

***The Preacher's Daughter* Discussion Questions**

Discuss Annie's inner conflicts as expressed in the prologue of *The Preacher's Daughter*. Have you experienced similar struggles between trying to please a parent and longing to make your own choices in life? Between following your heart vs. what you believe is God's will?

Annie wants to hold on to her art for as long as possible, knowing she must give it up someday to join church. Can you think of similar struggles among "English" Christians? Are there ways we want to "dabble in the world," planning to give it up someday to become "good" Christians?

Annie believed Rudy was a good choice for a husband, but she would not give up her art in order to marry him. Are there things we must give up in order to fully commit ourselves to marriage? To God?

How does Annie rationalize hiding her artistic pursuits from her parents and the church? Are we ever justified in breaking the rules? In secretly pursuing activities our family or church disapprove of?

Louisa is tired of the rat race and materialism and longs for a simpler life. Can you relate? Have you ever had similar longings? As Christians, what can we do to avoid falling into the traps of the modern world?

How do you think you would adapt to the hard work and deprivations of Amish life? Which modern conveniences/technologies would you most dread doing without?

Louisa's decision to "dress plain" pleases Annie and her family. Do you see any possible pitfalls for a "worldly girl in sheep's clothing?" Do you think Louisa did the right thing in adopting the dress of the Amish? Why or why not?

Annie's guilt over her "sin" is complicated by the fact that she is breaking a man-made rule and not one of God's clear commands in Scripture. What rules that are not spelled out in Scripture do you personally have conflicts over?

The Amish allow their young people a wild time--rumschpringe--before they settle down. What do you see as the benefits and dangers of being allowed to "sow wild oats" before becoming a responsible adult?

Annie and Louisa encounter two modern women, one wielding a camera. Their

insensitivity irritates Louisa, and she hopes she was never that rude before coming to Amish country. How can we become more comfortable with others outside our own society and culture? How can we treat them with sensitivity and respect?

What did you think about the Amish stance of keeping the police out of their community--for example, not reporting the long-ago kidnapping, the discovery of the bones in the field, or suspected spousal abuse?

By pursuing art, Annie is developing her creativity and individuality, both of which are strongly opposed by the Amish. Why would they oppose such things? What individual freedoms do we ourselves give up in order to maintain our own communities and traditions?

When Esther confided to Annie her problems and fears, how did Annie respond? Would you have handled it any differently? Have you ever been in a similar situation, where a friend has asked your advice during a trying time with a spouse? What advice did/would you give?

Believing husbands and wives are called to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. How did you react to Zeke's treatment of Esther and the children....and to Esther's growing resentment? Are there times you find it difficult to submit to your spouse?

If you had been in Esther's shoes, what would you have done? Do you think she was right or wrong to leave her husband? What other options might she have had? How is the way Amish men view their role as head of the family similar to the way "English" men view it? How is it different?

Louisa is impressed when she learns that the premise of Amish community includes sharing not only one's finances but also time and energy: "This was one way to carry out God's will on the earth, helping one another. Even to the point of sacrifice, if need be." How does your church community do in this regard? What could it do better?

When Annie's painting is printed on the magazine cover, Annie realizes her days as a closet artist are over, calling it "the death of a dream." Have you ever experienced the "death" of one of your dreams? Has God ever asked you to give up one of your heart's desires--even for a time?

When Esther declares her newfound faith in the saving grace of Jesus, Preacher Jesse states that, "Declaring yourself saved is the most prideful thing a person could possibly do." Why do you think the Amish consider sure salvation an "alien belief"? How would you respond to such a statement?

After her father gives Annie an ultimatum, Louisa advises Annie to stay with the Amish, even if it means giving up her art. Did this surprise you? Do you agree with Louisa's advice? Or, would you have advised Annie to follow her heart...even if it took her away from the Amish community?

When Annie asks her dad for more time to gradually "say good-bye" to her art, he replies, "Cuttin' off a dog's hind leg is much harder done little by little, ain't?" How is this wise advice? Are there things in your own life you've had to "cut off" all at once? Or are there areas of your life you are giving to God little by little?