

SOME LETTERS IN RESPONSE TO "OPEN LETTER TO BAPTISTS"  
(Even though they did not ask me to do this, in order to protect their identity,  
only initials of first names are used in the signatures)

Thank you, Shirley, for your courage and determination to support women in ministry. I am blessed to be an ordained woman associate pastor in a church where 2 other women are on the pastoral staff and where we have had women deacons for over a decade. We were nearly kicked out of our association at one point (over my ordination), but our associational leaders acted like Baptists are supposed to behave: one by one they stood to say they would likely never have women deacons or a woman pastor in their church, but our church was a "wonderful church with the right to make this decision without interference from the association." I'm sad to say that we are one of the few across the nation who remembered our Baptist principles and responded like this. Most of the time the church is kicked out.

I hadn't heard of your work, so was glad to receive this e-mail. May God bless you and give you strength, courage and tenacity to continue. May many women be blessed by being able to serve where God has called them because of what you do.

Blessings,  
Signed Rev J

Dear bWe,

I am a full time senior co-pastor in Houston, Texas. My husband and I share the office of senior pastor with complete equality in all our duties. I appreciated your open letter to Baptists.

Sincerely,  
Signed Rev K

There can not be a new look apart from what God has already directed through His Holy Word.

Signed D

Shirley-

Good work. Best wishes in your effort.

Signed J

Shirley,

This is fabulous! You must feel so good that at least people are listening and more importantly RESPONDING! I know you put a lot of effort (and thought and prayer) into what you've done so far.

Signed J

Shirley,

Received your excellent open letter and will definitely be proud to forward. Proud of you and your commitment.

Signed J

Shirley:

I am excited to hear about your movement and awareness to women in ministry. A colleague of mine passed along your article and website. I have been in ministry almost all my life. I have been a Baptist for four years and in seminary two years. What do I do to join the fight for women to be ordained?

Signed D

Dear Mrs. Taylor:

I am enjoying learning about your efforts in Texas! Good luck and know that you have a lot of friends and fellow travelers cheering for you. I grew up in MS, but am fortunate to have been in churches that eventually supported women leadership in churches (even in pastoral ministry!). Step by step, you can help many young women, as well as their brothers, fathers, etc.

Best,  
Signed H

Dear Shirley,

How wonderful for you to start this organization! And for seeing what's going on and stepping up to the plate! I saw the Associated Baptist Press article about your work at

[http://www.abpnews.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=3795&Itemid=53](http://www.abpnews.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3795&Itemid=53)

I am a 1991 M.Div. graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. It's heartbreaking now to visit and see the learning halls filled with only males. Where are the women? During my 5 years of study I had one 90-minute class that talked about women leaders in the Bible. I was stunned to learn there was a woman apostle. Best wishes with your work!

Signed H

Shirley, I was referred to your letter a friend. Thanks for this candle in the darkness. I'm a retired American Baptist minister, living in Texas now. American Baptists are more accepting of women in ministry than Southern Baptists. Unfortunately, American Baptist women in ministry are likely to be relegated to the hinterlands. The same is true of Methodists, Presbyterians, and possibly/probably others.

Signed K

Hello,

You go girl! Thanks for being willing to be a prophetic voice in a land where many are deaf because they will not hear. I want you to know about an excellent resource we have on woman in leadership in the church, *Junia: A Bible Study and Storytelling Resource for the Church*. It was written by Rev. Dr. Susan Crane, then an interim pastor in Maine, a culturally very conservative place. Susan makes a serious study of all the scriptures used to keep women out of leadership with a perspective of helping Baptists from a very restricted perspective to see things differently. Her work is well respected in Maine.

Signed J

Shirley,

I have found that the women who are so set against women preachers typically had what I call a "no, you misunderstood. God does not desire women to....." experience sometime in their lives. In order to accept the chastisement, they must defend the position or their world comes crashing down. These women will go to many lengths in order to be "on the right side" and will abandon thought and reason in order to preserve the choice they made to adhere to the chastisement. And yet...sometimes.....the sun comes up in their lives and they awaken to possibilities. Thank you for your call to action..... may you not grow weary in your quest. Thank you for sharing and including me on your list.

Be blessed,  
Signed K

BRAVO.....this is awesome. Keep me on your mailing list for sure. You state the truth, and explain in a fair, unbiased way. I totally agree with what you say and yet you don't sound like a "women's libber".(thank goodness). What many forget is that our Baptist beliefs come from the same place as almost all other churches...."the Bible", and then the rest are man made and subject to change.

Signed B

Dear Shirley,

I received your letter regarding women pastors and deacons and would like to respond to several points in your letter. I completely agree with your mission statement until you get to the phrase, "and will put up no barriers to women serving God in the same capacity as men do."

I have a big problem with this. God does value women! He puts men and women on the same plain, breaking down barriers. However, He has also made us different and clearly knows how we can compliment each other.

I have grown up in a country that has had prejudices against women and have witnessed changes in the workplace and society. I have also witnessed a breakdown in families and society stemming from individuals being basically self-centered and insisting on their rights. There is balance and harmony in the body of Christ and in the home when individuals accept their roles in an humble, submissive manner to the Lord.

I am familiar with the passages of scripture on qualifications for deacons and pastors, as well as the passage from 1 Tim. 2:11-15. I fully understand that you must read scripture in the context in which it is given and consider the social setting of the time.

I have served the Lord and walked with Him for 45 years. In that time I have observed God honoring marriages that are a picture of Christ and the Church. This harmony comes through submission, not demanding our rights. You suggested that we forward your newsletter to our daughters. We have two daughters that have been married for a number of years. We are very proud of them as wives and mothers because I can see them modeling the Eph. passage. One of our daughters has always been very head strong. She has chosen to trust her husband in matters of leadership and management. He responds to her in love and a desire to provide for their family. Our other daughter is married to a very strong-willed man. Her marriage has sometimes been difficult, but I can see the fruit of her submission.

I say all of this because I am concerned for unity in our local church as well as our denomination. As you well know, the subject you have addressed is controversial and divisive. I for one, have never felt bullied by men in the Baptist Church. I also want to see men in leadership as deacons and pastors. I have been on a mission trip to Russia, where the church is basically made up of women, with few men attending. Do you want that? I do not have a beef. However, if this issue is ever confronted in our local church, I will have a beef, and predict that it would be very divisive.

Please do not send me any more newsletters.

Sincerely J