

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

**Hosts:** Elyse Fitzpatrick and Eric Schumacher

**Episode 26 — Guest:** Brittany Smith & Doug Serven

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Eric Schumacher 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 will not 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.

Welcome to the Worthy podcast. I'm Eric Schumacher along with my co-host, Elyse Fitzpatrick. And we are excited to have with us today two guests, Brittany Smith and Doug Serven, who have edited, together they have edited a book, called Co-Laborers and Co-Heirs: A Family Conversation, and we're going to come back to what that book is about.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 1:32

Just to introduce our guests today, Brittany grew up in Mesquite, Texas, attended the University of Texas, and has a Bachelor of Arts in English. So we will try to make sure we get all of our grammar correct on the podcast today. After being involved,

That ain't happening.

Eric Schumacher 1:52

After being involved at RUF, Reformed University Fellowship, at University of Texas, she worked for two years as an intern at the University of Oklahoma with RUF. She's married to Dan, and they both attended Covenant Seminary together where she received a Masters of Education Ministries in 2011. She loves college students, teaching the Bible, the ministry of RUF, and now she's settled down in Tucson where she enjoys desert wildlife, playing board games on the patio, and reading books to her kids. Those are all good hobbies. And Doug is a pastor of City Presbyterian Church in Oklahoma City. He has been a campus minister, seminary student, professional writer and journalism student, a beer brewer, a marathon runner, a crossfitter, an avid reader, a beard grower, and a buffalo head collector. And

Doug Serven 2:47

Well sort of, he has one.

Eric Schumacher 2:51

And he loves urban planning, strategic thinking, great friends and laughter, profound and inane conversations (hopefully we will fit one of those), a Cardinals fan, and he loves his wife and kids most of all. And he is the author of books such as TwentySomeone, The Organized Pastor, and Everything Is Meaningless? So Doug and Brittany, welcome to the podcast.

Brittany Smith 3:16

Thanks for having us.

Doug Serven 3:16

Thanks for having us.

Eric Schumacher 3:17

Yeah, it's good to be here. I, when did Co-Laborers and Co-Heirs come out?

Brittany Smith 3:23

I think it was 2018? Was it 2019? Was it last year?

Eric Schumacher 3:27

2019 is what the copyright says.

Brittany Smith 3:29

Oh, 2019.

Eric Schumacher 3:30

So, I had the opportunity to read an early draft of it and endorsed it. I think Elyse did as well. And I absolutely loved the book. I love what you're doing with it. Why don't one of you, maybe Brittany, explain to us how this book came to be, what it's about, what you're trying to accomplish with it.

Brittany Smith 3:50

Sure, Doug should speak a little bit to the format of it, because it was kind of modeled initially off of another book that he had put out called *Heal Us, Emmanuel*. So he can talk a little bit about that. But essentially the, so we're members of the denomination, the PCA, Presbyterian Church of America, and in 2016 and 2017 there was a lot of discussions regarding women in the church, specifically because there was a, what's called a study report that was commissioned by the denomination to study this issue of women serving in the church. And so there was a lot of debate and formal discussion at the national level at our national meeting, which happens in June every summer. And so at both of those meetings because of the way our denomination is governed, it's all pastors, and we only ordain men to the pastorate in the PCA. So it was basically a bunch of men who are leaders and are fathers and brothers discussing the issue of women in the church. And it- there was good parts and bad parts to it. And so I felt like for me, at the end of 2017, after it had been two summers of all this discussion, I just really felt like the discussion of women serving the church was not complete without women getting to add to the conversation. So I talked to Doug about the possibility of putting together a compilation of, primarily focusing on the voices of women describing their experiences, teaching us about theology, and about that, their experiences in the church and serving in the church. Alongside maybe some men as well, we did include some chapters written by men. But I mostly wanted just to contribute what was lacking in the conversation of women serving in the church.

Doug Serven 5:52

Well, that's a very good explanation. And thank you both for endorsing the book. But Brittany, she just yeah, that's, that's exactly what it is. We had previously done a book about racial reconciliation with that, with the format she's talking about. That came out in conjunction with a racial reconciliation overture that was confessing sins of omission that- so we had already previously confessed sins of commission, things that we had done, but this was a new one of like, stuff we hadn't done. And so I was, I had the idea of, I know all these pastors and good writers, and surely they've written about this. Let's just put it all together in a book and hear different voices to speak into this in a different way outside of a meeting that could get out there. And so Brittany's book is the same idea to let other people speak instead of just being spoken for.

Eric Schumacher 6:56

And I would say as, as I read it- so I'm a Southern Baptist pastor. So there was a lot of the PCA that I was unfamiliar with, so- But I felt like it was well explained. And I, I found it to be a profitable experience to read the book just because being able to listen to these women explain what their experiences have been like in the church, in a denomination. It was just very beneficial. I think one thing, and correct me if I'm wrong, I don't even think all of the contributors necessarily agreed with each other on what they were asking for or wanting. But it gave an opportunity to give voice to that. How has that been received?

Doug Serven 7:43

Well, I think you're right. So we didn't, we tried to cultivate a conversation. Now the conversation is in a sort of narrow band. So it wasn't like any conversation. So there wasn't like a big overthrow revolution, or we weren't really getting radical, but it can feel radical to people that aren't used to any conversation. But we didn't take out essays, we didn't really say like, this is what you need to write about. It was different women writing about what they wanted. Some of them are very theological. Some of them are very personal. And then also Brittany can talk about, there were essays considered to be written by many women that just felt, like, couldn't write them. It wasn't safe, or it wasn't the time maybe to talk about this issue, or it was too hurtful, or was too personal, or it affected their husbands. And so there was a lot of behind the scenes stuff, as you both know. When you start talking about this, there's a lot going on. But what's in the book is not what we told people should be there. It's what we got.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 9:08

And so what was the question you were basically asking the women to answer?

Brittany Smith 9:13

I think, I think what I- I mean, I think it was a broad and somewhat open-ended question, but part of what it was is what do you have to add to the discussion that needs to be told? Do you have a story? Do you have a lesson? Do you have a perspective that your brothers and sisters at large and the PCA would profit from? I like that word you used, Eric: profitable. We're looking for, I mean, there's one chapter written by Maria Garriott who writes about the male majority ministry space, and just talks about some different experiences she has when she attends like a presbytery meeting, which is the meeting, like a regional meeting, of all the churches, which is almost always going to be like, highly majority men, because it's pastors and elders who really do the business of the church at that meeting. But there's often a lot of women who attend just to know what's going on in the denomination or in their region, who are presenting something, or who work alongside these men in ministry in different ways. And just

the experience of what it's like to be in that space and be someone who's unexpected. Like that was just a beneficial experience to be told, both for, you know, the encouragement of women who are in those spaces or who were- who might be in the future, as well as the men who maybe don't know how to talk to a woman when she shows up at that meeting. So I think, I think the question we, we wanted was, what do you have to offer? Because we don't always know. I mean, we like Doug said, we didn't dictate, you know, we need a chapter about this particular topic, or we need a chapter, or we need you to write this thing. We just said, tell us about what it's like to be you in the church, what God has called you to, you know, within the bounds of what the PCA believes. We're not trying to change major things in the PCA about women or ordination or anything like that.

Doug Serven 11:12

I really appreciate y'all's book. Thank you so much for writing it. I was, I was re-looking at it today, you know, in preparation and thinking to myself how, how well done it is and how easy to follow. And then I was thinking it's so sad it has to be written.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 11:27

Yeah.

Doug Serven 11:28

Like, why do we need this book?

Elyse Fitzpatrick 11:29

Right.

Doug Serven 11:30

It's so basic, right? And, and yet we do need this book. So I think our book is a little bit like if you'd asked 30 people to read this book and write about it. It's a similar natured project. Just because the- I think the difference is we didn't like tell them what to say. And I know for me, I know many of the women in the book, and I was reading things that I know generally, but I didn't know like this woman's story. And it sort of intersected with mine at pieces. And I remember first time, one of them I read Katie Ribera's and she was one of my students. And I just, I was weeping at this little thing that happened. And then the, like, redemptive moment. I was just like, how are we in this place? You know, and it just, it just hits you

when people are telling their own stories instead of just thinking about it theologically, or systematically, or- That's why we want to, like, get voices out there to be able to tell them themselves, you know.

Eric Schumacher 12:41

I think what you said there about hearing peoples' stories, one of the reasons that's so important, as opposed to just thinking theologically, is I know if someone would have asked me ten years ago about the value of men and women, I would have said, oh yeah, my theology tells me that we're equal. But I've had women point out, you know, ways that I have not treated them as equal. And even Brittany's comment about, how do you speak to a woman when she shows up at, you know, a general assembly meeting or whatever? Like, I was thinking the same thing Doug just expressed is like, why do we even need to have that conversation? But, you know, it's, it's, I don't think about how should I talk to my sister, you know, when I go home for Christmas. It's, I know how to talk to my sister. And, but for some reason we are here. I want to ask about the title of your book. There's three terms that stand out in it: co-laborers, co-heirs, and family. What's the significance of each of those terms to what's going on here?

Doug Serven 13:52

Well just a little, we call it CoCo, just so you know.

Eric Schumacher 13:57

All right. Elyse likes cocoa.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 13:59

I do.

Doug Serven 14:00

It's too long, so we just call it CoCo.

Eric Schumacher 14:03

CoCo. All right.

Doug Serven 14:05

Brittany, you tell why.

Brittany Smith 14:07

Well, I felt a little bit fraught about our title, because I- it was one of the hardest parts of the book, honestly, was picking a title. And we actually took it from the very last chapter, which is written by Greg Perry. It was the title of an article he had already written. And so we thought that that was one of the best kind of summaries of the book. So he- his was co-laborers and co-heirs. And I added "a family conversation" just because- So I remember adding the part of family conversation because I do feel a lot of, I feel frustration, but I also feel a lot of compassion for people who are really afraid of this conversation and who enter into thinking about this with fear and a lot of knee-jerk responses that are negative, and some people just feel like- make a lot of assumptions, because of a lot of understandable things in the past of the PCA and how we were formed. So I, in light of that, I really wanted to include the idea that we're just having a conversation. This is not some kind of, you know, agenda or it's not a

Doug Serven 15:28

...final word.

Brittany Smith 15:29

Yeah, we're not coming for you, you know, we're not out to get you or to zing you. We're just wanting to talk. We just want to be heard and listen to others well, and talk about things that are hard and that are scary. Like, if we're in a family, if we really are calling ourselves the family of God, we have to be able to have hard conversations about things that scare us that are important. So that's the reason I included that part of it and co-laborers co-heirs was just a good kind of summary of the way that I think men and women work together. Like another, another title we considered at one point was Better Together. Just the idea that we want to be together as much as we can and co-labor as much as we can together, not be separate and isolated, and focus on the things that are different as much as how we're together in Christ.

Eric Schumacher 15:38

Well I think that title uses really great biblical terminology. I mean, Paul talks about women being his co-laborers, hear about wives being co-heirs. It's just a great reminder that this isn't men versus women,

we're on the same team, we're in- we have the same great commission, we're in this together. And a family should be a place of safety, where you can be open, where you can have conversation. You both mentioned a couple times, Brittany, you've used the word fear, but there were people who this is, they're afraid of this. And I think on both sides. On the receiving end they're, they're afraid to even enter this conversation, and others are afraid to say what they have to say. And Doug, you, you've mentioned a couple times that it might not be- I think some people that you asked, it wasn't safe for them. Can you unpack why it wouldn't be safe to have this conversation?

Doug Serven 17:17

Yes, I can.

Well, of course, some of these stories, and I got a, I'm saying stories, but also there are chapters that are just teaching and biblical teaching. So it's not like some, like emotive story. It's a range, but some of the women consider writing and, you know, if you imagine your husband is a pastor and you're going to write about your experience in the church, I mean, that could be, it could be implicating friends. And it could, this is an area where it affects your job. And that's true, like, and that's sort of something we've been talking about more in the me too movement and all that stuff. And then there's like, it's connected in the church is an even like, stranger, deeper, more confusing. I think it should be more redemptive, but it's often even more hurtful. And then I know that a lot of people, and it's not just women, men and women get zinged real quick anytime you're talking about something that is very within the bounds of our denomination or theology or orthodoxy. But it's to the whatever side of the far. And, and so, so it, there are criticisms just because it's just like a slippery slope argument all the time, non stop. If you're talking about power, you're talking about Marxism.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 19:02

Right.

Doug Serven 19:02

And so that's just where people are at right now. And I've heard that a lot. And so that's where people are afraid to write because they know that people are afraid to hear. But I think these, these chapters are very brave. And if someone were to read them and not just instantly dismiss it, it's very brave. Of course, you know, I have tons of friends, Brittany, like think this is, this book is ridiculous. It doesn't even go a tenth as far as it should, right? You know, and so it's like y'all are like Neanderthals back here. We're talking about this stuff. And so it's a, it's a strange space.

Eric Schumacher 19:39

The book did a great job in its tone. It doesn't come across as, you know, revolutionaries with pitchforks and torches, you know, and a guillotine demanding someone's head roll. It, I felt like the contributors were very humble in what they had to say. And, and that's why I would recommend it to anybody in any context, particularly pastors who may have never had a conversation about this before. This would be a great book to pick up and read through, highlight things, and maybe even give to women in your church and say, would you read this? And come back and tell me where you can relate with what people are saying, It'd be a good, a good conversation.

Doug Serven 20:20

Well, we're, like our men's group is reading it.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 20:25

Really?

Brittany Smith 20:28

Several churches here are using it for their elder training.

Eric Schumacher 20:31

Oh, wow.

Brittany Smith 20:32

Which I think that's been really encouraging to hear that it's been used that way, that they would want to listen to women as they get, think about the church.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 20:43

You know, we've gotten, we've gotten pushback, as I'm sure you have as well, from the Worthy book. And I've actually kind of been surprised in one way, because it's not like we're saying anything in the

Worthy book that is revolutionary in any way. All we're doing is saying that women have value. And, but then the pushback, of course, that we've gotten is, well, all you do is talk about women having value, but you don't talk about what they can't do. And, and it seems to me that we're at a place in, in conservative Christianity, where we can't even talk about listening to a woman's story without there being suspicion that somehow we're driving some agenda beyond what we're saying. I'm wondering if you had that same kind of response to the book? What's it been like in your circles?

Brittany Smith 21:58

Yeah, I think that's a very common pushback that I get with any, surrounding this conversation at all. One pushback we got that surprised me was, and I found this both in like interpersonal, just casual conversations, as well as like in a review of the book that was published, was that they were frustrated that we didn't focus enough on sort of the traditional conservative roles of women in the home and church, that we didn't give honor to them enough. One in particular, that we just didn't honor the role of being a mother enough, which is was a funny pushback considering we have two chapters about motherhood in the book, they're just not nuclear family regular. It was being a single mother or an African American single mother in the church. And so I think, I think part of what I have heard that pushback, I think it comes from a place of where, in the broader culture, a lot of times stay at home moms or people who prioritize being a wife or mother, they feel not honored in that role in like broader secular culture, which really wants women to be empowered and to do wonderful things. Which is great, right, but they feel like there's not the place for them there. And I think in the conservative church, they found a place where they find that honor in that role, and the worry that if we talk too much about the other stuff with women, that that's going to somehow be diminished, or that there's not going to be enough to go around. So I, that's one thing that makes, makes me sad, just because I'm like, there's abundance in, you know, in the family of God for all women who are called to all different things.

Eric Schumacher 23:43

I think that's interesting that here you have a book about people talking about how they perhaps aren't well represented in the conversations that go on because they don't, perhaps fit into certain categories. And then you have people who are well represented coming back and saying, I wasn't well represented in your book. And that offends me. Well, yeah, there you go. That's a good starting point to listen to these other voices. And also, it's interesting, you know, about, you didn't go on enough about the value of moms or you didn't talk about traditional roles. Because I'm thinking there's, there's an abundance of those books out there. You know, if you, you want to hear about that, the reason we're writing about what we're writing about is because we think it's not written about enough. So I'm wondering just practically, so Doug, what does it look like for you as a pastor to practice what the book is preaching?

Doug Serven 24:46

Oh, that's a great question. I just have really started even more, I don't know how much more, but really valuing having women at as many steps along the way, speaking into as many places as possible. So like one example would be, we try to have our, our pastoral session meeting, our pastors and elders are all men. But we have unordained diaconal representatives. And we have staff members. And so we try to do our meetings as much as we can all together to value all the input up and down the table and experiences and roles. So that's one example of like, trying to just say, we want more voices and more different voices, than we technically need to have.

And then we've been, a lot of women for whatever reason are like Presbyterian nerds. And so they like to come to Presbyterian nerdy stuff and learn all the stuff. And you know, there's people like that. I'm not personally one of those. I'm required to go. So if anyone goes to these things and they're not required, I think they're weird. But so we've been having more men and women come to our presbytery meetings and general assembly, like general assembly was in Dallas. And so we had, I don't know, ten, I don't think, maybe ten women come to Dallas, and like one of them sat through two days of overtures meetings. And so then there, you know, there just needs to be some commentary along the way. So we set up a group to like, talk about what's going on. And so that, I think that's super cool. Because it's, it is interesting at some level, you know, and to different people.

I had our last men's retreat I had four women speak at my invitation. So the, there was one man, there were five speakers. They all spoke about 20 minutes. And they came in and shared. I gave them sort of different prompts to share. And I was trying to sort of communicate to the men that we can listen to the women, of course, which again, is easy to say, but we don't always do. And then I was also making the point that like, there are some of you that don't sit under the authority, of whatever level, of women for weeks and months at a time. And I'm one of those people, right? I have to put myself into yoga classes or something, because I'm just not naturally under the direction of anyone, much less women. And I have to like, intentionally do that. And that's important for me. And something I've been trying to work on, and I wanted to communicate that to the men of our church. And I think it was, I mean, of course, the women were the best speakers we've ever had. That's not a surprise, but I may be like, brought up on charges any second.

Eric Schumacher 28:08

How was that received?

Doug Serven 28:08

It was awesome! They were wonderful. Of course. Everyone received it really great. It just was a surprise. I had never, I've never heard of it.

Eric Schumacher 28:20

Did you tell them ahead of time what was gonna happen?

Doug Serven 28:23

No, I didn't tell them anything. I didn't tell them they were gonna go to a yoga class either. So it was all a big surprise.

Eric Schumacher 28:31

Well, you probably didn't tell them that because you didn't want them to bring the yoga pants. So Brittany, what's it look like for you in your church to see this book lived out?

Brittany Smith 28:44

Well I'm a member of a church plant here in Tucson, so it's pretty small right now. And we don't have a session. We just still have a church planter who's running everything. And it's kind of a small, small enterprise right now. But that also means, I mean, in some ways that means all hands on deck, so everybody participates and throws in to help. And everyone's still invited to everything because, you know, our core team is made up of just whoever shows up.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 29:11

Right.

Brittany Smith 29:13

So I, but I can speak a little bit to how I like, how I see it playing out in our denomination specifically and my hopes for the future regarding this. Specifically I work with my husband on staff with, for RUF at the University of Arizona. And I really think RUF is a great thing the PCA is doing, and it's helping us learn how to work together alongside each other as men and women because we have really grown in our, equipping and inviting women to be in the ministry with our ordained pastors who are the RUF campus

ministers. So we have a campus staff program that's been growing incredibly fast for recruiting more women to work alongside in long term, well-equipped ministry roles, which I think is part, is part of the difficulty too that comes out in the book is women who feel called to vocational ministry or who want to be really active in the church serving in different ways. And it's hard to find out the places we can do that and find the invitations to do that. And I think RUF is doing a great job right now with that.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 30:26

So RUF, for those of you who don't know, is University, or Reformed University Fellowship. And, you know, I think that's a very interesting space for you to be, Brittany, because I, I wonder about the women who are your age or younger, and college students, and how they are receiving or not receiving the complementarian message of the church. I mean, honestly, one of my deep concerns is that I look at women who are perhaps in college now or maybe are just in high school. My own granddaughters are in high school. And I wonder, because they're growing up in an egalitarian society, and I wonder how they're going to embrace or refuse the faith. Because, because that's, that's the context in which they, in which they live. It's egalitarian. And to tell those women, you can't, you can't do anything except, you know, get married and have babies, I just don't know how that's gonna fly. So what's your experience been like?

Brittany Smith 31:54

Well, I think you're absolutely right, that that, that was another thing that was, things that set off thinking about putting a book together was, there was a comment in the debate at our general assembly from an RUF campus minister who said, I am with your daughters daily, and they are shrinking back from the ways that God would have them serve because they aren't sure what's allowed and what isn't. And we need to talk about this more with them and give them the freedom that they need to have in the areas that are open and that they're needed. And so, and Doug has, Doug constantly reminds me about this, too, because I'm somebody who really wants to see change happen really quickly. That part of us is thinking we're trying to think about our daughters and what kind of church they're going to grow up in, and what kind of world they're growing up in. And so I would say, for me in the ministry that I do locally, kind of part of what I, my emphasis has to be is, is that the issue of complementarian and egalitarianism is what- I will talk about it with you all day long. I don't have all the answers. But I am not going to make that a primary issue of what I want to see in their, like life. I mean, I have a sweet student who has been told by her female pastor that she should be a pastor when she grows up. And she came to me and was talking to me about that. And so part of what I see is my role is not to dictate to her, but it's to say like, let's look at the scriptures together. And thankfully she's in a place where she says, I don't know about that, because I don't know the Bible very well. So it's, it's an easy conversation for her in particular, but, you know, they are going to be asking these questions, and if we want to have a position of complementarianism where we say men and women are not exactly the same, and in the kingdom of God there are different things for different people, and, but that's not a bad thing, we have to find a way

to be, how to do that with integrity and that does not allow cultural norms or, or just things that make us feel comfortable because of tradition to dictate that at all.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 33:58

So you know, we know that a lot of times in the conservative church women are told, well, this is what it looks like to be biblically feminine. And so, and so, if a, let's say a college woman can't really see herself homeschooling five kids or baking pies or something like that, but feels called to be a physicist, then I wonder if that isn't leading to some wondering in Christian women about, am I wrongly gendered? Because my gender, you're telling me this is what my gender is supposed to look like, but I don't, I don't resonate with that at all. So is that something that you're seeing them ask those questions, or is that maybe just something I'm thinking of myself?

Brittany Smith 34:56

I saw that more when I, when we did ministry in the Bible Belt than I see it in Arizona now. I don't think that, I think if anything I want them to be thinking about, they tend to separate those things out too much, maybe.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 35:11

Okay.

Brittany Smith 35:12

But I do think that that happens, especially as they get closer thinking about marriage and thinking about what their life will be like after college. But I mean, I remember struggling through that, too. When I was in college, I thought I might want to be a doctor. And I was dating a guy who was really not okay with that, and had had some trouble with that issue, because he's like, well, how are you gonna be a wife and a mom. And but thankfully my campus minister at the time was like, you can do that. That's fine. Those are not mutually exclusive. And so,

Elyse Fitzpatrick 35:46

Yeah.

Brittany Smith 35:46

So Dan and I do I think have to have those conversations, as you know, don't overdo what it means to be a woman in a church.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 35:54

Right.

Brittany Smith 35:54

But add to that, you know, it's not in Scripture.

Doug Serven 35:56

One of the problems is that, and this is a weird problem, but there's enough people in the conservative evangelical church that agree to all that stuff, right? And there are enough pastors that have churches filled with those women. And so they sort of like already self-selected out the people that struggle with that. And so like, you can say, you know, hey, we're talking to people, because like, in RUF, and in the maybe bigger, broader church, you have lots of different conversations. But if you narrow it in to like your wife, who agrees with you, which maybe she does, and your children who you've raised, and you're not like, having lots of conversations, and you don't have anybody in your church that could come there and debate this, then you sort of think this is a terrible conversation, because you don't know anyone that's having it.

Eric Schumacher 36:53

Yeah.

Doug Serven 36:54

And so there's enough women that sort of like, sadly sabotage the women that are struggling with it. And so like, I think that the pastors and then the women that agree with all of this cultural stuff, makes it really hard for people that are trying to figure it out. And, you know, some people figure it out with a radical's solution. And, you know, gender confusion, and there's a tons of stuff, but there's other people just like, hey we want to like walk with Jesus, and be members of the church and, you know, contribute.

And so that doesn't, I don't think that needs to be sidelined or just discredited. But it does get sidelined and discredited. A lot.

Eric Schumacher 37:38

You've been listening to the Worthy podcast with Eric Schumacher and Elyse Fitzpatrick. Our special guests today have been Brittany Smith and Doug Serven, who have co-edited the Co-Laborers and Co-Heirs: A Family Conversation book. You like how I snuck another co- in there. Co-edited. Should have been on the cover too. But a great, a great book full of first person contributions about what it's like to be a woman in the church. And I would highly recommend it to those who want to get in on that conversation regardless of your denominational context. We allow you here on the podcast respectful conversations about the value of women in the church, the home and the world. And if you value those too, we hope you'll consider joining our Patreon team to help cover some of the costs of publishing this podcast. And, and be sure to share it with your friends or with perfect strangers on the street. So we're back with one more question from Elyse.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 38:40

So guys, let's assume that there are pastors, and we know that there are pastors, who do listen to us. What changes are you hoping to effect with this book? And so Doug, we'll let you go first. You're a pastor. What do you want to say to the guys?

Doug Serven 39:01

I wasn't expecting that question, so it's a good one. That means it's a great question, right? Um, what I want to say to the guy pastors is, this is an important conversation, obviously. It's not going to take a lot. In this sort of time right now, I mean, we're having this conversation in the virus, right? And so the bar is low, right? I, I can do five minutes of work, put it on Facebook, and people think it's like amazing. It's so crazy. But so like, I think in this, in this space, right, we're talking about is, the bar is low, and it's easy to get over it. Because the hurt is so much, and there's so much more redemptive work to do. So I mean, inviting women to a meeting seems easy. So let's do that, right? Let's, let's just try to treat people with respect and dignity. I mean, that seems basic. And as I listen to women, or the women I listened to are saying that's not being done. Okay, so like, you've got to think through your, what you're communicating and, and how it's coming across, and the people that are interacting with it, and what does it feel like, and what is it like to be a woman in the church? In this church? And how can I move that up? So I mean even, even me saying this sounds like, yeah, no kidding, um,

Elyse Fitzpatrick 40:56

Yeah.

Doug Serven 40:57

Like, let's get something even better, or- I don't know. But it just like it, it baffles me at how we're talking about this. So I don't know. That's not, I feel like that's a non answer. I'm sorry, Elyse. I don't know how to answer your question.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 41:12

Yeah. It's, you know, it seems like, it's so obvious. It's so obvious. That's how we felt about Worthy. It's so obvious. And yet, we're having to have the conversation. So Brittany, what would you like to say?

Brittany Smith 41:34

I think what Doug is trying to say is that it's obvious, but it's one of those things that we like can easily pay lip service to while we still are blind to a lot of our own assumptions about the world and about the people around us. And so we've got to seek out ways to examine our assumptions, but take more effort than you are currently giving to the topic. So like what Doug was saying, speaking out, putting himself in a space where a woman is giving him instructions, opens himself up to an experience he doesn't have very often and might make him think differently about the women he has a casual conversation with.

So I think about that- one thing I've been doing is trying to hunt down women in our denomination who are doing like- one thing our denomination has been recommended from that study report I mentioned earlier from 2017 was the possibility of creating something called a commissioned church worker status for people who essentially, it would not be ordination. But it would be something else that would enable women who were going to work in vocational ministry to be endorsed and possibly have some kind of standard of equipping that they've been assessed by so they can go out and do different areas of work in the world. That matters for women who want to be prison chaplains at women's prisons, who want to work in non-ordained hospital chaplaincy programs, which they can go and get a seminary degree for, but which a lot of times requires some kind of denominational endorsement to come. And there's been some difficulty, I know, with women in our generation who have an interest and feel called to that, that want to be in the PCA. They feel like PCA is their home, and they want to be a member of their local PCA church, but there's no path, easy path to find a way to get that endorsement and to be able to earn their living with the job that they want to have. So I would love to see that particular issue be taken up and

investigated a little more for the sake of women. Because if we don't, I do- from what I can tell, they're just going to leave, leave our church and go somewhere that'll be easy to get endorsed.

Eric Schumacher 43:51

Well, Doug and Brittany, thank you for being on the podcast. It's been a pleasure.

Doug Serven 43:56

It's been good to talk. Thank you.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 43:57

Thank you.

Eric Schumacher 43:59

And to our listeners, thanks for listening in. Be sure to go and get yourself a copy of Co-Laborers, Co-Heirs: A Family Conversation, and join us next time on Worthy.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>