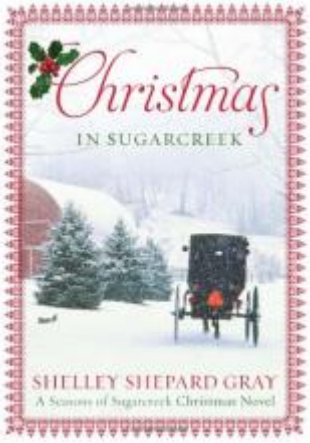
Christmas in Sugarcreek: A Christmas Seasons of Sugarcreek Novel

by Shelley Shepard Gray



About the Book

Judith Graber has always been the obedient daughter. When her older brother Josh struggled with his love life, she offered wise counsel. When her younger brother Caleb flirted with the idea of leaving their order, she firmly told him he was wrong. Over the years, she's watched her younger siblings, helped around the house, and worked in her family's store during her spare time. Judith feels overworked, overlooked and underappreciated this holiday season.

But everything changes when her father hires Ben Knox.

Ben Knox is the "bad boy" of Sugarcreek. Though he's never considered jumping the fence, he's certainly never tried to be anything close to dutiful. Two years ago he left Sugarcreek under a cloud of shame. Rumors circulated that his *rumspringa* had been filled with more than the usual harmless explorations.

Now he's back and working side by side with Judith.

As the chaos of the holiday season threatens to sap all joy, sparks fly between Ben and Judith. But Judith steels herself to ignore her infatuation. The last thing she wants to be is just one more girl who falls under Ben's spell. Ben, on the other hand, wants Judith to realize there's more to him than his bad reputation. When he fled Sugarcreek, he was running from a disruptive home life. Now that he's back, he wants a fresh beginning.

Could this Christmas season bring love and a new life for the unlikeliest pair in Sugarcreek?

Discussion Guide

1. The theme of belonging is an almost-constantone in my novels. Christmas in Sugarcreek was no exception. Ben, Rebecca, and Lilly all felt that they weren't quite good enough for the people who loved them. Did they change…or did their perceptions about themselves change?

2. Writing about Lilly and Robert celebrating their first Christmas together made me nostalgic. Over twenty years ago, my husband and I started several traditions that have become an integral part of our holiday season. Do you have any traditions that you began? Are there any traditions you wish you could change?

3. The Amish are known to be very giving and charitable people, which is one of the reasons I wanted Caleb and Rebecca to be working on Christmas baskets in the novel. What ways does your family or church or

community give back at Christmas?

4. Obviously, Lilly and Robert's story was a twist on O. Henry's famous story, "The Gift of the Magi." Have you ever had a Gift of the Magi moment, where you gave someone a gift that they couldn't use?

5. When I finished the novel, I still wasn't sure where Ben and Judith should live. Do you have a preference? Above the store like Gretta andJoshua? In Ben's house? Or, perhaps they need a new place of their own?

6. Is there a character in the Seasons of Sugarcreek novels who you would like to see more of? Why?

7. When I first read the Amish proverb, "The woods would be silent if only the best birds sang," I knew it would go well with this novel. Does the proverb resonate with you in any special way?

8. The following scripture verse helped me tremendously when writing this novel. Is there a person in your life who adds "light" to it? Can you think of a way that you add "light" to others? *"When Jesus spoke again to the people,He said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' "* John 8:12

Author Bio

Shelley Shepard Gray is the *New York Times* bestselling author of the *Sisters of the Heart*, *Seasons of Sugarcreek* and *Families of Honor* series. Before becoming a writer, she was a teacher in both Texas and Colorado. She now lives with her family in southern Ohio, where she writes full-time. Visit Shelley Shepard Gray's website and Like her on Facebook.

Critical Praise

"[A] feel-good winner."

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Publication Date: October 25, 2011
Genres: Christian, Christian Fiction, Fiction, Holiday, Romance
Hardcover: 256 pages
Publisher: Avon Inspire
ISBN-10: 0062089765
ISBN-13: 9780062089762