



Discussion Questions for *The Bridge of Peace*

1. Lena believes that many people have hidden wealth within that makes them more worthy than they appear on the outside—even Peter, the student who mocks her physical appearance. Do you know someone who seems unlovable? How can you find the treasure that God sees inside that person? In what ways can you reach out to people whose actions and behaviors irritate you? How can you help those who don't respond positively to your attempts?
2. After six years of marriage, Grey and Elsie go about their daily lives without speaking about the hurts of the past that emotionally strangle them. She feels incapable of expressing her emotions and afraid of revealing her deepest fear. She is reluctant to share their problems with anyone. Do you think Grey should have taken the steps to get the needed help even if his wife didn't want to?
3. When Elsie finally tells Grey what's been bothering her, it's not any of the reasons he expected. Have you ever spent a lot of time and energy trying to figure out what someone else was thinking? Has anyone ever misunderstood your motives for something? What might have been salvaged if the truth had been revealed and discussed sooner?
4. Cara doesn't understand why the Amish ban on working Sundays includes her doing some lawn mowing in exchange for a gift for her daughter, especially since boys are allowed to play sports and women can fix meals. She is also distressed that someone "tattled" on her. Though she disagrees with the line the church leaders draw, she submits to their authority ... until she discovers that the rules prevent her daughter from enjoying the gift that meant so much to her. If you disagreed with instructions or guidance from an authority in your life, how would you handle the situation? At what point does accountability start to feel intrusive?
5. A death within the Dry Lake community affects everyone differently. Ephraim realizes that his reaction to death is different now that he has Cara in his life. Aaron blames himself for his part in the incident. Another character is paralyzed by self-accusations and remorse. How does the thought of losing someone close to you make you feel about the life you're living and the relationships you have? Are there any divisions you want to try to mend or words you want to say while there's still time?
6. Cara continually struggles to understand and accept the Amish ways, though she's committed to do so for Lori's and Ephraim's sakes. When is it appropriate to adjust your ways for someone else, and when is it better to accept yourself the way you are?
7. When Gray chooses to burn the envelope with the DNA test results without looking at them, he says, "I choose to be free of all that we didn't handle right." What past wrongs are you holding on to? Are you ready to choose to be free of them?

8. Mahlon returns to Dry Lake and tells Deborah he loves her. This is what she'd ached for, for a long time. Is there something you want deeply, have even prayed for intensely, but you haven't received the answer you desire? How do you know when to accept an unanswered prayer and when to keep fighting for your desires?
9. Lena doesn't believe anyone is capable of seeing beyond her birthmark to who she really is, because she sees everything in her life as being related to her birthmark. If Lena were your friend, what would you say to her?
10. Lena ignored the school board's mandate and arranged for Peter to see a grief counselor. Do you agree with her decision? What do you think she could have done differently?
11. Grey begins building a bridge between his home and Lena's brother's home. Why do you think he purposely didn't finish it himself? Do you agree with his line of thinking?
12. What aspects of the Amish life appeal to you? What restrictions would you have a hard time living with? Can you think of ways to simplify your daily life or enhance your special occasions by making them a bit more like the Amish?

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