**Women Rising***Learning to Listen, Reclaiming Our Voice*

May 11, 2021 | \$17, 208 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4778-5

Meghan Tschanz is a writer, speaker, and former missionary who is passionate about empowering women and reclaiming feminism for the Christian faith. She's a prolific blogger, host of the *Faith and Feminism* podcast, and an avid traveler. She and her husband, Dustin, live in northeast Georgia. Visit her website at MeghanTschanz.com.

Interview Questions for *Women Rising*

- You were a missionary working with exploited women. Can you tell me about the injustices you witnessed?
- There came a point when you realized that fighting the demand for sex trafficking meant fighting patriarchy both within the church and without. At what moment did you realize that?
- There was an instance when you spoke to some Johns (men who buy women) and realized that the way they spoke reminded you of what you had heard growing up. Describe those experiences and how you found the two situations to be similar.
- What happened after you realized that what you'd heard growing up was not all that different than what you'd heard happening to women around the world. Why did it lead you to quit your job?
- Sexual assault and domestic violence are often due to power differentials. Can you explain what that means?
- When you started resisting the patriarchal teachings of the church and speaking for women's rights, what happened? How did God meet you there?
- You often have Christians ask you how your marriage works if it's not complementarian. How do you respond to them?
- How is purity culture connected to rape culture?
- How do you wish the church would handle the conversation on sex better?
- What advice do you have for any woman trying to find her voice?



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“For every girl and woman who has been made to feel small, demeaned, violated, and confused, and for every man who has bought into the lie of female subordination and missed out on all that half the church has to offer, Meghan’s words speak freedom and hope for a better way.”

—Blythe Hill, CEO and founder of the Dressemer Foundation

What Did Jesus Teach About Justice for Women?

What experiences led you to write *Women Rising*?

Meghan Tschanz: After serving as a missionary working with oppressed, exploited, and trafficked women, I realized that the root of their oppression was inequality, and that if we as the church were going to get serious about fighting human trafficking, we first need to address inequality, gender scripts, and women’s rights within the church. Honestly, I wrote this book because I felt God call me to “get my people” and show them that in practice we may be inadvertently contributing to inequality between the sexes, which ultimately leads to the oppression of women.

What is the message at the heart of this book?

Meghan: The central thesis of my book is that the gender roles preached from the pulpit are also the same gender roles that sex buyers and sex traffickers subscribe to. My goal is to get Christians to examine their own complicity in the oppression of women and examine what Jesus actually taught when it comes to seeking justice for women. If we as the church are serious about fighting sex trafficking, we must first get serious about fighting for women’s rights.

What do you want readers to grasp and consider as they read *Women Rising*?

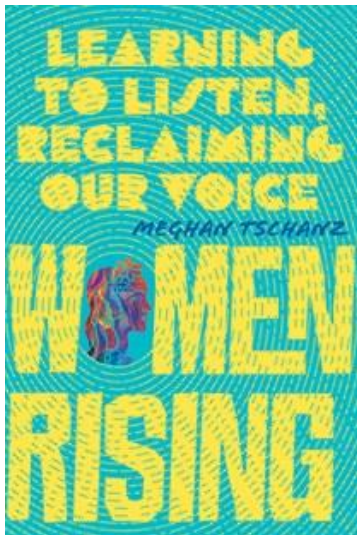
Meghan:

- I want readers to understand human trafficking. If human trafficking is a problem, why, who, and what contributes to the demand? What social systems can prevent human trafficking?
- I want readers to question gender roles preached from the pulpit and examine if their theology is producing good fruit.
- I want readers to examine their own complicity in harmful systems that lead to human trafficking and the oppression of women.
- I want women to find their voice and speak out despite opposition.
- I want Christians to rightfully join their place in fighting for justice and be willing to make mistakes. I believe this is the gospel.



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Meghan Tschanz was radically changed after witnessing the violence and oppression experienced by women around the globe. She also became keenly aware of how her own Christian culture was often complicit in the problem and how she, by extension, had become complicit too. As you read Meghan's transformative story, you'll be inspired to amplify your voice, confront injustice, and discover a biblical standard for gender equality.

Please, Do Not Turn Your Face Away

Somehow the evangelical church has become one of the greatest upholders of the patriarchy, and, my friends, it's worth taking a second look at the fruit that's being born as a result. There is a tie between the way men are taught to view women and the way they treat them. If you teach a boy (however subtly) that he is better than women by telling him he is the leader and the teacher and the preacher, if you teach him that women are put on earth to serve him and his calling, then he will likely grow up viewing women as less than him. He is unlikely to think the voices of women are valuable or worth defending, and that sets him up to abuse his power.

One only need look at the epidemic of sexual harassment and abuse in the church to see that this is true. There are many incidences of pastors sexually abusing women and children, and when they are caught, the church often tries to cover it up. I want to argue that this is not the result merely of individual sin but also of systemic sin. These are not one-off cases; they are the outcome of systemic injustice.

We get sad when we hear the story of a girl being abused, but when we hear the story over and over again, why don't we pause to ask why it's happening in the first place? What beliefs do we hold dear that contribute to what we're seeing in the church? I believe that our gender theology creates dangerous power differentials that contribute to and even create abuse.

It's disturbing to me that prominent evangelical pastors who call for strict gender roles sound similar to the men who buy women in bars in Southeast Asia. They both focus on the need for women to respect men, while requiring nothing of the men.

For example, one of the men I talked to in the bars told me, "No one in the States respects men anymore. The women here [in the bars] are raised right. They respect men."

Meanwhile, prominent evangelical Emerson Eggerichs writes, "This is not about the husband deserving respect; it's about the wife being willing to treat her husband respectfully *without conditions*."

Like Eggerichs, many complementarian evangelicals focus on a woman's submission to and absolute respect for her husband. The power differential this promotes is clear: men are in charge; women follow. Yet we've also established that sexual assault is due to a male need to assert power. I assert that a theology that props up an enormous power differential between men and women is contributing to a society in which one in three women is sexually or physically assaulted.

Here's more evidence: In 2012, twenty-three-year-old female physiotherapy intern Jyoti Singh was beaten, gang-raped, and tortured to death on a bus in New Delhi, India. When reporters interviewed one of her rapists, Mukesh, about why he did it, he justified his actions by saying, "Housework and housekeeping is for girls, not roaming in discos and bars at night doing wrong things, wearing wrong clothes." He also said men "had a right to teach them a lesson and women should put up with it."



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"In this vulnerable, engaging account of facing confusing and constricting gender roles in the church, Tschanz shows that patriarchy is not part of the world God created but is a result of sin and domination. She calls Christians to imagine a world as God meant it to be: all God's daughters being liberated to lead, serve, and stand up for truth and justice. If you've ever wondered if God has good news for women, this book is for you."

Stay home. Keep the home tidy. Dress modestly. Does this sound familiar to you? To me it sounds like Mukesh is describing the "biblical gender roles" I was taught in the evangelical church. This rapist is literally saying that because a woman broke with her prescribed gender role (by the way, she was wearing jeans on the way home from a movie with a friend), he was entitled to rape her to death.

This line of thought is rampant across India. Madhumita Pandey, a doctoral student working on her thesis at Aglia Ruskin University, has interviewed one hundred convicted rapists across India, asking them a simple question: Why do men rape? What she has found is this: "Men are learning to have false ideas about masculinity, and women are also learning to be submissive. . . . Everyone's out to make it look like there's something inherently wrong with [rapists]. But they are a part of our own society. They are not aliens who've been brought in from another world."

I would argue that Pandey's findings are consistent across cultures, even here in the United States. Jackson Katz, PhD, educator, author, and social theorist, says, "We have a rape culture. What that means is that individual rapists aren't just crawling out of the swamp, they're being produced by our culture."

The language of some prominent male pastors mirrors that of men who rape. They both follow a masculinity script that centers on a man's felt need for power. And this felt need for male power is making the church sick.

I know that's a strong statement, but I believe God took me on a grand journey around the world to finally see this. And if I can begin to question years of what I was taught about biblical gender roles, maybe you can too.

This is what I implore of you: Let your sister's story challenge the way you think. Let it help you examine power structures both within the church and in our society. Matthew 7:18 says, "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit." Can we honestly examine what fruit these doctrines produce?

Please, do not turn your face away.

—Adapted from chapter sixteen, "Revelation"



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