

## A LESSON IN FORGIVENESS

On the morning of Oct. 2, 2006, Charles Carl Roberts, a Jewish-American milk truck driver, barricaded himself inside West Nickel Mines Amish School in Bart Township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

After murdering five young girls and wounding six others, Roberts committed suicide. It was a dark day for the Amish community of West Nickel Mines. But it was also a dark day for Marie Roberts, the wife of the gunman, and her two young children.

On the following Saturday, Marie went to her husband's funeral. She and her children watched in amazement as Amish families – about half of the 75 mourners present – came and stood alongside them in the midst of their blinding grief. Despite the horrific crimes the man had committed against them, the Amish came to mourn Charles Carl Roberts as a husband and father.

Dwight Lefever, a Roberts family spokesman, said an Amish neighbor comforted the Roberts family hours after the shooting and extended forgiveness to them. Jack Meyer, a member of the Brethren community living near the Amish in Lancaster County, explained to CNN: "I do not think there's anybody here that wants to do anything but forgive and not only reach out to those who have suffered a loss in that way but to reach out to the family of the man who committed these acts."

Bruce Porter, a fire department chaplain who attended the service, was profoundly moved. "It's the love, the heartfelt forgiveness they have toward the family," he said. "I broke down and cried seeing it displayed."

He said Marie Roberts was also touched. "She was absolutely, deeply moved by the love shown."



The power of love – that deep-seated, Godly form of love – and its motivation to forgive produce amazing results in human relationships.

When witnessed – as in the case of the Amish and Marie Roberts and her family – we marvel at how it influences and changes lives.

For believers, we have seen it at work in the spiritual realm – how God gave His only begotten Son to redeem people whose lives have been marred by sin, who turned their backs on Him to pursue their own prideful pleasures. We can rejoice in His amazing love, His amazing grace.

(more)

And since our Lord forgives us, so ought we to forgive others.

*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:32 NKJV).*

– Beecher H|unter