



The Amish Blacksmith

By Mindy Starns Clark and Susan Meissner

1. Jake considers himself to be an “unemotional” type of guy, but that notion is later challenged. Are there really people who “just don’t feel things deeply,” as he claims? Or do such claims always indicate that the person is masking/hiding from deeper feelings that are hidden away below the surface?
2. Priscilla suffered a terrible tragedy in Lancaster County before going away to Indiana at 14. Now she has returned, even though she didn’t want to, because she feels it is God’s will for her to do so. What does this say about her as a person? Have you ever felt God leading you to do something you didn’t want to do?
3. Jake describes Amanda as “laid-back and understanding and uncomplicated.” Do you think this makes her a good match for him? In what way is she a better match for him than Priscilla? In what ways is she worse?
4. When Priscilla returns to Lancaster County, Amos and Roseanna open their home to her, hoping she’ll stay and make a new life for herself there. Do you think Amos is right to ask for Jake and Amanda’s help in getting his niece reconnected with the other young people in their district?
5. Jake and Priscilla sparred over whose technique was the most effective in helping troubled horses. What were their differences in approach, in your opinion? How were they alike? Do you think one approach was better than the other, or did the two approaches work best when combined together?
6. Jake describes the various ways that people view horses, including as “just one more kind of animal, albeit a useful one,” friends, companions, loved ones, moneymakers, symbols of wealth and prestige, entertainment, employees, and more. Which of the above terms, if any, would best describe how you view horses? Do you agree with Jake’s assertion that farmers tend to think of horses differently than non-farmers?
7. Do you think God uses elements of His Creation to teach us? What did Jake learn about himself through his relationship with the horses in this story? What have you learned via something that God created?
8. Natasha has staked much of her reputation and livelihood on the upcoming performance of a single horse. What motives a person to get involved with a sport that has such huge costs and high stakes? In terms of time, money, or something else, what’s the costliest commitment you’ve ever made for a sport?
9. When Jake realizes Tyler and Rachel are expecting, his emotions are mixed. Have you ever had a similar reaction to what is essentially good news? Does it surprise you that many Amish don’t openly discuss certain topics such as pregnancy?
10. Jake’s parents are reluctant to tell him about what happened when he was a child. Do you think it’s wise for parents to keep silent on such matters? Or is it always better to bring past traumas out in the open, even if they happened decades ago?