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My name is Erin. That's me about the time my bangs hit their peak, circa seventh grade.

I have a serious aversion to shopping malls, I'm not a huge fan of pink, and my hair has been in a messy ponytail for 364 of the last 365 days. (I just cannot get the hang of flat irons, curling irons, or hairspray!) I spend a lot more time being loud and rowdy than I do being "gentle and quiet." My fingernails haven't been painted since my wedding, more than a decade ago. Don't get me wrong: I love being a girl. But if you're searching for the poster child for girly girlness, I'm afraid you'll need to keep looking.

I suppose that makes me a strange choice to write a book on God's Truth about being a girl.

I mean, don't the women in the Bible love to cook and clean and wear flowing skirts in fields of flowers? Not exactly. At least, not all of them. In fact, as we look to the Bible for answers about what it means to be a girl, we will find women who were feisty,



strong, and brave, as well as some women who used their gentle femininity for God's glory. From clever heroines to bold military leaders, these ladies can join me in the "We're Not Girly Girls" Club. I'll go ahead and sign you up for your free membership too, because whether you're a mega tomboy, a pretty-pretty princess, or someone somewhere in between, God has a plan for your girlhood that goes way beyond ribbons and curls.

Before we can get to the "what" of God's plan for us as girls we need to answer "why?" Why does it matter that God created men and women? Why did God make guys and girls so different? Why does gender (that's just a fancy word for the traits that make girls *girls* and boys *boys*) matter anyway?

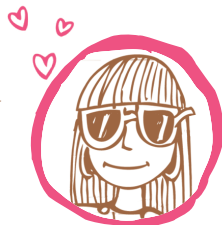
Yep, you're a girl, but how does that fit into who you are as a daughter, sister, student, friend, athlete, dreamer, or future rock star? How does it impact how you live out your faith?

Great questions! I'm glad you asked.

I don't have it all figured out and I can't promise to answer every question about gender within the pages of this book, but I do know what it's like to wonder, "What kind of girl does God want me to be?" That question sent me running to the Bible for answers. What I found made me so excited to be a girl.

A New Pair of Glasses

I've seen what can happen when we let the world tell us what gender means. It isn't pretty! I've counseled many girls who feel like the rope in a tug of war because they're torn between the messages of the culture and what they think a good, Christian girl should want to be like. I've



been the girl who wondered if I could ever measure up to the women in the Bible without having a total personality transplant.

If you read the first book in this series, *My Name Is Erin: One Girl's Journey to Discover Truth*, you know that I've learned God's Word is like a pair of glasses that can change how we see the world. His Truth has certainly changed how I see gender. But it's not my mission to tell you how you should think about what it means to be a girl. Instead, I want to show you how to discover God's Truth for yourself.

My name is Erin, and this is my story.



A world without Pink and Blue



Here are a few of the ways gender has made headlines recently.

★ A Toronto couple made international news by refusing to announce the gender of their baby even to his/her own grandparents. Baby Storm's family decided to allow their child to define his/her own gender and vowed never to share what was under his/her diaper even with close family members.¹

★ For the first time ever, the United States Navy decided to allow two women to share the traditional homecoming kiss upon the return of a Navy vessel.²

★ Several preschools made the news by banning all mentions of gender among even the youngest of students. Such schools


have banned words like “him,” “her,” “he,” and “she,” and have invented new words to take their place.³



These stories got people talking. To be honest, they got folks fighting plenty too. Some people think we should simply erase gender from the world. No more blue is for boys and pink is for girls. Instead we should live in a genderless society where all the lines are blurred. Others think traditional gender lines must be protected or chaos will ensue. And there are plenty of people somewhere in the middle asking, “Why should I care about gender?”

What's the Big Deal?

I can see why the young women in my world struggle to understand what it means to be a girl.

Every day I meet girls who do not know who God has made them to be or how God has called them to live. The consequences are devastating. Here are a few statements I've heard from girls recently:

 “Every girl wants a real nice relationship and to be taken care of and to be loved . . . Since girls want this, why wouldn't I want to be in a romantic relationship with a girl because I want this too! All boys want is trouble.”


Catch up with Erin in
the blogosphere at
liesyoungwomenbelieve.com.




“I’ve been struggling with this question for quite a few weeks now . . . What’s the purpose of marriage? That may seem like a dumb question, but God doesn’t want our devotion and love to be divided. Isn’t that exactly what happens when you marry and eventually have kids?”



“I think we hold up this Proverbs 31 woman way too high on some pedestal, and the end result is a lot of frustration, guilt, and shame because we as women can never measure up. I hate to say it, but women need to stop living in her shadow. We are not created to serve or be slaves to men.”

These girls don’t understand that the differences between guys and girls are a good thing! Because they don’t understand the way God wired boys, they assume that boys only want trouble. Because they don’t understand the roles girls are designed for, they struggle to find purpose. Because they don’t know the reasons God made



Proverbs 31 is a passage that describes a version of Superwoman. She’s a wife, mom, seamstress, chef, real estate tycoon, and fashionista. Many Christians hold her up as the “perfect woman.” This passage was actually written as a description of a good woman by a mother to her son (Proverbs 31:1), not as an actual billboard for what we should all look like.

gender in the first place, they have a hard time making sense of their relationships, their feelings, and their future.

They are not alone. This is a great place for me to introduce a group of girls I just know you'll love. I really wanted to get into the minds of the readers of this book. I'm a little older than you (ahem, maybe a lot older!), and I would never assume to have you all figured out. So some friends and I hit the road to hang out

with young women across the country and get their take on what it means to be a girl. The girls we talked to were probably a lot like your group of friends. They were mostly Christians (many were raised in church), but like me they had big questions about what kind of girl God wants them to be. You'll hear their take on gender throughout this book.



These girls love to talk! That's why I like to call them the **Gab Gallery**. From here on out, I'll just call them "the Gallery." It's their job to make you feel that you are a part of a conversation about what it means to be a girl (because you are!). If you love to talk, you'll fit right in.



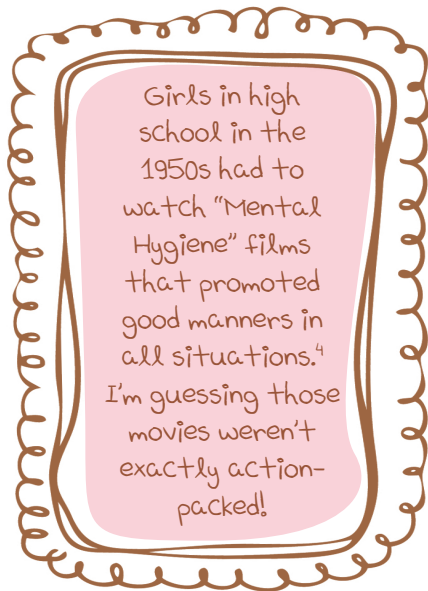
If the Gallery were teaching Girlhood 101, here's a peek into their lesson plans.

★ “I do not like it when I am called ‘a young woman’ . . . I’m not in to that whole etiquette thing.”

★ “Women stay home . . . sometimes, and men go to work and pay the bills. Sometimes women work, but mostly men work and mow the lawn. Except at my house.”

★ “Guys are easier; they are more fun. Girls make such a big deal about things!”

There’s nothing exactly wrong with the way the Gallery was trying to define the differences between girls and guys, but their ideas were kind of all-over-the-map. One girl said she didn’t like the whole “etiquette thing” (she later told us she did not like to be called a “lady.” Noted!). Rewind to the 1950s when having good manners



was a huge part of being a girl. Can a modern girl resist all that lady talk and still be feminine? Still be girly?

Another girl said women stay home while men work and mow the lawn. That throws us back to some very traditional gender roles that may leave you feeling like you're being pulled into an episode of *Leave It to Beaver*. But even she admitted that wasn't how things really worked at her own house. Maybe there is no normal. Should there be?



That last girl painted guys and girls with a really wide brush. Guys are easy and fun; girls are dramatic. I'm guessing she has some girl drama in her life! Are guys really just cavemen who think simple thoughts and like to have fun? And are all girls drama queens? Did God make us to be that way?

My goodness! If we think of studying God's plan for being a girl like unraveling a knot of mixed messages, we seem to be tying the knot more tightly by stirring up more questions than answers. As I listen to what the Gallery is saying and line it up with my own heart, it becomes very clear that most of us are fairly confused about what it means to be a girl.



Hop into the wayback Machine

How did we get here? Let's have a brief history lesson. (Don't worry, there won't be a quiz.)

In the 1950s being a girl meant dresses and dreams of a future dream house, complete with white picket fence, where your 2.5 children could play.⁵

In the 1960s a movement called “feminism” caught fire in America. (Speaking of catching fire, this is an era when women burned their bras in the name of change. Weird!) Women were supposed to be strong, loud, and take-charge. They ditched feminine touches like dresses, pink, and frills as they marched.⁶ In the 1980s girls just wanted to have fun, at least that’s what pop singer Cyndi Lauper told us. There are plenty of fashion trends from the eighties that are simply too gaudy to mention here (I’m talking to you, shoulder pads!), but one trend worth noting is power dressing. Women in the workforce were the norm in the eighties, and they wanted to show they were equal to (or better than) their male coworkers. So women rocked suits and big hair with the occasional touch of blue eye shadow.⁷ An eighties girl had her sights set on a corner office. I was in junior high and high school in the nineties. The clearest message I heard was that anything guys could do, I could do better. I also learned to put all my hopes for a happy life into the basket of an important career. At the dawn of the new millennium, I had it all: high-paced career, fancy degrees in frames on the wall, and a hubby who was happy to let me run the show. But it didn’t feel like the fairy tale I was promised it would be. I couldn’t shake my craving for more.



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If we look at history like a map, the girls of past decades point us to the spot that says, “You are here.” What does it mean to be a girl right now?

Is a modern girl powerful or soft? Does she want a career or a family? Does she deserve to be taken care of or want to be in charge? How can we look beyond the messages of the fashion industry and pop singers and figure out what God would say if He were teaching *Girlhood 101*?

It is possible to know God’s plan for gender, but before we get there let’s pull out our magnifying glasses and look just a little closer at what’s on the line.

Here is what researchers are saying about you:

- ★ For the first time ever, more of you are saying “I don’t” to the idea of marriage.
- ★ Living with a guy you’re not married to is okay with you.⁸
- ★ For the first time ever, women are earning the majority of college degrees. You want to finish your education. You want a career. And you want at least as much responsibility in your job as the guys you know.⁹
- ★ Most of you aren’t sure if motherhood is for you, or you want to delay it until after you’ve accomplished your career goals.
- ★ If you become moms, you don’t feel pressure to work less to raise kids. You want to have it all.¹⁰

★ Some researchers have said that marriage and family are still important goals for girls your age, but you're not sure if and why it matters.¹¹ (Hint: it does!)

Some of you may read that list and think, "That sounds about right." Others may look at that list and think, "No way! That's not how I think."

what? Some of you may be straddling the fence. No matter where you land, lean in and listen closely. It's less important for us to figure out exactly what we think about being a girl and more important for us to ask God to show us His heart for gender.

The bottom line is that we cannot simply erase gender from our lives. We cannot delete words like "he" and "she" from our vocabulary without new words with the same meaning creeping into our conversations. Nope, boys and girls are here to stay, and so are our differences. Our best bet is to seek to understand those differences through the lens of God's Truth!

which brings me to the first girl who ever lived 

