

REFORMERS INTERVIEW:

LYDIA BROWNBACK

*Author of Flourish: How the
Love of Christ Frees Us from
Self-Focus*

THANKS FOR INTERVIEWING WITH US, LYDIA. YOU HAVE WRITTEN SEVERAL BOOKS FOR WOMEN. WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO WRITE FOR WOMEN AND IS THERE A GENERAL THEME OR GOAL OF YOUR BOOKS?

I've had a passion to write since I learned to read as a child, and over the years God has opened opportunities for this passion to become a reality. All those gems in God's Word—the big, bright obvious ones as well as those we have to dig deeper to uncover—nothing on earth compares to these riches, and as I learn them, I can't wait to share those discoveries with my sisters in Christ. It's almost like I can't not write. It's an incredible blessing of God's Spirit.

WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO WRITE FLOURISH AND WHO DO YOU HOPE WILL READ IT?

Flourish grew from a burden. More and more evangelical resources—podcasts, websites, and books—as well as churches have incorporated secular self-help methods and programs into teaching about Christian discipleship. It's so prevalent today that our understanding of what it means to walk with Christ has been skewed. Our walk is being shaped by worldliness, and we don't even recognize it. We've come to see Jesus as our personal life coach who oversees our personal self-improvement program; we've forgotten that the call to faith is a call to die, not to improve. If we believe that Jesus died on the cross to give us a better self-image and success in all we do, our faith is likely to get shaken when life goes wrong, and we might even be tempted to walk away from the Lord altogether. With Flourish, I hope to equip readers to discern good teaching from bad and truth from error, because the better we know God in Scripture, the better prepared we are to recognize and steer clear of those faith-crushing misconceptions.

ONE OF THE THINGS YOU DO IN FLOURISH IS CALL OUT SOME WAYS IN WHICH PEOPLE HAVE MISUSED THE BIBLE. WHAT ARE SOME KEY THINGS WE CAN DO TO SPOT MISUSES AND ENSURE WE DON'T DO THE SAME?

The number-one way to spot misuses of the Bible and avoid misusing it ourselves is to know it! We need to marinate in Scripture. I begin each new year reading Psalm 119, an acrostic psalm about treasuring God's Word and ways. The psalmist has a passion for faithful discipleship, and notice how he approaches it:

How can a young man keep his way pure?

By guarding it according to your word.

With my whole heart I seek you;

let me not wander from your commandments!

I have stored up your word in my heart,

that I might not sin against you. (vv. 9–11)

He guards himself by (1) pursuing God with all his heart; (2) praying for faithfulness and spiritual purity; and (3) storing up God's Word in his heart. I prayerfully read through this psalm every New Year's Day because I want to live like the psalmist as I make my way through the year. We can't recognize God's ways or pursue them if we don't know them, and the only way to know them is to immerse ourselves in Scripture. We don't need something new or novel. The answer is the same as it's always been—regular intake of God's Word.

WAS THERE A CHAPTER OR TWO THAT YOU FOUND PARTICULARLY HELPED YOU TO FLOURISH IN YOUR WALK WITH CHRIST?

The topics in Flourish are primarily about our tendency to love ourselves at the expense of others, to use God rather

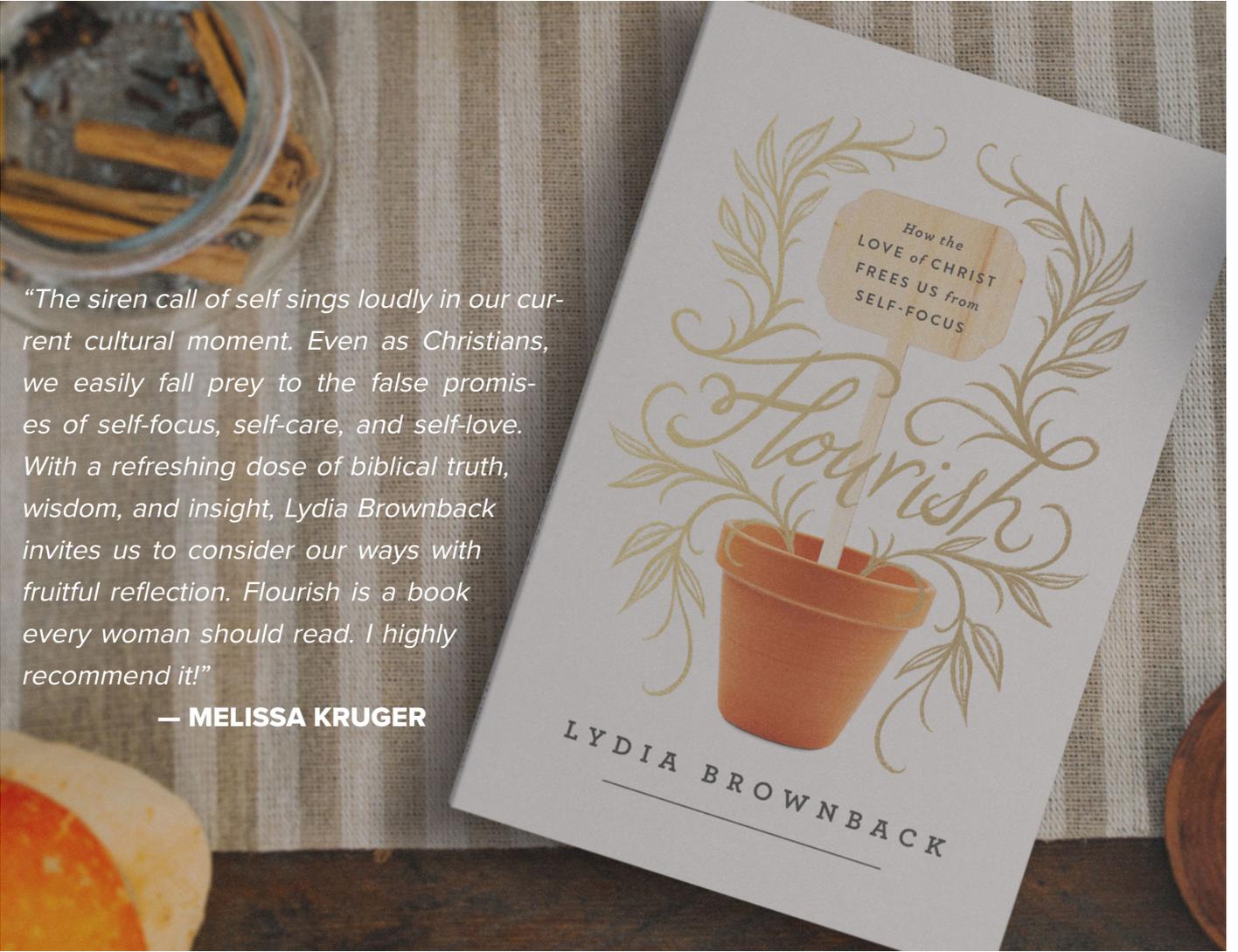


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than serve him, and to pursue pleasure rather than holiness. I wrote the book not because I've figured it all out but because I share in the struggle. We women are all in this together. I think I've been most impacted by the chapter "Free from Self-Indulgence." Like many women, I battle what sometimes feels like an irresistible pull to excess—to worship the idol of comfort. We all crave comfort, don't we? And sometimes our demand for it is destructive to our discipleship, our relationships, and, paradoxically, our very own self. But life in Christ frees us. In Christ we are no longer compelled to bow down to the comfort god. Instead, as Scripture shows us, we can enjoy God's creation gifts and point to his goodness as we do.

FINALLY, CAN YOU SHARE A TIP FOR READING THAT HELPS YOU GET THE MOST OUT OF THE BOOKS YOU READ?

I guess it depends on what type of book I am reading. As I look over at the stack of Christian books beside my favorite chair, I notice that every single one is dog-eared, underlined, and highlighted, and I've written numerous comments in the margins. So, I read this type of book interactively. Opening up each one is like sitting down with a friend or an acquaintance for a lively conversation.



"The siren call of self sings loudly in our current cultural moment. Even as Christians, we easily fall prey to the false promises of self-focus, self-care, and self-love. With a refreshing dose of biblical truth, wisdom, and insight, Lydia Brownback invites us to consider our ways with fruitful reflection. Flourish is a book every woman should read. I highly recommend it!"

— MELISSA KRUGER