

Authority Myth Still Keeping Women From Ministry Despite Recent SBC Vote

Sixty-one percent of the delegates at the Southern Baptist Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana, voted for a constitutional ban on all churches that have a woman on staff who bears the title of “pastor.” But the vote fell short of the required two-thirds majority necessary for a constitutional amendment.

The amendment would not have changed the SBC’s position on female pastors but would have added teeth for enforcing it. The denomination’s position remains that put forth last year by the executive staff, which quoted Paul’s words in 1 Timothy 2:12a (NKJV), “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man.”

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Based on a superficial reading of this passage, the executive staff then said Paul “Concludes women cannot have a pastoral position, or perform the pastoral function, for that puts them in authority over men in the life of the church.”

The ‘Authority Myth’

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Based on this “authority myth,” this year’s annual meeting expelled the First Baptist Church of Alexandria, Virginia, from the SBC because of its support of female pastors. Messengers also voted against accepting the requests for

reinstatement from Saddleback Church in Southern California and Fern Creek Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, both of which were excommunicated for having female pastors.

For the SBC and all churches that ban women from leadership roles, “authority” is the central issue. The titles may change, but authority is still the issue. One megachurch allows women to be pastors but does not allow them to be on its board of elders because the elders govern the church and “women cannot function in governing authority.”

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