



The Love Letters

by Beverly Lewis

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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH BEVERLY LEWIS

1. What inspired *The Love Letters*?

The storyline for my tenderhearted protagonist, Marlena Wenger, has been on my heart for years, inspired by some of my mother's old journals, which recounted being sent to help her grandparents two summers in a row and feeling terribly homesick while away. Her older sisters were also sent away in a similar fashion, but to my surprise, all of them gave the money they earned to their parents. Mennonites and other Plain families still do this to help elderly relatives—though in my story, Marlena doesn't earn any money by doing so.

The secondary storyline was so strong in me, it nearly wrote itself! When I was a girl, my pastor father made a place under the stairwell in our big church for a homeless man named Mr. Ebling. The lovely, white-haired man became the caretaker of the church, interestingly enough. My father was a very good judge of character when others, even his own board, were leery of the homeless man.

2. Tell us a little about the setting for your newest novel, *The Love Letters*, and how it relates to your childhood.

My uncle Amos and aunt Anna Jane Buchwalter's wonderful white clapboard house was situated within yards of the historic Brownstown Mill—presently a private residence—near Conestoga Creek in Brownstown, Pennsylvania. My sister and I and our cousins loved our visits to their home and the one-lane bridge not far from the mill, where we tossed pebbles into the creek below, much like my character Small Jay Bitner in this book. We also ice-skated on that creek during the winter, and fished and played in it—often up to our waists—in the summertime, with the familiar clip-clop of driving horses hitched to buggies regularly coming from the road.

3. Your characters struggle with a lot of very real “heart” issues in your books. What are some story questions found in *The Love Letters*?

How can we reach out to serve those God brings into our lives, whether beloved family members, or strangers whom others might prefer to avoid? What does it mean to make faith one's own, and what are some sacrifices that might need to be made in the process? In what way does the influence of grandparents (and parents and other mentors) continue to shape us even after they are gone? What beautiful things can happen in our own lives when we willingly put our plans on hold for the benefit of others?

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH BEVERLY LEWIS

4. Your books have now been published in eleven languages, and your name is a fixture on numerous bestseller lists, including the *New York Times*. What do you think of your broad popularity?

Completely astonished! I couldn't have imagined this, or how the longing for a simpler, less harried way of life has led to widespread fascination with the Amish tradition. This interest has surprised and pleased my own Plain relatives. And it has truly been a blessing to hear from thousands of readers over the years, many of whom have written to say my novels seem to speak directly to them, touching them on a heartfelt level. I'm so very thankful for the opportunity to share God's love through something I love as much as story. He alone is the first and best storyteller!

5. What are you currently working on?

Presently I am busy writing my next stand-alone novel, *The Photograph*. The story features Eva Esch, who is beside herself when her younger sister, Lily, disappears, leaving only a brief note. Eva fears pretty Lily has been wooed away from the People by an outsider. Then Jed Stutzman, a young Amish buggy maker from Ohio, shows up at Eva's candy store with a photo of a Plain young woman. Eva feels powerfully drawn to the quietly charming stranger with a tragic past, but the girl in the forbidden photograph is no stranger at all. . . .

With romance, mystery, and a timely message of healing for the wounded heart, *The Photograph* promises a little something for everyone. It's a story that's been germinating for a while, and I'm looking forward to finally sharing it on September 8, 2015!

6. How can readers keep up with your work and latest news?

Thanks to social media, there are many 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 also features regular updates, book excerpts, delicious Amish recipes, and news about my upcoming book tour, which will include bookstore and library events from March 24 – April 2 in western Pennsylvania, upstate New York, and New Jersey. It's always a delight to have the opportunity to meet my wonderful readers and hear their stories!