

Go for It, Beth

Back in the 1980s, popular preacher Anne Graham Lotz—daughter of Billy Graham—was publicly snubbed when she approached the pulpit at a Southern Baptist conference. A group of men on the front row stood up, turned their chairs around and sat with their backs to her. With their rude body language, these men were saying, in effect, “Bless God, no woman is going to teach the Bible to us!”

God has a sense of humor, doesn't He? Today, one of the most influential Christians in the United States is the Southern Baptist woman who appears on the cover of this month's Charisma. I'm not ashamed to say that I'm one of her biggest fans.

Beth Moore's books, videos and online Bible studies are bringing countless people into a new place of intimacy with God. Her weekly Bible study at Houston's First Baptist Church attracts thousands—and I don't mean just women. Yes, men are listening to Beth Moore. And so are countless charismatic and Pentecostal people who—after hearing Beth speak with refreshing vulnerability—don't seem to care what denominational label she wears.

I'm secure enough in my masculinity to recognize that God can do whatever He wants to do through women. Maybe that's because I have four daughters or perhaps because God used a woman to lead me into the baptism of the Holy Spirit when I was 18. I know the Spirit is not restrained by gender and that women can preach, pastor, evangelize and plant churches in foreign countries—and in American suburbs.

Yet in so many segments of the church today we're still arguing about what women can and can't do—even though the Bible gives us numerous examples of powerful female ministers. Priscilla, who was part of Paul's apostolic team, had such a profound impact on the man Apollos that she helped launch him into ministry (see Acts 18:24-26). Junia, who spent time in prison with Paul, was engaged in courageous apostolic work (see Rom. 16:7). Women such as Euodia and Syntyche (see Phil. 4:2-3) served in church leadership.

Despite this strong biblical basis for women in ministry, religious people still feel compelled to restrict, constrain and muzzle them. This reaction, although often well-intentioned, thrills the devil. He knows that if he can deceive us into keeping women off the front lines, his job will be that much easier.

After all, women who know how to use the weapons of the Spirit are a huge threat to the kingdom of darkness. Remember Jael? She nailed the enemy to the ground with a tent peg. Remember the "certain woman" of Judges 9:53, who threw a millstone over the wall of the city and crushed Abimelech's skull? And what about Esther, whose godly influence sent Haman to the gallows?

Lord knows we need an army of Jael's and Esthers today—women who know that crushing Satan under their feet is part of their divine destiny. Why would we try to put barriers in their way?

Beth Moore is one of our generation's female warriors, and she deserves our support. My chair is facing her pulpit. I pray that every Christian who has resisted the idea of women preachers will start cheering for them every time they hurl a millstone in the devil's direction.