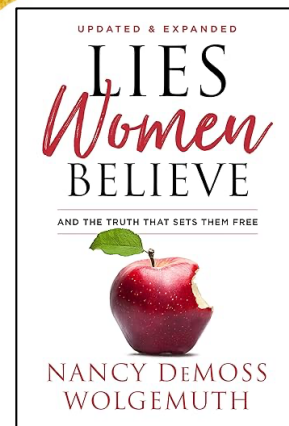




BARE MARRIAGE

HEALTHY, EVIDENCE-BASED, BIBLICAL ADVICE FOR SEX & MARRIAGE

with Sheila Wray Gregoire



Lies Women Believe: And the Truth That Sets Them Free (Updated Edition) Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth

SYNOPSIS

Healing from habitual sin, complex trauma, depression, and more comes from changing what we believe.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

- Shows no understanding that habitual unwanted behaviors are caused by a myriad of complex factors, including trauma; unhealthy coping mechanisms; and shame, not merely problematic beliefs.
- Equates being sinned against and sinning oneself throughout the book, providing the same solution to all problems.
- Fails to give any route to relationship change, such as drawing boundaries, but rather insists that women's suffering and silence brings wanted change.

IGNORES BREADTH OF SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE OF TRAUMA AND BEHAVIORAL CHANGE

- Fails to understand that trauma is held in the body, not caused by "believing a lie" (40). Implies that childhood sexual abuse (137), emotional abuse (67), or sexual assault (137) can be healed by changing beliefs and thinking the trauma away.
- Asserts that habitual sin is caused by believing lies, so changing one's beliefs will bring an end to compulsive masturbation (40); same sex attraction (106); and can even lead to a 65 pound weight loss (58).
- Dismisses symptoms of postpartum depression (238); rebukes those who seek medical help first for depression: "It's easier to rely on a doctor, a therapist or antidepressants than to ask God how He might want to use our pain to sanctify us" (248).

SHOWS A PROBLEMATIC MISUNDERSTANDING OF FEMALE SEXUALITY

- Implies that a woman can overcome sexual dissatisfaction and dysfunction simply by "training her body to respond", and suggesting women talk to a godly female mentor about this. Never mentions talking to your husband, even though evangelical couples experience a 47-point orgasm gap, with the biggest reason being lack of foreplay (138). Implies women can think themselves to pleasure, rather than noting that husbands have a responsibility to bring their wives pleasure.
- Chastises a woman who wants to experience sexual pleasure with her husband as "being caught in a snare" because she believed the lie that she "needs an outlet for sexual desire." Advises her to work on her friendship with her husband instead of learning techniques to experience arousal (153).
- Excludes rape from a list of nine ways we can sin sexually, but includes "to lose one's virginity", implying that a rape victim has committed a sin and has become impure (148).

IGNORES ABUSE DYNAMICS

- Equates a childhood abuse victim now yearning for human connection with a woman comparing herself to others on social media. In both cases, women are in "personal and spiritual bondage" because they "believe and act on lies" (67-68).
- In her section on why women embrace shame, includes both "my stepfather forced himself on me sexually at least once a week from the time I was five until I was eleven" and "I'm looking at porn" (133) as if the route to healing is identical. Lists both sexual abuse and a husband's porn use as examples of a woman's "sexual sins, challenges, shortcomings" (133).
- States repeatedly that one cannot be a victim. "I used to believe that I was chronically depressed due to being a victim. When I began to realize that much of my depression was caused by my choice to be angry, I began to take responsibility for my sin and found freedom" (102).
- While giving a caveat that abusive marriages should not be tolerated, repeatedly gives contradicting anecdotes, including a woman who prayed for 40 years for her marriage to be restored, though godly counselors told her to leave (263). Presents all the following beliefs as lies: "I'd be better off getting a divorce" (186); "he doesn't care that he hurt me (186); "I can't continue in this marriage" (266), or believing that most problems in marriage are his fault (187).

- Fails to name clergy abuse, portraying a relationship between a pastor and a woman in the congregation as consensual (22).
- Ignores systemic marriage issues leading to women's exhaustion—the disproportionate burden of mental load, housework, and emotional labor that women bear (116), painting the problem merely as a failure to properly prioritize.
- Praises a woman for remaining silent and not drawing boundaries in the midst of her husband's alcoholism (166), and implies that we should suffer to bring our husbands to repentance (189).
- Teaches an unhealthy view of submission where a woman can "graciously express her view on a matter", but then must follow her husband (175). Scripture condemns Sapphira who followed her husband, and praises Abigail who did not.
- States that no man is actually passive, and if women step back, men will step up (179). This is not universally true, and waiting for him to step up in areas such as children's well-being or paying bills may have destructive results.

CONTAINS PROBLEMATIC THEOLOGICAL VIEWPOINTS

- Believes that "I have the right to decide when or whether to have a child" is a lie, arguing that it is best and most godly not to use contraception (197). Portrays as the ideal a woman with eight children (201). States that feeling "I can't physically handle more children" or "I can't afford more children" are lies. (203-204).
- Implies that God deliberately chooses to make some women infertile (198), or deliberately kills a parent (51). States that, if we were to know what God knows, we would choose infertility or death of a parent or child all over again (291).
- In a section discussing women's "shrewish spirits" and "failures", includes as examples "women whose marriages are hanging by a thread" and "women whose hearts ache for their children" (15).
- Asserts that, if one doesn't have money for rent next month, the solution is to believe hard enough "my grace is sufficient for you" (267). This is a version of manifestation theology, that if one believes enough, one can manifest a result.
- Presents standing up for one's rights and wanting to be treated well as antithetical to a gospel life, where "each new hurt, each new offense, is a fresh opportunity to surrender our rights and to respond in the spirit of Christ." (77)
- Declares that not caring for one's appearance reflects "negatively on both her husband and her heavenly Bridegroom" (81)
- Equates same sex attraction with "bestiality, incest, polygamy, cult prostitution" (147) and being a lesbian (harms no one) with being a murderer or adulterer (has victims) (293).

HEALTHY SEXUALITY RUBRIC SCORE: 22/48*

INFIDELITY & LUST: 11/16 | PLEASURE 5/16 | MUTUALITY 6/16

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WHAT WOMEN HAVE SAID

- "This book kept me spiritually hostage for years in a terrible marriage riddled with abuse and infidelity." **Naomi N.**
- "When I read it, it left me feeling like I could never be enough, like I could never fit in to church culture, like I needed to be submissive and quiet and make myself small to fit the "perfect Christian woman" mold." **Cindy A.**
- "It taught me to see my depression and anxiety as a lack of gratitude, my trauma responses as my own fault for being too bitter and not forgiving enough, and my autistic meltdowns as just a lack of self-control. It taught me that my own happiness doesn't matter. It taught me that women are made to be homemakers and submit to their husbands and raise children—and that it's rebellious and selfish to NOT want these things, but also I shouldn't want them TOO MUCH or that means I'm turning them into an idol. It taught me that if I'm feeling too overwhelmed and busy, it's because I'm not trusting God enough. I'm not being dramatic or exaggerating when I say that book did severe damage to my mental health." **Alicia J.**

SYNOPSIS OF FINDINGS

Based on an overly simplistic understanding of healing, *Lies Women Believe* tells women that the root of all of their problems is that they have been deceived, and they can achieve healing merely by believing the right thing, ignoring all modern understanding of trauma and behavioral change. Consistently equates problems caused from sinning with problems due to being sinned against, painting abuse victims as responsible for their own trauma. This book heaps shame on women in untenable situations, and rather than giving a compassionate view of God, leaves Him out of reach.



INSTEAD OF LIES WOMEN BELIEVE, CHOOSE...

Try Softer (Aundi Kohlber); The Emotionally Healthy Woman (Gerri Sczzerro), The Making of Biblical Womanhood (Beth Allison Barr); The Wisdom of Your Body (Hilary McBride)