

**WOMAN
EVOLVE**

WOMAN EVOLVE

BREAK UP WITH YOUR FEARS
&
REVOLUTIONIZE YOUR LIFE

SARAH JAKES ROBERTS



W PUBLISHING GROUP

AN IMPRINT OF THOMAS NELSON

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Published in Nashville, Tennessee, by W Publishing Group, an imprint of Thomas Nelson.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Roberts, Sarah Jakes, 1988– author.

Title: *Woman evolve* / Sarah Jakes Roberts.

Description: Nashville, Tennessee : W Publishing Group, an imprint of Thomas Nelson, [2021] | Includes bibliographical references. | Summary: “Reimagining the story of Eve, Sarah Jakes Roberts draws lessons from Scripture and from her own life that show women how to use the mistakes of their past to overcome the challenges of today. *Woman Evolve* teaches women that they can use failures and mistakes to break through to their future. Like Eve, they do not need to live defined by the past. Pastor Sarah says, ‘Bruised heels can still crush serpents’ heads.’” — Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020045489 (print) | LCCN 2020045490 (ebook) |

ISBN 9780785235545 (hc) | ISBN 9780785235569 (ebook) | ISBN 9780785235583 (IE)

Subjects: LCSH: Eve (Biblical figure) | Women—Religious aspects—Christianity. | Christian women—Religious life.

Classification: LCC BS580.E85 R63 2021 (print) | LCC BS580.E85 (ebook) |

DDC 222/.11092—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020045489>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020045490>

Printed in the United States of America

21 22 23 24 25 LSC 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*To every woman determined to abandon what was and
bold enough to discover what could still become . . .
this one is for us.*

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O N E

RESCUE EVE

Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

—GENESIS 1:28

Three years ago I fell deeply in love with Eve. Yes, the Garden of Eden Eve, the woman who basically ruined God’s plan for humanity over a piece of fruit.

I know what you’re thinking: *Fall in love with Eve? How is that even possible? The woman most popularly known for being the gateway of sin, debauchery, cramps, bloating, labor pain, dysfunctional relationships, insecurities, depression, disease, stretch marks, acne . . . ?* Yes. That’s the one.

For years I rolled my eyes whenever Eve’s name came up. I saw her as the woman who had *one* job and failed so miserably that it changed my life, and yours, thousands upon thousands of years later. Before it could even begin. A fantasy of traipsing around a tropical garden with a flat tummy, picking organic fruit from trees—never

worrying about the cost of living, global warming, or obsessing over social media—comes to a screeching halt over a little ol’ piece of fruit. Picked from a forbidden tree.

I’ve always had *big* plans to get to heaven and give Eve a full neck-twisting, eye-rolling, hand-clapping dissertation on the effects her choice has had on the rest of us. But all of that changed at a women’s conference. I noticed that all the volunteers (and most of the registrants) wore matching shirts. This isn’t uncommon at a women’s event; however, these shirts were different. They displayed the names of women in the Bible who are celebrated for their commitment and faith: “Sarah. Ruth. Esther. Mary. #squadgoals.”

Since we are just getting to know each other, now may be a good time to tell you something you should probably know about me. From time to time, there’s this petty part of my brain that needs to be reminded that I know Jesus. Is that anybody else’s testimony?

That day at the conference, that petty part of my brain tapped me on my proverbial shoulder and whispered, “Chiiillle, look! You ain’t the only one who doesn’t want Eve on her squad.” I immediately smiled at the thought.

As I walked from the backstage holding room into the crowded auditorium, I looked over the audience. The “Sarah. Ruth. Esther. Mary. #squadgoals” shirt was literally everywhere I turned. The band had taken their places on the stage. The singers had grabbed their microphones. The music was blaring, and everyone in the room was lifting their voices in worship. But I was stuck.

I couldn’t shake the feeling that something was wrong. I should have been opening my heart and lifting my hands to sing along with all the others. After all, in just a few short moments I was scheduled to take the platform and share a message meant to confront, transform, and empower the women in the room to pursue

the vision God had when He created them. Yet all I could think about was Eve.

Logically I knew why her name was not on the shirts. Seriously. Who in their right mind wants Eve on their squad? She was so easily tempted and manipulated to abandon what she knew was right and engage with what would leave her (and the rest of us) in the world struggling.

If an actual lightbulb appeared over our heads each time we had an epiphany, in that moment a high-megawatt beam would've been shining brilliantly over mine!

Compassion for Eve hit me like a ton of bricks. This time I wasn't viewing her from my high horse but from a position of empathy that can only come from knowing what it's like to be in someone else's shoes. There I was, in the middle of a women's conference, where the virtues of women who showed ridiculous faith and righteousness were being proclaimed, but all I could think about was Eve—my heart longing to go back to the garden to tell her that she still had value, promise, and worth.

YOU'VE GOT SOME EVE IN YOU

Value. Promise. Worth. Aren't those the words we all need to hear? Especially when we find ourselves in our own inevitable *Eve* moments? Haven't we all had a moment when we knew better but didn't do better?

Let's be honest. Our inclination to choose a path that pushes us further away from our moral, ethical, spiritual, financial, physical, relational, or emotional goals is not a foreign concept. Yet Eve has been vilified for making a similar choice. One we all can relate to making at some point, in some way.

If you raised your eyebrow at that last sentence, allow me a moment to prove it to you.

Every day we are given many opportunities to choose what we know is good and right for us. But if you're like me, there are times throughout the day when my discipline to do what I know is good and right is overshadowed by the temptation to do what I know will ultimately slow my progress. In other words, you know what it's like to know better but not do better.

Maybe you're like me, and you "closet eat" french fries in the car before you get home with everyone's dinner. Or you overindulge and buy things you know you don't need (but convince yourself you really do). No doubt we all stalk the social media pages of those who have hurt us, allowing our thoughts of shame, anger, fear, anxiety, insecurity, and doubt to take the mic—sometimes to the point we no longer have the faith required to live life with integrity or confidence.

In those moments, when we choose to resist what we know we should do, we are subconsciously also choosing to live inwardly unfulfilled, envious, and apprehensive, in toxic relationships, and addicted, stressed, depressed, ashamed of ourselves . . . the list goes on and on, but all of it ends in a state of devastation. The truth is that no matter how easy people may make it seem, it can be incredibly challenging to abandon toxic habits and instead choose to do what we know is right.

This is by no means a judgment. If you're still on this planet, then there's an area of your life that is still growing to its maximum potential.

If you're journaling or taking notes—and if not, now is a good time to grab pen and paper; you're going to need it—I invite you to take a moment to look within your soul. What's an area of your life where you continue to repeat a cycle that ends with you feeling less

valuable? That, my dear, is your forbidden fruit. Now, consider how evolving for the better in that area would change your life. That's the new pattern I want you to achieve. And to help you with these kinds of deeper reflections, I've added "Working It Out" opportunities in the chapters that follow. Please take a moment to pray each time before you begin to work it out. I think you'll be amazed at the way God honors those prayers and your work.

I'VE GOT SOME EVE IN ME

My first devastating foray with forbidden fruit was different from Eve's. I wasn't in a garden God created for my personal enjoyment and dwelling. I wasn't walking around in my birthday suit in the middle of the day, with grass mingling with my toes or birds chirping in the air. I can't even say there was a slithering serpent that got in my head and ruined my life.

The truth is there was no one to blame for the toxic pattern that infected my soul with fear, anxiety, and depression. I was very much complicit in the experiences that attempted to destroy my worth and value. Like Eve, I knowingly ate from a tree I knew would end in misery.

Ever since that wake-up moment on the conference stage, I've had one mission: rescue Eve and all the other women like her. Women like me. Women who are sometimes lost in a world that feels bigger than they are. Women who are attempting to recover after a setback. Women who want to bring forth good fruit despite the forbidden fruit they were exposed to. I want to serve them by helping them grow from wherever they are willing to start to the place God has marked as their finish line.

My purpose is to create environments where women feel safe enough to retrace their steps so they can see where pain, disappointment, or failure buried their hope, potential, and faith. Because when we dare to retrace our steps, we learn that those difficult experiences did not only hurt us. They changed the way we show up and engage in relationships, friendships, business, family, and the world in general.

Just because you've survived something doesn't mean you didn't experience damage. There is truly nothing more necessary for our journey of healing than acknowledging we've been damaged. How else can we heal unless we admit we're wounded?

For those of us who have found safety in not admitting, not digging into what was, let me offer some assurances. I'm not asking you to experience the heartbreak again. I'm not leading you into a cave. I'm not going to leave you stuck. We're finally going to lean in instead of running away. We're going to pass through a tunnel that allows us to reconnect with our soul, hopes, passion, and power. We're going to stop pretending that it never happened because there is a realization more powerful than any painful truth you've experienced. When you commit to growth after trauma, there is resurrecting power that demands your hope, potential, and faith to rise up. An even better version of you is waiting to emerge!

THE RESCUE

There is a well in you. That well has perspectives, disciplines, strategy, creativity, and paradigms that will consistently reveal to you what God knows about you in every season of your life. That well cannot be damaged. That well has not run dry. It's still tucked away in the corridor of your heart, and it's been waiting for a moment to

spring forth. It will water the seeds of the woman God created you to become. No matter how much you have accomplished or how far you are from even getting started, if you're still alive, there is an even more powerful, purposeful woman waiting to take root and produce fruit within you. My job is to help you dig until that well springs up, and that version of you has no choice but to come forth.

That version of you is powerful because of her vulnerability and authenticity. She doesn't talk herself out of getting the support she needs to be free. That version of you is not ashamed of the path that has led her to where she is today. That version of you believes health is wealth, starts the business, goes back to school. That version of you spends and saves with financial stability (and overflow!) in mind. She shatters glass ceilings. That version of you is so whole that a relationship is the cherry on top, not a necessity. That version of you believes that her potential is limitless, and the sky is only another level—not a limit. She is empowered to continuously evolve because she's fascinated by how God will reveal His perfect plan and strength through her heart and hands. That version of you does not subscribe to the notion that this is exclusively a man's world, but *every* industry has room for a woman who is confident that she belongs wherever God sends her.

Our world was not given to just one gender to subdue. Genesis 1:28 says, "Then God blessed *them*, and God said to *them*, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth'" (emphasis added). That declaration was God's original intention for *all* of humanity. So, girl, this world literally needs you. We need you to be fruitful and multiply, not just with beautiful babies but with incredible ideas and opportunities. And if you don't commit to filling this earth, the alternative does

not exclusively affect just you. The world is so interconnected that your empty spot gives permission for someone else to leave her spot unfulfilled too. Because when you subdue your giant, you teach the rest of us how to take ours down too.

Eve eating from the fruit did not change God's intention—it only changed how He would fulfill that intention. God still desired to partner with Adam, Eve, and all of humanity to unleash our ability to manifest His divinity on Earth. But because of her choice, Eve would have to take on the daunting task of seeing beyond the depravity of her present life to partner with God for her future.

Every woman will have to fight Eve's fight to manifest God's vision of filling and subduing the earth. Eve had to fight to see where she fit in the world. She had to fight to look past her mistakes and to stay connected to God and others. Eve had to fight like the world depended on it—because it did. Imagine if we stopped minimizing our fight and recognized that no matter how small or minuscule it may seem, if it's keeping us from being better, it's a threat to not just us—it's a threat to the world.

It's not just low self-esteem. It's not just a little anxiety or depression. It's not just bitterness. It's a threat to who you are called to be on this earth. When you do not become better, the world cannot become better either.

Eve made a mistake, but she had proper perspective on how important it was to course correct. I've been on a mission to rescue Eve because she's been penalized for what she did but not recognized for how she showed up to fight back.

I no longer see Eve as the woman I vilified. I see her as a reflection of me and so many other women who've been able to see their futures only through a filter that fear, shame, and disappointment can create. I never felt passionate about starting a community for

women to connect, grow, and inspire one another until I had this epiphany about Eve.

I wanted to shout from the rooftop that a woman who is determined to abandon what was must commit to the vulnerable process of evolving. It's impossible to maximize the potential that God has placed in each of us and stay the same. When we make room for transformation in our lives, we embody the definition of evolving. *Evolve* means to develop gradually, especially from a simple to a more complex form.

Now, listen, I know that life is already complex enough and simple sounds appealing, but to be complex is not the same as being complicated. *Complex* simply means consisting of many different and connected parts. There are so many different parts of who you are, but are they all connected? The creation story reveals that God doesn't create anything simple. Genesis 1:1 says He "created the heavens and the earth." It sounds simple, but one semester with astronomy as an elective will prove that there is nothing simple about the heavens.

Just as true as this is for the sky, it's true for you. There is so much more to you than the simplified perspective you have on your existence. You are a beautiful, vast, ornate demonstration of God's thoughts and hope for humanity. Eve had to learn this the hard way, and so did I. The pursuit of God's thoughts toward me, and every woman, birthed a desire for me to create community for women. Through our podcasts, events, social media, and curriculum, we're able to connect, support, challenge, and inspire one another to discover the best version of ourselves. I call it Woman Evolve, and the content of this book is inspired by the breakthroughs we've had together.

Notice how saying *evolve* very slowly you hear *Eve*. That's how much my revelation of her experience inspired me.

As my slight stalker obsession with Eve began to fully blossom, I felt deeply in my heart that the only way to begin the journey of saving every woman was to start with rescuing the first woman. I needed to go back in time and imagine being her and not just looking at her choices from the outside in. I needed to rescue her from who I thought she was. This journey felt so appropriate because in my own life I realized that my healing began the moment I wanted to rescue myself from who I was not so that I could discover who I could become.

I read through Genesis armed with my new compassion for Eve. Instantly I recognized more than her guilt. I saw her innocence. I recognized her strength. I realized how much courage she exhibited when she chose to be an active participant in her restoration process. I learned that she was not just the woman who ate from the forbidden fruit; she was the woman who paved a way for the ultimate Redeemer who would offer salvation to all humanity.

Throughout our time together in this book, I share what I've learned, and what I'm continuing to learn, about unearthing the gifts, talents, discipline, and stability that produce perpetual inner victory. Many women have influenced my development, certainly too many for me to list in this book. I feel, however, that it is important for me to introduce you to one of them in the way that I've come to know her.

Come with me, for a moment, back to the Garden of Eden.

MY FRIEND EVE

It was the way her eyes moved before her eyelids ever parted that indicated she was ready to be introduced to a

whole new world. Flutter, shut, flutter, shut, she practiced the opening and closing of them until she finally allowed them to remain open. Then, slowly, she lifted her delicate hands to eye level. Like a newborn baby trapped in a woman's body, she stood in the middle of the garden, fascinated by her fingertips. The warmth from the sun covered every inch of her like a blanket. She studied the backside of her hands and marveled at the hints of red and gold peeking from beneath the top layer of her bronzed skin. Turning her hands over, she discovered the intersecting lines embedded on her palms. Her fingertips traced the trail of lines as they mingled and danced, creating abstract art unique to her tale. Her eyes roamed the length of her arms. Her right hand grazed the roundness of her left shoulder and the fragile protrusion of her collarbone. She paused only to rest the pads of her fingers in the cove that held her pulse. She took a moment and felt the rhythm of her blood flowing through her body—steady and controlled.

Slowly but surely, her focus drifted, and she began surveying the rest of her frame. Devoid of another woman's body to serve as a point of reference, she felt no need to compare the roundness of her tummy with others she'd seen. Nor could she judge the appropriate thickness of her thighs or ideal width of her hips. Instead, she did what so many of us fail to accomplish: she reveled in the beauty and simplicity of her existence. The woman was fascinated by the dimensions of her power. She had the innate ability to touch with a delicate finesse or with a firmness that demanded the recognition of her strength.

Still utterly consumed with her personal examination

of the body she now possessed, the woman's trance was suddenly broken when she heard the rustling of life happening around her. She took what she thought would be a quick glance around, but her eyes widened with astonishment and admiration as she surrendered to the beauty of her new home. The birds swirled above her head. The lush grass danced with her toes. The bushes crunched as the creatures passing by divided their square form. Undeterred by her stares, the creatures went about their way, not nearly as intrigued by her as she was by them. The rivers streamed with a familiar pulsating rhythm, reminding her of the beat she felt happening in the cove of her neck just moments before. The woman had so much to learn yet no urgency to do it. This moment, her introduction to the world, had to be fully breathed in.

She continued to skim the new land until the only being powerful enough to break her trance came into focus. In a world full of so many textures, colors, shapes, and forms, he was the only thing she'd seen thus far that resembled her own frame. The differences were subtle but undeniable. His shoulders were broader and arms much longer than her own. There was a bulge in his neck that resembled the fruit she'd observed on one of the trees. His face was decorated with hair that began by his ears and circled around his mouth. Her eyes landed on the corner of his lips and she noticed how they curved slightly upward. Instantly, she mirrored his expression. When she finally focused on his eyes, she had a knowing that while she stood taking in her environment, he'd been studying her.

He was standing there staring at her as if she were the

RESCUE EVE

most fascinating organism he'd ever encountered. He surveyed every inch of her beauty with his eyes and became irrefutably mesmerized. It was the way their eyes locked that made the earth stand still. The flowers stopped their sway, and the breeze broke its pattern. It was almost as if the whole world were applauding that he'd finally found something akin to him.

He took her hand in his. Palm to palm their hands conveyed what their spirits already knew. Their connection began long before their fingers, presently intertwined, ever touched. It began in a realm much more divine. A realm that not even words could define. Immediately it became obvious that the sun would rise and set many times over before their infatuation with each other's presence grew dull.

He navigated their world with ease and comfort. She studied her environment like a new student eager to please and desiring to do well. He shared with her the names of all the creatures and plants. He exemplified the power they both possessed to command the earth to do as they wished. The man often stressed that everything was made in sequence of importance, with her entrance serving as the apex of all creation. It felt like the woman was late to a party that had been going on for hours. Her delayed entrance into the world meant she would have to catch up from last place while somehow exhibiting a confidence that relayed she deserved to be first. He tried to help by reminding her of the commandment that they'd been given when God handed them the "reins." God had said, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air,

and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” This intimidating world was created to adjust to the tone she set, but she would have to be intentional about setting that tone or she would get lost in the rhythm the world set.

WHAT ABOUT US?

Can you imagine coming into the world as an adult woman? Everyone and everything has its place except you. You’re simply still trying to understand if, and where, you fit.

The woman we know as Eve was pulled from the rib of the man and placed in an organized world where everything had a label, role, and united function. She was told to subdue the earth, but how can one subdue the unknown? She was charged with controlling a world that she did not even understand. No wonder all it took was one thought to change her tenor and undermine their success.

Eve’s ability to succeed depended on how well she navigated and transformed the culture that predated her existence. Unfortunately, before she could begin producing from the safety of her new normal, one encounter changed everything forever. I wish I could say that this woman, my friend, had no control over how her story detoured, but that would not be entirely true. I don’t believe it was her intention for things to veer as drastically as they did; however, I cannot deny that she knew before she gave in that trouble would begin.

Simply put, she knew better but didn’t do better, but haven’t we all been there? Should she be penalized forever for what she failed to do in that moment? Choose your answer wisely, because however you handle Eve’s transgression will undoubtedly be how you handle the transgressions of others, especially your own.

If this were a courtroom, now would be the moment when I dramatically turn to the judge and say, “I rest my case.” Because who can’t relate to being fragile, ignorant, and susceptible to mental, emotional, and spiritual traps that ultimately change our mind and then our actions? I know quite a few women who can relate. In fact, I’m one of them.

And to think this all began when she was exploring her new world away from the man who served as her guide. He’d given her the rules and outlined the plan; he could have never imagined that a creature so crafty could have undermined their mission. In theory he was correct. The woman did not just obey a random command. She engaged in a conversation that changed her mind first, then her diet, and eventually her actions.

All it took was one question. One question invaded her mind, opened the floodgates, and changed her path: “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1). That’s all it took to suck her into questioning herself and the power, purpose, and potential God granted her.

Narrowing down to a moment what happened in the garden when a woman sunk her teeth into a piece of fruit is far too easy. Closer examination reveals the trouble began long before she picked the fruit.

The moment the woman’s truth was uprooted and replaced with inquisition is the moment humanity took a sharp turn.

Can you remember the first time your truth was uprooted? Can you remember the first time you no longer felt safe? Loved? Wanted? Liked? Good enough? Beautiful? Innocent? Can you remember how it made you question yourself and others? The serpent in the garden wasn’t after Eve’s appetite. He was after what she trusted as God’s vision for her life. God’s power in her life began to dissolve the moment she started questioning God’s plan for her life.

For the longest time, I thought my trauma began when I became pregnant as a teenager. I know now that my pregnancy was just the moment I ate from the fruit. The seed of trauma began as a question, and the search for the answer is what led to my pregnancy and to every other issue that destabilized my world. That question, and so many other questions produced from it, would haunt me for many years before I finally discovered the only answer that mattered.

In full transparency, the question has not fully gone away, but the search for the answer has ceased. The question that started it all was “Do you really belong here?” The “here” changed over the years. Sometimes the “here” was family, other times it was school, occasionally it was relationships, and eventually it found its way into my career and purpose.

What question haunts you? What is it that finds a way to creep into the most unsuspecting moments of your life? That question is a seed that if not properly addressed will continue to control your actions.

You may want to change your thinking and actions. Perhaps you’ve wanted to change them for quite some time, but to no avail. When Eve was in the garden, engaging with the serpent, it was the question that ultimately changed her actions. Perhaps we should spend less time focusing on the action and more time discovering the root question that produced the action.

If we can get to the root, we can change the fruit.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SARAH JAKES ROBERTS is a businesswoman, bestselling author, and media personality who expertly balances career, ministry, and family. She is the founder of Woman Evolve, a multimedia platform dedicated to engaging and empowering the modern woman of faith. She has been the driving force behind grassroots marketing for films, publications, and community programs that inspire and uplift people of all ages and backgrounds.

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