

INVISIBLE
FOR *Young Women*

JENNIFER ROTHSCHILD



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS
EUGENE, OREGON

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INVISIBLE FOR YOUNG WOMEN

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Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97402

www.harvesthousepublishers.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Rothschild, Jennifer

Invisible for young women / Jennifer Rothschild.

pages cm

ISBN 978-0-7369-6575-0 (pbk.)

ISBN 978-0-7369-6576-7 (eBook)

1. Bible. Hosea—Criticism, interpretation, etc. 2. God (Christianity)—Love—Biblical teaching.

3. Young women—Religious life. I. Title.

BS1565.52.R68 2016

224'.606—dc23

2015023106

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Printed in the United States of America

15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 / VP-JH / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

1. #worthit.....	5
2. #somebody.....	19
3. #gorgeous.....	33
4. #thoughts.....	43
5. #truth.....	55
6. #real.....	71
7. #faithful.....	85
8. #ultimategood.....	99
9. #heart.....	115
10. #covered.....	129
11. #future.....	143
12. #protected.....	157
P.S. #know.....	169



*To my nieces
Justine and Juliet Jolly*





#worthit

*Know this: GOD is God, and God, GOD.
He made us; we didn't make him.
We're his people, his well-tended sheep.*

—PSALM 100:3 MSG

Sarah smiled at herself in the mirror and wondered, *What in the world is going on?* Her day had started off on a pretty terrific note. She'd popped out of bed the first time her alarm went off. She had even laid out her clothes *and* packed her backpack the night before. She—wait for it—ate breakfast, and not just any breakfast! She had oatmeal and some OJ instead of the usual granola bar and bottle of water her mom handed her as she flew out the door. It was going to be a good day. Sure, it would be a busy day—Spanish test, play rehearsal, and Bible study—but she liked being busy. It was who she was. Sarah was a good Christian, a good friend, and a good girl who got good grades!

When she got to school and saw her BFF, Makayla, she noticed how cute her friend looked...again. Makayla always wore the latest styles and had her braces for only a few months before they'd been removed to show off a sparkling white smile. Sarah, on the other

hand, was heading into her fifth year of braces with no end in sight. *And why does Makayla have to have such perfect skin too?* Sarah suddenly became completely self-conscious. *I wonder if anyone can see this dumb pimple on my chin,* she worried.

When Señora Sanchez handed out the Spanish tests, Sarah's early morning confidence took a dive. *Unit six vocabulary test?* Sarah panicked. *I thought we were supposed to study unit five vocab!* Glancing around, Sarah saw the rest of her classmates effortlessly filling in all the blanks on their tests. *There goes my A,* she thought. #epicfail *At least I have the play to look forward to.* The drama club had recently held spring play auditions, and all Sarah's friends assured her she was a shoo-in for the main role. Sarah was a good actress—everybody said so. She felt that her voice lessons had been a big help in auditioning for the starring role since the play was a musical.

But when she walked into the theater after school and saw the crowd around the newly posted cast list, Sarah's heart sank. Everyone was saying “way to go” and “congratulations” and “you deserved it” to her main competition, Chloe, who also had perfect skin and no braces. #epicfake

When Sarah finally made her way to the cast list, sure enough, Chloe's name was right next to the starring role—the role Sarah wanted. Sarah's role? Villager. *It's perfect for a good girl with not-so-good grades, braces, and a giant zit on her chin!* she thought to herself. *This is going to be just another face-in-the-crowd role. I might as well be invisible.*

At that point, it was a good day gone bad. Sarah knew she should go to Bible study. She could tell her friends all about her rotten day, and it would feel so good to vent. But as she played the scene in her mind, she realized how stupid it would sound: *I'm jealous of my friend because she doesn't have braces anymore. I was the only idiot who*

studied the wrong Spanish vocabulary words. I felt so awkward looking at the cast list when everyone else was congratulating Chloe.

So instead of going to Bible study, Sarah stayed home. She told her mom she had to catch up on her Spanish (which was true!), but in reality she was just done with not measuring up to her friends and classmates. She considered reading her Bible, decorating those picture frames she'd bought at the craft store with washi tape, and beginning that devotional she'd gotten for Christmas.

But after she ate dinner, showered, and studied for a little bit, Sarah found herself reaching for her phone. *Just a little social media before I start on that new devotional*, she told herself. *I'll just see what's on Instagram for five minutes before I study my Spanish.*

Five minutes turned into ten minutes and then an hour as Sarah scrolled through her Instagram feed, scrutinizing the photos of her friends. *Of course there's Chloe striking a pose next to the cast list! Man, just look at all the comments. Everyone loves her! No wonder I didn't get the role. Makayla's smile always looks so perfect. I wish I was as pretty as she is. Everyone's always saying how gorgeous she looks. Wait! Makayla and Caitlyn went out for ice cream together? I wonder why they didn't invite me?*

Sarah's devotional sat unopened on her nightstand as she continued to search through the photos and comments. Noticing that her battery was about to die, she plugged her phone in and headed to the bathroom to brush her teeth—such a chore with braces!—wash her face, and put on Clearasil (which probably nobody else had to use!). And that's when she looked in the mirror and asked herself again, *What in the world is going on? I'm usually pretty upbeat about stuff. I know I'm not perfect, but why am I feeling like such a nobody all of a sudden? Everyone else is so smart and beautiful and talented—and then there's me, Sarah the invisible!*



Have you ever felt like Sarah? Girl, I know I have! I'm a grown-up woman, but even to this day, I have those moments when I'm uncomfortable with everything about myself. I'm even prone to social media anxiety—and I'm supposedly a well-known author! In fact, I remember a miserable road trip to a gorgeous lake, which was actually one of my favorite places (I know, it should have been an amazing road trip!). On that trip, I was bombarded by radio ads and talk shows that reminded me how much more attractive and successful I could be if I bought this cosmetic or tried that workout. Totally focused on me, myself, and I, I did the worst thing ever when I got to the lake. I hopped on Twitter and Facebook and started comparing my posts with the posts of my friends—especially other authors and speakers like myself. Talk about feeling like a failure!

If you're looking for it—if you're 100 percent focused on your own shortcomings—it's easy to find someone else who seems so much better than you are. And sure enough, that's what I discovered. These friends of mine had *way* more followers than I did. While I can only manage to tweet once or twice every two days, these women seemed to tweet up to 12 times a day. I know this because I counted. You've done the same thing, right? (Remember, we're being honest here!) My friends are perfect! They have a presence on Pinterest. You can find them illuminating Instagram. They're brilliant and busy, put together and perfect. How perfect? Many of the friends I was comparing myself to blog every day. E-V-E-R-Y-D-A-Y! Seriously, sometimes I don't even shower every day. (That's not something I would tweet. #gross)

Now, here's something you need to understand. Because I am blind, navigating social media is just plain hard for me. Even though my iPhone talks to me, social media apps, like Facebook, aren't

always easy for someone who can't see. For me to spend my time clicking and tapping until my knuckles were swollen and my fingertips were raw just shows how obsessed I was with myself. Of course, I'm not always like this, and I know you aren't either. But we all have those moments when we're desperately trying to discover who we are and how we fit in with everyone around us. And when we fall into the trap of comparing ourselves to others—especially other females—it's easy to find ourselves falling short in just about every category.

No matter how popular you are, someone else will always seem more popular. No matter how good your grades are, someone else will always score higher on an exam. No matter how talented you are, someone else will always seem to outshine you. Measuring your success by comparing yourself to others does nothing more than make you feel like a nobody!

Now, I know you don't want to feel like a nobody. None of us do! But sometimes you just can't help it. The more you think about yourself, the worse you feel about yourself.

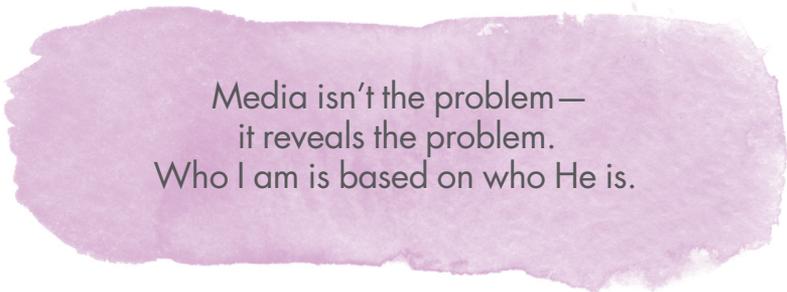
When you compare yourself to everyone else, you're going to end up feeling invisible.

Girl, that's what this book is all about—getting yourself out of the “me versus her” mindset and getting into the “God and me” mentality. After all, there's really only one “like” that matters—the “like” you get every second of every hour of every day from God.

It's Not Your Fault!

It's tempting to look for a quick fix for the invisibility problem. I could tell you to stay off social media. I could encourage you to unplug your television and turn off your computer. I could even warn you not to go to the mall or the movies. But we both know that avoiding all forms of media is hardly realistic.

And while it's tempting to rant and rave that Facebook and Twitter will do nothing but shred your self-esteem, which, by the way, they will if you let them, that's another unreal expectation. Besides, media—social and all forms otherwise—*isn't* the problem. Media simply *reveals* the problem.



Media isn't the problem—
it reveals the problem.
Who I am is based on who He is.

Let's go back to my own Facebook freak-out. Seriously now, how did I ever let myself go there? I was a Christian, for heaven's sake! I knew—really *knew*—that God loved me. I completely understood that I was valuable to Him, no matter how many Facebook friends I had. There was no doubt that my identity was in Christ. So how could an identity crisis hit me—and hit me so hard?

It's true that my identity was—and always is—in Christ. But at that moment, it felt like my identity was defined by an image on a screen and a silly set of numbers—how many followers I had, how many “likes” I'd received, and how many people had retweeted me.

But wait! Isn't who I am based on who He is? And if it is, then why was I even trying to find myself in the first place? If I find Him, I find myself. If I really believe that God sees me, I'm never invisible.

So why even let myself go there—to that place where I'm wrapped in insecurity and invisibility? Here's why: It's because I am *prone to wander*.

As humans we're all prone to wander. We're just one negative thought or comment away from rejecting the truth that God accepts us for who we are and believing the lie that He accepts everyone *except* us. We believe this lie when we put down our devotional, stop seeking God, and get sucked into social media, where we search for other people and see how we compare to them. And then we begin to base who we are on how we feel about ourselves instead of on how God feels about us.

Every girl on this earth has those moments when she finds herself wondering why she doesn't measure up to her own—or someone else's—idea of who she should be.

Now, I want to get something straight. It's not your fault that you're prone to wander. Let me repeat that. *It's not your fault!* It's your human nature. *All* of us have that nature. Every person on this earth is prone to obsess about me, myself, and I. Every person on this earth is prone to wander away from God. Every person on this earth has moments when they find themselves wondering why they don't measure up to their own—or someone else's—ideals.

How many times have you wasted time comparing yourself to others? How many times have you looked in the mirror and thought, *I'll never be good enough?* How many times have you wondered, *Why do others seem to have it so much better than I do?*

Take a little bit of time to think about your answers. You can even write them down in a journal or talk to a friend, parent, or youth leader about them. As you do this, I'm going to introduce you to a young woman who had an identity crisis of biblical proportions. Talk about being clueless about her worth! She was loved beyond belief—loved with the kind of love that only seems to show up in fairy tales—but that wasn't enough for her. She rejected her God-given identity and went with what the world had to offer. And the result wasn't pretty!

“Hosear” and “Goma”

Ever heard of them? I first heard about this couple from my dad, who was the best storyteller ever! Growing up, I loved the way Dad wove together tales that blended a lot of God’s truth, a little bit of imagination, and a whole lot of Southern drawl. In fact sometimes I had no idea who he was talking about because their names were lost in Dad’s slow, sweet Southern twang.

When my dad told me the story I’m about to tell you—a love story about a totally unlikely couple—I thought the characters were named “Hosear” and “Goma.” For real! (Years later, I realized that their actual names were *Hosea* and *Gomer* and that not all storytellers had a Southern twang!)

Hosea (not Hosear) was a young preacher, a prophet actually, who lived in Israel at a time when people weren’t interested in hearing his message. Just imagine hearing from God day after day and being given the huge responsibility to tell everyone around you what He is saying. And then imagine nobody listening to you! Instead of listening to Hosea (which they should have done!), the Israelites were walking around with their headphones on, staring at their smartphones, totally tuning out God’s messenger. (Not quite, but you get the picture.)

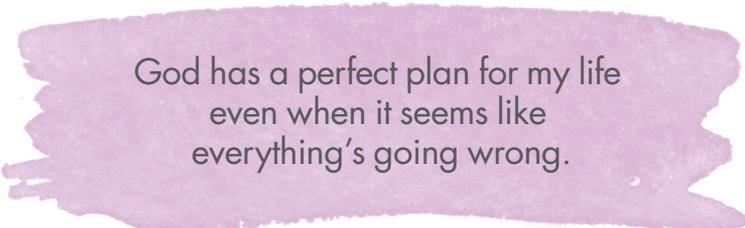
One day God surprised Hosea with a radical message: Hosea’s bachelor days were up! It was time for him to get married. And the woman God had picked out for him was simply stunning. Good news, right? Well, maybe.

The good news of Hosea’s wedding came with some bad news. His new wife was going to break his heart. She was going to leave him.

Yikes! At this point Hosea might have wanted to tell God, “Thanks, but no thanks. I’m going to find someone else who isn’t

going to end up hurting me.” But Hosea trusted God. And so after his wife broke his heart, Hosea picked himself up, dusted himself off, and did the unthinkable—he forgave his wife and brought her back home because in the end he truly did love her.

Love can overcome anything, even that which seems lost forever. (See, I told you this story was like a fairy tale!)



God has a perfect plan for my life
even when it seems like
everything's going wrong.

The story of Hosea and Gomer is a love story from long ago. When we read it, we see the perfect plan God has for our lives—even when it seems like everything's going wrong.

Did you know that the story of Hosea and Gomer is also your story and my story? It's a story about finding your identity in the perfect love of God and about discovering the *real* you and finding out that you are never invisible. You do matter. You matter so very much!

The girl in the story, Gomer, didn't want anything to do with her husband's love. She wanted something more...something more exciting, something more daring, something that made her feel more like she was *somebody*. Hosea's love should have made her happy, but Gomer was only considering herself.

Now, Gomer had a pretty rough background. As you'll find out, her family situation wasn't good. And the culture of the time didn't help things. Chances are you're probably thinking you don't have a

whole lot in common with Gomer. I know. I used to feel the same way!

But I have more in common with Gomer than I might think. In fact we all have something in common with her. We're all prone to wander. We're all tempted to go our own way. We all tend to focus on ourselves and look away from God. In fact the Bible tells us this is true! Hosea 11:7 says, "My people are determined to turn from me."

I know that you've never been married and left your husband. (Neither have I! Yes, I'm married, but I've never left my husband.) But wandering away from God doesn't have to happen on the grand Gomer scale for it to be real and dangerous.

When we look away from God and look to others for approval, we wander.

When we stray from living for Jesus to searching for something that gives us a bigger buzz than God does, we wander.

When our thoughts turn away from God, we begin to wonder who we are. And when we wonder who we are, our actions will start to wander. We'll go away from God to find out who we are. We'll pursue other people and other places to seek out our identity. And that's when we'll find ourselves feeling totally invisible—right in the middle of a major identity crisis.

When we try to figure out who we are away from God, we're never going to know ourselves as God created us to be—amazing, unique, incredible girls of God!

Isn't it a relief to know you're not the only one who struggles with a healthy sense of identity? Isn't it comforting to realize that everyone around you—even the girls who seem so put together and perfect—has had moments when they feel invisible?

As we look at Gomer's life and consider our own, let's think through some important questions. (Again, you can journal your

answers or talk about them with your friend, your mom, or a youth leader.)

- What is my identity?
- What is my identity based on?
- Do I identify with my identity?
- Do I accept myself?
- Do I think God accepts me?
- Do I feel invisible?

Finding Your True Identity

There's a "me" in GoMEr—and there's a "you" in Gomer too. It's the part in all of us that is prone to wander away from God. It's the part in all of us that loses our God-given identity—an amazing, unique, incredible girl of God—as we try to find our place in the world. The crazy thing is when we leave God out of the picture, we can't remember who we are!

When we don't accept ourselves, it's hard to believe that God has accepted us. But He has! We can be so quick to see our own weaknesses and flaws. And we can also be quick to overlook all that God sees in us.

God chose you and me as His beloved. And when we, like Gomer, turn away from Him, He is always ready for us to return to Him.

God doesn't focus on *where* we are—stuck in an identity crisis. He focuses on *who* we are. We are never invisible to Him!

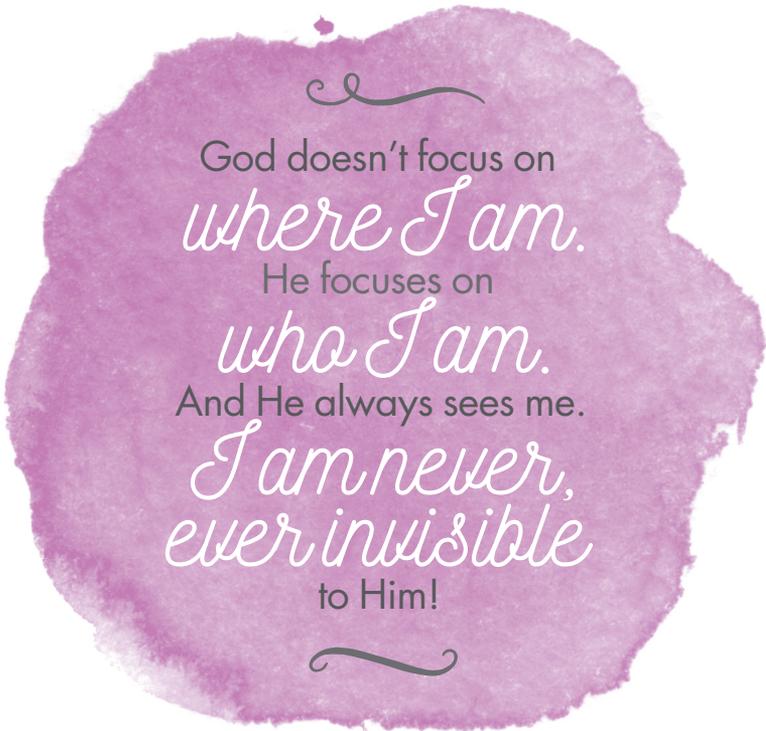
Have you been working hard to be accepted? God can free you to accept who you truly are.

Have you spent time wondering who you are? God can show you your real identity—one you can smile at.

Have you felt overlooked, inadequate, or invisible? God can show you once and for all that how you feel is not who you are!

Oh, girl, are you ready to come with me on this journey? Together we can get to a place where how you feel won't define who you are. What you've done in the past won't influence what you can do in the future. Who the media says you should be won't be as strong as who God says you already are! [#epicfaith](#)

Instead of constantly striving for acceptance, you'll be free to accept the amazing *you* that God accepts (braces, pimples, and all). Instead of staying stuck in an identity crisis, you'll discover your unimaginable worth. Instead of feeling overlooked or underappreciated, you'll discover that you have never, ever—no not ever—been invisible to God.



God doesn't focus on
where I am.
He focuses on
who I am.
And He always sees me.
*I am never,
ever invisible*
to Him!

#TheInvisibleBook