

The rise of the feminine Church of Eden

by Jeff Maples · May 2, 2015, "Pulpit and Pen"

There's no doubt that women are gaining a substantial voice in the Evangelical Church today. There's Beth Moore, who travels extensively, speaking at conferences to audiences of both men and women. There's Ann Voskamp, a well known writer of personal religious experiences, and of course, similar author, Sarah Young. Priscilla Shirer is gaining popularity among Evangelical congregations. And of course there are the famous Word of Faith pastrices, Christine Caine and Joyce Meyer. There are many others, including Lisa Bevere, Paula White, Kelly Minter, Angie Smith and Margaret Feinberg. But what do these women all have in common? They either teach something unbiblical, practice something unbiblical, or, in most cases, both.

For example, Beth Moore is known for channeling spirits claiming to receive direct revelation from God. She claims God "lifted her up" and "gave her a vision" that Roman Catholics and Protestants should forget their doctrinal differences and unite. Priscilla Shirer, a disciple of Moore, is a promoter of contemplative prayer, and other mystical activities. Best selling author, Ann Voskamp, regularly blogs and writes about imaginative romantic love encounters she has with God, and so on. And nearly every one of these women who are rising in popularity have a regular audience of not just women, but men. And not men who are there to critique her work, or to make sure she is biblically sound, and safe for his beloved wife to listen to. No, they are there to learn from, and be instructed by these women, just like the wives are. But can we really blame the problem on the women?

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. He created night and day, land and water, vegetation, birds, sea creatures and land animals. He then created man and woman, Adam and Eve, and placed them in the garden, known as Eden. God gave them dominion over all of his creation, but gave them one command—not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. All was well, until, one day, the serpent deceived Eve into eating of the fruit, upon which she then

deceived Adam into following suit. God became angry with them for disobeying.

Though Eve was the first to eat of the fruit, Roman's chapter 5 makes it clear that God held Adam responsible for sin entering the world, and causing death (Romans 5:12-21). God created Adam first, and then created Eve to be his helper (Gen 2:18). This means Adam was the head of the two, and Adam was responsible for any sin that Eve committed.

This is exactly the problem we have in the Church today. We have women, running around unchecked by men leaders, and most men just following suit. One example of this is Beth Moore's bible studies. Lifeway Bookstores, an extension of the Southern Baptist Convention, publishes and sells "women's" bible studies by Moore, and many churches, from many denominations, engage in these studies. When speaking to different pastors from various churches concerning this, I usually find that most of the elders have not reviewed Beth Moore's materials, and have no idea some of the outlandish claims she makes, or what she teaches. Upon confronting them with the evidence, they simply "do not have time" to review it, or simply don't care. This is especially true in the larger churches and mega churches. The men are so busy dealing with church activities, preaching and speaking engagements of their own, or simple day to day congregational and pastoral duties, that the women are just left to fend for themselves. Many take the position that "since Lifeway sells it, it must be okay." But this theory has been recently thoroughly debunked.

Ann Voskamp's 1000 Gifts is another popular "bible study" among women. Ann Voskamp is known for writing about semi-erotic, romantic encounters she allegedly has with God. Women, by nature, seek affection and approval from their husbands. This is why God commands men in Eph 5:25 to love and to cherish your wife, but also for wives to submit to their husbands (Eph 5:22-24). Women need leadership from their husbands. 1 Peter 3:7 says:

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

But what we see with most of these women that are rising in popularity is what appears to be a female dominant role in their personal marriages. Beth Moore regularly travels to speaking and teaching engagements without her husband, as well as these others. Christine Caine is an ordained pastor of her “church” in Australia, and also regularly speaks and travels without her husband. Husbands aren’t overseeing their wives’ writings and teachings, and any attention that they pay to their wives’ work is not through the lens of Scripture.

I want to be clear, I don’t necessarily take the position that a man can’t listen to, or learn something from a women. I have personally learned a great deal by reading books and blogs that were authored by women. However, when women usurp the position of men in the church by holding authoritative positions over men, this is the problem. Any women that are in ministry should be working only under the authority of their husbands first and foremost. If the husbands were overseeing the work of the women in ministry, we wouldn’t see this rampant abuse of authority by women.

But I would suggest the problem is even deeper than that. As stated before, many of the elders and I would suggest that in cases like Ann Voskamp, and her writings of semi-erotic encounters with God, perhaps stem from a shortfall of romantic fulfillment in her marriage. Voskamp, in a previous blog post, writes of an encounter where she saw a writing on the sidewalk that said “Hey Beautiful, You Are Loved!” She ascribed this writing to being a sign from God, and compares God to actor Ryan Gosling, saying:

And she laughs loud and we’re carried and hey, who needs Ryan Gosling and his “Hey Girl” meme when you’ve got God with His “Hey Beautiful” promise?

Sadly women are buying into this type of religious eroticism all through the Church. This dangerous perception of God’s love is completely unbiblical, and if more men were fulfilling their Scriptural duties as husbands, women wouldn’t be seeking this type of affection from God. Men aren’t speaking out against this type of heresy, instead, they are praising it. Look at what well known pastor of Village Church, Matt Chandler, tweeted about Voskamp:

Matt Chandler

✓ @MattChandler74

I think @annvoskamp is becoming one of my favorite writers.

Tremendous piece <http://shar.es/1nvAuY>

8:15 PM - 12 Aug 2014

So what can we do about it? I would suggest that Christian men turn off the televisions, open a Bible, and learn how to step up and be a man. Pay attention to your wives. Your wife needs your affection, your love and your acceptance, but she also needs your guidance. You must be able to provide her with guidance. Your problem is you care more about who your NFL team is drafting than you do about your wife sitting in her bed reading Jesus Calling while looking for some kind of affection. Educate yourself. Educate your pastors. Do not be afraid to speak up in your church if your church is doing something you perceive to be unbiblical. They may or may not listen, but it's your biblical duty to do so.

“Again, when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I place an obstacle before him, he will die; since you have not warned him, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. “However, if you have warned the righteous man that the righteous should not sin and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; and you have delivered yourself.” – Ezekiel 3:20-21