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## TWIST with FAME

**Goodrich mom ready for 'Wife Swap' spotlight**

GOODRICH

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Kelly Stonerock surveyed the office of an atheist talk show host and instantly knew why ABC had chosen her for a particular episode of "Wife Swap."

"The first thing I see is atheist paraphernalia - a sign that says 'We're all infidels' and a calendar that says 'Godless America,'" said Stonerock, the wife of a Goodrich pastor. "I knew immediately."

What happens when a God-fearing pastor's wife moves in with an atheist talk show host and his three kids for a week? Viewers will find out when the episode airs at 8 p.m. Monday. On a reality show that's sometimes spiced with Jerry Springer-like confrontations, this episode will seem tame by comparison, the wives said.

The women are as different as, well, a Christian and an atheist. They have at least one thing in common - their husbands make under \$40,000 a year.

Kelly, 38, plays soccer, hunts, works out three times a week, helps her husband in the ministry and runs a home school. She's been married for 13 years and has five children, ranging in age from 3 weeks to 11 years old. A niece and nephew also live with them.

Amber Finley, 32, of Atlanta assists her husband, Reggie, with his talk show, sends two of their three children to daycare and the oldest to public school. She enjoys cooking and playing a computer game that simulates a virtual community. The Finleys have been married for more than five years.

Both families said the show was a positive experience overall, and they had a few revelations afterward.

"We didn't go in to get something out of it," Kelly said. "Our motive was not for any kind of personal gain."

But after hearing guests on Reggie's talk show say that Christians had made "judgmental comments to him and his atheist colleagues," Kelly said she feels compelled to

"encourage Christians in the church to either walk in love toward others or say nothing at all."

The Finleys have made some changes based on Kelly's suggestions. "I'm spending more time with my husband," Amber said.

"We're spending more time with the kids. RJ (son Reggie Jr.) is in his own bed now (before he was sleeping with his older brother in the same bed.)"

The Genesis

How did it come about?

One night in the fall of 2004, Kelly was watching "Wife Swap" and thought to herself, "it's the kind of show you could really make a difference on."

She logged onto ABC's Web site, asked a few questions and later filled out an application.

Within a week, she received a call from a casting agent saying they'd chosen her from 10,000 applicants. "I was in my hunting gear ready to go out hunting when I got the call," Kelly said.

Her husband, Jeff, had a knee-jerk reaction: "I can't do this. I'm a pastor. I've got a reputation to keep." But after some thought and prayer, Jeff, pastor of Victory World Outreach Center in Goodrich, changed his mind.

"My vision was not to preach the gospel but to live it," he said. "There's an old saying, 'preach the gospel wherever you can and when necessary, use words.'"

The Stonerocks contacted people who'd been on the show before (ABC gave them phone numbers, Kelly said) and consulted with friends in other ministries.

"Our stipulation was that I wouldn't be alone in the house with another woman," said Jeff, now 40. At least one ABC crew member stayed with him every night.

The couples underwent criminal background and credit checks, blood, TB and urine tests and psychological evaluations.

"I knew I was going to a decent family," Kelly said. "I wasn't nervous."

The Finleys agreed to appear on "Wife Swap" to "show that atheists are everyday, normal people," Amber said. "There's nothing different about me that would make me a bad person. I have the same hopes, dreams and fears. I just don't believe in a god."

Neither woman knew anything about the other until they were in their respective homes.

At each house, they had access to a manual with the other wife's routine and philosophy on life. (The show was filmed last winter and some scenes may end up on the cutting room floor.)

The atheists

While staying at the Finleys, Kelly discovered that Reggie is a workaholic who puts in 70- to 80-hour weeks in his home office. He broadcasts from his Web site, [www.infidelguy.com](http://www.infidelguy.com).

When it was her turn to make the rules for the Finley family, Kelly recommended that he work fewer hours and spend more time with his family.

"He loved his children," she said. "He talked about how they're his first priority. But he spent very limited time with them.

"One of my observations was that there were antacids in every other room," she noted. "He (Reggie) is concerned, worried, anxious. In his heart, he's working to provide for his family."

Following Amber's routine, Kelly played with the two younger children in a 10-foot by 10-foot room while Reggie stayed in his office. The oldest, Dorian, then 12, went to school.

When the young children were in daycare or taking a nap, Kelly played a computer game that simulates a virtual community.

"I was bored to death (playing the game)," she said. "I'd try to sneak out of there and the (TV) crew would send me back in and tell me that I had to live her life.

"I created a virtual husband - that way even though I was in Atlanta, he could be with me too," she added with a laugh.

When it was her turn to make the rules, Kelly took the kids out of daycare, joined a toddler group and went to a playground. "The kids had a blast," she said.

She set aside a day for Reggie to play with his children. Reggie told her he'd make an exception on that day but couldn't follow through with it every week, she said.

Kelly, a former marketing executive, took a turn as host of Reggie's show but changed the name to "Bible Gal."

She related her story of how she became a Christian and brought Reggie on as a guest. She later set up a Web site, [www.biblegal.org](http://www.biblegal.org). She'll host a live chat on the site at 7:30 p.m. Thursday.

She attended a meeting of atheists with Reggie, and he went to a Bible study with her. They debated the issue of nature vs. nurture as it pertained to homosexuality.

"I felt like he was trying to get me to say something negative about homosexuals on camera," she said.

To prevent Reggie Jr., now 4, from climbing out of bed at nap or bedtimes, Kelly told him he'd get two big stickers. The reward system worked "like a charm," she said.

Another rule she implemented was moving Reggie Jr. out of Dorian's bedroom and into his little sister's room. She suggested that Reggie talk to Dorian at least 15 minutes every night and read bedtime stories to his two younger children. Kelly recommended that Amber set aside time to exercise in the mornings while her husband prepares the kids for school.

### The Christians

Amber's experience in Goodrich was vastly different from her life in Atlanta.

At first, she was shocked by all the animal skins around the house. That was her first clue that the Stonerocks were hunters. Then she noticed a newspaper article identifying Jeff as a pastor and she knew why she was placed with this family.

Amber said she had issues with the Christian textbook the Stonerocks used for home school. When it was her turn to make the rules, she hired an atheist tutor from the Flint chapter of American Atheists to teach.

She was supposed to deliver a biblical message at a tea party for some of Kelly's friends and church members. But Amber used the "Noah's ark story to point out that you should look deeper into what you're reading," she said. "It's not really a nice story when you think about the millions of people, babies and innocent animals who died."

Until six years ago when she met Reggie online, Amber said she believed in God. "I saw his picture - his screen name was 'I'm for atheism.' I contacted him to ask what he meant by that. We started talking, and the first question he asked me in regard to my beliefs was 'Do you really believe a man (stayed) in a fish's belly for three days?'

"I'm a very logical person," she added. "I had to say, 'no I did not.' The only reason I accepted it as fact before was because I never challenged my beliefs."

She and her husband call themselves "agnostic-atheists because I don't know if God exists and because I don't know God exists, I don't believe in God."

While in the area, Amber also played soccer with Kelly's team at SoccerZone in Grand Blanc.

She worked out at the Whole Life Fitness gym in Goodrich and took the kids to the Children's Museum (one of her ideas).

During her soccer game, Amber said she had to get off the field periodically because of a foot condition. But she tried to shoot for a goal once or twice.

Her experience at Jeff's church was positive. "Everyone was very nice," she said. "But some were shocked when they found out I was an atheist."

One time, she heard someone make a disparaging remark at a video store after the person noticed her T-shirt, which had a "no" symbol over the word God.

When it was her turn to change the rules, Amber removed spanking and washing mouths out with soap from the Stonerocks' punishment list.

Instead, she and the kids came up with the idea of writing repetitive statements such as "I will not hit (so and so) ..."

For a while, Amber instituted a "no-God zone" in the house.

If Jeff mentioned the word God or Jesus, he'd have to put a dollar into a prayer box. He forked over \$68 that day, which Amber used to throw a party for the kids and their friends.

Amber also recommended that the Stonerocks spend more time with Taylor, their niece. She had a girl's night with her.

The Finleys implemented some of Kelly's suggestions, including paring down Reggie's work schedule so he could spend more time with his family.

Upon Kelly's request, the production company gave the Finleys a bed for Reggie Jr., a comforter for Dorian, a swing set, a soccer set, balls and sand toys.

Kelly, on the other hand, said she decided to use the punishment of writing sentences for one of her sons because it was more effective than anything else.

As for Amber's suggestion to spend more time with Taylor, Kelly said she and Jeff already spend time with each child individually. She said she's trying to do more "girl-oriented activities" with Taylor.

But Kelly rejected Amber's recommendation to cook more exotic foods. "She (Amber) loves to cook. I cook because my family has to eat," she said. "(Exotic foods) take more time and cost more money."

Since the show was filmed, the families have touched base with one another via e-mail.

Though she had no expectations, Kelly said she was hoping that Amber would suggest the production company pay for a vacation for her and her husband.

"The only negative thing I said about my husband in the manual was that he's not romantic," Kelly admitted.

"I was hoping that ABC would pay for a Disney cruise for us," she added with a laugh.

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