

Beth Moore Confronts Brothers in Christ Over Evangelical Misogyny

Bible teacher and speaker Beth Moore confronted her brothers in Christ in an open letter about evangelical misogyny.

“This is where I cry foul and not for my own sake. Most of my life is behind me. I do so for sake of my gender, for the sake of our sisters in Christ and for the sake of other female leaders who will be faced with similar challenges,” the head of Living Proof Ministries writes. “I do so for the sake of my brothers because Christlikeness is at stake and many of you are in positions to foster Christlikeness in your sons and in the men under your influence. The dignity with which Christ treated women in the Gospels is fiercely beautiful, and it was not conditional upon their understanding their place.”

Moore released the letter this week. In it, she cites several personal examples of how men have treated her—even well-known theologians.

Moore is incredibly open about the abuse she’s suffered, and tweets prolifically about the #churchtoo movement that acknowledges sexual abuse and harassment within the church.

She and Kay Warren of Saddleback Church together addressed the atrocities in a sermon last year.

Moore writes that she didn’t report the harassment, abuse and misogyny for years because she was afraid acknowledging it would mean she’d be “Fried like a chicken.”

No more. She’s asking Christian men to step up and reflect the light of Christ.

Moore writes:

Many women have experienced horrific abuses within the power structures of our Christian world. Being any part of shaping misogynistic attitudes, whether or not they result in criminal behaviors, is sinful and harmful and produces terrible fruit. It also paints us continually as weak-willed women and seductresses. I think I can speak for many of us when I say we are neither interested in reducing or seducing our brothers.

The irony is that many of the men who will give consideration to my concerns do not possess a whit of the misogyny coming under the spotlight. For all the times you've spoken up on our behalf and for the compassion you've shown in response to "Me too," please know you have won our love and gratitude and respect.

John Bisagno, my pastor for almost 30 years, regularly said these words: "I have most often seen that, when the people of God are presented with the facts, they do the right thing." I was raised in ministry under his optimism and, despite many challenges, have not yet recovered from it. For this reason I write this letter with hope.

I'm asking for your increased awareness of some of the skewed attitudes many of your sisters encounter. Many churches quick to teach submission are often slow to point out that women were also among the followers of Christ (Luke 8), that the first recorded word out of His resurrected mouth was "woman" (John 20:15) and that same woman was the first evangelist. Many churches wholly devoted to teaching the household codes are slow to also point out the numerous women with whom the apostle Paul served and for whom he possessed obvious esteem. We are fully capable of grappling with the tension the two spectrums create and we must if we're truly devoted to the whole counsel of God's Word.

Finally, I'm asking that you would simply have no tolerance for misogyny and dismissiveness toward women in your spheres

of influence. I'm asking for your deliberate and clearly conveyed influence toward the imitation of Christ in His attitude and actions toward women. I'm also asking for forgiveness both from my sisters and my brothers. My acquiescence and silence made me complicit in perpetuating an atmosphere in which a damaging relational dynamic has flourished. I want to be a good sister to both genders.

The letter has gone viral, garnering both praise and criticism.

Thabiti Anyabwile, pastor of the Anacostia River Church, penned an apology letter to Moore and other women on *The Gospel Coalition*.

Over the last 18 months, my heart has grown even sicker with grief as I've watched you valiantly stand with African-Americans in our complaints and concern about treatment in the world and sometimes in the church. I've been astounded at how the Lord has used you and how much you have courageously risked to stand with us and to join the conversation. You did it all with no promise of an "up side" or reward but because convinced by Scripture you thought it was right. As we've interacted online, you've been used of the Lord to heal a good number of things in my heart that you're not even aware of. I'm still set free by an interaction between you and Ray Ortlund, an interaction that's allowed me to return to blogging and lean into some things I was pretty hopeless about. For that, you've earned my deepest respect and admiration and profound gratitude. You have been far kinder to me than I deserve. Your kindness has heaped coals on this poor sinner's head.

So, I want very much to ask your forgiveness.

I want to admit my sin publicly, because my sins have affected a wider public than I know. I don't want to pass under the radar hoping others might afford me the benefit of

the doubt or because they might appreciate something else about me might put me in the category of men you so graciously say you're not addressing.

I want to accept responsibility for my action and inaction without qualification. There are no "if," "and," or "but" statements to justify or excuse my wrong. I only wish I could describe my wrongs more fully and forcefully, because it is displeasing before the Lord. I do not wish to be the Pharisee thanking God that I am not like some brothers I imagine to be worse than I am. There's no relativizing my sin; I accept responsibility for my wrong here.

I want to acknowledge the hurt I've caused. I cannot imagine what it's like to share an elevator or a car with men who would not even acknowledge you. I didn't do that to you, but I've certainly contributed to that kind of treatment by failing to advocate for my sisters and to challenge such things among men. I am grieved that I have damaged your reputation among others.

If this means we cannot have a relationship, I accept the consequences. I will have been the one who broke trust and failed to love and protect my sisters and you specifically.

I do now commit to being a more outspoken champion for my sisters and for you personally. Not that you need me to be but because it is right. I hope, with God's help, to grow in sanctification, especially with regards to any sexism, misogyny, chauvinism and the like that has used biblical teaching as a cover for its growth.

Dear Beth, and all my sisters, I hope you will forgive me.

Social media users responded to both letters in droves. Here are a few examples:

Thank you Beth. This Moore house loves you and are grateful

for you.

– Russell Moore (@drmoore) May 3, 2018

First, you are absolutely forgiven, there's likely many of us who have done similarly. You are a faithful woman with great integrity, grace, and strength. I thank God often that he has given you such wisdom and willingness for such a time as this.

– Trillia Newbell (@trillianewbell) May 3, 2018

This is what it means to be the church.

Thank you, @ThabitiAnyabwil.

– Karen Swallow Prior (@KSPrior) May 3, 2018

That story about the theologian is sickening. Unfortunately it's also all-too believable. I'm sorry for you and thankful for your perseverance in serving the church in spite of this nonsense.

– Mike Cospers (@MikeCospers) May 3, 2018

Your letter brought me to tears. As a pastor of an SBC church I am convicted, and grieved.

– Timothy Stephens (@tsstephens) May 3, 2018

Clear, Gracious, Needed. Thank you and I will endeavor to do so.

– Chris Seidman (@chrissidman) May 3, 2018

I've started and deleted several attempts at a thoughtful response but I keep coming back to "omg men are THE WORST," and I'm sorry. Thank you for sharing what have to remain painful memories.

– John B. Graeber (@jbgraeber) May 3, 2018

This is so courageous. Sending you so much love and gratitude.

– Kate Bowler (@KatecBowler) May 3, 2018

You are a rock sister and it's my and @laurenychandler's pleasure to call you friend. You are prayed for often and rejoiced over frequently in our home.

– Matt Chandler (@MattChandler74) May 3, 2018