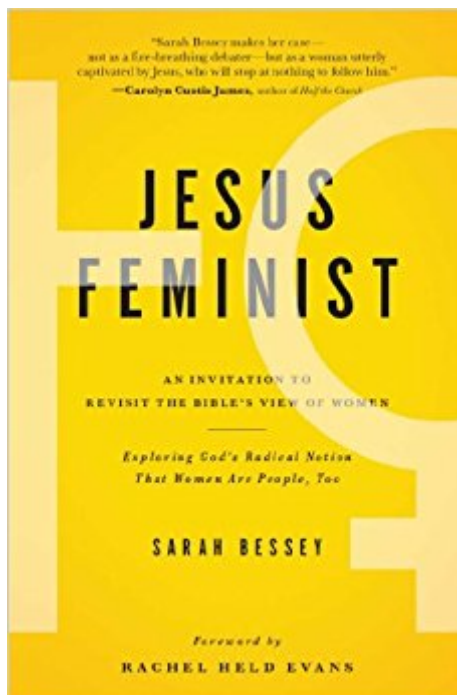


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# Jesus Feminist: An Invitation To Revisit The Bible's View Of Women



## 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

Bessey speaks directly and compassionately to her fellow Evangelical Christians, arguing the case for viewing Jesus as unbounded by gender considerations in valuing the worthiness of humans. Bringing an informed but nonacademic historical perspective to her reading of the Bible and using relevant examples from her personal life, both as a church member and a part of contemporary Western culture, she observes that biblical events and traditional Evangelical interpretations of them are not always what they seem. Never strident, Bessey's approach is instead solid and clear. Although apostolic admonitions read without the contexts she proposes might bolster sexism, given a larger frame of reference, they fall to her arguments. An excellent choice for a church discussion group as well as an important viewpoint to include in public library religion collections.

--Francisca Goldsmith

"Bessey's warm and intimate writing sets this book apart from others focused on similar topics. Her approach and style offer a unique addition to literature on women's role in Christian churches." (Publisher's Weekly)"Never strident, Bessy's approach is instead solid and clear....An excellent choice." (Booklist)"World, meet Sarah Bessey. Settle in and get to know her because this woman has arrived. Reading Jesus Feminist is like drinking a warm cup of tea while taking a cold shower • Bessey manages to comfort the reader and wake her up at the same time. I cried and nodded and said 'preach, sister!' again and again. Bessey is a treasure and a prophet and I've notified all of my friends (both men and women) that Jesus Feminist is a must read." (Glennon Doyle Melton, author of the New York Times bestseller Carry On, Warrior and founder of Momastery.com)"Lucid, compelling, and beautifully written. This book will encourage women everywhere to take their high place in Christ." (Frank Viola, author of God's Favorite Place on Earth and From Eternity to Here)"For some time now, feminism and Christianity have been bedfellows, but primarily in the halls of academia. What Sarah Bessey does is claim the voice of feminism for her own Christian faith • an evangelical faith, no less! The result is a powerful and empowering narrative that both men and women will find compelling and readable." (Tony Jones, theologian and author of The New Christians)"I love writers who are insightful enough to be cynical but choose not to be. I love books that help me see things I'd never noticed before • in life, in myself, in others, in the Bible, in Jesus. I love writing that makes reading enjoyable and easy, because I know how hard it is to write that way. For these reasons and more, I love Jesus Feminist. It's not just a woman's book. In fact, it's the kind of book that will help both women and men see how unhelpful that distinction is." (Brian D. McLaren, author, speaker, activist)"It's hard to navigate an extremely delicate and important issue with gentleness and intention. In Jesus Feminist, Sarah Bessey has clearly proven herself a master at the task. Bessey powerfully, yet gracefully, compels both genders to rethink the role and value of women in the Christian faith, and emboldens women to know and live out that intrinsic value within the Body of Christ. Jesus Feminist is a critically important work; a must-read for everyone in the Church." (Nish Weiseth, author of Speak: How Your Story Can Change the World)"Sarah says she doesn't feel a call to preach, but she speaks with the fire and artistry of a great preacher. Her sermon is one of hope: though the Church has often ignored the voices of women or lumped them into one limiting category, a revolution is coming. Sarah's voice is prophetic and she will free other women to speak and act with power, love, and courage. And may it be a summons for men in the Church to speak less and listen a lot more." (Adam S. McHugh, author of Introverts in the Church)"With grace, humility, and confidence (even in the unknown), Sarah Bessey's Jesus

Feminist masterfully humanizes one of the most controversial topics of the day. Bessey realizes that life, love, and faith cannot happen without community and the understanding that 'controversy' is less about sides and more about being whole together." (Andrew Marin, author of *Love Is an Orientation*) "If you never imagined yourself as a card-carrying Jesus Feminist, this book will give you second thoughts. Sarah Bessey makes her case not as a fire-breathing debater but as a woman utterly captivated by Jesus who will stop at nothing to follow him. Her winsome writing made me laugh, cry, and stand taller as a woman. Unless I'm mistaken, it should swell the ranks of Jesus Feminists too. Sign me up!" (Carolyn Custis James, author of *Half the Church: Recapturing God's Global Vision for Women*) "Sarah Bessey is so gifted a writer, so smart and welcoming and humble, the Church might not even notice how often it gets kicked between its doctrinally sound traditions, where it hurts. But what makes Jesus Feminist so fantastic, so challenging is Bessey's ability to be both the friend who tells us the truth about womanhood inside our churches and the sage who shows us how Jesus embraced equality and how we can do it better. With Jesus Feminist, Bessey is a modern-day Moses, seeking to not only free a Church held captive by dogma but also to redeem generations of women who have been stifled and silenced far too long." (Matthew Paul Turner, author of *Churched*) "Jesus Feminist is a book that needed to be written! With honest vulnerability and a strong biblical foundation, Sarah Bessey shares her very personal journey and insight regarding the roles and qualifications for women in ministry." (Helen Burns, author of *Miracle in a Mother's Hug and What Dads Need to Know About Daughters and Moms Need to Know About Sons*) "I want to write like Sarah Bessey. What she does with words is extraordinary, and the topic she's chosen is so deeply important. Jesus Feminist is a beautiful, challenging, rich, gutsy book, an absolute must-read." (Shauna Niequist, author of *Bread & Wine*) "I've read countless books addressing the place of women in the kingdom, and I have never, ever read anything so lovely, so generous, profound and humble as Jesus Feminist. If you're expecting anger or defensiveness or aggression, move on. If you are looking for intelligence and warmth and spirit, read this immediately." (Jen Hatmaker, author of *7 and Interrupted*) "Jesus Feminist is a revelation, a genre-defying tour-de-force that soars above the caustic rhetoric that has defined these conversations in the Church. Sarah Bessey throws combinations like a literary Muhammad Ali: sharp-edged prophetic critique, elegant poetry, theological provocation, humble memoir, endless charm. There is so much heart, wonder, and most of all authentic soul in this book; you won't know what hit you." (Jonathan Martin, author of *Prototype*) "Sarah Bessey makes me want to get to know Jesus all over again, but

this time specifically through my womanly flesh, engaging God with the glorious gift of being a woman rather than in spite of it. (Enuma Okoro, author of *Silence and Reluctant Pilgrim*) “Jesus Feminist summons the Church to join in a conversation about women in God’s Kingdom. Sarah Bessey disarms us and then hands us a cup of tea. She creates a safe space for deep discussion, gentle reflection and holy imagination. She calls, converses and commissions us into the wild ways of Jesus. This is a holy invitation for all my sisters to come to the table at last. A must read! (Kelley Nikondeha, co-founder of Amahoro Africa)

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. My guess is that she wrote this book for Christian women, not so much to argue for their equality with men from a biblical viewpoint as to assume it and urge them to get on with the Kingdom work God has called them to do. That being the case, good on her! Still, it’s pretty hard on a guy to realize that his egalitarianism is theoretical rather than practical. That it exists in books and arguments rather than in his willingness to listen to a sister. For Sarah Bessey’s unintended effectiveness in exposing my, well, sexism, good on her! Back to what the book actually says rather than its effect on me: Jesus

loves women. Patriarchy is not God's design for relations between the sexes. Husbands and wives need to figure out how their relationship works for them through trial and error, rather than based on rules that are allegedly exported from the Bible. Churches need to fully deploy (and employ) the feminine half of the congregation. Women's ministries need to be missional, since God calls them to change the world, not make a craft. (Not that there's anything wrong with that!) Christians need to do the hard work of addressing the lack of justice and peace in the world, much of which centers around the ill treatment of women and its side effects. And women don't need permission; they just need blessing. To which I say: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, and yes, respectively. Is Jesus Feminist a great book? I don't know. It's not the kind of book I normally read, so I don't have a metric. Is Sarah Bessey a needed voice? Yes. On behalf of women such as my wife, sister, and friend. And to men like me as well.

Sarah Bessey is sincere and well-intentioned and young, and I believe that she was inspired to write as a result of genuine, paradigm-shifting, personal experiences. It is obvious that she has a deep passion to follow Jesus and admits much of her own flaws. Bessey has great ideas that are worth meditating on, but this book may have been written too early. I believe that authors are more influential when they allow themselves to deepen and mature, in turn allowing their ideas to deepen and mature. Bessey writes beautifully; however, her ideas are lacking in maturity and substance. Bessey provides no deep personal experiences of her own to back up her ideas of what it means to be a Christian feminist. She does provide many stories of other people, but all of these anecdotes are undeveloped. For now, Bessey seems passionate, yet naive and inexperienced. Regardless of life experience, Bessey's argument for Jesus feminism was nonexistent. There was no examination of opposing perspectives, or a clear path of reasoning to guide the reader to why she ardently believes in Jesus feminism. Honestly, it was quite frustrating to try to pick out her points and biblical evidence in the midst of all the poetic prose. The bold title gives way to what might be a bold idea, but which is diluted by too much imagery and too many rhetorical strategies. What was missing for me in this book was that this book called "Jesus Feminist" doesn't address contemporary feminist arguments. As a Christian woman sifting through and at times, feeling bewildered in the current literature of today's feminism, I was relieved to find a book that uttered "Christian" and "feminist" in the same thought. However, it did not shine any light on current political issues or everyday feminism for the typical Christian. So if that is what you are looking for, this is not where you will develop thought in those areas. This book was a miss for me, however, I would be interested to see

what works of writing Bessey produces in 20 to 30 years, after living a full and passionate life as a "Jesus feminist."

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