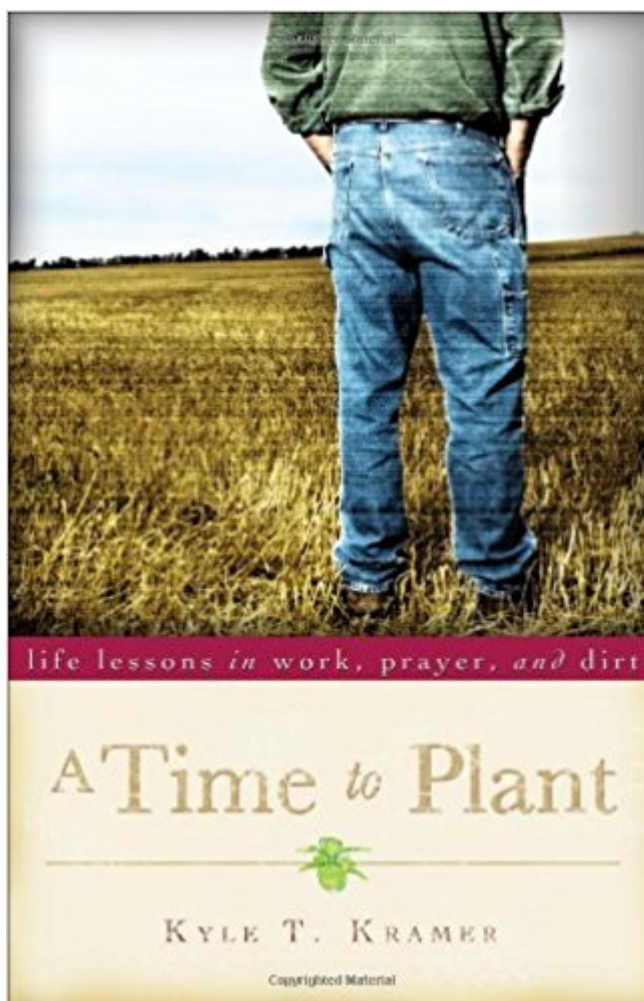


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# A Time To Plant



## Synopsis

In his moving debut book, America columnist Kyle Kramer recounts the sometimes-gritty story of how he came to experience the joys of real community through a journey of honest reckoning with his own ambitions. For Kramer, this story involves lots of dirt. In the summer of 1999, Kramer, an earnest and high-achieving private school teacher in Atlanta, decided to forego a promising academic career. Instead, he heeded the voices of the unlikely prophets in his life and purchased a block of hardscrabble land in southern Indiana in order to start a small farm. Tending it back to health--one difficult lesson at a time--Kramer founded Genesis Organic Farm, built a self-sustaining and environmentally friendly home, and began to fully embrace the Benedictine traditions of physical labor, prayer, and hospitality. *A Time to Plant* is a deeply human story of one man's attempt to make simple living a reality as a spiritual discipline for himself, as a model for his children, and for the good of creation.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Debut author Kramer is a farmer who came to his farm deliberately, after a divinity school degree and a life active in an Episcopalian church in Atlanta. His evolving vision led him back to his roots in southern Indiana, where in 1999 he purchased acreage in serious need of care. With that he began an agrarian life, learning through mistake, humility, and loneliness not only how to be a farmer, but how to be home, working in the earth. His homesteading is hardly glamorous, nor does he issue a back-to-the-land clarion call. His enterprise is modest and deeply personal; he cultivates his farm, marries, has children, and has an off-farm job at a nearby Benedictine monastery. He is at pains to

say, and show, that his life takes a lot of work. Some additional details on his very concrete daily life as a farmer would make his story more vivid; the last three chapters contain much reflection that might well have been exchanged for more description of dailyness. Kramer has written a commendable, nonromantic book on spirituality and the land. (Jan.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

In 1999, Kramer bought a plot of land in rural Indiana, which he eventually turned into an energy-efficient, wind-powered, working organic farm. With his home as a foundation, Kramer makes the subtle but powerful connection between his faith and the natural world. He freely admits that the journey to his new home was not a smooth one but was, instead, full of both anxious and hopeful moments. Kramer believes in what he calls authentic belonging, where the twin concepts of simplicity and sustainability are inseparable. Here he explores what it means to cultivate a healthy home economy, which can be something as fundamental as preparing food to finding a meaningful connection to the larger world. Home economics, he maintains, is nothing less than a spiritual undertaking. Inspired by the work of Luke Timothy Johnson, Wendell Berry, and especially Scott Russell Sanders, Kramer explains his gradual transformation from a self-proclaimed motor head (he loved mechanical things) with little interest in ecology to the person that he is today. A humble and charming meditation on spirituality and nature. --June Sawyers

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. It put into words what I am trying to do which is to live a life more purposeful and authentic to my vocation as wife, mother and faithful servant of the Lord. I have a mind to farm and we have just bought land so this book was appealing to me. Mr Kramer is a very thoughtful and spiritual person and this book reveals much about him in a genuine light. There is a lot of information regarding spiritual growth which I feel is relevant to everyone, not just someone seeking to farm. Thank you for writing this book!

When I met my husband Tim, 25 years ago, he had a dream to farm. In addition to growing up on a farm in rural Indiana, he had worked in Guatemala in the Peace Corps in reforestation and bee keeping. Though I knew the farm was the dream, graduate school took us on a different path. We have had extensive organic gardens but the farm was still something that seemed like it would never be part of our reality until we read Kyle's story. We read it together and realized how much of his story mimicked ours (Tim in particular) and it spoke to our hearts. I suppose it touched us in different ways. Tim could connect with everything from the longing to work and live in unity with the

land to the soil erosion and building challenges. I was most touched by the journey with his family. Kramer's story lead us to long and heart felt conversations about a dream once lost that now we must find again. Our 11 year old son joined in the excitement and we went on a land search. We were lead to 10 acres that we are now getting ready to work. We took almost all our savings to purchase the land and a John Deere! I will tell you this dream is starting to unfold and we keep our copy of Kramer's book close at hand for encouragement and inspiration.

An excellent book to share with us our connection to the earth as part of the earth and the universe.

Fundamental and applied ecology with spirituality necessary to save Mother Earth. Well written and instructive love for topsoil, in a time of Frack Sand and Big Oil control of our life and finite natural resources.

I admit it. When I received a review copy of "A Time to Plant: Life Lessons in Work, Prayer, and Dirt," I cringed. A book about back-to-basics living? No, thank you. In my defense, I do try to be a reasonably responsible steward of the earth. I recycle almost everything, try to limit consumption, give things away rather than put them in the trash, etc, but no one would ever accuse me of being earthy-crunchy. I live in a city. If my family was dependent on my gardening abilities for survival, we would have died a long time ago. Being forced to go camping is my idea of a nightmare. Yet, even with all that working against it, "A Time to Plant" was still well-worth reading. In 1999, Kyle Kramer, who is the director of lay degree programs at Saint Meinrad Archabbey, "bought a rough patch of neglected ground in a rural corner of southwestern Indiana. . . and committed [himself] to its healing and care." In the past decade, amid myriad ups and downs, he has honored that commitment. In "A Time to Plant," he shares the tale of his call to live off the land as well as his more personal story of his spiritual wanderings which finally led him to the Catholic Church and finding the extremely understanding woman who is now his wife and the mother of their three children. Kramer is an honest man. He tells of his failures as well as of his successes. He shares his darkest hour which came while he was attempting to build a house for his wife and new twin daughters, who were at that time living in a pole-barn apartment. "It was five degrees in the unheated shell of the house as I worked by battery-powered headlamp down in the dark basement, my feet blocks of ice; my ungloved, unfeeling fingers fumbling to measure, cut, and solder copper pipe . . . I sat down on an overturned five-gallon bucket, rocking back and forth in a near catatonic struggle to remember even one good reason why I had taken on this gargantuan, impossible project. . . My prayer was a simple

and desperate cry for divine help." God heard his prayer and slowly, things did begin to improve. His marriage survived and the house was eventually completed. Those who dream of living a life close to the earth will love this book, although Kramer is the first one to acknowledge that there is nothing simple about living a simple life. His idealistic dreams didn't get fulfilled quite the way he thought they would be. At times, he grows restless and questions this commitment to one place. Yet, overall, he lives with hope and has the connection to the land he always wanted. He and his family are an inspiration. For those less agriculturally inclined, "A Time to Plant" offers a great deal of wisdom on vocations and their evolution, as well as what it means to develop a true home. It is a very well-written and thought-provoking book.

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