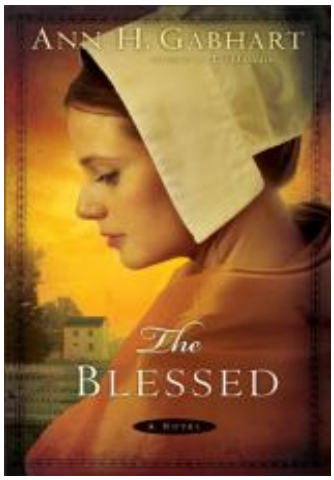
The Blessed

by Ann H. Gabhart



About the Book

?Ann H. Gabhart takes us on a remarkable journey into the lives of the Shakers and their community. With a compelling style, she weaves a story of love, compassion, and a young woman?s determination to find God?s truth. From cover to cover, **The Blessed** captivates and challenges --- an absolutely wonderful read.?
- Judith Miller, author **A Bond Never Broken**

In a life not her own, one woman longs for the freedom of true love.

It is 1844 and Lacey Bishop?s life is a tangled mess. Estranged from her own family and married to a man she can never love, Lacey?s only comfort is being mother to a little girl who was left on the doorstop. When her husband decides to move the family to a Shaker village, Lacey is not prepared for the new life that awaits her.

In the midst of her deep loneliness, Lacey finds herself drawn to a young Shaker man. But of course any notion of love between them is only a forbidden dream. Not only is she already married, but the Shakers believes marriage is a sin.

Will Lacey ever find true happiness in this strange place?

Discussion Guide

1. Lacey was ready to do whatever she had to in order to continue mothering Rachel even to marrying a man she could never love. Do you think she made the right decision? Do you think you might have done the same if you?d been in her shoes?

2. Lacey depended on Miss Mona to teach her what she believed about the Lord. She trusted Miss Mona to know the truth. Why was that not enough? Why did Lacey need to learn to trust with her own heart and not just because it was

what Miss Mona would have wanted her to believe?

3. Isaac blamed himself for his wife?s death. Do you think he had reason to feel that way? Was he wrong to want to go west even though Ella didn?t want to leave her family?

4. Isaac was so depressed after his wife?s death that he wished he could die. Do you think that if Brother Asa hadn?t come along, Isaac might have ended up in the river? Do you believe that the Lord sometimes places someone in our path to keep us from doing the wrong thing or making the wrong decision? Have you had something like that happen in your life or known someone who has?

5. Lacey had a rocky relationship with the Ebenezer Church women. She couldn?t seem to do anything that pleased them or at least that?s what she thought. Do you think she was too hard on them or that they were too hard on her? How was that changed by the end of the book?

6. Reuben was a likable character from the first minute he showed up in the church graveyard. Since it was unlikely that he would ever marry and have his own family, do you think it was a good thing that he counted the church his family? Do you think the church can be a special blessing to people like Reuben when they are allowed to work for the church and thus for the Lord?

7. Lacey has a hard time believing that an angel is really speaking through Aurelia. She certainly never expects to see any angels and she can?t keep from doubting Aurelia?s claims to see the angels. Do you think that showed a lack of faith on Lacey?s part? Do you believe Aurelia could have really been an instrument of the angels?

8. When the eldress allows Lacey to go see Rachel, the visit doesn?t turn out the way Lacey expected it to. Why do you think Rachel was so cold toward Lacey? Did you guess who was poisoning Rachel?s mind against Lacey?

9. Why do you think Miss Mona kept Aurelia?s secret? Was it to protect Aurelia, Rachel or the preacher? Or perhaps herself? Do you think she did the right thing?

10. After he went to the Shakers, Preacher Palmer became obsessed with achieving balance. Do you think he really believed that he could find that place of peace in between earth and heaven where he would not be tormented by his failures and his sins would not be counted against him? Was he trying to earn that peace instead of accepting the free gift of grace and forgiveness?

11. Isaac started to ride on past Sadie Rose?s house when he saw the new preacher on his knees in front of Lacey. Why do you think he turned his horse and rode up to the porch instead? Do you think Lacey would have eventually married the preacher if Isaac hadn?t come looking for her?

12. Lacey?s mother taught her to welcome spring by doing a dandelion dance. Why do you think it was so important to Lacey to continue that tradition as the years went by? Can you see her as a gray-haired grandmother still dancing to welcome spring each year? Have you ever wanted to dance to welcome spring or celebrate some other time in your life?

Author Bio

Ann H. Gabhart is the bestselling author of ANGEL SISTER, SMALL TOWN GIRL and WORDS SPOKEN TRUE, as well as several Shaker novels --- THE OUTSIDER, THE BELIEVER, THE SEEKER, THE BLESSED and THE GIFTED --- and *The Heart of Hollyhill* series. She lives with her husband a mile from where she was born in rural Kentucky.

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