

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

Hosts: Elyse Fitzpatrick and Eric Schumacher

Episode 21 — Guest: Todd Bordow

Date Aired: June 22, 2020

Elyse Fitzpatrick 0:06

Welcome to worthy, a Christian podcast that celebrates the value of women. Each week, we'll bring you conversations with women and men, and 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. And women are valuable, and respectful conversation on this topic is essential in our day.

Hi, friends, welcome back to the worthy podcast. Eric and I are here today and we're really excited to welcome Reverend Todd Bordow. As our guest today, Todd is married to Cheryl and he is a pastor at Christ Cornerstone OPC in Houston, Texas. Todd received his MD from Westminster Seminary in 1996, and his DMIN from reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando. In 1998, he was ordained as a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and he has five children. So welcome to the podcast, Todd.

Todd Bordow 1:56

Thank you. It's great to be here.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 1:58

We're really happy to have you on I've been listening to you now for a number of months, I guess I should say. And before we talk about your podcast and what you've been talking about that on the podcast, why don't you tell us a little bit about your faith journey, and how you ended up pastoring in the OPC church in Houston.

Todd Bordow 2:24

Let me start by saying the name of our church is Cornerstone OPC not Christ Cornerstone, just in case anyone looks it up. But thank you. Everything else? Good. Well, I was raised in a Jewish Home, there really was no Gentile blood in my background or family. And so I went to synagogue. And by the time I was a teenager, I was very idealistic and didn't really like religion at all. So definitely drifted away from that. And I was a teenager in the 70s partying and like, all my other friends, and when I was a senior in high school, my best friend who I partied with all the time, his parents had headed up a ministry,

Campus Crusade for Christ, which has gone through a number of different names, but they invited me and my friend to a week long youth camp. So it was spring break in 1980. And I got on the bus. And for the first time I met Christians, I'd never known a Christian before. And I was really impressed with their joy, and their seeming care for me, which was very unusual. I don't remember young people being happy like that, that was really odd. You're not supposed to be happy as a teenager. And so it did pique my interest enough to start reading the Bible. Find out what they believed. And then a couple months later, there was another camp in Estes Park, Colorado, this was the national Campus Crusade meeting. So I went to that. And interestingly enough, the the song leader for that week was a young woman named Amy Grant. I think she was 16 or 17, just starting out. And so at the end of that camp fee, the teacher had been teaching on the last week of Christ life. And then when he explained the cross really clearly, why Jesus was dying on the cross. It was a very dramatic conversion for me, trusting in Christ for salvation, and beginning of a very long and somewhat difficult journey, obviously having to tell my parents and having to move out. And so, before long, I was involved in the youth group of a Bible, very large Bible Church in Phoenix, Arizona. And as I was leading in the youth group, I was only about a year old as a Christian. When I had a chance to teach people would come up to me, adults who were there and say, you need to go into ministry, you're a teacher, but just blew my socks off because I'd never gotten up in front of anyone before. I was extremely shy and quiet as a child. So but enough people said it that I finished, I was going to be a tennis instructor because I was a tennis player and I finished my phys ed degree at a local community college. Then I got a Bachelor's at a Bible college and cross cultural communications, and became a youth pastor in the Baptist world in California. But after doing that, for a while, ended up really desiring to go to seminary ended up at Westminster, and back then we called it Westminster West, in Escondido. And so, that journey led me after graduation to planning churches, for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. So I planted a church in Washington State and Fort Worth, and in Rio Rancho, New Mexico. And then I lost my voice, I had vocal cord surgery, and I couldn't preach for a while. And then when my voice started healing, I had left the ministry because of that, but I could speak again, this church here in Houston, happened to need a pastor, they called me to be the pastor. That's a whole lifetime in about seven minutes.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 6:25

That's really great. You know, I, I'm going to ask you a little question off script, which is, I grew up in a home that my mom was a non practicing Catholic, but my father was Jewish, and they divorced fairly early on, but when I came to Christ, that was the end of that relationship for a while. But then about 10 years before he died, my relationship with him was restored, which was nice. And I'm just wondering, how is your relationship with your family?

Todd Bordow 7:05

Something similar happened for a while, obviously, we weren't talking and it was tense. But and and you know, you go through that cage stage new Christian, where you overdo things. That as I grew in Christ,

and especially as I met my wife, they really liked my wife, even though she was a Gentile. And so, you know, we started going back over there. And as long as we didn't bring up religion, or politics, by the way, Jews are very strong opinions opinionated, as you probably know, we started to mend fences, and then build in a stronger relationship. And, you know, we tried to honor them, and be careful what we spoke about in front of them, but my dad has passed away. But still, my mom and I have a good relationship. We talk a lot. So it took some time, but it sort of happened the way you explained it with you.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 8:02

Thanks. So, Todd, I first became aware of you and your ministry a few months ago, by listening to the Glory Cloud Podcast, where you were taking significant time to discuss the problems inherent in patriarchy, and then also abuse you were talking about it in the church. So if you were introducing people to patriarchy, how would you define it?

Todd Bordow 8:41

Well, it's difficult to define because it's hard to find any to the people who identify themselves as patriarch is agreeing on everything.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 8:52

So that means something. That means something.

Todd Bordow 8:59

Yeah. And so you could look at sort of those who make their living or made their living, promoting patriarchy like Bill Gothard, Doug Phillips and Vision Forum, these were patriotic organizations, that patriotic patriarchy organizations that so you can look at the tenets of what they believed. And then we see the same type of things in some other groups like that. Doug Wilson in Moscow. So, you know, some of the general things they believe is, that man is the prophet, priest and king of the home and the husband is to rule the wife and definitely, birth control was considered a sin. The purpose of the woman, the Christian woman was to say to her husband have as many babies as possible and definitely not send them to public school. So, you know, the father's authority and some of the family integration movement, that's patriarchal. They're not comfortable with Sunday school because the Father has to give authority to teach to somebody else. And so there's a list of beliefs of the patriarchal movement. But like I said, if you lay out the list, then there's always someone that's going to say, Well, I only believe in four of those, not seven of those. And so but I started with looking at the literature of people in my

men in my church who were abusing their wives, and the wives were at the end of their rope. They were on constant, either fear, or in tears. And then I looked at the literature, what these men were reading. And sure enough, it was from these groups. There is sort of a common denominator of all these situations I dealt with. That's when I started to study the patriarchal movement.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 11:08

It's not coincidental, is it, that Bill Gothard, and Doug Phillips, have had significant falls. Because of the way that they treated women, talked about women, do you think those two things go together?

Todd Bordow 11:40

It's a kind of thing where you're obviously not required to be an abuser, by what you believe about men and women. But the more you center, your Christianity or your religion on male authority, if that's sort of what drives you, and what's really important, and females submission, you're going to draw the wrong kinds of people. And that's what I began to see that the type of people that were drawn to this and, you know, Bill Gothard, has people all over the world who are suffering from what he's taught and done. So yes, you do invite abuse, abuse, but it's certainly not required that you abused your wife because you believe that you could have a wrong theology, but a very good heart.

Eric Schumacher 12:34

We talk often on the podcast, we'll use the terms complementarian and inegalitarian. How would patriarchy differ from complementarianism? Or does it?

Todd Bordow 12:47

Well, the problem is those terms are sort of flux right now. As I mentioned, on Glory Cloud, that when I entered the ministry 27 years ago, as a full time pastor complementarianism meant, do you believe in male ordination only? And people used to ask me years ago, are you a complementarian, or an egalitarian that's and I'm a complementarian, I believe in male ordination only. And I still do. But now, with all these patriarchal teachings that are sort of becoming more prominent in the church, complementarian is sort of getting a new image, a new look how it's defined. So now you have these different branches of complementarian. hard or soft, thick or thin, however you want to say. So it's become somewhat confusing. because no two people now have the same definition of what you mean. It's almost like, maybe we're beyond those terms. And we just need to stick with male ordination or not.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 13:54

So just for people who might be listening in and who really don't know you or really don't know anything about the Orthodox Presbyterian Church or what it means to be ordained there, you would say that you support qualified male only ordination. And then what about the roles of authority and submission in the home? How would you parse that?

Todd Bordow 14:30

I would say that women are told to submit to their husbands but husbands are never told to rule their wives, the husbands are told to love their wives. So this submission is a voluntary difference of doing the best they can to be a good wife. But that doesn't mean the husband becomes the master that can order them around and submission in the Bible is not the submission of the military that Greek word for submission is different ways in the Roman world. It was used in a military sense, which meant, the commander said it, you did it. But in the Bible, it's used in a much more Christ centered, or I would even say cross-centered sense. Where it's a voluntary, not living for yourself, but for the needs of another. That's why Ephesians 5:21 says, submit to one another in the church. Obviously, that's not the military, everyone else was in charge of you. It means as the rest of the New Testament teaches to give deference. And then that same concept in the next verse is applied to wives to husbands. And so there's no command that the husband has any more rule of the home than the wife as if the husband has more authority over the children. The Fifth Commandment teaches that the father and mother have equal authority in the household. And so we have to define mission both biblically and Christ-centeredly, where the way Christ humbled himself on the cross is our model. When we, it's our model of authority, it's just the opposite of the way the world looks at authority, which is ordering people around to do what we want. As long as we bring the Christian definition, and then those terms are used correctly. If we take the world's definition, then we're in trouble.

Eric Schumacher 16:40

I'm thinking about Paul's command to husbands right before that, to love your wife, the way that Christ loved the church. And that was by laying down his life for her good. It interests me that in you know how Paul describes that even in Philippians 2, he's talking about Christ becoming a slave Christians are commanded not to look out for their own interest only, but for the interests of others, Christ is presented in a way as showing deference. Setting aside what was immediately good for him, in order to do what was good for his church. And so it strikes me how similar in that sense, the commands the love and the command submit are, what, how the husband and the wife treat each other in many senses isn't all that different.

Todd Bordow 17:35

Right. And that's where we believe in mutual submission, because we believe in mutual love.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 17:41

Say that again.

Todd Bordow 17:44

He will submission. In other words, the wife has told the love that I mean, the husband is told to love the wife. That doesn't mean the wife doesn't have to love the husband.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 17:54

And I've heard that. I've heard that women are never commanded to love. Although Titus 2 makes that kind of, you know, questionable, that women are never commanded to love. They're commanded to respect and submit. I've heard that taught.

Todd Bordow 18:14

Right. And what happens is, all the other verses, patriarchy become such a dominant means to interpret the Bible, that it colors, everything else. So you have all these commands to love one another. Somehow it doesn't apply to the wife. In the same way submission, understanding biblically the husband has his own submission, he submits, he differs to her needs over his even if he takes a leadership role in doing that first. But it's still defined biblically. I wanted to add one thing when you asked about patriarchy, one of the most common and it says also that a woman cannot a married woman cannot work outside the home and have a career, which is a misunderstanding and a misinterpretation of Titus two where Paul is dealing with women who are drinking and gossiping, right? That's setting out a love where she can work.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 19:15

And I have I was actually part of a tradition that taught that not only should women not work outside the home, but they shouldn't get college educated. You know, and actually, there was a very popular blog that was out when we were in process writing the book. And the blog said, You really shouldn't go to college because, to women, because then you're going to be in debt and men don't like women who are in debt. So therefore, women should not go to college and not have a job and just focus in on learning how learning wifely skills, which is fine, but but it was a law, Todd, it was a law. And so, so if a parent decided to send their daughter or that a daughter could attend a university or a college, and you

know, there's all discussions about what school and college debt and all of that business, but basically the law was, if you were going to raise your daughter to be a godly woman, she didn't need to go to college, what she needed to do was stay home underneath her father's authority, and not, and you know, and then you've got the whole purity culture, and all of that other business that goes along with it, not date only court, people her father approved of, and then, and then what happens is, these girls get married, you know, they go through the whole purity culture, and then they get married. And because they were doing all these things, assuming that if they did all the things, right, they would have this perfect marriage, then they end up in a lot of times a train wreck of a marriage, because the husband and the wife in that marriage have been sold a bill of goods, that basically if you do all these things, right, then you're going to have this great marriage and great sex and great everything. And then they get divorced.

Todd Bordow 21:28

I've seen that a lot.

Eric Schumacher 21:34

One of the first episodes of your podcast that I listened to, Glory Cloud podcast, had to do with serial abusers. And we've already touched on how certain forms of theology can invite in abusers, they'll be attracted to that. What I was particularly interested in was you were talking about serial abusers, and the ease with which they can talk the right talk, and deceive people. And uncovering that addressing that, seeing any change, there can be very, very difficult. Could you just walk us through that?

Todd Bordow 22:23

So this was part of my dissertation for RTS on divorces, that the Bible has a very real category for hardened hearts, in the church. And these are unbelievers that they play the game and they're very religious, but they're Pharisees. And they're abusive, like the Pharisees were. And be, it's difficult for pastors to believe this sometimes. Because what one of the things we're taught is the power of counseling. And so what happens is you have an abuser who's treating his wife poorly, and doesn't love her actually hates her. And he's cruel. And this has been going on for 20 years, why he finally has the courage to say, This has to stop somebody help. So what the pastor and often the pastor does it with a good heart. He thinks he could counsel this to be a good marriage. But a hard heart will only take the counseling and use it to his advantage. And so the very fact that they're in the church and getting away with it shows that they're very sneaky. They're very smart. They know how to look repentant. They know how to say I'm sorry. And so they'll use your counselling to continue getting away with what they're doing. They'll just do it a little and they'll get the pastor on their side. Because then whatever you ask them to do, they'll say or do but if you don't understand that a hard heart produces abuse. And

you're going to overplay what you're doing, instead of realizing there may not be an ability anymore for this person to change. So the hard heart is a real category throughout the New Testament. I think sometimes we're just reticent to I mean, in one sense, we want to believe the best of people but we see hatred and cruelty for a number of years from a suppose Christian, we should really should realize that's a real category and all the counseling of the world is not going to change that matter of fact, you can put the woman in more danger by putting her back in the situation that you've sort of declared is remedied.

Eric Schumacher 24:42

I'm thinking about counseling there. And I'm wondering if in some, I know in some circles there are certain forms of counseling that are going to be prized and and things like psychiatric evaluations for mental disorders will never be considered. And the pastor will be the one doing the counseling, counseling from the Bible, which is a good thing. We as pastors want to counsel with the Bible. I'm thinking here, you know, often what you said, what you just said was, the pastor will try to counsel the marriage to be healthy. And I've seen that several times where a husband is being abusive, and the couple have sent to marriage counseling. And that's how it's described. And then you get into, well, she's probably not submissive enough or sexually available. And then also, if you're in a circle where the husband has this sort of high authority over his wife, sometimes you're in a situation where he's going to be there in the room while she's being counseled she doesn't have an opportunity to be alone. And it may just end if it is it may just be with a pastor or a couple elders. And she's always in the situation of being under the authority of men, which is a scary place to be if you're being abused by a man. So maybe you could talk us through some helpful cautions and steps that local church pastors can take when they're dealing with an abuser.

Todd Bordow 26:33

Yes, if it's very clear that there's bitterness, hatred, cruelty from one side, you have to deal with that particular person. It's not true that two people destroy a marriage, it only takes one. So there is such thing as an innocent party in a marriage. And that's the person who actually wants the marriage to work. And is actually trying, yes, they have their own problems and sins, but that's not what destroys a marriage. What destroys a marriage is cruelty, hatred, perversion, etc. So the danger in though constantly models is both sides. The psychological model, the danger is that abusers love an excuse. So if I told that, well, I'm like this, because when I was five, this happened to me. So that I don't have to take responsibility. I don't have to repent, I just have to understand or you have to understand me. So the psychological model, though, it's always worth looking into, you never want to disregard people getting diagnosed. But even a diagnosis doesn't cause you to hate somebody, hate comes from the heart. And then the biblical counseling model is damaging, it can be damaging that you get them to do certain things. You get them to say, I'm sorry, to read the Bible, more memorize scripture. And they do everything, because they want the wife to stay in the home and do things for and nothing changes in the

heart. So as long as pastors realize the danger of relying on these things, and how manipulators will manipulate the system either way, you have to sort of understand how that works.

Eric Schumacher 28:27

So, a follow up on that. Let's say that a pastor, and the elders have determined that a man is an abuser. But he's theologically sharp, and he's loved by the congregation because he knows how to play the game. How do you go about presenting a situation of church discipline, to a congregation that may be conditioned to believe him? And after all the effects that are coming out of in her make her look spiritually weak, or, you know, something might be wrong with her?

Todd Bordow 29:10

It's very tough because in my experience in the church, the abuse is rarely physical. Which makes it more difficult to,

Elyse Fitzpatrick 29:21

I'm sorry, did you say rarely physical?

Todd Bordow 29:23

Rarely physical. Rarely are we dealing with situation where a man is beating his wife. And that happens, that's, that's an easy one, in a sense. You know what to do, but when it's more emotional and psychological when it's cruelty, and the Puritans even had a term Intolerable Cruelty for why they had a reason for divorce, and it's tougher because first of all, you have to rely on the other party to explain it to you because you're not in the home. They experience it every day. They have to share a room with that person. But my experience is over time, if you see that and you don't see a repentant heart, if you continue to hold them accountable, they end up getting angry and leaving anyways. Before really, you can do much. So, again, it's on a on a church discipline situation when there's nothin obviously physical, now, I do believe psychological abuse ends up being physical, because that's what trauma does, it affects the body and the mind. But that's, that's harder to prove. So I guess the answer the question, in my experience, if you simply hold that person's feet to the fire, they'll end up hating you. Because they realize they cannot deceive you anymore and they tend to take care of itself.

Eric Schumacher 31:03

You've been listening to Todd Bordow. He is a OPC pastor out of Houston, Texas, and runs the Glory Cloud podcast, which is a podcast inspired by the theology of Meredith Klein. And we will put some links to that podcast in the show notes as I know, there's a few episodes that are particularly relevant to what Todd's just been explaining and they would be very helpful for you to go listen to. These are the kinds of discussions don't that don't often happen in the church, at least not in respectful ways. And so we're hoping here on the worthy podcast to bring you respectful conversations about the value of women in the church, the home and the world. And so if you are benefiting from this, we hope that you'll rate, review and share the podcast as well as consider going to our Patreon page to help cover the costs associated with producing this. We're going to ask Todd, a couple more questions now, in our closing. Elyse, you got a question for Todd?

Elyse Fitzpatrick 32:09

Sure. I'm wondering, have you ever seen real repentance from someone who would be serially abusive? Or is that hard heart just a bridge too far? I mean, have you actually seen it?

Todd Bordow 32:32

That's a great question. And from a serial abuser, no. I have never there's a book out there. It's a great book called *Who's Pulling Your Strings?* And she's the author has been working as a doctor with manipulators and narcissists for 30 to 40 years, she makes a comment in that book that she's never seen one truly change. And that goes back to the hardened heart. If you know the gospel and after 10, 20 years, you're still cruel to people around you. Then the gospel is very powerful, it either softens or hardens, and the more you hear it without responding, the more danger you're in of a hardened heart, as the book of Hebrews teaches. So personally, I have never seen a serial abuser repent, truly repent.

Eric Schumacher 33:30

Could you define serial abuser?

Todd Bordow 33:34

Someone who over a long period of time with intent is very cruel, and uses people around them, but claims to know the gospel and to serve God. Certainly someone outside the church wouldn't be a hardened heart. They could certainly be saved. But I'm talking about those in the church.

Eric Schumacher 33:58

Yeah. So if, this is just a follow up to at least this, this isn't my final question, I'm reserving that. But if, let's say a man was married to one woman for 20 years, he's nice to everybody else outside the church, would that constitutes serial abuse?

Elyse Fitzpatrick 34:23

You mean if he's if he's like, cruel to her for those 20 years, just it's just the one person? Yeah, just one person. Yeah. But he's doing it over and over.

Todd Bordow 34:31

Yeah. Yes. Yeah.

Eric Schumacher 34:33

Okay. Yeah.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 34:34

So here's my question. Why do women? Why are women drawn to patriarchal men? And why do they stay in those relationships do you think?

Eric Schumacher 34:52

Thank you, listeners for tuning in to the worthy podcast? You want to hear Todd's answer to this final question. Come join us on Patreon. Todd, thank you for joining us.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 35:03

Thanks so much, Todd.

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