

Voices: If you speak of sexual sin, speak of rape

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Editor's Note: Texas Baptist Voices columnist Kyndall Rae Rothaus hoped to speak to the Baptist General Convention of Texas motion that declared "any church which affirms any sexual relationship outside the bonds of a marriage between one man and one woman be considered out of harmonious cooperation with the Baptist General Convention of Texas." She did not have that opportunity. Here is the speech she intended to deliver. A video of her remarks posted to Facebook can be viewed within this article.

My name is Kyndall Rothaus, and I am the senior pastor of Lake Shore Baptist Church. I am also a survivor of sexual assault. As recent events have made clear, there is an assault epidemic in our country. One in four women will experience assault.

So I stand before you today passionately **against** sexual sin. I am here to proclaim without doubt the **primary sexual** sin of our time is assault. Assault is absolutely contrary to all our Christian values.

While children are molested, girls are raped on college campuses, and men and women attend churches where they seldom, if ever, hear about rape from the pulpit, we squabble about the sexual choices of consenting, responsible adults. If the Enemy were trying to distract us from protecting our children, he has succeeded magnificently.

Our affirming congregations are not asking us to agree with their decision. But they are asking us to respect it, because that is what it has always meant to be Baptist—to respect the local autonomy of the church and the freedom of the individual conscience. If our reverence for autonomy is to

languish, I cannot help but lament.

Given our current political climate, I would hope to see the church be a shining example to our country of how to work together despite our differences. What a strong, counter-cultural testimony that would be! The world doesn't need more polarization, and the body of Christ doesn't need any more amputations. When did our shared beliefs in the Triune God and our common hope in the life, death and resurrection of Christ become irrelevant?

We are not enemies. We are brothers and sisters in Christ, fellow members of the body, and when we cut off certain members, we cut off Christ's own limbs. It is not our responsibility to police doctrine and practices or to purify them according to our standards. Baptists have never believed in authoritarian control. We have always trusted Christ to be our head and to be our heart, and we have left the judging to God.

If the BGCT chooses to abandon its commitment to the four fragile freedoms of Baptist polity, I will do my best to love you anyway. Even if today is the day our convention begins to split, I beg you, do not ignore the sin of sexual assault. Address it with at least as much passion and fervor as you have addressed the sexuality of same-gendered love.

Do not be so hypocritical as to talk sexual sin without talking rape. Do not ignore your daughters, your congregants, the 25 percent of women in this room who know intimately what sexual perversion is because we have been unwilling victims to its merciless onslaught. If you haven't experienced sexual assault, do not assume you are the authority on sin. Ask Sin's thousands of traumatized victims and see what they can teach you.

Church, if we're gonna get busy addressing sin, let's address assault. Thank you.

Kyndall Rae Rothaus is senior pastor of Lake Shore Baptist Church in Waco.