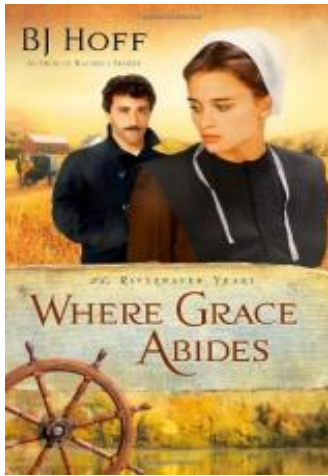

Where Grace Abides: The Riverhaven Years

by BJ Hoff



About the Book

Where Grace Abides is a story that includes many challenging topics for discussion, including slavery and abolition, faith and organized religion, personal liberties, issues of discrimination, and more. This book will especially appeal to reading groups who are looking for a thought-provoking read that asks challenging questions in the context of a faith perspective.

In **Where Grace Abides**, the compelling second book in the series, Hoff offers her readers an even closer look at the Amish community of Riverhaven and the people who live and love and work there. Secrets, treachery, and persecution are only a few of the challenges that test Rachel's faith and her love for the forbidden "outsider," while Gant's own hopes and dreams are dealt a life-changing blow, rendering the vow he made to Rachel seemingly impossible to honor.

Discussion Guide

1. Early in the story, Gant refers to the rules of the Amish ministerial brethren as "manipulation." He seems to believe these rules have been established to prevent the Plain People from being infected by the "worldly influence" of the English (the non-Amish). What's your understanding of these regulations? Do you agree with Gant? Are they a means of manipulation, or what is the primary purpose behind them?
2. When Gant tells Rachel of the bishop's refusal to allow him to convert --- thereby making it impossible for them to marry --- she seems to accept the decision as the final word on the subject and tells Gant she can't go against the bishop. Could you do that? If your church required that you give up any hope of marrying the person you love or that you disassociate yourself from a loved one, even a family member, would you be able to obey, or would you be more inclined to give up your church?
3. Rachel and her mother, Susan, approach the assurance of salvation from different perspectives, which prompts the

question from Rachel: "Do you really think it's so wrong to have questions about God's will for us? Don't you think He would want us to understand His teachings?" How would you answer that question?

4. What do you believe was the purpose behind Gant's special gift to Rachel's younger sister, Fannie?
5. Why did Gant and Asa seem surprised to see Gideon doing the supper dishes? What's the typical division of labor between Amish men and Amish women? How do you feel about this? Are tasks clearly marked in your household as to who does what? Does the system work well for you and your family?
6. What do you believe to be Gant's motivation for helping runaway slaves through the Underground Railroad? What prompts him to risk his own freedom to help others gain their freedom?
7. Incidents of harassment, persecution, and oppression have followed the Amish across time and place throughout the years. What do you believe accounts for such mistreatment? Can you relate their experience to other religions or ethnic groups?
8. How does Gant feel about the Riverhaven Amish? What does he see in them and their community that he secretly longs for in his own life?
9. What was your initial impression of Terry Sawyer, the newcomer to Riverhaven? Did your opinion change with the progression of the story? If so, why?
10. We often find experiences out of our "comfort zone" difficult to endure. Little about the flight North held any "comfort" for the runaway slaves. Obviously their primary concern and the source of their courage had to do with freedom. What would motivate you to submit to some of the harrowing events, dangers, and discomforts faced by the refugee slaves who were so desperate to make their way to the North?
11. What is the first sign to some of the Plain People --- including Rachel and her mother --- that something might be wrong with the bishop? Dr. Sebastian is also concerned, but what's the reason for their hesitancy to discuss the possible problem?
12. As much as Gant and Rachel love each other and want to be together, their prayers for each other take a different turn and begin to go in an unexpected direction. What do you believe accounts for this?

Author Bio

BJ Hoff's bestselling historical novels continue to cross the boundaries of religion, language, and culture to capture a worldwide reading audience. Her books include SONG OF ERIN and AMERICAN ANTHEM and such popular series as *The Riverhaven Years*, *The Mountain Song Legacy* and *The Emerald Ballad*. Hoff's stories, although set in the past, are always relevant to the present. Whether her characters move about in small country towns or metropolitan areas, reside in Amish settlements or in coal company houses, she creates *communities* where people can form relationships, raise families, pursue their faith, and experience the mountains and valleys of life. BJ and her husband make their home in Ohio.

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Publication Date: October 1, 2009

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: Harvest House Publishers

ISBN-10: 0736924191

ISBN-13: 9780736924191