

The Bizarre Church Practices of Those Who Believe in Male Authority

I have a friend who is a young, Bible-believing pastor in North Carolina. I will not name him for this Bible study. He represents the typical pastor/church viewpoint on women and the so-called "spiritual authority" of men. In this lesson, I'll show you bizarre practices that rise over a belief in male authority.

This pastor had a woman named Elyse Fitzpatrick "speak" at his church one Sunday morning. Elyse is the author of several books, and according to the pastor, Elyse is "my wife's favorite Bible teacher." This pastor should be commended for having Elyse speak on Mother's Day, 2015. It seems, however, that this invitation caused some consternation at the church. Ten days after Elyse spoke, the pastor wrote a blog post entitled **Can Women Teach in the Church?** He writes: "Our elders have been working on a statement explaining the roles God has given to women in the ministries of our church. That statement is still in the works, but our recent invitation to have Elyse Fitzpatrick share during weekend services has led some to ask whether we believe a woman can preach/teach in the mixed-gender church gathering?"

The pastor attempts to answer that question by quoting 1 Timothy 2:12 and John Piper. He concludes:

"In context, I think 1 Timothy 2:12 means that women shouldn't be the authoritative teachers of the church..."

The pastor defines what "authoritative teaching" means: "Authoritative teaching," is, according to him:

1. Teaching that is binding for that particular congregation.
2. The teaching that comprises that church's fulfillment of its responsibility to pass on the faith to the next generation.
3. The pastor said the elders have the "authority" to teach official doctrine and remove those from membership who disagree.

Elyse Fitzpatrick couldn't officially "teach" anyone at the church because she was without "authority."

This kind of thinking – though prevalent in the Southern Baptist Convention – is unbiblical and absurd.

1. The authority behind Truth is always the greatness of the message, not the messenger.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it (e.g., "the gospel" not the "messenger") is the power of God that brings deliverance to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile." (Romans 1:16).

If God spoke truth to Balaam through an ass, He can surely speak authoritative Truth to the world through men and women. Jesus Christ said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," He is the Truth; and if He is the topic of the message, the authority of the message comes from Him, not the messenger.

2. If you wrongly believe that there is inherent authority in males, then you must treat female messengers of the powerful gospel differently.

This is where it gets weird. To show how a woman speaking "truth" at this church is one without authority, the pastor set up a "hedge of protection" for the congregation lest they "perceive" (his word, not mine), that the woman has authority when she does not.

He writes: "A woman can teach in a large formal setting, like a mixed Sunday School class or an evening Bible study, but she must not do so in a way that "mimics" the teaching authority of a male elder. Perceptions are important, and if some in the church begin to look to a woman-teacher as their primary shepherd-leader, both she and they have gone into error."

Wow. But what about Elyse Fitzpatrick?

She spoke on a Sunday morning during the "sermon time" at Summit. The pastor explained how he and the males at Summit took several steps to prevent the wrong perception that Elyse had some authority over the congregation. The pastor writes:

"A teaching elder at our church set the context, invited Elyse up to ask her a series of questions, and then I (the pastor) wrapped up the service by applying her words specifically to our church. The elder's introduction, presence on stage, and application at the end "officialized" the explanation and exhortation given by her for the church, and made clear she was not teaching (as one with authority) in our church. She explained the content, but we, the church elders, bore the weight of responsibility for teaching."

If you watch Elyse Fitzpatrick's message on Sunday morning at that church, you will notice she was not allowed things that other male speakers can do at The Summit. For example:

- 1). Elyse could not stand as she taught, she had to sit, lest it be perceived she had authority.
- 2). Elyse could not "declare" truth, she had to be asked questions from one in authority.
- 3). Elyse could not "apply" the Truth to the congregation, only those with authority could.
- 4). Elyse had to be "introduced" and "followed-up" by a male with authority.
- 5). Had Elyse Fitzpatrick spoken truth the way males usually do at the church, there would have been shock among the church men.

When evangelical churches like this church promote as "***biblical and normal***" male authority over females, then evangelicals will have far more in common with Muslim culture and the Muslim religion than we ever will with the Good News of Jesus Christ. The gospel, the New Testament, the New Covenant shed in His blood, and the Messiah Himself, elevated women to equal status in the Kingdom of God. **Equal does not mean identical.** Men and women in the Kingdom of God are different, but men and women in the Kingdom of God are equal. There is equal worth (in Christ), equal significance (born of the Spirit), equal authority (we are all "priests unto God"), equal inheritance (co-heirs with Christ), and equal value ("we are the blood-bought redeemed"). According to this pastor, women who teach the Bible can't be in a position of declaring truth authoritatively, because nobody is to submit to a woman teaching truth. **Women are the acquiescers; males are the authoritarians.** Males give; women receive. If a male receives "truth" from a woman, then "error" has occurred because a male can't get anything authoritative from a woman. There's a Greek word for such thinking - baloney.

"At some point, evangelicals are going to need to wake-up to the New Covenant truth that Jesus makes the ground at the foot of the cross equal." - Wade Burleson, *Fraudulent Authority*.