

## AUTHOR Q&A



### **Women Rise Up**

Sacred Stories of Resistance for Today's Revolution  
by Katey Zeh

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*Reading Women, Rise Up felt like the first time in thousands of years of sacred storytelling that women are finally being believed...Faithful to the best of hermeneutical practices, Katey weaves contextual biblical stories of women with urgent concerns of today's global women so we can benefit from the wisdom and solidarity of our sisterhood through the ages. This book transforms stories of women that have been used to oppress, into ones that liberate—I'm here for it.*

— Cindy Wang Brandt, author of *Parenting Forward*

**Q: There are numerous books about biblical women. What compelled you to write this one?**

**A:** Most books tend to portray women in the Bible as either unrepentant sinners or helpless victims. I wanted to contribute a more nuanced take on these women's lives that would explore both their flaws and their strengths. My hope is that in giving these ancient narratives some much-needed breathing room, I also extend that grace to the reader—the permission to be fully human. *Women Rise Up* is a call to action—to honor these sacred stories, to speak our truth courageously, and to rise up together for the dignity and well-being of women and girls everywhere.

**Q: Why is so important to read these ancient stories with a global perspective—especially now?**

**A:** I spent much of my early life reading the Bible through a highly individualistic lens. If I came across a particular passage that didn't seem to have an immediate application for my own life, I moved right along. In many churches we often make a similar mistake of dismissing troubling sacred texts as relics of their time. In reality, we haven't made as much progress as we'd like to think. The same forms of violence and marginalization that oppressed women thousands of years ago continue to strip women of their dignity and rights today—both around the world and right under our noses. By tying these ancient stories of oppression and resistance with the current struggle for gender equality today, we can shine a light on the ways in which we continue to be called to work for justice and compassion now.

**Q: You're both a gender justice advocate and a Baptist minister. How do these vocations shape your writing about women?**

**A:** My writing is deeply connected with my advocacy for women and girls, and my advocacy is deeply rooted in my call to ministry: to follow God in creating a more just, compassionate world for all. When I look at the first chapter of Genesis, I see how each of us is created in the image of God, born with innate sacred worth. Putting that belief—that all humans bear a likeness to the divine—into action requires me to point out the ways in which we, both individually and collectively, deny the sacred

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worth of one another. That means naming injustice in all its forms. But my faith also calls me to seek out and highlight the ways in which oppressed people, like the women in these biblical stories, hold onto their identity as children of God and resist oppression against all odds.

### **Q: Which biblical story felt the most personal as you explored it?**

**A.** I wrote my first draft when my daughter was not quite a year old. I would often wake up before dawn to write in my office as she slept in her crib in the room next door. When I heard her waking cries, I would often think about Moses's mother going into seclusion to hide her infant son for months. Recovering from birth was an isolating time for me, and as I imagined the lengths to which this woman had to go to protect her baby, my heart broke for her—and for all women raising children in unsafe environments.

### **Q: How do you hope readers will rise up after exploring your book?**

**A.** I hope that this book sparks their curiosity about these women and others in the Bible who found ways to survive, resist, and thrive, and that this exploration of sacred stories leads to sacred sharing, both in and outside of our faith communities, about our own lives. But I also hope this book moves us to take action in meaningful, sustainable ways by sharing our resources and voices with the movements and organizations led by those most impacted by systems of injustice. Like the women of this book, they will lead the way for us all to rise up.

### **Q: What's one small way you're rising up today?**

**A:** I'm working on asking more thoughtful questions, especially when I encounter someone who holds a viewpoint that differs from mine. As I reflect on my spiritual growth over the years, I attribute much of it to the exchanges I had with thoughtful people who were willing to listen attentively to what I had to say and who gently challenged me to consider other perspectives. For a long time I thought my activism always had to be relentlessly bold, but I'm learning the power of gentleness in conversation.

### **About the Author:**

Reverend Katey Zeh is a nationally-recognized advocate for gender justice. Her writing about faith and gender has appeared in *Huffington Post*, *Sojourners*, and *Religion Dispatches*, and her work has been featured in *The Washington Post*, *The Nation*, and *Colorlines*. The Center for American Progress named her one of their top justice-seeking faith leaders to watch. Rev. Zeh is also an ordained Baptist minister and the co-host of *Kindreds*, a podcast about faith, friendship, and feminism. She lives in North Carolina with her husband Matt and their daughter Samantha. Find her at [www.kateyzeh.com](http://www.kateyzeh.com) or follow her on Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook at @KateyZeh.

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