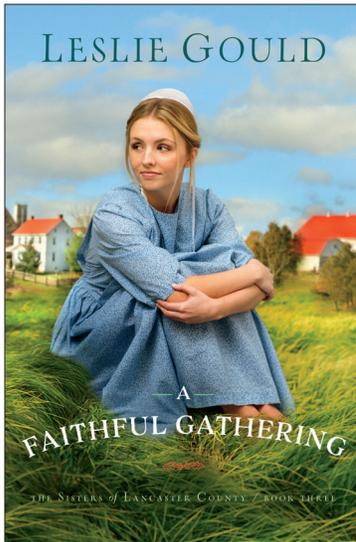




QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH LESLIE GOULD



A Faithful Gathering
THE SISTERS OF LANCASTER COUNTY #3
by Leslie Gould
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1. A Faithful Gathering is the third in the SISTERS OF LANCASTER COUNTY series. How does the final book wrap up the story about the three Bachmann sisters?

Leisel Bachmann is the youngest of the three Bachmann sisters and has pursued a career as a nurse instead of joining the Amish. But when her sister Marie is diagnosed with cancer, Leisel moves home to Lancaster County to care for her, which then leads to all sorts of unforeseen challenges. Although *A Faithful Gathering* is Leisel’s story, her sisters Jessica and Marie are key characters in the novel. Readers who enjoyed the first two novels in the series will get updates on their lives as married women with children.

2. What about writing Leisel’s character captivated you the most?

Leisel is very different than her sisters in that she’s super pragmatic, had an interest in medicine from the time she was a child, and doesn’t care what other people think of her, including her family. She’s an atypical Amish girl and leaves the Amish before she ever joins the church. But when she returns to Lancaster County, she realizes she’s more Plain than she thought. And when life stops going the way she planned, she learns that her pragmatism can’t save her, and she needs to learn to trust the Lord in a new way.

3. Because Leisel never joins the Amish church, she isn’t shunned when she leaves home. But her choosing not to join the Amish causes tension with her family when she returns to Lancaster County. How does she reconcile her opportunities in the Englisch world with her longing for her past?

Yes, that’s really one of the main challenges for Leisel. She finally embraces, with her Aenti Suz’s help, what she truly treasures about her Amish faith and upbringing, which is service. But as someone who felt called to be a nurse, she has to figure out how to truly serve others using her training and education while still retaining the core beliefs of her childhood.

4. A Faithful Gathering is a dual-time story, sometimes called time-slip, with both a contemporary and a historical plot. In what era was the historical thread set? Why did you choose that time period?

The historical thread for this story is set during World War II and follows the Bachmann sisters’ grandfather as he works first in an army hospital in Chicago and then in the European Theatre. I chose wartime eras for each of the historical plots of the series because they were especially challenging times for the Amish, who practice nonresistance, and some Americans vilified them for not serving.

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By World War II, the Civilian Public Service had been established, which made serving in noncombative roles easier for the Amish and other nonresistant individuals.

5. What challenges have you faced in writing historical threads about the Amish? What have you liked the most about exploring the Plain community's history?

Because the Amish still live in such an old-fashioned way, sometimes people don't think about how different their lives used to be. True, they still drive buggies just as they did 70, 150, and 250 years ago, but their coming to America, maintaining their culture, and remaining nonresistant has taken a lot of dedication to their beliefs. I've loved everything about exploring the Plain community's history, but I think what impresses me the most is the attention they've paid to figuring out how to be United States citizens but still keep their allegiance to Christ and his teachings.

6. How does it feel to have finished another series?

Sad. I'm always so sorry to say good-bye to my characters! That's what I love about writing a series—at least I get to hang out with the same characters for three books. But, alas, the end always comes.