

HOW I ENCOURAGED AN ABUSIVE SYSTEM WITH MY SILENCE AND SUBMISSION

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 119 of the Flying Free Podcast. Today I have with me Meghan — is it pronounced “Chance”? I forgot to ask you before we started recording.

MEGHAN: No, it's Tschanz (Chawns). It's like “Chance” with a British accent.

NATALIE: Oh, I like that. I like that a lot. It's Meghan Tschanz...

MEGHAN: Yep, you got it.

NATALIE: ...who is the host of the Faith and Feminism podcast. By the way, if you're not familiar with that one, I highly recommend it. Go grab it. Your podcast is about the same age as this one. I believe we started at right around the same time. We connected first on that podcast. I think you interviewed me... Well, I don't think — I know. So you interviewed me, and now I get to interview you. It's super fun. Meghan is a writer. She's got a brand-new book out called “Women Rising: Learning to Listen, Reclaiming Our Voice.” She has a passion for empowering women and reclaiming feminism for the Christian faith, which I totally love. In this interview, we'll find out why this is her passion and how she went from being a “normal” Christian to being a Christian who actively confronts injustice against women while pointing to a biblical standard for gender equality. So welcome, Meghan.

MEGHAN: Thank you. I'm so excited to be here. Like Natalie said, I had her on my podcast about two years ago and had a lot of good feedback from women. What you're doing is so important. I hear stories again and again and again, even in my Faith and Feminism group. So many women are going through these messy divorces. They didn't even realize they were being abused for so long because of the way the church had framed things. It was hard for them to identify. So I've pointed many people to the resources that you have. It's so important, and so many women have been helped through the work that you're doing. So thank you for the work you're doing and thank you for having me on.

NATALIE: I'm so glad you could come. That is the natural outcome of that kind of theology that marginalizes women. I want you to tell us about your new book in a bit,

but first, we would like to hear about the journey you took that brought you to this place of standing in the gap for half of the human race that has been marginalized and exploited all throughout history and in every place on the planet. Let's start by going back to when you were a missionary who worked with exploited women. Could you tell us about the injustices that you saw?

MEGHAN: Absolutely. I started doing mission work after I grew up in a conservative culture that told me that as a woman, the closest thing I could get with God was missionary work, because I wasn't allowed to preach and I wasn't allowed to teach. I realized it was the only option left to show how much I love God and serve others. So I thought, "Okay, as a woman, I have to be a missionary," because that was the most holy thing I could do. Or so I thought.

NATALIE: Or to be a pastor's wife. Being a pastor's wife was like a close second.

MEGHAN: Yes, a close second. For some reason, the missionary life appealed to me because I realized — or what I was taught about marriage — is that I was my own person until I got married, and then I had to defer to my husband in everything, including my relationship with God — this whole "spiritual household" thing. I wasn't ready to give that up quite yet — or maybe ever. So I got into mission work. I got into a program called The World Race, which is an eleven-month, eleven-country trip. Almost immediately, I started encountering misogyny and sexism within the church — the first month I was there. We encountered a contact who told us that women should be seen but not heard in the church, that women's worship should be inaudible, while men's should be audible. I wondered, "What does that even mean?" They had women giving testimonies, but there were all these rules. He kept on talking about "God's order" and how God made women to be subservient to men and that men had to take care of them, almost making women seem like infants who couldn't take care of themselves.

NATALIE: That's true.

MEGHAN: I remember that sat so wrong with me. By this point I was twenty-three, so I knew enough that what he was saying wasn't okay, but I didn't know how to address it. After he went on this tirade, a small group of women and I left during the tirade and realized we weren't alone in recognizing that what he was saying was extremely harmful. It was the first time realizing I wasn't alone and that maybe we could do something about it.

Fast-forward a couple of months and I worked with women. I gave talks to programs at schools, and young girls would come up to me afterward, specifically in Kenya, and ask

me about female circumcision. I remember being really taken aback when they first asked me that because, while I had heard about it in college... We called it female genital mutilation. It was really damaging and harmful. It wasn't anything I ever thought I would encounter or talk to someone who had ever survived it, yet these young girls were telling me they were survivors of (they called it female circumcision, but) female genital mutilation. You could tell they were really questioning it and wanting to push back against it. Having the opportunity to talk to someone from a different culture and ask, "Does this happen over here? What's happening with us? Is this right? Is this wrong?"

The first time someone asked me, I just said, "No, that's not practiced in the United States." Yet it is, actually. There is a famous place in Michigan where they tried to ban it, and then the Michigan judge defended it. I could go more into detail, but if you Google it, there are actually some parts of the United States that still practice female genital mutilation. It's not as prevalent as Africa where I was, specifically in Kenya. But it was eye-opening. These girls talked to me about it. I did some research so I could come prepared and answer their questions in a better way. It talked about the harms. It makes sex extremely... It takes away all pleasure and makes it extremely painful.

If people aren't familiar with female genital mutilation, it's where either the clitoris or the entire external genitalia for girls is removed to control women's sexuality. So it makes sex extremely painful. It's a procedure that isn't done in scientific or medical training. It is quite common for girls to bleed to death because there isn't any safe procedure happening around it. In addition to that, it makes childbirth more painful. It increases all these other issues that have to do with that region, like incontinence. There are hosts of medical issues, not to mention the fact these procedures happen with no anesthesia while the girls are awake around the ages of eleven or twelve. They are usually held down.

NATALIE: What in the world?

MEGHAN: So not only is this extremely physically damaging, but it's also extremely emotionally damaging, which makes sense that these girls were questioning it. I went and asked my contact about it, and it turns out that in this village, all the girls between the ages of eleven and thirteen had endured it. He told me he used to hide girls who were trying to escape it in his church, but it was such a strong tradition that it wasn't changed and was hard to change. It was completely eye-opening to me that this was happening.

Not only was I hearing stories about female genital mutilation, but I was also hearing

stories of girls not being allowed to get an education. They talked to me about how they had to fight so hard for their education while their male counterparts were allowed to go and encouraged to go to school, and they had all the chores and their brothers didn't. They would talk to me about sexual abuse. It was the first time that someone told me they were raped. It was during this time that I started questioning these teachings, the same teachings that I grew up with — that women should be in the home and they should take care of the house — and what the ramifications were in the society. In this case, it kept young girls from going to school and made them responsible for all the chores (and there were a lot more chores) like getting water. They would walk miles to get water. There were all these other things. I noticed a tie to this type of damaging theology that I had grown up with and had just experienced several months previous and the real-life ramifications of what that looks like.

NATALIE: Yes.

MEGHAN: I continued, and several months later I was in India working with women who had been sex trafficked from Nepal. How that works is that Nepal is a country with a lot of poverty. Often people will try to migrate to India (where there is also a lot of poverty), hoping to get a better life. These traffickers will go to these impoverished villages in Nepal and say, "Give me your kid. I'll take them to India and get them a good job and send money home to you." But really, they are taking the children and putting them into the slave trade. So I worked with women who had been trafficked from Nepal. The contact I worked with there started a daycare center for these women. He was a native of India near Mumbai. He started the daycare because he had a young boy tell him he used to have to hide under his mother's bed while she was being trafficked. While she was with a client, he was hiding underneath the bed. It helped him realize these children have nowhere to go. Obviously, the women don't have a choice because they are being trafficked by pimps. So he started a daycare center and took care of these kids while the moms had to deal with clients.

While I was there, I met a young girl who was being raised by the pimp who sold her mother. She was five years old, malnourished, and clearly wasn't cared for. It turned out she had a hearing impairment. She could hear if you yelled, but if you talked at a normal volume, she couldn't hear you. There was nothing done to help her communicate, so she literally had no way to communicate with others. That was the moment of having my heart be completely wrecked and broken more so than ever before, because this young girl was being raised by the pimp who sold her mother and, on top of that, didn't have a way to communicate. I remember talking to our contact about the situation that was there, and he said there was nothing we could do except pray and love her and take care of her now, because if you kidnapped her, the pimps

would be violent, the police were bought off by the pimps... It was a whole corrupt system. The good news is that he continued to work with this young girl, and now she is safe. He said she had medicine in her ears (which I'm guessing is hearing aids where she can hear) and is going to school now.

I think the things that broke me that month were the constant sight of the oppression and marginalization of women and seeing these similar gender roles that I was taught being played out to a much stronger degree, a much more powerful degree. I could really see the effects there. I decided I wanted to do something about it. To bring me to where I am now, I continue to work with this mission organization. We do inner healing retreats for women who have come out of the sex trade. I did that for about a year and lived with women specifically in the Philippines who had left the sex trade to get a college education.

The way trafficking works there is that there are these bars with women in underwear. Sometimes they will have numbers on them; sometimes they won't. But men watch them when they are on stage and point a laser at the girls they want. That is how they get them for the night. I was there talking to a girl. It was her first night there. She was telling me her story. A lot of these women come from the most extreme poverty and oppression. She had a boyfriend and a child, but her boyfriend was extremely abusive. She was showing me where she had cigarette burns. She said, "I have no way to provide for my child except to do this."

As I was talking to her, these men came up and wanted to buy her. Technically, she should have a choice there, but these drunk guys weren't taking "no" for an answer. She was saying, "No." I was saying, "No." Then they started grabbing her. I didn't know what to do. Eventually, a teammate ran up and I said, "Why don't we just buy her first?" So there was the crazy concept of purchasing her, but they still tried to take her, which led us to get into a fight with these guys. A verbal fight, not a physical altercation. We got the bar managers involved. The whole bar was staring at us.

Eventually, we won this argument. But over this period of time, these men got more heated. We won the argument by proving we paid for her first. I don't know what the miscommunication was. These guys were from South Korea. They didn't speak English, but they were very drunk and furious. They pulled another girl off the stage. I remember her looking back at us, and I felt I had made the situation worse, because now not only was this woman getting taken by these six men to one girl, but these men were also now very angry. I had a woman I had worked with in the past who had been murdered by a client, so I was devastated, because I felt I had made the situation worse.

It had me ask, "Why is this happening?" We can help women, and that's a noble cause, but why is it that there are so many men willing to buy trafficked women who don't have any other option? Sometimes they are kidnapped and have no other options. Sometimes it's a matter of circumstances: They don't have education; they can't provide for their children. They do this to feed their kids because they have no other option. Why men? Why is there so much demand? Why is this happening? Why aren't we making a difference? Or it felt like we'd help one person in that moment who was so easily replaced. It really had me start to dive into these scripts that we give men and women on how to behave in the world.

What cinched that idea home was the next night when I was talking to an American man. He called our group over and said, "Why are you here?" We were telling him we were partnering with a ministry that put girls through college. He went on a tirade about how women here were raised right and knew how to respect men, where women in the United States were too uppity and didn't know their place. That's when the connection happened for me. I was asking, "Why? Why? Why?" Here was one of many men (because this wasn't the first time I'd heard it) saying, "I come here to get the respect I deserve. I come here to buy and traffic women, because they give me the respect I deserve."

That's when I made the connection that this sounded like the pastors I had growing up speaking about how important it was to respect men no matter what — this need and entitlement for respect. I saw the fruit of that teaching. Not only have I seen it in the sex trade, but I had also seen it in these gender roles in Kenya, where women had female genital mutilation and were often physically and sexually abused. I saw it with my upbringing where I was sexually assaulted and I thought it was my fault, because purity culture told me it was my fault. It was this huge moment of breakthrough — it's why these gender roles about men being dominant, "Listen to them," "They need respect," "This respect is not a want — it's a need, and you have to get it. If you don't get it, then you are entitled to get it in whatever way." We see this in marriage books. I think of "Love and Respect." Men need respect; women need love. But this whole idea of this need for dominance and respect is prevalent within the church and without the church.

That was my moment of revelation. I thought, "I need to address these power differentials. I need to address these gender roles," which ultimately led me to reclaim feminism for the Christian faith, because I believe Jesus was and is a feminist. He talked about equality between the sexes and demonstrated that in the way He interacted with women. I think for too long the church has been an upholder of harmful power differentials that prime the ground for abuse, which I'm sure you are all too familiar with. But that was my moment of revelation that these are not just inconvenient truths

that I don't like: These are damaging and hurtful and lead to women getting brutalized and being trafficked because of these power differentials that we see.

NATALIE: Right. I see the fallout of all that. It's interesting, because what you just described... I was thinking about the difference between hard-core porn and soft porn. It's like hard-core misogyny and soft misogyny. We sort of pedal the soft misogyny in the church over here in America, and they've got the hard-core stuff. (Well, we have the hard-core stuff too, but the church doesn't pedal it.) But the church still pedals misogyny. It's still the same thing. Misogyny is still the same underlying things, and we're not selling women to strangers, but we're selling them to their husbands and saying, "You 'belong' to this man now. So he owns you. He makes all the decisions. He decides if you work or don't work. He decides what you do if you are going to work. He decides when you're going to sleep with him, and it's okay for him to do that. It's not abusive at all. That's normal. That's, in fact, not only normal — it's godly. That's a godly thing to do." So you quit your job, eventually?

MEGHAN: Yes. I quit my job right after that night when I had the realization, especially because the organization that I was working for definitely had some of these patriarchal, not good things. I had confronted it in the organization, but it really felt time to leave. So yeah, I quit my job three weeks later.

NATALIE: Can you give an example of what kinds of things you were seeing? Maybe give an example of something you were seeing where you worked that just didn't...

MEGHAN: Yeah. One thing I called out in the organization... In many ways, my organization said that they believed in women's empowerment and leadership, and to a degree, that was true. Yet we would push for women to be in leadership, and that meant change. They wouldn't put women on their board or in senior leadership. Specifically, they were doing this whole campaign, which I talk about in my book, about how they were training missionaries to look for the "man" of peace, which was the biblical concept also known as a house of peace. It really is a gender-neutral term. But I was in the marketing department, and they kept on pushing this word "man" of peace. My co-workers confronted it, but it didn't change.

I remember talking to my boss and I said, "Do you think this language is inclusive? Does it include women? Because right now, it seems that men are the only ones that we can steward with the gospel message." She said, "Yeah, I pushed back against that, but they didn't listen. So I encourage you to have a conversation with them." My opportunity came quickly. There was a big meeting they had once a month where employees could ask questions of the organization. As predicted, the senior leadership member was

talking about this whole concept of man of peace. I leaned over to my boss and said, “Is this a good time to ask the question if women are included in this as well?” She said, “This is the perfect opportunity. It’s what the meeting was designed for.” So I pushed my hand up in the air and said, “Does this term include women as well?” He got very upset, flew off the handle, started talking about how I was accusing him of sexism and “How could you even ask that question?” He went on a tirade and made fun of me and turned my question into a joke in front of this meeting of fifty or sixty people.

Of course, I sat in my seat and backed down and thought, “I guess I shouldn’t have asked that question.” But I heard people murmuring behind me, “Meghan, that was a good question.” When the meeting finished, three people immediately rushed up to me and said, “That was handled so inappropriately. I’m going to be following up with an email, and I hope you do too.” So I followed up with an email. These other people followed up with an email. Through a series of conversations, the language was changed, because the language we use is important. But even at the end of that, he asked to have a meeting with me and said that I was wrong because I asked my question out of offense. It felt weird because I got them to be more inclusive, but the way the situation was handled, it was like, “You never should have spoken up in the first place.”

That was one of several things that speaks the idea that, “We say we’re for women, but when that is questioned or when it’s not showing up and you ask questions about it, we’re going to make you an example of how not to behave.” That was one of the reasons I knew it was time to leave. But like I said, I was leading a trip for them — it was actually three weeks before I got married — and that push really showed me this wasn’t where I should spend my time. I didn’t feel like I was being heard there. So I went and got other people to help reclaim gender equity for the church.

NATALIE: Were there other times after that where you were resisting patriarchal teachings in the church and speaking up for women’s rights? What happened?

MEGHAN: Oh yeah. I started a podcast called Faith and Feminism. Of course, that got me into so much trouble. I’m serious.

NATALIE: What does that mean? What does that mean you got in trouble? What happened?

MEGHAN: I’ll tell you. Like I said, I had just gotten married. Prior to getting married, my in-laws are very conservative, and my father-in-law kept on telling me a story about

how in their marriage vows, Deb, his wife, said, "To obey my husband." That was in the vows. His friend came up to him afterward and said, "That is so awesome! How do you get your woman to obey you?"

NATALIE: Oh my gosh!

MEGHAN: This is a real story. Then he said, "No, this is just the Christian way." He told me that story twice before I got married, but I didn't know how to address it because I wanted him to like me. "I want my in-laws to like me, so I just wouldn't say anything." I felt like since I didn't respond the first time, that's why he told me a second time. I don't know. Anyway, that gives you a primer of what I was marrying into. They relentlessly trolled all my social media channels — I eventually had to block them. We had to cancel trips home for Thanksgiving. It was a very painful time in our life, especially for my husband, because he is obviously a feminist. I wouldn't have married him if he weren't. But he wasn't outspoken about it. Now that I was outspoken, it led them to talk to Dustin. They would troll my social media and then email Dustin kind of like, "Get your wife in line."

NATALIE: Wow! Like they're in control of you as adults.

MEGHAN: Yeah, they would reprimand him instead of me. They would reprimand me publicly, but then send a long email to him. That was frustrating. I was like, "Talk to me if you have a problem," but I thought, "Your theology prohibits you from learning from women. Literally, this is part of your theology, so I don't know why we're having these conversations."

NATALIE: Right.

MEGHAN: It was painful for him. We both — Dustin, my husband, and I — we both had to go to therapy and talk to therapists individually to talk about his... He had a great childhood until this, and now it felt like he was excommunicated. They told us we were false teachers. They hinted we were going to hell. All this was because we believed in women's equality. Then I had friends who told me they couldn't be associated with me because it would tie them to a liberal agenda. I had one of my very dear friends send me a message saying she couldn't be connected to me on my birthday. So it cost a lot to speak up.

Something I've learned so powerfully is I'm not concerned about the critics. I'm concerned about who I use my voice for. What were the last four years of mission work if it didn't change me, if I didn't see their stories as something that is worth fighting for?

If I know what's harming them, how could I just walk away from that and be like, "Oh, that's fine. I'll be comfortable over here and not talk about this"? Not only was it what happened to them, it's what happened to me. It also opened my eyes to all the abuse and sexual assault that I had endured but was told it was my fault. I've gotten in trouble, I've lost friends, my family has been disappointed in me, and the list goes on.

But that's not who I speak for. I feel so close to God, because I truly believe this is God's work. This is not something I had an idea about. Of course women's equality matters to God. Of course God cares about women and stories of abuse. Of course, of course, of course. So I'm so confident that this is what God has called me to do, that even when this does happen... And that's not to say it isn't painful. I do cry a lot. But I see my therapist, I talk about it, and I recover. I remember why I tell these stories or tell my story, because it has an effect. What we believe about our gender roles really has profound effects, not only here but also around the world.

NATALIE: It does. I totally relate to the feeling. I feel like I'm aligned with the heart of the love of God now in a way that I wasn't before when I was buying into and catering to all the... It's hateful underneath all of it. It's got a nice little pink bow on the top with some frosting on it, but it's not cake underneath there. It's a pile of poo. Once you see that, the loving thing to do is to say, "I don't want anyone to eat this. This is not healthy. Let's go for the real thing." Now, my audience is women of faith. They love Jesus with all their hearts. A lot of them are in marriages that are like my former marriage was. It's a complementarian marriage. They come from that kind of theology.

One thing I noticed when I was getting out of my former marriage (and I ended up getting remarried and I do not have a complementarian second marriage, thank goodness), even the marriages I noticed that were healthy in the complementarian church that I went to didn't function where the guy was the one ruling the roost, making all the decisions, and treating his wife like crap. They functioned more like an egalitarian marriage. They were partners. They were a team. When I would look at marriages like that in my former marriage, I thought, "I wish my marriage could be like that." I didn't know at the time that what I was... But those women in those marriages would say, "Oh, this is a true complementarian marriage. I am very submissive to my husband. I do whatever he tells me to do."

But on a functional level, that wasn't what was going on. All the rest of us in abusive marriages would look at that and think, "Well, I do that too, but my marriage looks nothing like that." Can you talk a bit about...? I'm assuming your marriage is not complementarian. What do you say when people ask you, "How is your marriage functioning when you don't have someone to make the decisions for you?"

MEGHAN: Yeah, I so... It's funny. With the podcast, Faith and Feminism, I don't get that question as much.

NATALIE: Do they leave you alone now? They are like, "Oh, we can't touch her now. She's totally off the deep end. She's a lost cause."

MEGHAN: It's funny. I wrote the book I wrote... They sent my book to beta readers (I guess that's what you'd call it). They sent it to three different demographics of women, and it was clear that they sent one of my books to a complementarian woman in a complementarian marriage. Something she asked, because I wrote a chapter on marriage, was, "How does your marriage function?" Actually, I hadn't written a chapter on marriage yet, and I added that afterwards because she said, "I don't understand how this works."

It's simple. I think we've been taught a bunch of formulas, which aren't helpful at all. Also, formulas don't really work with people. Obviously I have an egalitarian marriage, but I think it's simple. We talk to each other, we listen to each other, and we empower one another. An example I use in my book is that I knew I needed to quit my job after that night I described to you earlier. Instead of my husband saying, "You need to submit and earn money," he just empowered me. He said, "You know what, Meghan, you're right. This is something that needs to be addressed. Go for it." After we got married, he was a chemical engineer. He hated his job. He worked in a factory. The way he was raised is that you just do it to earn money, and his role as a man was to earn money. So he would do this terrible job, even though he hated it every day. I said, "You don't have to do this job. We can survive without it." So I encouraged him to quit his chemical engineering job and go back to coding school, computer programming school, and now we both work from home. He is a coder, and he loves it.

That is a small illustration to just listen to one another, support each other in the best way you know how. It's not like, "You're the man. You have to keep on providing for the family, and I'm the wife, so I need to immediately have a bunch of children, cook dinner, and clean the house." That was not it. It is allowing us to function in our gifting. When it comes to household duties, we split it up according to our giftings. Who's mowing the lawn? Who's doing all the yard work? It's me, because I like it and I enjoy it. He is not doing that work because he has allergies, and we live in Georgia. If he goes out and works in the lawn or garden, he is covered in hives. But I enjoy it. Actually, he always empties the dishwasher and cooks. That's just an example of playing to your gifts. I hate emptying the dishwasher, so he does that for me.

NATALIE: That's awesome!

MEGHAN: I love gardening. I love yard work. I enjoy mowing the lawn. I have an Apple watch and I have a move goal. I'm trying to burn five-hundred calories every day, so I'm like, "Yeah, I want to mow the lawn. That's another opportunity to hit my move goal." I think the answer is to just talk and listen to each other and try to empower and support one another in the best way possible. I've only been married for four years now, but that has worked great for us. We both work from home, so it's not even... Whatever we're doing is working, because we are with each other 24/7. We still love each other, love spending time with each other, and even miss each other when we're apart.

NATALIE: That is so awesome. I hope that gives listeners hope for... I know a lot of my listeners are separated or are getting a divorce, and they wonder if there are healthy relationships out there. "Is that something that could be a reality for me?" I want them to know that it is definitely a reality. Not all men have that kind of theology that believes those harmful things against women. So wrapping up, let's talk about your book. Is it released? This is going to air in the future, but when is the release date?

MEGHAN: May 11th.

NATALIE: May 11th. So this will be out by that time. Tell us about why you wrote the book and what you are hoping it will do in the world.

MEGHAN: When I first had this idea to write a book, I really was gung-ho about writing a memoir, because I wanted people to identify. I wanted them to see themselves in my story. I think what I found over and over and over is that when we have conversations, when we tell our stories, we are so much less alone than we think we are. Many of the things that were harmful to us and were told were good were actually harmful to others. They were questioning it, but felt that they couldn't talk about it. I remember when I was pitching it to the publisher, they said, "A memoir doesn't really sell as well as non-fiction books, so I want you to consider that." I said, "Okay, well, I have this first draft of a memoir (it was very rough and not good), a very rough first draft of a memoir. Can you read it and let me know what you think, because I feel pretty strongly about the memoir." They read it and said, "Yeah. We'll do the memoir."

The reason I wrote it as a memoir is that I think the listeners especially... You've already described your audience. I think they will read this story and see themselves in it again and again. That was my hope. I think so often we don't think the bad stuff that happens to us... We think it's just us. We don't realize there are so many other people. We also don't realize that the bad stuff that happens to us happens to women around the globe to differing extremes, but it has the same root cause. The reason I wanted to tell it as a memoir is I want you to see my story. I want you to identify with it. But I also want you

to know at the end that you do have a voice, and this is how you can come out of it. This is why this theology is damaging in a firsthand account, but this is how we can come out of it. One of my favorite teachings from the Bible is when it says, "We know a tree by its fruit." The question I am asking is, what kind of fruit does this biblical gender role theology produce? It's clear not only for your listeners but around the world, this kind of theology is producing rotten, damaging, toxic fruit.

NATALIE: Yep!

MEGHAN: If we're taking the Bible seriously in that way, then we know we must confront these teachings, or abuse is just going to keep on happening in the church. And not just in the church, but we will be complicit in the abuse that happens elsewhere. Like I said, a lot of these ideas are exported. A lot of these women who are trafficked are being purchased by western American men with these ideals. So I want them to see themselves in these stories. I want them to find the courage to confront these gender roles if they haven't already started questioning it. I want them to know that they are not alone. I want them to feel seen and heard and empowered to do something. That is my hope with it.

NATALIE: I love that. I love the name of it too: "Women Rising." I'm all about the flying. Can they get it on Amazon? You sent me an early link, but it was not on Amazon. I just want to make sure they can get it on Amazon.

MEGHAN: You can get it on Amazon, Barnes and Noble. My publisher is InterVarsity Press, which is a Christian publisher, so you can find them as well. You can pre-order on Amazon, so if this will be released before May 11th, please, please, please pre-order it. That would help me so much. But yes, you can do it on Amazon or InterVarsity Press. If you just search "Women Rising" and my name, you will find the book.

NATALIE: Okay, great. For those of you listening or on YouTube, I will have the links in the show notes if you go to flyingfreenow.com/119. That's the number of this episode. I will link to Meghan's podcast. We'll link to her website. We'll link to her books and any other helps that she has for you, and you can get to know Meghan a bit better. Okay. Thank you so much for coming on the podcast. It's been great to talk to you and hear your story and get to know you a bit. For those of you listening, thanks for listening. Until next time, fly free!