

Texas Baptist Forum

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Unity, not division

In his letter excluding female church leaders (June 12), Brian Thompson cited several Scriptures and concluded we must trust in the authority of the Bible. In my entire Baptist experience, I have never been in a Baptist church where women aren't allowed to talk, teach Sunday school, wear their Sunday best, wear earrings and wedding and engagement rings, wear makeup and have their uncovered hair in the latest styles. Yet with the same scriptural authority that Thompson cites, these practices are problematic.

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Letters are welcomed. Send them to marvknox@baptiststandard.com; 250 words maximum.

Out ((Loud))

“A growth-oriented congregation won't shut down for the summer. They can change programs, perhaps, but they need to recognize that church-shoppers expect to see ‘merchandise on display,’ not ‘empty shelves.’ Some churches, in fact, offer more in the summer, not less.”

Tom Ehrich

Writer, consultant, workshop leader and Episcopal priest from Durham, N.C. (RNS)

“The language of the Declaration (of Independence) marked an important shift in early American history. Prior to Philadelphia and the Revolution, most public professions of faith were Christian, whether the words came from Anglicans in Jamestown or Puritans in New England. In declaring the colonies’ independence from Great Britain, though, the Founders were also making another declaration: That Americans respected the idea of God, understood the universe to be governed by moral and religious forces, and prayed for divine protection against the enemies of this world, but were not interested in establishing yet another earthly government with official ties to a state church.”

Jon Meacham

Managing editor of Newsweek magazine, in his new book, American Gospel: God, the Founding Fathers and the Making of a Nation (RNS)

Also, in my reading of these Scriptures, it appears that they are addressing family relationships, not clergy or deacons. Scripture does cite several early female church leaders. More importantly, Jesus communicated clearly in the gospels that men and women, Jew and Gentile, and free and slave were equals in every way. The very first person to proclaim the good news to a group of people was Mary Magdalene, and her authority to do so came as a direct command from Jesus himself.

We as Baptists are congregationalists, and this issue is clearly the prerogative of each congregation. If a person's cultural and social perspective makes one feel uncomfortable in a church that has female leaders, find another Baptist church more to one's preference.

Let's focus on those things that unite us, not divide us.

Ray Atkinson

Dallas

Spirit's leadership

Brian Thompson seems to suggest that men are to be the spiritual leaders of women (June 12).

Is he saying men are to take the place of the Holy Spirit in the lives of women? This is almost blasphemous even to consider. The Bible says it is the Spirit, not men, who will guide us into all truth.

Surely the word for "head" has a different meaning in Scripture. The words "source" or "origin" come much closer. Moreover, there is abundant proof from the Bible that women did preach and teach in the early church with God's, and Paul's, blessing and approval, so 1Timothy 2:12 must have another, less restrictive meaning.

If women are as able as men to lead, why not let them?

Kathryn Vance

Kosse

Stumbling block

In William Campbell's letter about alcohol (June 26), the question should not be, "Can we drink alcohol?" but, "Should we drink alcohol?"

Things are permissible, yet because of their influence on others, they're not. The question becomes: "Does taking a drink glorify God?" Paul said in Galatians the last fruit of the Spirit is self control. We need to be cautious of anything that takes control away. No matter how little alcohol you use, it inhibits self control. This is a proven fact.

By promoting alcohol use, the pastor has become a stumbling block, because everyone who reads his letter thinks that because the pastor drinks, it is OK.

One of my deacons tells the story of he and his wife befriending another couple before he was saved. They met for dinner and had wine. This was the first time to drink for the couple. The wife became addicted and now is an alcoholic.

As a pastor, I would have a hard time explaining that situation if I had caused it. Pastors influence people. We must be careful not to lead people astray. I could use alcohol and it not hurt me. I will not, because it might be a tragedy for someone else, keeping them from Christ.

Let us not glorify culture but rather glorify Christ.

Bill Gleason

Cuero

Clear positions

Thank you for clearly stating the positions in your editorial “SBC: Many changes, very little change” (June 26)

We can choose to be “traditional, mainstream Texas Baptists” or to be “young, polite inerrantists who affirm the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message” and work with—I suppose you mean financially and ideologically support—the Baptist World Alliance and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

It really helps when guys like you spell it out for us. It makes our decisions much easier.

Wade Taylor

Alvarado

. Letters are limited to 250 words.

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