



A Plain Love Song

By Kelly Irvin

1. Adah recalls that her father told her the Amish in her community don't dance because it draws attention to the individual, saying "look at me, I'm special," instead of focusing on God. Many of us are taught from a young age to be competitive, to strive to be the best, to win, to stand out in a crowd, to use our God-given talents. What are the pros and cons of both attitudes? Can they coexist?
2. Jackson Hart finds it difficult to understand Adah's community's prohibition against musical instruments. Can you think of instances where an activity you participate in—while innocent in and of itself—leads you to do something you know you shouldn't have? Something that takes you farther from God?
3. We often admire people with special talents, such as musicians, actors, and professional athletes. Do you think there are times that this admiration amounts to adulation or even idolatry? Why do you think professional athletes make so much more money than teachers or firefighters or police officers or soldiers?
4. In the world's eyes, Adah's choice to leave her family and her home to pursue her dreams with Jackson in Branson might be seen as brave or adventuresome. We're often told as we grow up that we should pursue our dreams relentlessly. How do you think Adah's choice affected her family? Matthew? Her faith? Should she have told Matthew what she was doing and why before she left town? Why do you think she didn't?
5. Although idols and idolatry are often spoken of in the Bible, we don't talk about this sin much in modern society. What examples of idols (aside from people) do we often see? Is there something in your life that you feel is becoming too important? How is that manifested? How do we find a balance between what we want and what's good for us and what gives the glory to God?
6. Why concrete ways do you use to make sure God is at the center of your life? What does the statement "Thy will be done" mean to you?
7. After she gets to Branson, Adah discovers she can't perform in public. She can't see herself wearing flashy clothes and makeup. She freezes in front of the microphone. To make her dream a reality, she would have to make herself into something she isn't. Did you ever have a dream

only to realize you're not really cut out for becoming a professional basketball player or an opera singer? How did you deal with it?

8. Most of us may find the prohibition against performing in public and playing musical instruments hard to understand. Can you see how not participating in those activities knits Amish communities closer together? Do you see a danger in letting individuals shine at the expense of the group? Or would you argue, as Adah did, that a God-given talent is meant to be used for His glory? Can a quiet song for God's ears only be the one performance Adah needs to give? Is a middle ground possible?
9. Adah decides she and Jackson are too much alike to ever be happy together. Is that a surprising conclusion, given her background as an Amish girl brought up in a conservative community and Jackson's wild ways as a musician? Do you think it's an astute assessment of her own willfulness? Could you imagine them living "happily ever after?"
10. Why (or why not) do you think Adah made the right choice when she returned to Matthew? Do you think they are more alike or different? In successful relationships, which is more important, in your estimation?