

WINTER

VOLUME 2

ISSUE 1

MAGAZINE

SheBelieves



SHE SANG FOR ME: A STORY OF SURVIVAL & HOPE

Featuring Jewish Holocaust Survivor and Opera Singer, Dorothea Szczesniak

Gender Roles in the Church: The Southern Baptist Convention & Women Pastors

Pastor's Wife's Perspective: Conflict Resolution

Reaching the Deaf for Christ One Sign at a Time

More Than a Mystery

JANUARY 19, 2024



Hear, O Israel: The
Lord our God, the Lord
is one!

Deuteronomy 6:4 NKJV

OUR PRAYER

SheBelieves Magazine is an extension
of our ministry at SheBelieves Co.

Our prayer is for our Heavenly Father to use our magazine to edify and encourage women in every season of life, from teenage girls to great-grandmothers and every woman in between, through media inspired by God's Word. And for our Heavenly Father to be glorified as we share the gospel, encouraging all to surrender their hearts, seek the Lord, and grow closer in their walks with Jesus Christ.

Find us on 

Please like our [Page](#) on Facebook.

Please join our [Group](#) on Facebook.

OUR TEAM

SheBelieves Magazine

Volume 2 Issue 1

January 19, 2024

Editor: Summer Elizabeth Ball

Assistant Editor: Mary Beth Barrett

Volume 2 Issue 1 Contributors:

Vanessa Joy Lancellotti

Dakota Moore

Jeanine Michaels

Donna May Lyons

Klaire Smith

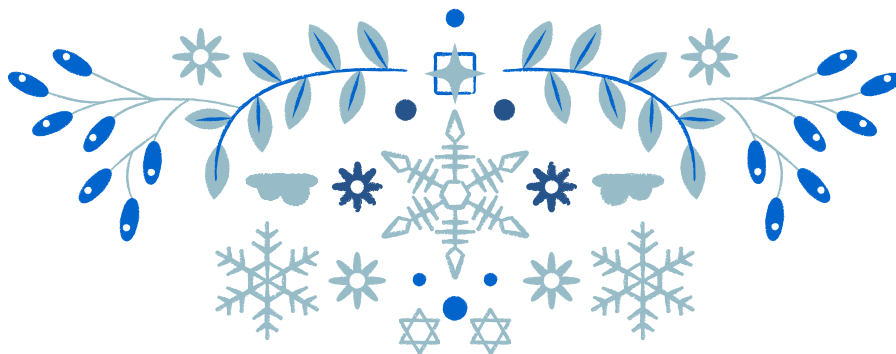


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pg 7 SHE SANG FOR ME: A STORY OF SURVIVAL & HOPE
by Vanessa Joy Lancellotti

**Pg 15 Gender Roles in the Church: The Southern Baptist Convention
& Women Pastors**
by Dakota Moore

Pg 23 Pastor's Wife's Perspective: Conflict Resolution
by Jeanine Michaels

Pg 29 Reaching the Deaf for Christ One Sign at a Time
By Donna May Lyons

Pg 35 More Than a Mystery
by Klaire Smith



Our first issue in 2024 has a Jewish theme and a features story, recognizing **International Holocaust Remembrance Day** on January 27, 2024. The issue also covers various church-related topics we believe the Lord will use to draw you to Himself and His Word.



Summer Elizabeth Ball
Editor-in-Chief

EDITOR'S NOTE

In late 2021, SheBelieves Co. was only an idea. On June 1, 2022, we established our website and a group on Facebook to begin this Christian ministry for women. In 2023, we were thrilled to publish the first two issues of SheBelieves Magazine. We are equally excited for you to experience the first of four issues in 2024.

In 2024, our magazine will be available by subscription. We hope you will join our community and subscribe to SheBelieves Magazine to support the continuation of our publication. You can subscribe now, by clicking [HERE](#).



Mary Beth Barrett
Assistant Editor

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV



SHE SANG FOR ME

A Story of Survival & Hope

Featuring Jewish Holocaust Survivor & Opera Singer, Dorothea Szczesniak



by Vanessa Joy Lancellotti

**“The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.”**

Numbers 6:24-26

Nearly every year, my family and I plan a big bonfire at my aunt’s house to celebrate birthdays and spend quality time together. After playing a game of baseball and taking a gander down the hill to feed and play with the farm animals, we all enjoy a delicious smorgasbord. As the sun begins to set, we collect as much wood as we can and build a fire. Everyone gathers around to roast marshmallows and share stories as we snuggle up in blankets to keep warm from the cool, brisk air.

During our 2020 gathering, I was delighted to personally meet Mrs. Dorothea Szczesniak, a talented opera singer and Holocaust survivor. She has been a dear family friend and neighbor of my aunt’s for years and decided to make her way across the street to join our family celebration. It was then that I learned more of her heroic journey that must be shared with the world!





Dorothea Szczesniak, 2024

In 1939, Dorothea fled Germany with her little sister, Daisy, and parents, Karl and Berta, to a hiding place in Brussels, Belgium. World War II had begun under the German socialist party led by Adolf Hitler, and it became increasingly evident that his chief aim was to annihilate the Jews. In 1940, the Nazis invaded Belgium and hunted the Jews. Anyone of Jewish descent was mandated to wear a badge with the Star of David, and Jewish children were forbidden from attending public school. Anti-Jewish riots began to erupt in the streets of surrounding territories, and Jewish families were taken captive and forced into concentration camps, where they were tortured and eventually massacred.



On March 15, 1943, the Gestapo banged down the door of Dorothea's hiding place and ordered her parents to stand outside on their doorstep while they proceeded to interrogate her and Daisy. "I was soon to be 14 years old, and at that point, I knew what was going on," said Dorothea. "I told my sister, 'Be quiet. Don't say anything!'"



Dorothea holding up an photo of herself (right) with her younger sister, Daisy (left), and mother, Berta (center)

She continued, "The soldiers kept yelling to us in German, but I just shook my head as though I didn't understand what they were saying." Fortunately, Dorothea's Belgian neighbor and friend ran outside to convince them that they were indeed her own granddaughters and that she took care of them. She quickly handed Dorothea and Daisy a couple of bookbags and prompted them to hurry up before they were late for school. "And they believed her!" Dorothea exclaimed.



“So, my sister and I were able to remain in hiding while they took our parents away to a soldier barrack in Maline, Belgium. Until they were forced onto a train and sent to Auschwitz Death Camp in Poland, and that was the very last time we ever saw our parents,” Dorothea said solemnly.

Instead of going to school, Dorothea and Daisy fled by tram to a friend’s house. They were soon separated and stayed with foster families; Dorothea stayed with one family while Daisy stayed with another. Dorothea remained in hiding with her foster family until after the war was over, and she was considered mature enough to live on her own at age 21.

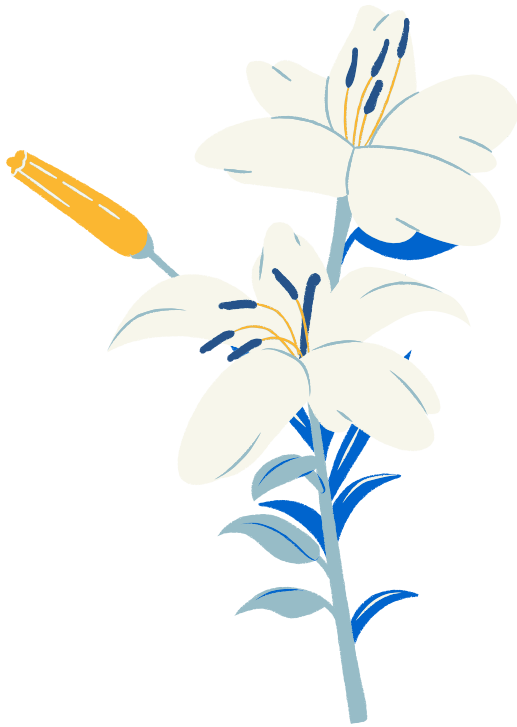
Years after the war, she and Daisy visited the soldier barrack in Maline, where the Gestapo had taken their parents before sending them by cattle train to Auschwitz.



Dorothea, sharing a photograph of her parents, Karl and Berta Weiss on their wedding day.



Dorothea, sharing the photograph that was taken in 1943 of her father, Karl Weiss, by the Nazis in a soldier barrack in Maline, Belgium while she was in hiding.



Dorothea, sharing the photograph that was taken in 1943 of her mother, Berta Weiss, by the Nazis in a soldier barrack in Maline, Belgium while she was in hiding.

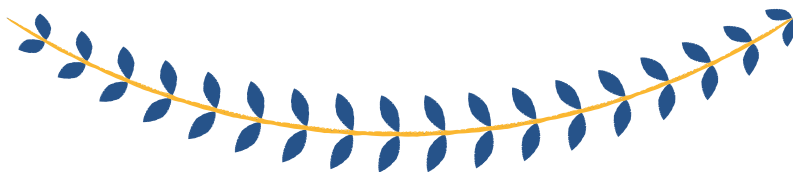
“They kept very good records,” Dorothea explained, “and in that barrack, we found information about our parents, including what convoy they were on and even their photographs taken by the Nazis. So, we know for sure that they were there.”

After Karl and Berta were sent to Auschwitz, they mailed a letter to the Red Cross that was addressed to the Belgian woman who saved the girls from being taken by the Gestapo. Dorothea recalled, “I got the card from my mother and father, and they asked, ‘How are Peter and Henry?’ They would not tell our names, but we knew they were asking about us. And that’s the only thing I had from them.” Today, Karl and Berta’s photos and stories are available to view in the [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#) in Washington, D.C., along with countless others who died or survived the Holocaust.



Dorothea, sharing a photograph that she took of her parents’ stories in the [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#).

Once Belgium was liberated and the war had ended, Dorothea chose to study at the Annex Conservatory of Music in Brussels to become an opera singer. Her foster father was a violinist and orchestra conductor from Ukraine, and her foster mother was an opera singer and first premier ballerina of the Ballet of Montecarlo from Czechoslovakia. However, they did not advise her to become a professional opera singer. They cared for her and did not want to see her struggle during such challenging times. Despite the odds, Dorothea pursued her dream!



“I always sang all my life. I remember singing duets with my father, who had a beautiful tenor voice and played the piano,” Dorothea exclaimed. “I had a private teacher who was retired and used to be the top mezzo-soprano of the opera. And when I couldn’t pay her anymore, she said, ‘That’s okay, I’ll teach you for nothing.’”

“When I met my husband, who was a displaced person from Ukraine, I had to make a tough choice: A career or a family. And to me, having a family was very, very important,” she said. “My voice teacher was so upset because she had high hopes for me. But I realize now that I made the right choice because since we moved here to the United States, I have been singing all the time!”



When Dorothea and her husband moved to the United States to raise a family, she never gave up her love of music. She joined the Long Island Opera and gave solo performances in synagogues and churches. She even sang for Corrie ten Boom and was interviewed by Steven Spielberg for his documentary *Survivors of the Shoah*, which was released shortly after he directed *Schindler’s List*. Dorothea proudly became a legal U.S. citizen at 29 years old and eventually earned her well-deserved high school diploma at age 50. “So, God gave me my cake, and I ate it, too! How ‘bout that,” she smiled and laughed.

As Dorothea shared much of her life story with me, I couldn’t help but feel amazed at her courage and humility. Though she suffered such a great loss, she credits God for His miraculous intervention and opportunities to prosper. Today, Dorothea is an inspiration to so many as she uses her voice to sing and share her testimony of survival and hope in churches, schools, and universities throughout the Northeast and beyond.

Dorothea's story is one of many, and we are so honored that she agreed to share it with us so that we could have the privilege of featuring it in our magazine to encourage our readers to remember those people who died or survived the Holocaust and their stories.

International Holocaust Remembrance Day is on January 27, 2024. Please join us in prayer, asking our Heavenly Father to protect the Jewish people today from those who still seek to annihilate them.



REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS. AGAIN I WILL SAY, REJOICE! LET YOUR GENTLENESS BE KNOWN TO ALL MEN. THE LORD IS AT HAND. BE ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING, BUT IN EVERYTHING BY PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION, WITH THANKSGIVING, LET YOUR REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN TO GOD; AND THE PEACE OF GOD, WHICH SURPASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING, WILL GUARD YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS THROUGH CHRIST JESUS.

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7 NKJV

GENDER ROLES IN THE CHURCH: THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION & WOMEN PASTORS



by Dakota Moore

This past July, I was visiting my friend's bible study group and one of the women's prayer requests was for the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) to make a wise decision that week. As an independent Baptist, I had no idea what she was talking about. Later, she explained the debate and broke into tears as her hope to be an SBC chaplain was now jeopardized since chaplaincy requires ordination (Dotson). As she explained the controversy and what she felt to be her calling from the Lord, this sparked a curiosity and

compassion in me. What does the bible say on the issue? Why is this an issue now? Lastly, why did the SBC choose disfellowship as a response, and should they have? Underlying the debate are conflicting biblical understandings of women's and men's roles in marriage and the early church and how that understanding applies to the church today. In the July magazine release, I will discuss the theological debate within the SBC. Yet, in this article, I will focus on the high probability of the SBC voting to ratify a constitutional amendment on male-only pastorates at the coming convention in June.

This debate over women pastorates has simmered in the SBC since second-wave feminism (Ammerman). There are three reasons this year's vote to disfellowship five SBC churches with women pastors was launched to such importance and public visibility. First was the size and influence of the churches affected in comparison to past disfellowships. Second, was that it was done by the national convention, not a local association, and third, a constitutional amendment was being considered rather than a resolution (Moore).

In 2021, Saddleback ordained three women as assistant pastors, beginning a building discussion of expulsion, which climaxed last February 21st when Saddleback, Fern Creek, and three other churches were disfellowshipped for their female lead or assistant pastoral leadership (Chandler). Pastor Mike Law had brought forward a motion to make male-only pastorates a constitutional amendment in 2022, which passed in May 2023 at the first of two annual meeting votes needed to make it official after the churches' disfellowship in February, the second being in June. This makes adherence to male-only pastorates a condition of cooperation with the SBC. For Baptists opposed to women in pastoral roles and those for it, this is important as the SBC is the largest Baptist denomination in the world and the second biggest denomination in the country. Depending on the outcome, over 1000 SBC churches that have women pastors on their leadership team could be affected (McClure). Also, how the SBC addresses gender relations and if they maintain friendly discourse, if not unity, serves as an example and witness to the secular world of Christian conduct in divisive situations.



Via Facebook screenshot

Saddleback Church ordained three women as assistant pastors on May 9, 2021

Two issues are at hand. First, what is the SBC meant to be, and thus, what is necessary for a unified mission? Apart from the difference in understanding of womanhood and female relations to men in the family and church, Mike Law believes the SBC has certain doctrines essential to their denominational identity and cooperation, while Rick Warren believes agreement on any specific doctrine is not only unnecessary but unachievable. There are two basic flaws with Warren's general argument and one immediately visible flaw in Law's argument that are worth pointing out.

Warren represents the views of many who support female pastorates, including Fern Creek, who also seeks reinstatement. Warren argues on his website SBCStand that "We cannot finish the task Jesus gave us with 50% of the Church forced to sit on the bench." Women are not benched just because they are not allowed pastoral roles. While the SBC decision does restrict women in the ways they can minister, it does not completely exclude them from the work of God's kingdom. Women may and do work in many other positions in the church (BF&M 2000, Article IX); thus, that section of his argument is an inductive hyperbole. As well, God's purposes will be fulfilled (Isaiah 46:9-11). The issue over women pastorates will not prevent the completion of God's will that people all over the earth be discipled (Matthew 28:19-20).

The second issue is with his statement, "There are 2.6 billion Christians in the world affiliated with various faith communities and denominations. We may disagree over baptism, the Lord's Supper, doctrine about Mary, and a dozen other things... As followers of Christ, we're never going to achieve unity on doctrine, but we can achieve unity on mission" (SBCStand). If only mission unifies the SBC, then whether a church holds to the Baptist distinctives does not matter. The Baptist Distinctives are the eight core Baptist doctrines that define Baptist beliefs and practices, distinguishing them from other denominations (The Baptist Distinctives). If Baptist doctrine does not matter for SBC cooperation, what makes the Southern Baptist Convention Baptist? With this



understanding, a catholic church (though it would likely not choose to) could become part of the SBC as long as it contributes financially to its mission initiatives. Warren posted in support of this view three founding SBC documents, the original constitution, and two other articles by the founder and first President of the Southern Baptist Convention on his website. Warren argues through his notes on these documents that local church autonomy was the only doctrine mentioned and emphasized by the SBC Founder, William B. Johnson (SBC Founding Document...). Although Johnson emphasized church autonomy and unified mission in those three documents, it is unfair to argue that he thought the Baptist distinctives were unimportant for SBC cooperation based on an emphasis. Additionally, although Warren believes doctrine is unimportant in SBC cooperation, the majority of southern Baptists believe otherwise, as illustrated below.



As for Law, the chief apparent weakness in his argument is his claim that failing to make male-only pastorates a constitutional amendment will cause the SBC to allow homosexual pastorates in the near future, as some other denominations have done (sbcamendment). He ascribes this correlational trend in most other denominations that have allowed women pastors (Colin) to the liberal hermeneutics and theology employed by those who support female pastorates. I argue correlation is not causation in regard to the homosexuality pastorate claim, and though some proponents of acceptance of homosexuality in the church use similar reasoning that egalitarians use to dismiss Paul's text on male headship (Christ overall), this doesn't mean one will necessarily interpret the two issues in the same way or that female pastorates must precede homosexual pastorates. The SBC constitution already has a 2014 amendment preventing homosexual behavior, let alone pastorates (Oldham). While there is room for some differing interpretations of Paul's texts on male-female relations in the church, the texts on homosexuality are clear and explicit. Paul uses terminology such as "should" (1: Corinthians 11) and "I do not permit" (1 Timothy 2) concerning male-female church relations in a specific context, yet there are no punishments or moral judgments, merely

his reasoning. As well women are allowed leadership in the early church order. Contrarily, homosexuality is given no place in the early church or the Kingdom of Heaven (1 Cor 6:9-10), and Paul says those who practice it as shameful, depraved, and given over to their lusts by God. Paul uses harsh, condemning language and ascribes a penalty to homosexuality. He does not ascribe punishments to deviations from the male-female relations he establishes in the church order.



According to their Baptist Faith and Message 2000 and historical precedence on this specific issue, the SBC was in alignment with their values when deciding to disfellowship churches over women pastorates. Warren's main contention is that the SBC is purely a cooperation and, as stated above, can never agree on doctrine. He writes, "From the start, our unity has always been based on a common mission, not a common confession. For the first 80 years of the SBC, we did not even have a confession because the founders were adamantly opposed to having one!" (Warren). He calls the Baptist Faith and Message a "consensus of opinion" and states, "It is the Great Commission that draws us together" and forms them as a denomination. He argues that the three founding SBC documents posted on his page all emphasize mission, church autonomy, and biblical principles derived through scriptural study. In fact, the original constitution never mentions specific doctrine. Warren is perhaps justified in understanding the SBC in this way historically, perhaps even a decade ago. Yet the understanding of the SBC and the BF&M, which states SBC's core beliefs, has changed. It is true that a doctrinal creed or a top-down denomination was never the intention, yet there is an expectation of aligned values per the 2015 amendment to the SBC constitution requiring churches to "have a faith and practice that closely identifies with the BF&M..." (law's information for executive committee). The BF&M states that as of 2000, the "office of pastor is reserved for men." Perhaps before the 2015 amendment, his argument that the SBC has no emphasis on agreement in doctrine was valid. For example, while holding to Baptist autonomy, Virginia's SBC state constitution sees departure from other doctrine as

grounds for removal from their association. It states, "... the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia may rescind the affiliation of any church, which shall, in the judgment of Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia, depart in doctrine or practice from the affiliation qualifications set forth in the Constitution and Bylaws" (SBCVirginia).

Some point to the parallel issue on the election that touched on the BF&M 2000 article 5, "God's Purpose of Grace," to argue that churches in the SBC don't have to agree doctrinally. Most Southern Baptists and Calvinist Southern Baptists disagree on limited versus unlimited atonement, which is directly tied to teaching on election and soteriology. According to Revell, efforts at unity for "the sake of the cause of Christ" were successful, and they "emphasize(d) the priority of unity of purpose in the midst of theological diversity and the application of love in the midst of doctrinal differences" (Revell). Yet the BF&M statement on election was written in 1925 to encompass both side's views. Thus, both sides closely identified with the statement. The issue was those who wanted to force agreement and polarized opposing viewpoints. This was resolved without requiring agreement because the BF&M truly didn't require an interpretation one way or another concerning limited and unlimited atonement as long as general principles were agreed upon. Whether this is right or not, it seems this was not an issue on which agreement was seen as necessary historically, unlike women pastorates.

Consequently, the Conventions/messengers' interpretation of the BF&M would have to change for a different outcome than ratification in June, and this is unlikely as the majority holds to Law's interpretation. The constitutional amendment proposed by Law this year is a firmer measure echoing and confirming the 1983 resolution against female ordination and thus pastorates (Early) and the BF&M 2000 statement reserving pastoral offices to men (Law, Myth of...). Whether the SBC is right theologically or not, it seems the majority stance has always been against female pastorates, and over the last two decades, agreement on this has been the assumed standard, if not an enforced one in the SBC.

Clarity must be given as to what “faith and practices that closely identifies with the BF&M” (Information in...) means and what doctrines and beliefs it applies to. How to interpret this clause is of much debate in the SBC, despite Law’s belief that it means one can’t contradict the BF&M (Information in...). The SBC generally agrees with Law’s understanding, but they need to state it in their constitution so the cooperating churches may have a clear standard. If the SBC votes for the amendment on women pastors in June 2023, then they must change the 2015 constitutional amendment as Dr. Heath Lamber suggests, instead stating that cooperating churches “Do not contradict the BF&M message” (The Baptist Faith...). If the New Orleans convention in June were to vote against the proposed amendment, reversing this past year’s vote, then this would instead require the SBC to make clear what is required for cooperation and what is not, defining “closely identifies.” Must a church hold to any doctrines stated in BF&M to be in cooperation, or do they only need to hold to the majority of BF&M statements (if so, which ones) but may disagree with the rest? Questions along this line must be settled and incorporated into the Constitution. If women can be pastors, or at least the SBC won’t require doctrinal agreement on the issue, then the sentence in Article IX ‘Church’ of the BF&M 2000 prohibiting women pastors must be stricken.

Based on the points above, the Convention will likely be in favor of agreement with the BF&M 2000 statement on the pastoral office, making male-only pastorates a constitutional requirement of Southern Baptist belief and cooperation. This is not to say there aren’t strengths to the argument that the Bible doesn’t disqualify women as teachers and or pastors or that making a male-only pastorate is a necessary qualification on the Baptist distinctive of two offices. Rather, my point is concerned only with what is likely based on the current direction of the SBC. In summary, when the Executive Committee votes to ratify the amendment in June, the SBC must clarify its understanding of what cooperation is and entails.

Look for a follow-up article in our July 2024 issue that will address the biblical/theological arguments of the two sides.



subscribe

A PASTOR'S WIFE'S PERSPECTIVE

Conflict Resolution



by Jeanine Michaels

One of the most shocking and surprising things about being involved in a church family is when conflict arises. As you can imagine, I've seen my fair share of conflict in 36+ years of ministry. And I've learned a thing or two.

The first thing I've learned is that conflict happens whether or not you like it or are, as is my case, conflict-averse. As a leader, I've had to tackle this topic head-on despite the fact that I do not like tension of any kind between parties.

I have had to learn that conflict is a reality when dealing with people. However conflict-averse my personality is, I was in a position that required me to learn to grow comfortable in confronting and exposing conflict when necessary.

What is most important when conflict arises is making sure that we handle the conflict biblically and in a way that does not harm the cause of Christ. The assumption here is that both parties are believers. Make sure that this is actually the case. As my husband is fond of saying, "Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going into a donut shop makes you a cop!"

If both parties are believers, then we can apply the principles of Matthew 18 to the situation. Either we believe every word in the Bible is accurate and, therefore, applicable to our lives, or we don't. If you do, then let's look at what Jesus teaches us about resolving a dispute in the church.

A PASTOR'S WIFE'S PERSPECTIVE



[via Canva](#)

Matthew 18:15-18 says, 15 “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ 17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.”

First, verse 15 tells us that if another believer sins against us, we go and talk to them directly. We don’t go and talk to everyone else about our grievances.

A PASTOR'S WIFE'S PERSPECTIVE

Proverb 18:17 says, “The first one who pleads his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him.” We all remember middle school and how our peers would come to us, trying to enlist us to their side of a spat with another classmate. Many carry this behavior into adulthood and, worse, into the church setting. Jesus’ teaching is clear. The goal is to resolve the situation with as few people involved as possible. Go. Talk. Express your perspective. If he hears you, then you have gained a brother.

The circle only expands if the problem can’t be resolved between the two of you. Verse 16 tells us that you are then to take one or two others to discuss the matter again. Another relatively small circle. And yet, how often is this how conflict in the church goes?



[via Canva](#)

A PASTOR'S WIFE'S PERSPECTIVE

Finally, verse 17 teaches that if he still won't listen to the opinion of you and one or two others, this is when the circle widens to the church. Then and only then, after other attempts fail, does it rise to the occasion of bringing the matter before the church.

Many Christians have never been taught the basics of Conflict Resolution 101. However, knowing these principles can alleviate so much heartache and difficulty in our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Many years ago, my husband was sitting in a meeting with several other pastors. One of the men attributed negative behavior to someone who was not present. The pastor whose church the meeting was held at picked up the phone immediately and said, "Let's call him in and ask him about this." He basically called his bluff.

My husband marveled at how quickly the situation was resolved and with as little damage as possible. That's the way God designed things to be.

Imagine the next time someone comes to you to talk about someone else if you remember Matthew 18's admonition. What if you said, "Well, let's go talk to them and see if that's true?" How quickly would people learn not to gossip to you? And how quickly would the congregation begin to grow and mature as a result? This technique reveals the actual motive of the person sharing information with you.

As we all learned from Veggie Tales' Larry Boy and The Rumor Weed, listening to the gossiper only hastens the growth of the Rumor Weed and seldom resolves the conflict. Maturity in our walk with Christ mandates that we not only learn Matthew 18 but that we implement it.

A PASTOR'S WIFE'S PERSPECTIVE



[via Canva](#)

Questions, Suggestions & Comments

If you have a question or comment or want to suggest a topic that you would like our in-house pastor's wife to respond to or write about, please submit via email to:

jeaninemichaels@shebelievesmagazine.com



blog.♥

REACHING THE DEAF FOR CHRIST

ONE SIGN AT A TIME

Did You Know...



by Donna May Lyons
in collaboration with
Donna Ruane

- The World Federation of the Deaf estimates the global Deaf population at 70 million, around 1% of the world's people and yet, according to DOOR International less than 2% know and follow Jesus.

- According to IMB.org, most of the approximately 70 million Deaf people around the world have never seen Jesus' name signed in their language. Often ignored and oppressed, Deaf people groups are some of the least evangelized people on Earth.

- According to Gate Communication, 93% of the Deaf in America have no contact with a church. Additionally, the Deaf are considered the third largest people group in the world who do not have access to the gospel of Jesus Christ

- According to Silent Blessings Deaf Ministry, less than 5% of churches in the U.S. offer Deaf outreach.

- Per Gate Communication, less than 300 individuals are serving in full time Deaf Ministry worldwide



The ASL Sign for Jesus

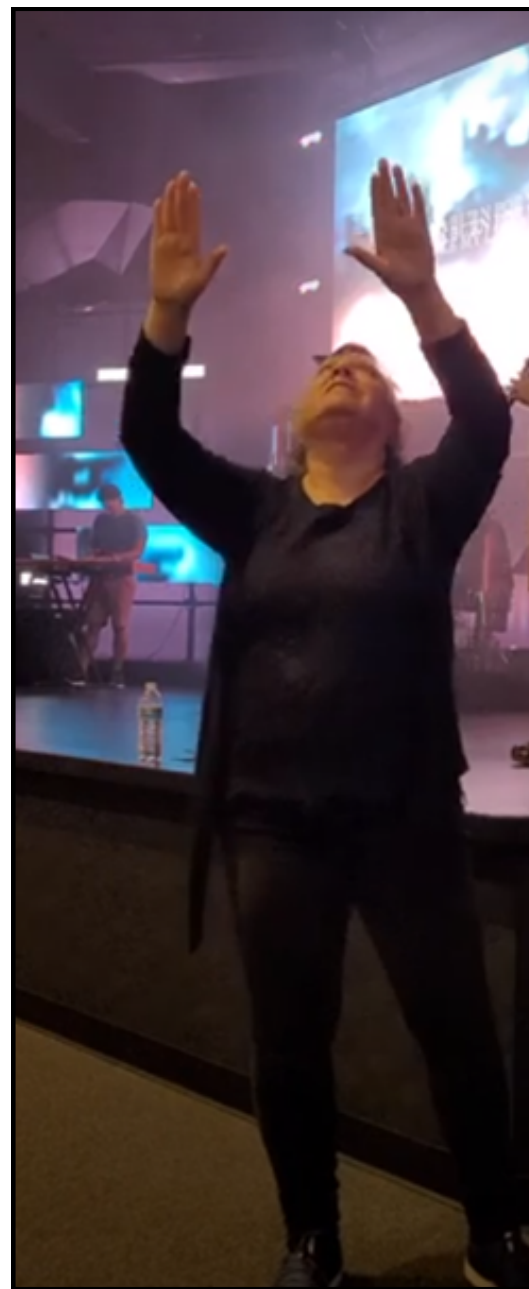
Can you imagine never learning about Jesus? Or never seeing the name of Jesus in written form? Or never having contact with a church because you have been ignored or oppressed? As a hearing person, that is likely not something you've ever had to deal with. But as the above statistics reveal, it is a sad reality for the Deaf Community.

American Sign Language (ASL) was standardized beginning in the early 19th century with the founding of the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut. It was then propagated widely by schools for the Deaf and Deaf community organizations. ASL is a complete and organized visual language with grammar, syntax, and structure that is expressed by employing both manual

and non-manual features. ASL signs also include phonemic components, such as movement of the body, hand, mouth, and facial movements. It is a natural language that serves as the predominant sign language of Deaf communities in the USA. It is claimed to be the third most used language in the U.S. and Canada, with an estimated half a million people who use ASL. There are at least 135 signed languages in the world, and it is estimated that there are over 350 signed languages in total; for a more historical breakdown of ASL, visit [StartASL](#).

Over the years, there has been a slow but growing movement of people and groups across the country and world who have become committed to reaching the Deaf Community with the Gospel of Christ through ASL. Donna Ruane is one of those people in her local community. She had been attending the main campus of Legacy Church in Albuquerque, NM, for a couple of months when she noticed a woman on the far end of the stage signing during worship. “It was beautiful but went beyond the external beauty of what I saw. I felt a much deeper prompting to learn the language that I could only attribute to the Holy Spirit,” said Donna.

Donna knew immediately that God wanted her to pursue learning ASL as a ministry. However, other than knowing how to sign the alphabet, she had no previous experience with ASL or knowledge of the Deaf Community. An interesting thing happened as Donna was filling out a card to serve. She said out loud to her son, who was sitting with her, “I wonder if I have to know sign to serve on the Deaf Ministry Team?” At that very moment, one of the class assistants (who was part of the Deaf Ministry Team) walked past and answered her question. Donna saw this as an affirmation and later met with the team leader. She began attending classes through the church and learning ASL so she could begin serving.



Donna Signing at Legacy Church,
Albuquerque, NM

According to Donna, it was God's grace and the supernatural anointing of the Holy Spirit that allowed her to begin leading worship songs within nine months. "That was the easy part," said Donna. "ASL is challenging like learning any new language and has a structure all its own. However, meaningful communication with people, as you can imagine, requires both receptive and expressive language and goes beyond memorization and learning signs." Donna continues to learn and grow in her ministry.

ASL is intensely focused communication, requiring both parties to be engaged and entirely and intently focused on the person they are communicating with. If you look away, you will miss what the other person is "saying." While hearing people can converse while being engaged or distracted, they can still carry on a conversation. The same is not true with the Deaf Community. Suppose you are distracted or doing something else, for example, looking away or being on your phone. In that case, it isn't polite, and you cannot reply, and you have missed parts of the conversation. This is definitely an important lesson to learn in all our human interactions. According to Donna, "Being fully engaged and giving someone your undivided attention, I believe, is beautiful but rare nowadays. Learn to be in the moment."

"The amazing thing about learning to worship in ASL is breaking down songs to know the meaning to be able to communicate accurately, scripturally speaking," says Donna. Part of her ASL ministry practice is digging deep into scripture to learn the meaning of the words and songs, which, in turn, gives her a deeper understanding of God's Word and how she worships Him. This adds to the intimacy of her relationship with the Lord and truly knowing Him. Donna's ministry centers around Mark 16:15, where we are told, "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone.'" (NIV)

Going into all the world with the gospel is a mandate to believers. According to DeafHarbor.org, more than 95 percent of the Deaf do not know Christ. Statistics vary, but figures indicate only two percent of the Deaf have a relationship with Jesus. This parallels the same percentage in most local communities as well. See [Did You Know YouTube videos](#) for more information.

Donna's goals are to continue growing in skill and understanding of ASL both receptively and expressively. She also wants to continue serving and communicating on a relational level, as well as being able to share and experience growth and understanding of God within her individual relationships and the Deaf Community.

It is Donna's prayer that Deaf pastors would be supported and that others would rise and have the resources necessary to teach the gospel to this mostly unreached group of people so they can be introduced to God's Word and be disciplined.

PRAY

We want to ask our community of believers to pray that the hearts of the Deaf would be opened to hearing about the love and eternal gift Jesus has for them and that hearing churches would develop an understanding of the Deaf Community to be able to reach out and support their growth and discipleship.



Donna Signing at Legacy Church,
Albuquerque, NM

If you'd like to know more about ASL, the Deaf Community, or ways you can serve, please take a look at the following resources:

- [Deaf Harbor](#) - Providing clear Biblical resources in ASL, transformational special events, in-depth training, and meaningful Christian fellowship opportunities leading to new life and a deeper relationship with Jesus.
 - [Deaf Missions](#) - Maximizing impact on Deaf people through their Language, Culture, and Identity.
 - [Deaf Missions](#): Interview with Renca Dunn
 - [A Bible to Call My Own](#) by the Deaf Bible Society - A short YouTube video explanation of the importance of visual communication.
 - [Nicole West Blessed](#) - Did You Know? and other ASL videos.
-

Stay updated on the She Believes Co. social media pages for future articles about other ministries to the Deaf Community. Have ministry information you'd like to share with the Deaf Community? Please email us at [**contact@shebelievesmagazine.com**](mailto:contact@shebelievesmagazine.com).

[**Facebook**](#) [**Instagram**](#) [**LinkedIn**](#) [**Pinterest**](#)

MORE THAN A MYSTERY



by Klaire Smith

Recently, I have been considering the simplicity of the gospel versus the complexity of God.

I feel the Spirit leading me to grapple with a gospel everyone can understand that points to the God of all wisdom.

But not just that. I feel in my soul a conviction to pursue the unbelievable characteristics of a God I can't always wrap my mind around.

Like many believers before me, I have wrestled with the gospel presentation Jesus gives to the young man known to many of us as the rich young ruler. In fact, I often avoid this particular story altogether. It's uncomfortable for me. At face value, this story characterizes salvation and heaven in ways that are hard for me to understand, let alone believe. However, it is best not to put myself in a position of doubting God. God is a God of mystery, after all. Who can know His mind?

Yet, as this new year begins, I am reminded of Mark 9:24. A desperate father cries out to Jesus, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

Instead of running from scripture that causes me to doubt, I want to spend this year running toward God with that which seems unbelievable, crying: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"



What better place to start than the story I have been avoiding?

Mark 9:17-24

17 Then one of the crowd answered and said, “Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. 18 And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.”

19 He answered him and said, “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.” 20 Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth.

21 So He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?”

And he said, “From childhood. 22 And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”

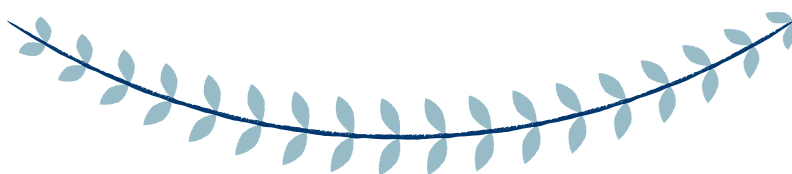
23 Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.”

24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

How incredibly peculiar. Jesus looked at him with love but let him go away lost.

Isn't the goal of presenting the gospel salvation? Help my unbelief!

For me, the story only gets more uncomfortable. The debrief Jesus gave to his disciples after they witnessed this exchange left them feeling—much like I feel reading this—confused and shocked.



Mark 19:23-25

23 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

25 When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?”

Utterly bewildered, the disciples ask Jesus the same question that comes to my mind upon hearing this- “then who can be saved?”

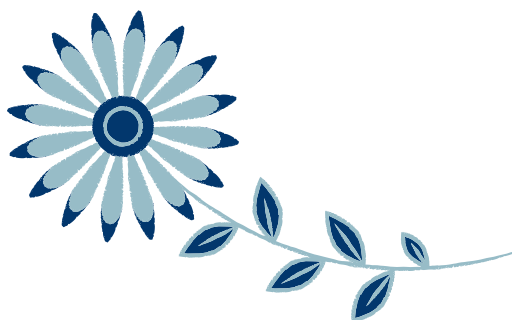
It hadn't occurred to me until now to consider the importance of the disciples asking this exact question at this exact time in history. But then again, I shouldn't be that surprised either—I intentionally run from this passage any time I see it.

Very soon, the disciples would be without Jesus. Very soon, the disciples would receive the great commission.

Of course, they do not know this yet.

But Jesus does.

Rather than answering their question of who could be saved, Jesus answers the more important question of who can save.



Mark 19:27

27 But Jesus looked at them and said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.”

In this passage from the gospels, we see some fundamental characteristics of God. Beautiful characteristics—not scary like I have always thought. We see the simplicity of the gospel in complete harmony with the complexity of God.

Romans 8:28

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

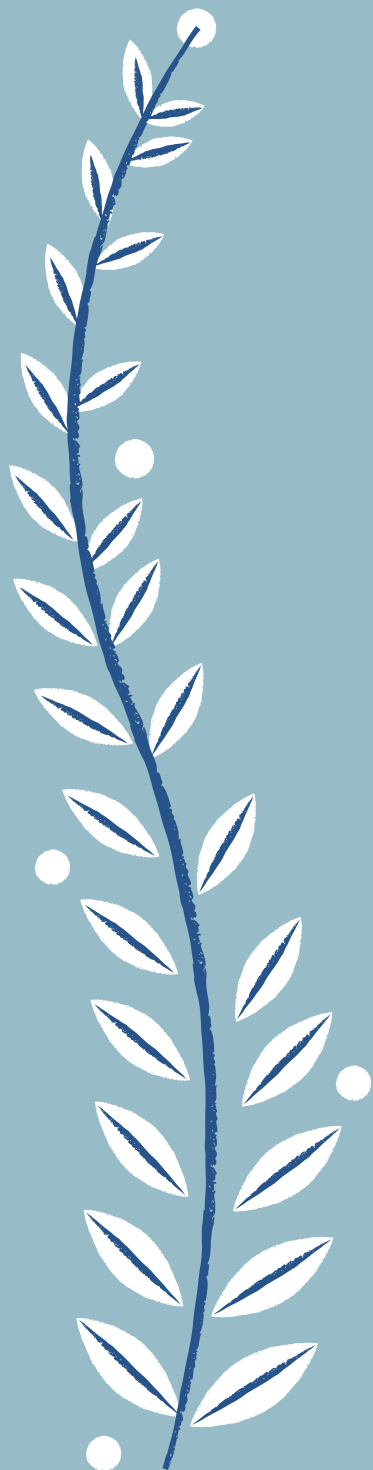
We see a good Father giving his disciples what they need before they even know to ask for it. We see Jesus plant a seed of knowledge from which divine revelation would later grow.

Later, in the book of Acts, we get an account of Peter preaching to his fellow Israelites on what is now considered Pentecost. His salvation message to them?

Acts 2:38-39

38 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

The word "jesus" is written in a blue, cursive, handwritten style. The letters are connected and fluid, with a wavy line extending from the end of the word.



I can't help but think, as Peter gave this address, that the lesson he learned from Jesus the day they encountered the rich young ruler was playing in the back of his mind.

As the disciples were sent out into the nations, they knew a few things for sure. It was God alone who saved—not them. It was for God alone to know who would be saved—not them. Revelation of the truth of the gospel message would come through the Holy Spirit at the appointed time—not through them.

Praise God that his ways are higher than my ways!
He is good.

This means the hard-to-understand qualities of God, which sometimes seem to be shrouded in mystery, are always good.

May I never again forget that I have access to the truth regarding the deep complexities of God because of the Holy Spirit. And that my good Father has been planting seeds of knowledge in my life from which divine revelation will undoubtedly grow.

Gender Roles in the Church:
The Southern Baptist Convention
& Women Pastors
Cited Sources

Ammerman, Nancy. Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990.

Chandler, Diane. EC removes six churches from cooperation including Saddleback Church. 2023.
<https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/ec-removes-six-churches-from-cooperation-including-saddleback-church/>

Baptist Faith & Message 2000 <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/#vi>

“Constitution and ByLaws” SBC Virginia <https://www.sbcv.org/constitution-bylaws-and-articles-of-incorporation/>

Dotson, James. “NAMB will no longer endorse ordained female chaplains” 2002.
<https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/namb-will-no-longer-endorse-ordained-female-chaplains/>

Early, Joseph E. “The Role, Place, and Purpose of Southern Baptist Women, 1979-1987.” Baptist History and Heritage 54, no. 2 (2019): 8–13.

Kevin McClure, “How Many Female Pastors are in the SBC.” June 2023 <https://americanreformer.org/2023/06/how-many-female-pastors-are-in-the-sbc/>

Lambert, Heath. First Baptist Church Jacksonville <https://fbcjax.com/first-thoughts/the-baptist-faith-and-message-and-the-future-of-the-southern-baptist-convention/>

Law, Mike. ‘Part 3: The Statement of Faith (BF&M 2000) addresses the pastoral office, not just a “Senior” pastor.’ SBCAmendment. <https://sbcamendment.org/resources/senior-pastor-part3-bfm/>

Law, Mike. ‘Part 4: The Sources (authors) of the BF&M 2000 address the pastoral office, not just a “Senior” pastor’. SBCAmendment. <https://sbcamendment.org/resources/senior-pastor-part4-sources/>

Law, Mike. “Information in Support of 2022 SBC Amendment Annual Item 22.” Information Paper for Executive Committee. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gYv9BFLyJFytJOuzP-kOtyJry7WcYxeY/view>

Moore, Dakota. “The Biblicality of Women Pastorates in the Southern Baptist Tradition...” 2023.

Oldham, Roy. Executive Committee to Consider Update to SBC Constitution Article III on SBC Messenger Qualifications. <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/sbc-life-articles/executive-committee-to-consider-update-to-sbc-constitution-article-iii-on-sbc-messenger-qualifications/>



SheBelieves
MAGAZINE

© 2024 SheBelieves Co.

SheBelieves Co.
PO Box 2442
Ewa Beach, HI 96706-0442

(808) 773-2635
contact@shebelievesmagazine.com



SBCM211