

5 Reasons Rick Warren and Saddleback Church are Challenging the SBC

Drawing a line in the sand and preparing to utilize every available asset and resource at their disposal, author and founding pastor of Saddleback Church, Rick Warren, along with the church, are objecting to their expulsion from the Southern Baptist Convention.

Warren has now shared publicly that he feels he must speak up against what he and the church believes is an injustice for their appointment of female pastors.

The plan so far is for them to tactically release a series of videos that explains in-depth why Saddleback Church should remain a member of the SBC.

Before that can happen, however, Warren will personally answer the question on why they are so strongly objecting to the SBC Executive Committee's decision to remove Saddleback from "friendly cooperation" because of their stance on female pastors.

As reported by Baptist News Global, "Saddleback appears to have upped the ante on the debate last Sunday by naming a woman as campus pastor of its Lake Forest congregation. In Saddleback's multi-campus structure, the campus pastor is not the primary preaching pastor but coordinates care for a particular campus congregation."

If there is one thing that Saddleback has made clear, it is that they are ordaining women into positions of pastoral leadership while showing no signs of altering that course.

"We're not challenging the Executive Committee ruling for

Saddleback's benefit," Warren said. "No one wants to stay where they aren't wanted. Instead, we are challenging the ... ruling for five reasons that would benefit others we care about."

Here are the five reasons Warren and Saddleback are challenging the SBC's ruling:

- "We're challenging the ruling on behalf of millions of SBC women whose God-given spiritual gifts and leadership skills are being wasted instead of empowered for the Great Commission. We cannot finish the task Jesus gave us with 50% of the church forced to sit on the bench. Great Commission Baptists believe Jesus authorized every woman to go, to make disciples, to baptize and to teach—just as He authorized every man."
- "We're challenging the ruling on behalf of over 300 concerned pastors who have written to me and have female pastors serving on their staffs. They are fearful and worried their congregations will also be disfellowshipped when the new inquisition discovers them. (I've seen one list with over 1,200 names of Baptist women in just Texas churches.)"
- "We're challenging the ruling on behalf of our IMB missionaries. Today our missionary force has almost 1,500 fewer missionaries than we had 23 years ago when the revised Baptist Faith and Message was approved in 2000. With a renewed emphasis on the restriction of women, we'll lose more godly female church planters and couples serving as pastoral teams in the mission field."
- "We believe a decision this critical to the SBC's identity and future should be decided by the messengers, not a committee. The messengers must decide if they want the Executive Committee to act like a Catholic magisterium."
- "Our goal is to spark the thinking of messengers regarding the direction of the SBC. There are many

complex issues causing the continued decline of our denomination. These are heartbreaking. So, regardless of the chances for success, if you really love something, you fight for it. But sometimes it takes years for people to consider an event before change happens. Wilberforce lost every vote for 17 years before the slave trade was eventually abolished. It took 10 years after the lynching of Emmett Till in 1955 for the Civil Rights movement of the '60s to coalesce. Note my prediction: The next generation of Southern Baptists will remove the restriction on women one day, because truth eventually triumphs over tradition."

✖ With the subject of women speaking in the role of pastor a sensitive subject within the SBC, and many other denominations across the world, the SBC Executive Committee has stood its ground rigidly when not allowing women to hold the title of pastor.

"While there are few—if any—churches left in the SBC with women serving as senior pastors, the focus now has turned to women serving in other staff roles that include the word 'pastor.' Most ordained women or women seeking ordination left the SBC two decades ago and found homes with the Alliance of Baptists, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and other denominations," according to Baptist News Global.

As Charisma News previously reported, Warren came to a place of personal repentance when he changed his view on female pastors citing the Great Commission as a motivating factor:

"There are four verbs in the Great Commission: 'go,' 'make disciples,' 'baptize' and 'teach'," Warren says. "Women are to go. Women are to make disciples. Women are to baptize and woman are to teach, not just men. This is one of the reasons why Saddleback Church has baptized more people than any church in American history—57,000 baptisms in 43 years. Anybody can baptize anybody that they led to Christ.

“The second thing that changed my mind was the day of Pentecost,” Warren said. “A few things happened that day. We know women were in the Upper Room. We know women were filled with the Holy Spirit. We know that women were preaching in languages other people couldn’t understand.”

Warren says that the expulsion will be challenged at the next annual meeting of the SBC. It is the hope of many that, while differences in doctrine have occurred amongst organizations throughout church history, this season between Saddleback Church and the SBC may come to an amicable end and that when all is said and done, God will be glorified amid the disagreement. {eoa}

James Lasher *is Staff Writer for Charisma Media.*