

“This book has been missing from the shelves of the LGBT+ conversation for too long. People who are walking (or wondering if they should walk) a similar path to Rachel’s will feel seen, known, and loved as they read these tenderhearted and gospel-centered pages.”

Laurie Krieg, Author; Teacher; Hole in My Heart Podcast Host

“I thank God for Rachel Gilson. She has written a book that is both a biblically faithful and a very personal explanation of and rationale for what the Bible says about human sexuality. She writes to all of us, but especially to those who deal with the pain and confusion of same-sex attraction and sexual dysphoria. She knows this pain from the inside. So while she addresses these issues with theological carefulness, she does so with tremendous compassion, helping us to see that God’s design for sexuality really is very good, merciful news.”

Jon Bloom, Co-Founder and Board Chair, DesiringGod

“Rachel Gilson’s life is a testimony to the sufficiency and power of the Scriptures. Her book is a testimony to a living faith that is based on that sufficiency and power. Rachel doesn’t just read Scripture faithfully—she lives it faithfully too. And her book challenges me, likewise, to grow in my faith beyond a life of comfort and easy answers.”

Karen Swallow Prior, Author, *On Reading Well*
and *Fierce Convictions*

“This book is worth reading just to learn about and rejoice in God’s work through Rachel. But the book offers so much more, with rich biblical reflection on identity, marriage, singleness, romance, friendship, and more. Rachel’s honesty and clarity make this book useful for sharing in so many diverse contexts, whether you’re wanting to investigate Jesus and his gospel or you’re leading in the church.”

Collin Hansen, Editorial Director, The Gospel Coalition;
Author, *Blind Spots*

“*Born Again This Way* is a heartfelt, wise, and hope-filled book. In it, Rachel Gilson offers same-sex-attracted Christians and those who love them a Christ-centered and story-driven reflection on how to thrive in Christ. Not content to speak in generalities, Rachel delves into the practical everyday struggles of same-sex attracted Christians, speaking to questions about friendship, singleness, sex, and identity. The result is a warmly compassionate and theologically perceptive harvest of insights that will inform, challenge, and encourage the reader. Highly recommended.”

Bruce Ashford, Professor of Theology and Culture,
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“This is a brilliant book by a remarkable writer with an astonishing story and a decade of theological training. It offers no glib before-and-after narrative, but is a practical guide for sinners—same-sex attracted and otherwise—who dare to believe that Jesus is the best lover. I wish I could have given it to my younger self.”

Rebecca McLaughlin, Author, *Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World's Largest Religion*

“Rachel Gilson masterfully and disarmingly presents a winsome narrative and a solid Christian theology of sexuality that is much needed in today’s world. With so much confusion and polarization surrounding such issues, she offers a refreshingly honest perspective that is balanced and nuanced; there is lament and there is satisfaction, and amazingly they can coexist! Reading this book feels like you are sitting at coffee with her and that she cares for you.”

Allen Yeh, Associate Professor of Intercultural Studies & Missiology, Biola University, Cook School of Intercultural Studies

“This book is a pastoral gold mine full of biblical advice for us all—movingly illustrated by the lives of Rachel and her friends. It wonderfully tells of how same-sex attracted people can both become Christians and stay Christian in a world which often believes that neither is possible.”

Ed Shaw, Co-founder, livingout.org; Pastor, Emmanuel City Centre, Bristol; Author, *The Plausibility Problem / Same-Sex Attraction and the Church*

RACHEL GILSON

BORN
again
THIS
WAY

The logo features a stylized, curved line above the text 'the goodbook' and 'COMPANY'.
the goodbook
COMPANY

Born Again This Way
© Rachel Gilson, 2020.

Published by:
The Good Book Company



thegoodbook.com | www.thegoodbook.co.uk
thegoodbook.com.au | thegoodbook.co.nz | thegoodbook.co.in

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All rights reserved. Except as may be permitted by the Copyright Act, no part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without prior permission from the publisher.

Rachel Gilson has asserted her right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as author of this work.

Published in association with Don Gates of The Gates Group,
www.the-gates-group.com

ISBN: 9781784983901 | Printed in Denmark

Design by André Parker

CONTENTS

Foreword <i>by Sam Allberry</i>	7
Welcome	11
Chapter 1: Unexpected Birth	15
Chapter 2: Unexpected Vision	29
Chapter 3: Unexpected Options	43
Chapter 4: Unexpected Ministry	57
Chapter 5: Unexpected Relationships	71
Chapter 6: Unexpected Marriage	85
Chapter 7: Unexpected Celibacy	99
Chapter 8: Unexpected Blessing	113
Chapter 9: Unexpected Identity	127
Epilogue	141
Acknowledgments	145

“For they were not, as I saw it, my readers, so much as readers of their own selves, my book being merely one of those magnifying glasses of the sort the optician at Combray used to offer his customers; my book, but a book thanks to which I would be providing them with the means of reading within themselves.”

Marcel Proust, *Finding Time Again*

FOREWORD

BY SAM ALLBERRY

One of my favourite moments in any James Bond movie is when “Q” turns up. Before Bond sets out into danger, he stops by the quartermaster to be given some latest piece of equipment or gadget. The scene normally provides a few moments of light relief before the intensity of the main conflict resumes. It is also a moment when we can guess something of what is going to happen in the rest of the film; because whatever Q gives Bond turns out to be exactly what he will need. If Bond ends up with a tall pepper mill that doubles up as a flame-thrower, we can be sure that at some point he’s going to find himself in a pizzeria surrounded by evil henchmen. However weirdly specific the gadgets are, they will always be the exact thing he needs.

I’m confident that for many of us, this book will feel just like that. In some senses this is a niche book. Rachel is addressing issues experienced by only a subset of Christian men and women. That specificity will be a huge gift to readers who at last realize they are not alone in what they’re going through. Yet the struggles Rachel addresses are also but one type of the battle faced by all who find themselves captivated

by Jesus Christ, and her guidance and worked examples will apply to anyone.

Nearly twenty years ago I was confused and profoundly angry with God. This had been brewing for some time, of course, but the trigger had been that I was wrestling painfully with same-sex attractions and they didn't seem to be going away. When I'd turned 21, I'd said to myself that I wanted to be married with kids by the time I was 30. It seemed a noble aspiration: the sort of thing God would be pleased with me wanting. I wanted to be a godly husband and father, for marriage and family to be a means of service to God and blessing to others. And yet, as I hurtled into the latter part of my twenties, those hopes were becoming increasingly unrealistic.

The issue wasn't just timing. Ever since I had had any conscious feelings of intimacy and longing, they'd always been toward other guys. When I became a Christian, I assumed that those feelings would naturally subside and appropriate attractions to the other sex would take their place. The fact that this didn't happen left me confused and bewildered, angry with God for not doing what I took to be his job in all this.

What made it worse was isolation. I'd not yet felt able to share these quiet agonies with anyone else. My Christian friends knew nothing of what I was going through, and instead made regular gay jokes that made me very hesitant to open up with them. I was going through all this on my own. I didn't know anyone who wrestled with unwanted same-sex attraction—or even that such Christians might exist—let alone have people to process this with and learn from.

So I wish I'd had the book you now hold in your hands. Rather than the angry confusion of my own head, I could have had the compelling, elegant biblical wisdom that flows from Rachel's. This book would not have taken away the struggles I was going through, but it would have provided

much-needed encouragement and strength. Rachel writes with honesty—at times searing, painful honesty—and yet there is nothing gratuitous or voyeuristic going on here. Rachel is simply helping us deal with real-life issues that too often go unaddressed. But more than that, Rachel writes with wonderful biblical clarity and insight. Many of the truths she's about to share have been hard-won—lessons learned the hard way. But, as she so beautifully demonstrates throughout these pages, all these truths have their origin in a God whose words to us are always and unfathomably good.

SAM ALLBERRY

Speaker and Writer, The Zacharias Trust;
Consulting Editor, The Gospel Coalition;
Author, *Is God Anti-gay?*

WELCOME

I wrote this book for you, though only you know why you've picked it up.

I became a Christian much to my own surprise. It was as if the sun of the gospel had evaporated my atheism in an instant.

But as time went on, one reality remained like a stubborn puddle: I was sexually attracted to women. I still am.

So many questions pressed for attention. How could something that felt so right be condemned as wrong? Why would God prohibit acting on these desires for love? Would I ever have sex again? What words should I use to describe my experience—since neither gay nor straight seemed to fit? How should I navigate close female friendship in my new Christian community without everything getting... complicated?

My new Christian friends didn't know where to point me. They had never had to consider these questions from my angle; they were all attracted to the opposite sex—a fact which presented enough challenges of its own in the fight for joyful obedience. And all the while, we were bombarded with the loud, monotone declaration of our culture: "You must obey your sexual desires."

I remember one cool morning in Wyoming, sitting outside with a friend who also happened to be named Rachel. We were discussing one of our guy friends who had come to Christ in college. Before that, he had lived by following his own intuition of what would make him happy and fulfilled. He had had a girlfriend with whom he was sexually active, but when he met Jesus, he called it off and broke up with her.

Rachel and I had learned that this ex-girlfriend had recently also come to know Jesus as her Savior, and it seemed that she and our friend would now resume their relationship—this time both as Christians. Perhaps they would even one day marry! Wouldn't that be a lovely story of redemption?

It seemed like it to us. But it also made me quietly realize that that story would never be mine. If any of my ex-girlfriends came to Christ, I would rejoice. But none of them would be my future wife. Redemption could not look like that for me. It just felt so unfair: an ache in the heart that pulsed dreadfully, not letting me ignore it. I voiced it to Rachel and received sympathy. Yet neither of us really had an “answer.” It felt like uncharted territory. It was.

Our culture sings that we're “born this way,” as if that settles the matter. But I'm born again. My life has told a different story than what society expects for me and what I expected for myself, because God himself has written his own twists and turns into the narrative: unexpected blessings that are more powerful, more lovely, than anything I could have imagined in my former life.

This book is my story. It's just one among many, and it's not intended to be weaponized against anyone else or used as a pawn. But my hope is that my account of coming out, coming to faith, and what came next will be a refreshment to you on your own journey. Though I have experienced failure and pain, I have also received freedom and joy. In later

chapters, I'll also share stories of others who are walking this path with their eyes fixed on the Lord.

Even more than stories, I want to offer you the Scriptures, and show you how those ancient, God-breathed words can meet us right in our very contemporary circumstances. They will challenge us and comfort us, and ultimately root us in the God who loves us.

And whoever we are, that's what we most need.

Maybe someone else pressed this book into your hands, hopes high for how it would impact you. Perhaps you're sure of your sexuality, but unsure of what Jesus has to say about it—or whether he has any right to own it. You are welcome here—I wrote this for you, even if you've picked it up secretly, with heart pounding, hoping no one will ask you why.

Maybe you find yourself secure in Jesus, fighting to say yes to him and no to same-sex sexual sin—yet still, like all Christians who have gone before us, you're living in a body that is not yet free from temptation. You don't want to limp to the finish line but to run your race with joy. This book is for you.

Or maybe you're listening in on this conversation as a pastor, significant other, friend, or parent of a Christian with same-sex attraction. You long to love like Jesus, who came full of grace and truth. This book is for you too.

I want to show you that Jesus is beautiful, powerful, and worthy right at the heart of this conversation, right at the heart of our sexuality. He is not scared or unsettled by anything, and if we are rooted in him, we can be people of power and love and self-control.

This is what I want for myself, and what I want for you. I'm not writing as a polished product, standing behind the finish line, clapping for you with the medal already around my neck. I'm right with you, sometimes stumbling, often aching, but also running with joy.

No matter where we start from, no matter what shape we're in, he is not hindered. His love and power are more than sufficient. He is always more than we expect.