

Kieryn:

I'm Kieryn.

Eve:

I'm Hannah. This is Kitchen Table Cult.

Kieryn:

Where two Quiverfull escapees talk about our experiences in the cultish underbelly of the religious right.
Hey Hannah.

Eve:

Hey Kieryn. How's it going?

Kieryn:

It's school, and life, and politics. What about you?

Eve:

School and life and politics. We have had classes canceled because of Hurricane Florence, which is a total joke because it never actually came here. We've gotten a bunch of rain, but we're kind of outside the path so far. So I have been taking a lot of naps.

Kieryn:

That seems good. That seems nice.

Eve:

I had EMDR yesterday and I've only just started it. This is my second or third session and gosh, it's really, really good, but it's decreased my anxiety levels so that I have to overcompensate with my executive functioning now, because that's what used to keep me going on all of my to do lists and now I'm just, "Hm, maybe I'll map."

Kieryn:

I feel I should try that, but also maybe I shouldn't. Because anxiety is also why I get my schoolwork done on time.

Eve:

I think that it stops me from dissociating. It's really incredible. I really strongly recommend it.

Kieryn:

Yeah, that would be good. I've been less disassociated since I got my uterus out, but being even less disassociated than that would probably be better.

Eve:

Right, right. I have easier time focusing. Yeah, it's been really good. I feel like I'm also, I don't know if this is just me in my perception of it, but I also feel like in social situations, I can regulate and modulate myself to match the tone of things. So as opposed to overshooting or undershooting [crosstalk 00:02:40] anxiety is less.

Kieryn:

That makes sense.

Eve:

Yeah. It's kind of cool.

Kieryn:

I should try this.

Eve:

You should try this. It's really good. So one of the books I'm reading right now for school referenced Andree Seu and op-eds in world magazine and I was thrown for this massive, massive memory lane flashback of all the times that I sat in the bathroom pooping and reading world magazine and going directly to her column because it was the most interesting thing in there and written by a single woman who knew the Bible really well and was taken seriously by all the dudes.

Kieryn:

Yeah. That's really rare and shocking.

Eve:

We got a question this week on Twitter.

Kieryn:

Yeah, we did.

Eve:

You want to get into that? This kind of relates to how rare-

Kieryn:

Yeah, somebody was asking, not a specifically, but someone tagged us into it about what long hair and head coverings is all about in Christian fundamentalism. And I remember head coverings being a huge part of my family's life and long hair.

Eve:

The debate goes really far back about whether or not the hair is the head covering or if you need an extra one.

Kieryn:

Right. But what are we even talking about? What is with the long hair? Why would we think that there's a question about whether or not the hair is the covering?

Eve:

Well, yes, we have to define what headship is to get going. Okay. So this all goes back to gender roles and this is part of why Andree Seu's interesting and why this question is interesting and why who we are now is such an affront to who we used to be. The whole school of thought around taking the Bible literally create some interesting situations.

Eve:

And some of the interpretations of some of the more probiotic passages about creation and men and women and setting up that as a cut and dry binary. Some of those verses really put men in distinct authority over women. And who's surprised? That's pretty classic nomadic Judeo-Christian people group thing. That's not a surprise. But I guess Abrahamic religion thing is more what I meant.

Eve:

But the literal interpretation of this when it comes into today's society is interpreted in some really weird ways in modern fundamentalism. So, you have what we call headship theology. We have them more sterilized household term complementarianism, and all these things kind of date back to a reaction against so-called second wave feminism in the church where women were getting more rights politically and the church being afraid of change as usual was trying to stamp that out.

Eve:

And so 1987, the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood was formed and they issued the Danvers Statement, which is the predecessor for the statement on social justice that we covered last week, and it basically denounces feminism as non-biblical and gets into a whole lot of other stuff.

Kieryn:

Yeah. And I remember people specifically having a problem with women wanting to be pastors and speaking in the church. And so, what we're doing is clawing at the Bible for reasons to make women be submissive. And so I feel a lot of this, at least, as it relates to kind of the hair stuff comes from First Corinthians 11. And it's two to 16-

Eve:

Do you want to read it?

Kieryn:

... is where all of this is. I don't want to read it, but I'm going to read it.

Eve:

May eye of the goddess rest your soul.

Kieryn:

Yeah. And I'm reading this in the King James because that's the purest, purest form.

Eve:

I'm so sorry. My father would disagree.

Kieryn:

My parents and your parents would not get along.

Eve:

No, there really wouldn't. This is why we're friends.

Kieryn:

No. I'm really glad they never met to be honest. All right, so First Corinthians 11:2-16 is where a lot of this is pulled from and I'm going to read it in the KJV, and then I'm going to need a palate cleanser.

Eve:

You're going to [crosstalk 00:08:02].

Kieryn:

Yeah, I'm going to go get a shot of tequila and it'll be fine.

Eve:

All right.

Kieryn:

All right. "So now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ and the head of the woman is the man and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head. But every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors with her head. For that is even all one as if she were shaving." It's really hard to read.

Kieryn:

But the last half of that sentence is basically shaved heads are bad on women or it would be the same. Having your head not covered would be the same as having her head shaved, which is a shameful thing as we are going to discover in two seconds. "For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it'd be a shame for women to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered"

Kieryn:

"For a man, indeed ought not to cover his head for as much as he is the image and glory of God. But the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman. But the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man." Oh my God, this is so much worse than I remember it.

Eve:

And you wonder why the Apostle Paul wasn't married.

Kieryn:

Yeah, no shit. All right, we're almost there. "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels."

Eve:

Oh yeah. Because of the angels.

Kieryn:

"Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman and neither the woman without the man in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man even so as the men also by the woman, but all things of God. Judging yourselves is it commonly that a woman praying to God uncovered, death not even nature itself teach you that if a man have long hair it is a shame unto him. But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her for her hair is given her for a covering." And that is where we get our coverings.

Eve:

The phrasing in this version is so bad. It's so bad.

Kieryn:

It is. It's terrible.

Eve:

It's also incredibly homophobic. And it just reflects-

Kieryn:

It's just bad.

Eve:

It just reflects the cultural norms of the time. And the Apostle Paul was a misogynist and these things are pretty obvious to anyone who's reading this for the first time outside of the church and who doesn't have this background of growing up with this kind of passage being revered. And then the passage you were mentioning before about women speaking in the church. I forget which epistle.

Kieryn:

It isn't Timothy?

Eve:

Yeah. So basically the situation as most liberal scholars have come to conclude is that the women in that particular congregation were gossiping in the back of the church so much that it disrupted the church service. And that's why that particular situation was being addressed with the women should be silent. It was a specific command to a specific context and a specific congregation.

Eve:

But when you interpret the Bible literally without any historical context, both of these passages become just cesspools for a creative interpretation.

Kieryn:

But not creative interpretation because scripture is clear on the matter and there is only one literal way that this can be interpreted.

Eve:

Yeah. So I'm the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood in the Danvers Statement, one of their sub points at the beginning of it is talking about, "the increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devise to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of biblical texts." And you see this phrase a lot how you sided growing the phrase scripture is clear. That's always a little bit of as a dog whistle for biblical infallibility iniritability.

Kieryn:

My parents loved that phrase.

Eve:

Inerrancy, not iniritability. The Bible is not irritable. I am, but ... Inerrancy. So, talking about the inerrancy of scripture, it's this literal interpretation and one author as opposed to multiple authors. And I've talked about this ad nauseum already on this podcast. But I cannot emphasize enough how often things go back to ... when things get weird in the church, it goes back to reading the Bible literally and out of context. And mocking anyone who tries to place it.

Kieryn:

Apply context?

Eve:

Yeah. Apply context and nuance. And so you get these phrases like hermeneutical oddities. It's just a knee jerk response that kind of gets any casual layman reader to agree with editorializing of any opposing his position as trivial and stupid. So it's this mocking-

Kieryn:

It's not outright heretical.

Eve:

Yeah. It's this mocking stance on anyone else's opinion to reinforce their own authority. And that goes back to the headship stuff. So if you had this biblical, literal interpretation of scripture, and anyone who doesn't do that, you're going to consider heretic and you're going to say they don't have any authority over you in terms of their interpretation of scripture.

Eve:

I got into this fight a lot with my dad when I was courting because he said I wasn't biblically an adult. And we hit this back and forth about what biblically an adult meant and if there was any legal distinction about it. And so I did a five or six page, extra Jesus paper, researching what adulthood represented in the old and new testaments. And I placed everything in context and he was like, "Well, we're going to have to agree to disagree on this."

Eve:

Because he didn't agree with my approach because I was putting it in context. And you get that kind of dismissive attitude everywhere in these fundamentalist circles where they believe in inerrancy of scripture. So the headship stuff takes this literally, and they create this kind of diagram of an umbrella where it's God is the big umbrella who's protecting everybody. And then underneath is this little umbrella and it's the man, and underneath is a smaller umbrella and it's the woman. And underneath this-

Kieryn:

And then there's a bunch of little umbrellas, little children.

Eve:

... it's little children. And if you step outside of God's covering, you're going to get rained on.

Kieryn:

You're in danger.

Eve:

Which is I guess toxic sludge of the modern world is going to get you. And so it's this idea of the man is the one who interprets scripture. The man is the one who determines where family boundaries are and defines morality.

Kieryn:

Makes decisions.

Eve:

Yeah.

Kieryn:

My parents were extremely into the concept of the umbrella headship thing.

Eve:

Did you guys have-

Kieryn:

My dad liked to call it the umbrella of protection.

Eve:

Yeah. Did you guys have any systems for appealing a decision that your parents made?

Kieryn:

No.

Eve:

My parents had this whole thing, I guess we learned it from some family friend. But it was if you thought that a decision was unfair, if you calmly and respectfully, keywords, came to the parent who made the decision, read, father and said, "May I make an appeal?" He would consider it if he felt benevolent. And then usually he'd dismiss it and tell you why. But that was the way you could work within the headship system to maybe influence it to get your way, but you had to be really persuasive and you had to be calm and logical.

Kieryn:

Yeah, we didn't have anything like that really. Although the power structure in my family was actually kind of matriarchal, but under the guise of patriarchy. So, I don't remember where my parents learned the phrase, it was from some comedian where it was the man is the head, but the wife is the neck that turns the head. And that was exactly how my family works.

Eve:

That's from My Big Fat Greek Wedding.

Kieryn:

So, really the decision was my mom. Yeah. Yeah. My mom loved that movie. It was weird.

Eve:

I kind of loved that movie because that's how getting married felt for me.

Kieryn:

Yeah. I understood it later after I watched it as an adult, but when I saw it, my mom watched it while I was still living there and it was, this is really weird and confusing. But yeah, so that was sort of how it works. So my mom would really be the person that you needed to convince, which was just-

Eve:

The women has the soft power. So before we get into this, we got define gender roles here. Because that informs this. The soft power is the woman is responsible for the household and the children. The administrative tasks in the family. The woman does all the emotional labor of keeping track of everyone's birthdays and favorite foods and allergies. And when your mother said she wanted to visit and making sure-

Kieryn:

Basically the secretary.

Eve:

... we're keeping up with stuff at church correctly, and so and so needs to go to the dentist and get his vaccine or not. And the father's the one who has veto power. One family I knew had a running gag calling the father the chancellor of Dick's checker. He had the purse strings and the mother had the middle-management job. So she would have to go to him to get financial things approved or disapproved and make a case for it.

Eve:

I remember my mom having to do that for new shoes for my brothers or no, oh my gosh. So many things. And just like, "Yeah, this is why this person needs this now and this is why it's going to cost this much as opposed to that much." And there was this complicated process.

Kieryn:

Yeah. My dad, basically his role was to be the provider and the protector. So he made the money and made all the ... he was the backstop. So he and mom would kind of make decisions together, but he was the one who was responsible for the decisions and was where the buck stopped. But my mom was the one who was basically in control of finances. She was the one who was on top of taxes. She was the one who was on top of paying bills. She was the one who would be like, "Hey, we're not going to be able to pay the mortgage this month, so you should work on Saturday."

Eve:

My mom was the one who was always much better with money than my dad, but at some point, I remember when maybe when my brother was born probably ... not 2000, '94, '95, somewhere in there. My dad for my mom's birthday gave her the gift of relieving her from financial duty. Which is, yeah.

Kieryn:

No, no, no.

Eve:

Yeah, it's just stuff is so bad. So what are the gender roles? And how does the complementarianism as a word, what does it mean?

Kieryn:

So that goes back to the theory that I don't remember where they pulled it from. But the woman exists to serve the man and to be ... oh, it's from the helpmeet verse. It's from being a helpmeet. The woman is supposed to be the helpmeet to the man who is the one who is carrying the burden of making all of the decisions.

Eve:

Right. So, the man is the one who has all the responsibility and he's the one who is answerable to God for whatever happens with the family. And the mom is supposed to, or the wife is supposed to smooth things over-

Kieryn:

Carry it out?

Eve:

- fill in the gaps and, yeah, carry it out, execute it and support him.

Kieryn:

Yep. And that's why they're like, it's not equal but different because you couldn't have one without the other because you obviously need one person to do all of this thing and the other person to do all of that thing.

Eve:

Yeah. The way they talk about it, it sounds like this yin-yang this symbiotic men take on this, women take on this. Men are initiators, women are receivers, and it's all very Freudian and explicit. But it also doesn't work because in terms of the responsibility, the burden of the decision is on the man's shoulders forever.

Kieryn:

And there's no way to come out equally. There's no structure in here for an equal partnership.

Eve:

Yeah. I think it's interesting because I have seen women back lead these marriages, the women who really craved authority, but I've also seen more passive codependent women take advantage of that to really infantilize themselves intellectually and avoid taking responsibility for any decisions and avoid actually having to learn about how the world works. Which is really interesting and toxic. But ...

Kieryn:

Yeah. My parents used sort of that to reason about why we didn't need to learn things. It's like, "Well, your place is in the home and it's so much better to be a girl because you don't have to make decisions. And decisions are such hard work and nobody wants that and you don't want to have to carry the responsibility for that." And so they created this environment that did just infantilize everybody.

Eve:

And that's part of how they sold courtship too was just like, "You don't have to do the work of finding your person, your personal will find you," or [crosstalk 00:24:13].

Kieryn:

If you pray hard enough.

Eve:

Yeah. And there's this real culture of intellectual abdication of responsibility in terms of consequences in the world. I've seen people make really stupid financial or career decisions. I know for example a family might have nine kids and not have a stable ... the dad might not have a stable job and the mom's not allowed to have a job outside the home because her job is at the home. And they can't feed everybody and they can't take care of someone if someone gets sick.

Eve:

And this is something like a trial that God is calling them to weather not a bad decision that they made.

Kieryn:

That is literally my entire childhood is a series of bad decisions that my parents made [crosstalk 00:25:01] a trial.

Eve:

Which chalks it up. It goes back to headship is like, well God is the authority and He's calling us to live this way where we don't have birth control and we welcome children as a blessing and the woman doesn't make decisions because she's not supposed to because that's too masculine. And it kind of extrapolates out. Obviously this is a very simplistic caricature of this ... I know complimentarians-

Kieryn:

Not inaccurate.

Eve:

... who would take offense at this, but this is how it practically works in a lot of situations.

Kieryn:

Yeah. There's more nuance to the idea of it, but on the ground, that's how it works.

Eve:

Do you remember, I don't know if you ever read the book, the little booklet that John Piper put out about biblical manhood and womanhood and what it meant.

Kieryn:

I think I tried.

Eve:

It had the list of jobs in the back that were appropriate for women.

Kieryn:

No, I didn't get that far.

Eve:

I think it's a PDF. I think I can probably find it to link to this, but there's this list of positions of authority that it would be biblically inappropriate for a woman to have. There are situations like a woman is a CEO and she has a male secretary, that's bad, that kind of stuff.

Kieryn:

I remember, so the way it played out when I was a teenager because I was active in politics, which is not a thing where women should be. And so the rules that I had to abide by were that I could never be in a position of authority over a man. So, I couldn't ever be a director or a campaign manager. That's the word I was looking for. Or I couldn't run for office. I couldn't be a ...

Kieryn:

I could be a secretary. I did wind up being a volunteer coordinator, which did sort of loosely put me in authority over men because I was telling them where to go, but I wasn't telling them what to do. And I was just always limited because I was only ever allowed to work under men. And if I worked under a woman, she had to be working under a man.

Eve:

Did you ever run into a situation where it was super clear that the woman was the one in charge but they had kind of finagled it to have a man as a figurehead?

Kieryn:

I feel like I have.

Eve:

I feel like I have too.

Kieryn:

I feel like I did.

Eve:

It reminds me of the Bible story of Deborah, the judge, which is an example that gets called up a lot in this conversation where the Israelites needs a general to go to war, God's speaking to the people through a prophetess Deborah because there was no man who was willing to listen to God at that point. So He went through a woman and then this woman goes to this warrior and is like, "God wants you to be the general." And he was, "I am scared."

Eve:

And so she's like, "Cool, I'm going to lead the army into battle." Even though she's just a housewife or something. She wasn't, but that's the way it was framed. And she triumphs over the enemy and the man is her supporting sidekick and God shames him at the end of the battle with this Israel needs a man to lead and you wouldn't do it. And that's the only reason we let her lead to shame you through having her lead you.

Eve:

And the way that was framed is women are allowed to lead if all the men abdicate responsibility and if all the men-

Kieryn:

Only as a last resort.

Eve:

Only as the last resort.

Kieryn:

Yeah. That was how (Sarah) Palin was explained as okay. Was it was a Deborah situation where everyone else was just not stepping up. So that's why she was okay.

Eve:

Who else could have stepped up to fill her shoes? I feel almost anyone else could've been better.

Kieryn:

Literally anybody.

Eve:

Literally anyone else. Wow. Yeah. So Sarah Palin, modern day Deborah. Let's take a quick break and then we'll come back and we'll get directly to the question about head covering. And we'll answer another listener question.

Kieryn:

Yes.

Eve:

So did you know that I am actually an excellent ballroom and swing dancer?

Kieryn:

No, but this doesn't surprise me.

Eve:

Not only did I do worship dance once upon a time for a very long time, but I was participating in a Christian cotillion that was mostly populated with homeschoolers. And the reason that was okay by all the parents is because one, all the dads attended and were participating, and two, the whole idea was it's a great place to practically practice leading and following, which will teach the men leadership skills and initiative if they have to practice asking girls to dance and girls have to practice submission and following by following clumsy teenage boys around the dance floor.

Kieryn:

Oh my God.

Eve:

Yeah. So, this was the whole thing. And they had all these little gender role lecturers that went with every lesson or all these jokes, all these pneumonics for remembering little tricks. In most box steps, the man leads forward with his left foot to go first and the woman moves back with her right foot. And they were like women always lead with the right foot because they're always right.

Eve:

I don't know, they were all these little gags. The whole thing is just appropriating classic 1950s misogyny and patriarchy and adapting it to complementarianism, which is kind of what complementarianism is anyway.

Kieryn:

Yeah, that's not really ... there's, I don't know that you could make a differentiation very well. It's pretty similar.

Eve:

So did you wear a head covering to church?

Kieryn:

I did. My parents went through this stage where we actually experienced kind of, well, we experienced all the stages of head coverings, which is first my parents were like, "That's ridiculous. Obviously hair." And then my parents read the King James some more and I don't know who they talked to. And then they were, "Mm, no, I do feel like God is saying we should have head covering."

Kieryn:

So then for a bit, they tried to make all of us girls wear head coverings. And let me tell you about trying to put head coverings on toddlers, it doesn't work.

Eve:

It's difficult.

Kieryn:

It doesn't stay.

Eve:

So they didn't start at puberty. They did it for everybody.

Kieryn:

Yeah. They tried that and then they realized that was a mistake. And so, then they were like, "Okay, well maybe the children don't have to do it. It will just be the adults." So my mom did one and I wanted to be an adult, so I also wore one. But what I wound up doing, I actually wore head coverings longer than my mom did because they eventually came around to the other side where they were, "No, you can read it as, as long as you have long hair, that's a covering." Which is why I was also never allowed to cut my hair short.

Eve:

Interesting.

Kieryn:

Which is why my hair is short now.

Eve:

So my family, maybe this is because my father didn't have us reading the King James Version. But we read that passage as metaphorical as reinstating complementarianism. So long hair wasn't required. And head coverings were not required, although at some points I definitely felt I wished that we are more

like that. But that's just me being Anne Shirley obsessed Victorian wanna-be, like more lace the better I'm at for a minute when I was 13 or 14.

Eve:

But my dad definitely personally preferred long hair and I think all of the guys I knew growing up did, so there was this kind of it's this ancient symbol of fertility and health and long healthy hair means that you've got a good diet and you can probably have babies. But in our community, it was kind of idealized. And so, I had really long hair at some point, but when I went away to college, I cut it off right before I left.

Eve:

And I've never really had it that long since and I'm pretty happy with that. I had it long when I got married. One of the first things I did when I got divorced was got a pixie cut, which I think is a pretty classic massive breakup move, but also symbolized a lot more given our community in the context of hair is a covering.

Kieryn:

Yeah. I was not allowed to decide what I wanted to do with my hair. My parents militantly controlled my hair and it bothered me forever. I have really thick, really heavy, really dark hair, and I lived in Florida and having hair that is long and so dark brown, it's almost black, and thick to the middle of my back was awful and I hated it and it was knotty and terrible and I had to wear it in a ponytail or a bun and then I would get migraines because it was so heavy.

Eve:

Oh yeah. I had friends who had that problem too. Well, my hair is, I have a lot of it, but it's very fine. And so, I used to wear it up and I'd get headaches too, but not that bad.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Eventually, I figured out how to make it be less of a migraine problem. But yeah. So my parents had this rule where it could never be above my shoulder blades. So not on my shoulders, but my shoulder blade.

Eve:

The back of your shoulder blades.

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Eve:

It has to be able to cover your tits.

Kieryn:

Right. And so when-

Eve:

Just in case there's a fire and we have to leave without clothes on.

Kieryn:

I mean why would you not be wearing clothes in your house? Unless you're in your shower.

Eve:

You were never nude?

Kieryn:

Right. Yeah. Unless you're in the shower. Yeah. So that was always a huge point of contention because it was just this thing that was awful and painful and I couldn't ever control it. And my parents demanded control of it. So, when they broke us up, what I did to retaliate was I cut my hair to my shoulders, which is three inches above what I was-

Eve:

I remember that [crosstalk 00:37:08].

Kieryn:

... allowed to cut it too. Yeah. And that was liberating. And I have just cut my hair shorter ever since. My parents were initially really angry and then they decided that instead of having a rebellious child, they would just own it and be like, "Yeah, no, we let them cut their hair because they had a breakup and we thought that was fine." And I was, "No, you did not."

Eve:

So sympathetic.

Kieryn:

No. I was livid. I was so angry. I was like, "You don't get to do that. This was my act of defiance. You don't get to claim it."

Eve:

I hate when these little moments get co-opted.

Kieryn:

So [crosstalk 00:37:49].

Eve:

We're going to be proud of you anyway, because we're going to still pretend that you're in submission to us.

Kieryn:

Right.

Eve:

My God.

Kieryn:

Yeah. So, I did, and I wore head coverings. I wore them in a bow so they didn't look like, when you think of head coverings and you think of Amish women, I had a ponytail and then I wrapped a piece of fabric around it in a bow and called that good because it was the intention that was there, but I didn't have to stand out in a crowd too much except I did.

Eve:

So, that's the thing. So, it'll vary a lot from group to group how that works. I know of some very conservative Catholics who wear head coverings. I know some reformed Presbyterians who will wear head coverings, and there's a whole variety of ways it can look and it's very much like we're taking the letter of the law as simply as it can possibly be taken. Some things like a hair ribbon or a piece of lace, kind of looks a little doily tied to the ponytail or the button.

Eve:

And then it can be everything to up to full blown scarves covering the head. If a family went messianic Jewish in my world, they would often start going in that direction looking they had just walked out at the set of Fiddler on the Roof. So I hope that answers your question about head coverings guys. We have another question that we wanted to take on today.

Kieryn:

Yeah. This is something that we've been asked quite a bit recently.

Eve:

And we're going to put this up on our page. There's an email exchange I had with a listener that we got permission to put up on the website. But I guess it's probably time that we address the elephant in the room.

Kieryn:

So why don't we talk about the famous Quiverfull people that have TV shows?

Eve:

The famous Quiverfull people that have TV shows, the Duggars and the Bates. They're easy reference points if I want to tell someone where I come from in a 10 second conversation.

Kieryn:

I use it for shorthand with therapists or professionals that I'm meeting with, if they need a background. I'm like, "Do you know of these families?" Okay.

Eve:

"Yeah. That's where I come from." It's pretty convenient. But so Kieryn, you are more involved in this community blow up when it happened with the speculation. You want to talk about that?

Kieryn:

Yeah. So a couple of years ago, some people were speculating about the sexual orientation of the minors in one of these families or both of these families, I don't remember. And a lot of us alumni who were queer and closeted, if we even knew we were queer at the time when we were growing up know how dangerous it is for people outside of your immediate, well, anyone but people outside of your community to be speculating about your queerness.

Kieryn:

Because you are supposed to shun and avoid any appearance of evil. You should give people no reason to think that you have anything to do with anything bad. And queerness in this culture is evil. I sat through so many speeches about how evil it was for boys to be feminine at a convention. And if your parents are on TV and there's speculation ...

Eve:

It comes from, there's a passage I guess in one of the Epistle Timothy as well about what qualifies a man to be a pastor or an elder and it's like, he has to have his house in order and it's this concept of moral consistency and familial integrity. The father is exercising his authority correctly. So everyone in his household is falling in line along what he believes to be true.

Eve:

So if a daughter is going around wearing a spaghetti strap top at church, some other family member or family might ... the mom or the dad might come over to the parents of the daughter with the spaghetti structure and be like, "What's going on here? She's in rebellion." It becomes a reflection on the parents moral fiber and their faith. And whether or not they actually believe the things that they say they believe.

Eve:

So if you have a queer kid or if you have a kid who's using drugs or dressing immodestly or is dating or courting, it becomes-

Kieryn:

Being a normal teenager really.

Eve:

Yeah. It becomes this concern that the parents are maybe not true believers. So when that kind of concern happens, what's at stake? If somebody questions the validity of your faith in that situation, what do you stand to lose?

Kieryn:

Your entire community or access to resources. Your only outlet or one of the few outlets that you have to see people who are in your family, and your parents can make your life a million times worse by working you to the bone and nobody seeing or noticing or caring.

Eve:

Right. So if the parents feel their faith is called into question by their community, they're going to double down on whatever authoritarian practices that they have. And so we, having from personal experience know that to speculate about the gender identity or sexuality of any of these kids who are kind of minor celebrities against their will and don't really have a choice in this family venture, they are at significant risk for abuse.

Kieryn:

And we already know that the suicide rate is much higher or the attempted rate is much higher for queer kids even more. And we don't have the data for this if you're isolated.

Eve:

And in these communities, these are the kinds of people who will send their kids to conversion therapy camps, which are basically-

Kieryn:

Torture.

Eve:

... systemic torture. Yeah. They're systemic torture organizations that will torture you and break you to say that you're not queer anymore. And so in order to protect those like us, we can't really discuss these things or speculate about the Duggars or the Bates or whatever their families are up to because it's too dangerous for kids in the system. So if you know kids in your community who are homeschoolers and you're wondering about these sorts of things, how should people react? How should they help them?

Kieryn:

One, don't bring attention to the minor who may or may not be queer because you don't know how their parents are going to react, and two, be accepting of them however it is they are expressing themselves. If they're being queer or feminine or acting like a normal teenager, just accept that, accept them for who they are as people and don't project to them.

Eve:

I think treating kids as people with autonomy and valid emotions and valid interests is pretty much revolutionary enough. That's all you can safely do and that's all you should safely do. But that's incredibly powerful and liberating and affirming. And so, just be careful in these situations because you never know what's happening behind closed doors.

Eve:

The families that look their most perfect, the families that are the most polished are the ones that in my experience, anecdotally in my experience that have the most abuse going on behind closed doors and the darkest secret.

Kieryn:

This is sort of bring us into something that happened in California recently. This is something we saw with the Turpins who they took their entire massive family to Disney World and had smiles and

everyone was like, "Oh look, they're so happy." And I'm like, "That's what they want you to think because they're hiding all of this. And it's important to be aware."

Kieryn:

And the other thing that I wanted to throw out as another reason that I don't really want to talk about the famous Quiverfull families is because the people who haven't left or who are on their way out need a safe place. And I want to be there for them and I don't want to make them feel bad for something they couldn't control. It's not their fault. And I don't have any problem with them for being in the family that they were born into. They can't help it.

Eve:

No. To be clear, we're not saying that we believe that these famous families are abusive. There's been some accusations or some things with one of the sons, and if you want to go down that rabbit hole, you can. And that seem to be pretty clearly abuse that was covered up. But in terms of the parents physically abusing the kids, we haven't seen any evidence. We don't know. Maybe things are fine. I hope things are fine. Maybe everybody's actually really happy and that's awesome.

Eve:

We're not accusing anybody of anything. But just anecdotally speaking, this seems to be the wiser decision.

Kieryn:

And it's important that when they get the ability to leave, if they ever have that ability that they know there's people here who will support them and are here for them and are part of their community as well.

Eve:

Yeah. And if you want to read about people who've left communities like that, there's a memoir by one of the daughters of the Westboro Baptist Church group that I've heard good things about. I haven't read it myself. But if you want to see what that experience looks like from the other side and how someone in one of those kinds of highly publicized situations got out, that's where you should go look. But yeah, don't support the tabloids that exploit these kids. It's really gross.

Kieryn:

It's really gross. It's so gross.

Eve:

Thanks for listening.

Kieryn:

We'll see you next week.

Eve:

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Send us your questions. Join our Patreon. We will be hanging out with people in an after dark episode soon. So, come join us and BYOB.

Kieryn:

Yes.

Eve:

Bye.

Kieryn:

Bye.