

THE GREAT SEX RESCUE

Hi. This is Natalie Hoffman of FlyingFreeNow.com, and you're listening to the Flying Free Podcast, a support resource for women of faith looking for hope and healing from hidden emotional and spiritual abuse.

NATALIE: Welcome to Episode 108 of the Flying Free Podcast. Today, I'm super excited to be visiting with Sheila Wray Gregoire. Did I say it right? I meant to ask you before.

SHEILA: You did really well, Natalie. Yeah.

NATALIE: I don't know why. I see it all the time, and I don't think I've ever really had to say it out loud. Anyway, she's a speaker. She's a marriage blogger. She's had a blog "To Love, Honor, and Vacuum" for how many years?

SHEILA: Twelve, I think. No, thirteen now. March 2008. Thirteen years.

NATALIE: Oh my gosh. Were you one of the first bloggers?

SHEILA: I was in that Christian marriage bubble that we were all in. I think you were even in that too, back then. Then I endured somehow. I was really transformed and got a lot louder over the last few years.

NATALIE: I think you are amazing, and your blog is amazing too. It's really popular. She's also the author of eight books. How many years did it take you to write eight books?

SHEILA: Well, I started in 2003. Then COVID-19 has been really good to me, because I've just been turning them out this year. But yes, the latest one came out yesterday, which is what we're talking about today.

NATALIE: So tell us what it's called.

SHEILA: "The Great Sex Rescue." I always get the subtitle wrong.

NATALIE: I wrote it down. The subtitle is, "The Lies You've Been Taught and How to Recover What God Intended."

SHEILA: Yes. So it's all about the lies that evangelical Christian culture and Christian books told women about sex. It's one of those books that is going to make you feel

vindicated, validated, and seen. That is our prayer for this book going forward.

NATALIE: That is awesome. When was it released?

SHEILA: Yesterday. So it's brand new.

NATALIE: Oh my goodness! This is amazing. Here we are. Just on the back end, we are actually recording this in December.

SHEILA: Merry Christmas!

NATALIE: But you guys won't be hearing this until March. I can pre-order it right now, I just found out. So I am definitely pre-ordering my own copy. I was also telling Sheila we are kind of like yin and yang, because she is all about helping women have great marriages and I'm all about helping women get out of their crappy marriages. So here we are together. I'm so excited.

SHEILA: But we're good friends. We've known each other for years online. I've sent people to you all the time. I feel like we're in this together even if it is different sides, because we're both after the same thing, which is a Jesus-centered life, whatever that may look like.

NATALIE: That's right. Here's the other thing. A lot of the women I work with end up getting divorced from their abusive partners, and they end up getting remarried. Then they come to your blog trying to figure out, "What does a healthy marriage look like? How can I make this even more amazing?"

SHEILA: Yes. I'm a safe place.

NATALIE: Yes. Sheila is a very safe place, because you can go to her blog... If you are listening and are not sure if your relationship is problematic or not – you probably know it's problematic – but if you're not sure if it borders on abusive, go to Sheila's blog. She has a lot of great articles that talk about that as well. She doesn't skirt around the issue of abuse at all on her blog. So she's a safe resource.

The other thing about Sheila is that she lives in Canada, and I'm in America. I was thinking, "Man, we could be such good friends if we lived close to each other." I will not lie. My husband and I brought up the idea of moving to Canada. Just be glad that you live up there and not down here. It's crazy down here.

SHEILA: Yep.

NATALIE: Let's get into the discussion about your new book. First, tell us why you wrote this book in the first place.

SHEILA: I was tired of arguments over what constitutes healthy marriage teaching, because we go around and around in circles about doctrine. What does it mean that man is the head of the wife? We talk about complementarianism and egalitarianism. We see these things in very doctrinal terms. When you're engaged in that kind of argument, it's difficult to feel like you are heard or to even get past people's blocks. What we decided to do was take it completely out of the realm of doctrine and look at data. So we surveyed 20,000 women last year. Thank you for sending so many people to our survey.

NATALIE: Wow! 20,000 women!

SHEILA: 20,000 women. It's the largest survey that has ever been done of its kind. It was a long survey. I think you sent about 800 people, women, to me. So you who are listening, I know a lot of you took that survey. I just want to say thank you, because I know it was long. It was like, twenty-five minutes. It was huge. But what we were looking at is all these evangelical teachings. We wanted to measure what their outcome was. If you believed this stuff, if you were taught this stuff, if you believed it before you were married or believed it now, how does that impact your orgasm rate, your rate of sexual pain, and your marital satisfaction?

Once we did that, then we started looking at where evangelical teaching spread some of these ideas. We looked at best-selling marriage books. We took a lot of quotes from them. We wanted to show that if you had a really bad marriage, or if you had a terrible sex-life, maybe it wasn't your fault. Maybe it's just that you were taught really bad stuff, and this was perpetuated in your marriage. This just made you feel invisible and alone, and that wasn't your fault. Let's see how we can get around that and see things how God really intended.

NATALIE: Wow. That is absolutely incredible. This is a huge gift to Christian women in our time. Can you tell us what some books were that you pulled quotes from?

SHEILA: We looked at the top ten marriage books on Amazon on the particular day that we started writing this. We didn't know how else to measure it. We excluded three of them because they didn't talk about sex, so we couldn't measure the sex messages from them. So we took the seven best-selling marriage books. Then we looked at six

sex books that were iconic – either best-sellers now or they were the go-to sex book for years. For instance, “The Act of Marriage” by Tim and Beverly LaHaye.

NATALIE: Yes!

SHEILA: Everybody who got married in the 80s or 90s read that one, which means that most pastors today, that was their sex-ed. So even though it’s not a best-selling book today, we felt it was important to look at the iconic sex books. So “The Act of Marriage,” “Intended For Pleasure,” “Sheet Music,” “Every Man’s Battle” – those kinds of books. In marriage books, we looked at “Love and Respect,” “His Needs/Her Needs,” “For Women Only,” “Sacred Marriage” – I have a whole list, and I know you will put a link in the podcast page where people can download that list and look for each book.

NATALIE: That gives us an idea, because I’m sure everyone who is in their car driving or whatever is going, “Yes! I read every single one of those books!” Oh my word. What were some of the harmful messages that you uncovered in your study?

SHEILA: One of the most harmful messages was that a woman is obligated to have sex with her husband when he wants it. That message is everywhere in Christian books. They take the “do not deprive” verse, which is 1 Corinthians 7:3-5, which is about how the husband’s body does not belong to him but to the wife, the wife’s body does not belong to her but to the husband, and you’re not supposed to deprive each other except for a time and for prayer that you may come together again, et cetera. So, “We’re not supposed to deprive each other.” What books do is take that as the absolute command to women that there is absolutely no reason that you are allowed to say no. Books say this again and again and again, that you are selfish, that you can’t say “no.”

There are so many problems with this, but the very first one is a definitional one. If I were to say to you, you who are listening and are married, “Did you have sex last night?” First, that is a stupid and uncomfortable question to ask. But you are picturing something very specific. When I ask, “Did you have sex last night?” you think what I am asking is (and I hope there are no children listening because I’m going to use some words here, so just a warning to turn the volume down if there are kids listening) but you think what I’m asking is, “Did the husband put his penis into the wife’s vagina and move around until he climaxed?” because that is our definition of sex. So if you believe that is the definition of sex, then when you read, “Do not deprive,” you think, “I’m not supposed to deprive him of sex,” and what you are thinking is, “I’m not supposed to deprive him of the chance to put his penis in my vagina and move around until he climaxes, and he’s not supposed to deprive me of him putting his penis into my vagina and moving around until he climaxes.”

That says absolutely nothing about her experience. She is completely missing from that definition, and that is not the biblical definition of sex because in Genesis 4:1, if you read it in the King James (which is actually one of the best translations of this verse), it says that "Adam knew his wife, Eve, and they conceived unto them a son." When I heard that verse in junior high, I remember thinking that was hilarious, right? "God is embarrassed to use the real word because the verse said, 'know.'"

But there is something there that is really important, because the Hebrew word "to know" that God deliberately used for sex in that verse is the same word that David uses in the Psalms when he says over and over again, "Search me and know me, oh God! Know my innermost heart. You know everything about me." It's this longing for connection. I think God used that word there to tell us that sex is not just physical. It is a deep, intense longing for intimacy, and sex where intimacy is not a part of it is not biblical sex.

NATALIE: Wow.

SHEILA: When we are talking "Do not deprive," it is not him getting the chance to put his A into slot B. It's about an intimate relationship which also is completely mutual, because that is the point of the 1 Corinthians passage. It's completely mutual. God does not ask us to submit to one-sided sex. God asks us to be in a marriage where sex is a beautiful, mutual, pleasurable, intimate experience. If it's not that, the "do not deprive" verses do not apply.

NATALIE: Yeah. That is profound, and I think it's going to set a lot of women free and unshackle them in their minds because that verse... I've talked to literally hundreds of women. That verse is used as a weapon to beat them, really, as a justification for marital rape in some cases.

SHEILA: Oh! Would you like to talk about marital rape and incidences of marital rape in books?

NATALIE: Yeah. Let's get into it.

SHEILA: Let's talk about "The Act of Marriage." You would not believe how many incidences of marital rape we found in all these books when they didn't even call them marital rape.

NATALIE: Okay, give me an example of this.

SHEILA: So, "The Act of Marriage" – he's talking about a couple. A young woman is getting married, and she's nervous about sex. Then her Aunt Matilda comes to her and tells her that sex is a terrible thing. Tim LaHaye says, "Isn't this awful that Aunt Matilda told this girl that?" Then he explains Aunt Matilda's history, how she was married when she was very young to a clumsy farmer who was much older than her. On their wedding night, he forced her while she was screaming and trying to push him off.

Over the rest of her marriage he continued to rape her, and she hated sex. So she told her niece how horrible it was. Then he says this: "Isn't it sad that..." I don't know how he phrased it exactly, but he used the words, "her equally unhappy husband." So he calls the rapist "equally unhappy" as this woman whom he has raped for her entire marriage.

NATALIE: Unbelievable. That just shows the underlying belief system.

SHEILA: And she is the antagonist in this story because she is "bad" for not enjoying sex, and then she warns the niece that sex is a terrible thing. So that is one instance.

NATALIE: I read that book before I got married the first time. That stuff would have flown right over our heads.

SHEILA: I read the fourth edition, and I think the fourth edition was published sometime in the 90s. It was originally published in 1976. In 1976, to be fair, marital rape was not necessarily a crime in a lot of jurisdictions in the U.S. By the 90s, it was in most jurisdictions. He actually used the word "rape," yet he never explained that this was something bad, that the husband had done anything bad, or that the wife should call the police or anything like that. He just said that the husband was "equally unhappy."

NATALIE: Wow. That is tragic.

SHEILA: Yeah.

NATALIE: And that's why a lot of women, especially women in my group, they will talk about marital rape and they won't even know. There have been coaching calls where I have said, "That's rape. What you just described is rape." And they are shocked!

SHEILA: After we did the survey of 20,000 women, we had a number of focus groups and interviews afterwards. We talked to eight women who shared their stories of marital rape, and the majority of them did not have a word for it. They did not know what to call it until they were talking to divorce lawyers or later on.

NATALIE: That is so sad.

SHEILA: The problem is that these books do not give women any reason to say “no,” ever. The only reason you are allowed to say “no” is for prayer and fasting, as it says in 1 Corinthians 7. Other than that, you are not allowed to say “no.” For instance, in “Sheet Music,” Kevin Leman says that even during your postpartum period or your period that you should be giving hand jobs or oral sex to keep him from watching pornography.

NATALIE: So it’s your responsibility then. The whole responsibility is basically on the wife to....

SHEILA: That’s another of the toxic beliefs that we were looking at: “You should have sex so that your husband’s temptation to watch porn or to lust will be lessened.” That is a very common teaching. “Every Man’s Battle” – those books are based upon that. They advise men to “Bounce your eyes so that you don’t lust after women and instead, transfer all your sexual energy to your wife.” They talk about how it could be that you are going to her for five bowls of sexual gratification a week, but now that you’ve stopped lusting, you are suddenly coming to her for ten bowls, and she will find this exciting.

NATALIE: What?! I want to swear right now.

SHEILA: Yeah, I actually said they have an astonishing lack of insight into women.

NATALIE: So unbelievable!

SHEILA: And “Every Man’s Battle” specifically calls women “methadone for their husband’s porn addictions.” They said in their part to women, “If your husband is struggling and finds his temperature rising, be like a merciful vial of methadone to him.”

NATALIE: Wow! Again, it is just objectifying women.

SHEILA: Again, that is not the biblical way of looking at it. In the Bible, God clearly tells people that “You are responsible for your own sexual morality. Someone else is not responsible for that for you, and you need to be sexually pure yourself.” It also says in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that “No temptation is taking you except which is common to all. God is faithful, and He will not tempt someone above what they are able, but will, with the temptation, also provide a way of escape, that you may be able to stand up under it.” So there is no temptation that you cannot withstand without a hand job from your wife.

NATALIE: Right. Can you give us one more example...?

SHEILA: Of a bad teaching?

NATALIE: Yeah.

SHEILA: Or of marital rape?

NATALIE: Of a bad teaching that you've exposed.

SHEILA: Another one is...This is a difficult one because most people believe this, but boys will want to push your sexual boundaries. So teaching teenage girls that "Boys will always want to push your sexual boundaries, so you need to be the gatekeeper. You need to make sure that things don't go too far. You're responsible for that, because he can't control himself." That leads to higher rates of sexual pain as well. I should say that the obligation sex message – that you are obligated to have sex when he wants it – that is co-related with primary rates of vaginismus.

For those who don't know what that is, it is a sexual pain condition where your vaginal muscles constrict involuntarily. Nobody is trying to make it happen. In fact, often you are trying desperately to not make it happen. But you cannot cause those muscles to relax, and it makes penetration very difficult or at times even impossible. We found that around 33% of women had experienced sexual pain. Some of it was postpartum – about 20% primary pain and 20% postpartum. Some of them had both. Altogether, it was about 32.6%. Of those, 7% had it so badly that penetration was impossible. The obligation sex message causes as much increase in the rate of sexual pain statistically as prior abuse does.

NATALIE: Wow!

SHEILA: We would assume that if you have abuse in your past that you are obviously going to have higher rates of sexual pain. But hearing the obligation sex message – our bodies literally interpret that as abuse, as trauma, and it has the same statistical significance in the increase in vaginismus as abuse does.

NATALIE: So basically, women have been programmed or brainwashed to believe these messages that have actually shot marriages in the foot, really.

SHEILA: Yes.

NATALIE: And this is from books that are supposed to be helping you have a great marriage, right?

SHEILA: Yeah. Another of the most damaging ones is that "All men struggle with lust. It's every man's battle." When women believe that, their orgasm rates plummet.

NATALIE: What's the connection there?

SHEILA: Because if you believe all men struggle with lust, then there is this idea that you are no longer a person, you are just an object. "He needs this. He needs the release." So sex is seen as something that is about release and not about intimacy. It also causes a woman's trust in her husband to go down.

Interestingly, believing this message as a teenager... A lot of women are taught this in high school. "Don't be a stumbling block for guys. Be careful what you wear." All of that you are taught in high school because "All guys lust." Then let's say you meet your husband when you are twenty-five years old, and he's actually a good guy. He doesn't use porn. He doesn't do any of these things. What we found is that even then it impacts your ability to trust him. Even women who are married to upstanding, decent guys have worse sex because they were primed when they were teenagers, before they even met the guy. He didn't stand a chance, because these books are telling women "You cannot trust your husband."

NATALIE: Right. Their brains are programmed to believe a certain thing. So even though their adult-self is recognizing, "This is a good guy; he's not like that," their physical brain has already bought into a completely different story. That is the part that is causing all these internal issues, then, that affect our bodies. It's not necessarily in our control.

SHEILA: Right. Exactly.

NATALIE: It's not really in our control. It's a brain-body thing.

SHEILA: Yes. That is often what makes orgasm so elusive. What we found is that there is a 47-point orgasm gap among men and women in evangelical circles. What we mean by that is that 95% of men almost always or always reach orgasm during a sexual encounter, but only 48% of women do, which is, incidentally, higher than I thought we were going to actually find.

NATALIE: I was going to say that I think that's kind of high.

SHEILA: Yes, it's higher than I thought we were going to find, but that is good. Then another 18% reach orgasm at least half of the time. But there is that 47-point orgasm gap. When we're constantly telling women "You need to want sex more," or "You need to desire him more," but we're not addressing the question, "Why should she want something that does nothing for her...?" Libido is not the issue. Orgasm is the issue.

That's one of the things we are really drilling down on in the book. There are so many instances in Christian books where women are told, "What your husband really needs is not just for you to want sex, but for you to believe that he's a good lover. You need to believe that he's a good lover because he needs to feel like he is satisfying you. Make sure he knows he is satisfying you." We have all kinds of quotes from different books about this.

NATALIE: So you're faking it. I've done that.

SHEILA: What these books don't say is that he should make sure that he actually makes you feel good.

NATALIE: Right. That's a novel idea.

SHEILA: It's more important to tell women that they're supposed to make him feel like he's a good lover than it is to tell men that they actually have to be a good lover, and that's a problem.

NATALIE: That's a big problem. It's funny, because I am your target audience. I've been brainwashed. Even when you are talking, my brain is doing a bit of a flippy thing. My brain is thinking, "Yeah. I've never thought about this." I'm remarried and am trying to figure it all out again, only with a healthy person. But we're still... He grew up Catholic, so still very religious and still very interesting ideas about sex and what it is for and everything. But he and I both struggle with all of that, with inhibitions and the whole nine yards, because of how our past is. It's so sad. I'm hoping that... Does this book...? It talks about the issues. Does it also help you to rewire your brain properly?

SHEILA: Yeah. What we try to do is present the seven principles of healthy sex. Then we show how different books and different teachings have undermined these principles. Then we say, "Here's how we can reclaim them." We have a rescuing and reframing section where we say, "Instead of saying all men lust," say, "People struggle with lust. But not everybody, and God is bigger than this. With the Holy Spirit, you can overcome it." Things like that. Or instead of saying, "Men want sex more than women," say, "People all have sexual needs, but some of them feel them to different degrees, and

often during marriage the person who has the higher one flips.”

When we are constantly telling women, “He wants sex more than you do,” should we be surprised when women don’t want sex? Self-fulfilling prophecy is a thing. Emerson Eggerichs literally says in “Love and Respect,” “If your husband is typical, he has a need you don’t have.” How does that help women by telling them, “Hey women, you don’t need sex?” Plus, it’s only 60% of marriages where he does have the higher sex drive. In roughly 20% it is the same, and in another 20%, she has the higher sex drive.

NATALIE: Right. Then a Christian woman is left wondering, “What’s wrong with me?” if she has a higher sex drive and he doesn’t really have one. When I got married the first time around, I was told, “They will want to have sex all the time.” My first husband didn’t, and my second husband hasn’t either. Neither one of them are sex animals or whatever you want to call them. (Sex kittens? I think that’s what they call girls.)

Anyway, neither one of them were like that, so I was left wondering, “Well, maybe there’s something wrong with me? Maybe I’m just not attractive enough?” It wasn’t like I really wanted it all the time, but I kind of wanted to be desired. I don’t think either of them... My first husband was abusive in other ways, but not in this area. He just didn’t have a high sex drive, and that’s okay.

SHEILA: Yeah. It needs to be acknowledged that there are big differences and big variations, even in the idea that men are visually stimulated and women aren’t. Research over the last two to three years has totally upended that. Women are just as visually stimulated as men; it’s just that we are conditioned not to give in to it or think about it. But the same parts of the brain light up with the same intensity for all these things. It’s just that what men and women find visually stimulating differs. There are subjective differences, but it’s not that women aren’t visually stimulated. It’s not that women don’t battle lust.

Everything is on a bell curve, and bell curves often overlap. There are going to be some women on one end and some men on the other, and that’s okay. That’s why one of the big things we are saying in this book is that we need to stop talking about gender: “Women are like this; men are like this,” because that isn’t healthy and it’s not accurate. Instead, just help couples navigate differences, because everybody has differences to different extents and about different things.

NATALIE: I’m curious. Are there books out there on the market that are coming from a healthy perspective that you recommend? I know you’ve written some.

SHEILA: I've written some! For this book, I feel for your audience, when you are coming out of destructive marriages and you need to know that you're not crazy, I think this book will be really healing for a lot of women. Especially read all the quotes from all these terrible books and realize, "Oh my goodness! They actually said that to me."

But if you're looking at how to build something healthy, "The Good Girl's Guide to Great Sex," which was my original big book on everything you ever wanted to know about what God made sex like for women and what was His intention, that is awesome. "31 Days to Great Sex" is a really fun challenge that couples can do together and can help you talk about a lot of these issues. For example, "What is sex?" It's not only the physical. "How do we work on the emotional and spiritual part of sex, plus how do we spice things up at the same time?"

NATALIE: I'm so glad that you've really filled a very black hole in this genre. It's so needed. I would say two hundred years from now, the world is going to look very different. It's going to be better, I think. I think the world is going in a better direction. There's a lot of crap going on while it gets there. But think about how far we've come in the last two hundred years when it comes to women and how we're being treated. There is still a long way to go, but we're getting there.

I think the work you are doing is part of that process of getting there. Doing a study with 20,000 women – that's huge! Doing that exposes. How can you argue with a study with 20,000 women that takes twenty-five minutes to fill out the survey? You are exposing reality there and shining a huge flashlight on it. You can't ignore that. Once it's exposed, then we can start addressing what is screwed up about it. Hopefully some of those books you are quoting in your book will be non-existent two hundred years from now, and it will just be a byline in history that these books existed and created more problems for Christian women.

Here's the thing. I believe God's vision for men and women and for all of humanity is that we would work side-by-side in love, in mutual respect, in mutual harmony, fulfilling all the gifts God gave to us, and doing it together instead of always fighting against each other. I shouldn't say "fighting against each other," because I feel like that is mutualizing the problem. History shows that women have been marginalized, beaten down, blamed, and yet held responsible for all the problems that exist in marriages and even in churches. I think a lot of women are blamed for problems that churches have as well. It's absolutely insane, because women are actually part of the solution.

SHEILA: What I'm hoping is now that we have data we can say, "If you want to teach that, you can, but you've just got to know that women are going to orgasm 35% less."

That will at least shut them up.

NATALIE: Yes! Exactly. We have to give freedom for everyone to believe what they want to believe, but also to understand, "Here are the results. If you like those results, then go for it." It has been such a pleasure to have you on here and to see you face to face. If you are listening on the podcast, we are videotaping. What do you call this? That's the old school way.

SHEILA: We are Zoom recording.

NATALIE: We're Zooming it. I'm going to put it on my YouTube channel, so if you want to see Sheila, she is beautiful today. We were talking about how she gets her hair to fluff up. She has to have a brand-new haircut, apparently. I haven't had my hair cut for probably five months. I'm letting my grays grow out. I'm going to wait until Covid is gone, then I will... We should have you on again sometime, because there is a lot we could talk about.

SHEILA: I would love that. Remember everybody, if you do want to see that scorecard of how your...

NATALIE: We didn't talk about that!

SHEILA: I didn't know we missed it, but I have that scorecard of how your "favorite" Christian books scored. You can see our rubric. We created this rubric of healthy marriage teaching about female sexuality on twelve different levels. Then we scored all the books on those twelve elements. Guess which one scored zero out of forty-eight?

NATALIE: Was it "Love and Respect"?

SHEILA: Yes. Do you want to hear what is really sad? We took John Gottman's marriage book, which is a secular book. It's the best-selling secular one. We used that one as our control. You want to guess what that scored out of forty-eight?

NATALIE: What?

SHEILA: Forty-seven.

NATALIE: Oh good, because I've read that book!

SHEILA: Our best-selling Christian resource, "Love and Respect," was the best-selling

marriage resource that we looked at. It scored zero. Our best-selling secular one scored forty-seven.

NATALIE: Wow!

SHEILA: What does that say about the evangelical church?

NATALIE: Exactly! The book that she's talking about is...

SHEILA: "Seven Principles of Making Marriage Work."

NATALIE: There you go. So that book, and then Sheila's books. We'll put links to all this in the show notes so people can go there. Wasn't there another rubric too that you mentioned before we started?

SHEILA: We were working on another one, but we haven't published it yet. But you can look at this scorecard. We rated everything from one to four. There were some Christian books that scored really well on healthy sexuality. "The Gift of Sex" by the Penners also scored forty-seven. "Intimate Issues" was in the forties. "Boundaries in Marriage" was in the forties. There were some that scored well, but then there were a lot that just failed.

NATALIE: Okay. I know "Love and Respect" is your favorite.

SHEILA: Oh yes. I've talked about that book a lot. Maybe you can put a link to my open letter to Focus on the Family about "Love and Respect" as well.

NATALIE: Yes! That was the bomb! You guys need to check out her blog. If you haven't yet, you absolutely need to go over there. I need to put a link to that too, the "Love and Respect" letter. Did anything ever come of that?

SHEILA: They ended up issuing a statement which was stupid, where they called "Love and Respect" "a biblically sound, empowering message for wives." Then I wrote my own statement against their statement.

NATALIE: So much fun!

SHEILA: Really, it was that interaction with Focus on the Family around "Love and Respect"... We never would have written this book without that. If they had actually taken our concerns seriously, we never would have done this. The fact is that they were

willfully blind because they were more invested in men retaining power than they were in making sure that marriages were healthy.

NATALIE: Yeah. But I love that, because that was the impetus for something that is going to be so much more impactful and influential years and years into the future. What you guys have done is amazing!

SHEILA: In the last chapter of the book, we tell that story about “Love and Respect” and Focus on the Family. I’m hoping that Focus on the Family may actually regret what they did and repent and consider this differently.

NATALIE: I hope so too, because if they really want people to “focus on the family,” they are going to need to address this issue.

SHEILA: Maybe we need to stop focusing on the family and start focusing on Jesus, too.

NATALIE: There you go! I love that even more! We’ll end on that note, because that was awesome. Thanks so much, Sheila. And thanks to those of you listening. Until next time, fly free!