

# Review: The Gravity of Joy

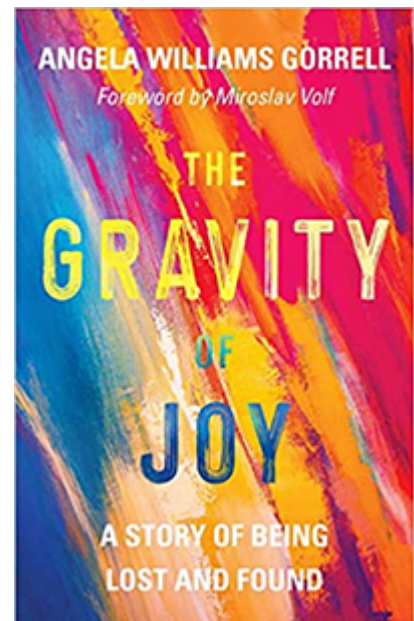
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## *The Gravity of Joy: A Story of Being Lost and Found*

**By Angela Williams Gorrell (Eerdmans)**

How would you respond to the death of three family members over the course of a few weeks? Angela Gorrell, assistant professor of practical theology at Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary, describes vividly her own experience losing a family member to suicide, her father to opioid addiction, and her young nephew to sudden cardiac arrest—all in the span of a few weeks.

Ironically, Gorrell endured these family tragedies just as she began studying joy and teaching about a life worth living at Yale University. When she was supposed to be at the top of the mountain, she found herself in the depths of hell. While leading a regular Bible study group for women in prison, Gorrell discovered joy, but not without more pain. As she ministered to and with incarcerated women, she learned of lives loaded with suffering.



Gorrell's telling of her sorrow—and others'—is true to life. The telling, as with lived suffering, takes longer than any of us think we can bear up under

the pain, leaving the reader tempted to quit reading too soon. Indeed, the stories Gorrell shares testify of trauma and despair and ought to be approached carefully. She devotes a considerable amount of the book to descriptions of drug addiction and despair leading to suicide.

The reader who endures will find Gorrell's source of joy in what she calls God's "withness and witness," which she found coexisting with sorrow. The book culminates in the final chapter with Gorrell's full description of joy, as well as its cultivation and sharing.

*The Gravity of Joy*, expected in March 2021, is a quick and captivating read with the flavor of a personal journal, not a theological treatise. Throughout Gorrell's personal narrative are sprinkled thought-provoking theological, psychological, social, biblical and spiritual reflections.

*Eric Black, executive director, publisher, editor*  
*Baptist Standard*