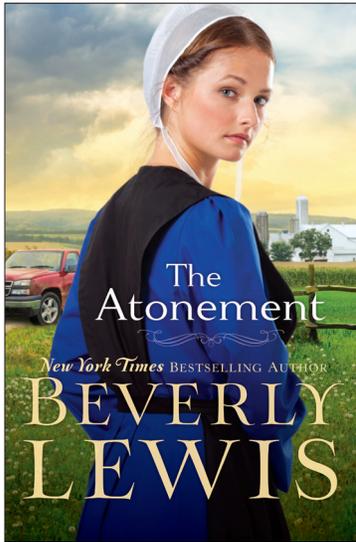


QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH BEVERLY LEWIS

The Atonement

by Beverly Lewis

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1. What inspired *The Atonement*, your newest novel?

The idea of helping others as an attempt to atone for past mistakes was one I wanted to develop years ago but shelved. Then, more recently, during “100 Helpful Days,” my cousin Kirsten documented on Facebook her acts of compassion via numerous charitable organizations. Her selfless journey reminded me of that forgotten premise, and I adopted it for my character Lucy Flaud.

While Lucy volunteers for very different reasons than most of us, her story journey demonstrates that we don’t have to be perfect in order for God to be able to use us to help others—just willing. What a beautiful truth!

2. That’s a wonderful reminder and makes for a unique story setup. Can you tell us more about this novel’s plot?

Certainly! Twenty-five and beyond Amish courting age, Lucy Flaud is troubled by the mistakes of the past. Instead, she focuses on volunteering in both the Plain and fancy communities of Lancaster County. Yet no matter how hard she strives, she never feels she’s doing enough. Then her father strikes up an unexpected friendship with an *Englischer* in search of a simpler way of life. Lucy forms a connection of her own with the thoughtful young man even as she rejects courtship with her longtime Amish friend. Yet in her heart, she wonders: Is it too late for her to embrace redemption . . . let alone the power of love?

3. The footbridge that appears in *The Atonement* provides an appealing image and a powerful metaphor. Is it a real location?

There are a number of picturesque bridges in Lancaster County, including the pedestrian bridge on Witmer Road, an actual place. But this particular bridge is a reminder of the redwood one amid the shining green mountains of Colorado where my husband, Dave, proposed to me. And the bridge has become a symbol of that memorable anniversary, just as the footbridge in this story does for another couple. It was fun to anchor this story with “our” bridge!

4. Lucy’s sister, Martie, is a scribe, or columnist, for the national edition of *The Budget*, a Plain newspaper produced in Sugarcreek, Ohio. Is Martie typical of their writers?

Oh yes, most scribes for *The Budget* are local women with a finger on the pulse of their communities. It’s their job to keep everyone in the larger Plain world up-to-date on the goings-on in their church district—reading columns like Martie’s provides a window into Plain life in a particular region. I’ve subscribed to this newspaper myself for years and find it to be a delightful source of information. Unlike the articles in most national newspapers, the down-to-earth and sometimes humorous stories in *The Budget* are a breath of fresh air!

5. You are a regular on bestseller lists like the *New York Times*, and your books have been published in eleven languages. What do you think of your broad popularity?

I’m humbled by the opportunity to connect with so many wonderful readers from around the world—I’ve met the most delightful people and am so glad to be able to share God’s love for them through my books. Truly, only He could have orchestrated the journey I’ve experienced during my years as a writer, and I’m ever grateful for how He has blessed me. When my first Amish novel, *The Shunning*, was released in 1997, I had no inkling of what lay ahead!

Available at your local bookstore, bethanyhouse.com or by calling 1-800-877-2665.

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6. Do you have another stand-alone novel in the works right now?

Naturally! I'm a storyteller at heart, and I'm always eager to share the things my characters are "saying" to me. *The Wish* will release on September 6, 2016. At its core, it's a story about how our heart's desires can be among our greatest strengths . . . or lead us terribly astray.

Leona Speicher got the "sister" she always dreamed of the day Gloria Gingerich and her family moved to Lancaster County. Leona is shocked when the Gingeriches suddenly pack up and disappear after being expelled from church for reasons no one will discuss.

After a silence of several years, Gloria unexpectedly contacts Leona, who makes up her mind to persuade her friend to return to Lancaster farmland and Amish ways. Yet Leona's beau is alarmed when she decides to go after Gloria. Will Leona's dearest wish prove the key to her own undoing?

7. How can we keep up with your latest news and current releases?

Thanks to social media, there are many great ways to stay in touch! To sign up for my free newsletter, readers can visit my Facebook fan page, www.facebook.com/officialbeverlylewis, or my website, www.beverlylewis.com. The website includes book trailers and excerpts, my monthly blog, fun photo galleries, authentic Amish recipes, and news about my upcoming Spring 2016 Book Tour, which will take me to library and bookstore events throughout northern Ohio from March 31 through April 9. Touring is always a highlight of my writing life since it gives me a chance to be face to face with my readers!