

Seminary website lists aspects of 'biblical womanhood'

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FORT WORTH—[Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary](#) released a statement by women and for women to counter misunderstanding and negativity the authors say abound on what they call biblical womanhood.

[Biblical Woman](#), online home



The Biblical Woman website is the online home of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's Women's Programs. for women's programs at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, posted [a 12-point statement](#) March 27 outlining "the counter-cultural convictions that guide us as we strive to live out (God's) wisdom for our world."

An accompanying article introduces the Biblical Woman Statement as "a positive value statement about the 12 aspects of womanhood that impact us most."

"Sadly, many times our efforts to define our values lead to misunderstanding and even negativity," the article says. "Here at Biblical

Woman, we've encountered these misunderstandings about what we believe about women and what we teach at Southwestern Seminary. And we decided to do something about it."

Sponsors say the statement isn't intended to replace the [2000 Baptist Faith & Message](#), which teaches that wives should submit to their husbands in the home and that women cannot be senior pastor of a church, or the [Danvers Statement](#), the doctrinal basis for the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood based in Louisville, Ky.

'For women, by women'

"These remain two primary statements that help define what we believe, and we're not trying to replace either of these," the article says. "But we do want to share a biblical foundation for the issues concerning a woman's life that is for women, by women."

Recently, a group calling itself the [Freedom for Christian Women Coalition](#) posted an online petition at [Change.org](#) accusing the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood of putting the issue of female subordination ahead of the gospel and demanding the retraction of teachings the petitioners say are harmful to women.

The Biblical Woman Statement doesn't mention that controversy, but it defends "complementarianism," the view that males and females complement each other in their different roles and duties. A 2013 blog entry titled "Biblical Womanhood 101: What We Really Teach at Southwestern" defines the view as "equal yet distinct."

It contrasts with "egalitarianism," the view that "the Bible teaches that men and women are both created in the image of God (equal in essence) and that God has no distinction of roles or functions for men and women in the home or church."



Candi Finch “Some Bible-believing evangelicals and some of my good friends hold this position, but I believe that this position is incorrect based on some biblical passages,” said author Candi Finch, assistant professor of theology in women’s studies and executive assistant to Dorothy Patterson, wife of Southwestern Seminary President Paige Patterson.

The Biblical Woman Statement affirms “that every woman has been created in the image of God and is infinitely valued by and significant to him.”

“We believe that God has given women and men distinctive roles within the family and the church; that these roles were intentionally created and given prior to human sin; that according to God’s design, these roles are interdependent but not interchangeable,” the statement says.

Married and unmarried

“Women are called to honor God in marriage by submitting to their own husbands voluntarily and purposefully,” the statement says. It also affirms women who are unmarried, “that by their chaste and set-apart lives they may especially devote themselves to service in the kingdom of God during either their season or lifetime of singleness.”

“We believe that every woman is called to make her home a place of service and that such service is ultimately to Christ,” the document says. “We believe that investing in the next generation is every woman’s task; that women are uniquely gifted to nurture, teach and train children; that

children, as blessings from the Lord, are the most worthy investments for a woman's energies whether as biological, adopted or spiritual children."

The statement says "women are indispensable" to the life of the church, but their Christian service must be "according to biblical guidelines," specifically "that women are exhorted to instruct and mentor other women."

The statement supports educational opportunities for women, affirming "that the God-called woman warrants the investment of theological education and preparation for service to Christ according to biblical guidelines."

Southwestern, a Southern Baptist Convention-affiliated seminary, boasts "the largest women's programs faculty of any evangelical seminary." It offers courses of study ranging from certificate to a doctorate in women's studies, women's ministries and, since 2007, homemaking.

Course offerings at SBC seminaries

All six SBC seminaries offer courses to equip women to minister to other women or to support their husbands in ministry.

[New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary](#) was the first Southern Baptist school to offer formal, specialized theological education in the area of women's ministry, beginning in March 1997. New Orleans offers two certificate programs for women's ministry, as well as a bachelor's degree and three master's degrees.

[Southern Baptist Theological Seminary](#) in Louisville, Ky., offers a Seminary Wives Institute led by Mary Mohler, wife of President Albert Mohler. "At Southern Seminary, we recognize the need for God-called ministers' wives to be prepared for ministry," says a program description. "We believe that a minister's wife needs to be educated and equipped as she and her

husband prepare for service in the churches and beyond.”

[Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary](#) encourages “partnering in the ministry” in an unaccredited training program designed for seminary student spouses, “enabling ministering couples to maximize their time at seminary by preparing both partners to be co-laborers for Christ.”

[The Midwestern Women’s Institute](#) in Kansas City, Mo., “exists to prepare the women of Midwestern Seminary to serve their families, their churches and the Great Commission by providing them with ministry training, spiritual encouragement, biblical fellowship and practical equipping.”

As their male counterparts take courses in preaching and pastoral leadership, women in Midwestern’s master of divinity degree program are assigned courses including “Principles of Teaching” and “Introduction to Adult Ministry.”

[Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary](#) in Wake Forest, N.C., offers graduate programs with a concentration in women’s studies to “prepare women for a wide variety of family, care-giving and mission ministries.”

The Biblical Woman Statement acknowledges there is no such thing as “cookie-cutter” biblical womanhood.

“We don’t pretend to have all the answers, but we do believe our convictions reflect the guidelines God has given us in his word,” the authors say. “And it’s so much bigger than the few, controversial issues that have unfortunately surrounded it.”