



Wisdom's Toolbox – Part 4

Understanding Women in Ministry

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Many in our culture are abandoning the self-evident definitions of men and women. All of that is on display just watching a political commentator ask our cultural elites, "What is a woman?" You'd see that clearly if they fail to be able to answer the question. Not to mention our move to vocabulary phrases like "birthing people" or "menstruating persons." You can throw in the z's, zims, zoos, zippity-doo-da pronouns that are out there. Everybody has really left what should be self-evident.

And while the culture is doing that and abandoning definitions, the Church is busy abandoning that which is revealed, especially revealed, divinely revealed regarding the roles for men and women. The roles that have been understood throughout biblical exegesis and hermeneutics in understanding Bible for centuries, for millennia. It's been sad to watch, to see things change and capitulate to the pressures of our culture. Policies and hiring and all the instructions that are now taught from pulpits that are very different than it was even 15 years ago, let alone 500 or 2,000 years ago.

And today I think it's important for me to give you the conclusion up front. And that is that we have no plans or intentions of either changing the definitions of men and women, nor changing our understanding of the roles of men and women both in the church and in the home. Those are set. They have been revealed. God is a God who's clear. The book of nature makes things clear regarding sex and biology and gender, which are all tied together tightly in Scripture and in nature. And also we have a clear book of revelation that speaks without stuttering about the roles of men and women in the church and in the home.

Well, today we reach a passage in Acts 16 that gives us an opportunity to address this. And against the backdrop of all that's been happening in our world and in our culture and in the church world, I think it's good for us to stop and to say, "Wait a minute, do we believe what we've believed? And is there reason to change what we have asserted about what the Bible teaches regarding these things?" And it's not a passage about women in ministry, but it does show a woman, a very prominent woman in Europe here who gets saved and wants to be involved in ministry and is involved in ministry and becomes a very important player in some of the things that are going to happen in Philippi and the surrounding areas.

So last week we dealt with the Macedonian call. This week, as Paul sails across the Aegean Sea to the shores of Macedonia, we want to try to understand what is happening not only here in this passage, but how that's a platform for us just reasserting what the Bible says about these things. So let me read it for you and then we will try to look at the rest of Scripture this morning as swiftly as we can to see where we end up here when we're all done.

Turn with me to Acts 16 verses 11 through 15. And here's where we see Paul and of course Luke, he's using first-person plural pronouns. He's a part of this team now, the author of our



book. Silas, of course, and Timothy was picked up earlier on this trip. Verse 11 says, "So, setting sail from Troas," as if you need a map there. I put a map on the worksheet or it's on the digital worksheet down at the bottom. "We made a direct voyage to Samothrace," and that's a little island there. As a matter of fact, on our map, there's a pointer to it, a little island in the northeastern Aegean Sea. And they went there directly. And then "the next day they went to the Neapolis." And you see where that is there on the shores of Europe.

"And from there to Philippi, Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. And we remained in the city some days." And so that little bracket description describes a lot of what's going to happen in the rest of this chapter. And Philippi becomes an important part of our New Testament understanding of Christianity. Of course, Paul writes back there. We learned a lot about this city, and we spend some days here now with his missionary team. "And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside," and historically we assumed this and have tried to verify this. There were no active synagogues that were there in Philippi at this particular time in Paul's ministry and their travels. So they don't go and follow their normal pattern of going to the synagogue to talk about people who knew the Old Testament prophecies. But of course, there were people who were seeking and worshiping the God of the Old Testament, and they were gathered here.

"Where we supposed there was a place of prayer." And of course, they did. "We sat down and spoke to the women who had come together." That at least opens up our topic here. He's doing ministry to this group of women by the riverside outside of Philippi. "One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the City of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods," which is a cue with a little background work you can see this is kind of an upper-end merchant, selling things that are higher price. But that's not all she sold we assume. Her name, the fact that she's from Thyatira, but she's in Philippi. Lots of things we can piece together about this woman being a prominent, successful businesswoman, probably holding multiple homes in multiple cities, at least two.

But here she is there praying with this group by the riverside. And "she was a worshiper of God." She was a God-fearer. She was much like Cornelius back there in Chapter 10, who was not saved, not a Christian, but had this deference here as a European, a Macedonian. She's concerned about the truth of the God of the Old Testament. I love this line, don't you? Bottom of verse 14, "The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul."

So God is doing the work to bring her to real repentance in faith. And between that period and the first sentence here in verse 15, she's responded rightly to the gospel. Of course, that's who you baptize, people who have been made disciples. And she's apparently done some evangelistic work in her home, among her workers and her servants or whoever else there is living with her. No mention of her husband. Maybe she's a widow. Maybe she was never married. We don't know the situation of her marital status, but it says in verse 15, "after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us saying, 'If you've judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay,' and she prevailed upon us."



So Luke is saying me and Paul and Timothy and Silas, and of course, we can assume an entourage of other people are going to go stay there in the house. If you go all the way down to the bottom verse in this chapter by the way, you can see that it's become the base of operations for what's going on in Philippi. A lot is going to happen. We're going to see a demon-possessed girl in the next passage and then we're going to see Paul get thrown in jail. And if you know the story, a lot's going to happen in Philippi here. But at the end, we know that Lydia's house becomes the place where the Church is being hosted, where not only the missionaries are being hosted.

So we're assuming this is a big facility, a big home. They went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers who were there, of course, in Lydia's house, they encouraged them and the party. So this gal is wealthy, she's successful as a businessperson, and she is now engaged in wanting to be a part of serving and assisting the missionary work of the Apostle Paul and his band. It's not a passage that's teaching us about women in ministry, and yet it is a passage about a woman who gets engaged in ministry. And so I think if our series title is "Wisdom's Toolbox" and looking at how Paul shows wisdom throughout this missionary journey, it would be good for us to stop and say, well, I think the wisdom that's needed in our day, in our culture, in this time, is to look for God's wisdom regarding women in ministry. We need to think about that, to think biblically about that.

So I want to do that and I want to do that by you can see the first word on the first point, and it seems like it's going to put me in a defensive position. And sadly it is. When someone starts attacking the view that has been the view of the Church for 2,000 years and the view of the Old Testament from the beginning. It is a time when I have to debunk which even by the way I word this is becoming a straw man attack upon people who hold the traditional view that I hold regarding the fact that there are some distinctions between what men's and women's roles are within the church.

And that distinction being attacked, I need to debunk the kind of presuppositions that come with that branding. If you are that person, you believe those things, well, then we know some things about you just by holding that position. And that's why I think part of this, the kind of bombastic attack upon those who hold the traditional view, it has become a reason where a lot of people have capitulated and said, well, you know, it's time for us to change our views and get on with the program. I'm not going to go all the way to redefining men and women, but certainly let's redefine the roles for men and women within the Church.

So I've got that first word there. Debunk. What I want to debunk is a combination of two words here in the first point that really have become associated with one another if you're in a church context believing what I just said, that there are distinctive roles for men and women, at least some distinctive roles, for the service in ministry that takes place within the church. So let's put this mouthful, just two words to write down, but let's write it down. Number one, let's debunk, here are the two words, "Debunk Misogynistic and Complementarianism." There's a mouthful and a lot of letters, but I use those words advisedly.



Now, the first word, of course, I assume you're familiar with, misogynistic, right? To be a misogynistic person, to be accused of misogyny. It's this compound word comes from the Greek language and just transliterated into English. You're all familiar with the second part of this word, I'm assuming. The Greek word "Goonai," which is pronounced as its transliterated "Gyneo." We see that in all kinds of words today. If you're a woman, you have a woman doctor dealing with things that are distinct to womanhood. We call that woman, that guy or that woman, a gynecologist. Okay well that's where we get that. Goonai name means woman. "Miso" is the Greek word for "hatred." So to be a misogynistic person, it's that you hate women.

Now, again, that's a spectrum word that, of course, when they say you're misogynistic, they don't necessarily mean that you have a seething hatred for women and the vein on your forehead pops out. But they do mean that if you hold the view that comes next with the long word that I've had you write down that clearly there's some kind of denigration of women in your thinking, that you think less of them. You think men are superior to women. It's often, you know, encapsulated in the word the "patriarchy" today. So if you believe in men having specific roles of leadership that are reserved for men and not for women, then you're a part of that patriarchy. You're a part of a misogynistic viewpoint because you think condescendingly about women, and you have a denigrated view of that.

Now, the reason these words go together is you got to deal with the second word, which is a new word in theological circles. And it's a response to a word that came to be about 30 years ago when people started to say, well, what we need to do is to blur these lines, if not eradicate the lines between what men and women can do in ministry in the church. And so they came up with this word to describe that, and they called it egalitarianism. And you can see the English word "equal" there in that word, egalitarianism. Not only are men and women equal as people, but now they should be equal in terms of roles and what they do in the church.

So the response to that was to create people who said, "Now, wait a minute, the Church's understood what the Bible has said for centuries, for millennia to say that that's not the case." They may be equal, but they have distinctive roles within the home and the church. When it comes to the church, we've said, okay, those distinctive roles, if we hold them, we're going to utilize this word in response to the egalitarianism doctrine. We're going to say, well, we are traditionally, as the Bible has taught and as the Bible and the Church have believed, we are complementarians.

Now be careful how you spell that, because we're used to using the word "compliment," which is "c-o-m-p-l-i" and not simply "c-o-m-p-l-e." The word "c-o-m-p-l-e" is the beginning of the word that you and I use all the time, the word complete, complete. And to be a complementarian means that there are distinctions in the functional roles of men and women, often it's referred to in the home. Sometimes in the church. We're talking about the church today, and say these roles are distinct, but they complete one another. They completely make up the whole of what, in this case, God wants to do in the church. "Complete" comes from the



Latin word which means "to fill," it fulfills something. And as we'll see in my first sub-point, it fulfills something that God has done way back to the beginning of the book of Genesis.

So let's at least understand that the doctrine of complementarianism, which, if it's not in your vocabulary, it ought to be, because that's really a question someone may ask. "Oh, you go to that church, are they complementarian and or are they egalitarian?" And what they're saying there is do you believe in any role in the Church is open to any person no matter what their gender is? That's an egalitarian view. A complementarian view says no. Some are distinctively one gender, gender-specific, and others are not. So those are the distinctions between these views. And I want to talk about complementarianism and again, conclusion upfront, that's who we are, that's what we teach. That's what all of our pastors believe. That's what the churches historically believe. And we want to reaffirm this today in a day where a lot of churches are abandoning that view.

So if that's the case, let's think this through. And the first thing I want to do is respond. I hate to be on the ropes kind of playing defense here, but let's respond to the connection of people saying, well, if you have that view, you're misogynistic. You think less of women. You denigrate women. You even open the door to abusing women. You look down on women, you think they're less than you. So I've got to say some things here at the outset.

Let's build an outline, Letter "A" underneath the first point, and let's talk about the sameness of men and women, the sameness of men and women. And let me make some doctrinal statements that should be, as I like to say, the "no duh" doctrines. And I hate that I even have to say them, right? But when someone says, "Oh, you're complementarian and you must not believe these things," well of course I believe these things. Duh. I mean, that's my response. I'd like to say of course. And I hate that I have to say it, but I guess I have to say it because if I'm being accused of misogyny, then I need to make sure that, you know, of course I believe these things.

So let's talk about five things under Letter "A" here that we talk about in terms of sameness. Complementarianism gets its first definition from this first sub-sub-point. And that is number one, right? Men and women are of equal worth. Let's just jot that down, equal worth. And here's something you can put next to it, by virtue of creation. Let's think about this. In creation, the creation story, and as it's retold throughout the Scripture and referred to throughout the Scripture, as Jesus even said in Matthew 19, is that God created human beings in their own image. And he said he created them male and female.

So the distinction between male and female, which is both biological and gender sex distinctions, X-Y, X-X. I mean, you understand that. That all is a compliment. They complete each other because the whole of God's image and who he is, is reflected complementary in both parts. And so they're of equal worth. They're distinct. We believe that as complementarians. There's a distinctive connection to God's personhood that we see reflected in varying degrees, but distinctive. They're weighted in different ways in the two genders, male and female. So that we shouldn't even have to say it, but we have to say it. Of



course, we're all equally worthy by virtue of creation, both made in the image of God. Male, female, it doesn't matter.

Number two, let's go from Chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis to Chapter 3. We're also equally guilty. Let's go there next, we're equally guilty. Okay? It's not like in the fall, it was like, okay, Eve's in trouble, but Adam's not, or Adam's in trouble in Eve's not. They're both in trouble and we're all in trouble. And males and females all share one thing, right? We are completely guilty before God as sinners. The passage applies to all of us in Ephesians Chapter 2. We're all dead in our transgressions and sins. So men are not worse sinners by class than women, or vice versa. We're all sinners before God, all transgressors of God's law, all should be cast into outer darkness equally away from the presence of God and the glory of his power.

Number three. We are all equal, assuming that we are redeemed, in redemption, we have equal redemption. Our redemption is equal. In other words, a man is not more saved than a woman, or a woman is not more saved than a man. If we are redeemed and justified, we have equal redemption. And that's why when Paul says in Galatians Chapter 3, speaking of justification and redemption, he says, well, "In Christ, there is no slave, no free, no Scythian, no barbarian, no Jew, no Greek, no man, no woman." There's no distinction in the fact that we are all equally redeemed. And that's super important for us to catch. We're all equally redeemed. We have the same salvation, the same kind of salvation. You as a man are just the saved as that gal as a woman, and vice versa. All of us share the same redemption and have the same status as a redeemed person.

Number four, this of course varies based on your progress. But let's put it this way. We have the same godliness. Okay? Now, by that, I mean the potential for godliness. There are some women here a lot more godly than some men here. There are some men here more godly than other women. But in terms of the potential for us in our sanctification we all have that. And next to it, let me say this by virtue of, here's a doctrine for you, the priesthood of the believer, by virtue of the priesthood of the believer. Right? Why do you have equal worth to me and me equal worth to you? Because we're all made in the image of God. Male or female. It doesn't matter. Both of us were made in the image of God, reflecting different weighted parts of that glory. And we'll talk about that. But I'm also equally sinful. And you are sinful. We're all sinful people before God, but then we're equally justified and redeemed by virtue of redemption in Christ.

And then now we would say we're all equally godly, or at least have the potential for equal sanctification because of the priesthood of the believer. Now let me quote this passage because now we're getting into stuff where I think we need at least some details. So let me give you this. I'll read it for you, First Peter Chapter 2 verses 9 and 10. At least you should jot it down. And listen here. If you're trying to make distinctions between male and female, you can't find it. Listen, "You are a chosen race," I'm not talking about gender, "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." If you were to ask in the Old Testament, well, who's like closest to God? Who are the godly people here? Well, you know, it's the Levites and among the Levites, well, we've got the priests. And the



priests have special access to God that you don't have. And then, you know, we got among the priests, we got a hierarchy of priesthood and we got the high priest.

Now, you want to talk about who can get into God's presence, will he can after he does all the rigamarole and he's qualified and he can't have any blemishes, he can't be handicapped, he can't have skin diseases. He's got to be this person who serves in this role, but he can only do it until he's 50. All kinds of requirements. Is it that the 49-year-old priest who has no, you know, handicaps, is that person more godly than the 75-year-old man? Well, no, not really. But in terms of the access they have to the holy place and the holy vessels and the holy shewbread and all the things that are going on in the presence of the Ark of the Covenant, well, yeah, there's a distinction.

Well, here's what God says in teaching us equal access to God. You all are priests, right? You're a "chosen race, a royal priesthood." Right? You're "a holy nation, people for God's own possession." All of you. The next verse says, "You were not a people, but now you are God's people." Right? And that's not like God's man and the women are tagging along. You're all equal. You all have equal godliness, equal priesthood, if you want to rush right to the foundation of it all.

Number five, we also have equal accountability or equal responsibility by virtue of judgment. All of us are going to be judged. We call on Father, one who impartially judges each man's work, and that is not each man, an heir, if you know Greek, it's "Anthropos." Every person is going to be judged by God and we're all going to have to give an account. We're all God's servants, male or female, if we are Christians progressing in our sanctification, we're going have to answer for our Christian lives. So we all have equal accountability before God. It's not like, well, the men are going to have to answer and the women won't have to or vice versa. We all are answerable to God.

So all complementarians and we can make a longer list, but let's just start with those who would say yes. Equality, equality, equality, equality. Equal worth, equal sin, equal redemption, equal priesthood or godliness, equal accountability or coming judgment, the Bema Seat, passages like Second Corinthians Chapter 5, First Corinthians Chapter 3, Romans Chapters 12, 13 and 14, all deal with the ideas of what's involved. We're going to stand before God and give an account. Great.

Let's talk about under number one here. I'm going to try to respond to the claim of you're a woman-hater because you believe in distinctive roles. If you're a complementarian then you must be a misogynist. Well, then I want to talk about this. Every complementarian has been preaching these things and believes these. Can you find a knuckle-dragging woman hater who's a complementarian? Sure. But that's not who we are. It's not who Christians, orthodox Christians, godly people have been throughout all of Christianity. But what have we understood as a unique, praiseworthy characteristic of the gender, speaking as men, who we're not. And I guess in this case the complementarian as an "E" in the middle of the word we should be filled with compliments, with an "I," because there are compliments that should be given and are given throughout Scripture for women and the uniqueness of the women by



virtue of being a woman, there are things that are praiseworthy in that regard. So let's go through five of these real quick.

Number one, women are praised in Scripture as God's special creation. And I think that's a good place to start. Right? They're praised as God's special creation. And the praise starts with Adam, because Adam here is created on the sixth day. It's like God's work is done. And it's the first time God said he puts a pause on his creative work and says, "Hey, pause." Now, let's just live with that resonance right there. A little pregnant pause here, pardon the pun. But here's the deal. You need to live here for a little bit without a female on the planet, and let's see how you like it. And the bottom line is you're not going to like it and it isn't going to work. And God says, "It is not good that man is alone." So we're going to make a helpmate suitable for you and we're going to add to this world female human beings made in my image.

And so that picture is that God at the pinnacle of his creation, which is man, people made in his own image. We're not giraffes, we're not monkeys, we're not rocks, we're not trees. He creates human beings and then he says, okay, pause, pause, pause, okay now, here comes a woman. And it's like the cherry on the top of the pinnacle of creation that women have a special entrance into reality because God said, I just want to show you how much this is important to creation and will be important to you. Women are praised, starting with Adam. He praises this woman because she is a special creation in a special class, which is human beings. So they're praised as God's special creation. I wish I could unpack all of these.

Second one. Number two, if I've just talked about the sameness now I'll talk about the biblical praise for the uniqueness of women. What do we learn in Scripture about this? And this may sound chauvinistic to you, and I'm sorry if it does, but here it comes, right? Women are praised in Scripture as a special expression of God's beauty, jot that down. A special reflection of God's beauty. By the way, if you just want to look for the word glory or beauty, you're going to find it attached to God most often. Right? The beauty of the Lord, the beauty, even the concept of "Kabod" or glory, the greatness, the beauty of God, the magnificence of God, the shining of God. Right? All of that then you see those words describing not, "Hey, Abraham, really a beautiful guy." No, it's always like "Sara, really beautiful woman."

And the idea of beauty gets attached to this gender that is not the man. And you see that throughout the Scripture. I mean, sometimes in great, romantic, wordy, poetic form in the Song of Solomon, but you see it connected. You go into the holy place in the Tabernacle like in Exodus when we're talking about trying to make things beautiful, the beauty of it all, the royally dressing up this place where we worship. And then of course, women then are described in Scripture as in a special way expressing that beauty of God.

Now, from talking to a bunch of peacocks, if you know how peacocks work, I couldn't preach this point. Right? Because it's the female, every female peacock is a plain Jane. Right? But then the man gets to go out there and strut his stuff, and he's colorful and beautiful and all the kids go, "beautiful." Right? Well, in human beings, God says, I'm going to place that special beauty in women. Now I know beauty is in the eye of the beholder. That's not the point. We don't want to be called that. The bottom line is you as a woman are a special expression of



God's beauty and it is just a theological point I rarely hear made, but I think it's an important thing to say. Well, the Bible does put that as something that is very unique and special in terms of females, women.

Number three. For this one, I want you to turn to a passage I know you're familiar with if you've been around church for a while, Proverbs 31. Proverbs 31. Now you groan when you go to that passage. You think, "Oh, this is like it makes me feel guilty. And she's so perfect this Proverbs 31 woman." But listen, she is praised in this passage as Scripture does, because of certain things that she does and all of women unless they're, you know, reprobate, they're reflecting these things in various degrees. And they're the kinds of things that men in a complementarian world are saying these things are important. It's a divine commentary on how women are doing something that is uniquely good in this world.

So maybe we can jot that down and then I'll start reading in verse 10. The third one, women are praised as special agents of good. They do something good in ways that are distinctive to their womanhood, and that is important and praised in Scripture. For instance, even how it's described here, the "excellent wife" starts in verse 10. Now it said poetically, "Who can find it?" And he's talking all about her because he's got one. And he says, I've got one. "She's far more precious than jewels." Right? And doesn't say that about his friend, "The heart of her husband trusts in her, he will have no lack of gain. She does him good, and not harm all the days of her life." Does that mean she never has a bad day, wakes up with a cold and, you know, never argues? That's not the point. The point is there's a special agency of good that she brings to the man in this case who she's married to. And of course, that spills over in a variety of different ways as the biblical narrative spells out.

There are women who are a special agents of God's good, doing special kinds of good in this world that are unique to their femininity, their gender, and who they are in terms of female. So that, I think is important. And a lot of this, you could say, fits under that. But I want to go into verse 13 and grab a fourth one for our list. Women are praised in Scripture as special agents of good. A lot of examples of that. But in verse 13, "She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands. She's like ships of the merchant; she brings her food from afar. She rises while it's still night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens. She considers a field and she buys it; with the fruit of her hand she plants a vineyard. She dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong. She perceives that her merchandise is profitable," for trading.

"Her lamp does not go out at night. She puts her hand of the distaff, and holds the spindle with her hands. She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy." That's a reflection of our third point. "She not afraid of snow of her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet." Starting to think of Lydia now dealing in purple fabrics. "She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple. Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to merchants."



I'm just reading all that. And again, I'm not thinking specifically of Lydia, but Lydia is a reflection of that, a very successful, industrious, hardworking woman. And I'm saying that's a kind of depiction of ladies that I do think you recognize and probably need to go to another culture to recognize it the way that it really is recognized in agrarian societies and in societies that are not quite as modernized as ours. They are the hardest working, most industrious people, and they're reflecting a kind of good through their industry.

So I put it this way. They're praised in Scripture as sacrificial workers, and there are plenty of examples of this in the narratives of Scripture, but they're industrious, and they're the kinds of people who will work sacrificially in a way that is unique to their womanhood. And if you think that through, you can take someone who's busy about social media and doing her thing. If some young woman has a baby and instantly she learns a whole level of sacrificial good for this child. Right? And all of that is part of how God has designed women. And I'm not saying that every woman has the same kind of industrious streak or even the same levels or expressions of femininity. But you do recognize that the balance of distinction between men and women, this is the side that is often praised in Scripture because it hits a target that is praiseworthy. In this case, the kind of sacrificial, industrious work.

But look further. Verse 26. Right? I mean, it was almost there, I guess I could have read verse 25, "Strength and dignity are her clothing, she laughs at the time to come." She's ready. She thinks of things. Trust me, it's like when you women go to women's retreat, generally speaking, the men... I don't really want to get into what happens when you're gone, but it's terrible in most cases. All right, verse 26. "She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed." How did they even learn to thank people for good things? How did they learn to call people blessed? Well, the instruction is in her mouth. "Her mouth teaches wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. Her husband also sees it and he praises her. "Many women have done excellently, but you surpassed them all." Which, by the way, all of this is even though "charm can be deceitful, and beauty can be vain, I get that, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her the fruit of her hands. Let her works praise her in the gates."

This is a praiseworthy aspect of women. And in this case I'm looking at verses 26 and following, I'm talking about their teaching, their wisdom. Women are praised as wise teachers, as teachers who can teach kindness, who can teach good things and blessing and wisdom. Even wisdom itself in the book of Proverbs is personified as a woman, a woman who is trying to teach you to be wise. And all I'm saying is there's something about that that is different than this dog eat dog, and again, I'm just talking in generalities about men and women here, the contrast. It's not that, you know, it's not that every woman is in the center of the description. Like there are some women who want to be cage fighters and there are some guys who want to be interior designers. I get that. I understand that. But on the whole. Right? On the whole, there's something about the distinctions in masculinity and femininity that reside within these complementary genders that I'm saying are praiseworthy.



And I just listed five. We could list more, but every complementarian that I've ever met who loves God and is godly is all about praising these things in Scripture. We're not overlooking those. They're not misogynist. Complementarianism is not a misogynistic complementarianism. It's a straw man. It's a caricature. It's people attacking the view because they say, well, if you don't have equal access to all positions within the church, you clearly look down, you denigrate women. I'm saying nonsense, nonsense.

When I look at what the Scripture says, it is not a connection of misogyny with complementarianism. You can add whatever words you want to stop the conversation, patriarchy or whatever. I'm just saying, I don't accept the assault. I don't accept it. And if I feel like I'm on the ropes, you're being defensive. I just have to say, these are things that are no-duh to me. But let's at least state them at the outset.

What is the real concern? Well, let's go back to our passage. And again, there's not a passage about women in ministry, but it does describe a woman who's getting into ministry here, and she's going to be important to the church in Philippi and, of course, because she's hosting this missionary team and beyond. But in verse 15, I want you to read it again after "she was baptized and her household as well." We see her leadership, we see her industry, we see all the things we could praise, probably a lot of things that we just read in Proverbs 31 to this woman, Lydia. "She urged us saying, 'If you've judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.'" And Luke writes, "And she prevailed upon us." So they said yes. Okay.

Now, I know in the context historically you're going to say she's a neophyte to Christianity. You can't make someone stay in your house. She had to ask. But even the way she asks, right? If you look at me and you think in your evaluation of who I am, and if I've been faithful to Christ, then you allow me to be involved in this kind of ministry. That deference to the brokering of a decision, an administrative decision for Paul and the team, is deferred to Paul. Now, again, that's a narrative. And every narrative doesn't mean it's a prescription for us to follow. But plenty of prescriptions throughout the Scripture make this point and make it clear, not by way of example, but by way of command.

So I want to think about what the Bible has to say about the roles that distinguish themselves in men and women within the context of the Church, particularly as it relates to administrative decisions in the organization of the church or missions organization or whatever it might be. So number two, what we want to do is we want to affirm them. I hope you want to affirm them. I want to affirm God's rules about roles. If God's got different roles, I want to affirm them. And you know why? Because I think God gives us good rules and he's not out to just torture us with rules.

If there are rules about what can be done based on your X-X chromosome, I'm going to say, okay, I just want to at least say God is not trying to do something bad to us here. Right? This is the way God has set forth his rules, his glory as expressed in his rules. And frankly, when you read the Old Testament, you read a bunch of rules that were all a part of the ceremonial laws of the Levites, for instance, clean and unclean rules and you probably say, as you think



back and you kind of, you know, as you're sitting there with a cup of coffee reading the Daily Bible Reading, you think, "Oh, yeah, well, I guess I'd have to do that and then I'd have to do that. And it says to do that and I have to do that and bring that kind of... I would do that, you know, because I love God. I love the God that made those instructions."

And then you think, really? Would there be some of those rules you wouldn't like? I'd bet there'd be a ton of those rules you wouldn't like. Think about it. You find some kind of mold or some kind of fungus growing in some back closet, some musty closet. So what do you do? Well, maybe if you are an industrious person, you go to a Home Depot, you go and you get what you need. You cut out that piece of drywall, you go in there, you patch it up, you paint it, and then you say, "Great, I'm good." Or you call some handyman or contractor, and they come out and they fix it all.

Well in the Old Testament, you know, here's the thing. You got fungus in your house. You got some kind of spot growing on the wall. Here's the deal. You can't move back in there unless you call the seminary grad. You got to call a priest. Not just the Levite, I got to call the priest, the guy who's been to, you know, Rabbi School, the guy who's studied the scrolls and he's got to come in and sign off on it. "Well, my contractor said it's fine." "I know, but this guy's got to do it because that's what God said." "Oh, I don't like it. That's inconvenient."

Or what about maybe you're starting to lose some hair and you're thinking, "Oh, I'm going bald, I guess. I don't know. I go to the doctor." You should go to the doctor because, "Yeah, it's no problem, you're just getting bald." Sorry, you're going to have to go get checked out by the priest. The priest. You've got to travel to the priest, find a priest and let him sign off on the fact that you don't have some weird skin disease. But is he the doctor? He's not the doctor. But that's how the ceremonial rules work.

And I'm just telling you, there are a lot of rules. You may have your heart set on some kind of ministry as a Levite on the Temple Mount. You get an injury, you can't walk. Well, you can't serve anymore. Why? Just because I got a bad limb? Yeah, that's how it is. That's just the rules. And all I'm telling you is sometimes the rules you may not even like. But here's one thing I know about the rules in the Bible. James said it. Isaiah said it. Of course God is saying it through both of them. There's only one lawgiver and judge. And I'll add this, it ain't you. Right?

So we're stuck. God has made some rules. And those rules are his. And here's my responsibility: not to make the rules, not to criticize the rules, not to change the rules. But it's for me to keep the rules. Some say, "But you're reading them wrong." Well, we'll address some of that. But let's start through the second half of this message with no time to go. But here we go. Ready? Don't look at the clock. We're going to turn the clock off. Here we go. Because this is really the meat of what you came to get offended over. Ready? So here we go. Here we go. Let's talk about it. We're going to talk about affirming God's rules. Some sub-points for you. Ready?



Letter "A." Cue the sober music. Here it comes. Here's a rule and I'll try and state it and try to... Only qualified men are to lead the church. They lead the church. And by that I mean the top-level leadership of the church. There are three words used for the top-level leadership that is leading and brokering the final decisions, that are judging and making the decisions for the church.

Three words are "Poimen," "Episkopos," and "Presbuteros." Those three Greek words. Poimen is translated depending on your translation "shepherd" or "pastor." Right? It's also equivalent to the word episkopos. Episkopos is translated depending on your translation "overseer" or "bishop." Right? And the third word, presbuteros is translated "elder," elder. And elder is coming from the idea of who led the synagogues in the intertestamental and New Testament times. And episkopos comes from the Latin reference from, I say Latin because it comes from Rome, it's in Greek, of course, but the idea of someone who's going and legislating in Rome like a senator, someone who's making decisions, administrative decisions.

Those three words are crammed together and used synonymously in the New Testament to describe the top-level of leadership. And to know if I can be one I have to go through a vetting process described in First Timothy Chapter 3 and Titus Chapter 1. And it starts with the fact that you got to be a man. A man. Okay? Now let's think through that now that we're all offended at that, because God has just taken a particular role and said only men can do this. But let's think through this.

Number one, let's think about how it comports with a few things, comports with what God said in the Old Testament. God in the Old Testament set up leaders, starting with the tribal leaders of Israel, the sons of Jacob, and they became the namesake of all of the different regions of the Old Testament. And they were all men. Right? God creates a monarchy and we can look at substrata of leadership and he is working through the leadership of men. That's what he chooses to do.

Christ comes along. Letter "B," or number two under Letter "A." Christ comes along and he's going to set up people who have the authority to speak for him. They're called "Apostolos" or "apostles." And those apostles, he prays and he brings all of his disciples together and he chooses 12 of them. Six guys and six girls. Do you remember that? No, that's not what he did. He took 12 men. And he appointed them and authorized them as the apostles. Okay? And I don't think he was afraid. "I don't know. I'm afraid that if I put women in this team, Herod might hear about it and not like it." He wasn't afraid of culture. Right? This is what he chose to do. "Well, I know when we get to heaven, man, we're going to be done with all the patriarchy, that's for sure."

Oh, jot this down. Revelation Chapter 4. This is the scene here in heaven going on presently, where God sits enthroned in unapproachable light. The Lamb sits there on the Father's throne and has a scroll in his hand, at least in the picture that John sees. There are the four living creatures which are weird and they're neuter nouns. And then there are 24 elders sitting on 24 thrones with 24 crowns on their heads. They're all described as the presbuteros in heaven right now, and they are sitting there in deference to the King of kings and Lord of lords. But



they're all men. And most of the assumptions of Bible students are they must be the 12 apostles and the 12 tribal leaders of the Old Testament. Why? Because when we get to the end of the eternal state, we see that all those 24 names are on the walls, foundation, stones and gates of the New Jerusalem.

So they're memorialized and they're all men. And my point is in heaven, the quote unquote patriarchy, if to you that means misogynistic complementarians, I'm going to say, "Well, that's what God does." And he presents this as this is what I'm doing. This is my plan. He's not looking for equal roles in that. He's got literally the souls of 24 men who are sitting on those thrones. That's number three.

Go to the fourth thing, the millennial kingdom, Matthew 19, he speaks of the millennial kingdom and he compares, Peter's like freaking out about the fact that this rich, Jewish young attorney doesn't get saved, and he says, well, what will there be for us? "Listen, you 12 are going to be sitting on the 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel," when the Son of Man comes. So in the millennial kingdom, in the kingdom on earth we don't have six guys, six women, we have 12 men who are there at the top of the heap there, I'm assuming, along with the 12 tribal leaders of the Old Testament, as all these resurrected bodies get resurrected bodies, the souls in the afterlife, and they rule as leaders in the administration of the kingdom.

All of this, by the way, is related to birth order. And I say that and I mean creation order. Every time we start seeing the distinctions in roles we see it based on creation order. And when the leadership role for the Church is limited to a gender-specific group called males or men, it goes back to creation order, both in First Corinthians 11 and First Timothy Chapter 2. All of these things are related. It's like birth order. If their inheritance and the birthright and everything comes to the firstborn, the second born doesn't say, "Well, I couldn't do anything about being second born." Well, you're right. And if you are there saying I'm a godly person and I'm good at all these things and I want to be a pastor. And you said, well, but I'm a woman, and so I can't help that. And that's not fair. The second born could say that in any situation.

All I'm saying is I understand that. These are just God's rules and I'm going to affirm God's rules as good, and therefore I'm going to try to be joyful about God's rule. Some say, "That's easy for you to do because you're a man." It doesn't matter. God could have said only redheads can be pastors, right? I mean, he could have. Or you have to be, you know, you have to be under five feet, you know, six or something. "Oh, I really want to be a pastor." That's not the point. The point is, if God makes rules, we're going to keep those rules and joyfully affirm those rules.

And he said men were created first and then women and in that creation order, there's something about leadership, both in the home and in the Church, we're talking about the Church today, that has to be established and recognized because that's what I chose to do in creation, and that's what I've affirmed in Old Testament, New Testament, eternal state, the Millennial Kingdom and in heaven right now. So that's how we're doing it. And we should say, "Yes, sir." "When we've done all that we're supposed to do, we should say we're unworthy



servants, we've only done that which we ought to have done." That's how Jesus taught us to talk about the rules. And the rules are, as I put it, only qualified men are to lead in the Church, and by lead, I mean the top-level leadership.

Letter "B." And this seems wordy. I get it. But to understand First Timothy 2, to understand what it means to have this differentiation of roles, you need to know this: full assembly teaching, which we're doing right now, and the full assembly of the Church, male, female, young, old, is an expression of the role of authority. The expression of the role of authority. The role of authority that is bound up in the pastors is expressed and exercised in the teaching in the full assembly. And so that is why when Paul says, listen, this has to be a male thing, when there are people assembled with all the people together, it needs to be a male expression of the pastoral leadership of the Church. And in First Timothy that's the point. There is a provision that says that just how we're going to separate and divide the labor here. Now to help you with that, well, then, because here's how most of the books that try to convince me, these guys that write and say, "I used to be like you. I was a complementarian and now I'm an egalitarian and I think women pastors are fantastic. Let's have them at the top of the org chart in the church. That's how we ought to do it."

The argument is often this. I looked in the Bible and I found there are a lot of women who are gifted to teach, right? And they'll quote like Acts Chapter 2, "My Spirit's going to be poured out and your sons and daughters shall prophesy." Daughters! Prophecy! They're teaching. Or we see people that are in the New Testament like Priscilla sitting down and teaching Apollos. She was with her husband, but she does teach him or Abigail giving advice to the king, King David. Right? Or Huldah the prophetess of the Old Testament advising the king about what he should and shouldn't do. And we said, well, they're teachers. They have the gift. Right? The daughters of Philip, we're going to find later in the book of Acts, they prophesy and we think, okay, the prophecy, that's New Testament teaching without a New Testament.

So this is something God is endowing them to teach. If you have the teaching gift, then you should be the pastor. And here's the thing. All pastors have got to teach, but not all teachers are pastors. And that has to be clearly understood in our thinking. And to say, well, if a woman is gifted to teach, she ought to be allowed to be a pastor. That's not the point in Scripture. As a matter of fact, lots of examples of teaching. Matter of fact, here's a verse that will blow your mind. Romans Chapter 15 verse 14. Romans 15:14. All of you should be teachers. Everyone should be teaching each other. He says this, "You're full of goodness, you're filled with knowledge, you're able to instruct one another." The implication is the Church ought to be involved in teaching each other. Colossians. Right? You should be speaking to each other in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." "You should be admonishing and teaching one another."

So all of us are teachers, but there are some who are especially gifted to teach. And there are some women who they're especially gifted to teach. They're endowed with that gift. Right? And they should teach. But the full assembly of that teaching act, that is an act of the authority of the Church, because it's tied together this way in First Timothy 2:12. Teaching in a mixed crowd of the assembled church is the exercising authority over them, and that in a doctrinal



setting like this in church, that's something that is reserved for men and the male leaders of that church who are qualified and gifted and properly trained and ensconced in that role should be the ones who are doing that. And that is a gender-specific role.

Priscilla, Abigail, I pulled out plenty of examples in Bible and those are women are teaching. They're not teaching, though, in the setting that we're talking about here that would be the setting for pastors to do their ministry. So the setting is distinguished for women's teaching as a pattern, and it's obviously done that way by instruction. We're commanded that that can't take place. That you can't have a gal preach in the assembled church, that's what the Bible says you can't do that. Can a woman teach? Absolutely, all kinds of context for that. I don't know.

Titus Chapter 2 clearly says we can have women who are mature and know the truth able to impart and train and teach those that need to be taught. In that case, older, younger. But I mean, sometimes the younger can teach the older if they know more and have more maturity in the things of Christ, they're gifted to teach, they're gifted expositors. Well, what if there are ten people there? Great. What if there are 100? Great. What if there are 800 like in our women's Bible study? Great. Do it. Right? That's not the assembled church and the expression of the authority of the pastors leading over their church.

As Paul said to Titus, "Teach with all authority and let no one disregard you." That picture is not one of deference to a different level of authority. That helps us understand the "silence" passages in the Bible. Okay, let's deal with that one here. The full assembly expression of authority, when they say be silent in the church, women are to be silent in the church. Two passages. Right? One I just quoted, First Timothy Chapter 2 verse 12. There's First Corinthians Chapter 14. Now, in that context, you read that context and say, "Well, a lot of weird stuff is going on in that. You know, people got a prophecy and a revelation and singing a song and just all this going on."

Well, in Chapter 11, when it speaks about the distinctions between men and women, you do have a statement about women praying and prophesying and you think, well, there you go. It looks like it's the assembled Church. It looks like there are people who are gathered together and they're doing that. So let's bring that on. The whole point of that passage, by the way, if God does endow the gifts that he endows to have people do their work and sometimes it's men, sometimes it's women, all of that is said in that context to make sure that the woman makes clear that she's in deference to the authority, the male authorities. She's even supposed to do that by how she dresses. And in that passage, the cultural expression of that deference was the head covering, if you remember the text.

Maybe you need to listen to the sermons, I did two sermons on that passage that are on your worksheet, on the back, "Your Gender Matters to God." If you think, "I don't understand, should I, you know, should I put a head covering when I come to church?" That was a cultural expression, but you can learn about that. I'm not trying to... If it says wear a Q-Tip in your left ear, we would wear that. Right? We'll do whatever God says. But God is not saying you got to



cover your head. God does say you need to make sure that there is deference in any ministry, certainly to the elders of the church.

That's why in Chapter 14 when it talks about speaking the prophecy that you have. Right? You're supposed to let the others judge. And the point is the others that are judging and determining sound doctrine in the Church are always the ones entrusted with that. And that's what we read in First Timothy Chapter 3 and Titus Chapter 1. It is the presbuteros, poimen, episkopos that are in that role to do that. And that is a gender-specific role.

Under this, I should say this, if the full assembly teaching is expression of the role of authority, all non-pastors, which should be all the women of the church and most all of the men should fearlessly... And by that I mean that because sometimes it's afraid to be under subjection in deference to human leaders and they all have feet of clay. But we should fearlessly respect the Bible has a lot to say about that, and defer to our pastors. It is a gender-specific role, but there needs to be deference and there needs to be respect. And that's what the Bible teaches in many passages.

If you want like the "go to" right to the heart of it, Hebrews Chapter 13 verse 17, you are to obey your leaders." Why? Because they keep watch. "They keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account," who's entrusted with that doctrinal accountability, ultimately, when it comes to the church doctrine and the church practice. Right? It's those who rule well, that's the word, and teach well, they teach hard. They have double honors to be given to them. So that's the picture in Scripture and the full assembly teaching doesn't mean that women are not gifted to teach. It doesn't mean that women aren't gifted to lead. And in many ways they do.

I'll put it this way, Letter "C" and you probably not tracking my outline at this point because I'm in hyperspeed, but number "C." This is like "2C." Roles are not determined by giftedness. Please get that. Roles are not determined by giftedness. A Christian cannot be a pastor without gifts to lead and teach. Right? But Christians can be gifted to lead and teach without being pastors. And if you're a woman, we know that has to apply to you. It has to. Is there a role, is there any kind of class or any kind of distinguished class? Well, of course there is. It's called the ministry leaders. We call it this in the Bible the "Diakonos," the deacons. Phoebe, for instance, in Romans Chapter 16, is described as this deacon in the church of Cencreae, and that church has Phoebe, who's praised.

And then Prisca, which is just short for Priscilla, and Aquila are also praised. These two women, Priscilla and Phoebe, were both praised as sacrificial contributors to the ministry. And even Phoebe is given that title, the diakonos, the teacher. It's a feminine form of the word, not teacher, but servant of the church. They're ministering in the church. We have women who minister in the church. Absolutely, some on staff, some have lots of responsibility, but all of them are not in the slot, the Bible says, of that top-tiered final say of doctrine and practice and administration of the poimen, episkopos and presbuteros, the pastors, overseers and elders, which is all one class of people in the Bible.



If you dare to do a small group this week, maybe some should just skip small groups. But if you go to small groups, one of the passages I shoved you into is First Timothy Chapter 2, where some of this is found in First Corinthians 11. But when you get to First Timothy Chapter 2, if you do do that, you're going to find this weird passage about child bearing and you're going to go, "That's weird," right? Like, that's weird. I just want to say this, both men and women, and this is the point, the distinctive roles, both men and women, here's how I put it, have important gender-specific roles. Right?

Now note what I just said. It just means that that gender has gender-specific roles because men, not all men are pastors. Right? And you're going to read the verse about the preservation of women by childbearing and you going to say, "Well, I guess I'm not a full woman if I don't have a kid." No, it's not what it's saying. Right? Not all women are mothers. As a matter of fact, they're praised when, in First Corinthians 7, they're not mothers and they are fully given to devotion to God. But it does say in the passage, here's one thing a man can't do, no matter what Apple will send you as an icon on your phone, men cannot get pregnant.

And so what you need to say is here is a gender-specific role. And he uses the word "Sozo," which is translated "save." And you think saved? Like saved from hell? No, no, no. We use saved, by the way, in a lot of ways. Right? "I saved a soul from hell, I shared the gospel." I also say, "I saved my leftovers from the Italian restaurant and it's in the fridge." And that means something completely different. So saved is the same word. Same concept. There's a breadth of meaning. And sozo, to be saved in this passage is there's something that preserves here in the act that is gender-specific. And if you do it well with faith and good works and then it is praiseworthy and lauded. Just like men, not all men are pastors, but in that preserving role of leading in the church, it is praiseworthy if it's done well, as Paul said, work hard at ruling and teaching and preaching. Hey, that's praiseworthy. And both the Church and the human race are preserved through those gender-specific functions.

So there's a lot here that should remind us that God is not trying to make one superior to the other. We're differentiating the roles. And of course, motherhood, you know, we can get into the domestic roles, but this is not a sermon about that. We're talking about the Church. And the Church is very clear on this matter. Now, we live in insubordinate times. And I use that word advisedly and I pull it out of the New Testament, at least our English New Testament. We live much like they did in the days of the judges. Twice in Judges, and that's the last verse in Chapter 24, is "There was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes." We live in a day like that.

Matter of fact, a lot of you listening to my sermon you going to do whatever you want, you're going to believe whatever you want. You know you're not even going to pick up a book and try and challenge it. But just like, "Oh, whatever. I'm just going to do whatever I think is right. I'll find a church that believes what I believe." We live in a day like that, right? But we need to understand, just like Paul told Titus when he's in Crete and he said, you live in a place with lazy gluttons and brutes and evil people and they're "insubordinate." That's the word he used. He said what I want for you, though, Titus, as you put people in positions of leadership, of



pastorate, of pastoring, of being an overseer to hold to the trustworthy word as it was taught to you. Don't let it slide. Don't let it go. So that you can teach with "sound doctrine." I'm quoting now and it says this that you can "rebuke those who contradict because many are insubordinate."

There are a lot of people out there saying stuff that they shouldn't say. And he says in that passage, they're changing this stuff for "selfish gain." Right? And I'm not saying people are trying to make more money by being egalitarian, but I am saying the pressures, there's something to gain. I mean, I could do better by not having the "operation crowd-reduction" sermons like this. Right? I could do better by going along with all the other churches that say, "Well, we're done with all this archaic, patriarchal distinction between roles. Just get some women on the pastoral team, would you, Pastor Mike?" We could do that. Right? And that probably would make a lot of people happy, it would probably grow the church that way.

But the bottom line is the reality in a context of an insubordinate culture, this atomistic, like I just I'm going to decide for myself is for us to hold to sound doctrine. God has got good rules for us and we're going to keep those rules. We have no intention of changing the definitions of men and women. I'm not going to ask for your pronouns. I'm going to teach what I think the Bible clearly says. And I know there are arguments against it. I've read more books against it, I think, this week than I have for it, to just say to myself, I need to make sure that this is the trustworthy word that is taught to you, that is from the Scripture. And I trust that you would affirm, as I said in the second half of this sermon, God's good rules about roles. And so I commend you to that work. And why don't you stand with me and I'll let you go and I'll put my feet up and see if anybody comes back next week. (audience applause) I love you.

Let's pray. God, we, I mean, I feel just with very little time to get these things out. I pray that it can be resonating in the hearts of those who, like me, just want to do whatever it is you say. And if this is what you've said, there should be a gender-specific pastorate then we want to hold to that even if everyone else is going to throw rocks at us, even if they're going to call us haters or phobic or whatever they're going to call us next. And we just want to say we want to be faithful and we think this is fidelity to your clear teaching.

And so, God, I just pray for those in a day that, as I said, there's a lot of casting off of the burdens of these kinds of restrictions in their minds, that we would look forward to a day when there's no jealousy, no rivalry, no envy, no strife and your rules and who you put in places and positions, whether it's based on, you know, ethnicity or whether it's based on birth order or whether it's based on gender, that we will applaud it. Just like in the first century, Jesus' ministry of the Jew first and also then the Greek. I mean, that's how the Church started and we recognize that. We know there was something privileged about the gospel coming first to the sons of Israel. And so, God, we just pray that we would be people that affirm you, that just have an awe over the fact that you would even include us in redemption, knowing how sinful we are and how unworthy we are to receive your grace.

So we thank you for your kindness to us. We want to be faithful to your word. Pray you dismiss us now, if for nothing else, even if people disagree, to go and do the homework on



this text and this text, many texts all throughout the Scripture to try and come to a conclusion that we can altogether, as Paul said in First Corinthians 1:10, be in agreement. We should agree as a church on these matters. And we just pray that more churches would be bold and stand firm on your word, particularly when they have a lot of pressure not to.

In Jesus name. Amen.