

Voices: Yes, I'm a children's pastor, too

June 21, 2024

Scenario 1: Imagine, for a moment, being so caught up in being “right” that you miss an opportunity to show and be love.

Imagine creating so many parameters around people joining in the mission of God's kingdom that you oust people based on power and your ability to do so.

Imagine thinking *you* have a say in how and who God calls and uses in church ministry.

Imagine thinking you matter more than the person next to you.

Scenario 2: Imagine if the women hadn't been there on that first Resurrection Sunday to spread the good news.

Where were the men? Hiding.

Imagine Vacation Bible School not existing because Virginia Hawes was told, “Go home.” Yes, I'm talking to you, John McArthur.

Two hundred kids wouldn't have heard the gospel of Jesus Christ at our VBS two weeks ago in Muleshoe. Dozens of youth volunteers wouldn't continue to return each year because of the influence VBS had on their own lives as young children.

Imagine what your church would look like without the women who faithfully serve and listened to God's call on their lives.

Imagine if they, too, “stayed home.”

Imagined vs. real

Thankfully, we don't have to imagine the second scenario. God has called and will continue to call women. And those he calls, he equips—regardless of the circumstances surrounding the call.

The first scenario, however, happened last week as the Southern Baptist Convention met in Indianapolis. Unfortunately, it will continue to happen.

Today and every day, I stand in solidarity with so many of my pastor and minister friends—sisters in Christ and sisters in mission.

Know your worth. Go where you are welcomed. Preach on.

“Go, be free,” as Beth Allison Barr said.

I planned to post Beth's words on social media when the Law Amendment passed at the SBC annual meeting. The amendment didn't pass, however. In fact, it narrowly missed being passed.

Yet, the SBC still deemed a church in Virginia not to be in friendly cooperation with the convention. The reason? They had a woman pastor for children and women on staff.

Not a lead pastor, a women and children's pastor. Although, if she were the lead pastor, that would be between her and God alone—not the business of any man or corporate body of believers, outside of her local church. And I gladly would support her calling to lead within the body of Christ in whatever capacity.

I'm a pastor

This decision hits close to home. I, too, am a children's pastor. My title is minister to children and families, or children's and family minister. The

difference between “pastor” and “minister” here? There isn’t one.

Three years ago, my church ordained me after five years of faithful service. Thankfully, my church is distinctly separate from the SBC, or we would face the same fate as First Baptist Alexandria, Va.

My convention? It celebrated my ordination and invited me to serve in leadership positions. It continued to grow in me the heart of a pastor.

My church? It sees the call God placed on my life. The people foster in me a spirit of service as I grow into the pastor God created me to be.

Where does that leave us? With lots of work to do. There are far too many things that matter to focus on control and power. Quite literally, eternity is at stake.

Our task

When the body of believers gathers, it should be for the encouragements of saints and cooperation to bring people into the kingdom of God. The author of Hebrews tells us to watch out for one another, to provoke love and good deeds, to not neglect gathering together and to encourage one another as the day approaches (Hebrews 10).

Last week? The headlines swirled with arguments about a woman serving as a pastor and questions about IVF.

The first is something a convention of believers outside the local church has no business controlling. The second, well, IVF is a deeply personal decision and journey, one that is between patients and doctors and one, arguably, that should not be voted on by people who never have walked that road.

My charge: Do better. Because this isn’t it. And the people are watching.

Abby Manes is the children's and family minister at First Baptist Church in Muleshoe. She is a proud [foster] mom and spends her time chasing kids, investing in her church and the surrounding community, and drinking good coffee. The views expressed in this opinion article are those of the author.