

UNTWISTING THE BIBLE ON AUTHORITY AND PATRIARCHY

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 110 of the Flying Free Podcast. Today, I'm excited to introduce you to... Well, maybe I don't have to introduce you. Maybe you already know Rebecca Davis. I've known Rebecca for several years. She's the author of "Untwisting Scriptures that were used to tie you up, gag you, and tangle your mind." I just have to say, I thought, "That's a long title." But it's only fifteen words. When I looked at the title of my book, which Rebecca contributed a section to, the title of my book is eighteen words. So there must be something about you and me and big, long titles.

REBECCA: A long title. It gets the message across.

NATALIE: Exactly. It tells people exactly what the book is about. Rebecca also has a blog that she writes amazing articles on. It's called "Here's the Joy." Check that out if you haven't already. Like I mentioned, she wrote a section in chapter 7 of my book. Her section was called "God and Divorce." I was thankful that she wrote about that because at the time, I really didn't want to tackle that too much. But she has come out with a brand-new book. I am one of the people who, when I read your first book, thought, "Oh my gosh! There are a million scriptures that we need to untwist." This covered how many? It only covered a couple of areas, right?

REBECCA: Three areas, yes.

NATALIE: Tell us what those were.

REBECCA: Yielding rights, biblical bitterness, and taking up offenses.

NATALIE: Okay. So I'm excited to know that you actually had intended to turn this into a series of books, right?

REBECCA: Yes, that was always the thinking.

NATALIE: Tell us about that plan and what happened.

REBECCA: Well, the first book came out in 2016, and I thought, "I can do a book a year.

That shouldn't be a problem." So here we are, four years later, four and a half years, and I'm coming out with a second book. I'm just thinking, "Well, that's the way life goes."

NATALIE: That's right.

REBECCA: I did one other book in between there, or two, I guess. One was "Rock Bottom and Faithless" with Sue Parisher, and then another was "Prayer Armor for Defense Against the Enemy's Flaming Darts." So I was still writing. I just didn't get to this second one until now.

NATALIE: Right. You've been busy, you've been writing on your blog, and you've been helping a lot of people.

REBECCA: Yeah.

NATALIE: So this book is addressing patriarchy and authority. Why did you pick those two subjects to tackle next?

REBECCA: There were so many choices.

NATALIE: I know. You could be writing for the rest of your life.

REBECCA: I could, I'm sure. I had done some blog posts about patriarchy back (I'm embarrassed to say how long ago) a few years ago now. Someone said to me, "I would love for you to make these blog posts into a booklet, because I'd love to give them to my parents. They don't read blogs, but they read books." So that was in the back of my mind all this time. Eventually, that was the decision. That's why I choose these.

NATALIE: Who is this book written specifically for? Who is going to think, "Oh my gosh! This is exactly what I need to unlearn."

REBECCA: I am telling you I keep that person right in front of me the whole time I'm writing. I will discuss the book with my husband, and he'll say, "You should say this, or that, or the other thing." I'll say, "That's not my target audience." My target audience is people who are coming out of patriarchy. To be frank, I told someone recently that it feels like this book should have come out ten years ago, because that is when people were really coming out of patriarchy. But I know for many of them, even if they've come out, it is still in their head somewhere, and they are going to counseling for it.

With the first book, some people told me, "I gave this book to my counselor so she

could understand what I came from." So I think about that with this one too, that it's a possibility. Also, some people have a lot of trouble reading the Bible, especially certain scriptures, because it is in their head a certain way. They still want to follow Jesus. I'm writing for people who still want to follow Jesus, but they must put those scriptures somewhere in a back closet because they don't know what to do with them.

I am saying, "Ok. Let's clean out the closet. Let's pull out those scriptures, actually look at them, and ask, 'Where the heart of God is in this?'" That can help people walk in much greater freedom. The book is in four parts. The first part is patriarchy, specifically to young people (or some of them aren't young anymore) or people who came out and grew up in it. The second part is church authorities.

NATALIE: I love this, because I do talk to a lot of women who... Well, some do just throw out the whole thing. They say, "I feel like everything I learned was a lie, therefore, maybe the whole Bible is a lie. Maybe I've been deceived in everything." It is easier for them at this point in their journey to just set the whole thing aside and forget about it.

REBECCA: I understand. Yes.

NATALIE: But other people are saying, "I don't want to do that. I'm not ready to do that. So how do I make sense of all this?" I would probably fall into that category. I love that you are helping those people. We don't have to throw out the Bible, but maybe we need to take a closer look at what it actually says, because people bring their own bias to a reading of anything. Our brains filter out what we don't want to believe, and they want to prove what we do believe. So we bring that bias to the table when we read the Bible. If you have a whole history of white males bringing their bias to the table when they read the Bible, what are you going to get or learn in the seminaries? What are you going to learn from the pulpit?

REBECCA: You talked about those two groups: One who still wants to follow Jesus and one who has thrown everything out. The group who's thrown everything out is the group I do often pray for, because I hope that eventually they will want to come back and know the real Jesus. So that is part of my audience. I keep them in my mind when I write because I hope that one day, they'll be ready to find out who He really is. If they were in a cult (which is who this book is for) then they didn't get to know the real Jesus.

NATALIE: Right. That's a good segue into the next question, which is what is your big picture? What's your overarching theme or point that you want to make sure people walk away with or know when they are done with this book?

REBECCA: That's a good question. I want them to know that I don't want to just say, "Everything you were taught was a lie. Now go on your way, and peace be with you." I want them to understand the truth. The truth is that God, who came in the flesh in the Lord Jesus Christ, is our ultimate authority.

When we are talking about adult-to-adult, people don't have spiritual authority over other people. But the last chapter addresses our authority as believers in Jesus Christ. That's when I dip into spiritual warfare 101, what I hope will feel like a little touch into the spirit realm. But we have spiritual authority. He gave us that. But when it comes to other people... I feel like the words coming to my head are, "You're not the boss of me."

NATALIE: Right.

REBECCA: But I answer to God. If you can point out where I am disobeying God in what I am doing, then I want to hear it. But I don't just want to hear, "You are disobeying God because you're disobeying me." I don't want to hear that.

NATALIE: Right. That's the hard thing to parse out, though, because people will say... I don't want to get into the whole political thing right now. I will say that in general, there is a sense of, "If you don't believe this then you are disobeying God, because this is God's way." Like, "This is how you raise kids God's way; this is how you do marriage God's way." So that strikes fear in the heart of especially younger Christians who think, "Oh my gosh! I want to do it God's way. This person says it's God's way and even has Bible verses to back them up."

So that is what I think causes all the confusion, rather than saying, "Hey, you're on your journey. You're figuring out the parenting thing," if we use the raising kids example. "Learn all that you can. Apply wisdom to the situation. I support you and I love you. I'm going to support you and your children in your parenting journey, and I hope you do the same for me." Then we are free to make mistakes if we need to. I feel like all the fear and being hemmed in and wondering if you will make a massive mistake if you turn to the right or the left, that will send your children on the slippery slope to hell and it will be all your fault... That is the fear I think Christian women in my sphere of influence are really struggling with. It affects everything in their lives.

REBECCA: Yes. I can see that. I do point out that true leaders are people who are farther down the path than we are. In the case of Christian leaders, they have a life of integrity. They truly know the Lord. They live in a way that is exemplary both in public, in private, and in secret. I want to listen to leaders like that. If they say something to me about how their children all grew up loving God and loving others, I want to listen to that.

If I were to say to people, "Love is the overarching thing when you raise children..." Honestly, Natalie, I could go back to my own child raising and I just cringe. I think, "I did this wrong and I did this wrong. And I did that wrong and that wrong and that wrong." I'm sure my children would be glad to contribute to the list. They are all grown now. But I know that love is the overarching rule, if you want to call it that, in raising children.

NATALIE: Right.

REBECCA: We love them. We love God. We love others. That's the bottom line.

NATALIE: Right. When you say you want to listen to people who are mature and who are exemplary in these different areas of their lives, you do, but those are the kinds of people who are probably not going to be saying, "You'd better do this or that."

REBECCA: Yes, right.

NATALIE: Those people are the kinds of people who, because love is the foundation and the core of who they are and how they are living, extend that love to everyone around them.

REBECCA: Yes. It's quite different.

NATALIE: So let's talk about leaders who didn't do that. You mention that in your first book. You dropped a few names like Bill Gothard and Nancy Leigh DeMoss. I'm wondering if you talked about them in the second... Do you talk about specific teachings from specific people in this second book?

REBECCA: Nancy Leigh DeMoss didn't make it into this book.

NATALIE: Poor Nancy.

REBECCA: I just finished re-reading it, and she's not there. But Bill Gothard is all through it because he is... Wait a minute! No, no, no. Nancy was there. I just remembered there was one little quote. And Bill Gothard is center stage because he is the big authority teacher. Honestly, he influenced so many people. Even though he has fallen from grace now, so to speak, his influence is still so prominent. So yes, I have several chapters devoted to Bill. Like his umbrella, of course, had to get in there. This is a book about authority. How do you not write a book without having the umbrella in it? Anybody who doesn't know Bill Gothard, I'm glad you don't. But for those who know who I'm talking about when I say Bill Gothard, then that material is all addressed.

John Bever, he wrote the book "Under Cover: Why Your Response to Leadership Determines Your Future..." (I can't remember the subtitle, but it is something like that.) He gets a chapter. There are different people. I'm not afraid to name names, as I wasn't in the first book. One thing that is a little different is that I didn't have a lot of standout quotes. In the first book I had the quotations in the gray boxes. For some reason that didn't happen in this book. I'm not sure why not. But I do still tackle the teaching.

NATALIE: Okay. Did you have any experience with these teachings? Were you in one of those families that went that direction and got into the whole ATI/Bill Gothard thing?

REBECCA: I tell my story in the book. I was a Bill Gothard fan. I would have been in the Bill Gothard fan club if there had been a Facebook group for that in those days. But that was in the 1970s and 80s, and we weren't on Facebook in those days.

But my husband decided he didn't want to do ATI because he didn't want someone else telling us how to raise our children. I thought, "Oh well. Okay. That's that." So I didn't go through it. I didn't go through patriarchy. Again, I thought it sounded so intriguing, but my husband didn't want to do it. I thought it would be too weird if I insisted on it when I'm supposed to be showing my submission by being in a patriarchal family. So we just didn't. We went on our own journey. Then I came back to learning what had happened. I tell all that in the book.

NATALIE: Well, I think you were spared. You were spared a lot of...

REBECCA: I see it so much! We were spared.

NATALIE: Yeah, because I was raised on Bill Gothard. I went to Bill Gothard seminars every year when they came to the Twin Cities.

REBECCA: I went probably five times when I was young, but it wasn't my parents doing it and it wasn't my husband doing it. It was in between life with parents and life with husband. So I loved it. I was always studying his red notebook. My mother said, "Why are you studying that thing?"

NATALIE: There must be some... I think there's a personality type that gravitates toward all the clear black and white, "Just give me the rule book and I am all in."

REBECCA: Well, he seemed so wise.

NATALIE: Yeah.

REBECCA: But he made me nauseous when I was trying to listen to him to do research.

NATALIE: Yeah, I literally get triggered when I hear that stuff. So anyway, I'm glad people like you are willing to dive into the swamp.

REBECCA: I'm wading into the muck.

NATALIE: Exactly! So you said you wanted to write for the young people who were raised in the system. But what about...? The people I work with are mostly the moms of those people. In my situation, my husband kind of went along with me because I was the one who was like, "Yes! We really need to do this." I was kind of like you, Rebecca, only my husband was very passive. (This is my ex-husband.) He would not have said, "No, we will not do that." He was just like, "Well, whatever. If that's what you want to do, that's fine."

So we did it. There has been a lot of fallout in my own family with my older kids, mainly because my younger ones I am raising quite differently. But what about those moms? What about the moms whose husbands said, "We are going to do this. This is exactly how it is. You're going to homeschool. You're going to do this, and you're going to do that"?

REBECCA: There is an appendix. That's what I was proofreading when we got on our call. The appendix is called "The Matriarchs of Patriarchy." It talks about Mary Pride who wrote "The Way Home" in 1985 when she was thirty years old.

NATALIE: Wow! I had no idea she was that young when she wrote that book. I loved that book! I devoured that book.

REBECCA: Yes. So did I.

NATALIE: She was just a kid!

REBECCA: Yes, she was. She was just a kid. That's how it seems now, but we were just kids too.

NATALIE: True.

REBECCA: But she seemed so wise, and she seemed older. That appendix, which is written by a young person... I didn't write the appendix. I asked a person who grew up in patriarchy to write it. She talked about the generation of her mother, which is my

generation, and how they devoured Mary Pride. Many of them... More women jumped on the patriarchy bandwagon than men. Their husbands were passive. Does that sound familiar?

NATALIE: Yes.

REBECCA: The husband said, "Whatever. I don't care." So families went into it with the women at the helm. So that's why it's called "The Matriarchs of Patriarchy." In the appendix, she explains the fallout. The reason I put this chapter in the appendix instead of part of the regular book is because the book is called "Untwisting Scriptures." This appendix doesn't have any scriptures in it. It's just a history lesson. "This is what happened over the course of the last thirty-five years." That is laying out what happened.

But the first six to eight chapters are written for the young people who came out of patriarchy, although I know the mothers and fathers who were stuck in it can receive help from it too, because most of these were blog posts originally. I heard from people who were helped by them.

Then part three is about oppressive churches. Mostly those are mothers whose church leaders told them, "Stay in your abusive marriage." It isn't directed as much to women of my generation. Some of it definitely is. But I'm confident that women of my generation and your generation could benefit from the material in it.

NATALIE: I absolutely think they can, because even the women I work with who have relearned a lot of things and are moving forward in their lives... The brain's programming is very difficult, and it takes time to rewire it.

REBECCA: Yes, it does. I talk about the voices that are still in your head. So many people have told me, "When I read scripture, I either hear it through my ex-husband's voice, my father's voice, or my pastor's voice, and I'm having trouble getting that voice away from the scripture."

NATALIE: It's not really your adult self. You've figured it out, and you know what you want to believe now. And you even believe it. But your brain has been programmed for so long. Those synapses are in there. It is literally just a science issue that is going on.

REBECCA: Yes, I even mention brain science in there.

NATALIE: When you read books like this, it helps your physical brain. It's like washing it.

It is as if it has been marinated in saline solution, and now we need to wash it in some clean water for a while so it can rinse out the salt.

REBECCA: There you go! My longing is for all my audience to see the true heart of God, who God really is, because I often hear, "I always thought He was waiting for me to do something wrong so He could pounce on me." I want them to see the heart of God, that He loves His children. He doesn't love them while holding His nose and picking them up with two fingers. It's that He holds them gently, like His beloved sheep. That permeates my thinking when I write, that He loves you if you're His child.

NATALIE: That is beautiful. I want to touch on one other thing that we skimmed over a bit. You mentioned you have this last part that talks about the matriarchs of patriarchy. I want to bring that up, because a lot of my listeners would put themselves in that category (I put myself in that category), although I want to say to them that even though we put ourselves in that category, we didn't want to be the matriarchs. There is a dynamic that was quite common where the men would be very passive and they wouldn't take leadership of their family. Not that they... I'm remarried now, and we don't... I would say we have a very egalitarian marriage. He is not the leader; I am not the leader. There is no leader or follower. We work together. We're like a team, and it's beautiful. It's amazing! I did not know that this was a reality for anybody. It's so incredible.

Anyway, I was brought up to think there must be a leader and there must be a follower. That's just the way it is in marriage. I did not want to be... My mom wore the pants in the family I grew up in, and my dad was very passive. I did not want to be like my mom. I wanted my husband to be the leader. I wanted to nurture him and support him and do all that...

REBECCA: Natalie, that's funny, because it's the same for me. My mother was the boss and I did not want to be like that. I wanted my husband to be the boss.

NATALIE: In that desire though, it sounds like your husband at least had the gumption enough to say, "No, we're not going to do that."

REBECCA: Yes, but I agree with you. I didn't have the concept. However, when my daughter was thinking about a certain person she was thinking about marrying, she said, "I'm just not sure if he'll be a good leader." I said to her, "Honey, you don't want someone to be walking in front of you with you walking behind. You want to be walking shoulder to shoulder. You want to be walking together." I was giving her these symbolisms with my hands and I thought, "Oh boy! Someone is going to think I'm

egalitarian now.”

NATALIE: God forbid that you be an egalitarian. I actually don't know where you stand. We won't go there. I just want to say to those women who are feeling like I did for so long, like, “I just didn't want to think of myself as a matriarch of the patriarchy. I just really wanted to support and love my husband...”

REBECCA: Yes. That appendix talks about that, how much the women wanted their husbands to be the leaders. The matriarchs of patriarchy – it isn't really indicated that these wives are those matriarchs. The matriarchs were people like Mary Pride, Jennie Chancey, and other people like that who were telling the wives what to do.

NATALIE: Right. I had a blog called “Visionary Womanhood” (some of you listening might even remember that) for years where I promoted and regurgitated all those women's teachings on my blog in different ways. I wasn't like a well-known matriarch of the patriarchy, but I definitely fell into that category.

REBECCA: The point was made in this appendix by the author that there were far more women bloggers promoting patriarchy than men bloggers promoting patriarchy.

NATALIE: Yes! Isn't that fascinating?

REBECCA: I don't get the dynamic there. I'm not sure about it. But it's very interesting.

NATALIE: You know what it is? I loved God with every fiber of my being. If God told me to jump, I would say, “How high do you want me to jump? I will jump or fly or whatever You want me to do.” So when someone told me, “This is the way it is,” when Bill Gothard said, “This is the way it is,” I was all in on that.

REBECCA: Oh yes! I get it.

NATALIE: And I wanted everyone to be all in, because why not? Why would we not want to do what God wants us to do?

REBECCA: Of course.

NATALIE: What happened with a lot of us is that we ended up with husbands who were not... Even though they were passive husbands... My husband would never have hit me or done any physical violence to me at all. He never swore. He kept himself really clean that way. But the emotional abuse was so subtle – the criticism, the cutting down, the

subtle attacks, the lies and omissions – that kind of stuff that I lived with from the first day we were married. That stuff eroded who I was as a human being.

Then it is very difficult for women to put together all the pieces. It is so confusing. You've got this husband who you want to support, yet he is tearing you down. Yet you think you deserve to be torn down because you are just a woman, after all. My whole mission for the rest of my life is helping women untangle that.

REBECCA: I hope this will be a contribution to that. It takes a lot of pieces to put the puzzle together, and I see this book as one more piece to help with doing that.

NATALIE: Much needed. Is this book also called "Untwisting Scriptures" with just a different subtitle?

REBECCA: Yes. The first book should have had a subtitle of "Book One" and then told what the topics were. But this one will have a subtitle of "Book Two Patriarchy and Authority."

NATALIE: Perfect. I can't wait. This episode is going to air on March 17. When is your book going to be out?

REBECCA: Good question. The aim is at the end of February. I self-publish all my books and do all the formatting myself. I'm in publishing and editing, so that's my job. The end of February is the goal.

NATALIE: So by the time this is out, you guys can go get it on Amazon, I'm assuming, just like your other book?

REBECCA: That's right.

NATALIE: So this is Rebecca Davis. The book is called "Untwisting Scriptures: Patriarchy and Authority"?

REBECCA: "Untwisting Scriptures that were used to tie you up, gag you, and tangle your mind: Book Two Patriarchy and Authority."

NATALIE: Okay, so you're keeping the beginning, then?

REBECCA: I am. The whole thing.

NATALIE: Well, it's a good title, and it definitely evokes all the emotions.

REBECCA: Yes. I wanted to touch on the emotions. People will say, "That book is for me."

NATALIE: Exactly. It has been so much fun to reconnect with you, Rebecca. I'm so glad you were willing to come and share about your book with these listeners. I wish you the best of luck. I think it's going to be amazing. I am going to promote it on my blog so as many people as possible can find out about this.

REBECCA: Thanks so much, Natalie. I appreciate your having me on. I hope the book will be helpful to many people.

NATALIE: Thanks for listening, the rest of you. Until next time, fly free!