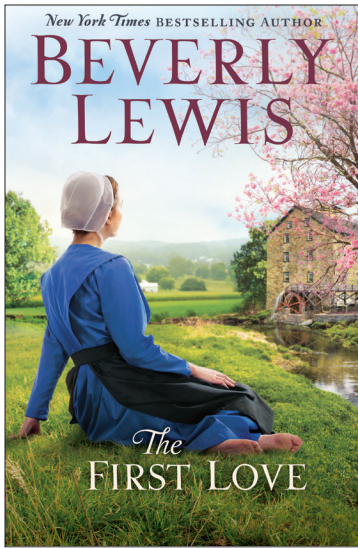




QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH BEVERLY LEWIS



The First Love

by Beverly Lewis

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1. Tell us a bit about *The First Love*, your newest stand-alone novel.

It's my pleasure! In the summer of 1951, Maggie Esh is in real need of some hope. Sweet-spirited and uncommonly pretty despite struggling with chronic illness, she is used to being treated kindly by the young men of her Old Order Amish church district. Yet Maggie wishes she were more like other courting-age girls, so she could live a normal, healthy life and marry one day.

When tent revival meetings come to the area, the words of the preacher challenge her to reconsider what she knows about faith. Can she learn to trust God even when hope seems a distant dream?

2. You have chosen to set most of this book in the Lancaster County of 1951. What attracted you to that era?

The Mennonite tent meetings of 1951 and 1952 were a rich source of inspiration for this book. My own father pitched a large tent not far from the Lancaster-area location of the fictional meetings that Maggie attends. For two consecutive summers, he conducted a six-week outreach where various evangelists preached the Gospel, and the sick were healed by God's miraculous power. Over the years, my parents spoke often of that precious time, and I also had the privilege of hearing the accounts of other Plain friends, as well. So many were encouraged in their faith journeys!

As you may guess, the Rev. Billy Graham inspired many tent evangelists. The success of his crusades certainly influenced other ministers to travel the country and spread the Good News to any willing to listen. What a legacy of blessing!

3. Your readers often write to you about how your books connect with them at the heart level, in part because of the characters, but also because of the relatable themes. What are some themes found in *The First Love*?

Maggie's health struggles and her relationships with those around her give rise to a number of thought-provoking themes, including the importance of seeking God above all that one might hope for. In addition, the newly expanded Esh family—Maggie's widowed father has recently remarried—also learns to trust and accept one another, and discover that creating new bonds doesn't have to diminish the importance of the old ones.

4. With your fondness for writing, you must be working on a new project. Can you reveal anything about that?

Absolutely! *The Tinderbox* will release in April 2019. Sylvia Miller is piqued by curiosity when she stumbles across the key to the old brass tinderbox her father keeps in his Lancaster County watch repair shop. Eager to have a peek inside, she unlocks the cherished heirloom, not realizing that what she is about to discover will splinter apart her happy life.

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Once Sylvia overcomes her shock, she confronts her father about the contents of the box. The long-kept secret alters everything for their close-knit family, and when word of Earnest's deceit reaches others in the community, the truth pits Amish neighbors against one another and threatens to dry up Earnest's livelihood—as well as to jeopardize Sylvia's engagement to the preacher's grandson.

5. In the two decades since the publication of your first Amish novel for adults, *The Shunning*, your books have been published in twelve languages, and your name has appeared on bestseller lists like the *New York Times*. What do you think of the widespread appeal of your fiction?

Only God could have orchestrated all that I've experienced as an author! The reception for my books has exceeded my wildest hopes, and I'm so grateful for how He has blessed me with the opportunity to share His love through my writing. As a storyteller, it's a blessing to regularly hear from reader-friends from around the world who relate to my Plain characters and their enduring values of faith, family, and community.

6. What is the best way to keep current on your latest news and book 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 website, beverlylewis.com, or keep in touch daily via my Facebook fan page, facebook.com/officialbeverlylewis. The website includes story excerpts and book trailers, my monthly blog, photo galleries, authentic Amish recipes, and news about my September 2018 Book Tour, which will take me to library and bookstore events throughout Michigan. Because touring gives me a chance to meet face-to-face with my wonderful reader-friends, it's something I very much enjoy!