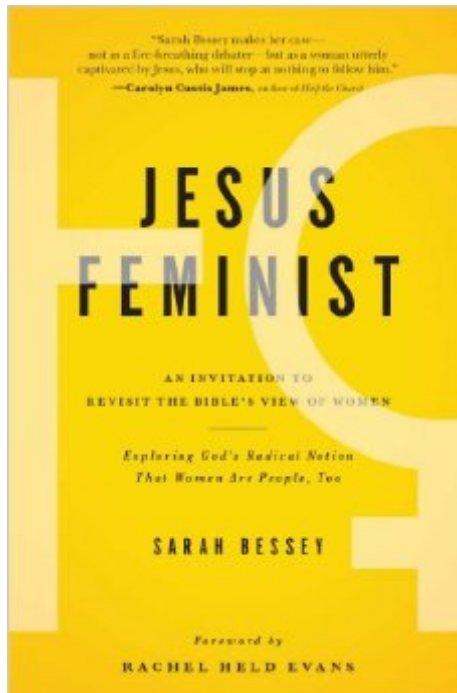


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# Jesus Feminist: An Invitation To Revisit The Bible's View Of Women



## Synopsis

Written with poetic rhythm, a prophetic voice, and a deeply biblical foundation, this loving yet fearless book urges today's church to move beyond man-made restrictions and fully welcome women's diverse voices and experiences. Gender roles have been debated for centuries, and now Sarah Bessey offers a clarion freedom call for all who want to realize their giftedness and potential in the kingdom of God. Through a thoughtful review of biblical teaching and church practices, Bessey shares how following Jesus made a feminist out of her.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

You know our mothers told us never to judge a book by its cover? I ignored that advice when I saw *Jesus Feminist* on the shelf at Barnes & Noble. Yellow is not my favorite color. I didn't like the juxtaposition of the Cross and the Venus symbol. And despite being theologically egalitarian, I don't like the word feminist. So, I left Sarah Bessey on the shelf and exited the store sans book. Then my wife told me I needed to read *Jesus Feminist*. Her sister had read and loved it. A good friend had read and loved it. And the kind of books I liked to read were nerdy, she said, and no one other than me cared about them. So why not read and review something normal people actually liked? As per usual, I listened to my wife, returned to Barnes & Noble, purchased a copy, and started reading. Although Sarah Bessey writes well and although I pretty much agree with her, I found reading the book's initial pages to be a long, hard slog. She tells stories where I would assert propositions. She asks questions where I would offer answers. She assumes conclusions where I

would make long arguments. Her authorial voice is so different than mine. I would approach the topic of "the Bible's view of women" in such a different way. Midway through chapter 2 (or was it 3?), I realized what the problem was. It wasn't her, it was me. Here am I, a man, having a hard time listening to a woman make a case in her own voice on an issue where we agree. Let me repeat that for my male readers: I wasn't listening to what a woman was saying because she was a woman. Now, I realize that I am probably not Sarah Bessey's intended reader.

Review of "Jesus Feminist," and response to one star review by "Steve." Steve's Criticism: "First, Sarah Bessey loves to go after the straw man [i.e. a position that someone doesn't actually hold]. Even the subtitle betrays this tendency: Exploring God's Radical Notion That Women Are People, Too. Did Sarah seriously believe her complementarian [sic] (Biblically minded non-egalitarian) friends would think it a radical notion that women are people too? Who has ever suggested they are not?" My Response: Who indeed Steve? Here are some quotes from the architects of complementarian theology, and from those who continue to perpetuate it today: "[For women] the very consciousness of their own nature must evoke feelings of shame." - Saint Clement of Alexandria, Christian theologian (c150-215) *Pedagogues II*, 33, 2 "In pain shall you bring forth children, woman, and you shall turn to your husband and he shall rule over you. And do you not know that you are Eve? God's sentence hangs still over all your sex and His punishment weighs down upon you. You are the devil's gateway; you are she who first violated the forbidden tree and broke the law of God. It was you who coaxed your way around him whom the devil had not the force to attack. With what ease you shattered that image of God: Man! Because of the death you merited, even the Son of God had to die... Woman, you are the gate to hell." - Tertullian, "the father of Latin Christianity" (c160-225) "Woman is a temple built over a sewer." - Tertullian, "the father of Latin Christianity" (c160-225) "Woman was merely man's helpmate, a function which pertains to her alone. She is not the image of God but as far as man is concerned, he is by himself the image of God."

Right out of the gate, let me say that I think what Sarah is doing here is really important. By putting the word "Jesus" in lights right next to "feminist," she's forcing a certain conversation that some folks would rather not have right now (or ever). Feminism has been recast in the past few decades as anathema to Christianity in many ways. Simply suggesting that one can hold to both concepts and implying that being a "Jesus Feminist" is possible in a way that will not, in fact, result in a sort of universe-destroying cataclysm, is a radical statement in itself, it would seem. Starting with the introduction and all the way through to her hopeful commission in the final chapter, Sarah's primary

mode of interaction with the reader is one of disarming. She sets the tone early on saying, "We have often treated our communities like a minefield, acted like theology is a war, and we are the wounded and we are the wounding." She's acknowledging up front the firepower we often bring to discussions like these, and suggests that, instead of trying to kill each other, maybe we could just try to hear each other instead. As you read on, you start to understand that this is no empty gesture. Sarah is consistently disarming in her grace, her candor, and her willingness to let us into the most intimate, most painful experiences of her life. Some people bring knives to gunfights. All Sarah brought was her story, and the result is that we cannot help but lower our weapons and listen to her tell it. So as you settle in past the introduction and into the meat of the book itself, the feeling is far more coffee (or tea!) on a Saturday afternoon than it is a sermon on Sunday or a lecture on Monday.

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