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Autobiography & Memoir

A Time to Plant: Life Lessons in Work, Prayer, and Dirt
Kyle T. Kramer
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Other people have found God in the garden, but most of them can't also write as well as Kyle T. Kramer. In his memoir about living an authentic life with his family on twenty acres in Indiana, this amateur organic farmer and divinity school graduate shares his doubts, his depression, his joy in the face of physical work, and the deft way he maintains a life of the mind even as he adds to the dirt under his fingernails.

It was while living and teaching in the city of Atlanta that Kramer decided the farming life was for him. He became more convinced that farming was his calling when he found a patch of land just an hour from where his parents lived. The land was damaged and neglected, but when Kramer looked at it, he saw home.

Creating that home wasn't easy, especially when he and his wife were surprised by the arrival of twins. Building the barn and house; creating market gardens and hay fields; forming bonds with neighbors, colleagues, boarders and new friends; and still making time and room for prayer nearly brought Kramer to his knees in defeat. Strength, however—both inner and physical strength—prevailed, and he is now even stronger for his experiences.

It's not just his back and hands that have strengthened from this work. Building a house for his family and tending the gardens that provide nourishment for his children and the community beyond, Kramer found a spiritual way of living that books and theological discussions didn't provide. "In some sense, then, toughness and strength are mere by-products of simplicity and sacrifice. The real spiritual fruit is a softer, more expansive heart, which is open, aware, grateful, and compassionate: a heart in harmony with the wide reaches of God's sorrow and God's love."

Kramer's slim book is filled with discovery, exclamations of pure love, and plenty of humor. It's the humor that makes this book so easy and enjoyable to read. Other heartfelt books can occasionally fall into a pattern of self-righteousness, but Kramer doesn't hesitate to poke fun

at himself and reveal his weaknesses. His honesty and ability to laugh at himself make his writing inviting.

Not everyone will want to run out and plant a garden after reading Kramer's book, but that's part of his point. His greatest talent lies in being true to himself, and readers will be inspired to follow their true path whether they plant corn or design skyscrapers.

Andi Diehn