

Teen Girl Bibles and Purity Discourse

Bible versions

- TIB – True Images Bible (Zondervan) – teen girls
- BTG – the Bible for Teen Girls (Zondervan) – teen girls
- RB – Revolve Bible (Thomas Nelson) – teen girls
- Rbzine – Revolve Biblezine (Thomas Nelson)
- Revolution Bible (Zondervan) - teen guys

A heads up before we start

Some of the teen girl Bible content is quite distressing to read – and we will be considering themes of purity, victim blame, abusive relationships, and coercive control.

A 'sex-saturated' world

- “Any activity that arouses sexual feelings is off-limits” to a girl until she is married (*TIB* 377).
- “We’re so saturated in our sex-crazed culture that our sense are numbed. Things we might have questioned before now don't even register. And if we’re not prepared – if we haven't decided what to do in a tempting situation beforehand – we might as well just kiss our ideals good-bye” (*BTG* 1506).
- “Run. Get away. Don’t put yourself in a position to decide whether you need to use a condom. Don’t get alone with a guy you find attractive ... [It is] really the best form of birth control.” (*BTG* 1519).
- “God created sex for marriage alone. If you’re in a relationship where you’re having sex or toying with the idea, get out! Even if you’re not in a relationship that has progressed to this point, be careful. Guard your thoughts and impulses ... Sexual sin is powerful and tricky” (*RB* 1387).

Premarital sex is dangerous

- “Love is like fire, once it’s started, it’s hard to put out. If you don’t feel ready for a lifelong commitment, why play with fire? You will get badly burned” (*TIB* 1430).
- “Did you know that God created sex ... as a gift for people? He also created the only safe place to open this gift – a committed marriage. All other places lead to disappointment and pain” (*TIB* 7).
- Premarital sex “is like playing Russian roulette with STDs ... sleeping around cheapens the beauty of intimacy and leads to severe emotional damage ... [it is] cruel ... emotionally devastating ... [leads to] pain, fear, and distrust ... [and will] damage you emotionally and dishonour God’s good plan for your life” (*RB* 787).

Girls have no sexual agency

- “Pray that if God has marriage in his plans for you, that you will be a loving and refreshing part of your husband’s life” (*TIB* 874).
- “Dear God, show me how to fall in love with you first, so I’ll know how to care for the guy of my dreams” (*TIB* 319).
- “You can’t give sex to get love. That never works! God intended your virginity to be an amazing gift for your husband” (*TIB* 879).
- “Your virginity is a precious gift God gave you to hand to your husband someday” (*TIB* 883).

Modesty – girls' bodies as a source of shame

- “When you dress sexy, you send a message ... If you don't want to be seen as a sex object, then don't advertise your body by trying to get guys to want you sexually” (*TIB*, 605).
- “There's no harm in looking good ... [but] Christians are supposed to focus on what's noble, right and pure ... Think twice about what you're wearing and develop the habit of seeking God's approval, not the stares of guys around you” (*TIB* 605).
- “Ask God to show you why you might be making the decision to draw attention to your body” (*BTG*, 788).

Teen guys are 'hardwired' for sex

- “God is available 24/7 to help you when your appetite for sex gets *out of control*” (*Revolution* 857; emphasis added).
- “God has wired you to want to have sex; and once you start ‘rounding the bases’ and physically heading in that direction, it’s hard to put on the brakes ... Learn to appreciate your God-given sexual urges, but at the same time learn to practice self-control to get the best out of sex – after your wedding” (*Revolution*, 856)
- “It seems like everywhere you look, there’s something to tempt you to think impure thoughts. So how do you engage the world and interact with women without lusting?” (*Revolution* 1479).
- 2 Samuel 11 serves as “a reminder that it’s easy for boys and men to be tempted when they see something alluring” (*BTG* 376).

Victim blame

- Bianca's profile (*TIB*, 543): "if you are underage, [sexting] is illegal and can be prosecuted under the law. It is considered child pornography. A single text or photo can get you or the recipient into real trouble" (*TIB* 543; emphasis added).
- Paige's profile (*TIB* 1021): "If you're constantly in relationships, choosing guys that are controlling or emotionally abusive, or putting up with abusive behavior from a guy, you are in an unhealthy pattern. These are signs of dependency and self-esteem issues."
- Girls like Paige are urged to speak to a counsellor "to help you figure out why you're drawn to unhealthy relationships."

Coercive control

Knowingly or not, these teen girl Bibles draw on the tactics of coercive control in their editorial additions:

- Threats, intimidation, demands for obedience
- Humiliation and degradation
- Isolation
- Love bombing
- Gaslighting
- Microregulation
- Microsurveillance

Threats, Intimidation, and Demands for Obedience

Girls are warned that if they disobey God:

- “you’ll end up paying for it sooner or later” (*TIB* 226)
- “you’ll eventually find yourself in a painful predicament” (*TIB* 563)
- “God might just let you fall on your face” (699)
- “You’ll pay for it when you do things your way instead of God’s” (*TIB* 184)

“The choice is simple. Choose life or choose death. Choose to follow me or to go your own way. Live as though I don’t exist and choose death. Love and obey me and choose life. It’s up to you” (*TIB* 246).

Be grateful for God's punishment

- “If you’re never punished, your brat-potential could skyrocket. Punished too much, and your confidence takes a nosedive. It’s a good thing God gives just punishments. He’s all about *balance*” (*TIB* 1049).
- “[God] expects us to obey ... When we don’t, we’re brought to shame and failure” (*RB* 347).
- “Some of us learn the hard way. We’re warned about sin’s consequences, but we don’t listen. Only when the punishment comes do we realize that we should’ve obeyed God ... discipline is just one of God’s methods for shaping us into people who truly love and follow him!” (*RB* 459).

Humiliation and degradation

- “[God] already knows we can’t do this life thing by ourselves, so don’t try to be a heroine on your own!” (*RB* 87)
- “Think of how many times you really blow it in life! You drop the ball with your family, friends and schoolwork all the time” (*TIB* 256).
- “Take a lesson from the Israelites: Don’t trust your own talents and strength; *those alone won't get you very far*. Instead, put your faith in God and trust him to lead you through life” (*TIB* 486).
- “My daughter, You are made in my image. You are worthy, not for what you own, not for your grades, not for your wardrobe ... but because I made you. [Signed] Your loving Father” (*TIB* 3).

You are nothing without God

- “God doesn’t want you, or your team, or your family, or your church to take the credit. He wants the credit. He wants the glory. So let him have it! You’ll be amazed what he can do with it” (*TIB* 296).
- “Sometimes when you’ve worked hard for something, it’s tempting to gloat over your success. Instead, remember where your success really comes from” (*TIB* 508).
- “Jesus isn’t looking for girls who think they’ve got it all together; he longs for girls who know they need him” (*TIB*, 570).
- “Out of the whole earth, which is mine, I chose you – not because of anything you’ve done, but out of my mercy and love. Love, Dad” (*TIB*, 93).

More degradation and humiliation (with a bit of gaslighting thrown in)

- “My love and mercy are infinite. My love extends to all who come to me – the disabled, the weak, the fatherless, the unlovely, the strangers, the sinners. (You fall into at least that last category, dear.) Always know that I love you” (*TIB* 224).
- “God saw you, in all your sinful ugliness, and loved you anyway (before you were beautiful)! His love, grace, and mercy transformed you ... suddenly you were no longer ugly and unlovable. Because of Christ, you’re pure and lovely, a treasure in God’s eyes” (*RB* 1501).
- “It’s pointless to keep secrets from God. He already knows all the ugly details of your life ... and he still loves you! Go ahead – show him the real you” (*TIB* 325).

Girls should just shut up

- “You can avoid a lot of hurt feelings and regrets if you just keep that mouth shut!” (*TIB* 800).
- (Referring to Psalm 39:1): “Not sure a muzzle would be a smart fashion choice. You might want to try controlling your tongue without one: no gossip, no hurtful words, no backtalk. You can do it!” (*TIB* 701).
- “You can tell a lot about a girl by listening to what she says and how she says it ... Every time you get ready to open that mouth of yours, think about what you’re going to say and what that says about you” (*TIB* 830).
- “too much chatter is sure to lead to sin because our mouths are a hotbed of trouble. When we don’t control our words, they will eventually lead to catastrophe” (*RB* 739)
- “if you have a tendency to talk and talk and not say much, then you might want to examine that part of your life ... Don’t interrupt! Wait for someone to finish his or her thought before you pipe in ... Think carefully before you speak” (*RB* 903).

Love bombing

- “focus on God’s faithfulness and power to overcome any problem. And after locking eyes with the Lord, you’ll find that you can face the world again – unafraid” (*TIB* 687).
- “Do you need some Face-Time with God? You don’t have to wait for his call. He’s already said, ‘come and talk with me. Let’s get to know each other’” (*TIB* 687).
- “[God] wants you to love him with all that you are. He wants to have an intimate relationship with you. Your love relationship with God is real worship” (*TIB* 932).
- “It thrills [God] to spend time with you. He runs to see you and loves to tell others that you are his” (*RB* 1135).

More lovebombing

- “We can’t even conceive how worthy God is of our devotion. Yet we keep flirting with our old boyfriend ... with the world. God’s got every right to be intolerant of unfaithfulness. He’ll be jealous of our affection until we give him our full devotion ... it’s what God deserves. Don’t mess around with the world and act like you belong to it. Only God is worthy of all your devotion!” (*RB*, 681)
- “If you want true satisfaction, choose me [God]. I’ll provide you with lasting good things” (*TIB* 768).
- “As you read this love story [Song of Songs], pray that if God has a guy in your future, that he will love you with passion and romance – and set your heart on the God who already does” (*TIB* 874).
- “God should be your first love! Instead of going nuts over guys, focus on your relationship with [God]. He’ll satisfy your desire to be deeply known and loved” (*RB*, 785)

Isolation

- I love it when you choose my opinion over the opinion of others! [Signed] The One whose opinion counts. (*TIB* 346)
- If you're asking people's advice 24/7 but never going straight to God, you're bound to fail. Since all wisdom comes from God, why not go straight to the source? (*TIB* 642)
- [E]xpecting anything (or *anyone*) other than God to give you joy and contentment will always lead to disappointment. (*TIB* 680; emphasis original)
- Looking for the perfect friend? You may be setting yourself up for disappointment. Even your most faithful amiga can let you down sometimes. Only God is 100 percent perfectly trustworthy. (*TIB* 779)
- Instead of searching futilely for that one flawless guy, friend or parent, try trusting in a perfect God. Your chances of finding him are much better! (*TIB* 891)

Isolation ... and obedience

- “God wants your heart to be all his, and he’s not going to share you with anything or anyone else. So take a look at your priorities and give God the place he deserves: *numero uno!*” (RB 950).
- “make God the boss of your life ... He cares about your future and wants you to consult him and follow what he tells you to do” (RB 325).
- “Listen to the one true God’s commands for your life and keep all your devotion and adoration focused on him. He alone deserves your worship!” (RB 273).
- “My girl, Shut off your device. Close the laptop. Turn off your phone and close your bedroom door. Now come to me and be quiet. Do you hear me? [Signed] Father God” (TIB 709).
- “If God says no to a relationship, a job or anything, you know it’s the best answer for you. Rebelling against God’s decision will only hurt you in the end” (TIB 624).

Microregulation

- “Dear Jesus, sometimes I’m afraid of letting you have complete control of my life. Show me how to be a girl who always says yes to you. Amen” (*TIB* 903).
- “[The Holy Spirit] comes to live inside of you. He gives you directions every day – people he wants you to talk to, places you should or shouldn’t go, and he even tells you which things you should and shouldn’t do” (*RB* 830).
- “Make sure your heart is soft and pliable for God, so he can do magnificent things with you” (*TIB* 79).
- In making a piece of pottery, does the clay fight back? Of course not! The potter is always in charge. In life, God is in charge. Always. God is God, and *you* are not. He has the right to decide how things go in your life because he’s the Potter, and you are the clay ... The clay’s job is to trust and submit to the Potter. God knows what he’s doing as he’s shaping you. Trust him with the outcome (*TIB* 960).

Microsurveillance

- “Beloved, There are no secrets between us – absolutely none. I can see every text you send, every picture you post, and every thought you think” (*TIB* 518).
- My daughter, I never sleep. I never take a vacation or go on a break or ask for a substitute. I watch over you constantly. I see you come and go – I’m always caring, loving, protecting you 24/7. (*TIB* 788)
- My girl, Ever wish that life was straight-up easier? I know your paths – where you’ve been, where you are, where you’re going – and I’m making you into something beautiful throughout it all. (*TIB* 637).
- “Trying to sneak one past God? He’s not fooled by your disguises or pretenses. So if you’re hiding something from him – ‘fess up. And if you’re holding something back from him – give it up” (*TIB* 423).

Microsurveillance

“What do you have stashed in the bottom drawer of your dresser or under your bed (besides some dirty clothes)? What things about yourself do you try to hide? What are your deepest, darkest secrets? While it’s okay not to advertise your personal life to the outside world, it’s not okay to try to hide it from God. It doesn’t work. Your life is laid out to him to see in full view and living color regardless of whether anyone else knows. He knows all your secrets. You’re completely transparent in his eyes” (*TIB* 816).