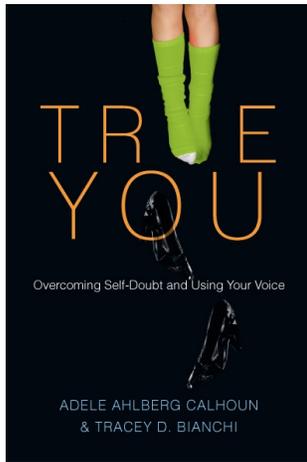




BOOK EXCERPT



True You: Overcoming Self-Doubt and Using Your Voice
Available January 2015
\$16, 176 pages, paperback
978-0-8308-4315-2

True You serves as a companion as we find ourselves, our sense of community and our identity in God. Designed to take you deeper with God on your own or with a group of sisters, journey alongside experienced ministers Adele Ahlberg Calhoun and Tracey Bianchi into some of the places where women struggle – no matter what their age or life-stage.

What is your true you?

Pressure to perform and conform starts young. Elementary-age girls become grossly aware of where they don't measure up and how they are lacking. Before they even hit puberty, the life of tenacious striving begins. The expectations are overwhelming, and many younger girls face feelings of isolation, anxiety and loneliness, triggered by the pressure of it all. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, women struggle with depression at twice the rate of men.

In attempts to keep up appearances we all but drink rocket fuel for breakfast, and in the haste and compulsion our ability to keep in touch with the truest parts of ourselves is erased. If we get a quiet moment we are ambushed with doubts. *Who am I? What if I don't want (or am not able) to raise a family? Am I smart/strong/valuable enough to do something different with my life? What if I don't want to marry? What if my marriage ends in a fiery divorce? What about my education and career? What if I'm a lousy parent? What if friendships slip?*

In a culture that urges women to strive toward impossible ideals, many of us feel overwhelmed and insecure. The message to achieve more and look good doing it can push us into compulsive busyness, so much so that the close connections and meaningful conversations we long for never happen. The poet John Donne once penned, "No man is an island," but the reality is that many women feel like they are on one. Heintz says, "For women, the path to fulfillment is not through one thing, it's through all things: education, career, home, family, accomplishment, enlightenment. If any one of those things is left out, it's often perceived that there's something wrong with your life. We are somehow never enough, just as we are."

What would it be like if we found ourselves in a conversation about the fact that each one of us is actually enough? Just as we are in this very moment. Today. Now. That inside of us God whipped up the perfect cocktail of artist, poet, athlete, friend, lover, learner, so that we do not actually have to strive. What if we took some time to catch our collective breath, calm our souls and discover the "true you"? Might we live fuller, less isolated, less pressure-filled lives?

This small book is our attempt to claim some new ground into real self-clarity. We call it finding and embracing the true you. The path to this deepest, truest part of ourselves becomes clearer when we consider who we are and what holds us back. When someone doesn't mirror back the image we hold of ourselves, what do we do? What happens when we settle into a deck chair at night and find a moment to catch a glimpse of our often-anemic souls? How do things like friendship, competition, prayer, rest, justice, aging and image nourish or starve along the way to a true you? This book is a journey into some of the places

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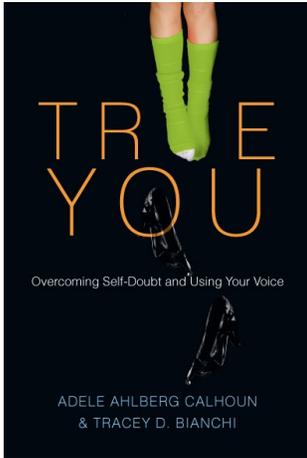
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where women struggle. It is an attempt to gain awareness and solidarity on the deep realities women face regardless of age, life stage or generational affiliations. It is a reminder, a note to self and the world, that there is an objective, substantial, beloved “true you” waiting to be known in each of us.

– *Taken from the Introduction*



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Two voices. Two generations. Two different experiences.

Why did you two decide to write *True You* together?

Adele Ahlberg Calhoun: Tracey and I have talked about the challenges of living sane whole lives for more than two decades. We have lived the challenges of being woman pastors. And we know as Flannery O'Connor says that sometimes you suffer as much *from* the church as *for* the church. We decided all of the air time we have spent on topics ranging from husbands, to theology to kids' sports needed to be directed towards something besides ourselves. So we decided to do a book together. Two voices. Two generations. Two different experiences.

What is at the heart of *True You*?

Tracey Bianchi and Adele: In a world where culture and the church both prescribe roles and expectations for women it can be hard to know who they really are. Women know what others want and need. How to live up to what others say matters and gives meaning. But this doesn't mean women know how to find and name their true selves, speak with their true voices and live into their true gifting and purpose. Our hope is to encourage women to receive, accept and shoulder the beautiful God given life they have.

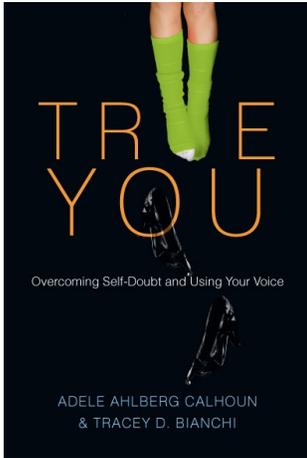
What do you hope readers take away from this book

Adele: I have a one of a kind unrepeatable life that God wants me to receive and share with others. I have a voice that is worth hearing, a story that is worth telling and a purpose worth realizing. Women bear the image of God. Women and men all over the globe need to know this. Healing the wrongs done to women is something we can mend starting here and now.

Also, that a woman's story matters, that whatever part of the world I find myself in and whatever issues I face, women are not alone in them. They are part of a bigger story that includes billions of women across history and they are of course, part of God's story.



AUTHOR BIO



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Tracey Bianchi (MDiv, Denver Seminary) is a freelance writer, speaker and pastor. She serves as pastor for worship and women at Christ Church of Oak Brook where she leads a team that creates contemporary worship each week. She is the author of *Mom Connection: Creating Vibrant Relationships in the Midst of Motherhood*, the featured MOPS International book of the year, and *Green Mama: The Guilt-Free Guide to Saving the Planet*.

Tracey has been serving in ministry ever since college. A featured author and speaker for MOPS International, she is also a member of the Editorial Advisory Board at Christianity Today's *Gifted for Leadership*. Her work has appeared in a wide variety of publications including *Leadership Journal*, *Washington Post*, MOPS International's *MomSense*, *Proverbs 31 Women's Magazine*, *FullFill* magazine and more. In 2012, Christianity Today noted Tracey as one of "50 Women to Watch, Those Most Shaping the Church and Culture."

An active participant in faith-based environmental conversations, Tracey serves on the Synergy National Advisory Council as well as the board of directors for the Evangelical Environmental Network. Her hope is to engage in the hard but good conversations about grace, peace and all that is possible if we let God lead the way. She lives in Chicago with her husband and three kids.



Adele Ahlberg Calhoun (MA, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) has worked in Christian ministry for over thirty years and is currently copastor, with her husband Doug, of Redeemer Community Church in Needham, Massachusetts. She was formerly pastor of spiritual formation at Christ Church in Oak Brook, Illinois.

A trained spiritual director, she has taught courses at Wheaton College and Northern Baptist Theological Seminary. In the early 1970s she helped pioneer student work with the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. She has also worked with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship in New England and Canada and with the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students in the West Indies and South Africa.

Adele is the author of *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* and *Invitations from God*.