

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

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Episode 23 — Guest: Rachel Green Miller

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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 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.

Hi there, and welcome. Thank you for joining us again on the Worthy podcast. My name is Elyse Fitzpatrick, and I'm here with my cohost, coauthor, Eric Schumacher. And Eric and I are very happy that you tuned in today, because we've got a very special guest with us today. My friend, our friend, Rachel Green Miller. And so welcome, Rachel, thank you for being with us.

Rachel Green Miller 1:37

Thank you, Elyse and Eric. It's really an honor to be on here. You know, it was fun. We had y'all on Theology Gals, recently. And it's nice to kind of return the favor.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 1:49

We're happy to have you. For those of you who don't know in our listening audience who Rachel is, let me introduce her to you. She is a researcher and popular blogger who is passionate about elevating the dignity of women. So now you know why she's on with us, improving the cultural conversation about gender relationship and defending Orthodox Christianity. And thank you for that. She's a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, which for those of you who know or don't know, they're the very, very conservative branch of the Presbyterian Church. And so she lives in Houston, Texas, with her husband, Matt, and their three sons. She blogs at rachelgreenmiller.com. And the reason we're having her on today is because she has written a book that I found encouraging, fascinating, enlightening. I could go on and on. The book is entitled "Beyond Authority and Submission: Women and Men in Marriage, Church and Society." It's a P&R publication. So thank you for that book, Rachel. It's wonderful. Take a moment now, just for people who don't know you, and give us a little bit of a snapshot of your faith journey. How did you get to where you are?

Rachel Green Miller 3:17

I grew up in a Christian home. My dad was a pastor in the SBC for many years. So I was raised in the faith. My mom was raised Presbyterian, so when my parents married, my dad was at Seminary in Fort Worth, in the late 70s when the big discussion was over Calvinism. And around that time is when he came to understand the reformed doctrine and Calvinistic doctrine, but felt called to stay in the SBC. And so we did until I was a teenager. And around that time, my dad came to a different understanding of Covenant theology and infant baptism and those issues, and so he joined, he became a pastor in the PCA. And I did too--I joined, not, I didn't--I also joined the PCA when I was a teenager, and I was in the PCA for 25 years. So I went to college at A&M. I was in Reformed University Fellowship there. Great time, some are still my best friends from that time period. My husband and I met at a PCA church or through a PCA church. Our boys have been baptized in the PCA. And about a year ago, we were driving over about 40-45 minutes to church every Sunday, and the little OPC church near us moved even closer to us and so they moved about 10 minutes down the road, and we had friends there, had a chance to meet the pastor. And it was just a really great opportunity for us to be in a church again that was close to home, where you could be more involved, do things with the church. It's really hard to be at a distance. And we've been that way off and on, depending on where we've lived. So it's quite a blessing to be in a church that's close by, and the pastor is Todd Bordow, who some people know online. He's a great guy, and he has been extremely supportive. I have really appreciated him and other leadership at the church in the way that they support and promote women and listening to women. So while you know, we're clearly not in a denomination that would ordain, and I agree that, you know, ordination should be for qualified men. It's nice to be in a church where women are respected and listened to.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 6:00

Ok, so now nickels just fell in for me. So that's wonderful. I'm glad to know that Todd Bordow is your pastor. Eric and I have both listened to him as he talked about patriarchy on The Glory-Cloud podcast. So you know, for those of you who haven't listened to that podcast, that would be a really good thing. We'll put up a link to that. And then also, you have a podcast, Theology Gals, that you cohost with Coleen Sharp, so that's something else that, you know, we want to encourage our listeners to access. So Rachel, in her book, argues that what the Bible teaches about women, men and gender is both simpler and more difficult than we're often told. Although modern discussions have focused on authority and submission--those two words authority and submission--there is much more to the biblical picture. Examining common beliefs in the light of Scripture, she draws out important themes that will strengthen our relationship as co-laborers in the kingdom of God and for the good of this world. That's a synopsis of her book. So let me now ask you, Rachel, you wrote that you've written this book, because you've become increasingly aware of what's being taught in conservative circles about the nature of women and men and what's considered appropriate in marriage, the church and society. It's troubling, you say, and much of it isn't biblical. So do you want to respond to that? Can you be more specific about what is not biblical about what's being taught?

Rachel Green Miller 7:56

Simple question with a lot of answer.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 7:58

Yeah.

Rachel Green Miller 8:01

The reason I wrote the book the way that I did, the reason it's called "Beyond Authority and Submission"--

Elyse Fitzpatrick 8:07

Which is a great title.

Rachel Green Miller 8:09

Well, thank you. It's because so much of the discussions have gotten bound up into who can do what, right? So everything kind of starts, but then it also ends there. So while there are reasonable discussions that we should have about, you know, headship in marriage or who should be ordained in the church, these are reasonable discussions that have a place biblically. When we end our discussion there, and all we say is, well, you can't be a pastor as a woman, and we don't talk about anything else. Or you know, husbands are the head of the home, but then we don't talk about anything else. Then we short circuit, so much of the message that Scripture has for us as men and women in the faith. So the unbiblical part, I think that I call it a hyperfocus on authority and submission in the book. And I think it really undermines--because then the whole lens of what we see is everything is about authority and submission. So then, you know, can a woman have a job outside the home? Well, then it has to be weighed over, you know, well is she an authority? Or is she undermining her husband's authority by working or, you know, how is she showing proper feminine deference in the workplace? All these discussions become about that instead of, you know, is she serving the Lord in what she's doing? Is this something that she's been called to do? Is this something that she, you know, is a blessing to her family? You know, it's just, it's a much bigger discussion. And part of what it gets back to, especially when I talk about, culturally, how we've gotten here is this understanding or this belief about authority and submission, that authority and submission define the very nature of what it means to be male and female, that men are defined, because they're men, as leaders and in authority, having a masculine authority by nature of being male, and that women are by nature to submit to that authority. That's who we are. That's what our ontology

is. And when you look at the Scripture, and Scripture teaches that--when you look at Genesis 2 and you have the creation of man, that God made man, male and female, in his image and gives them dominion together over the world, under him. And so you have that sense of authority is in us both. We have an inherent authority given to us by God to rule over creation together. And then you look in Scripture further on into who we are in Christ, and we are male and female, united together in Christ as brothers and sisters, and there is a quality before Christ in who we are. And not that that takes away the differences between men and women, but there is a fundamental unity that we have, as men and women in God's image, united in Christ. And even the issue about submission is that submission is not, and I argue this in the book, submission is not a feminine characteristic. Submission is a human characteristic. And we see Christ as our example of how to be a human in submission to authority. So that's for both of us men and women. We're in submission in all sorts of relationships throughout our lives. And it's not because we're women that we submit. It's because in this particular relationship, it calls for me as a woman to submit. Does that make sense?

Elyse Fitzpatrick 11:48

Yes.

Eric Schumacher 11:49

Yeah, that's good. And so it's very clear, I think, just from what you said, and even by the title of your book, in saying "beyond" authority and submission, you're not saying less than authority and submission. You're saying, there's something more than that. You're not against, it's obvious to me you're not against the ideas of authority and submission at all?

Rachel Green Miller 12:13

Right. And that's actually one of the challenges that I've heard. My book came out in September. So one of the things that gets pushback that I've gotten is people are like, well, beyond authority and submission. So you know, you're using beyond to say that we should do away with, and I'm saying no, beyond as in, we should continue the discussion more than authority and submission. It's more than that, not less than, so yes, you're right.

Eric Schumacher 12:38

So you just mentioned there, you know, and rightly so I agree with you that, you know, the idea of authority or dominion isn't inherently masculine or feminine. And the idea of submission is not inherently masculine, or feminine. Humans are called to both of those. And so, I know you've done some

discussion on what constitutes masculine and feminine. Do you want to talk through that? What does it mean to be masculine or feminine?

Rachel Green Miller 13:16

Well, I think that we see even in the Genesis 2 passage that God created us, he created the two. He created male and female, and we are distinct from each other in that, right, so that there is male and there is female. There's one author that I read who talks about it as two ways of being human, right, there's the male and there's the female. And obviously, we know that those differences are necessary, physically, in the sense of being able to bear children. This is very clear. We know those differences. I wouldn't reduce masculine and feminine to only biology, but I think it's important to recognize that the biology is a very big part of being male and female. I think it gets dismissed kind of easily sometimes, like, well, you know, you're just making it about biology and I'm like, well, but that biology is important in who we are. Right?

Elyse Fitzpatrick 14:12

Right.

Rachel Green Miller 14:14

You know, I would say, one of the things I say in the book is that my children--I have all boys--each of them is masculine, because they are male. But each of them is different in how that looks. I have one son, who is very much the, you know, that driven personality. He is a natural born leader. He will--I jokingly said when he was very small that he was going to grow up to be the benevolent dictator of a little bitty Island Republic, because that's just--he's going to lead the world, right? My second son is very quiet, very calm. He's also very attuned to what's going on around him. He's very empathetic, right? But you would never doubt if you met my sons that they're both male and masculine. They don't come across as anything other than that. So what I think about with masculine and feminine is that, you know, we were born male and female. We have different physical properties as a result of that difference. Beyond that, there are some cultural expectations around us that change culture to culture as to what's you know--a woman in China in the 1800s, this is what she would have looked like as a woman. A man in the 20th century, there's differences that are cultural, that aren't wrong for us to consider how to apply. But we shouldn't be so restricted in our view of what is--this is masculine, this is feminine--that we try to shoehorn everyone into the same set of characteristics.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 16:01

Right.

Rachel Green Miller 16:01

And if you don't fit these characteristics, then you can't be called a man or you can't be called a woman. So I guess that's where, you know, I definitely say that there are differences. I can even say that there are some generalities that we could make, but those generalities don't determine whether or not you're male or female,

Elyse Fitzpatrick 16:20

Right, and those generalities are not because we have ontologically different natures. So, you know, we are male and female, created in the image of God. And that ontological or sense of who we are, the essence in our being is not somehow feminine, which I've had discussions with guys, and they talk about, you know, femininity. And I say, you know, guys, that's not even a word that's in the Bible. You know, you're building an entire way of talking about and categorizing women using something that isn't even in Scripture. And I think a point that you make very beautifully in the book, Rachel, is that those categories of biblical femininity, as it's being defined, biblical masculinity, really doesn't come out of Scripture, but instead comes out of the Greek and Roman and Victorian societies or cultures. So do you want to talk about that for a minute?

Rachel Green Miller 17:46

Sure, you know, that's my background. My degree is in history, and part of what happened, when I first got interested in writing about this is, I'm a homeschooling mom, I'm in the homeschooling community. And I was coming across a lot of resources, both for homeschooling, and then also, particularly for women in the church. And I was realizing that a lot of these ideas about, you know, this is what it means to be a man, this is what it means to be a woman, it was familiar to me, not from Scripture, but from history. And so you go back and look at what the Greeks and the Romans believed about men and women--that women are an inverted, inferior version of a man. And so you have that division of they're already very separate natures, that you have the male nature and the female nature. They're defined by, you know, men have heat and strength, and they're the ones in charge. Women are weaker and they lack the heat to be a man. It's very interesting when you read through what they believe about men and women. But as you look through history further and you get to the Victorian era, you have with the Renaissance and the rebirth of ideas and study into Greek and Roman, they brought back a lot of that Greek philosophy. And some of these things came back and these ideas about Aristotle's views, in particular, about the nature, the separate nature of men and women. The Victorians took it and, of course, it fit. The preconceived notions that they had about, well men are obviously the ones supposed to be in charge, women are obviously the ones who are weaker and supposed to be in the home and

take care of things there. And then they read Scripture through that lens and tried to pull things and say--well, obviously--I say they baptize these ideas to try to align it. But to do it, you have to ignore a lot of Scripture, where most of Scripture is written, everybody, male and female, no matter who you are, where you're from, and it applies to us all. So these ideas about, you know, what it means to be a man, and for a man you see things like to be a leader, to be a provider, a protector, to be the one who initiates, the one who is strong and forceful, right? That's those ideas. And then for a woman to be-- those ideas are the ones that make men capable to be the leaders, not just in the home, but also in society, because that's their world. And women are made for this gentle, quiet, soft domestic world of the home. It's fascinating when you start seeing the parallels between what the Greeks and the Romans believed, and even the toxic--the hearth, the keeper of the hearth--

Elyse Fitzpatrick 20:44

And the Vestal Virgins--

Rachel Green Miller 20:46

The Vestal--all of that, right? You see these ideas come back over and over again. And, you know, the Victorians writing about upholding society with her pale white hand, you know, all of that, this imagery. And for us, you know, you get past the 1950s and into post World War II, and you get the 1960s, you get the sexual revolution and abortion, and the second-wave feminism, and all these things that start happening that the church sees as a threat, and rightly so, a threat to the church. And in so much of the response, instead of going back to the Scriptures directly, there's been this appeal to an earlier time, like this 1950s model of Christianity. And the thing is, when you look at it, those models, the 1950s model of the nuclear family, Victorian model, none of those were actually maintainable or achievable for the majority of the culture, right? Most women couldn't do these things. They couldn't not work. In order for women in the upper classes not to work, they had to hire women to work for them.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 22:06

Right. They had to hire the help.

Rachel Green Miller 22:09

They had to hire--and who were the help? They were women working outside their own homes to support this view of domesticity?

Elyse Fitzpatrick 22:15

Right, it's been interesting to me. Rachel, at one point, I really bought into the whole complementarian thing. I read the blue book. I bought into it. I said, yeah, right. But, you know, as people like you, and as I have been writing, as I've done more study, it's become very, very obvious to me, that this whole thing of, you know, the woman who doesn't work outside the home, she stays home, her husband goes out, you know--this is a very white 20th/21st century way of thinking, American way of thinking. If we were living in South America or China, our lives as women would be--you couldn't do that. If you think about the way women have had to work outside the home, throughout history or live lives that were very dangerous, you know. Giving birth, even as a 14-year-old, the sort of thought that, you know, what it means to be a Christian woman is that she stays home with her children and she homeschools and that's lovely. I homeschooled as well. But that doesn't fit in every circumstance.

Rachel Green Miller 23:58

Right. I would be the first to say that I think there's a lot of good in some of the basics of complementarianism. Right. Like, if you look at it, I think that it is good for families to want to serve God together. Right? It is good for a husband to be a leader in the home, who sacrifices of himself to care for his family. It is good for a wife to submit to her husband's leadership and to put his needs first and together to raise their children to love the Lord. It's good in our churches to have qualified men be ordained. Right? And to, you know, these are good things. It's good for men to be encouraged to be protective of women. Those are good things, right? But the problem is what you're getting at. When we take this view of well, this is what it must mean to be a man, what it must mean to be a woman, and if you're not doing these things, then you're not really, not only are you not really a complementarian, but then your salvation is also questioned because can you really be a Christian if you're not following this view of men and women? Then you're leaving out a whole majority of the world for most of time about how we've lived and worked.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 25:22

Yes, right.

Rachel Green Miller 25:22

Most of my family until the last couple generations were farmers, so they lived on the farm. Everybody works on a farm. In agricultural society, everybody's working together to get things done. There's not a question of well, who's making the most money? It's how do we survive today? And that's true for most of the world, for most of history. To be able to sit around and argue about well, you know, should wives

stay home? Or should their husbands go to work? It is a very, and I hate to use the word, but it's a very privileged discussion.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 25:22

Yes, right.

Rachel Green Miller 25:26

When we can sit and have that discussion about--and I'm thankful. I'm thankful to be able to be at home, and work from home, and homeschool my children. I'm thankful that my husband has a job that provides that way for us. But, you know, I wrote something recently about what does success look like for a woman. I have one grandmother who was a stay-at-home mother. I have another who had a master's in education and worked in administration for schools and was a missionary's wife. My mother was a professor until she retired and she supported so my dad could be a pastor. It just depends on what your situation is, and I think it's hurting people to try to--I use the example, the illustration of Procrustes bed. If you don't fit, you're gonna have to either be stretched or chopped off. Right? When we try to fit everybody into this very wooden structure, we end up hurting people, and marriages and churches, because we're not using the gifts that people have. And we're telling people that they're not good enough or right because they don't fit. And it's only going to lead to damage.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 27:02

You know that's one of the things that, you know, I've seen, I think among women, is that with younger women like say, in their teens or their 20s, when they hear of the picture of what a biblical woman, feminine woman looks like, then I think that many of them are beginning to question, well, maybe I'm wrongly gendered.

Rachel Green Miller 27:29

Yes.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 27:29

Right? I'm wrongly gendered because, you know what, I love to eat somebody else's apple pie, but I don't want to cook it. So maybe there's--and what I'd rather do, what I'd rather do is be a truck driver.

But if you say that, then what you're automatically doing is causing these younger women to question even their gender,

Rachel Green Miller 27:55

Question identity, and it questions your faith, because then something must be wrong with me because I don't fit. And so then, if I don't fit, then I can't be right. Yes, you have all of this build-up. And honestly, it's something that Aimee Byrd has written about that I really appreciate that, in making these discussions so essential to the nature of men and women, they're using the same arguments as the arguments that are made in transgender. Well, if you don't fit, then you must have the wrong gender, or you're not right, but it's the same arguments. Instead of saying that, and this is an illustration that Wendy Alsup used with men and women that our character, our personality characteristics is like a Venn diagram with a really big overlap. So men and women have much more in common than they have differences. And when we see that, then we can see that the expression of being a man or a woman is much greater. And you see it in Scripture, that, you know, David does not look like the same kind of man as Solomon. Or Jacob is a much different kind of man than Samson, right? But all of them were men, and not questionably. They were obviously men. And even with women, you have Deborah, who was a different kind of woman from Mary, or Lydia, who's different from Sarah, but they're all women. And so all I want us to do is not say there aren't differences between men and women, but to allow for a diversity of expression that is much wider, much greater an expression, and say we're all men and women, and we're working together to serve the Lord.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 29:41

Beautiful.

Eric Schumacher 29:42

So when I hear that, I'm sitting here listening to you, and I'm thinking, none of this to me sounds even remotely controversial. And I'm a fairly conservative Christian. I use the term complementarian to describe myself. I hear you saying there are clear places in the church and in the home where there's a distinction for--I don't like the term roles, but you know, in ordination and husbands and wives, that sort of thing. And what you're saying is we live out our masculinity and femininity differently according to how each of us is designed as an individual person. You know, we're distinct. And none of that sounds even remotely controversial to me. Yet, I'm hearing you say that you're experiencing pushback against this, you know, and people are saying you want to do away with gender and that sort of thing. So what is the pushback against your book and where are they getting you wrong?

Rachel Green Miller 30:56

It's interesting. Honestly, none of the pushback that I've gotten was unsurprising. Like I knew ahead of time, kind of how things were going to fall out, where things were going to be. And there are people who certainly made up their minds about me and my book before reading it, or haven't even read it. So they just decided that I--because I'm saying that we should talk about what's being said, because I'm raising questions, then obviously, I'm actually a feminist or I'm actually an egalitarian or....insert word to shut down communication here, right? I think what I've discovered in listening to and talking through this with other people, is that there comes a fundamental difference of understanding of what it means to be human and what it means to be male and female in the image of Christ. And where I would say that we have all the same human nature, but there are distinctions that make us male and female, the opposite side, the people who are most upset with me want to say that there are different and distinct human natures. There is a male nature and a female nature, and we are ontologically different. And so they--and some of it is concerned, people think that if you say we should incorporate women in the life of the church, then obviously you want to ordain women. They have such a black and white view of it, that they can't see that we can have the same agreement that qualified men should be ordained, but that men and women who are not ordained should be able to work in the church in these ways. And they see that as you know, a slippery slope or an undermining of things. And there's a lot of talking past each other, not a lot of listening, in my experience.

Eric Schumacher 32:56

I think what you just said, in terms of, you understand that we share an essential humanness, a human ontology. And then there's distinctions as we are male and female. But others seem to say, there is a, basically a male human ontology and a female human ontology, and they're two different natures. And I think it's really helpful to point out because what I'm hearing in conversations is people saying, what does it mean to be a biblical woman in everything that I do? Or what does it mean to be a man in everything I do? And even to the point where, you know, there's a popular Bible teacher who would say that if a man is lost in a city, and he goes to ask directions from a woman, he needs to do that in a particularly masculine way, and she needs to answer his question in a particularly feminine way--

Rachel Green Miller 33:56

That affirms his masculinity.

Eric Schumacher 33:58

That affirms his masculinity and initiative and all these things, which I don't find taught in Scripture. I can see how they grab that from an implication of an implication from some principles they might they

might find, but I'm hearing this question and I think it's a bad--I think it's a poor question. They're welcome to ask it, but I think it comes from a wrong assumption that there should be a masculine, a biblical manhood way of delivering the mail versus a biblical womanhood way of receiving posts from the mailman.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 34:44

Postal worker.

Eric Schumacher 34:45

Postal worker, yes, yes. What's interesting is, you know, at the center of Orthodoxy, you know, we begin with this understanding of who our God is as a Triune God, and we state that he is one in his essence and exists in three persons. So there's distinctions between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and yet they have one ontology. If we said there was an ontology of God the Father and God the Son and God the Spirit, we end up having three Gods, and we'd be called heretics.

Rachel Green Miller 35:26

And rightly so.

Eric Schumacher 35:28

But we come to the image of God, which the Scripture goes to great lengths to say, you're made from the same stuff. I'm gonna make Adam from dirt and then her from Adam, just to show there's not two different sources here of them. But we end up saying, there's a male ontology and a female ontology. And so I think you're hitting the nail on the head there with that distinction being the issue.

Rachel Green Miller 35:55

Yeah. And what's scary about that is the logical implication, if you keep going with that, that there is a male nature and a female nature, then you have to ask the question, when the Son is incarnate and becomes Jesus, the God-man, takes on human flesh, did he take on a male nature? Or did he take on a human nature? And when he died, did he die in a male nature only? Or did he represent all of human nature in His death? Because otherwise, how are women saved? Yeah, like, who do we model?

Eric Schumacher 36:26

Yeah. Who's our example? And who would be your perfect righteousness?

Rachel Green Miller 36:31

Right.

Eric Schumacher 36:31

If biblical womanhood is a category of righteousness in and of itself, who has lived that out without failure in your place and can impute that righteousness to you? And who do you look to? Whose image? Whose ontology are you conformed into?

Rachel Green Miller 36:50

Exactly.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 36:51

So Eric, I want you to say that again. I think that's so important. You know, if biblical womanhood, if that's where our righteousness comes from, if we fail at biblical womanhood, then who is our righteousness? That's such an important point that I don't think many people, if anybody, is even talking about, aside from Rachel.

Rachel Green Miller 37:20

There are some others, yes.

Eric Schumacher 37:22

Yeah, I have a letter up on my blog, a post called "Is Jesus the True and Better Woman?" And it's exploring that question, you know. Has he fulfilled that? And, in response, I had a woman contact me and she said, "I asked this question to my pastor, like, should I imitate Jesus, you know, because he's an embodied male?" And he told her that no, women aren't called to imitate Christ. They are called to imitate Sarah. She's the example that the apostles put forward. I was just flabbergasted, but--

Elyse Fitzpatrick 38:02

Well, I think, you know, earlier on maybe even before the Reformation, women were called to imitate Mary.

Rachel Green Miller 38:10

Right.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 38:11

Right? Because there's this male nature that somehow we don't have. How do we respond to that, Rachel, when people are saying, you know, biblical, female, feminine nature. How do you respond to that?

Rachel Green Miller 38:34

I look at all the places, you know, in Scripture, when I talk about it in "Beyond Authority and Submission." The three things that I talk about that I think are themes in Scripture, that are often overlooked in these discussions, I talked about unity, interdependence, and service, right? And so I think that we look at what are the the actual overarching themes in Scripture and throughout, especially in the New Testament? You have again and again how we are united in Christ, and we are one body. We are different parts. And Paul talks about how we each have different gifts, we have different abilities, right? But we are one body, and we are all one in Christ. And when it says in Galatians, that in Christ, there is no male or female, right? That while there are obvious distinctions in what we are, because we are in Him, we are united to him, we are part of him, then we are all the Son, right? We are all--you talk about it in your book, about being sons in the Son, right? We are--that's who we are. That's our inheritance. But at the same time, you know, we are also the bride of Christ. Right.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 39:46

Right.

Rachel Green Miller 39:46

And so we have this image of both being Christ and also we are the bride. And so we have both a male and a female imagery that is used to describe us, and we are united in those aspects. We are interdependent. We need each other. We have different gifts and different abilities. And, you know, I talked about, we talked about how we have unique characteristics as men and women. But we also have unique characteristics in our marriages, that every marriage is going to look a little bit different because we're individuals in our marriage, and we have different strengths and weaknesses. But it's true in our churches, too, that we have different strengths and weaknesses, and we need each other to fill in those gaps. But everything that we do should be done out of service, and that's what, you know, Jesus says, in getting away from "Beyond Authority," he talks about, don't lead like the Gentiles do. It's not about lording it over. It's not about authority. It's about how do you serve each other? And you serve like I have served you. And so that's where I see, people want to talk about these things. Yes, I think it's important for us to be, you know, God made you a man, you're a man. God made you a woman, you're a woman, right? That's important. But he also has taught us so much more beyond that about how we are to work together. And all of those instructions are given to us in the church. Very little of it is gendered. Almost all of it is given to everyone.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 41:13

Right.

Rachel Green Miller 41:14

And we should focus there.

Eric Schumacher 41:18

That is good. I have so many questions I want to ask.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 41:21

Can we just go like, a couple of hours here?

Eric Schumacher 41:25

Yeah, I want to ask about like, I want to go back to the cultural thing and ask about, you know, I mean, Paul can acknowledge cultural distinctions between men and women, and say that, you know, there's a way in which the church needs to recognize those and operate within those. But those cultures change,

and how do we as the church change with that? Or do we just put a stake in the ground at one point in history and say, okay, culture has arrived? And, you know, I want to ask about what does it look like in the resurrection? You know, in the world to come? That's the question I have, for those who see this, male and female, different ontologies is, you know, I'm reading hints of even in the resurrection in the new world, there's going to be these role distinctions between men and women. So, anyway, if you've been listening along with us, this is the Worthy podcast. We've been talking with Rachel Miller about her book, "Beyond Authority and Submission: Women and Men in Marriage, Church and Society." That's from Presbyterian and Reformed. And so that's the book "Beyond Authority and Submission." We are attempting and hoping to have respectful discussions about the value of women in the church, the world, and the home here on this podcast. And if you think that's valuable as well, and you've been enjoying this, we hope that you'll share the podcast, review it, rate it, and consider joining our support team at Patreon. You can just search for the Worthy book. I think it's patreon.com/theworthybook, and you can join our support team and get some bonus gifts for doing that. We've got one more question for Rachel. And I'm gonna let Elyse take that away.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 43:19

So I just want to again, thank you for being with us, Rachel. You say you're no longer comfortable calling yourself complementarian. I am there with you. I tried to make up a word--reciprocitarian. That's even worse. What would you say? People will say to you, are you complementarian? And they just basically want to know, you know, do you affirm qualified male leadership in the church or leadership in the home? How are you answering that now? Help me.

Rachel Green Miller 43:52

Well, it's interesting, because in most interviews I've given on the book, I usually start out with, you know, these are the things that I affirm, you know, just so people get that, okay, this is what I'm saying and this not what I'm saying. And I do it very early in the book, too, because I don't want people to feel like, you know, oh, gotcha. I want people to know upfront what I believe. But you know, friends of mine, we've been battling this around for a couple years now, and none of us have come up with a great, you know, label to use, unfortunately. Some of us have used confessional, and for those of us who are in confessional churches, it works pretty well. To say that we're confessional, I affirm what's in my confession. Not everyone is in a confessional denomination. So you know. I've liked some of the discussions around mutuality, because that idea of needing each other, but also not everyone is the same. But even there you have people say, "Well, you know, egalitarians have used that term." And well, the egalitarians have also used complementarity. I mean the words are out there and people are all using them. So here we are. Yeah, it's a tough place. I think it would be good to have a new word. And it's not because I disagree with some of the foundational ideas of complementarity. I do, I think that the complementarity of men and women is a good thing. But the term itself has become so loaded. There's so much baggage now with it. It's like, you know, trying to explain to someone when I say I'm a

Presbyterian and like, Oh, you know, well, so do you, you know, ordain homosexuals? And do you believe in gay marriage? Because the biggest Presbyterian churches do. I'm like, no, I'm not that kind of Presbyterian. I'm this kind of Presbyterian. By the time you get to that conversation, it's a lot of discussion and not a label anymore, you know? So, you know, it's really hard to qualify and give enough qualification. So I'm uncomfortable with using the term because of what it's come to mean.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 46:00

Right.

Eric Schumacher 46:01

And I think that highlights the reason we're trying to have respectful conversations about this topic, because words have meaning and those words can sometimes mean different things in different circles. The Bible uses words, and we look at context to figure out what those are. And it's the same. God is our neighbor, and we read his word in context. And we're called to love our neighbor, and that means we read their words in context. And so we need more of that kind of dialogue where instead of using a litmus test of what term do you take, we ask questions, we clarify, we listen, summarize, and respond before we attack. And so, Rachel, thanks for being on the podcast.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 46:50

Thank you, Rachel.

Eric Schumacher 46:50

Good to have you here.

Rachel Green Miller 46:52

Thank you so much.

Eric Schumacher 46:53

And thank you to our listeners for following along. And we hope you'll join us next time on Worthy.