

## Episode 6

### Mormon Identity

#### MEN AND WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

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NARRATOR: Welcome to Mormon Identity, a 30 minute talk radio program that addresses church topics important to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our host is Robert L. Millet Professor of Religious Education at Brigham Young University.

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ROBERT MILLET: Welcome to another addition of Mormon Identity. I'm Bob Millet, your host, and with me today is Professor Camille Fronk Olsen, a member of the Ancient Scripture faculty at Brigham Young University. Welcome Camille.

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: Thank you.

ROBERT MILLET: We want to talk during this period about men and women in the Church. Men and women in the Church. And we want to talk about, let's talk in terms of the importance of men and the importance of women. Let's talk about assignments, priesthood, motherhood. We'll deal with what it means to have the priesthood in the home. We'll talk about the patriarchal order is, what the prophets have said about that. And then we will deal with rather controversial concept in the world today of people submitting, whether a woman should submit to her husband or vice versa. Camille as far as I can tell you are a woman, are women as important as men? (Laughing)

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: (Laughing) Um....

ROBERT MILLET: When you go out into the Church, I know you've served on general boards and you've served in leadership capacities, as you visit with sisters in the Church, with women, who have often been troubled, concerned or hurt, what about this issue of importance?

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: It does come up once in a while. And often times the idea seems to be because the woman is not ordained to the priesthood somehow she doesn't have same value in the eyes of God, that she is second class to her husband or to men generally in the Church. I can't help but think that just looking at two major standard works, the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon, it's like they go out of their way to make sure you see that men and women together were the Lord's plan. And that He created them both and that they were both good in His eyes.

ROBERT MILLET: Yeah, I think you're absolutely right. When I think about my situation in my marriage, our family has been so very dependent on the two of us, my wife and I, working together as partners. That I cannot conceive that the happiness that I

enjoy now, the success we might have enjoyed here and there could have come with just one or the other of us. That she has been a very, very significant element, if not the most significant element of our doing. And so importance, no question. Let me ask this question of you, if priesthood is as it were man's assignment and motherhood we're told is woman's assignment, what about those women who don't have the opportunity?

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: That does come up, I hear that very frequently. I often times think, you'd be a twelve-year-old boy and show up to church or show a desire to go on a mission or ordained to the priesthood, and yet for many women there is not an opportunity or inability to be able to bear children. And the question then arises then is that woman not fulfilling her God given assignment and therefore not as good. I think it is interesting there is one place in the Bible where it talks about a mother in Israel and it's actually Deborah, Deborah the prophetess, Deborah a judge. She, her husband is named if that really is her husband, the Hebrew suggests it could be a position or it could have been the name of her husband. But one thing that you do see that there is no children mentioned to Deborah. She was a mother in Israel and the definition of mother becomes much broader as she helps Israel lead them out of captivity from the Canaanites. And in that way motherhood expands to a much broader definition than merely giving birth.

ROBERT MILLET: Let me ask you this, Camille, and have this considered. How would you respond to this? I once heard President Jeffery Holland who was president of BYU speak to a woman's conference and say this, he said, "we do a tremendous disservice to men and women when if we equate the word priesthood to male administration."

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: Yeah and I've heard that very often too. When we make the comment the priesthood and Relief Society sisters are going to be meeting together, as if the priesthood has legs and walks. There's, it becomes very clear that we've got men who are ordained to the priesthood, but as a woman I've been set apart under the power of the priesthood to fulfill a mission, to serve Church callings. And I can't help but think that is power of the priesthood working in my life.

ROBERT MILLET: Camille, let's put you on the spot here in front of the people who are listening. Have you ever enjoyed a spiritual gift in your life?

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: Many times, many gifts.

ROBERT MILLET: So the question really is, is there any spiritual benefit other than the performance of an ordinance, a priesthood ordinance, other than the performance of the ordinance itself is there an spiritual benefit, blessing or gift that I have access to that you do not?

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: Not at all. It's true, it's the outer ward evidence of priesthood power that we often times identify or define priesthood to, the ordinances. And I don't perform those ordinances, but that doesn't rob me of any blessing in receiving that power of God and having it function in my life. I know often times in Relief Society we will have a lesson on the priesthood and the question comes up so frequently, how does the priesthood bless your life? And most often almost always the answer comes up with well you know the member in our house who

holds the priesthood and when someone is sick they get a blessing. If that's all priesthood is, is giving blessings, all those years I was single I had the most wonderful home teacher that could give me blessings perhaps more efficiently and quicker than someone who actually would have lived in the house. Is that all the priesthood is? Is that...

ROBERT MILLET: It's fixing what is broken, or what is injured or damaged? I've often thought the same thing, I've often thought and said to the men of the Church, "If all priesthood power is, is that power of healing the sick. Then Brethren we're going to be out of work in the millennium." Let's pause on that we'll be right back.

[PAUSE]

ROBERT MILLET: Welcome back to this segment of Mormon Identity. I'm Bob Millet joined by Professor Camille Fronk Olsen of BYU. Camille, we were just talking about men and women in the Church and I think we had just talked a bit about priesthood is neither male or female, it is neither man or woman, the priesthood is an authority that God bestows upon worthy men, which can bless and should bless men and women equally. It's not uncommon, now you know this, it's not uncommon for a woman to stand up in a meeting, perhaps in testimony meeting, and say, "I'm so grateful to be married because I have the priesthood in my home." Your comment.

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: I think I came to this, because for so long I was single and lived alone. And I remember even asking a woman in a meeting who had made that comment, saying, "Tell me, what I am missing?" I feel like I am tremendously blessed and protected and I have a good spirit in my home. What am I missing? And again the answers were always getting the blessings; kind of the convenience of having a live-in healer right there.

ROBERT MILLET: But as you indicated, you have people that can attend to that within a moment's notice.

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: And so then they start talking about partnership and a relationship with a husband. And I have to say okay that I do not have, but is that priesthood? A good relationship with a spouse who believes the same thing as you do is a blessing. And now I have that in my life and it is remarkable. But I haven't recognized, I mean it could be that I'm not too in tuned that way, but it feels the same kind of good spirit and power that is the home that was there when I was single.

ROBERT MILLET: I think you're right. As we said, there is nothing that I am entitled to as a male that you're not entitled to as a female. I do hear things like this occasionally and these sort of rub me the wrong way. Well men are assertive and strong and women are the weaker vessel and women are tender and nurturing. You know when I hear that I am prone to think, you know the fact of the matter is those aren't male or female virtues per se, they are Christian virtues.

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: Isn't that true. It's what Christ is all about. Can I give one quick

example of that? I heard a young woman who just returned from her mission tell this. She said when she first started her mission she was very petrified of the whole idea of going up to someone cold and asking them if they could teach the gospel to them. And she noticed the elders seemed to be much more comfortable with that. She was much more comfortable welcoming and nurturing the members and the investigators when they came to church on Sunday. And she noticed that the elders were typically not very sensitive to them. So she asked the mission president if the sisters could be the ones to help people when they are at church and the elders could go out and find them. And the mission president said, "No". Of course. But then she said she started noticing something she noticed the elders just before they went home and how sensitive they were to the membership of the Church, to the new members, to the investigators.

ROBERT MILLET: So they were growing spiritually.

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: They were incredible. And then she says, I started noticing what started happening to me. I became much more bold and courageous to go out and share my testimony. She said, when I came home I realized I as well as the elders and become more like Christ, because we got to serve together.

ROBERT MILLET: That's a wonderful story, a wonderful illustration in the fact that we are talking about Christian properties, Christian characteristics and not necessarily male or female. Men should be nurturing. Women should be assertive. And so forth.

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: And I don't know if we would do that as well if we were segregated. We do it better by being together and learning from each other.

ROBERT MILLET: Yeah. You know I want to talk about something, Camille. Let's talk for a moment, let's get started on this. There's a phrase that we use in the Church occasionally, it's a phrase that in the world that really causes the hair to stand up on the back of some people's neck and maybe a few in the Church. It's the concept of patriarchal order, patriarchy seems to denote, unfortunately I would think, something unpleasant.

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: A hierarchy where women are at the bottom.

ROBERT MILLET: Talk about priesthood in the home and priesthood in the Church, if you will.

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: I will never forget the General Conference when Elder Packer, and it was April of 1998, Elder Packer gave this wonderful distinction. He said, "There is a difference in the way the priesthood functions in the home as compared to the way it functions in the Church. In the Church there is a distinct line of authority. We serve where called by those who preside over us. In the home it is a partnership, with husband and wife equally yoked together, sharing in decisions, always working together. While the husband, the father, has responsibility to provide worthy and inspired leadership his wife is neither behind him nor ahead of him, but at his side." It's such a simple explanation, a simple principle being defined for us here, but it made so much sense to me. In the Church it's a vertical line, we have a line of authority and it goes all the way

back to the prophet and to Jesus Christ and the Church functions in that hierarchy.

ROBERT MILLET: Offices, quorums, assignments of that sort, knowing in a ward that the buck always stops with the bishop.

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: And then the bishop, then there's the Stake President. There is that line. But in the home, it's horizontal, it's husband and wife. They are a partnership.

ROBERT MILLET: I appreciated I guess it was the August 1985 Ensign, President Benson made the comment that the patriarchal order is a family order of government. And frankly we would know from section 131 of the Doctrine and Covenants that a person enters into the patriarchal order when they enter into the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. And so this concept of patriarchal order for me is a family centered order where husband and wife serve as the proclamation of the family suggest strongly as equal partners. Let's pause there and we will come back in a moment.

[PAUSE]

ROBERT MILLET: Welcome back to Mormon Identity, I'm Bob Millet. I'm joined by Camille Fronk Olsen of BYU. We are discussing today men and women in the Church and we've talked about a number of items. Camille, we just began to talk about this patriarchal order, this family-centered order and how we enter into this patriarchal order. Do you have a comment on that?

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: Yeah, Elder Bruce R. McConkie said it about as clearly as any. He said, "There is a priesthood which is patriarchal, I hold the patriarchal priesthood, I'll tell you where I got it." Then he quoted Joseph Smith saying that you go to the temple of God and there is an order of the priesthood that is patriarchal. "Go to the temple," he says, "and find out about this order." So Elder McConkie said, "I went to the temple and I took my wife with me, and we kneeled at the altar. There on that occasion we entered the two of us into this order that is patriarchal in nature. When we did it we had sealed upon us on a conditional basis every blessing that God promised father Abraham, the blessings of exaltation and eternal increase."

ROBERT MILLET: Wow, that's marvelous, that's marvelous. Do you remember Elder Oaks talking about this in conference? After Elder Packer had given that marvelous talk some years before on vertical verses horizontal relationships, I remembered. What do you remember about that?

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: It was October 2005. And if you recall Elder Oaks grew up most of his young life was without a father. His father passed away and his mother raised that family as a single mother. And he made the observation that when he, young Dallin, received the Aaronic Priesthood at age 12, he didn't suddenly become the head of the house. He didn't call on people to pray, that was his mother; she was still the head of the house. And in that same address he said, "There are many similarities and some differences in way priesthood authority functions in the family and in the Church. If we fail to recognize and honor the

differences we encounter difficulties. A most important difference in the functioning of priesthood authority in the family and the Church results from the fact that the government of the family is patriarchal, whereas the government of the Church is hierarchical. The concept of partnership functions differently in the family, as a result of that.” And he felt that even in the absence of his father, his father was still part of that patriarchal priesthood in the home.

ROBERT MILLET: That's marvelous. You know I'm very practical about this. My wife is as charitable a person as I know. She's as filled with love for people and she's now serving as Relief Society President.

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: Bless her heart.

ROBERT MILLET: Yes, that's what I say. She has this gift by nature. And you know as I think back on the years together with her, it would never have seemed appropriate through our 38 years together for me to have said to her, “We’re going to do such and such, because I hold the priesthood.”

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: Yeah.

ROBERT MILLET: Not only not seem appropriate to me, but she is church broken enough to have said to me, “Oh really?”

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: Yeah, what gives you authority for that?

ROBERT MILLET: Why am I not entitled to that same revelation? And I think that is a very important distinction. I am very attentive when Shauna says, “Bob, I've been having a feeling the last few days that...” I'm sitting up. In fact she's the same way with me when I say, “Something’s been weighing on me and I need to talk to you about it.” She's very attentive. Why? Because we are both entitled to direction of the Spirit regarding our family, regarding things over which we have stewardship.

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: I loved to watch the relationship between President Hinckley and his wife, Marjorie. They were pretty open with us in some of their ways of solving problems in the home and stuff. But I love this one, when President Hinckley said, just as he began his talk, “I am so grateful for this dear little woman who has been my companion, my sweetheart, my love, the mother of my children, and the only one in the world who could tell me what to do. And I do it and I've been doing it for a very, very long time. As a matter of fact she doesn't hesitate to tell me if I go down the wrong track somewhere one step, she pulls me back and has done that this many, many years.” I mean, there's that idea that they help each other, it is a partnership. And she welcomes it when he will pull her back.

ROBERT MILLET: I am reminded when I watch the wonderful series on the life of John Adams. How significant.

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: Abigail.

ROBERT MILLET: How Abigail was so significant in his life, not just as a sweet person who helped him when he came home to deal with his depression. But how forceful,

righteously forceful, she was in saying, “John, I think it is a fine speech. Don't you think there is a little bit of pride coming through here that shouldn't?” I mean, that kind of feedback, that kind of relationship, where we are open to each other's counsel, we're open to each other's being divinely led. That is what makes for happiness at home.

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: I think that term submissive and head when you see those terminology that Paul uses for example in the epistle to the Ephesians and others again the definition makes all the difference. If you've ever looked up in a thesaurus or just dictionary about meanings for submissive or submission they run the gamut from the most positive, meek, helpful, nurturing to these, my favorite is doormat, you know, spineless, hen-pecked. And depending on how you want to read that, if you see Paul as saying be spineless, be a doormat to your husband, man, no wonder you would get upset.

ROBERT MILLET: Of course.

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: But you have to look at the context of how that was being used and the same way being head, head could be a war-lord and you get a war-lord and doormat living together, this is not a happy home. But you get one who is willing to go first into battle, you get one who is bold and courageous and then again those are all characteristics of Jesus Christ, the meek, the nurturing and the bold.

ROBERT MILLET: I remember when, about the time when the Relief Society monuments were being dedicated in Nauvoo. Elder McConkie was asked to speak and I'm paraphrasing him terribly but I will try to be true to him in intent. He made the comment that Isaac and Rebecca had the kind of relationship in the Old Testament that we speak of here. That clearly in the case of who should bear the birthright Rebecca was right and in this one Isaac was wrong. Now I would add we don't have to apologize for Isaac, he has done quite well. As the Doctrine and Covenants says, he is no longer an angel but a God.

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: But he wasn't a God then and he wasn't a savior. He needed a savior.

ROBERT MILLET: He needed somebody to save him in this situation. And as Elder McConkie went on to say on this occasion she was more in tune.

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: And then remember what he said, “Oh if all women, could Rebecca like, engineer things in their homes so that more of God's blessings could be received.” That's a great one.

ROBERT MILLET: On that note, let's take a break.

[PAUSE]

ROBERT MILLET: Welcome back to Mormon Identity, I'm Bob Millet, your host. I'm joined by Sister Camille Fronk Olsen a member of the Ancient Scripture faculty at BYU. We're talking today about men and women in the Church, the importance of both. How we are working together as a partnership, I know how significant that is for unity in the home and success in society and in the world. Camille, let me

ask you a rather personal question I don't mean to be inappropriate but as you indicated you left for many years, very successfully, very successful in your career, as an educator, an administrator, as a woman who was not married, who had not had that opportunity. You must have learned some lessons during that time period that would be a benefit to those who are listening. Both for those who are married and those that are not. What would you share?

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: You know, I think when life turns out differently than you expect, you hear and seek for answers much more deeply, because you really do have a situation where you would like to better understand. I think it was in those years, where you would hear a more general teaching about the importance of family and marriage and I would have to find ways of how I could apply it to me in the situation where I was in. I know it was during those years as I searched the scriptures that I started finding much more of a relationship of my dependence on the Lord. And the fact that nowhere in there did it say that I could not have a relationship with my Father in Heaven and being single that I didn't have to go through a husband or father to get to God that I could talk directly to Him. And I, you pick up things like Rebecca that we were just talking about, where she prayed about these two, these children she was carrying and not knowing what was happening inside of her before they were born. And it was God who answered her, not to her prophet husband but answered her directly. And gave her a prophesy about who would, she had two children and which one would be the leader. Those kind of stories gave me encouragement. I grew up in, where my home chapel had a picture of the woman at the well speaking to Christ right behind the pulpit. And I looked at that all the time and again would just recognize that the Savior saw individually women and saw worth in them and wanted to teach them. It's in that time that I found the verse section 6 of the Doctrine Covenants verse 14, "As often as thou hast inquired thou as received instruction of my spirit, if it had not been so, thou wouldst not come to this place where thou art at this time."

ROBERT MILLET: That's beautiful.

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: And I just recognized that He had a purpose for me. And that I could tell through His grace that I was being able to do things that I should not have been able to succeed at. And therefore, how could I be downcast and discouraged? I pretty much come to the conclusion I would probably never marry in this life and that that wasn't a terrible thing because I knew that God was with me and He had a plan for me and with that, that is the whole thing we are all asking for. And I think anyone that is not happy in life, anyone that is feeling like this is not what I signed up for, go to God and let Him help you and if you're not doing what you should be doing He will help you get you to where you need to be. But if you are, to hear it from Him is different from hearing it from anybody else. And no one else can say, "Oh this must be what God wants you to do." You've got to hear it from Him. And then it is a beautiful life, and very fulfilling.

ROBERT MILLET: Thank you Camille, that is very tender and very touching I know that will help many people. Let me just say that as I read the scriptures especially the New



Testament and the Book of Mormon, I see Jesus as someone possessed of such love and such power within that love that people were drawn to Him. In many ways I see Jesus as a great liberator of women and men. There didn't seem to be a pecking order in Jesus's eyes. I think the thing you know the particular paragraph I'm thinking of in a Christian writer with the name of Phillip Yancey wrote a book called *The Jesus I Never Knew*. He said something like this, he said, "What was it about Jesus that drew people to him, especially those who were on the outskirts of society those who would not normally have felt close to Him?" And then he asks this haunting question, "Then why did those people feel so uncomfortable with us?"

CAMILLE FRONK OLSEN: Yeah why don't those people like being around us?

ROBERT MILLET: And it says to me, that as women and men we need to become persons filled with that love of God that would make whomever no matter their circumstances in life, single, married, divorced, widowed, whatever, feel at home, comfortable, part of a larger partnership and a larger family, namely a larger kingdom of God. And the Lord said marriage is ordained of God. It's marvelous principle and a marvelous precept. But men and women are children of God, God loves His daughters, God loves His sons. He doesn't draw distinction between His love for one, nor should we.

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NARRATOR: You've been listening to Mormon Identity, thanks for tuning in. Hope you join us next time.

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