

Unsqueezed

Springing Free from Skinny Jeans, Nose Jobs, Highlights and Stilettos | By Margot Starbuck | Reviewed by Megan Greulich

I will be honest about this. Margot Starbuck's *Unsqueezed: Springing Free from Skinny Jeans, Nose Jobs, Highlights and Stilettos* (InterVarsity Press, 2010) is not a book I would typically pick up, let alone excitedly read. With its giant, bright red, high heeled shoe on the cover, and a different pair of shoes gracing the first page of each chapter, I worried that it would be a "fluffy" message about how all women are beautiful—a Christian "chick lit" book that would provide milk when I was longing for meat, to use the metaphor of Hebrews 5. But I will happily (and humbly) admit that I was very wrong.

Starbuck writes conversationally, refreshingly and humorously relaying stories of her own insecurities, inner dialogue, and interactions with her family and friends. She utilizes lots of examples from pop culture. She is very funny. And yet, somehow, she accomplishes all of this with a profound sensitivity to those from cultures other than her own and to those who are marginalized—she does not shy away from issues of gender, ethnicity, poverty, and disability, both in secular and Christian cultures. She wrestles honestly with how to reflect the radical and transformative gospel of Christ in mind, spirit, body, and community. She asks good questions, and she tells the truth.

Starbuck delves into topics from marketing, makeup, and polka dots, to others-centeredness, self-acceptance, and gluttony. She explores what it means to be made in the image of God, and how we can show others, through what we do with our bodies, that we belong to Christ. She also has an uncanny way of highlighting the hypocrisy and illogic deep within many of us. Take for instance:

The strange tragedy that the majority of the world wonders how they will get their next meal, while many Americans spend much of their time, energy, and money in an effort to not overeat.

The fact that most US women are more concerned with how their bodies appear, rather than with what they can do.

The truth that God made our bodies to be instrumental, rather than purely ornamental, and that we are made to use our bodies to be in relationship—serving and loving those around us.

Each of *Unsqueezed*'s twenty-seven chapters boasts a catchy subtitle like "How Women Agree with our Thingification," "The Life-Changing Day I Actually *Needed* a Milkshake," and "From Doritos to Discipleship." They are short—several chapters take less than five minutes to read—

and would work well for devotions. In fact, I recommend only reading a chapter at a time; each vignette provides a nugget that could, at least for someone like me, be something to really ponder for a while. That, along with the thoughtful discussion questions provided at the end of the book, make *Unsqueezed* an excellent selection for small groups. For women who are ready to move from discussion into action, Starbuck also highlights practical steps and resources for putting these principles into use.

The great benefit to Starbuck's book is in its ability to pose deep questions in a friendly way, thereby encouraging Christian women of many ages, cultures, and points of view to dialogue. In a culture that bombards women with destructive ideas about their worth and identity, and in a church that has not adequately addressed its deep devaluing of females, *Unsqueezed* is a refreshing challenge that I highly recommend we take up.

MEGAN GREULICH holds a degree in psychology from Bethel University. She is the editor of *Mutuality* magazine and the membership coordinator for CBE. Megan lives in Saint Paul, Minnesota, where she spends her time decorating cakes and helping with the youth group at Lighthouse Christian Church.

Originally published in [Mutuality, Volume 18, Number 1 Spring 2011, p. 18.](#)

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