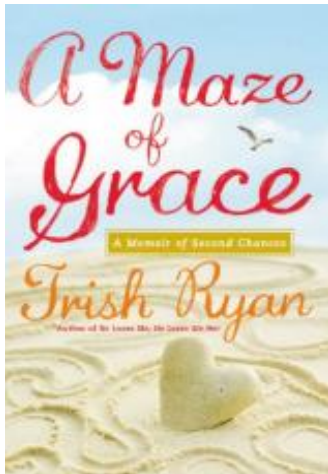


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# A Maze of Grace: A Memoir of Second Chances

by Trish Ryan

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## About the Book

Ryan brings the perspective of someone whose experience differs from the way marriage is often portrayed --- she's happy! Yet happiness was hard-won, she admits. As Ryan searched for advice for her second attempt at marriage, she found much talk centered on failure. "Happy people are apparently too polite to write books about how well things are going," she observes. "Perhaps they should. Because what I realized is that I'd absorbed some bad advice over the years: *Communication is the most important thing. Sex matters less once you're married. Get in touch with your feelings --- they'll never lie.* It took Steve and me approximately three days to realize that talking endlessly about our disagreements didn't solve them, sex mattered way more than we'd thought, and my feelings lied all the time about what was really going on." Ryan found the "happily-ever-after" with an unexpected bonus --- in addition to a husband, she gained a newfound faith. Now she offers an "applied spirituality," testing her beliefs to see if they really work. She also writes of her struggles with infertility, depression, and universal questions about body image and what makes good sex. She offers a refreshing, countercultural take on a range of issues.

## Discussion Guide

1. In **A Maze of Grace**, Trish discusses how her "Happily Ever After" played out differently than she expected, sometimes in good, bad, or surprising ways. Are you living your "Happily Ever After"? What does it look like for you?
2. In the introduction, Trish says that one of the best parts of her faith is that it allows do-overs. What is your experience with second chances?
3. Trish was excited to share the mundane aspects of marriage with her new husband: clogged sinks & burnt meatloaf. What do or did you envision marriage to be like?
4. "GIRL --- you've got to give that man some SEX!" was the best advice Trish and Steve received in their newlywed

year. What's your reaction to this advice?

5. A situation with an attractive female coworker at Steve's work caused Trish concern. Do you agree with her caution?
6. Trish describes a point in her marriage where it felt as if she and Steve had become 'more like casual roommates than lovers.' Have you felt this way in a relationship? Is it inevitable, or something to push back against?
7. Trish's friends Helena and Jasper shared how their marriage was damaged by an affair. After months of prayer and healing, they made it through to a wonderful restoration of their family. Have you ever been betrayed? Do you believe restoration is possible?
8. Trish's inability to get pregnant raised questions about whether God really listened or cared about her. Have you had a situation where you felt hopeless and abandoned by God? How did you handle it? What gave you hope?
9. In moments of frustration and doubt in life, do you look for answers in a specific place, as Trish looked for them in books? What do you find?
10. Trish describes 'Acedia' as the evil spirit akin to depression that assaulted her during dark times in her life. Have you experienced similar dark times? How did you handle them?
11. Trish is surprised to find herself agreeing with Lori Gottlieb's rally cry that women stop being so picky and 'Marry That Man' But with a caveat. What are your criteria for choosing a mate? How realistic are they? Does faith play a role?
12. As Trish faced hard realities amidst her 'Happily Ever After', she saw 'glimpses of grace'. Do you get glimpses of grace in your life? She says that even in hard times, God's voice can be heard, and hope can be found. Do you agree? Why or why not?
13. In the beginning of her book Trish asks to be encouraged by her story. What were your thoughts as you finished the book?
14. At the end of her book, Trish shares four words she heard at a friend's wedding: Prayer Works. Love wins. What strikes you about this perspective?

## Author Bio

Trish Ryan is the author of **He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not**, both published by FaithWords/Hachette Book Group. A writer and speaker on relationships, marriage, spirituality and creativity, Ryan lives in Cambridge, MA, with her husband, Steve.

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