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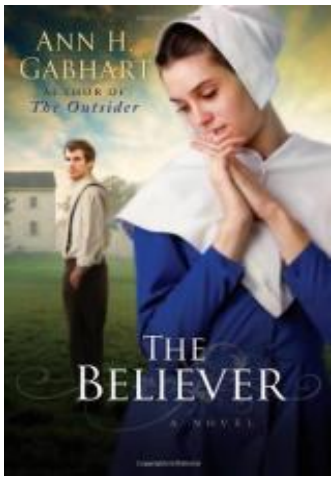
The Believer

by Ann H. Gabhart



About the Book

Will a forbidden love destroy all they know? Elizabeth Duncan has nowhere to turn. In charge of her younger brother and sister after their parents die, her options are limited: she can give in to the unwanted advances of an odious landowner --- or she can flee.

When Elizabeth hears that the Shaker community in the next county takes in orphans, she presents herself and her siblings at Harmony Hill. Despite the hard work and strange new beliefs around her, Elizabeth is relieved to have a roof overhead and food to eat. But life gets complicated when she finds herself attracted to a handsome young Believer named Ethan.

Ethan has never looked on the opposite sex as anything but sisters, but he can't shake the new feelings that Elizabeth has awakened in him.

Will Elizabeth be forced to leave the village to keep Ethan from stumbling? Or could Ethan's love for her change their lives forever?

Discussion Guide

1. After her father?s death, Elizabeth didn?t know how she and her siblings were going to survive. When she found the Shaker seed package in her father?s Bible, she thought it not just chance but an answer to prayer. Do you agree and have you ever experienced a similar feeling that the Lord dropped something in front of your eyes so that you could see the answer to a prayer?

2. Ethan worried that the bad seed of his father would grow and flower within him. Do you think he had a reasonable concern? Are we destined to have the traits of our biological parents in spite of our upbringing?

3. One of the Shakers? aims was to shut away the world in order to establish a community where they could live a perfect life here on earth. Do you think they were successful or ever could be successful in this hope this side of heaven?

4. Hannah had difficulty living under the Shaker rules. Do you think that Hannah was born with this gift of a free spirit or that the child simply lacked the proper discipline in her life as the Shaker teacher claimed? If Hannah had allowed the Shakers to squelch her spirit, would you have liked her as much as a character?

5. The Shakers believed that the family unit of mother, father, and children was the reason for much of the stress in life. That?s why they separated families and lived as brothers and sisters. Do you think the marital unit is the source of disharmony and stress? Or do you feel the family unit is God?s plan?

6. When Elizabeth realizes she is falling in love with Ethan and he seems to be attracted to her as well, she determines to stay away from him and not be a stumbling block in his spiritual path. Do you think this is what she should have done, or should she have tried to convince him the Shaker beliefs were wrong?

7. Elizabeth promised Hannah they would leave the Shakers in the spring if Hannah wasn?t happier by then. Do you think this is a promise she should have made? Would you say God honored this promise?

8. Sister Lettie thought Elizabeth had a gift for healing, and she wanted Elizabeth to stay with the Shakers and learn about herbal medicines and medical treatments from her so that Elizabeth could eventually take over those duties among the Believers. Do you think if it hadn?t been for her promise to Hannah, Elizabeth would have stayed with the Believers and learned to be content among their Society?

9. Hannah set a fire in the hopes that Payton would be blamed and thus made to leave the Shakers. She wanted her family to stay together. Have you ever done something you knew was wrong and excused yourself because you thought the end justified the means? Do you think the end ever justifies the means if those means are wrong behavior?

10. Ethan said that Brother Issachar was the father of his heart. Why do you think he felt that way? Do you think family relationships are built more on actions in our daily lives or actual bloodlines? Which do you feel is most important in establishing family ties?

11. Brother Issachar told both Elizabeth and Ethan to follow their hearts before he died. What do you think he was trying to tell them?

12. Ethan left the Shakers to save Elizabeth from Colin Linley. But then once he accomplished that, he couldn?t seem to move forward toward a future with Elizabeth or backward to his life with the Believers. Why do you think he felt so at a loss about what to do next? Do you think he and Elizabeth could be happy together?

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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