

How Institutionalism Quenches Holy Spirit's Gifts

The Southern Baptist Convention recently expelled Saddleback Church in southern California because of a woman on their staff who carries title of "teaching pastor." According to Baptist Press, Saddleback was declared to "not be in friendly cooperation with the necessary credentials under the Southern Baptist Convention."

This is an example of how "institutionalism" quenches the gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit. "Institutionalism" is defined as "an emphasis on organization at the expense of other factors." In the church, institutionalism always comes at the expense of the life of the Holy Spirit being freely expressed through all members of the body of Christ. An institutionalized church becomes captive to its own rules, regulations and order.

In her book, "In the Spirit We're Equal 2nd Edition," Dr. Susan Hyatt documents how every genuine revival in church history has led to the elevation of women. This happens because in revival the church tends to give more emphasis to the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit than to organizational and institutional concerns.

John Wesley, for example, began commissioning uneducated men and women to preach the gospel in the midst of the great Methodist revival. When asked why he changed his mind about women preachers, he replied, "Because God owns them in the conversion of sinners and who am I to withstand God" (Hyatt, "In the Spirit We're Equal 2nd Edition," 253).

I appreciate the Southern Baptist Convention's commitment to the authority of Scripture. However, I pray that they will open themselves to the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit in

women as well as men and consider the following biblical truths.

Women Included in the Leadership Gifts of Ephesians 4:11

The English noun “pastor” is found only once in our English Bibles and that is in Ephesians 4:11 where Paul includes it in that list of leadership gifts, along with the apostle, prophet, evangelist, and teacher. That women are included is made clear by how Paul introduces this list of ministry or ascension gifts.

In Ephesians 4:8, Paul speaks of Christ’s ascension and says, When He ascended on high He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men (NKJV). The word “men” in this passage is translated from the Greek word *anthropoi*, which is gender-inclusive and literally means “people.” This is why the NIV, NLT and NRSV have all translated the word as “people.”

If Paul had wanted to confine these gifts to males only, he could have done so by using the gender-specific Greek word for man, which is *aner*. Instead, he used *anthropoi*, which left open the possibility of women also functioning in these leadership gifts, including that of pastor.

1 Timothy 2:11-12 Does Not Restrict Women from Pastoring

Some will surely protest and point to 1 Timothy 2:11-12 where Paul says he does not allow a woman to teach or have authority over a man. However, a close examination of this passage makes clear that Paul is addressing a particular situation with Timothy in Ephesus where he is dealing with false teachings in that city.

This is indicated by Paul’s use of the word *authentein*, which is translated “authority” in this passage. It is of utmost importance to note that this is not the normal Greek word for “authority.” In fact, *authentein* is found only here in the entire New Testament. Neither Paul nor any other writer ever

uses it, except for Paul's use of it in this one passage.

The normal New Testament word for "authority" is *exousia* and it is used by Paul and other New Testament writers over 100 times. Nowhere are women told they cannot exercise *exousia*.

If Paul were here addressing the normal exercise of "authority" in the church, he would have used *exousia*. His use of *authentēin* indicates that he is addressing a unique and local situation in Ephesus and is not giving instructions for all women and churches everywhere.

For a full discussion on the meaning of *authentēin*, see "In the Spirit We're Equal 2nd Edition," pages 417-19.

Concluding Thought from the Early Pentecostal Revival

At the beginning of the 20th century, the great Pentecostal Revival exploded in growth all over the world. In a conversation many years ago with Dr. Harvey Cox, who served as Professor of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School, he commented that a key to this explosive growth was what he called the "quasi-chaotic" character of the movement.

He used that expression in a positive sense to emphasize that the movement was not hampered and weighed down with bureaucratic, organizational regulations and structures. The movement relied primarily on the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit for its life, mission, and direction. In this milieu, women flourished as evangelists, teachers, church planters and pastors.

The early Pentecostals were also a people committed to biblical authority and they sought a healthy balance between Word and Spirit. In the January 1908 edition of the *Apostolic Faith*, the official publication of the Azusa Street Revival, the leaders gave a biblical basis for their acceptance of women pastors and leaders. They wrote:

✖ “Before Pentecost, the woman could only go into the ‘court of the women’ and not into the inner court. But when our Lord poured out Pentecost, He brought all those faithful women with the other disciples into the upper room and God baptized them all in the same room and made no difference. All the women received the anointed oil of the Holy Ghost and were able to preach the same as men. They both were co-workers in Eden and both fell into sin; so they both have to come together and work in the gospel.”

Let’s pray that the Southern Baptist Convention will experience genuine Holy Spirit revival and that their leaders will realize that in this new and better covenant God is calling women as well as men to serve Him in every area of ministry and leadership in the church. {eo}

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Dr. Eddie Hyatt is an author, historian, and ordained minister. This article is derived primarily from *In the Spirit We’re Equal 2nd Edition* by his wife Dr. Susan Hyatt, and is available from Amazon and their websites at [at](#) and [. For more information on institutionalism and how it has affected the Church throughout history, see Eddie’s book, 2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity, published by Charisma House, and the companion Study Guide, Revival History, available from Amazon.](#)