

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

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Episode 24 — Guest: Mark and Rondi Lauterbach

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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, and women are valuable. And respectful conversation on this topic is essential in our day.

Hey, and welcome again to the Worthy podcast. I'm on the Worthy podcast today as, in a solo role. And my co-host, co-author, Eric Schumacher is otherwise occupied and couldn't make it to our podcast recording today. So I am, I'm here without Eric, but I am here with my friends, Mark and Rondi Lauterbach. And Mark and Rondi have been friends of mine for fifteen years probably. And so we're really glad that they're here with us. Mark is a pastor in the PCA and has been a pastor for 40-plus years. And Rondi is a good friend of mine, a Bible teacher and author of the book *Hungry*, and also teaches *Pilates and love dance*. And so they're friends of ours. They live in Tucson, Arizona. They love to take trips to Serbia. They do that I think three times a year to train pastors and lay leaders in, in the Gospel. So we wanted to have Mark and Rondi on for a number of reasons, not the least of which they are our friends, but also because Mark really enjoyed the Worthy book in particular. And so we wanted to get a little feedback from him about the book. But this isn't going to be just a podcast about the book. We're also going to talk to Mark and Rondi about how they have navigated marriage through, and ministry, through different contexts. So we wanted to let you meet them. So welcome, Mark and Rondi.

Rondi Lauterbach 3:16

Thank you. Great to be here with you guys.

Mark Lauterbach 3:19

Yeah, very good to be with you. Thank you for the opportunity.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 3:22

You're welcome.

Rondi Lauterbach 3:23

We miss you, Eric. But Elyse can handle it.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 3:26

Yeah, I can handle it. Who needs Eric anyway? That's a joke. So, why don't you guys just tell us a little bit about yourself. Start off with your, you know, your faith journey and how you were raised, what your families were like as far as husbands, wives, moms, dads, those kinds of issues, and then we can get into more specifics about your specific marriage.

Rondi Lauterbach 3:54

Yeah, that, that background sound is real important. We had a similar background in our faith journey. Both of us raised in mainline denominations, and then through, through ministries in high school that reached out to us came into contact with the gospel in such a way that we realized we hadn't yet believed in Jesus to save us from our sins. So we did each have a conversion experience in high school. It was amazing to me how the lights came on in some ways that I hadn't expected that suddenly. The scriptures were alive to me, rather than being a distant, locked book. But I also remember one particular moment in our family dinner table conversation. My father was an obstetrician and the Roe v. Wade hearing decision came out in 1973. And we talked about that around the dinner table. And I remember when, as we talked about it, I said, well, I don't know. Abortion sounds bad. But it also sounds like you probably need it. Sometimes I could see reasons why that, that would be might be an important thing to be available. And then after I have my conversion experience, the conversation came around again. And without thinking, oh now I'm a Christian, I should think differently about this, I just had a completely different visceral reaction to that loss of life. And I'm not going to nuance it here with all the parts of the, of that decision. But I thought, I almost looked at myself and said, wow, you really changed. It was just evidence that God had done a new thing, and I was a new creation, and I had new responses to important topics.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 5:48

Sweet.

Mark Lauterbach 5:48

I came to faith near the end of high school, and it was very similar in how it turned my world upside down. I began my senior year of high school with the ambition of going to an Ivy League school, getting a Bachelor's, going on and getting an MBA, and making my first million by the time I was 30 years old. And in between that and beginning college, the Lord brought me to himself. And a year after all those ambitions set in, God turned my world upside down, and I wanted to be a pastor.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 6:23

Wow.

Mark Lauterbach 6:24

And achievement and success were no longer what I aspired to. And it wasn't like I tried to change. God changed me. And so conversion was so real for both of us. It, it was night and day, darkness and light as we both look back on it.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 6:45

Wow. And so then you, you both were in very high power kind of homes. I should say, high expectation kinds of homes.

Rondi Lauterbach 6:59

That's right.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 7:00

And so then you both went to Princeton. And, and so you met there. So tell us a little bit about that.

Mark Lauterbach 7:10

Oh, yeah, we were, I was raised in a high expectation home. Actually, we both were. Very, very high view of education, both for the boys and the girls in the family. The quickest way to have been disowned in my family would have been to not go to college.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 7:26

Wow.

Mark Lauterbach 7:26

It was not an option. And so, so I was raised in the context of valuing it, and my mom had a master's degree. She was, she was a well educated lady.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 7:38

What was her master's in?

Mark Lauterbach 7:41

I believe it was an economic. She ended up working in the business world briefly. University of Pittsburgh.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 7:47

Uh huh.

Mark Lauterbach 7:48

And her mother had a degree. And that was a long time ago. There were-

Elyse Fitzpatrick 7:52

Yeah.

Mark Lauterbach 7:52

very few women that had degrees.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 7:54

Yeah.

Rondi Lauterbach 7:55

A Master's. She went to Duke, and then she got her master's later on.

Mark Lauterbach 7:58

That was your mom.

Rondi Lauterbach 7:59

Oh, you're talking about your mom's mom.

Mark Lauterbach 8:01

My grandmother.

Rondi Lauterbach 8:02

I was, I was trying to get my two bits, two cents in.

Mark Lauterbach 8:05

Yeah, that was my grandmother had a degree. So that was unusual. So yes, I was raised in that kind of a home. Rondi could tell you a little bit about hers and then we can talk a little bit about college.

Rondi Lauterbach 8:15

Yeah. Both my parents had a high view of education, and my mother was very well educated and wanted us to go in those same footsteps. She, it was interesting to me. She did, and it wasn't just education for the state, for the sake of the degree and the academics but so that she could be useful in society. Because I'd say both of our families had a high view of the home, kind of raising your kids and bringing the best to them, including well educated parents, but also that preparation for community service. I saw my mom trying to serve the community just by being a faithful partner to my dad. Yeah, it was, he was, as an obstetrician he was often on call, and they were women who were going into labor were trying to find their doctor. And my mother would end up being called at home to try to find them, and she would drop everything and try to help that patient get her doctor.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 9:21

Wow.

Rondi Lauterbach 9:21

And I remember thinking, wow, she's not just a wife or a doctor's wife. She's there with him, alongside him trying to serve. I thought of that when I became a pastor's wife. It was a role model.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 9:36

Really?

Rondi Lauterbach 9:37

Yeah.

Mark Lauterbach 9:37

Yeah, we were talking about how both of us had that kind of a mom that was very supportive to her husband, was very engaged in serving the community. That was true with my mom, too. So when we, when we got to college, we, we were new Christians landed at Princeton. There was a college fellowship there that had been started in 1930-something, and the old man that had started it was 80 when I

arrived. He was, he was about as close to a sort of a modern day - I don't want to use the word apostle - but he, he had remarkable ministry and influence as a single man over years.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 10:19

Uh huh.

Mark Lauterbach 10:20

And that fellowship disciplined people all over the place, and we came into a fellowship where we were all pre-, we were all fairly new in Christ, brothers and sisters in Christ, deeply disciplined, learned scripture. We were kind of intense about it. But the distinction between men and women really didn't show up unless we started to talk about getting married or the church. That was it.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 10:46

Right.

Mark Lauterbach 10:46

Other than that we just loved and respected each other greatly as brothers and sisters. And I can't imagine the hundreds of hours of conversation we had as brothers and sisters in Christ talking about Scripture, talking about how to apply to life. And the gender role issue just wasn't there except in a very narrow band of conversation.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 11:08

And that's like in the mid-1970-ishes.

Rondi Lauterbach 11:12

Yeah, that's right.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 11:14

Yeah, I can remember when Phil and I were married, we were married in 1974. And, I mean, nobody was talking about gender roles, I mean at all. So you know, there we were, we were in Bible college. And, but you know, then again, I was in a, I was in a context where women could be pastors. So there wasn't any discussion at all. And it was just expected you, as a woman you needed to be able to speak publicly, you needed to know the Word, you needed to be a person who would go witness. You had a ministry. You needed to figure out what it was. And so that was all in the 1970s.

Mark Lauterbach 11:56

That was our world.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 11:59

Yeah.

Rondi Lauterbach 11:59

That was actually in college, that couple that led our ministry were really role models for us. They had such a beautiful partnership in training us. And their, their leadership was mainly to train us in knowing the Scriptures.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 12:16

Right.

Rondi Lauterbach 12:16

You know, it was, it was out of the four years it was three years of one on one Bible study discipleship. So that, and every single one, we all got started in Romans, had to master Romans before we could-

Elyse Fitzpatrick 12:30

Yeah.

Rondi Lauterbach 12:30

go on.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 12:31

Sweet. Yeah, master Romans. Good on you.

Mark Lauterbach 12:34

Yeah the one thing, we were talking about this as we look back on those days. There was no sense of the narrowness of a woman's role that was brought to us in those early days. And in fact, we, we were on a conversation last weekend with people-we were in each other's weddings 40 years ago. He's a PhD, teaches at a university. She, she is, she's now being brought to China to teach about training kids with literature.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 13:05

Wow.

Mark Lauterbach 13:05

We have friends who are medical doctors. We have a friend who helped in the pioneering of the homeschool movement, a woman in, that was in our college fellowship. And no one has ever looked at them like, what's wrong with you? Why didn't you just, why weren't you just a mother and a wife? There was an expectation that being a disciple of Jesus for men and women would take you in lots of places, not just in the home.

Rondi Lauterbach 13:30

Right.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 13:32

Right. Yeah. And yeah, and so we have seen this sort of shift. And, you know, being a friend of yours, I've, you know, talked a lot with you about that shift. And I remember even Rondi having a conversation with you at one point where we were saying, surely Titus 2 is not the only passage in the Bible that women should read.

Rondi Lauterbach 13:59

Oh my goodness.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 14:00

Do you remember that?

Rondi Lauterbach 14:01

There was a time when I thought, just cut it out of the Bible and hand it to me and say, here you go. It just made me want to fall down and cry.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 14:11

We, we, yes. I mean the, this conversation that we're having now is a conversation actually that we have the three of us had, and even with Phil, the four of us for, for years, you know. And just really getting to the place where we said, you know, I know that there was a conversation we were having at one point about whether or not women should go to college because we were in a context that did not encourage women to get educated. Because if they, because they didn't need to. Because what they needed to do was get married and have babies.

Rondi Lauterbach 14:50

Right. Learn how to cook and clean and get ready for that life, which-

Elyse Fitzpatrick 14:53

Right.

Rondi Lauterbach 14:53

I don't reject. I like to cook and clean,

Elyse Fitzpatrick 14:55

Right.

Rondi Lauterbach 14:55

and I've had three children. But that's not the be all and end all of everything. Yeah. And it was a shocking group to be part of, a shocking time in our lives.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 15:07

Yeah.

Rondi Lauterbach 15:07

That we were going to be that constricted.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 15:10

And, and I do want to say something about you liking to cook and clean. You are one of the best cooks I know. And actually at one point, at one point, Rondi even, even gave me a subscription to a cooking magazine.

Rondi Lauterbach 15:24

Did I? Well, I, what was I thinking? I'd forgotten that.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 15:31

I, you know, honestly Yeah. So now I,

Rondi Lauterbach 15:41

I can't remember if it was before you had us over for dinner or after.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 15:46

Yeah, right, exactly. And Eric actually was saying, we were on a podcast recently. And Eric was saying, you know, the only time I've ever been over to Elyse's house for dinner- Well, now, obviously, you know, of course, he lives in Iowa. So he ain't out here very often. But he said, I do remember that we ate there, but she had food delivered.

Rondi Lauterbach 16:07

You know what, I think that's very smart for all of us at some point.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 16:10

For everybody to do that. Yeah. So yeah, we were, we were in a very interesting context. But I, and I do want to get to that, but I want you guys to talk about your marriage. You know, and, you know, I, Rondi, I know you didn't grow up thinking you wanted to be a pastor's wife. And Mark, you really didn't grow up thinking you wanted to be a pastor. And so then you guys came together. You both had differing trajectories. And then you find yourself in ministry, and how have you worked that out?

Rondi Lauterbach 16:47

I just wanted to be Secretary of State. I had big ambitions-

Elyse Fitzpatrick 16:50

I know you did. Okay, now we have to say, you have to tell people what your degree is in.

Rondi Lauterbach 16:57

My undergraduate degrees in Slavic languages and literature. So I studied Russian. I studied linguistics and Old Church Slavonic. And I thought it would be fun to be a diplomat. But I also wanted to be a doctor because my dad was a doctor. And I also wanted to be a dancer. So I've wanted-

Elyse Fitzpatrick 17:15

If it starts with a D..

Rondi Lauterbach 17:17

A doctor who's, a doc- a diplomat, who was a doctor and tap danced on the weekends.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 17:22

Of course you did. Of course you did.

Mark Lauterbach 17:26

All of that in 24 hours a day. I'm not really sure how we were going to do all that.

Rondi Lauterbach 17:30

Yes. Exactly.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 17:31

And you have to play with your dogs and stuff like that, too.

Rondi Lauterbach 17:34

That's right. And cook.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 17:35

And cook.

Mark Lauterbach 17:34

Yes. So we got married. We met in college. I was two years older, and we got married while I was in seminary. Seminary, my first year in seminary, was the first year I actually was aware there was a debate about the role of women in the church. For me it was pretty simple. Scripture said women couldn't be pastors and elders, and what is there to talk about? But the school had decided to offer the M.Div. degree to women minus pastoral training courses, and it ignited the campus. There were, there were students who left the school over this. And I remember thinking-

Elyse Fitzpatrick 17:45

Because they were offering an M.Div. without the pastoral part of it? They were objecting to women having an M.Div.? Were they objecting to the fact that the pastoral part wasn't there or that women were getting M.Div.'s?

Mark Lauterbach 18:14

They were, they were objecting to the comprehensive education of an M.Div. for women. I remember the president of the school saying, what are you all afraid of? If, why shouldn't our sisters in Christ learn Greek, Hebrew, systematic theology, church history? They should, if all means of understanding Scripture is properly used reach the same conclusions. What are you afraid of? And I remember hearing that saying, yeah, what's the problem? What's wrong with educated women? But there were students who left the school over it. But that's beside the point. That was seminary. That impacted us pretty deeply.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 19:06

Yeah.

Mark Lauterbach 19:07

We got married when I was in seminary, and I, typical of me, I read and studied and executed the passages in Scripture related to marriage. And I concluded that the nature of marriage was a partnership with a goal of the two becoming one.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 19:24

Nice.

Mark Lauterbach 19:26

It was centered, the operating system of a marriage was partnership into unity. The operating system, the marriage in my mind was never the role of the husband and the wife, but the way I would- Part of it, I thought about it early on as, I was given a responsibility. I wasn't given authority. That wasn't my action. My responsibility was to birth this partnership unto unity, that we came to agreement and common thinking in as many areas of marriage as we could. And the, I figured that I would rarely exercise the tie-breaking vote because that wouldn't be partnership into unity. So we entered marriage having talked through that and, and what that looks like to be one and did the hard work of, but if there's anything true of us, we talk about everything. And if we can't reach agreement, we don't do anything until we do unless time requires it.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 20:28

Right.

Mark Lauterbach 20:28

And then that may be we defer to each other.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 20:31

Right.

Mark Lauterbach 20:32

There was no hierarchical operating system in the marriage. I viewed my role as, I was responsible before God, but the goal was partnership unto unity,

Rondi Lauterbach 20:44

Mark would have the tie-breaking vote if it came to that in terms of his, his headship, his responsibility before the Lord. But that didn't happen every day. That happened two or three times in our marriage.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 20:58

Right.

Rondi Lauterbach 20:58

It was a rare occurrence. Usually we came to agreement.

Mark Lauterbach 21:04

Yeah, I mean, one of the things I knew, Elyse, was, feminism was starting to rise in the 70's. And these issues became more and more conversation in the churches. And I used to think, wow, I have been given this incredibly gifted wife, bright, thoughtful, has lots of abilities. And I want to demonstrate that you can live out a biblical pattern of marriage with very strong, with a very strong and gifted woman who thrives and flourishes in that. Because I have stewardship of this lady. When she came to Western Seminary in Portland and took the language aptitude test, the first day in class, the president of the school stands up and says, I just reviewed the language aptitude test for our school for this quarter, and we have a student here that scored higher than anyone in the history of the school. And then he said, it's Rondi Lauterbach. And I'm sitting there going, that's the lady I married, and, wow, do I have a responsibility to make sure she thrives rather than [inaudible].

Elyse Fitzpatrick 22:12

See, and, I've heard, I've heard you say that before, Mark. I have a responsibility to make sure she thrives. That's so important for men to hear. And I know we have pastors listening, guys who listen in. So I have a responsibility to make sure she thrives. Flush that out a little bit.

Mark Lauterbach 22:37

Well let me give two, two negative examples,

Elyse Fitzpatrick 22:40

Okay.

Mark Lauterbach 22:40

where I failed to do it, and then talk about how I've grown to understand what it means. There was a time early on in marriage. Was it when we had Rachel?

Rondi Lauterbach 22:53

Yeah.

Mark Lauterbach 22:53

Our first child, where I be- my ego began to revolve around my ministry. And I was not only hurting Rondi, I was centered in, my identity was my work, and I was getting lots of praises. Uh huh. I began to

not work with partnership unto unity unto her nourishing. And we, we grew apart. The relationship grew not hostile but distant.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 22:53

Right.

Mark Lauterbach 22:55

It cooled considerably

Elyse Fitzpatrick 23:23

Uh huh.

Mark Lauterbach 23:24

And then she, she was going to go see her mom in Memphis and, for a two week visit with our newborn. And so off she went. I took her to the airport, dropped her off, and fell apart at the seams for the next two weeks. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't, I wasn't hungry. I couldn't focus on my work. And the Lord was sort of speaking to me. Number one, the two have become one, buddy, and you guys are inseparable, and you can't make it without her.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 23:55

Uh huh.

Mark Lauterbach 23:55

And number two, you've lost your focus. So when she came back, I told her I'd been selfish and arrogant, and I hadn't been caring for her as I should, and turned back to that. And it, and it really did quickly restore the marriage. And I began to realize I wasn't nurturing. And then about ten years later, we were here in Tucson and some good friends of ours from college had moved to the city to be in the same church with us. And we were hanging out in the kitchen one day, and this lady, who's just a great friend, looked at me and said, Mark, your wife is not thriving. Rondi is not thriving.

Rondi Lauterbach 24:38

And I didn't know I wasn't thriving. I was just doing what I was supposed to do, doing the next thing. We were busy with family and ministry, and I was taking care of everything.

Mark Lauterbach 24:47

And I realized I had narrowed my wife down to her role. She was a wife and a mother and a pastor's wife, and that was it. And through a lot of conversations with Rondi and actually our friend, I realized, I've lost sight of my wife as a whole person. She, she has lots of interests. She, she loves to read. She loves to learn. She loves arts. She loves dance. She had been reduced to being a wife and a mother. And so we set about to change that. It almost led her to a master's degree. It led her to take lots of dance classes. She ended up teaching dance. That's led ultimately to Pilates, ultimately to her writing. But I had to, I had to come to grips with the fact that she is not only a wife and a mother. Those are roles. That,

that is not her. She is Rondi with all the gifts and graces God has given her. She serves in roles, but she is not those roles. So I want to make sure she grows in every area. And that just-

Elyse Fitzpatrick 25:48

Yeah, that's, that's really good, Mark. One of the books that I've read recently that I thought was really great, and it goes along with what you're saying, is a book by Michelle Lee-Barnewall.

Rondi Lauterbach 26:05

Yes.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 26:06

Yes, called-

Rondi Lauterbach 26:07

We love it. Yeah.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 26:07

Neither Complementarian Nor Egalitarian: A Kingdom Corrective to the Evangelical Gender Debate. And the thing that, that I want to pull out of that book in response to what you guys are saying is, her point is, not authority and submission. Marriage is not primarily authority and submission, but marriage is unity. And that actually the primary command, as I understood her book as I read it, the primary command that's on the husband is to be in unity with the wife. The two shall become one. And that that's really, you know, the, the command that husbands are to have, not to, not necessarily to be sure that they're, you know, that they're the ones in authority and all of that, but actually that, that the burden rests on them to, to have unity.

Rondi Lauterbach 27:17

And it's, it's for the good of the couples for the unity. It's unto the unity, because together we're meant to serve Christ.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 27:26

Yeah.

Rondi Lauterbach 27:27

And that's what I was seeing that when our marriage was functioning at its best, we were helping each other. Mark was protecting me from some of my worst impulses.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 27:38

Nice.

Rondi Lauterbach 27:40

Because I tended to be an overachiever and want to do everything and didn't know my limits. And I remember one day back in seminary when I was determined that, yes, I was going to do everything that instructor asked plus this extra thing, this extra credit thing.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 27:55

Yeah.

Rondi Lauterbach 27:55

Which was going to mean getting up early and going across town and doing- and my husband just said, I hate to pull the trump card, but I don't think this would be good for you. Oh, but- but- but no, I need to, no, it'll be okay. And I'm arguing back, and he just finally said, honey, you can't go.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 28:13

Yeah. Good.

Rondi Lauterbach 28:14

And I need- I needed that. He was very gentle, but he was firm. And then finally I said, thank you!

Elyse Fitzpatrick 28:23

Yeah. So-

Rondi Lauterbach 28:25

It didn't always look like a storybook, you know, in our lives by any means. But I remember that.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 28:31

And

Mark Lauterbach 28:31

There was,

Elyse Fitzpatrick 28:32

Go ahead, Mark.

Mark Lauterbach 28:33

Well, there was also a day when she called me to my responsibility.

Rondi Lauterbach 28:36

Yes,

Mark Lauterbach 28:37

We were wrestling with a very, very difficult decision. And I'm, unknown to me, or maybe known to me, but self deceit, I was trying to punt the decision to her. I was trying to get her to make the decision by putting it off. And she, one day she looked at me and she said, honey, I'm not making this decision. This is your responsibility.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 29:02

Nice.

Mark Lauterbach 29:02

And I will not make it for you. You make the decision, and we will follow your leadership. I will not make it for you. I mean it was, it was a jarring word in which she called me to godliness.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 29:17

Yeah.

Rondi Lauterbach 29:18

I remember that moment. And it felt, I was so encouraged by the fact that this was God's pattern. And that it really helped my husband at that point.

Mark Lauterbach 29:29

I didn't like it.

Rondi Lauterbach 29:30

Yeah, he didn't like it.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 29:32

See, but then you're, you're being that necessary strong ally.

Rondi Lauterbach 29:36

Yes.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 29:37

Which is what being a helper means. Being a helper doesn't mean, oh, thank you for helping me cook, bake the cookies. You really messed them up. It's not that.

Rondi Lauterbach 29:48

Yeah.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 29:48

It's, it, you know that that ezer word is that military strong ally, that the man, the husband, needs. And that's what you were being with him. And I have seen you do that over and over again.

Rondi Lauterbach 30:06

Yes, that, that became a very important picture, that military picture. Which, if I had heard, I heard that term some time ago, and I thought, oh, that's, that's interesting. Why do we need to be allies? Where's the war? I just hadn't encountered the war. We got into a long period of time where there was a lot of spiritual warfare, a lot of enemies, a lot of difficulties in our lives. And that, that's where I saw it's, it's imperative for me to be my husband's ally. I am necessary to him.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 30:42

Right.

Rondi Lauterbach 30:42

And we are going to fight together. And when he was weak, I was able to help him and pull him up. And then when I would fall apart, he was helping me. And, but it was for the sake of the battle that we were in.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 30:55

Right.

Rondi Lauterbach 30:55

And I think as believers, we see that. We're in battles of all kinds, and we really need a strong ally. It's absolutely necessary.

Mark Lauterbach 31:03

I would say, Elyse, I would not be a pastor today if Rondi had not been that necessary ally. Because I was giving, I was prepared to give up everything in my calling because of the adversities we faced.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 31:19

Right.

Mark Lauterbach 31:21

And, and number one, she refused to let people divide us. There were, there were people saying things that, that the only way to interpret it is they were trying to set us against each other. And she absolutely resisted it. She would look at me and say, I don't know who they're talking about, but it's not the man I'm married to.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 31:39

Nice.

Mark Lauterbach 31:40

And then she stood firm, and she determined before the Lord to pray and to work to get me to see my calling again. And that means she endured a lot of flack. So I don't-

Elyse Fitzpatrick 31:53

From you, or from other people?

Mark Lauterbach 31:56

From other people. She absorbed a lot of suspicions, a lot of criticism. So whatever 1 Peter 3 means, the woman's the weaker vessel, it doesn't mean they're not tough in the wars. As a matter of fact,

Elyse Fitzpatrick 32:10

Yeah.

Mark Lauterbach 32:10

I will put, I will, I will say to my, I have a friend who is a Navy Seal. And he was telling me how tough he was once, and I said, I'll tell you what, I'll take you off, off sleep for two weeks and put you up against a mother of three kids that hasn't slept for two weeks. She'll kick your butt.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 32:26

Yeah.

Mark Lauterbach 32:27

You don't have a chance against a tough woman. And he looked at me like, what are you talking about? I said, women are tough. Whatever 1 Peter 3 means, it doesn't mean there won't be a weak and, sheltered, and Rondi has shown that. She's a tough lady. She's been a necessary ally.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 32:43

And you know, that's something too, that we see that I think I really saw in the writing of Worthy, is that women, you know, there's this trope going around about how women are weak, and we really need to protect them from anything that might be distasteful or difficult. And I'm like, meh. And I mean, I think that in a way the, maybe the mindset behind that, which is, we want to be men who protect women, I think that that's a good thing. But if you think that women aren't there on the front line every day of their lives practically, and that they need somehow because they're weak and can't stand the realities of life in the real world or something, I don't know what woman you're talking about.

But as I was reading, and particularly through the New Testament, and even in the Old Testament, you know, women are there. The, the leading cause of death for women in the ancient Near East was childbirth. And they knew that, and women would get married when they were 14 or 15 years old, frequently to men who were 10 or 15 years older than they were. And so, you know, they knew that when they were going to have a child that it was likely that they were going to die. And then their children, the mortality, infant mortality rate was so high. It was the women who were there with the babies. And it was the women who were there as the early Christians trying to, trying to rescue the foundlings and take them into their homes, and then it's women there also at the, at the end of life, where you've got the, the women who followed Jesus. There are the ones that go to the tomb to take care of his body. Women don't need to be protected, I think,

Rondi Lauterbach 35:00

No,

Elyse Fitzpatrick 35:00

In the way, in that sort of trope, I don't know what a better word for it is.

Rondi Lauterbach 35:05

It's a, yeah, it's a stereotype. It's, right. Trope is a good word. I've just been reading, you spoke a lot of, you spoke some of Mary in your book, the mother of Jesus. And there she was, she shows up again and again in the birth narratives. But then later, she becomes his disciple. And she's the first at the tomb and the first, she's there, and when the gift of tongues is given.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 35:31

Yeah.

Rondi Lauterbach 35:31

That made me, recently I read an article that talked about Mary as a student of Scripture. How did Mary as a 13 year old teenager know to say yes?

Elyse Fitzpatrick 35:44

Yeah.

Rondi Lauterbach 35:44

How did she say yes to the angel?

Elyse Fitzpatrick 35:46

Yeah.

Rondi Lauterbach 35:47

She knew the scriptures. She knew the promises.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 35:51

Yeah.

Rondi Lauterbach 35:51

And then we see it when she goes to Elizabeth and suddenly blurts out the entire thing that Hannah said years ago.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 35:57

Yeah.

Rondi Lauterbach 35:58

It was in her mind and her memory.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 36:00

Yeah.

Rondi Lauterbach 36:00

That didn't, she didn't pull out a sheet of paper and read it to her.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 36:04

Right, right. And then you've also got her, and I'm glad you said about, you know, the, at the day of Pentecost. Mary was there. She was in the upper room. She is undoubtedly part of the group of people who, having been filled with the Holy Spirit, go out into Jerusalem to proclaim the gospel. And, and she's one of the persons that Peter's talking about when he says your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Look at them, basically. Here they are. So, again, it, that whole thing of, and, and, I sort of wonder, too, and how much we've sort of denigrated Mary, or ingnored her, and how that really has something to do with this whole sort of view of womanhood that we're not real comfortable with her being that woman that she was.

Rondi Lauterbach 37:06

Yes, that's a good point. And one of the points that I love that you and Eric made in your book is, when you look at all the biblical commands in the New Testament, most of them, predominantly, they're addressed to male and female. They're commands given to the church. And so when we just focus on the passages that say women are not to be pastors, women should not do- use their gifts in certain contexts, primarily the pastor position, it is like just tearing that verse out and forgetting everything else. Because when I started to look at this, at, I started, just read my Bible and think, that command, that's to me, that's male-female.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 37:47

Yes.

Rondi Lauterbach 37:48

There, it is completely the majority of what's in Scripture, and that was a deeply encouraging insight you guys had.

Mark Lauterbach 37:55

I love of the section where you talk about the women that were there for the birth of Moses.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 38:00

Yeah.

Rondi Lauterbach 38:00

Oh, yes.

Mark Lauterbach 38:00

And it's all feminine, feminine pronouns. I was floored by that.

Rondi Lauterbach 38:04

Yeah.

Mark Lauterbach 38:04

I preached that passage. I never noticed those were feminine, and that it was all women, and they risked their lives.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 38:11

Yeah.

Mark Lauterbach 38:12

This is not a bunch of wimps or, or flowers to be protected. These were courageous women who served in a quiet way. They protected a child, but they risked their lives.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 38:24

Yeah. Yeah. Think about the, think about the courage that it took for them to, for them to do, those seven women, to do the things that they did. You know, Miriam, Jochebed, the two midwives whose names I can't remember right now, the daughter of Pharaoh, the daughter of Pharaoh's servant, Zipporah. I mean, so, you know, I, it's been, it's been helpful to me as I have looked again at all of the ways, shocking ways, in which God used women in Scripture. And then you put that up against some of the tropes that we hear, which, you know, I, I know that you guys in your pastoral ministry have walked through a bunch of that. You want to talk about that a little bit? Are you comfortable doing that?

Mark Lauterbach 39:21

Yeah, why don't I start and just say that, in the forty years I've been a pastor, this whole discussion has taken on a life of its own.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 39:31

Right.

Mark Lauterbach 39:32

It started, it was pretty simple. Can women be elders? No. So whatever an elder is doing women shouldn't be doing. Is the husband the responsible person in the home? Yes. That was it. So it began to take on a whole set of characteristics about, can, can women preach a mixed group of men and women at a conference? Can, can women quote Scripture in a small group of men present? It went down the modesty road. In the marriages, could women be in charge of the budget? But can women make financial decisions? In other words, the basic principle was pretty much what was discussed earlier on, and then it took on a life of its own. It got developed in all kinds of ways, but actually has become, I think, distracting and suffocating.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 40:37

Yes.

Rondi Lauterbach 40:38

I think the phrase "biblical manhood and biblical womanhood" is one of the places where the conversation extended far past the Scriptural boundaries.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 40:48

Right.

Rondi Lauterbach 40:49

I don't see Scripture talking in those terms.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 40:52

Right.

Rondi Lauterbach 40:54

That, then, because then you start to talk about character qualities. What's feminine? What's masculine?

Elyse Fitzpatrick 40:59

Right.

Rondi Lauterbach 40:59

And you know what, that's not what matters.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 41:02

No.

Rondi Lauterbach 41:03

It's not what color you like or how you, how sweet you are.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 41:07

Right.

Rondi Lauterbach 41:08

So I think that was a real left turn that took us off into some bad territory.

Mark Lauterbach 41:13

So we, we were for a period of time in a, in a culture that we would now look back on and say it was a patriarchal, hierarchical culture.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 41:24

Right.

Mark Lauterbach 41:25

Where everything was related to the role of the husband and the role of the pastors. And everything was about the husband's leadership and the pastor's leadership, and that the people were quote, unquote, just sheep. They're just sheep. We can't expect much of them. And I don't think we realized at the time how much we didn't fit that.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 41:49

Right.

Mark Lauterbach 41:50

We took it and there were things to learn from it.

Rondi Lauterbach 41:53

There was some beauty there.

Mark Lauterbach 41:54

There was some beauty in it, some things we had neglected. But as we look back on it, we realize it just, we didn't think it was right. I mean, I remember a day when basically Rondi was to be defined as under my headship. And, and I thought that meant I was responsible to lead the family and to care for the family. Well, that meant far more than that. It meant her whole identity. So much so,

Elyse Fitzpatrick 42:20

Right.

Mark Lauterbach 42:22

That she actually spoke harshly to another leader in the church and came home and told me about it, feeling grief for it, and I walked, we walked through what it looks like to repent and go back and pursue reconciliation. Matthew 5, Matthew 18. And she went back, and the man said, you shouldn't be here. Your husband should be here for you. And she came back and told me that, and both of us said,

Rondi Lauterbach 42:46

What?

Mark Lauterbach 42:47

Well, does that mean you're not accountable to God, that you have no voice? Have you, I mean it just,

Elyse Fitzpatrick 42:54

Yeah.

Mark Lauterbach 42:54

It was bizarre

Rondi Lauterbach 42:55

Right. It was bizarre. I kind of dropped my jaw like, huh?

Elyse Fitzpatrick 42:59

Yeah.

Rondi Lauterbach 43:00

I sinned against you, brother.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 43:02

Yeah.

Rondi Lauterbach 43:02

I think Scripture says I'm supposed to come, I didn't talk, I didn't try to argue it then. I just kind of walked away like, what was that?

Elyse Fitzpatrick 43:09

Yeah. Right. And when you, and when you come up against situations like that, I have found in my own life, I just, it's the jaw drop. It's like, wait, I, I don't even know how to respond to what you're saying right now. I, that's not even a category. You know, I'm not supposed to, if I sinned against you as a woman, I'm not supposed to say anything to you? My husband has to do it? And you know, when you take, if you take something like let's say ... I hate using the word roles, but I'm going to use it anyway. If you take the roles that we say that we can clearly see in Scripture, and then you build off of that parachurch ministries and other ministries that that's their primary message, then you have to add all of that other garbage on.

Rondi Lauterbach 44:14

Otherwise, they don't have any justification.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 44:17

Right. There's no justification. Because there's, there's, I mean, you can, there's not that much to say.

Rondi Lauterbach 44:25

No, there really isn't. Yeah, and it's like, let's say that, and then let's move on. Let's take that with us and move into life.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 44:32

Right, right. But then you've got to make up all of this other stuff about it. And then you have to justify your own existence, and then it becomes, and I'm gonna let this be our last question, because we're about out of time, but then it becomes the shibboleth.

Rondi Lauterbach 44:49

Yes.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 44:50

Then it becomes the litmus test. Do you agree about these issues and parse them exactly the way we think they should be parsed? And if you don't, then you are outside, you're outside orthodoxy. You know, and that's one of the things that Eric has talked a lot about. Eric is, Eric is a credobaptist. He doesn't think that you should baptize babies. And he thinks that baptizing babies is a bad thing. And yet, people who are Baptists have great fellowship with people who are Presbyterian. Because for them, it's not a tier one issue. It's probably far more important of an issue than what we do with gender roles. But we're okay having fellowship and letting people who are Baptists and people who are Presbyterians speak at our conferences and it's not an issue. But if you are a person who won't sign certain statements, then you can't. So talk a little bit about the, about that sort of, how it's a tier one issue now, and how important or not important it is for you. Where are you guys with that?

Rondi Lauterbach 46:21

Well, I think becoming more of a credal- Looking back to the creeds and the important doctrines like the Trinity, and the creeds of the church, and our salvation, those are so enormous. That's tier one. And that's where we need to be spending most, all, all of our time, most of our time. Now, God created male and female, so we're dealing with male and female-

Elyse Fitzpatrick 46:50

right

Rondi Lauterbach 46:50

all the time.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 46:50

Right.

Rondi Lauterbach 46:51

But, as we've said, male and female primarily is seen as unto unity, and primarily is seen as we work together for the good of the church in society.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 47:02

Right.

Rondi Lauterbach 47:02

The fact that all those, all those commands are addressed to male and female, they're generic commands.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 47:08

Right, brothers and sisters.

Rondi Lauterbach 47:10

Right, brothers and sisters. So really, it comes down to, to, the male and female differences, the roles for, you know, what's the best term to use. That's a very small part. Mark summarized the issue this way. I thought it was a great statement. He said, roles are not the operating system of the Christian life.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 47:32

Right.

Rondi Lauterbach 47:32

It's like, the Mac, the the operating system that runs behind my computer makes everything else work. What's that in the Christian life? Well, it's the Trinity.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 47:43

Yes, yes.

Rondi Lauterbach 47:44

It's Scripture as the revealed Word of God. It's, it's our salvation. It's not gender roles. And we have made it the operating system.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 47:54

Right, and, and to the harm of the church who ignores, some churches ignore half their gifts, and to the harm of women who are gifted and silenced, and to the harm of men who need help.

Mark Lauterbach 48:15

But my thought on that, if I was to summarize it, and because I agree with all that, but the way I would put it is this has become a schismatic issue.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 48:25

Right.

Mark Lauterbach 48:26

A schism is when secondary points are made primary points and people rally around them.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 48:31

Say that again.

Mark Lauterbach 48:32

That's-

Elyse Fitzpatrick 48:33

Say that again.

Mark Lauterbach 48:34

Schism, a schism is when secondary points are made primary points and people rally around them, and they begin to define everything. It's a faction. It is evil.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 48:46

Yes.

Mark Lauterbach 48:46

It is disrupting the unity of the church. And this has become so dominating that it's actually brought some people to corrupt the doctrine of the Trinity.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 48:57

Right.

Mark Lauterbach 48:57

Ingrained all that

Elyse Fitzpatrick 48:58

Right.

Mark Lauterbach 48:59

This has been read into everything. And that is my definition of a schism. It's a secondary issue. We should be able to agree that there's some distinctive roles for men and women, that men and women are different, and then go about and allow people to apply it as they see fit in their marriages and in their churches without this endless wrangling. And name calling. There are no hard and soft complementarians. That's just pure rubbish. I mean, that's like being a pure Calvinist or an impure Calvinist. And again, then you go to factions. I represent true reformed theology and credobaptist theology,

Elyse Fitzpatrick 49:36

Right.

Mark Lauterbach 49:36

as your faction. And they're destructive to the peace and unity of the church. And the name of Christ.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 49:44

Thank you. Well, thank you guys. Thanks for being on. Thank you for listening in too, our dear Worthy listeners. I want to remind you that Eric and I are funding this podcast ourselves, and we would love it if you would join our Patreon supporters. If you do that you're going to hear extra content that Eric and I are producing, and we'll even, we'll even have live zoom calls with you. I mean, how fun is that gonna be? So please, please rate and review us. Please leave good reviews on iTunes for us. What that does for us is it helps other people when they're searching, using the iTunes or whatever podcast app you use, it helps people find us. And then please, please remember to, to pray for Eric and I as we are doing our best to try to move this conversation, which is in a very schismatic atmosphere, we're trying to move it forward in a respectful way. So Mark and Rondi, thank you for being with us today. It's been a real privilege to have you.

Mark Lauterbach 51:08

Thanks for having us.