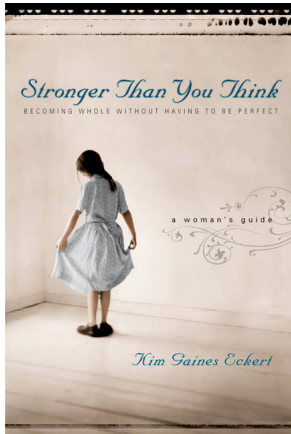


What is true strength?



Culture sends us countless messages about beauty, worth, and status. Is it possible to find truth in the midst of the lies around us?

Kim Gaines Eckert thinks so. In her new release, **Stronger Than You Think**, Eckert looks at how women often search for wholeness in things such as motherhood, romance, and careers. Openly exploring what true wholeness can look like, Eckert writes about many facets of the female experience, including emotions, body image, sexuality, and relationships. Honest and hopeful, **Stronger Than You Think** is a guide that will partner well with any woman—no matter where she is along life’s journey.

What was the catalyst in your decision to write **Stronger Than You Think**?

Kim Eckert: As a Christian psychologist who works primarily with women, I wrote the book that I wanted to give the women I see in counseling. I found myself addressing the same issues (self-esteem, negative self-talk, body image, relational wounds, forming healthy relationships, assertiveness, sexuality, etc.) with my female clients over and over again. I longed for a practical Christian book to give them to supplement our counseling, but I could not find it. Although there are a plethora of personal growth books out there for women, I couldn’t find any resources for my clients that were balanced in terms of in-depth counseling tools grounded in solid Biblical truth and theology. Also, I believe it is important for women to be able to seek help from other women, and I find very few Christian books written by female psychologists (in comparison to the numerous texts written by men). I realized that a comprehensive resource on women’s psychological health, informed by academic and clinical knowledge, grounded in Christian commitment, was needed.

How have your personal experiences shaped this book?

Kim: I recognize the ache of feeling that I am “never enough” in my own life. I remember as an adolescent thinking about how happy I would be when I got to drive a car or go to college. As a college student, I could not wait to graduate and get married. As a young married woman, I just knew that finishing graduate school and getting a great job would bring satisfaction. As a professional, motherhood became my next goal. And, in fact, I did love getting my driver’s license, going to college, getting married and becoming a mother. I was grateful for each new experience and role, which made it all the more confusing and guilt-producing when I still felt like something was missing.

Like many of the Christian women I know, I desperately want to be rooted in the love and protection of God. As much as I long for this in my own life, I get frustrated by my inconsistent devotional life, my selfishness,

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and my desire to win the approval of others before God. When I talk with other Christian women, I find that they also want to be filled up with God's presence and to find their peace and identity in Him. When we don't see that happening in our lives, we add that to our guilt and self-condemnation. This book is for women like my counseling clients, my students, my girlfriends and me – women who long for wholeness. My personal experiences with this struggle are woven throughout the book, as well as my experiences with clients as a clinical psychologist.

Do you think there is a single issue that women are facing today that takes precedence over all the others?

Kim: I believe the longing to feel whole – to feel adequate, complete, worthy, okay – is the central issue facing women. This longing for wholeness encompasses many of the other issues women struggle with, such as body image, self-esteem, relationships and sexuality. Because of an internal sense of incompleteness, many women search for wholeness in relationships, motherhood, a career, or even Christian service, only to be disappointed when they have reached the goal and still feel like something is missing. In this book, I suggest that women will not find the wholeness they are looking for in new activities or relationships, but only in their true identity as women created in God's image and restored by Christ's love.

Have you been changed by writing this book?

Kim: Yes! This book began out of a season of loss in my own life, and I walked through the struggles of each chapter of this book with a fresh experience of pain. The writing of this book has been a transformative journey in my life, and I cried and sometimes fought my way through it. At one point I remember saying to my husband, "If I have to experience everything I write about like this, I'm not sure I want to write anymore!" I believe God used those experiences to ground the content of this book in authentic experiences with each chapter. During the writing of this book, God has taught me so much about himself, especially through relationships– confirming my belief that God has created us first and foremost as relational beings.

What do you hope the readers of *Stronger Than You Think* will take away with them?

Kim: The most important thing I hope my readers take away with them is hope – hope that they really *are* stronger than they think, that God has already restored and made them whole, and that they *can* do something to grow and heal and change. I hope and believe my readers will walk away with specific and practical steps they can take to move toward healing and growth in their own personal lives. I also hope they come away from my book with a strong understanding that wholeness is not the same as perfection – wholeness is a journey; that we are created in God's image and restored by Christ's love – sin cannot undo what God has created and restored; and that we are fundamentally created for *relationship* – all of our growing and changing is done in and through relationships.

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