

“So Are All Women Pastors Deceived and Going to Hell?”

Dear Sue,

I really have to write you this. I met you at the Mind Games conference in Fall 2004 at my university and asked about the role of women in the pastorate. You gave a convincing view from the Scriptures that women are not allowed in the office of pastor. Even when I asked when a husband and wife team found a church and the Husband serves as Senior Pastor and the Wife as Co-Pastor, you said without apprehension “They are well meaning people, but they are deceived.” Honestly I could just cry in my soul. “Deceived” meaning that Satan the deceiver purposely deceived these people to start a church to carry on the mission of Jesus Christ and go out into the world and save those who are lost and edify the Church? I cannot fathom this is going on between Bible-believing Christians (or so they say) about saving souls and ministering to the Body of Christ. I do believe in the complementary natures of male and female, males serving as the primary heads of their families.

Maybe I come from another perspective, being raised where women did serve in ordained ministry. As I read on more of this, I read that various evangelical denominations (who do believe male and females are complementarily created, who oppose the ordination of homosexuals, same-sex marriages and abortions) for over a century have had women serve in ordained ministry.

What is the divine judgment of this: Will these “deceived” people inherit the kingdom of God or go to hell? Only “complementarians” will be saved? What? I don’t get it! Clear this up for me because souls depend on it!!

I am so sorry that my comments have caused you such grief. Had

I know your question came from your heart and not just your head I'm sure I wouldn't have responded so cavalierly.

I would gently suggest that you are making an unwarranted jump of logic here:

“Deceived” meaning that Satan the deceiver purposely deceived these people to start a church to carry on the mission of Jesus Christ and go out into the world and save those who are lost and edify the Church?

No, starting a church and saving the lost is not the same thing as installing a woman as pastor and leader in a church. “Deceived” meaning, convincing oneself that the end justifies the means. That even though God says in His word, “I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man” (1 Tim 2:12), somehow it's OK for a woman to be in pastoral authority over men in the congregation. I believe that God calls people to start churches all the time, to carry on the mission of Jesus Christ and bring the gospel message to the lost and edify the church—but only within the limitations He has set up according to His design for men and women. I can see that God would call a couple to start a church, but there's a big difference between working as a team to plant a church with the wife supporting her husband and contributing her gifts to the church, and the wife being a co-pastor. (Unless her pastoring [shepherding] is limited to women and children.)

As I have thought about your e-mail, I was reminded of Sarah, who believed that God was going to fulfill His promise of a son, but decided to help God out by doing things HER way. . . and the world's been dealing with the complication of Ishmael ever since. She was right to believe God for a miracle son, but she was wrong to go about it in the flesh. Women pastors are right to believe that God wants to do wonderful, marvelous things to build His kingdom, but wrong to go against and

beyond His restrictions in the Word.

I don't believe women being pastors is a salvation matter. It's an obedience issue. I know these women say, "But God called me to this position," and my response can only be, "God would not call you to something He has restricted to men in the Word." They are mistaken in how they walk out their calling. I know God calls women to shepherding ministry all the time; in fact, one of my spiritual gifts is pastor-teacher. But that means I am called to minister to women (and children would be OK too but that's not where God called me), not be in any kind of teaching position or authority position over men.

Does this help explain my position more?

Blessings,

Sue

P.S. Something God showed me last year about a big reason women are not to be pastors is Eph. 3:14-15

*For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,
from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its
name*

A much better translation of "family" is "the lineage descending from a common father" or "fatherhood." (The Greek word is *patria*, which is closely related to the word *pater* [father].) Male leadership and headship is an earthly manifestation of our heavenly Father's role of leader, protector, and provider toward all of us, and women pastors cannot reflect the fatherhood aspect of God. This is a minor, but nevertheless important, supporting reason for God's restriction on women from having positions of leadership over men. It's backwards.

Dear Sue,

I thank you for responding to the letter. It seems that “women CANNOT hold authority over men” sounds like a Universal Truth about women, therefore a bit contradictory. Why can women hold positions of civil authority and professional authority over men but not in the church. Doesn't the “order of creation” come to play in every facet of life on this side of glory? Women SHOULD not hold positions of authority over men in any shape form, or fashion if this is a UNIVERSAL TRUTH. For instance, a woman is president of a Fortune 500 company and “exercises authority” over five thousand men in her company. Why is that God, who in your position restricts pastoral authority to men, give Deborah, Huldah, Miriam, spiritual authority as prophetess. Yes, they were not in the priesthood which was restricted to men. But they were not called to be priests, but prophets. The old priesthood was done away with when Christ went to a cross. And how is that the gift of PASTOR is separated from the office of PASTOR? God's Word is spirit and life (Jn 6:63). What difference is the sermon if it comes out of the mouth of a man or a woman if it is thus saith the Lord, not Rev. Billy or Rev. Joan? God's Words have no gender distinction. Please explain.

Why can women hold positions of civil authority and professional authority over men but not in the church.

Civil authority and professional authority are of the world; ecclesiastical authority is of the church. Two different realms.

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I would respectfully suggest that things work better if women

do not hold positions of authority over men, even in the world.

Why is that God, who in your position restricts pastoral authority to men, give Deborah, Huldah, Miriam, spiritual authority as prophetess.

To be a prophetess is to offer the words of God to His people, but there is no authority inherent in the position. There are many places for women to serve in the body of Christ, and prophetess was/is one of them. As webservant for Probe Ministries, I send out e-mails informing people of new files on our website, offering the words of Probe to people in effect, but I have no authority over anyone either.

Yes, they were not in the priesthood which was restricted to men. But they were not called to be priests, but prophets. The old priesthood was done away with when Christ went to a cross. And how is that the gift of PASTOR is separated from the office of PASTOR?

Because all of God's people need to be shepherded. Women are excellent at shepherding other women and children (a VERY powerful position of service!!) and we are called to do exactly that in Titus 2. There is a distinction between the gift of shepherding and the office of shepherding because God's way is to put men in positions of spiritual authority, so only men should have the office of shepherding.

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God's Word DOES have a gender distinction when it comes to how things work in the church. We can't get around "I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man." We

can't get around the requirements for elder as being HUSBAND of one wife, which is a very definite gender distinction. We can't get around the fact that Jesus chose 12 men as His apostles and leaders of His church, even though there were women who traveled with them and ministered to them in a service capacity.

There is also a difference between a person standing up reading scripture, which I would argue is open to both genders in a worship service, and a person standing up preaching a sermon, which is far more than simply reading scripture ("Thus saith the Lord.") A preacher is making statements about God and about the meaning of His word from a position of authority. God says only men belong in that position.

I understand the sweetness and compassion of your heart that wants women to have as much spiritual power and access to people as possible, and bless you for it, but what do you do with the Biblical restrictions of women in positions of spiritual authority? How do you deal with 1 Tim. 2:12-3:7?

Dear Sue,

God bless you for your wisdom and conviction!! I totally admire that!! I guess there will be these FIERY (hopefully loving and prayerful) discussions within the Body of Christ til our Master comes back for His children. And in that day He will not come back for complementarians or egalitarians, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, or Pentecostal-Charismatics. He's coming back for us! And joyfully all of his children will be on one accord. Because in its totality, ministry of any form is not about our self-promotion, or egos. It's about Him. And the fact that we can agree to disagree on the hermeneutics of the Scriptures without bashing each other because we want to serve our God in our total capacities (however we may view them!) is really evident that we do care for our brothers and sisters in Christ, and how we don't want to marginalize them because some in Church History have abused

their authority and oppressed, repressed, and suppressed the voices of God's daughters for their own gain. And let just say that, you may not hold an OFFICE Mrs. Bohlin, you surely have a PASTOR's heart (for women anyway)!!!

May God Richly Bless You and Yours,

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See Also:

- [Feminism](#)

Probe Answers Our E-Mail:

- ["Should Women Be Pastors?"](#)
- ["I Have Some Questions About Women in the Church"](#)
- ["Your Position Against Women Pastors Is Outdated"](#)

Feminism: A Christian Perspective

Sue Bohlin provides a Christian view on feminism. How does this prevalent view of women measure up from a biblical perspective?

This article is also available in [Spanish](#).



The worldview of feminism has permeated just about every aspect of American life, education and culture. We see it in the way men are portrayed as lovable but stupid buffoons on TV

sitcoms. We see it in the way boys are punished and marginalized in school for not being enough like girls. We see it in politically correct speech that attempts to change the way people think by harassing them for their choice of words.

The anger and frustration that drove feminism's history is legitimate; women have been devalued and dishonored ever since the fall of man. Very real, harmful inequities needed to be addressed, and it's important to honor some of the success of feminist activists. But at the same time, we need to examine and expose the worldview that fuels much of feminist thought.

Modern-day feminism got its major start when Betty Friedan wrote her landmark book *The Feminine Mystique*, in which she coined the phrase "The Housewife Blahs" to describe millions of unfulfilled women. There are many reasons that women can feel unfulfilled and dishonored, but from a Christian perspective I would suggest that this is what life feels like when we are disconnected from God and disconnected from living out *His* purpose for our lives. As Augustine said, "We are restless, O God, until we find our rest in Thee."

Betty Friedan looked at unhappy, unfulfilled women and diagnosed the problem as *patriarchy*, which means a male-dominated society. If women are unhappy, the reason is that men are in charge.

The early feminists decided that women are oppressed because bearing and raising children is a severe limitation and liability. What makes women *different* from men equals *weakness*. The next step, then, was to overcome that difference so that women could be just like men. The invention of the birth control pill helped fuel that illusion.

Out of the consciousness-raising groups in the '70s came a shift in the view of women's differences. Instead of seeing those differences as weakness, they now saw those differences as a source of pride and confidence. It was now a good thing

to be a woman.

The next step in feminist thought was that women were not just *equal* to men, they were *better* than men. This spawned famous quotes like Gloria Steinem's comment that "A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle."[\[1\]](#) Male-bashing became the sport of the '90s.

Feminism says, "The problem is patriarchy—male dominated society." The problem is actually the sin of people within a God-ordained hierarchy. In a fallen world, there are going to be problems between men and women, and especially abuses of power. We must not confuse the abuses of the structure with the structure itself.[\[2\]](#)

Feminism and the Church

Feminism has so permeated our culture that we should not be surprised that it has impacted the church as well. Religious feminists uncovered the "Church Women Blahs." People became aware that for the most part, women were relegated to service positions like making coffee and rocking babies. If a woman had gifts in teaching, shepherding, administration or evangelism, she was out of luck.

The *Magna Carta* for Christian feminists is Galatians 3:28: "In Christ there is no male or female." However, the context of this verse is not about equal rights, but that all believers have the same position of humility at the foot of the Cross. The issue is not capability, but God-ordained positions within a God-ordained authority structure of male leadership. Other biblical passages that go into detail about gender-dependent roles show that Galatians 3:28 cannot mean the obliteration of those roles.

There are two main areas where religious feminists seek to change gender roles: the role of women in the church, and the role of women in marriage. The discussion has produced two

camps: egalitarians and complementarians.

Egalitarians are the feminist camp, with an emphasis on equality of *roles*, not just *value*. They believe that hierarchy produces inequality, and that different means unequal. The solution, therefore, is to get rid of the differences between men's and women's roles. Women should be ordained, allowed to occupy the office of pastor and elder, and exercise authority over others in the church. Instead of differences in the roles of husband and wife, both spouses are called to mutual submission.

Egalitarians are reacting against a very real problem in the church. But the problem of authoritarian men, and women relegated to minor serving positions, is due to an abuse and distortion of the hierarchy God designed. Egalitarians reject the male authority structure along with the abuse of that structure.

Complementarians believe that God has ordained a hierarchy of authority in the church and within the family that reflects the hierarchy of authority within the Trinity. And just as there is equality in the Trinity, there is equality in the church and in marriage because we are all made in the image of God. Women are just as gifted as men, but there are biblical restrictions on the exercise of some of those gifts, such as not teaching men from a position of authority, and not occupying the office of pastor or elder. In marriage, wives are called to submit to their husbands. Mutual submission in marriage is no more appropriate than submission of parents to children.

Christian feminists did not evaluate whether the structures or hierarchies of leadership were there because God designed them that way. They just demanded wholesale change. But some things are worth keeping!

Feminism on Campus

As with the family and the church, feminism has had an impact on our college campuses. Abraham Lincoln once warned, "The philosophy of the school room in one generation will become the philosophy of government in the next." What happens on college campuses eventually affects the rest of the culture, and nowhere is feminism's pervasiveness more evident than in our colleges.

A new discipline of Women's Studies has arisen in many universities. These courses usually stress women's literature, treating with contempt anything written by "dead white European males." They often incorporate women's religions in the curricula, especially the Goddess worship of Wicca on campus. The main tenet of this pagan religion is that the worshipper is in harmony with Mother Earth and with all life. They worship the Goddess, which is described as "the immanent life force, . . . Mother Nature, the Earth, the Cosmos, the interconnectedness of all life."[\[3\]](#) Many witches (followers of Wicca, not Satanists) and pagans are involved in women's studies programs because, as one Wiccan Web site put it, "Many feminists have turned to Wicca and the role of priestess for healing and strength after the patriarchal oppression and lack of voice for women in the major world religions."[\[4\]](#)

Christianity is often portrayed on college campuses, and especially within Women's Studies, as an abusive religion. There are several reasons. First, because Christianity is hierarchical, teaching differentiation of roles and that some are to submit to and follow others. Second, their skewed view of the Bible is that Christianity teaches that women are inferior to men. Third, Christ was male, so he is insufficient as a role model for women and can't possibly understand what it means to be a woman. And fourth, since the language of the Bible is male-oriented and patriarchal (both of which are evil), it must be dismissed or changed.

Feminism impacts dating relationships on campus. Heterosexual dating is often colored by an attempt to persuade women that all men are potential rapists and cannot be trusted. Even a remark meant to compliment a woman is taken as sexist and unacceptable. One woman, wearing a short skirt on campus, heard someone whistle appreciatively. She strode into the women's study center complaining, "I've just been raped!"

Angry feminists convey a hatred and fear of men as part of the feminist ideology. When it comes to dating, for a number of feminists, lesbianism is considered the only appropriate option. If men are brutes and idiots, why would anyone want to have an intimate relationship with one? In fact, there's a new acronym on campus, GUG: "Gay until graduation." But the fact is, most women really like men; that's always been a problem for feminists. Let's consider more problems that result from feminism.

The Problematic Legacy of Feminism

Feminists started from a reasonable point in recognizing a most unhappy aspect of life in a fallen world: women tend to be dishonored, disrespected, and devalued by many men. This is as true in religious systems as it is in society and political systems. Feminists started out trying to rectify this problem first by trying to prove that women were as good as men. Then they decided that women were better than men. They ended up trying to erase the lines of distinction between men and women altogether. This has resulted in tremendous confusion about what it means to be a woman, as well as what it means to be a man. And naturally, it has produced a lot of confusion in relationships as well. This confusion ranges from men who are afraid to open doors for women for fear of receiving a rude tongue-lashing, to women who are baffled in the workplace because the men they compete against at work won't ask them out on a date.

Radical feminist thought despised much of what it means to be

a woman—to be receptive and responsive and relational, to treasure marriage and family. Only masculine traits and behaviors and jobs were deemed valuable. Nonetheless, many young women are confused by the messages they are getting from the culture: that an education and a job are the only worthwhile pursuits, and the social capital of marriage and family is no longer valued. However, these same women feel guilty and confused for finding themselves still longing for marriage and family when they're supposed to be content without them. One college student said, "I've taken all the women's studies courses—I know that marriage and motherhood are traps—but I still want to do both."[\[5\]](#)

The legacy of feminism is the refusal of the God-given role of men to be initiator, protector and provider. And the God-given role of women to be responder, nurturer and helper is equally disdained. The consequence of this rebellion is relational confusion, especially in the home. Dads aren't communicating to their sons why it's a blessing to be male, because frankly, they're not sure that it is. The message of feminism is that being male is a joke or a curse. Moms aren't teaching their daughters the basic skill sets that homemakers need because they're too busy at their jobs and besides, haven't we been taught that being a homemaker is demeaning? As a mentoring Mom to mothers of preschoolers, I see how many young women are totally clueless about how to be a wife and mother because those essential skills just weren't considered important by their mothers. Radical feminism hates family and families, and we all suffer as a result.

Feminism says, "The problem is patriarchy—male dominated society." The problem is actually the sin of people within a God-ordained hierarchy. The heart of feminism is a rebellion against the abuses of this God-ordained hierarchy, but it's also a rebellion against God's plan itself. This is a perfect example of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Feminists believe they have the right to reinvent reality and to change

the rules to suit them. This rebellious belief system has had some disastrous effects on our culture and society.

For example, one of feminism's biggest achievements was the legalization of abortion. *Keeping* it legal is one of feminism's biggest goals: see, if women are to be truly free, then they must be free to decide whether or not to carry a pregnancy to term. A woman's ability to conceive, give birth, and nurture babies is seen as weakness and vulnerability, because women can be forced to be impregnated and to bear unwanted babies. Removing the consequence of sexual activity, and getting rid of unwanted pregnancy to cancel out a woman's so-called "weakness," is important to many feminists. So, since 1973, there have been over 40 million abortions in the U.S.{6}. But that only tells part of the story; "while some women report relatively little trauma following abortion, for many, the experience is devastating, causing severe and long-lasting emotional, psychological and spiritual trauma." {7} I have the privilege of helping post-abortal women grieve the loss of their babies and receive God's forgiveness for their sin. They know that feminism's insistence that abortion is every woman's right is a lie.

Another impact of feminism is seen in the feminization of American schools. Feminism's disrespect for men and boys has shaped schools and educational policy around values and methods that favor girls over boys. Competition, a natural state of being for many boys, is considered harmful and evil, to be replaced with girl-friendly cooperative, relational activities. "Schools are denying the very behavior that makes little boys boys. In Southern California, a mother was stunned to find out that her son was disciplined for running and jumping over a bench at recess." {8} My colleague Don Closson wrote, "Gender crusaders believe that if they can influence little boys early enough, they can make them more like little girls." {9}

To despise the glory of masculinity is to reject the very

image of God. To despise the treasure of femininity is to reject what the Bible calls the glory of man.^{10} That's the problem with feminism: it is a rejection of what God has called good. It has gone too far in addressing the inequities of living in a fallen world. It's a rebellion against God's right to be God and our responsibility to submit joyfully to Him.

Notes

1. Actually, I have discovered, it wasn't original with Ms. Steinem. She had this to say in a letter she wrote to *Time* magazine in autumn 2000: "In your note on my new and happy marital partnership with David Bale, you credit me with the witticism 'A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle.' In fact, Irina Dunn, a distinguished Australian educator, journalist and politician, coined the phrase back in 1970 when she was a student at the University of Sydney." Irina Dunn has confirmed this story, in an e-mail of January 28, 2002: "Yes, indeed, I am the one Gloria referred to. I was paraphrasing from a phrase I read in a philosophical text I was reading for my Honours year in English Literature and Language in 1970. It was "A man needs God like a fish needs a bicycle." My inspiration arose from being involved in the nascent women's movement at the time, and from being a bit of a smart-arse. I scribbled the phrase on the backs of two toilet doors, would you believe, one at Sydney University where I was a student, and the other at Soren's Wine Bar at Woolloomooloo, a seedy suburb in south Sydney. The doors, I have to add, were already favoured graffiti sites."

www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/414150.html

2. I am indebted to the wisdom and insight of Mary Kassian as expressed in her excellent book *The Feminist Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1992).

3. www.cog.org/wicca/about.html

4. Ibid.

5. Quoted by Barbara DeFoe Whitehead, *Mars Hill Audio Journal*

No. 61, Mar./Apr. 2003.

6. www.nrlc.org/abortion/aboramt.html

7. www.hopeafterabortion.com/aftermath/

8. William Pollack, *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998),

94. The entire quote is from Don Closson, "[The Feminization of American Schools](#)".

9. Ibid.

10. 1 Cor. 11:7

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