

Paige Patterson, SBC Leader Accused of Supporting Domestic Abuse, Issues 'An Apology to God's Children'

Southern Baptist Leader Paige Patterson issued an apology after sermon comments about submission and domestic abuse went viral.

"Pastoral ministry that occurred 54 years ago, repeated as an illustration in sermons on more than one occasion, as well as another sermon illustration used to try to explain a Hebrew word (Heb. *banah* 'build or construct,' Gen. 2:22) have obviously been hurtful to women in several possible ways. I wish to apologize to every woman who has been wounded by anything I have said that was inappropriate or that lacked clarity. We live in a world of hurt and sorrow, and the last thing that I need to do is add to anyone's heartache. Please forgive the failure to be as thoughtful and careful in my extemporaneous expression as I should have been," Patterson writes in a letter posted on the website for Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he is president.

He continued: "I would also like to reiterate the simple truth that I utterly reject any form of abuse in demeaning or threatening talk, in physical blows or in forced sexual acts. There is no excuse for anyone to use intemperate language or to attempt to injure another person. The Spirit of Christ is one of comfort, kindness, encouragement, truth and grace; and that is what I desire my voice always to be.

"To all people I offer my apology, but especially to women, to the family of Southern Baptists, my friends and the churches. I sincerely pray that somehow this apology will show my heart

and may strengthen you in the love and graciousness of Christ.”

Patterson came under fire in recent weeks after a religion reporter discovered an 18-year-old audio clip in which Patterson advises abused women to pray for their husbands.

“Do what you can at home to be submissive in every way you can and to elevate him,” Patterson said.

Patterson said that divorce is “always wrong counsel” and that he had never counseled anyone to get one. He said there are different levels of abuse and that if serious enough, he might suggest a temporary separation.

The clip outraged the denomination, and more than 2000 Southern Baptist women signed a letter addressed to the SWBTS trustees about Patterson’s comments.

The letter reads, in part:

The world is watching us all, brothers. They wonder how we could possibly be part of a denomination that counts Dr. Patterson as a leader. They wonder if all Southern Baptist men believe that the biblical view of a sixteen-year-old girl is that she is “built” and “fine” –an object to be viewed sexually. They wonder if all Southern Baptist pastors believe it is acceptable to counsel an abused woman in the way that Dr. Patterson has done in the past. They wonder if the Jesus of the Bible is like such men. We declare that Jesus is nothing like this and that our first duty as Southern Baptists is to present a true picture of Jesus to the world.

We cannot defend or support Dr. Patterson’s past remarks. No one should. The fact that he has not fully repudiated his earlier counsel or apologized for his inappropriate words indicates that he continues to maintain positions that are at odds with Southern Baptists and, more importantly, the Bible’s elevated view of womanhood. The Southern Baptist

Convention cannot allow the biblical view of leadership to be misused in such a way that a leader with an unbiblical view of authority, womanhood, and sexuality be allowed to continue in leadership.

This is a somber time. This is an important time. We are praying for you to have wisdom, discernment, and courage.

Patterson did not specifically acknowledge the letter in his apology.