I mean live for God, and... other than that, I don't really have any...

Levi Shetler: I had a pretty good life with my family. I've been thinking about them lately, and I went through a real tough time, I guess, just thinking about them. I miss them, so... I sometimes feel like I should go back and just try to talk to them and talk things over, try to work things out. So I guess... I don't know what I'll do.

Party Guest: How old are ya?

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Levi Shetler, Former Amish: Twenty. Yup, I'm turning 20.

[Guests singing Happy Birthday]

Slate: Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

Donald B. Kraybill, Sociologist: There's a lot of financial pressure on the Amish rural and agricultural way of life. Land has become very expensive. You may have one farm that's worth a million dollars, but if you have to buy farms for six or seven children, it's just impossible.

Slate: Fifty years ago, nearly all Amish supported themselves by farming. Today, fewer than half do.

Amish Teen 2: I could be a farmer, do carpentry, masonry, have a market stand. I could -- framer, roofer, painter, landscaper, any -- it's just on and on. You could be a wallpaperer, drywaller, manufacturer, a welder, woodworker. It's just such a big variety of things that -- of occupations in the area. It's almost too early to tell. I don't know. I never went through it before, so I don't know how it's going to be, like probably going to be fun and still sometimes wish I could still just go and play ball and just have fun, playing and -- I don't know how it's going to be. It probably won't seem as different until school starts again and then I won't go back.

Slate: LaGrange County, Indiana In northern Indiana, over half of Amish men work in "English" factories.

Amish Man 7: What are 20,000 people going to do to make a living in this tight area, with the transportation mode that we have? What are they going to do? They can't all buy farms. It's impossible. They turn 16 and 17, and they head for the factories.

Amish Teen 3: When I started working in the factory. That's when I really grew up. Because in there, you, I mean, you're treated like a man, no matter how old you are. It's a very high pressured atmosphere where they don't care about your clothes you wear, who you are. It's

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just if you can work fast and do what they want, you're in. And so that really made me grow up, because it wasn't who I was; it was what I could do. You're always thinking ahead. You're always thinking what you need to do next. I'm always thinking as fast as I can. I wouldn't want this my whole life. I wouldn't want to raise my kids underneath this pressure.

Amish Man 7: We're just doing things that we didn't do 25, 30 years ago. And when that happens, you tend to panic a little bit. You have to wonder: where are we going? What's this going to lead to? Is this what we really want?

Donald B. Kraybill, Sociologist: I think the move off of the farm into small businesses, into working in outside "English" factories has been the most significant, the most consequential change since they came to North America. It touches how they think, it touches how much technology they use, it exposes them to outside ideas, it exposes them to the larger world, it exposes their children to many things. And how that plays out over two or three generations, I think, is a major issue that we don't know the outcome of that yet.

Slate: Custer County, Colorado

Amish Man 8: When we started thinking about moving we looked in a lot of different places.

Slate: Thousands of Amish families have left their home states in search of cheaper land and more space.

Amish Man 8: We had to find a place that we could travel by horse and buggy, have the old ways of doing things, and still have enough work going on in the area that, that we have a chance of making a living and making a go of it. We don't know if this is gonna work out or not. But if we do have to leave it will bring tears to our eyes.

Real Estate Agent: So now on Bishop's place, Bishop's is not listed. He's given, given us the right to go look at it, so when we get there, let's just walk all the way through there. I know this house pretty well, I'll point out some stuff that --

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Amish Man: I'd like to see the barn, about more than anything almost.

Real Estate Agent: Oh, we'll get in the barn. So what are you thinking about one of these five-acre pieces? Just curiosity? Okay. You know I did check out the well on that one, and it checked out pretty good if I remember. But I'd have to pull it up again.... I might even have that information in your file. I bet I do.

Amish Man 8: Over the years, I saw Ohio changing tremendously. And there's about four or five times the number of families living in the same area, than there was as a boy. There's really no place for the children to, to roam around, and go out back and play, and use their imagination. They're just kinda stuck on that little one-acre of land and that's not really what I consider the ideal Amish lifestyle.

Real Estate Agent: Mr. Bishop said "275."

Amish Man 8: Did he, serious? Did he really? Right there, while you were still there?

Real Estate Agent: Yeah.

Amish Man 8: Well, that's good. That's good. That's a real good sign.

Real Estate Agent: He said Bob and him talked about it, the 275, but he said, "Well, we listed it for 295."

Amish Man 8: Because... yeah, I'm sure two years ago it was 335, or something like that. Three hundred and thirty nine?

Real Estate Agent: Amazing the difference in the wells. Five hundred feet, 140 something? Huh! Hard to believe.

Amish Man 8: We've still got a lot of things to figure out, entirely new country. Back east we worried about having too much water, here we worry about not having enough. We've gotta experiment with different ways of growing produce and see what works and what doesn't

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work, and hopefully work things out for the children in the future. If we can stick it out here, the first ones, for a couple of years and we get 12 to 15 families in that length of time, and everybody is able to make a living and survive, then I would say that it would be a thriving community and could probably grow from there.

Real Estate Agent: Yeah, well, the Hamilton property next door, to this one...

Amish Man 8: I feel a tremendous responsibility. Some days it's almost overwhelming.

Real Estate Agent: ...they're pretty nice. Same type of property.

Amish Man 8: I'm the eldest one here, and we've got young people moving in, just extending themselves right to the limit to buy properties and make a home here.

Real Estate Agent: ...kind of property. Little bit of tree cover, good green....

Amish Man 8: And if it doesn't work out I just feel like maybe I let them down or, or maybe I should've never started.

Real Estate Agent: ...the fact that this is fenced... that adds to the value --

Slate: Summer. Paradise, Pennsylvania. At age 16, Amish teenagers enter a period called *Rumspringa*, which means "to run around."

Donald B. Kraybill, Sociologist: There are a lot of myths about *Rumspringa*. And basically it means that young people on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, Sunday evenings, can go out with their friends. And so for the first time, when they're 16, an Amish boy may get his first carriage, he begins interacting with peers in a larger group, and this continues basically until the person is married. It's a time to socialize, and especially it's a time to look for a mate. And they also are in a friendship group that will follow them through the rest of their life.

Amish Teen 3: Biggest difference is, Saturday nights you got your group of friends. You go out with whatever group you're with. There's actually names for them. It starts out with Low

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Clinton, where they would basically be like their parents. They wouldn't do any fancier clothes, as far as even Amish fancier clothes. The High Clinton, they might do with a little bit fancier clothes. The girls figure out how to do fancier sleeves on their dresses, and the boys, they might do corduroy. And then there's the What's Up. They would be more high class. The latest jeans, the latest shirts, have up-to-date haircuts, and some of them also go clubbing and stuff like that, date English girls.

Amish Teen 1: I know where I'll end up. Or where I hope to end up as far as my future. But, like my friend and I we're just always like, 'We just want to settle down sometimes.' But then sometimes I wouldn't want to either. What if I would marry a guy that would want to just go out, strike out on his own, and be in another state? I'd be like, "No! I don't wanna go!" That would be so hard! I mean, I think, 14 miles is a long way from home. You know, think about being 100 miles, a couple hundred miles away. That would be terrible. They say wherever he goes, you'll follow, but it would still be hard. How far do you live from your parents?

Amish Teen 3: If you look at it that you want to live a free life, you want to drive, and you want to be able to get around and do what you want to, you're giving up a lot. If you want to be with your friends, be with your family, be within 20 miles of your family for the rest of your life, there's a good chance that'll happen in the Amish. And in that sense, you're going to be gaining a lot. Don't get me wrong. There's problems. People don't get along all the time. There's conflict. But if you really want to live an Amish life, and follow it, there's a good way out there to do it and be happy.

Slate: Almost 90 percent of Amish teenagers choose to be baptized and join the Amish church.

Tour bus driver: This is an Amish farm. On the left is a farmer, who raises ponies! You see him? The next guy is a sheep herder...

Slate: Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

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Amish Man 5: I have to tell you a little story. There was a tour bus. Amish man got on and they asked him -- what's the difference between you and us?

Tour Bus Guide: The man on the left has 13 children to the same woman. On the right, this little house... it is an Amish home.

Amish Man 5: Well, he said how many of you have television? All the hands went up. He said, how many of you, if you have a family, think you'd be better off without television? Practically all the hands went up. He said how many of you are going to go home and get rid of it? No hands went up. He said that's the difference between you and the Amish. Because we will do it. If it's bad for the family, we will not have it.

Tour Bus Guide: Amish people have no food restrictions. They can eat anything. They can smoke if they want to. They grow the tobacco, they might as well smoke it.

Amish boy: This is a Quillow. It might look like a Pillow, but then there's a pocket here, and you can pull it out, it turns into a blanket.

Tourists: Hey, you're pretty good at that.

Amish boy: Then you still have the pocket here, which you can stick your feet in. To fold it up, pocket face down, you half fold them on the line, looks good on both sides.

Amish Man 3: We want to be a society of people that are separate from the world, but still we want to be friends with the world. But it's tough. You rub shoulders with the outside world, after a while, you're just like they are. And it happens fast.

Donald B. Kraybill, Sociologist: Amish people who are in situations where they are rubbing shoulders a lot with the outside world have a keen sense of the potential danger that it could bring to their community. They're exposed, and their children are exposed to things that would have been unheard of 30 years ago. And so all of that presents dangers, and some

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Amish leaders I think, worry about what will the long-term consequences be, and what will this mean for our children down the road?

Amish man: Do you want this in a bag?

Tourist man: No that's okay....

Amish boy: Six eighty-eight with the tax, sir.

Amish Man 3: Some people, stretch the line a little bit, and before they know what happens, they're halfway out in the world. They didn't even realize it. And then for some it's too late and then they can't turn back. And they lose faith in the Amish church, and they disappear.

Amish Man 4: Working with the land I think has a tendency to draw you closer to the creator. I don't know if you remember old Hank Williams. He had a song... I can plough a field all day long, I can catch catfish from dusk 'til dawn. My grandpa taught me how to live off the land. He showed me how to be a businessman. And a country boy can survive. How hard will it be in the future? I don't know. I just don't go there. We're just pilgrims and foreigners, just passing through. This life is just a speck in the sand, compared to eternity.

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