



Christian Book Summaries



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PRACTICAL THEOLOGY FOR WOMEN:

How Knowing God Makes a Difference in Our Daily Lives

A Quick Focus

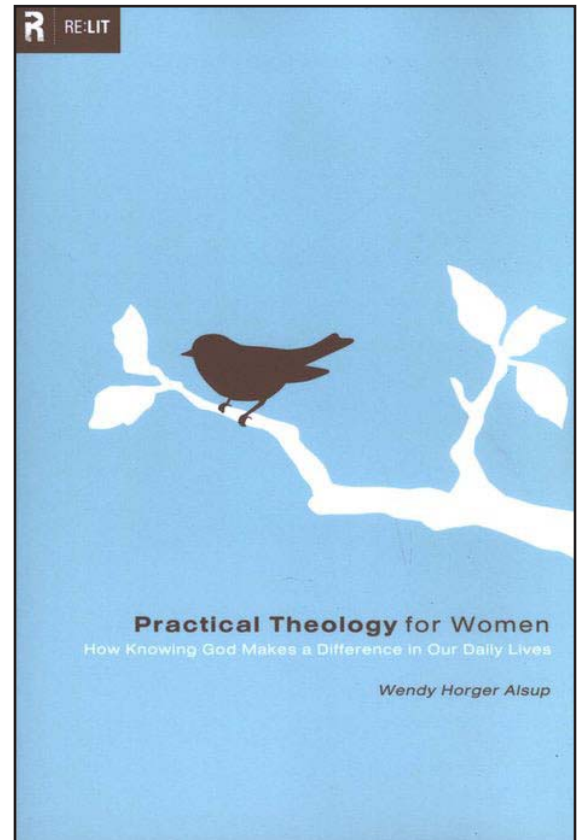
The Book's Purpose

- Encourage women to explore theology in order to gain a deeper knowledge of God
- Help women understand basic theology and how it impacts their lives
- Give women knowledge of God's character and teach them to walk in faith based upon that knowledge

The Book's Message

Many women need to grasp a deeper understanding of theology. They must comprehend what theology is, learn the attributes of God, and know how to communicate with the God who created them and who longs to be in relationship with them.

What the Bible teaches about God is not only for men but for women as well. This knowledge and truth will shape the everyday lives of women as they allow it to penetrate their minds and hearts.



by Wendy Horger Alsup
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Three Main Points

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What Is Theology?

And Why Should I Care?

Many Christians tend to think that biblical knowledge comes in two distinct categories: basic, helpful, practical principles that are for everyone, and then more complex theology~spiritual knowledge reserved for pastors and seminarians. Some women might think that study of the deeper biblical truths is just for men because most theological books are written by and presumably for men. This is hardly a biblical concept, however. Theology, the knowledge of God, is for every Christian, no matter his or her gender.

“A better understanding of God’s character, that is, theology, makes me a better wife ... when we ladies grow in our understanding of God’s character and attributes, it can only be a blessing for our homes, our marriages, our churches.”

Theology is most simply, the study of the nature of God. Is theology practical? Should it be reserved for spiritual leaders alone? Too many Christians assume that the deep things of the Bible are not practical, even though Scripture clearly states in Psalm 111:10 that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Knowledge of God that teaches us to reverence Him and submit to His purposes is what leads to wisdom in daily life. ***“Theology is the root, foundation, and framework for practical living that reflects wisdom and understanding.”***

If you have accepted Christ as your personal Savior, then His Holy Spirit resides in you. He promises to guide you into all truth. His presence in your life enables you to grow in your understanding of the deep things of God.

God is not calling us to be five-minute-daily-devotional Christians. He calls us and equips us to know Him, understand his character, and live by His truth. As we begin our journey, we will study God’s character and then reflect on our own responses to see if our lives actually demonstrate our faith in God.

What Is Faith?

Sometimes we lose sight of the most fundamental concepts of our faith. And it is *faith* that we often do not truly live by. Over the last few years, God has allowed my family to endure some very difficult times. Job loss, infertility, financial struggles, serious health issues, and major relocations all forced us as a couple to learn hard lessons in faith. God refined and shaped our faith as we responded to the challenges facing us. During these times, I observed how various Christians in our circle of friends responded to what was happening. I noticed that there is often a great disparity between what we say we believe and how we act. We say we trust God and

are resting in His presence, but in difficult times we are often consumed instead with worry, fear, and anxiety. ***“Does it fit with our belief system when such reactions characterize those who claim to believe in Christ and trust in his Word?”*** My desire is to help Christian women remove the disconnect between what we claim to believe and what our actions reveal our true beliefs to be.

The author of Hebrews says that “Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see ... And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Hebrews 11:1, 6). Too many of us live as if we are more convinced of the reality of our struggles than of the reality of God. Our problems seem much bigger to us than the Almighty God of the Universe.

“God must be big in our minds. God needs to be at the forefront of our thought processes. He needs to be the first consideration in all of our daily circumstances, not the last resort that we consider after exhausting all other options. Believing in His existence~focusing with trust on His reality~is fundamental to a faith that pleases God.”

WHAT IS THEOLOGY? continued from page 2

God rewards those who seek Him by giving them His love, His assurance, His presence, His peace. Blessings often follow terrible trials, and the sweet knowledge of God and the deepening of our faith make the struggles of life somehow precious instead of devastating. When we face uncertain times, do we filter our response through the wonderful promises of God's love and protection found in the Bible? Do my responses reflect a strong belief that God will work all things for my good? When I respond in unbelief, I fall into despair. But if I choose to believe in God's goodness, then I can respond in peace and rest, knowing that God is at work and I can trust Him. And when we know God on a deep level, we can truly have faith in Him. The key to overcoming worry and anxiety is faith~trusting in God because we know Him to be trustworthy.

Over and over in the Bible, God's people experience His provision, love, and power, but then they forget. We too, often forget how God provides for us and that He is faithful. We fret as if we've never seen God's faithfulness before. ***"It seems my initial reaction to any new problem is fear and anxiety. I have to fight each time to bring my responses back into line with what I know about Him ... but so often, just like the Israelites in the Old Testament and the disciples in the New Testament, I completely forget all the ways God has shown Himself faithful to me and others throughout time."***

Let us instead learn to respond like the centurion who trusted Jesus to heal His servant from afar, or the woman who just touched the hem of Jesus' robe and believed she would be healed. Let our actions show our firm belief in God's faithfulness.

"When the rubber meets the road, it's not what you say that demonstrates faith in your life. It is what you *do* and how you *respond* in the moment of crisis."

Appropriating What You Believe

Just how do we act on our beliefs? It is fairly simple~just stop and refocus. Stop the train of your emotional reaction before it crashes into despair. Fear and anxiety are not our masters. Then, refocus~put your mind

on Christ and His truth. Think about God, His characteristics of holiness and strength, and His faithfulness in the past. The believers mentioned in the Hebrews 11 hall of faith had learned to view their struggles with an eternal perspective. This perspective gave them the wisdom and power to handle their circumstances appropriately. ***"We too must train ourselves to take our thoughts captive and make them submit to what we know to be true about God. We don't ignore the details of this earthly life, but we must always read them in context of our eternal reality."*** We can filter our challenges through faith in what God has promised.

**"Know Him,
and then act
like you
know Him.
That is faith."**

CBS

Who Is Our God?

Our Father

The core of our faith is a right view of God. Too often we harbor unbiblical ideas about His character and His activity in the universe. Is He distant and unfathomable or personal and knowable? Both our culture and our background can influence our understanding of these questions. ***"Authentic faith in God is based on an understanding of the truth of God's character that comes from Scripture alone, along with confidence in the trustworthiness of that truth when applied practically to our daily lives."***

Through Christ, we have been adopted by God into His family, and we are now secure as His children. We are no longer slaves to sin, but children of a heavenly Father. Ephesians 1:4-6 tells us that before the foundation

of the world God chose us as His children. So now, no matter what our burdens are, we can rest in His love as our Father.

Sovereign, Compassionate, Wise

Our Father is sovereign. He knows all things and His purposes will always be fulfilled. What comfort it is to know that no matter how much wickedness seems to permeate the earth, God has never lost control. Everything will work out according to His plan. God is our Rock, our solid foundation when it seems that the storms of life will overwhelm us. Does your life reflect confidence in God's sovereignty?

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“Do you demonstrate trust in God’s plan and purposes or become fearful and anxious when circumstances spiral out of your control? ... Is your first reaction to trials to think fast and do something or to rest and wait patiently for God’s hand to work? ... Many of us say we believe ‘God is in control,’ but our daily responses to life’s issues reflect a different belief altogether.”

God is sovereign, but also compassionate and wise. He loves us as His dear children and always provides what is best for us, even when we don’t understand His plans.

A Father Who Disciplines

Adoption into God’s family means we also benefit from His loving discipline. Although no one likes the pain of discipline, God intends it as training for growth in our character and behavior. It trains us in righteous living, roots out the sin that entangles us, and transforms our character, so that we grow more and more like Jesus.

Savior, Example, Bridegroom

It is humbling to know that Almighty God chose to lower Himself and become a man so that He could die as a sacrifice for our sins. He gave up all the powers and rights of His divine nature, and gave Himself completely for us. Are we, too, willing to give up our rights for the sake of serving others? We are called to follow Christ, and, like Him, not think of ourselves but solely of the needs of others. Only by understanding Christ’s ultimate servanthood can we even begin to get this right in our own lives.

What did Jesus accomplish for us on the cross? Though we were dead in our sins, Jesus made us alive again through His atoning sacrifice. God allowed His death to pay for our sin and then clothed us in His Son’s righteousness. We are now reconciled to God through Christ and are being transformed into His likeness, as preparation for our entrance into heaven as the Bride of Christ. **“What an amazing place we have been given in God’s household! We are both children of the Sovereign Lord of the Universe and cherished bride of his firstborn Son. We occupy a high and honored position.”** Does your life demonstrate belief in these realities?

Our Identity in Jesus

Because we belong to God, we now have a supernatural connection to Jesus. He is with us, within us, holding us together every minute of every day. Jesus used the image of a vine and its branches in John 15 to help us understand this amazing connection. Like a branch whose sustenance and growth come through the vine, we are connected and thriving through the flow of our relationship with Jesus. Do we draw strength and wisdom and peace through His presence? Do we rest in this knowledge, or live like orphans, left to fend for ourselves?

Paul tells us to guard ourselves against deception and wrong thinking. If we tend to live as though we don’t believe these truths, then we must train our minds to think rightly through meditation and prayer. We must take our thoughts captive and make them submit to the truth of God’s Word. **“Many ... of us do know the truth but don’t count on it, don’t set our minds on it ... We are called to think this way: God is my sovereign, wise, and compassionate Father. He is intimately aware of the details of my life, and I can trust him with my circumstances.”**

Our Help

When you become a believer, God gives you the gift of His Holy Spirit to be your help, your comforter, your counselor. What an amazing privilege this is! He convicts us of our sin, helps us in our weaknesses, guides us and transforms us into the image of Christ. Little by little, the Holy Spirit is working in us to change our sinful habits and character until they bring glory to God. **CBS**

Communicating With Our God

Prayer~Conversing With God

Knowledge about the attributes of God is wonderful, but has no value if we have no personal connection to Him. He has given us the gift of prayer as a means of communicating with Him. It is God’s will that we “pray without ceasing,” which in essence means being mindful of His presence throughout the day.

In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus gave us a template, an example of how to pray simply for the glory of God, His purposes, and His provision. He invites us to bring our needs to

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Him, not because He is unaware of them, but because He knows it will give us peace of mind. Through prayer we experience His divine grace and peace. He guides us in forgiving others because of His great forgiveness extended to us. He leads the way out when we face temptation. He desires that we persevere and not lose heart.

“Pouring out our requests before God is the number one way to deal with vexing issues. It is the most effective way to mentally deal with our burdens ... He wants us to lay our burdens at his feet and allow him to carry the heavy weight of our baggage, and he promises supernatural peace.”

God's Word

The Bible is the written Word of God and our source for knowing Christ. It is critical that we understand how God has revealed Himself in His Word. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that God's Word is living and active; it pierces our hearts and reveals our thoughts and motivations. It opens our eyes to our truest needs and our wrong thinking, and it guides us on the right paths.

Many of us forget that the entire Bible points to Christ and what He came to accomplish. The whole biblical story reveals God's plan to restore His sinful children and to bring them home for eternity. Various parts of the story show God's work to preserve the lineage of Christ, reveal pictures of the coming Christ, and demonstrate mankind's need for salvation. Through the Bible, believers can be completely equipped for all that God calls them to do. It is relevant, powerful, and effective.

Many Christians, perhaps many women in particular, do not feel confident studying the Bible on their own. They might find it intimidating and frustrating. However, we need not be concerned if the deep things of God are “beyond us.” God is at work in ways that are far beyond our ability to comprehend. But always, God's Word can speak to us and teach us as we grow in our ability to understand. God promises to open our eyes to the treasures of His Word.

“God's Word is living and breathing, and, given the chance, it will cut you open with amazing clarity ... You cannot be equipped for wise daily living apart from knowing the character and work of God, and the Word is the primary way God reveals Himself to us.”

May He strengthen you so that you know both in your head and in your heart all the fullness of God.



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