

SBC Leader Removed as Allegations Surface He Covered Up Campus Rape

Paige Patterson was removed as president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary as allegations surfaced he covered up a campus rape.

“After much prayer and a more than 13-hour discussion regarding challenges facing the Institution, including those of enrollment, financial, leadership and institutional identity, the Board determined to move in the direction of new leadership for the benefit of the future mission of the Seminary,” according to a statement posted to the SWBTS website.

“The board passed a motion through a majority vote to appoint Dr. Patterson as President Emeritus with compensation, effective immediately, which he accepted. In addition, the board passed a motion to affirm the trustees’ September 2017 offer for Dr. and Mrs. Patterson to live on campus as the first theologians-in-residence at the Baptist Heritage Center, scheduled to be completed in July 2018,” the statement continued.

Patterson was thrust in the spotlight earlier this year when old tapes surfaced that revealed Patterson previously appeared to condone domestic violence, telling a woman to submit to her abusive husband.

More than 2,000 Southern Baptist women signed a letter asking the seminary to remove Patterson from his position. The alleged rape cover-up may have been the final nail in Patterson’s coffin, though SWBTS did not specifically address the reports in their statement.

The Washington Post reported the campus rape which recently came to light after Patterson was thrust in the spotlight. According to the *Post*, a woman says she was raped in 2003 at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, where Patterson was then president.

"I had bottled it up," the woman, who was not identified, tells *The Post*. "My husband didn't know about it until last week. ... I told him 'I need to do something.' "

The *Post* reports:

She said she had been dating the man she alleges raped her and had allowed him into her apartment the night she said he assaulted her. The two were kissing when he forced himself on her, she said. She said she reported it the next morning to the administrator who handled student discipline. That administrator then reported the incident to Patterson, she said, and she was required to meet with Patterson and three or four male seminarians she said were proteges of Patterson's. She said she doesn't remember the specific words Patterson used but that he wanted to know every detail of the rape.

Patterson and other administrators did not report the incident to the police, and she claims that Patterson encouraged her not to, as well, she said. The *Post* confirmed that a report was never filed with the Wake Forest Police Department.

The woman said she was put on probation for two years, but she doesn't know why, saying it was perhaps because she was with another man alone in her apartment, which was against seminary policy.

"They shamed ... me, asking me question after question," said the woman, who attended the seminary until 2005 before dropping out for reasons she said were unrelated to the alleged incident. "He didn't necessarily say it was my fault,

but [the sense from him was] I let him into my home.”

The woman said she recalls Patterson telling her to forgive the man who allegedly raped her. The former roommate said the woman described the alleged assault to him shortly after it happened and later complained to him about her treatment by Patterson and seminary officials.

Southern Baptist leaders responded to the allegations and Patterson’s removal on Twitter.

Protecting abused women and children from predators is not an optional calling. Such is demanded by the lordship of Christ, the authority of Scripture, and the credibility of the gospel.

– Russell Moore (@drmoore) May 23, 2018

There are some things hard to figure out about how to follow Jesus, where we see through a glass darkly and sometimes aren’t sure what’s the right thing to do.

Protecting women and children from predators is not one of those things.

– Russell Moore (@drmoore) May 23, 2018

There can be no ambiguity about the church’s responsibility to protect the abused and be a safe place for the vulnerable. Abuse can never be tolerated, minimized, hidden, or “handled internally.”

– J.D. Greear (@jdgrear) May 23, 2018

There is no triumph here.

This hard but necessary decision is a step toward the corporate repentance and healing needed in the SBC.

It's a new chapter. Let's make it a good one, filled with faith, hope, and love.

– Karen Swallow Prior (@KSPrior) May 23, 2018

Many evangelical women have spoken up in recent weeks about the misogyny they faced at the hands of male church leaders.

Stemming from the #MeToo movement that brought down Hollywood execs for sexual harassment and abuse, the #ChurchToo movement shows that similar treatment happens in pews and pulpits as well.

In an open letter to her “Brothers in Christ,” prolific author and speaker Beth Moore described some of the discrimination she faced as a female leader in the church.

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.

Patterson sits on the board of trustees at Cedarville University, a Christian university in Ohio.

University members launched a petition calling for his removal.

They say: "Our concern is that Dr. Patterson's seat on the Cedarville University Board of Trustees is a signal to the men in the faculty and staff, alumni community, and student body that as long as you are powerful and connected you can be complicit in the abuse of women without consequence. His seat also signals to women in the faculty and staff, the alumni

community, and the student body that submission to your husband is more important than your physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual safety and security."