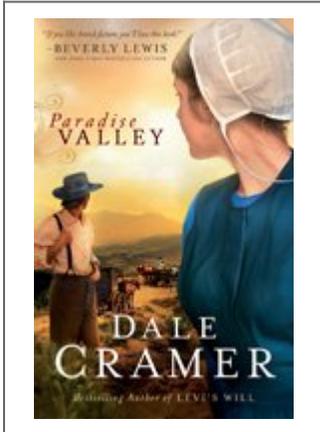


Book Reviews: Paradise Valley

March 2, 2012

[Paradise Valley](#) by Dale Cramer (Bethany House)



Award-winning author Dale Cramer has recreated the Amish world of his grandparents in his excellent book, *Paradise Valley*, the opening volume in the Daughters of Caleb Bender trilogy. Seeking freedom to live their Amish ways, one pioneer family in the 1920s—Cramer's ancestors— moved to Mexico and established a colony in Paradise Valley. It is into this historical context that Cramer sets his novel.

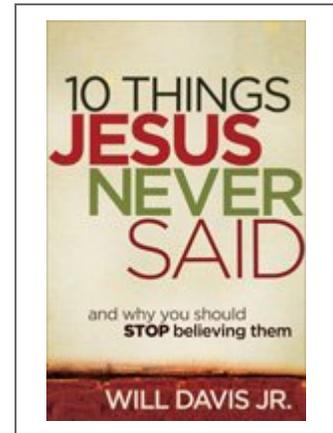
Caleb Bender, a man of strong faith, is the patriarch of this fictitious Amish family. He remains resolute that his nonviolent philosophy will deal successfully with bandits as he and his family build their homestead in Mexico. His daughters must discover unexpected gifts and strengths in this foreign land.

The author is a natural storyteller who provides a complete sensory experience in his descriptions of places and events. His characters will stay in your heart and mind long after finishing the book. The author also provides a helpful discussion guide on his website for more analysis of his characters and their motivations.

Sarah Crouch, adjunct professor

Dallas Baptist University

[10 Things Jesus Never Said](#) by Will Davis Jr. (Revell)



Will Davis Jr. believes many Christians live with tremendous guilt. "They know they don't measure up to God's high and holy standards. They believe they are constantly letting Jesus down," he writes.

I was blessed to read this refreshing book. Davis lays its foundation on what Jesus said to his followers, as recorded in Matthew 11:28-30: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ..." Davis shares a profound reminder for us all. First, Jesus wants us. Second, Jesus wants our burdens.

The book centers on 10 things many people have believed about themselves and others that have been incorrectly attributed to Jesus. They include: "You're too far gone to be saved," "I am so disappointed in you," "It's all up to you," "I've given up on you" and others. Each chapter exposes "the lie," explains "the truth" and concludes with a list of helpful small-group discussion questions.

Davis ends by challenging the reader to trade burdens with Jesus—a very insightful way to conclude a good book. He also adds an appendix, "You're disqualified because you're divorced"—a discussion needed in our society

today.

10 Things Jesus Never Said is well worth your investment, not only for your own spiritual growth, but also as a tool that will be of great value as you minister to other Christians who need to be reminded of Jesus' invitation.

Leo Smith, retired executive director

Texas Baptist Men, Alvin

[The Eternal Waltz of Jacqueline Kennedy](#) by Kristin Elizabeth Marshall (Sheaf House)



Looking back from eternity, if you could plan one perfect day, what would the 24 hours look like? Kristen Marshall attempts to answer that question in *The Eternal Waltz of Jacqueline Kennedy*. As first-person narrator, Mrs. Kennedy describes an ordinary day with her young children, a healthy baby Patrick and her husband free of a pain-plagued back. She and Jack walk hand-in-hand in the sand, share a tea party with Caroline, cuddle Patrick and play "bad guys" with John. They read *The Adventures of Winnie the Pooh* and *Madeline* and the *Bad Hat*.

The first lady examines the scrapbook of her life from her earliest memories through the loss of the president. She recalls the 48 covers of *Life* magazine "all posed and perfect." She remembers Cardinal Cushing's funeral words, "May the angels, dear Jack, lead you into paradise." She

reflects on God's blessing of allowing her and Jack to leave "something the whole world can sing."

Marshall paints an imaginary story in beautifully poetic images that appeals to all the senses. Marshall offers anyone fascinated by the Kennedy family wisdom and comfort gleaned from meticulous research into the lives of Jacqueline and John Kennedy and their children.

Kathy Robinson Hillman, former president

Woman's Missionary Union of Texas, Waco