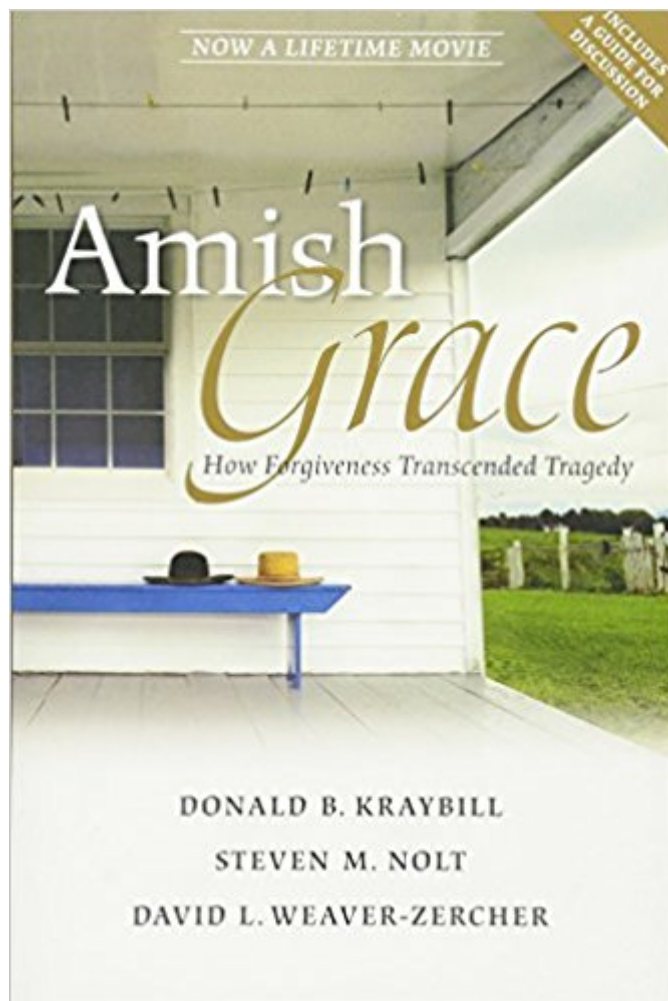




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Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy



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 treachy, 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

Starred Review. When a gunman killed five Amish children and injured five others last fall in a

Nickel Mines, Pa., schoolhouse, media attention rapidly turned from the tragic events to the extraordinary forgiveness demonstrated by the Amish community. The authors, who teach at small colleges with Anabaptist roots and have published books on the Amish, were contacted repeatedly by the media after the shootings to interpret this subculture. In response to the questions why and how did they forgive? Kraybill and his colleagues present a compelling study of Amish grace. After describing the heartbreaking attack and its aftermath, the authors establish that forgiveness is embedded in Amish society through five centuries of Anabaptist tradition, and grounded in the firm belief that forgiveness is required by the New Testament. The community's acts of forgiveness were not isolated decisions by saintly individuals but hard-won countercultural practices supported by all aspects of Amish life. Common objections to Amish forgiveness are addressed in a chapter entitled, What About Shunning? The authors carefully distinguish between forgiveness, pardon and reconciliation, as well as analyze the complexities of mainstream America's response and the extent to which the Amish example can be applied elsewhere. This intelligent, compassionate and hopeful book is a welcome addition to the growing literature on forgiveness. (Sept. 21) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Starred Review The crime's shooting innocent schoolchildren in a one-room schoolhouse was shockingly vicious. More shocking, virtually incredible, was where it happened, in the heart of Pennsylvania's Amish country, commonly associated with bucolic tranquility, not gun violence. This remarkable book explains, exceedingly well, Amish reaction to the horrific Nickel Mines shootings. The outside world was gravely taken aback by the Amish response of forgiveness. Some in the media criticized the Amish as naive and hypocritical (didn't they shun members of their own community?), but most simply couldn't understand the Amish concept of forgiveness as unmerited gift. How could they forgive humanly embodied evil? The authors, all authorities on Amish culture, emphasize that the Amish response reflected the sect's heritage and deeply embedded faith. They distinguish forgiveness from pardon and reconciliation. Forgiveness relinquishes the right to vengeance, while pardon forfeits punishment altogether, and reconciliation restores the relationship of victim and offender or creates a new one. They discuss the shooting mercifully straightforwardly before exploring the broader perspectives of forgiveness and concluding with reflections on the meaning of forgiveness. At times difficult to read, this anguished and devastating account of a national tragedy and a hopeful, life-affirming lesson in how to live is itself a marvel of grace. Sawyers, June --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

I had read and finally finished this past September Kraybill and co.'s book THE AMISH, a companion to the PBS Documentary. I would say that the PBS documentary was a companion and add-on to the BOOK, THE AMISH. The AMISH was very thorough. Kraybill mentioned briefly in the book the happening at Nickel Mines. After playing around with a few other books, nothing really satisfying, I came across Amish Grace, and saw that Kraybill had written it, and so bought it expecting what happened: a great book. Kraybill obviously wrote this book before he (and company) wrote THE AMISH. In fact, Amish Grace's appendix is a VERY condensed format of The Amish book. Enough about that book though, Amish Grace is a really good read. Reading it, some of the time I wondered if the chapter structure was too loose, as in, "Okay, I know this is in some ways, about Amish and forgiveness, but what does this have to do about Nickel Mines?" If you feel that way, know that in the end Kraybill and co. bring it around to say, "Now that you've learned this, here's how it applies to what happened at Nickel Mines." I know and have heard that there is a Lifetime movie about this incident, and I have yet to see it, and don't know if I will. If I did, it would be purely for entertainment purposes, but even then(1) Watching a movie about people who don't watch TV doesn't seem right(2) Watching a movie to be entertained through the horrible tragedy that took place at Nickel Mines also doesn't seem right. Being an evangelical Christian Pastor, I learned a lot and was edified a lot by Kraybill and co.'s deep investigation into Amish Grace and what forgiveness is as the Amish see it, and as the Bible explains it. If you are curious about the whys, the suspected hypocrisies, or even the skepticism and doubt about the Amish and their forgiveness of this horrible tragedy, Kraybill, I believe, offers satisfying answers here. If you just want to take a study into what forgiveness is, this is a great place to study. Kraybill pulls no punches too, he will list chapter and verse that the Amish go to for their understanding of forgiveness. No matter if you're a Christian or not, or if you have a soft spot, or a skeptical spot for the Amish, this book ought to re-orient your thinking when considering how to respond to tragedies. I highly recommend it, and though I bought the Kindle version, I instantly bought a physical copy so I can share it.

We all need help forgiving those around us - especially those closest to us. The story of how the Amish have integrated forgiveness into their daily lives is remarkable. To see how that daily practice took hold of their community after the Nickel Mines tragedy is humbling and inspiring. I was also deeply touched by the unexpected interview at the end of the book. I hope this book has changed me. It will be my loss if it hasn't.

Kraybill and associates have taken a close look at the events in Lancaster County and the killing of several school children and the wounding of others. The closest look, however, is at the Amish themselves, the friends, the families, the neighbors of the girls who were killed; yet more importantly at the family of the young man who did the shooting, a trusted fellow, "English" (i.s. non-Amish) known to everyone, who immediately afterward shot himself. How they were able to forgive (not the same as pardon) the dead perpetrator, yet more so his family, how they from innate impulse moved to circle that family with love, invite them to their events, include them in the funerals. And the family of the perpetrator included them in his funeral. I recently visited old friends in Bird-in-Hand itself, German emigrants and their children, who now live side-by-side with Amish. And I visited the rather new Young Center for the Study of the Amish and the Anabaptists, where Don Kraybill is a professor. It is an institute that welcomes graduate students who are working on the topic. This year they are expecting an Israeli student who wants to make a comparison of Jewish Orthodox and Amish ways. The book also gives some insight into the problematic custom of "shunning" wayward members of the community, yet also their commitment to peace but also non-participation in worldly politics. The book is regarded by the local community as excellent.

This book is a thought-provoking quasi-academic look into the concept of forgiveness using the Amish religion and an Amish school shooting as a backdrop. The book is broken into sections. The initial section that details the school shooting tragedy and what how the Amish responded is a fairly engaging (entertaining seems inappropriate) the remainder of the book is a little stuffy and sometimes repetitive but through provoking and worth reading none-the-less. I would recommend this book to anyone who is struggling to let go of long standing hard feelings or grudges or someone who wants to explore their personal spirituality. The author does a good job of using religion factually in the book without making the reader feel like they are reading a "religious" work.

In an age in which success is defined by accumulating as much as possible, peace is sought by getting sweet revenge on those who hurt us, and children are constantly told how special & unique they are, it's refreshing to learn more about a culture in which simplicity, quietness, forgiveness, and humility play a central role. It's ironic that those who eagerly devour the radical philosophy discussed in this book are the very ones who already understand it. It's true that the book does repeat some points, but maybe it doesn't hurt us to hear more than once that unequivocal forgiveness, although difficult, is the best policy when we are wronged, that thinking of God first, others second & self last isn't a bad way to go through life. The book presents a clear overview of

Amish life and beliefs, and corrects a number of common misperceptions.

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