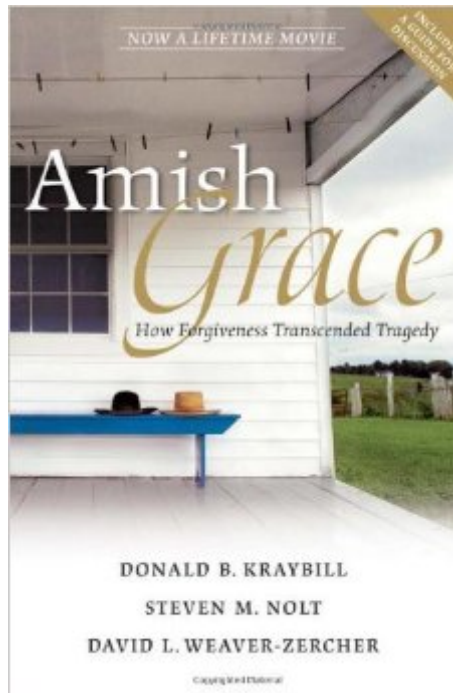


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Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy



Synopsis

Praise for *Amish Grace* "A story our polarized country needs to hear: It is still grace that saves."#151;Bill Moyers, Public Affairs Television "In a world where repaying evil with evil is almost second nature, the Amish remind us there's a better way. In plain and beautiful prose, *Amish Grace* recounts the Amish witness and connects it to the heart of their spirituality."#151;Sister Helen Prejean, author, *Dead Man Walking* "Faced with the notorious Amish aversion to publicity, reporter after reporter turned to the authors...to answer one question: How could the Nickel Mines Amish so readily, so completely, forgive? While the text provides a detailed account of the tragedy, its beauty lies in its discovery of forgiveness as the crux of Amish culture. Never preachy or treacly, it suggests a larger meditation more than apt in our time."#151;Philadelphia Magazine "This balanced presentation . . . blends history, current evaluation of American society, and an examination of what builds community into a seamless story that details the shootings while it probes the religious beliefs that led to such quick forgiving. Recommended." #151;Library Journal "Professors Kraybill, Nolt, and Weaver-Zercher have written a superb book#151;a model of clear, forceful writing about a tragedy and its aftermath. They have an obvious affection for the Amish yet ask tough questions, weigh contradictions, and explore conundrums such as how a loving God could permit schoolgirls to be massacred." #151;National Catholic Reporter

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Customer Reviews

This book achieves what most books don't. It combines a rich well of scholarly research on the part of three academicians without sacrificing the soul of what occurred at Nickel Mines during and after

the event. In addition to being well researched the book has a poetically lyrical and haunting quality that honors, reflects, and conveys the hearts, souls, and minds of the Amish community. One of the most difficult things a writer can achieve is to step out of the way and allow the pictures and voices tell the story without the writer's ego coming into play. This is what was achieved in this book. I haven't been grasped by anything this powerful in a long time. It challenges me to try to live with intentionality each day and continue to struggle with what forgiveness looks like in the ordinary moments and encounters of my life.

Amish Grace is a truly amazing and grace-filled book that will reach out to every reader. Written by three known scholars in the areas of Amish culture, history and religion - the early chapters recount the horrifying events of October 2, 2006 at the Nickel Mines Amish schoolhouse. The agony in reading these first few pages quickly gives way to the amazing story of sudden Amish forgiveness in the wake of tragedy. The authors, writing in one clear and concise voice - lead us through the story that emerges - how can they have forgiven such cruelty so quickly and what does this mean to each one of us? The violence of Nickel Mines has been described by the Amish as their 9/11. What role would such forgiveness have played as we each address the pain of 9/11. While this book does not attempt to solve the ongoing debates over such forgiveness, it goes a long way to help us understand the argument and determine what forgiveness may mean to each of us. This book is a must read on many levels - whether you are a student, teacher, parent, married, single, Christian, non-Christian - we are all human and this book is beautifully written on a human level. Amish Grace is an easy read and paints a broad enough picture that anyone can find the application of forgiveness in their own life - road-rage ring a bell? This is the kind of book that people will stop and ask you about as you read in the airport, doctor's office, and at home. It is also the kind of book that you will be more than happy to share as well.

This book is extraordinary, one of the most worthwhile I've read in the past five years. For starters, it is well written. Its prose is crisp, fresh and readable---even rewarding to read out loud. The next thing to note is the authors' comprehensive knowledge of their subject, which includes not only the events of the Nickel Mines disaster but also the hearts of the Amish people. Their empathy for and rapport with the Amish community are what make this book possible. Though they are social scientists with impressive credentials, they obviously care for the Amish people and have earned their trust. When they quote, one can be confident that their quotes are valid examples of attitudes within the Amish community. What is perhaps most important is that they have used a teachable moment, albeit a

tragic one, to write a probing inquiry into the nature of forgiveness, To their credit they come up with no easy answers, although they do clarify what forgiveness is not. For one thing, it is not easy. It does not mean that the victim forgets or that the perpetrator cannot be punished. It is not the same as reconciliation, which only takes place if the perpetrator repents. A large question that lurks in the background is how the Amish do it when other Christian groups preach it but seldom practice it. One obvious answer is that the Amish habitually think forgiveness, refer to it in all of their church services, and teach it to their children from the ground up. In their close-knit communities, doing so may well be a necessary survival tool. The question that follows in our therapeutic society is, "How can forgiveness be healthy when it requires suppression of feelings, feelings that we normally think should be ventilated?" And then, "Can what works for the Amish really be applied outside the Amish community?" I am not sure, but as a clinician I am impressed by the evidence that ventilation may not be as essential a therapeutic technique as I had thought. Of course, the notion of forgiveness also raises other big questions. Are some crimes or sins too heinous to forgive? Does forgiveness simply enable the perpetrator to continue his destructive pattern? These questions and others are addressed by the authors, who always use the Amish as their point of reference. They never stoop to simplistic answers. At the same time, they suggest that the simple approach of the Amish has a lot to teach all of us.

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