

Letters

My answers in Red

Letter to bWe: You are the one who needs prayer! You're leading a Women's Lib campaign which is not of the Lord at all. If you want to do something for the Lord instead of for yourself, go after the lost. We're losing ground as Christians and it's because self-interest so called Christians like yourself have left the front line to do the work of Satan. Yes I'll pray but I'll pray for you because you need it a lot worse than the SBC.

Sir, when you are on your knees praying for me, listen closely to what the Lord is replying back to you. Thank you for writing.

His reply: Lady you don't know me so don't judge me. I can judge you because you email me to pray for things that aren't biblical. I pray listening to the Lord but I also pray with God's word open. You need to spend some more time in God's word especially the passages that speak about the role of women in the church. I've been around and I know the liberal argument that, that part of the Bible is only cultural for that specific time. That is a lie straight from the pits of hell. What you are promoting is women's lib and you know it. Lady, if you were of Christ, your concern would not be about women taking over, but your concern would be humbling yourself unto service to follow and to reach the lost. I prayed for you yesterday. I'm going to pray today that you would submit completely to your husband if you have one.**(ah, you SBC people, you want to tag women as homosexual if they want equality – I clearly state on my website that I have been married 47 years to my husband).**

In Him

Dear Mrs. Taylor,

I hope that by writing you might re-consider what it means to be equal in light of our Trinitarian theology. We affirm that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God, same in substance, equal in power and glory. Yet we see Jesus submitting to the Father, for example in the garden:

"Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." -- Luke 22:42

or additionally in Philippians:

"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." 2:5-7ff

Certainly as Christians we are called to a Trinitarian relationship of mutual love and submission. Shouldn't equality also be defined by the Godhead? Jesus is equal but not identical to the Father, the Spirit is equal but not identical to the Son. They serve in different capacities, yet equal in substance and glory. Would you be willing to consider the motivation behind the statement of the SBC is a definition of equality informed by Scripture and the normative pattern of the intra-Trinitarian relations?

I pray we as Baptists will grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ as well as in unity by the power the Spirit.

Dear Sir:

Thank you so much for reading the material on my website and for responding.

I wonder why it is so important to you that women remain in a submissive role. I am sure that your reply would be "because God said so."

You are aware that the Muslims keep their women under control because "God says so." And that the Pentecostals keep their women with long hair and long dresses, and that the FDLS (Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) keep their women in prairie dresses and spirit marriages and numerous children, all because "God says so."

Women everywhere have to be the standard-bearers of their religion. Baptist women are, too. In a more subtle way – by omission. By denying a Baptist women the role of deacon or pastor, we are making our women the standard-bearers of the Baptist faith.

The men declare that "God says so" which goes to the very core of a woman's soul and she is afraid to do anything different. I wonder what it feels like to be so powerful to demand that half of the population submit to you.

Jesus had something to say about that. I am going to paraphrase the message in Matthew 23 as I am sure you are very familiar with it.

Jesus condemned the Pharisees because they thought their law was more important than people. He told them that they had already decided that they would break the law of the Sabbath to get their animal out of the ditch. They had found other ways to get around laws that they claimed they were observing (the gift to parents). They got on their high horse and got mad at Jesus for healing a person on the Sabbath, and they got mad again when Jesus fed his disciples on the Sabbath. Jesus told them that they were so concerned about the letter of the law that they were neglecting the weightier things of the law – mercy, justice, and faithfulness.

Now you tell me – just what is it about being a deacon that is so important that a woman can't do it? We take women's money, their time, their talents, and allow them to teach the gospel to our children, to people with a darker skin and those who speak a different language. When they are standing up singing their hearts out to God, we are holding this away from them. We are saying that women can do all these things but the office of deacon is so sacred that they can't have it. Do you really think Jesus would say that?

He would say "Woe unto you, blind guides! You say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.' You blind fools! Which is greater; the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred?" (look at what we do allow women to do - can the office of deacon be greater than that?)

You see, Sir, it is not as simple as just "God says so." When you look at Jesus and how he treated women, and you look at how the Baptists are treating women, do you see what I see? I see hypocrisy.

I do not buy the Trinitarian equation at all. It is just one more effort to use scripture to keep women in their place.

I do thank you for replying. I appreciate the opportunity to explain a woman's view.

Shirley Taylor
bWe Baptist Women for Equality

Letter from young man

Dear bWe,

First I want you to know that today I prayed that in both yours and my life that God would bring truth and reveal error. I prayed that God would lead both of us to where He would have us be.

That being said, I am a young 20 year old Southern Baptist who is going into the ministry. Before I read the scriptures on the issue, I believed that women could be pastors. Now I do not believe they are called to that position, yet they are completely equal to men. When someone asks me why a woman cannot be a Pastor, I say that I do not know, but that is what was revealed in scripture. My question to you is do you believe that some of us are not prejudiced - that the only reason we believe women cannot be pastors is because of scripture and not at all because of us being sexist? I know I am not sexist, but I wonder if you believe there can be a person who holds that position yet still holds a high view of women. May God bless you.

Dear Young Man,

There are people will try to persuade you that women should not be pastors - and their voices are loud. They are the professors and the pastors of Southern Baptist Convention colleges and churches. But there is another side. Many pastors and theologians are reading those same scriptures and have come to a different conclusion than the SBC would have you believe.

There is a growing unhappiness with the way the Southern Baptist Convention requires submission of women to their husbands. I have met numerous women who have left their Baptist church for another denomination because of this very thing. SBC doesn't want you to know that. The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 added a Chapter XV111 expressly to tell women how to behave. They also changed Chapter V1 *The Church* to eliminate the possibility of women pastors. One of their favorite expressions is that men and women are created equal - but they give with one hand and take away with the other by declaring that women cannot serve God fully as she is called. There is no mention of deacon, but few SBC churches would allow a woman to be a deacon.

For some reason the SBC made the decision that women must be kept under control. Whenever religion tries to keep women under control, they give men unlimited freedom to decide what amount of freedom women will have. Look at the Muslims and the Mormons Sect which still allows polygamy to see what happens when this attitude is taken to the extreme.

Baptists are in a transition and it will become even more so in the years of your ministry. Baptist members are older than most other denominations which mean that the young people are not coming into the denomination in great numbers. Also, whenever women leave a church, they take the family.

The SBC can be saved. It was a great institution before the conservative takeover. It moved with the times, and allowed freedom of thought, while holding to the truths of the Bible, and salvation by Jesus Christ. It will take men like you who are making their decisions now. It will take people with an inquiring mind like you to bring the joy back to the SBC. It will take freeing the women to be leaders in this 21st century, alongside the men.

Please read the Scriptural Argument for Women in Ministry provided on my website. They are written by Dr. Todd Still, Associate Professor of Christian Studies at Truett Seminary at Baylor University, and by Dr. James Denison who is

the Theologian in Residence at Baptist General Convention of Texas. Also under NEW there is a list of books that have been written about women in ministry.

I would also encourage you to read the blog by Wade Burleson. It is called Grace and Truth to you. In this blog, he discusses women and the Southern Baptist Convention. He is a respected Southern Baptist pastor of a large church in Oklahoma.

Thank you so much for this opportunity to speak with you. I sincerely hope that I have answered your questions.

Letter from a Pastor:

Thank you, Shirley, for giving me an opportunity to be the voice of my daughters. I think I will do just that.

Shirley, I am certain you are well meaning in your feminist efforts to get churches to go against their scriptural beliefs concerning the ordination of women into the pastoral role or to the office of deacon. If that is what your church wishes to do, then by all means do it. After all, each church is Autonomous. However you are stretching it a little far when you attempt to cause divisions in other churches simply because those churches do not agree with you. If you and your liberal friends choose to have a woman for a pastor that is certainly your business and I promise that I will not lead an e-mail campaign to get your congregation to declare the pulpit vacant. At the same time I will ask you to refrain from engaging in the business of sowing seeds of discord in churches where you have no business in infringing on their faith and practice.

Perhaps we would all accomplish more if we focused our efforts on winning our communities to Christ by sharing the Gospel message from house to house and heart to heart. May the joy of knowing Jesus flood your heart today and every day you live for Him.

Thank you very much for your reply. I understand your position, having been a Baptist all my life. My father was a Baptist minister. You and I send our money to the same place – our local association and roundabout to the SBC. And that is what gives me the right to speak.

I have one comment I would like you to consider. In this day of travel and where people move from city to city, what if someone comes to your church who has been to the outside world and seen women in leadership roles? Change will come, even to the SBC. I grant you it will arrive last in this part of Texas, but it will come.

**Thank you for replying. I appreciate the gentleness of your letter.
Shirley Taylor**

Angry Letter: The Lord HAS spoken, clearly, in His Word. Your thoughts sitting in the pew are not God's thoughts, but yours. He will not give us new and different "calls" that contradict what He has already said. I am not saying that I always like what He says, only that He is God and knows more than me and I should follow Him, not lead out in another direction. My daughter is in seminary presently getting a Mdiv, looking to be a minister, but not a pastor. She's brilliant, talented, and loves God enough to obey Him. I am proud of her.

It is possible that your daughter will read these scriptures differently than you do, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, come to a different conclusion that you have. I hope that you are prepared to still be proud of this woman of God if He calls her to pastor.

You have already decided what God can and cannot do. That is limiting God to your way of thinking, not opening your mind to God's way of thinking. You don't know the thoughts that God has put into my mind, just as you don't know how he is going to deal with your daughter.

Shirley Taylor
bWe Baptist Women for Equality

His Reply: You are ignoring what God has said in His word. You are deciding what you feel like is God and you can not imagine God disagreeing with you, so you ignore what God has said. That is not ok.

To Educate Me: I have read your article and you seem to have forgotten that while Christ the Son is in ALL ways equal to the Father, He SUBMITTED Himself to the Father's will. Yet in no way did this make Him inferior...instead, He was lifted up and glorified by the Father. You can have complementarianism and egalitarianism together. They are not contradictory...in fact, you have committed a logical fallacy in assuming such.

In the 1960s when I was teaching a Sunday school class of women in my Baptist church, the teacher's guide made the statement "The Jews loved nothing better than to go to the marketplace and argue over whether or not women had souls." I had no idea that Southern Baptists would be arguing over essentially the same thing 40 years later. Of course we dress it up and call it fancy names like complementarianism and egalitarianism. But it is the same argument. An argument designed to keep women in their place.

Jesus said that the soul is housed in a body and that when it is freed from the body in heaven that you won't be able to tell the difference between a man's soul and a woman's soul (actually he said that in heaven there would be no male or female, marrying or giving in marriage).

If that is not equality, then I don't know what is. That same soul that I have now will be the one I take into eternity. And it is going to look just like yours: washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Thanks for writing. I appreciate you taking the time to do so.

Letters from Supporters

From a lady : I have changed from accepting blindly the church's patriarchal teaching to being a biblical egalitarian. I now belong to an org'n called Christians for Biblical Equality, and have purchased many books on the subject to study. I am happy to see that you are opening dialogues in your church. I am making lots of noises in my church and challenging them to think. The more I read on the subject, the more I am convinced that God is an egalitarian God. I commend you for your honesty and faithfulness to what God has shown you to be righteous and just.

From a Pastor

Dear Ms. Taylor:

I believe in 2006 or 2007, FBC Decatur, a very prominent big steeple church in Georgia, called a woman to be their senior pastor. (I am sorry that I cannot recall her name, but I believe she came from Texas.) The GBC is in the process of disfellowshipping the church for calling her. The church, though, has the full support of the CBFGa.

Our church has had women deacons for nearly three decades and about 5 years ago we had our first female deacon chair.

We still have a long way to go, but I am proud that in Georgia, the CBFGa is very intentional about having a female moderator every other year as well as affirming the gifts of women both inside and outside the context of the church.

I am sorry that Texas is lagging behind. I do pray for you and this situation, but have little hope that within the SBC structure, women will make much progress. The SBC continues to be a pre-Pentecost denomination where as the CBF embraces that the Spirit of God has already empowered women to spread the good news of the gospel that Jesus saves! Is this not one of the remarkable stories shared in the beginning chapters of the book of Acts!

Grace and Peace,

From a woman:

Shirley,

Thank you for your earlier email in response to the press we received about Baptist women in ministry in Arkansas. Certainly we will pray for the SBC and its stance on women in ministry. Surely we believe God is still in the miracles business. Thank you for your work.

Blessings and prayers,

From a woman

This has been a sore subject with me for years. Why should Baptist refuse the leadership of half of it's membership? How shortsighted!

From a Pastor

Bless your heart. Your time would be better served not fighting the SBC dinosaur. Have you considered Cooperative Baptist Fellowship?

Thank you for reply and your kind words.

My church is also affiliated with CBF, but we have no women deacons and the subject has not been brought up in the 11 years I have been there. I have never even seen a woman deacon - expect that when I do see one, she will look normal and like all the other women.

I do appreciate the support.

His Reply: We will pray for you. We probably have 25women deacons—and yes they look very normal.