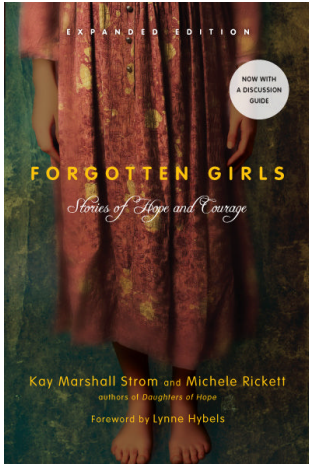




BOOK EXCERPT



Forgotten Girls (Expanded Edition): Stories of Hope and Courage

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"I guarantee that if you read this book, your heart will be broken – which is why you must read this book. Our hearts ought to be broken by the suffering of women and girls throughout the world."

The Truest Bellwether of a Community

In old English the leading sheep in a flock was called the bellwether, a term that came to mean the "indicator of future trends" or the "harbinger of what is to come." Today, social scientists consider the well-being of women to be the truest bellwether of a community, culture or country. If that's true, then many communities, cultures and countries are facing a dismal future. Why? Because of their rampant abuse and oppression of women.

Throughout the world women and girls are suffering incomprehensible abuses and neglect. Gendercide, child sacrifice, female genital mutilation, rape, sex trafficking and child marriage shock our senses. Abandonment, hunger and illiteracy prohibit girls from accessing the tools that would help them escape oppression. Tragically, distorted religious beliefs often cloak the oppression of girls and women in moral justifications. Perpetrators of violent conflicts increasingly use brutal gender-based violence as a weapon of war.

Too many girls, abandoned or oppressed from birth, grow up believing they are, in fact, inferior and deserving of abuse. As Michele Rickett says, "Unless a life-changing event interrupts this pattern, abused and oppressed girls grow up to be abused and oppressed women."

This book focuses on the life-changing events that have given hope to girls and women who have suffered in ways most of us can't imagine. Their stories are a testament to the strength and resilience of our global sisters. Truly, I am in awe of the women described in these pages.

One reason I love She Is Safe (SIS), the nonprofit organization that inspires this book, is that SIS supports grassroots interventions by indigenous leaders who understand the local community and know the most effective ways to protect and rescue abused girls and women. Development experts affirm this as the best way to support sustainable change.

I guarantee that if you read this book, your heart will be broken – which is why you *must* read this book. Our hearts ought to be broken by the suffering of women and girls throughout the world. But this book does more. It tells us how to take action on their behalf. I know how easy it is to feel overwhelmed by needs like you'll read about here. But consider what would happen if every woman reading this book supported an intervention that helped just one girl. Together we could help thousands of women and girls move from despair to hope! I challenge you to read this book and then pray the simple prayer that I have prayed: *God, what is mine to do?*

– Foreword by Lynne Hybels

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