

Latina leader urges women ministers to be ‘builders of the body of Christ’

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WACO—Every minister is called to be a “builder of the body of Christ,” Alicia Zorzoli told a gathering of Texas Baptist women in ministry.

Zorzoli, who serves on the faculty and board of the Christian Latina Leadership Institute, preached at the Texas Baptist Women in Ministry Conference at Baylor University’s Truett Seminary.

Drawing on the conference theme, “Encourage and Build,” Zorzoli preached from the Old Testament book of Nehemiah, which deals with rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and its walls.

Work together

She noted the third chapter of Nehemiah mentions the people involved in the rebuilding of the wall that protected Jerusalem, and none had a background in construction labor.

Priests, perfumers and the daughters of Shallum all were called to be builders. Therefore, “you and I are builders,” Zorzoli said.

The Scripture passages in Nehemiah present a picture of many people coming from many places to work together and accomplish something, she said.

“We can learn how to come and work together,” Zorzoli said.

God has given the church a big task, just as the people of Judah faced a big job rebuilding Jerusalem. Zorzoli insisted this means each person has to do only a small part, but they all have to work together.

“There are so many things surrounding us that are broken,” Zorzoli said. Rather than focus on the enormity of the task, concentrate on being a faithful steward and servant, she stressed.

“Jesus didn’t ask us to be barrel of water,” she said. Rather, he asked each of his followers to be “just one cup.”

Builders of life

God has called all his people to be builders, which means everyone must work toward the same goal, she noted. But to do that, Zorzoli said, the church cannot depend on hierarchies.

“God called you to be a builder of the body of Christ,” she said.

That can take many forms, Zorzoli stressed.

People who follow Christ are called to be builders of life, and this requires for them to be available to others 24/7, she said.

“You cannot say to someone who is broken, ‘Come at another time, since I’m busy right now,’” Zorzoli said.

Need for empathy

Empathy is necessary to be with people in their brokenness, because “we first need to be open to let that situation impact our lives,” Zorzoli said.

That does not mean Christians just wait until they encounter people who are dealing with hardships. Being available also means Christians “look

specifically for ways, for resources, to build that life,” she said.

Because everybody can be available, have empathy, and make an effort to build lives, the call God gives to people does not depend on their background or identity, she emphasized.

The same is to be said about the tools Christians use to build up those lives, she added.

People have their own experiences—the ways in which they have seen God’s faithfulness in their lives—that can be a tool, Zorzoli said.

They also have the Scriptures that show how God has worked on behalf of humanity, and they have the Holy Spirit to guide them, she added.

Some may choose not to be available, not have empathy or not make any effort.

The difference between their impact for God and someone who exhibits those traits is comparable to the “difference between building a mushroom and an oak tree,” she said.

“The oak tree will last,” Zorzoli said.