

SEE THE SYMPTOMS

Conversation One



ORDAIN WOMEN



SEE THE SYMPTOMS

ConversationOne

“What is patriarchy?” asked Mrs. Jensen, the Advanced Placement History high school teacher. Only Emma knew, out of the entire class of 30. She slowly raised her hand and answered, “It’s where men have all the authority and are necessary leaders for the organization to function. Women are subordinated. Women have roles, and they might be needed, but they are overseen by men and they are not necessary to the governing, rule-making, and ultimate decisions of the culture like male leaders are.”

Her teacher was impressed, “How did you know that?”

“I’m Mormon,” Emma replied.



OW CONVERSATION ONE READINGS

Participants should prepare beforehand by reading the attached excerpts of the following articles:

“Feminism 101: Patriarchy” Ingrid Asplund

<http://www.youngmormonfeminists.org/2013/08/10/feminism-101-patriarchy>

“Equality is not a Feeling” Heather Olson Beal

<http://www.dovesandserpents.org/wp/category/columns/equality-is-not-feeling>

“Ask a Feminist” Chelsea Shields Strayer

<http://www.ldswave.org/?p=402>

Doctrine & Covenants 1:24-28

In this conversation we will review patriarchal culture: what it’s like to live and worship in this culture. Please go through the activities and exercises below in order and then discuss the questions provided, or those that come up with your group members. Please feel free to modify the structure of the conversation to fit the needs of your particular group members in any way you see fit.

CONVERSATION ONE INTRO ACTIVITY: PATRIARCHY BINGO

This BINGO ice breaker activity will help identify some symptoms of growing up in a patriarchal culture. Cut the squares and arrange them as you like, so that each player's board in in a unique formation. Fill in the Free Square with something from your own life.

<i>The leaders you grew up learning about, singing about and honoring were men</i>	<i>Your dad presided over your mom</i>	<i>In Primary most of the lessons and songs were about men</i>	<i>More money and time was spent on boys in your ward than girls (Boy Scouts, Young Men's activities)</i>	<i>There was more concentration put on controlling girl's dress standards than boy's</i>
<i>You were taught that young women must help control male thoughts by removing temptations through modesty</i>	<i>You were taught that men and boys are naturally less spiritual, less nurturing, and more selfish</i>	<i>Women, even girls as young as 8 years old, were pedestaled as creators of life</i>	<i>The men who said that stay-at-home mother is the most important thing a person can do in life worked outside the home</i>	<i>You were taught that your primary goal in life was temple marriage, while boys were taught to also prepare for a career</i>
<i>You heard jokes about how incompetent and incapable dads are</i>	<i>Men taught you how to be a woman</i>	<p>FREE SQUARE</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<i>Fatherhood was de-emphasized at church</i>	<i>Your brothers were able to perform ordinances when they turned 12, leaving you out</i>
<i>If you looked for spiritual guidance, it was usually from a man</i>	<i>Every Sunday you looked up to see a stand dominated by male leaders with very few females present, if any</i>	<i>When you received s criptural posters, cartoons, or figurines the character was usually a man</i>	<i>Your dad picked who prayed and if he wasn't there your younger brother would</i>	<i>Your brothers were encouraged to go to college for an education and you were encouraged to go "just in case"</i>
<i>The leaders whose names you memorized and whose words you read were men</i>	<i>Most scripture stories were about men and their spiritual journeys. Any stories about women were about marriage or their ability to conceive.</i>	<i>The majority of talk about parenting, homemaking and nurturing children revolved around motherhood</i>	<i>Even if your mom had input, you knew that the final say on any major decision was your dad's</i>	<i>While you cherished your relationship with both your earthly mother and father equally, you were told only to communicate with your Heavenly Father for guidance</i>

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1. What are your thoughts and feelings after playing this game? What symptoms stood out most to you?*
- 2. Has the male-exclusive priesthood policy of the Church affected your life directly? Would anyone like to share they wrote on the Free Square?*

THOUGHT EXERCISE 1:

SACRAMENT MEETING

What if all the men were called to respond to an emergency one Sunday morning, and only women could make it to Sacrament Meeting? What would that look like?

There would be no bishop on the stand to lead the meeting, and no bishopric to fill in for the bishop. No priests to bless the sacrament. And no deacons and teachers pass the sacrament to the congregation. No one to conduct the meeting, announce the ward business, and no one to close the meeting before a prayer. Church would likely need to be cancelled that day.

Now, imagine on Sunday all of the women were somehow absent for sacrament meeting instead.

The meeting could carry on as scheduled without women: the bishopric are there leading, a man could lead the music, the men and boys can still pass and bless the sacrament, and the bishopric can close the meeting and direct someone else to give talks and say the prayers. Everything could run as usual.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTION:

What do you think of Sheri Dew's recent quote, "Within the Church...men ultimately control everything"?¹

THOUGHT EXERCISE 2:

LDS MEN ARE INCREDIBLE!, KNOW YOUR PLACE, AND THE MORAL FORCE OF MEN

Read these three paragraphs from an April 2011 General Conference address by Elder Quentin L. Cook,² an August 2013 BYU Education Week devotional by Elder M. Russell Ballard,³ and an October 2013 general conference address by Elder D. Todd Christofferson.⁴ Only picture Linda K. Burton, Relief Society General President saying each one over the pulpit (all gender references have been reversed):

"LDS Men Are Incredible! The female leadership of this Church at all levels gratefully acknowledges the service, sacrifice, commitment, and contribution of the brethren. Much of what we accomplish in the Church is due to the selfless service of men. Whether in the Church or in the home, it is a beautiful thing to see the Relief Society and the men's auxiliary work in perfect harmony... Brothers have key roles in the Church, in family life, and as individuals that are essential in God's plan. Many of these responsibilities do not provide economic compensation but do provide satisfaction and are eternally significant... Dear brothers, we love and admire you. We appreciate your service in God's kingdom. You are incredible!"

"In so many ways men are the heart of the Church. So today, with the help of the Lord, I would like to pay tribute to the faithful men and young men of the Church today. To you dear brethren, wherever you live in the world and whether you hear this address or read it, please know of the great affection and trust that the Prophetess and we the Relief Society Presidency have in you...Now, brethren, in speaking this frankly with women, may I also exercise a moment of candor with you. While your input is significant and welcomed in effective councils, you need to be careful not to assume a role that is not yours. Ward and stake councils that are the most successful are those in which female priesthood leaders trust their male-leaders and encourage them to contribute to the discussions and in which male-leaders fully respect and sustain the decisions of the council made under the direction of female priesthood leaders who hold keys."

"My grandfather taught me to be conscientious in priesthood service. He encouraged me to memorize the sacramental blessings on the bread and water, explaining that in this way I could express them with greater understanding and feeling. Observing how he sustained my grandmother, a stake matriarch, engendered in me a reverence for sacred things. Grandpa never learned how to drive a car, but he knew how to help girls become priesthood women. A man's moral influence is nowhere more powerfully felt or more beneficially employed than in the home."

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Does gender reversal in official discourse help us see and hear things differently?

Does it sound as odd for a woman to talk about men this way? Why or why not?

CONCLUSION

Ingrid Asplund says in her post, "Patriarchy is a system each of us is both complicit with and critical of at different times and in different ways."

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Is it possible to simultaneously benefit from and be discriminated against by a patriarchal institution?

How can we cherish the parts of the gospel we love and treasure, while at the same time think critically about the ways in which we have been harmed or discriminated against?



FEMINISM 101: PATRIARCHY

Ingrid Asplund • 10 August 2013

WHAT IS PATRIARCHY?

A patriarchal system is one in which adult men hold most, much, or all of the power. Patriarchy means “rule by fathers”, though the word as we use it now refers to men. Patriarchy is a system, not a group of people or a person. When feminists discuss dismantling, destroying, smashing, or crushing patriarchy this does not mean we wish to end all of the fathers in the world or all of the Stake Patriarchs in our acquaintance. Patriarchy is inanimate but pervades all sites of power: personal, political, economic, social, religious, sexual, and so forth. Patriarchy can manifest itself through different systems of oppression specific to community and culture. I, as a white, middle-class, Mormon woman growing up in the United States, experience primarily the Western Patriarchy, the Mormon patriarchy, and patriarchies specific to my race and class demographic. I experience the patriarchy of academia because I am a college student and the patriarchy of nuclear families. Someone different from me might experience a Jewish patriarchy, a patriarchy specific to South Asia, or a working-class patriarchy. Patriarchy is a system each of us is both complicit with and critical of at different times and in different ways.

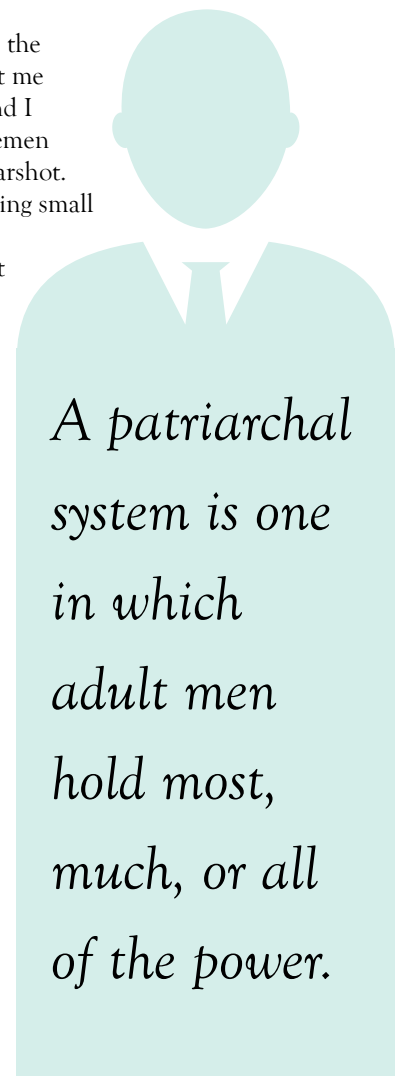
WHO DOES PATRIARCHY AFFECT AND HOW?

Primarily, patriarchy gives men privilege at the expense of people of other sexes and genders. That said, it's not completely black and white. There are side effects of patriarchy that are bad for men, such as the limiting experience of trying to live up to normative masculinity, and it could be argued that there are side effects of patriarchy that are good for women, such as the occasional free dinner for ladies who play their cards right and not being drafted in the US military. These are (arguably) good things but they are still part of a system which primarily privileges men and oppresses people who are not men. Therefore, most socially constructed gendered differences, even the few that seem to benefit women or harm men, probably originate in patriarchy, whether directly or indirectly.

WHERE IS PATRIARCHY?

In patriarchal cultures the patriarchy can manifest itself anywhere. It exists in the books we read and the music we listen to and in our ideas about sex, love and marriage and our individual interactions. Let me give you an example of a site of the patriarchy I witnessed this week, to illustrate: it was after dark and I was sitting at a bench on BYU's campus having a long phone conversation with a friend. Two gentlemen sat across from me at a different bench with their dogs chatting with each other, just about within earshot. After my conversation ended, one of these men asked after my phone conversation and started making small talk. These men were strangers to me, and because I was raised as a girl, I was raised that talking to strange men in the dark, even as an adult, is dangerous. I was waiting for some friends to come meet me and I had no interest in talking to them. Like many people, but especially girls, I was also raised to prioritize other peoples' feelings over my own feelings of comfort or safety. In addition, I didn't want these men to become angry with me for being impolite, so I tried to be nice without engaging even though I didn't feel comfortable talking to these men. I gave them short answers and didn't make eye contact, hoping that they would get the message that I was uncomfortable. They didn't, and we kept talking until my friends came and I could leave without feeling guilty.

This was a site of the patriarchy, particularly when you consider that the experiences these men were having were very different from my own. They didn't seem to feel that talking to strangers in the dark is dangerous, but it was an activity that did not feel safe to me. My feelings didn't seem like a priority to them, as they ignored what I thought were signs that I was uncomfortable and didn't want to talk to them, whereas their feelings— particularly making sure they didn't get angry at me if I explicitly said I didn't want to talk to them— were primarily what I was worrying about. Obviously there may have been other factors at play. I may just be especially non-confrontational and skittish around strange men, or they may just happen to be friendly to a fault, but I use this example to illustrate that because we were all raised with a patriarchal paradigm, gender is often a factor even in interactions that don't seem like they are necessarily gendered. Sites of patriarchy manifest themselves in ways that are more apparent. We can see patriarchy in the representation of women in the United States government, the kinds of roles and characters that are given to women in much of the media we consume, in rates of sexual violence and eating disorders, and in the wage gap. If you open your eyes to the way patriarchy affects our culture and sites of power, you will notice it coloring many interactions and experiences. We must be mindful of how patriarchy exists in our lives if we are to create a more just system to live in for ourselves and others.



A patriarchal system is one in which adult men hold most, much, or all of the power.

EQUALITY IS NOT A FEELING

Heather Olson Beal • 16 October 2013

TWO-PART PROCLAMATION FROM ME:

1. I don't know what I think about God these days, but this much I know: God is not the author of inequality. I don't care who claims otherwise. I'm not buying what you're selling.
2. Separate but equal is bollocks. I don't buy it in movie theaters, schools, water fountains, hospitals, government, laws, train cars, soda counters, or busses. I sure as heck don't buy it in my church.

In a meeting at City Creek Park on October 5, before the Ordain Women participants walked quietly to Temple Square to ask to be admitted into the priesthood session of General Conference, Kate Kelly said it much more eloquently:

"I have heard from many women, 'I see nothing wrong with the status quo. I feel equal.' To them I say: 'You can feel respected, supported and validated in the church, but equality can be measured. Equality is not a feeling. In our church men and women are not equal.'"

WAYS TO MEASURE EQUALITY IN THE MORMON CHURCH:

(excerpted from the Equality is Not a Feeling blog series)

LEADERSHIP



We have 122 General Authorities.

Only 9 positions are held by women in auxiliary capacities.

All 9 are presided over by men.

REQUIRED NUMBERS

NUMBER REQUIRED...	WOMEN	MEN
to form a stake	0	39
to form a ward of 300 (min size in us/canada)	0	15
to form a branch of any size in a district	0	4
to form a group of 2 or more members	0	1

According to the Church Handbook of Instructions (Volume 1, Section 9), these are the numbers of people needed to establish official church units (e.g., branches, wards, stakes).

GENERAL CONFERENCE TALKS

SINCE 1974 (all General Conference sessions on lds.org)		
	Men	Women
Number of Speakers	359	64
Number of Talks	2708	269
Word count	5,042,067	418,950
Number of Scriptures Cited	51,813	2,348

DUTIES OF YOUNG MEN AND YOUNG WOMEN AGES 12-18

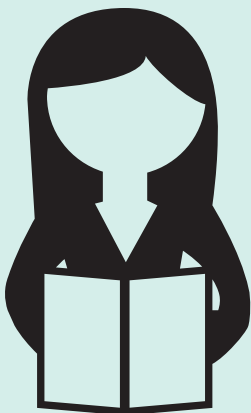
DUTIES/RESPONSIBILITIES THAT PERTAIN TO THE CONGREGATION AT LARGE		
Deacons (boys)	12-13+ years	pass the sacrament collect fast offerings care for the meetinghouse and grounds serve as a messenger for the bishop in church meetings class president serves on Bishopric Youth Committee
Beehives (girls)		class president serves on Bishopric Youth Committee
Teachers (boys)	14-15+ years	prepare and pass the sacrament collect fast offerings care for the meetinghouse and grounds serve as a messenger for the bishop in church meetings serve as a home teacher usher reverently assist bishop (i.e. shovel show, clean the building, etc.) class president serves on Bishopric Youth Committee
Mia Maids (girls)		class president serves on Bishopric Youth Committee
Priests (boys)	16-17+ years	baptize administer the sacrament offer the sacramental prayers ordain others to the Aaronic Priesthood assist in missionary work class president serves on Bishopric Youth Committee
Laurels (girls)		class president serves on Bishopric Youth Committee



*“You can feel
respected,
supported and
validated in
the church, but
equality can
be measured.
Equality is not
a feeling.”*

-Kate Kelly

ACCESS TO ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS



The number of people on earth who have access to the Church Handbook of instruction, Vol 1, the rule book by which men AND WOMEN are expected to live by and are led:

Men: 118,000 (GAs, stake presidents bishops)
Women: 9 (of 3 auxiliary presidencies)

Women cannot even see the rules by which we are governed.

ASK A FEMINIST

Chelsea Shields Strayer • 25 September 2010

Dear Ask a Feminist,

I just read the article in the Salt Lake City News titled “New Mormon-Feminist Group Lobbies LDS Church.” This is the first time I have heard of this group and still confused as to what you feel is unequal in the church? The only thing mentioned in the article is having to do with baby changing stations and boy scouts getting more money? These seem like trivial things and they are not really the core issue for you. What are the real things you feel so unequal? I read your blog and didn’t really find any issues just feelings of inequality. I would really like to know what are THINGS that make you feel this way? Is it that men lead the church? Yes, they are the leaders but, who runs RS, primary and young womens? I’ve had callings in all these and never once has there been a man telling us what to do! As of late the Elders of the church have focused on women and our needs, how we should be treated and how much we are loved and appreciated.

A quote from the article: “The issues that we Mormon Feminists are so concerned about are the things that are making it so difficult for Mormon women to stay in the church,” Butterworth writes. Please tell me what is so difficult? And, I feel you are trying to stir the pot and bring negative ideas about the church that do not exist. I also feel you are walking a fine line with this movement (with no real grounds in my opinion). You might NOT have to feel it hard to stay in the church if you are not careful (I would hate for it to come to that). I feel you do have a testimony of the church, but have pondered on a few negative things that people have done to you, and not what the church has done to you.

Best regards,

Be Careful

Dear Be Careful,

I’m glad that you have had many callings in the church and “never once has there been a man telling [you] what to do.” What ward are you in? We’d like to join.

All joking aside, you ask some poignant questions. Mainly, what are the things that make me feel unequal. Here is a partial list for you below.

Remember that this is my answer and each woman you speak with will have different experiences. I love my church leaders and have faith in this gospel. Not all gender inequality in the church is tied to the priesthood and I think that 90% of it is unintended and, thus, it is important for us at LDS WAVE to makes our voices heard. You may find this list overwhelming and wonder why anyone who feels this way would stay a member of the church. Remember that I am deeply committed to the church and am trying to align my faith as a Latter-day Saint with my deeply rooted spiritual sense of equality. Sadly, this paradox often causes me and many women that I know great pain and frustration.

I recognize that some of these issues are church wide, some local, and some unchangeable. Some of them are simple and some of them are deeply ingrained. All of them, nevertheless, make me feel unequal and are worth talking about.

I feel unequal when there are more (a lot more) men’s voices in religious texts, meetings, leadership positions, and decision making bodies.

I feel unequal when callings that don’t necessitate the priesthood are given only to men: Sunday School Presidency, BYU, BYU-I and BYU-Hawaii Presidents, Church Education Commissioners, Ward Mission Leaders, recommend takers at the Temple, etc. (Similarly, men are not currently called in Primary Presidencies and could be.)

I feel unequal when women doing the same job are called by different titles (i.e. Sister vs. President) and/or are accessories to rather than serving equally with their husbands, i.e. Mission President’s wives.

I feel unequal when I have a calling as an auxiliary leader and have to get approval of every decision by men and/or when I am not invited to attend Priesthood Executive Committee meetings (PEC) which directly influence my stewardships.

I feel unequal when my value is primarily linked to being a wife and mother rather than by being a child of God.



I feel unequal when the men in my life acknowledge that they have no female spiritual leaders in their wards or communities.

I feel unequal when women have less prominent, prestigious, and public roles in the church, even before and after childrearing years.

I feel unequal because even one of the most inherently female-dominated time periods, having a new baby, is publically displayed at church in an all-male ritual of the baby blessing.

I feel unequal when males handle 100% of the church finances.

I feel unequal when I am taught at church that my husband presides in my family, he is the head, and all things being equal, he has the final say.

I feel unequal when people preach that men and women are completely equal and in the same breath say the above sentence.

I feel unequal when I realize that at church all men have the final say. Good leaders might consult with female auxiliary leaders, but ultimately even after being called to a position via inspiration, men still make the final decisions.

I feel unequal when cub scouts and boy scouts have a larger budget (they are allowed to do fundraising- although this might be a local issue) than achievement days and Young Womens and thus, they often have better activities.

I feel unequal when the Young Women and Young Men's programs have such different manuals, budgets, activities, etc.

I feel unequal when fathers and mothers are encouraged to fulfill primary roles to provide and nurture, but only the fathers are given the freedom to seek out the best way for them to provide, whereas, mothers are told the best way for them to nurture—to be stay at home moms.

I feel unequal when men teach me that being a stay at home mother is the most important thing a person could do, and yet most of them do not do it.

I feel unequal when people do not emphasize fatherhood as much as they do motherhood and when we have numerous annual lessons on the priesthood and I'm not taught anything about the woman's role as a priestess.

I feel unequal in primary when most of the lessons and songs are about men although most of the teachers and leaders are women.



I feel unequal because church disciplinary courts are made up of solely men and there are no female voices in the very sensitive matters of church discipline.

I feel unequal when women have to talk to men about their sins, especially sexual ones, and have no other church sanctioned options.

I feel unequal because most men, even inspired ones, can't fully understand or provide enough resources for sexual abuse.

I feel unequal when young girls are taught about modesty and chastity from older men, especially because females make decisions about these things for very different reasons than males.

I feel unequal because many of the official church declarations and proclamations have no female input, regardless of how drastically they affect women.

I feel unequal when there are no checks and balances for females who experience abuse in the system. While abuse may be rare, it is terrifying that women have no resources to go to outside of the male hierarchy.

I feel unequal because the Relief Society's autonomy was taken away and it became an auxiliary presided over by men.

I feel unequal when women's financial autonomy isn't encouraged as much as men's at church and/or church schools.

I feel unequal because men conduct, men preach, men speak. Men teach us how to be women.

I feel unequal because local leaders rarely use gender inclusive language even though church manuals and General Conference talks try to do so.

I feel unequal when men speak at Relief Society and Young Women's meetings, but women never speak in priesthood meetings.

I feel unequal when there are very few women's voices in our official correlated church manuals.

I feel unequal when women don't pray in General Conference and usually only give 2 or 3 of the many talks.

I feel unequal because men and women can be sealed to different numbers of people.



I feel unequal in the temple because women have a different script and role.

I feel unequal when female employees of the Church Educational System and temple ordinance workers are no longer allowed to keep their positions after they have children.

I feel unequal because we know very little about Heavenly Mother and her role in the Godhead and there doesn't seem to be any emphasis on the part of our leaders to pray and find out more. I don't know what my divine potential means as a female and that makes me feel less important.

I feel unequal because all of these concerns are mediated by male leaders and that they are only as important as these men deem them so. While most of our leaders are wonderful, there is very little in the structure or doctrine to prevent male leaders from misogyny or benevolent sexism.

I feel unequal when these gender inequalities are not acknowledged by leaders. It is difficult to be a female in a patriarchal church and we are trying our best to make it work. Acknowledgement of that difficulty would go a long way.

All of these reasons begs the following question: If women are really as equally valued as men why aren't they given equal voice? That is what we are trying to do here at LDS WAVE.

We appreciate all of you who have contacted us and have heard from many women and men who do not see a problem with any of the above and/or do not feel unequal at all. We have also heard from many women and men who say they are uplifted, strengthened, and encouraged by knowing that they are not alone in their struggle and pain with these issues. Either way, please share with us how you have overcome some of these obstacles so that we might all learn from each other and be one in Christ.

Sincerely,

ask a feminist

*Behold, I am God and have spoken it;
these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants
in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they
might come to understanding.*

And inasmuch as they erred it might be made known;

And inasmuch as they sought wisdom they might be instructed;

*And inasmuch as they sinned they might be chastened, that they
might repent;*

*And inasmuch as they were humble they might be made strong, and
blessed from on high, and receive knowledge from time to time.*

Doctrine & Covenants 1:24-28

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES:

The following are recommended for participants who would like to follow up the discussion with continued personal study.

ARTICLES

A Walk in Pink Moccasins,

Carol Lynn Pearson

<https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/pdf/137-21-25.pdf>

Mormon Male Privilege and How to Make Apparent Gender Disparity in the Church

Chelsea Shields Strayer

<http://www.the-exponent.com/mormon-male-privilege-and-how-to-make-apparent-gender-disparity-in-the-church/>

The Trouble with Chicken Patriarchy

Kiskilili

<http://zelopehadsdaughters.com/2007/11/30/the-trouble-with-chicken-patriarchy/>

AUDIO

A Spoonful of Sugar

Lindsay, Liz, Meredith and Melissa

<http://feministmormonhousewivespodcast.org/tag/benevolent-patriarchy/>

Half The Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide

Cami, Chelsea and Anissa

<http://feministmormonhousewivespodcast.org/fmbc-half-the-sky-turning-oppression-into-opportunity-for-women-worldwide/>

BOOKS

Mormon Women Have Their Say: Essays from the Claremont Oral History Collection

Edited by Claudia L. Bushman and Caroline Kline, Greg Kofford Books: 2013

As well as the podcast by the same title:

<http://mormonstories.org/mormon-women-have-their-say/>

A Year of Biblical Womanhood

Rachel Held Evans, Thomas Nelson: 2012

Jesus Feminist: An Invitation to Revisit the Bible's View of Women

Sarah Bessey, Howard Books: 2013

As well as this FMBC podcast:

<http://feministmormonhousewivespodcast.org/fmbc-jesus-feminist-by-sarah-bessey/>

FOOTNOTES

¹ Women and the Priesthood. Sheri Dew, 2013. Deseret Book, p.110.

² LDS Women Are Incredible! Quentin L. Cook, April 2011 available at <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2011/04/lds-women-are-incredible?lang=eng>

³ Let Us Think Straight. M. Russell Ballard, August 2013 available at <http://speeches.byu.edu/?act=viewitem&id=2133>

⁴ The Moral Force of Women. D. Todd Christofferson, October 2013 available at <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2013/10/the-moral-force-of-women?lang=eng>