

## **Transcript for the podcast “Worthy: Celebrating the Value of Women.”**

**Hosts:** Elyse Fitzpatrick and Eric Schumacher

**Episode 1 — Guest:** Elyse Fitzpatrick

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**Elyse Fitzpatrick 00:00**

Welcome to Worthy, a Christian podcast that celebrates the value of women. Each week, we'll bring you conversations with women and men on the value of women in the church, home, and society. We won't always agree on everything, but we do agree that God is glorious, the Bible is true, women are valuable, and respectful conversation on this topic is essential in our day. I am Elyse Fitzpatrick, and this is my co-host,

**Eric Schumacher 01:03**

Eric Schumacher. And we want to welcome you to the inaugural episode of The Worthy Podcast. Elyse, we have... we have a podcast now.

**Elyse Fitzpatrick 01:12**

I know! It's kind of amazing, but yes, we do.

**Eric Schumacher 01:17**

It is kind of amazing. So, and this podcast is inspired by another project that we worked together on, want to tell our listeners about that?

**Elyse Fitzpatrick 01:27**

Sure, Eric and I have co-authored, co-labored to produce a book entitled Worthy: Celebrating the Value of Women.

**Eric Schumacher 01:37**

Worthy, is a book that walks through redemptive history, looking at how women have played an important role in God's plan of salvation from Genesis through Revelation, and what we can learn about that, and how that should affect our lives and interactions with women, and our thinking about women and in the world in the church today. And so, we thought that it would be a good idea, well, maybe not a good idea, but a fun idea, to invite some friends to come on to a podcast, and to talk about the value of women in God's world. And so, this podcast isn't going to be a commercial for the book. So, I think our listeners don't have to worry about us pressing them to go buy copies every week- we trust they will buy all the copies the first week- and we'll hang out for 30, 40 minutes each week, and hopefully bring you a helpful conversation.

**Elyse Fitzpatrick 02:33**

It's really our hope that in these days, where there seems to be lots and lots of heat about the topic of women- their value, and even their roles- to bring some light. And that's what we really want to do. We're really hoping to expand the conversation if we can; to learn to welcome people who maybe have a different perspective than we do; to enlighten ourselves and those who are going to listen to us. That's really our goal. And to do it respectfully, because Eric, as you know, there's not a lot of respectful

dialogue that goes on around this topic. So that's what we're really hoping we're going to accomplish here. And we want very much to push forward a dialogue with our brothers and sisters in Christ about the value of women. And you know, not just talking about roles, we will be talking about roles, but the value of women, to the Lord and to the church.

**Eric Schumacher** 03:50

I'm really looking forward to these conversations. And I'm really looking forward to the conversation with our first guest, that I get the privilege of interviewing, who is a sister in Christ, an author of at least two dozen books, a wife, a mother, a grandmother, a popular speaker at Christian women's events, and a passionate fan of the New Zealand All Blacks rugby team.

**Elyse Fitzpatrick** 04:16

Yay.

**Eric Schumacher** 04:17

Do you have any guesses as to who that is? It's our very own Elyse Fitzpatrick. So, Elyse, welcome to your own podcast.

**Elyse Fitzpatrick** 04:26

Well, thank you, Eric. Welcome. Thank you for welcoming me to your podcast.

**Eric Schumacher** 04:32

I hope you feel welcome. All right. I want to start by having you just share with us your journey in understanding women and their value. And their place in the home, the church, and the larger world. What and who and how has influenced you over the course of your life, and how has that changed and grown over time?

**Elyse Fitzpatrick** 04:55

Yeah, thanks. I didn't get saved until 1971. And when I was saved, and that was right before my 21st birthday, so yeah, I'm older than dirt. The church that I was saved into was a charismatic church that ordained women. And they weren't ordaining women because they were acquiescing to feminism. They were part of that Pentecostal type of ecclesiology that ordained women and didn't think there was a problem with it. So that's, I would say, maybe the first 15 or 20 years of my Christianity, the roles of women, I never saw that there was a problem with a woman speaking in front of men or even female pastors. That wasn't something that I really wrestled with at all. It was really a non-issue for me, although I will say that I could see in the churches that I was part of that men did even then seem to hold the power, seemed to have more powerful roles, even though there were women in leadership roles. I don't think I began to really think about this topic until I read *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, known as the "big blue Bible" on this topic, and I began to be convinced, of complementarian view of women. And I began to really embrace that. I believed that what was in- and still in many ways still do believe- that what was in the that book, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, I was glad that that they were drawing lines, helping me to think more clearly about women and their roles in the church and society. Of course, I was no longer in the church where I got saved. And I was by this time, I think I was in a PCA church and roles were very strongly held there:

male roles, female roles, and gender roles. So, I began then to be very, very interested in it. 2003, I wrote a book called *Helper by Design*. And that book was a book for women in marriage, and is highly complementarian. There is a lot of stuff in that book that really reflects my thinking at that time. And then I would say, I want to say, seven or eight years ago, I began to question whether or not... what I had embraced, as far as a completely full-on complementarian view, I began to question. What I was seeing was happening with women, to women, across the board in the church, I became aware of the fact that women were not being treated the same way as men were, as far as what they were being paid to speak, at large conferences, what they were being paid in the publishing world. I began to see that, and then I also began to see that there were women who had significant gifts but weren't able to use them. So, this discussion has really come to me. And the book that Eric and I wrote has really come out of my, first of all, starting out, as, you know, not even understanding the word complementarian, (I don't even think it had been coined yet), or seeing any difference between gender roles, to becoming strictly complementarian. And now to begin to question, not completely question everything, but to begin to say, "Hey, is there is there a way we can open the door to have more dialogue about how this actually needs to be playing out, in the home and in the church?"

**Eric Schumacher** 09:47

That's good. It's really an interesting journey to go on. Several, several waves in there. So, as you think about the podcast, and the book, maybe even in light of your own journey and understanding, what do you hope that we can accomplish through the book *Worthy*, and through the podcast?

**Elyse Fitzpatrick** 10:15

Yeah, I'm, um, I'm hoping, first of all, that we can start respectful conversations. And that's not an easy thing to do in this very highly charged, milieu in which we're presently functioning. You know, both you and I know, Eric, that if we tweet, or post anything at all, about the value of women, it automatically turns into a war on social media. And, you know, this is a highly charged atmosphere. So, I'm hoping that what we're going to do is demonstrate that we can have respectful conversations, give and take, where we may have someone on the podcast, who agrees, maybe with 50%, of what we believe, but also has other perspectives- on both sides, you know, either more conservative or more liberal. And we can demonstrate that it's possible to have respectful conversations about this topic, which is not, it's not going to be an easy thing to accomplish, in the times in which we live. And then also, to help women and men see the importance and value that women have; that we're not just of course addressing the current problems with the #churchtoo movement and abuse and problems in the church, but also, to really begin to address the squandering of gifts that God has given to the church. You know, half, in some churches, half of the gifts that the Lord Jesus has gifted to his body, are not being used, they're not allowed to be used. And so, I would like to push against that a little bit, respectfully push against it. And, to push against the disrespecting, the discounting, of human beings who are made in the image of God, and clothed with Christ. To begin to push against that and say, "Look, can we please begin to see ways in which women can be respected and valued and used," if you will, "in the ways that God has ordained for them to be used?" And then, of course, to remember that in the eschaton, you know, in the world to come, women will rule over the angels and nations with the men, we will rule together. And to begin to ask the question of, "does that mean anything for us today?" And how, then, should we be thinking about women? And so, you know, I am just hoping, I know that there are a number of women who have already read the manuscript of the book, and have told me personally that they cried, they

wept when they read it- to see the ways in which women were used in Scripture, in redemption's history, and are being discounted now. And my own son who is ordained in the PCA, you know, he read the manuscript, and he said, "Mom, I had no idea." I mean, he's got a degree from a seminary. And he'd never heard any of these things. You know, which brings me to just the topic of "are the men in seminaries who are going to be leading our churches, are they hearing a woman's- and valuing a woman's- voice at all?" So, you know, that's, I'm hoping that we can open that conversation. And again, I've said the word respectful a lot. I want to say again, I want to be very respectful in this, knowing that when people come to differing positions that I'm going to assume that they're doing so because they love the Word, because they value God's perspective, and because they're trying to do what they believe is right, so then to have these conversations in a respectful way,

**Eric Schumacher** 15:28

but it's so good. I just echo everything that you said. And just that emphasis on respectful conversation. And observing that, particularly in the social media world, the smallest comment can turn into a war. Why do you think that is? I mean, I see that on both sides where, a way complementarians can be characterized by egalitarians is unfair, and uncharitable; and the way complementarians- and I know this firsthand being a complementarian- the way egalitarians can be spoken about is often very uncharitable. And it doesn't promote dialogue and understanding. And it's tearing down the image of Christ, the image of God, and a fellow human being. Why is this subject such a flashpoint?

**Elyse Fitzpatrick** 16:28

I think it has to do with the culture wars. I think it has to do with a fear. I'll speak on behalf of the conservatives, the complementarians, let's say, that there is a fear that if we give in in any way to this issue, or to thinking about this issue, in a more broad way, that we're then on a slippery slope that will lead automatically to the ordination of homosexuals in your local SBC church. I think that there is a fear there. I think that it's also- and I don't want to mean this uncharitably. But I think that there's a laziness. It's just so much easier for me to say, "if a woman is an Anglican priest, then that must automatically mean that she doesn't value Scripture. And she's probably a lesbian." It's just so easy to broad-brush people who have a different view than I do. And instead of taking time to hear people, to hear their stories, to understand their perspectives, to see the ways in which women have really wrestled with Scripture, and yet, without discounting Scripture, come out in a different place, to believe that that's a possibility. I think that that's just anathema among a lot of my conservative friends. And then of course, on the side of the egalitarians, you know, it would be, you get beat up so many times, it's very easy just to strike back. And so, what I'm hoping we can do, is to say, I'm going to believe, when I talk to you, that you have come to the perspectives that you have, by prayer and study. And I'm going to hope to not just knee-jerk response to people who view things differently than I do.

**Eric Schumacher** 19:16

That is so good. And I can think of times in my life, whether in seminary, or as a pastor, where I have sinned, by painting my neighbor with those broad-brush strokes, and used issues such as the topic of gender and so forth as a litmus test of someone's orthodoxy, and even written them out of the Kingdom, when I actually don't know what they believe about the Gospel. So, I've turned my doctrine of complementarianism into the gospel itself, into the narrow gate through which you enter the Kingdom. And that's wrong. And that's something I'm trying to repent of, while, at the same time, holding firm to

my convictions on what the Bible teaches. I think what you said too, about listening to people's stories, even as you shared your story, is so important. One of the elders of my church used to say, in our elder meetings, that experience is normative. And what he meant was the things we've seen and gone through, in our minds, they become the norm. It's how we interpret all of reality. And so, you know, if you grew up in a small town where all the egalitarians are liberals who've thrown the Bible out the window, and that's all you know, that's how you're going to interpret everyone in that camp. At the same time, if all the complementarians you've ever seen in your heavily fundamentalist independent Baptist Church, have silenced women, overlooked abuse, and been fine with making jokes that are demeaning, that's how you're going to think all complementarians are. I want to be gracious with those experiences, and understand why people are hesitant to talk to the other side, and encourage them to be gracious as well. With that goal of respectful conversations, what do you think the biggest obstacle is, to seeing that happen?

**Elyse Fitzpatrick 21:35**

Yeah, you know, just those things that we've said. Maybe placing, as you said, placing too high a value on our view of gender roles in the church. In other words, you know, turning, as you said, complementarianism into the gospel. So, you know, there is going to be that obstacle, you know, the knee jerk reactions, or the slippery slope, the slippery slope argument. And I heard someone once ask the question, "well, what if the truth is on a slope?" You know, so, we can't, you know... to not use those old ways of thinking, and to begin to say, all right, you know, we want to learn, just to try not to knee jerk react, and of course, you know, what's the obstacle to peace in the Kingdom? Well, it's always sin and pride. So, you know, my own pride in the way I think things ought to be. And, you know, my, if you will, envy or greed or ambition, or any of the sins that all of us struggle with, those things will stop us from having respectful conversations as well. So may God grant us humility, and a desire for truth. And a willingness to say, "Hey, I'm wrong on this," or "I've been wrong," or "the way that I broad-brushed this brother, who said these things, that was wrong." To be willing to be humble. And you know, God knows how to get you there to

**Eric Schumacher 23:37**

Yeah. That's such an important thing. You know, as you think about, you know, what James says about why quarrels and fights start amongst us? It's because we're coveting something. There's something we want. And someone who disagrees with us might prevent us from having that, even if what we want is being right. And it's been so helpful for me to remember that my theology is not perfect. It's never been perfect. And it never will be perfect until I see Christ face to face.

**Elyse Fitzpatrick 24:14**

Right.

**Eric Schumacher 24:15**

And I am saved, by God's grace through faith, in Christ, who lived on my behalf. He had perfect theology on my behalf, where I failed, and He died on the cross under the wrath of God, for all the false and wrong things I've believed and taught. And He was raised from the dead, perfect and incorruptible, so that I could be seen through the lens of His righteousness, clothed with that, and be resurrected with not just a perfect body, but a perfect mind and a perfect theology. And so, I want to enter into these

conversations going humbly, knowing I'm not saved by being the perfect theologian, I'm saved by Christ. I want to believe what's true. But my standing with God isn't threatened by finding out I've been wrong on something. That would actually be a gift of His grace.

**Elyse Fitzpatrick 25:25**

Yeah, that's so good. You know, in James 3, verse 17, says, "the wisdom from above," (that's what we're really looking for, wisdom from above,) "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." So, you know, may God enable us to pursue wisdom that is pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason. I mean, think about that, being open to reason, full of mercy, and good fruits, impartial and sincere. I think that's where I, you know, if I could say, Lord, hear us, help us, please help us please, to be that, to do that.

**Eric Schumacher 26:26**

Well, I pray by His grace, that He, that He does do that. And we trust that He will. He's a good and gracious God. And I loved what that verse said about the harvest of righteousness. That's what we want, in the end, is God's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

**Elyse Fitzpatrick 26:46**

Amen to that.

**Eric Schumacher 26:48**

So why is this discussion so important? And what about our day, the time we're living in, that makes it especially important right now?

**Elyse Fitzpatrick 26:59**

Well, you know, again, this conversation is important because the church is in a war, the church is always in a war, but probably, you know, it seems like it's really heating up, and we can't afford to squander gifts. But also, we're living at a time where the lack of women in, let's say, some sort of leadership roles in churches, has been so damaging to the reputation of the church, particularly in as regards the hundreds and hundreds of women who have been misused and abused and molested in church contexts, and then denigrated and discarded. We need to stand up, we need to say, "hey, okay, this picture you're seeing of the church that denigrates and, and discounts women and thinks it's okay? Well, you know, it's not really okay." But it might, "it's not so bad for a woman to have been sexually assaulted." We want to stand up and say, "That's not the church. That's not Christ's bride." Jesus Christ kept and loved women, all the time, around him, women who were accused, women who were denigrated, He elevated and blessed and respected. And so that's how Jesus Christ would treat women and the church is His bride. And that's how He would treat her. So what we want to do is we want to say, hey, it's really time for us to begin a conversation that will say, "How can we change the reputation that the church has gotten?" Not a reputation of, you know, preaching the gospel, but a reputation of denigrating women? How can we change that? That's what we want to do.

**Eric Schumacher 29:31**

Good. That's good. So you mentioned Jesus and how He treated women. Who are some of your favorite women in Scripture?

**Elyse Fitzpatrick** 29:43

Yeah, well, you know, of course, Mary, you know, our Lord's mother. You know, of course. I mean, how can we... and Eve, who, at the time in her life when everything was broken and shattered, spoke words of faith. And Mary, a little girl, 13-year-old, 14-year-old girl, with enough faith to say "be it unto me according to Your Word." And, yeah, I mean, it's shocking. And, you know, I was just thinking about learning about Anna, a woman who prophesied in the temple, about the Savior, who she got to see., And, you know, by the way, this is a woman who is a widow. So she's a single woman, and has been for decades, who has given herself to prayers and fasting, and she gets to see the Savior and she prophesies in the temple. So, you know, again, I have had the opportunity in writing the book with you, Eric, to begin to see all these women who have been integral to redemption's story, and in ways we would never expect. So you know, Tamar, who always gets a bad rap. But who had faith, to try to do what was right. Even though what it meant, was having to have relations with a man who was not treating her respectfully, and who would have burned her and her unborn children alive. So you know, there are so many women in Scripture, who have really been denigrated, discounted. I mean, I finally, just recently- which is why I'm thinking about Anna- I have heard my first sermon on Anna, that I've ever heard. And I mean, I've been a Christian since 1971. So why is that? So you know, those women, there are hundreds and hundreds of women in Scripture- named women in Scripture- who God used in miraculous, powerful, surprising ways.

**Eric Schumacher** 32:53

I loved your section on Tamar in the book, that was really encouraging and helpful to me. What about women in our day, any favorite women, authors, artists, leaders?

**Elyse Fitzpatrick** 33:09

Well, of course, you know, Flannery O'Connor and Dorothy Sayers, I mean, those are the women. You know, if you're ever gonna hear a woman quoted in a sermon, those are the two you may hear, and I love what they have said. But you know, Nancy Guthrie, and Jen Wilkin. I mean, these are women who are standing strong for women today, for women being exegetes, good exegetes, you know, I'm so, so proud of them. Beth Moore. I mean, this is a woman that has taken so much heat and, who is trying, (I'm going to I'm going to do for her what I want people to do for me, which is believe that I'm seeking to be honest, and truthful, and to do business with the Lord.) And, you know, so for Beth, is it possible for there to be respect for women, that perhaps they're not in my lane? You know, I made a decision four or five years ago, and my decision was, I wasn't going to criticize any woman who was a believer for viewing things differently than me. I'm not going to criticize her publicly. Just not going to do it anymore. Because you know, we get enough of that I don't need to pile on.

**Eric Schumacher** 34:49

There is a lot of that out there. It's been sad and a little bit mind boggling to watch the intensity that some of these women can be treated with suspicion, outright accusations, lies, over sometimes slight differences in application by people who will stand on a stage and share a conference with male pastors who differ on big matters of practice and doctrine.

**Elyse Fitzpatrick 35:33**

Right?

**Eric Schumacher 35:33**

And it boggles my mind why that is so. And maybe that's something we'll get into on another episode. Who would you say, maybe this could be our final question, What woman has been most influential in your life?

**Elyse Fitzpatrick 35:52**

You know, I'm going to say my daughter, Jessica. I have a wonderful mother. And I had a really great mother in law, who was very, very influential in my life, wonderful, godly Christian women. But my daughter, Jessica, has been such an example to me of God's grace and goodness. And so frequently, she will remind me of things of the Lord, that blows my mind. So I don't know maybe I'm just being the proud mama or something. But I'm so proud of Jessica. And my daughters in law, Ruth and Michelle. I'm surrounded by godly strong women, I have godly strong female friends, who have encouraged and strengthened me. But you know, I'm gonna say Jessica has really been the person that's been such a wonderful influence in my life, particularly over the last three decades.

**Eric Schumacher 36:59**

That's really encouraging to hear. That is really encouraging to hear. I really like Jessica, and I just read her book, How to Help Your Anxious Teen. And she's a good writer, and full of wisdom, biblical wisdom and humility, and knows the Gospel. And explains it really, really well. So I would encourage people to check out Jessica's work. I think the first book I read of yours may have been your book, Give Them Grace, written with Jessica. And very, very helpful to me at the time, in several ways. So anything else you'd like to add before we close our first episode of this?

**Elyse Fitzpatrick 37:46**

No, you know, I think I think we're good. Again, just to remember, what we want to do is, try to get that wisdom from above. And, if the Lord helps us do that, then we will have accomplished what we wanted. Amen. Well, to our listeners, we hope that you enjoyed this episode. And I suppose we're supposed to say something about encouraging you to share it and like it and send it to your friends and all that jazz. But we really hope that you will go out into the world today, after hearing this and that you will look to see the glory of God as it's displayed in the value of women around you. Thanks for joining us.