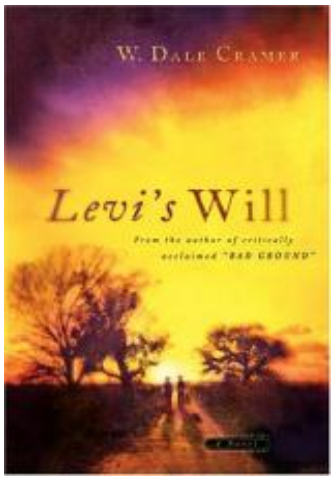
ReadingGroupGuides
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Levi's Will

by W. Dale Cramer



About the Book

Dusk. A barn lot on an Amish farm in Ohio. Will?s father doesn?t recognize him at first?it?s been eight years?so he holds a match up to Will?s face to see him better. ?I thought you were dead,? Levi Mullet says flatly, then blows out the match and walks away. No hug. No party. This is not how it?s supposed to be. Where?s the fatted calf, the celebration?

Living in the Deep South, Will has raised a family of his own. But the heart of a prodigal is never far from home. For years he?s worked?the only ethic Will understands?to overcome the unrelenting judgmentalism, the ban, of his father and the Old Order Amish, while a festering resentment takes its toll on his wife and children. Only when the life of Will?s youngest son hangs in the balance does he begin to understand the truth?that love is the proof of God, and forgiveness is the proof of love.

Levi?s Will is the haunting story of a fallen man seeking to reconcile the best of the old world with the lessons of the new, in the process building a bridge across three generations.

Discussion Guide

1. At the story's beginning we see that the author has juxtaposed the two lives of Will Mullet/Will McGruder, past and present. What does this tell us about Will's character and life?

2. Will seems eager to put off many of the qualities that make him Amish. Why? Does he ever regret leaving behind his old life? Which of these qualities can he see, in hindsight, may have helped him to succeed in the World?

3. It's apparent that Will struggles with the World's ways and feels forced to comply with its rules in order to survive. How is his struggle with the World similar to that of the Amish community from which he fled? How is it different?

4. The priest on the army ship suggests to Will that Will is angry. What is he angry about? What, if anything, changes in Will's relationship with God after the priest absolves him? Does Will believe the priest has helped him?

5. How has Will's relationship with Helen changed throughout their marriage? How has Will's Amish background shaped his idea of marriage? How does Will's perception of marriage differ from his reality?

6. How does Will's past catch up with him and what damage does it do to his relationships with his family?

7. Why does Will throw himself into his work? What sacrifices are made in doing so?

8. What does Mose see in Levi that Will does not? Does Mose's relationship with his father help to change Levi's opinion of Will?

9. How does Levi react to Helen's coconut cake? Why does this start a competition between Levi and Helen? What does Helen hope to gain through this game?

10. Will pinpoints an event early in Riley's childhood when his son started turning away from him. What is this event, and what is its significance? How has this influenced Riley's relationship with his father?

11. What has Will's defiance as a youth cost him as an adult? How do "the sins of the father" play out in Will and Helen's marriage? His relationships with Welch and Riley?

12. What makes Riley different from his brother? How does this affect his relationship with his parents?

13. What did Will notice about Barefoot that made him think Barefoot knew the secret to a happy life? What does this have to do with Will's relationship with God?

14. Will also realizes that this secret, or truth, is one that God has been trying to make real to him all his life. Why did it take Will so long to see it?

15. How does Katie react to Will's announcement at the family reunion? Why is this so important to Will?

16. How did the sermon preached in English at Levi's funeral affect Riley? What changes in him as a result? How does the author show this change?

17. How has Levi's funeral helped Will to reconcile with Riley? What lessons are learned from the author's comparison of the Amish ways to the modern lifestyle of the World?

18. What in general does the novel have to say about faith, legalism, religion, and morality regarding the various "brands" of Christianity practiced by believers, whether Amish, Mennonite, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, Episcopalian, Nondenominational, etc.?

Author Bio

W. Dale Cramer is a husband, father, electrician, and author of the acclaimed novels SUTTER'S CROSS and BAD GROUND as well as several published works of short fiction. His second novel, BAD GROUND, was selected by *Publisher's Weekly* as one of the Best Books of 2004. He and his wife and two sons make their home in northern Georgia.

Critical Praise

"One of those books that the reader comes away from with a contented sigh knowing all is well in the lives of the characters he has grown to care about during the reading of the novel."

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