

An open letter from Doug Batchelor regarding the response to his sermon, “Women’s Ordination: A Biblical Prospective”

On February 6, 2010, I presented a message to my home church in Sacramento, California, regarding the question: “Should women be ordained as pastors?” My conclusion, based on Scripture and church history, was no.

(This sermon can be viewed at <http://www.womenministrytruth.com>.)

This conclusion is in harmony with the official position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. At the 1990 General Conference session, church leadership overwhelmingly voted not to ordain women as pastors. Here is the relevant wording in the 1990 vote below.

“2. Further, in view of the widespread lack of support for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry in the world church and in view of the possible risk of disunity, dissension and division from the mission of the church, we do not approve ordination of women to the gospel ministry.”

(The full wording of the 1990 decision, plus a similar decision in 1995, can be viewed at <http://www.womenministrytruth.com>.)

Moreover, this position was recently upheld on April 7, 2010, by another overwhelming majority of our church leaders worldwide. At this meeting, division presidents emphasized that their reasons to uphold this interpretation were biblically based, not culturally based. (See <http://news.adventist.org/2010/04/womens-ordination-is.html>.)

Fallout from Supporting the Official Church Position

My sermon on women’s ordination never aired on television, so I’m surprised how widely the video was seen just from it being posted on the Amazing Facts website. Regardless, being a sensitive subject, this generated significant response on both sides of the debate.

First, I would like to thank the many church members, leadership, and pastors who took time to call or write me with their words of affirmation and support.

At the same time, I have friends whom I love and respect on both sides of this issue. For those who disagree with me, I do apologize if I said anything in an unChrist-like spirit. However, I would invite you to look past this faulty messenger and consider the essence of the message. In retrospect, I probably shouldn’t have attempted to cover this important subject in a 60-minute sermon, but rather taken an additional week or two to explore it more in depth and address the common misconceptions and to explain my position more clearly.

On an Unfair Characterization

I’m sorry to say that some have deliberately tried to portray this sermon as some kind of general opposition to women in ministry.

Of course, this is absurd. I have always preached that every male and female in the church should be involved in ministry. Indeed, Amazing Facts leads two colleges, AFCE (www.afce.org) and Weimar College (www.weimar.edu), that train women for ministry. These graduates are now scattered around the globe doing mission work, conducting evangelistic meetings, and planting churches. A woman being empowered for ministry is a separate issue from a woman being ordained as a pastor.

In fact, it seems something of an insult to godly women around the world who are actively involved in a kaleidoscope of ministries to suggest that their value to God and the church is somehow diminished or invalidated if they are not being ordained as pastors.

At the same time, I freely confess that I am not among the great theologians in our church; however, the central point of my message is in harmony with the majority of respected Adventist scholars. When it comes to the biblical distinction between the roles of men and women, I believe even a shade tree theologian can see the Bible's clear message on this subject.

Here is a small sample of scriptural principles that confirm male leadership in the church:

- From the garden of Eden, God established male leadership within the family and church (Genesis 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:13).
- While the Lord called the entire nation of Israel to be a kingdom of priests, only men were appointed to serve as priests for the sanctuary (Exodus 12:3; 29:10; 1 Peter 2:9).
- While men and women were both called as prophets, only men ever offered sacrifices (Leviticus 1:7, 8).
- Only men were anointed by God to serve as kings of Israel and Judah.
- "I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3).
- Pastors, elders, and bishops should be "husband of one wife" (Titus 1:6; 1 Timothy 3:2).
- While Jesus engaged women to share the gospel, He called only men to serve in the capacity of apostle. When Judas died, his replacement was chosen from among men (Mark 3:14; Acts 1:21).

This is just the beginning of the evidence. But to avoid being tedious here, I invite you to get to know more at this website, <http://www.womenministrytruth.com>, which has comprehensive Bible answers on the issue of women's ordination, including studies from several esteemed Adventist theologians and seminary professors.

Finally, despite the distinctions God has made regarding the roles of men and women, or how one might interpret these differences, He has called us all to act kindly with each other — as one body in Jesus (Galatians 3:28).

In Christ,



Doug Batchelor