

God's Wisdom *for* Women

Topical Scripture
and Encouragement



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Rachel Gorman



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17 18 19 20 21 22 23 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

We have this hope as an anchor
for the soul, firm and secure.

Hebrews 6:19 NIV

Topics



Look for the anchor within each topic. This signifies an “anchor verse” and offers an overview for the topic.

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Introduction

I (Rachel) have often struggled with my persona as a woman—at times feeling too feminine, at others too tough. Too weak, but also too strong. Always too much, but never enough. I was insulted for my self-sufficiency or “masculine” strength on the volleyball court, and in the same breath patronized for softness or gentleness. I could never win, never feel free, never sure what I was allowed to do or not do as a woman.

It took me most of my adolescence to truly meet Jesus—bad decisions, misdirection, lies, and chaos followed me through high school and college. It wasn’t until the end of college that I could say I truly wanted to *know* Jesus. During this time I read Philip Yancey’s excellent book *The Jesus I Never Knew*. I’ll never forget reading about what he describes as the “flannel board Jesus.”¹

Somehow I’d missed actually seeing the true character of Jesus for the first twenty-one years of my life. I only saw the flannel board Jesus, packaged neatly for Sunday school—one dimensional and flat. Honestly, looking back, I think I would have admitted that this version of Jesus wasn’t someone I really wanted to know or spend time with—and definitely not follow or obey. But then I read these words I’ll never forget: “Two words one could never think of applying to the Jesus of the Gospels: boring and predictable. How is it then that the church has tamed such a character—has, in Dorothy Sayers’ words, ‘very efficiently pared the claws of the

Lion of Judah, certified Him as a fitting household pet for pale curates and pious old ladies’?”²

With those words the flannel board was beginning to fade, and I was starting to see the Lion of the Gospels. Jesus as Aslan, the powerful and kind lion in the Chronicles of Narnia books. That was someone I wanted to know.

Too Much and Never Enough

As I began this journey to put away the flannel board Jesus and know the real Jesus, I still struggled to understand which parts of me and my personality were acceptable. As a Christian woman, was I allowed strength *and* femininity? Was I allowed to feel bold *and* gentle? I was trapped by these thoughts—still too much and never enough. The world with its misconceptions, and often other Christians, dictated how I should act and what I should feel. Since all expectations contradicted each other, I was at a loss.

It was when I discovered these powerful words by Dorothy Sayers in her book *Are Women Human?*³ that I started to finally feel free. Accepted. Wanted. She said,

Perhaps it is no wonder that the women were first at the Cradle and last at the Cross. They had never known a man like this Man—there never has been such another. A prophet and teacher who never nagged at them, never flattered or coaxed or patronised; who never made arch jokes about them, never treated them either as “The women, God help us!” or “The ladies, God bless them!”; who rebuked without querulousness and praised without condescension; who took their questions and arguments seriously; who never mapped out their sphere for them, never urged them to be feminine or jeered at them for being female; who had no axe to grind and no uneasy male dignity to defend; who took them as he found them and was completely unself-conscious. There is no act, no sermon, no parable in the whole Gospel that borrows its pungency from female perversity; nobody could possibly guess

from the words and deeds of Jesus that there was anything “funny” about woman’s nature.³

As I read these words, my confusion began to dissipate, and I started to see clearly for the first time. The Jesus Sayers describes, the real Jesus of the Gospels, pulled at all my misconceptions about myself, my world, and Jesus himself. Sayers’ words simultaneously showed me two very powerful things: First, I’m not the only woman to feel this dichotomy between who I am and who the world tells me I should be. And second, here is a man I want to know, here is the Jesus who accepts me, frees me, and puts my fears and insecurities to rest. I can trust this man.

Maybe you’re like me, always feeling too much and not enough, or maybe you’ve always understood your place in the world. Maybe you grew up knowing Jesus as a multifaceted, multidimensional hero, or maybe you’re longing to put away the Sunday school flannel board and meet the Lion, Jesus.

Whoever you are, no matter how you grew up, what you’ve experienced, or where you’re longing for restoration—I believe we are all looking for *hope*. The longer I live and the more women I begin to truly know, the more I realize that every one of us has experienced sadness, longing, and loneliness. Even if it’s hidden and no one else knows—not one of us is exempt. We long for hope.

Anchors and Hope

As we prepared for this book, one visual kept coming to mind: an anchor. Steadfast and mighty, anchors help to tether us through the storm. God’s Word is our anchor. Without his promises, we are subject to any storm life gives us. Without an anchor to truth we are in peril—tossed around with no direction, no map, completely at the mercy of the storms that surround us.

We all, each and every one of us, need a strong tether in life; we were created for this very thing—something to help us hold fast to “the hope set before us” (Hebrews 6:18 NIV).

This is the hope promised in God’s Word: that God keeps his promises, that we are not alone, and that we can find our hope in the Scriptures through Jesus. “God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (Hebrews 6:18–19 NIV).

How to Use This Book

You can use this book as a topical field guide, a starting place, to help you easily find God’s words for your life and your journey. You can discover and read through new topics as you need them, hurry to a specific topic in a moment of crisis, and at other times take the time to pause and reflect for long quiet periods. The book is intended to be an anchor; it’s not the whole ocean, or even the ship, but rather a tether to Scripture and a map for journeying deeper into and learning more from the Bible.



Each of these topics literally fills books, sermons, and whole sections of the internet—but God’s Word is an essential place to start. Our hope is that this book will lie open on your bedside table, on your desk, on your kitchen counter, next to your Bible—dog-eared, with pen marks and sticky notes marking the pages and verses that your heart and mind need most.

Our hope is that within these pages you see the Jesus of the Bible, the Lion, the Aslan—these are his words. May you find him here, and may it be an anchor for your soul.

Pat and Rachel



Look for the anchor within each topic. This signifies an “anchor verse,” and offers an overview for the topic.



Hebrews 6:18–20 We who have run for our very lives to God have every reason to grab the promised hope with both hands and never let go. It's an unbreakable spiritual lifeline, reaching past all appearances right to the very presence of God where Jesus, running on ahead of us, has taken up his permanent post as high priest for us. (MSG)

Knowing God



The Good News


Who Is God?

How to Know God

Why the Bible?

What to Do with Doubt

Sin and God's Forgiveness



We must pay the most careful attention, therefore,
to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.

Hebrews 2:1 NIV

• The Good News •

The Gospel That Changes Everything

What makes Christianity unique? How is it different from any other “religion”? The answer is as simple—and as profound—as the difference between *news* and *advice*. The great British pastor, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, asked his listeners to imagine a village that was about to be attacked by an invading army. At this point, the king could send military advisers to help the villagers ready defenses—dig trenches, collect arms, and prepare for battle. These advisers could help with their good advice.

However, if the king’s army had already defeated the enemy invaders *before* they reached the village, he would instead send messengers announcing the report of the victory—the battle was already won.¹ That’s *good news*. The *message* of Christianity, the *gospel*, is good *news* (that’s what *gospel* means: “good news”). The gospel is not about receiving good advice. It is not about you and what you can do to fix yourself. It is about God and what he has already done in and through Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to rescue you. The gospel is good news, absolute truth. The battle has already been won! And this good news *changes everything*.

.....

The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.²

Tim and Kathy Keller

.....

What the gospel tells us about God:

God is perfectly just and perfectly loving.

Numbers 14:18 The LORD is slow to anger and filled with unfailing love, forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. (NLT)

What the gospel tells us about us:

Human beings have rebelled against God's love and come under his just wrath.

Titus 3:3 For we too were once foolish, disobedient, misled, enslaved to various passions and desires, spending our lives in evil and envy, hateful and hating one another. (NET)

Ephesians 2:1–3 Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. (NLT)

What the gospel tells us about the rescue:

God, through Jesus, takes the punishment we deserve for our rebellion. In doing so, he keeps his promise to love and still remain just. We receive this rescue by believing the good news and trusting in Jesus, our Rescuer.



Romans 5:6–8 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (NIV)

Titus 3:4–7 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. (NIV)

PRACTICAL LIVING

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- If you haven't believed, or if you struggle to believe the gospel, then write down the top three things that keep you from believing. Talk to a Christian friend about these things.
- If you do believe the gospel and are trusting Jesus, take a moment to thank God for his amazing love and grace toward you.
- Study Tim Keller's article "The Centrality of the Gospel," available online at GospelInLife.com.
- Ask yourself:
 - » Where am I not applying the truth of the gospel in my life and relationships?
 - » How would those areas of my life and those relationships look different if I fully applied the gospel in them?
- Read Tim Keller's article "Religion vs. The Gospel," available online at dbcu.org.

RECOMMENDED READING

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- *The Prodigal God*. Tim Keller. Penguin.
- *The Gospel*. Greg Gilbert. Crossway.
- *The Story of God's Love for You*. Sally Lloyd-Jones. Zondervan.

• Who Is God? •

Knowing the God of the Gospel

Who is the God who rescues? The very same God who created everyone and everything. He is the only true God. He alone is the one worthy of our highest love, loyalty, faithfulness, joy, and delight. As human beings, created by God in God's image, we owe God our unwavering love, faithfulness, and obedience. But it is only by relating to God—through love, faithfulness, and obedience—that we are happy and able to feel the joy of who God made us to be. It was for this purpose—relationship—that we were made, and for this purpose that we were rescued.

So what is the God who rescues like? The book of Exodus, in the Bible, tells the story of God's great rescue of his people from slavery in Egypt. Who is this God who rescues his people? This is his answer:

Then the LORD came down in a cloud and stood there with him; and he called out his own name, Yahweh. The LORD passed in front of Moses, calling out, "Yahweh! The LORD! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness. I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But I do not excuse the guilty."

Exodus 34:5–7 NLT

In this one passage, we get a microburst of revelation about who God is and what he is like, but it takes the entire Bible to reveal even more fully the God of the gospel, the God who rescues.

.....

If you want joy, power, peace, eternal life, you must get close to, or even into, the thing that has them. They are not a sort of prize which God could, if He chose, just hand out to anyone. . . . Once a man is separated from God, what can he do but wither and die?¹

C. S. Lewis

.....

God is Spirit.

John 4:23–24 But a time is coming—and now is here—when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such people to be his worshipers. God is spirit, and the people who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. (NET)

God is the only true God; there is no one like him.

Jeremiah 10:6 There is none like you, O LORD; you are great, and your name is great in might. (ESV)

Deuteronomy 6:4–5 “Attention, Israel! GOD, our God! GOD the one and only! Love GOD, your God, with your whole heart: love him with all that’s in you, love him with all you’ve got!” (MSG)

God is personal. He speaks; he has a name.

Exodus 3:14 God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” (NIV)

.....

Do you feel loved by God because you believe he makes much of you, or because you believe he frees you and empowers you to enjoy making much of him? It is the difference between

the modern world where all terminates on self, and the biblical world where all terminates on God.²

John Piper

.....

God is triune.

The Father is God:

Genesis 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless.” (ESV)

The Son, Jesus, is God:

Colossians 2:9 For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. (NLT)

The Holy Spirit is God:

2 Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (ESV)

God is eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful, and everywhere present.

Psalms 90:2 Even before the mountains came into existence, or you brought the world into being, you were the eternal God. (NET)

Psalms 147:4–5 He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name. Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit. (NIV)

Jeremiah 32:17–18 O Sovereign LORD! You made the heavens and earth by your strong hand and powerful arm. Nothing is too hard for you! . . . You are the great and powerful God, the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. (NLT)

Psalm 139:7–12 I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there. If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me. I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night—but even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are the same to you. (NLT)

.....

What is God? . . . God is the creator and sustainer of everyone and everything. He is eternal, infinite, and unchangeable in his power and perfection, goodness and glory, wisdom, justice, and truth. Nothing happens except through him and by his will.³

Tim Keller and Sam Shammas

.....

God is holy, just, integral, whole—lacking in nothing.

Isaiah 6:3 They were calling out to each other, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Heaven’s Armies! The whole earth is filled with his glory!” (NLT)

Deuteronomy 32:4 The Rock, his work is perfect [whole, complete], for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he. (ESV)

Acts 17:24–25 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. (ESV)

God is love.

1 John 4:7–10 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (NIV)

God is full of grace and mercy.



Ephesians 2:4–5 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. (NIV)

God is the Creator and Sustainer of his good creation.

Genesis 1:1 First this: God created the Heavens and Earth—all you see, all you don't see. (MSG)

Genesis 1:31 Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good! (NLT)

Hebrews 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. (NIV)

PRACTICAL LIVING

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- Select one or two verses from this topic that particularly spoke to you. Look them up and read in context. Read each verse several times, carefully thinking through each word. Ask yourself: *What does this teach me about God? How does this truth help me treasure God?*

- Join a church, small group, or Bible study where people are enthralled by God's goodness, beauty, and truth.
- Find and listen to music, songs, or hymns that speak of God's character.
- Study the list of God's characteristics in Appendix A.

RECOMMENDED READING

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- *None Like Him: 10 Ways God Is Different from Us.* Jen Wilken. Crossway.
- *Knowing God.* J. I. Packer. IVP.
- *The Mind of the Maker.* Dorothy Sayers. HarperCollins.
- *God: As He Longs for You to See Him.* Chip Ingram. Baker.

• How to Know God •

Living in the Gospel

How does the gospel transform us? How does it change us and help us to grow? The way to grow in the gospel is *through* the gospel. We grow in the gospel as we work the truth of the gospel deeper and deeper into the core of who we are, in such a way that it begins to transform every aspect of our lives.

This process of working the gospel deeper and deeper into our lives is empowered by the same grace that rescues us. The grace that saves is the same grace that transforms. Growing in the gospel,

then, is not a matter of getting beyond grace or adding something to grace but of establishing patterns and habits that are regularly put in place to receive the grace that God gives. These patterns are often referred to as “spiritual disciplines,” “means of grace,” or “habits of grace.”

In his book, *Habits of Grace*, David Mathis points out that while there are many different practices that can help us grow in grace, there are three in particular that are vital: Bible reading, prayer, and being a part of a local church.¹

.....

“The essence of the Christian life,” writes John Piper, “is learning to fight for joy in a way that does not replace grace.” We cannot earn God’s grace or make it flow apart from his free gift. But we can position ourselves to go on getting as he keeps on giving. We can “fight to walk in the paths where he has promised his blessings.” We can ready ourselves to remain receivers along his regular routes, sometimes called “the spiritual disciplines,” or even better, “the means of grace.”²

David Mathis

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Read and study the Bible.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (ESV)



Joshua 1:8 Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. (NLT)

Psalms 1:2–3 You thrill to GOD’s Word, you chew on Scripture day and night. You’re a tree replanted in Eden, bearing fresh fruit every month, Never dropping a leaf, always in blossom. (MSG)

Romans 15:4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (ESV)

Establish rhythms of prayer.

Colossians 4:2 Be devoted to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. (NET)

Acts 2:42 And they devoted themselves . . . to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (ESV)

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. (NIV)

Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything. Instead, in every situation, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, tell your requests to God. (NET)

Be a part of a local church.

Hebrews 10:25 And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. (NLT)

Acts 2:42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (ESV)

PRACTICAL LIVING

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- Set aside regular time to read the Bible. There are lots of different reading plans available online. Bible.com is a great place to start. See Appendix B.
- Use Psalms 4 and 5 to start a pattern of evening and morning prayer. Read and pray Psalm 4 each evening and Psalm 5 each morning. Also consider working through the Psalms as a guide to prayer, using a book like *The Songs of Jesus* by Tim and Kathy Keller.
- Use a daily devotional book such as Paul David Tripp's *New Morning Mercies*.
- Find a healthy, gospel-centered local church and make full involvement in the church community a central priority with your time, finances, service, and affection.

RECOMMENDED READING

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- *Habits of Grace*. David Mathis. Crossway.
- *The Spirit of the Disciplines*. Dallas Willard. HarperOne.
- *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Donald Whitney. NavPress.
- *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*. Tim Keller. Penguin.
- *The Songs of Jesus: A Year of Daily Devotions in the Psalms*. Tim and Kathy Keller. Viking.