Good afternoon. This presentation is going to be different from what most of us are used to and it’s intentional. For one thing, I had three introductions but I couldn’t decide which one to use. Therefore, I’ll be incorporating all of them. Women do that. We don’t like to exclude things. We like to gather things in and not let anyone or anything get left out.

About five years ago, I was listening to a sermon in Africa and its presentation really struck me. Pastor Hachibamba began by saying, “Sometimes when you hear a sermon, you’ll have a theme and then you’ll have parts and it’s all nice and logical. I’m not going to do that.” He said, “Sometimes when you hear a sermon, you could describe it as spiral. You’ll touch on a point and then you’ll come around and pick it up again and expand and pick it up again and expand.” He said, “I’m not going to do that either.” He went through about three or four of those. Then he said, “Sometimes a sermon is preached in which it starts out with a lot of information, comes to a point and then makes the application expanding out again. That’s what I’m going to do today.” To this day, years later, I remember that sermon text and what that sermon was about because he told us ahead of time what he was going to do.

Introduction number one: I’m going to explain ahead of time what I’m going to do. This is going to be a presentation which is very “female.” This will be similar to reading Ecclesiastes or the Gospel of John. Those who have studied either of these books or simply read them, knows that from the start it feels as if one is spinning. The spinning continues until it feels one just might spin out of control. That’s what this presentation is going to be like because that’s the way women think. It’s going to be more reflective and thematic as opposed to being exegetic. I’m not going to be looking at individual words or things. I’m looking at the big picture. That’s the way we women think. There’s going to be more emphasis on perception of the facts than on facts in isolation from perception. This is a big point, and when we get to it, I’m going to expand it further.

Finally, there’s going to be a noted contrast to the straight-line, “flat-line” thinking that most of our WELS men and leaders are comfortable with. I have to explain a bit. “Flat-line.” I’m a nurse. One is supposed to be seeing a bleep, bleep, bleep on the heart monitor. When it’s flat, the heart is not working. The person is dead! That’s not good! The style I’m using is not going to be better than or worse than the “flat-line.” It’s going to be different. It’s going to be pointing out key differences in men and women thought patters. Women tend to think in constantly spiraling circular patterns. We have a word for that in my profession, too. It’s called torsa de pointe. It reflects a semi-erratic electrical conduction that’s incapable of pumping blood which also kills people. If we want to maintain life, when we’re working together in mixed groups of men and women, we need to simulate a life sustaining pattern of electrical activity reflecting a heart beat and regular flat-line intervals. Either extreme can’t support life.
I be using a “flat-line/torsa de pointe” combination in this presentation, but it’s probably going to be more torsa de pointe than flat-line. My prayer is for presentation to encourage debate and exploration on this issue. I’m not standing here to say the way it ought to be and to argue why it should be a certain way because I don’t know how it should be. But I do intend to put some issues out there to help our men develop insight into where Christian women are coming from. And hopefully, like putting this paper together helped me, we women will be able to better articulate where we’re coming from. Failure to clearly articulate our thoughts in words our Christian brothers can follow is a big part of the problem. That was introduction number one.

Introduction number two: A woman speaking to a mixed group on women leadership isn’t common in the WELS. Has it ever happened before? Actually having a woman talking about women’s leadership to a group of WELS leaders? I’m not aware of it, if it has. To initiate something like this is very uncharacteristic of me. In my life, I have found myself in leadership positions. I have found myself speaking at retreats. I have found myself in administrative positions. I have found myself working overseas in the American embassy and Canadian High Commission health units. Not once did I seek any of those positions. Not once did I go after them or say, “I want to do this and I’m going to lobby for it and I’m going to get it.”

The only other time I pursued something was when I began a woman led women’s Bible study ten years ago. What pushed me in that instance was two-fold. First, I know what it takes for me to focus and to make sure that I am in Scripture regularly, and for me that means to teach. If I’m not teaching, I’ll put it off and I won’t quite get to it. Second, I had really tuned in to my younger sisters and sisters-in-law. These are the women who are raising the next generation. As my sister said, “You know, if the pastor doesn’t have everything in the first and last sentences of his sermon, I get nothing.” From the time our young moms go to church with their oldest child until the youngest child has graduated from high school, through the sermon, through the service, she is involved with them. She can’t be getting much out of the sermon. At that time, women in our congregation who had young children were discouraged from being at Bible class because the children were distracting to others. What was happening was these mothers, who are responsible for the care of their children, weren’t being spiritually fed. - it’s outflow all the time for them. The only way to change the situation was to have a woman led Bible study where they could feel comfortable with their nursing babies, could sit down and work together. That situation is what it took to get me to step forward and say, “I have to do this.” Today is only the second time in my life I’ve stepped forward without an invitation and said, “I have to do this.” But the reason is coming later.

Introduction number three: This was actually going to be in the conclusion. However, I tend to talk too long so the conclusion gets dropped. I didn’t want to do that because this point is important, so important it needs to be up front. Much of what I’m presenting could come across as being negative or complaining. It isn’t. The reason it isn’t is because the men and the leaders of the WELS have already opened the door for women in leadership. I need to thank them. If it weren’t for the Commission on Adult Discipleship, the Parish Planning people, or the Christian men in my family - my father and my husband, among others - I wouldn’t be here today. They have already opened the door and have affirmed that I, as a Christian woman, have something to offer. That is what’s giving me the courage to be here. So I want to start by saying “thank you” to those in our WELS leadership who have recognized that 50% of our church body has been under-utilized. These men are just as anxious as we women to open the door so we’re all working together. Christian men and women working together in Kingdom work is the point of this presentation.
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All authority to deal with women and leadership roles in the WELS rests with the men. This is a truth. We hear a lot about empowering women in our world today. The truth is you can’t empower women. I hear a similar mantra in Central Africa. Empower women because that’s how you’re going to take care of the AIDS epidemic. Empower women? You can’t empower women. No matter what you say, the man standing next to a woman is bigger and stronger. You can’t give someone strength. You can’t empower the women in our synod either. No matter how you look at it, this authority, this headship role, the power in the church has been given to men. God made them for it. He made their brains for it. He made their physiques for it. You can’t give power to women. So the only way that current situation can change in our synod is if our Christian brothers pick it up, open the doors, walk ahead of us, and are then also behind us. Obstacles to moving forward will be presented by our women as much as by some of our men. Why that is I’ll discuss a little bit later in this presentation.

It’s time for some “flat-line” thinking. The following is an outline of the rest of the presentation. Point one: In a woman’s mind, leadership and authority are not synonyms. Women don’t lead by exercising authority. If we look at our homes, at the women in our homes, how do we women lead? We don’t lead by saying “because I said so,” unless we’re dealing with a little kid. Women lead by encouraging, by enticing, by being a colleague or a friend. That’s the way we women lead. When women are talking about leadership, about wanting a leadership position, about looking for a leadership position, or about being a leader in their congregations, they are not talking about wanting to exercise authority. So we don’t need to be told we can’t do what we’re not asking to do. Women see leadership and authority as very distinct and separate entities.

Point two: Women in today’s WELS churches are leaders, just as they are in their own homes. This has been true for the entire history of the WELS and of the Christian Church. Recognize the truth of this fact. We’re not going to be debating whether or not women ought to be leaders in the Church. The fact is women are leaders in the Church. As a group we’re just not seeing them, not recognizing them. Recognize, value and develop the leadership abilities of the gifted women the Lord has given the WELS. They are there. Learn to see them. Don’t be looking past them.

Why don’t we see them? Here is another difference between men and women and the way our brains work. When men are pointed in a certain direction it’s like a heat-seeking missile. They cannot see anything other than what they’ve “locked in” on and that’s good. That serves the Church very well. When the truth of Scripture is at stake we don’t want to be deterred from it. To be locked in on the truth is exactly what the Church needs. That’s why men are in the authority positions in the Church. However, when you’re locked on to authority in the church, sometimes other forms of leadership aren’t seen. It’s not that women’s leadership doesn’t exist it’s simply not recognized as women’s leadership styles are different.

Point three: WELS women leaders: use them or lose them.

So, now that we’ve established where we’re headed, let’s go back to the beginning. In a woman’s mind leadership and authority are not synonyms. In a woman’s mind the definition of a leader is something like this: A leader is someone who notices that every time she stops suddenly, someone is crashing into her from the rear. We discover we are leaders. We don’t seek to be leaders. Those of us who have had this “crashing-into-the-rear” experience have been noticing it from the time we were little kids. We can’t even tell you why. Utilizing this definition, how many mothers are not leaders? How many of them can stop suddenly and not have this cascade of little kids run into them from the back?
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Mothers are leaders. An article in USA Today less than a year ago about leadership made the point that stay-at-home moms were honing their leadership skills, which actually prepared them for leadership roles in the secular world. Using our definition of leadership, we learn to find women leaders by looking for those women who take a step in one direction and sure enough, there is a crowd behind them. They take a step in another direction and, sure enough, there's a crowd behind them.

What is a leader then? How is it separate from exercising authority? When we look it up in the dictionary, it’s really pretty clear. A leader is someone who is out front. It is the opposite of a follower. If you’re not a follower, you likely grew up like I did with a mother who said, “If everyone else jumps in the lake are you going to?” You thereby learned to not be a follower. You learned to think for yourself. If one isn’t a follower, it’s then likely she’s one out in front. So, that would make you a woman leader, who leads by enticing, coercing, encouraging.

Exercising authority, on the other hand, has to do with causing someone else to obey. Causing, enforcing. Those are the words that come with exercising authority. Women don’t like exercising authority. Three of my sisters are married to men who are gone for long periods of time in connection with their work. One is gone for a week at a time working on the railroad. Another one’s husband was in the Marine Corps, gone for as much as six months at a time. When the men are gone, these women can’t wait for their husbands to get back home. When the men are gone, the wives have to be exercising authority. It is that point that makes them tired, fatigued. Having to exercise authority makes the father, the husband, a welcome sight in the eyes of the mother. When he comes back he can take care of wielding authority in the home.

Women don’t like exercising authority. I don’t like forcing somebody else to do something. That’s not comfortable for me. So when one speaks of women in leadership position one must realize women are not only not seeking to exercise authority, they don’t like it. They don’t want it.

Now let’s consider women leaders. Christian women tend to discover that people are following them. They rarely seek a following. It’s true in our homes as well as in the church and society. In our minds leadership is a gift and talent from God. The Bible is filled with passages that support this. These passages are listed on the handout. What’s interesting to me, however, is that when gifts are listed, they are not listed according to “men do this” and “women do that.” These are gifts given to the Body of Christ. The only thing that is really distinctive in Scripture is that Christian women are not to teach or exercise authority over men. But this isn’t a problem as we don’t like exercising authority at all. To do so over Christian men would be particularly upsetting to us.

There are however, many Scriptural examples of women who lead without exercising authority. In all of the reading I have done, most of it written by men, which deals with leadership and exercising authority, I don’t see many references to these women. Women like Eve, Miriam, Rebecca, Deborah, Jael, Naomi, Hannah, Abigail, Bathsheba, Huldah, the wife of noble character in Proverbs 31, Jesus’ mother, Mary, Martha, Priscilla, the Jewish women of Acts, Philip’s daughters, Lydia, Euodia, Syntyche, to name a few, are all leaders. All were pretty powerful leaders. When I had my husband take a look at this, the one that he added was Abigail. His point was that Abigail taught David how to lead by the way she worked with Nabal, her foolish husband. She encouraged David to not follow through on what he was planning to do to Nabal and to choose instead a better course of action. According to my husband, Abigail actually taught David how to lead.
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Consider Rebecca and Bathsheba. Consider the methods used by each to secure a long-standing promise impacting the Messianic lineage. Rebecca had been told that Jacob was the one through whom the promise would transfer. But fast-forward about seventy years, and Isaac was intent on giving that blessing to Esau. It was Rebecca who urged Jacob, “No, it isn’t right. It’s not going to happen.” Together they deceived Isaac. In Rebecca’s mind the Messianic line had been promised to Jacob. She made sure it was his.

A little later we find Bathsheba facing a similar situation. David was old and sick. It had been promised that Solomon would be the next king. However, David, for some reason, was unaware of the fact that Adonijah had gone up into the hills, was celebrating, declaring himself to be king. Nathan came to Bathsheba and said, “This isn’t according to the promise David made to you. Therefore, you go in and talk to David. Tell him what is going on. He’s not seeing it.” I don’t know what he was “locked-in” on. He already had one son who had conspired against him and led an uprising. But David wasn’t seeing that a second one was doing the same thing. Bathsheba went in and talked to David. “If you don’t act now, Solomon is not going to get the kingship you promised him.” Nathan came in when she finished speaking - they had pre-arraigned this - and said the same thing. That very day Solomon was crowned so news of Solomon’s coronation reached those in the hills as they were trying to take over that kingdom. Bathsheba exercised some very good leadership. What she was doing was clinging to a promise that had been made. She was going to make sure it occurred the way the Lord had promised.

There are other Bible examples of women who showed leadership. Miriam is on the list. Miriam is an example of both good female leadership and an attempt to exercise authority over men. Miriam was a leader of the women. Miriam was composing songs and hymns and was doing just fine until she conspired with Aaron to try to take Moses’ authority. The Lord was not amused by her actions and she ended up with leprosy “outside of the camp.” Interestingly - and I think this is something I ask my Christian brothers to keep in mind - when she was “outside the camp” Moses was the one who interceded on her behalf. Moses was the one who said, “We’re not moving on until Miriam is able to join us.” So even though she was clearly in the wrong and clearly was disciplined for being in the wrong, it was Moses, the one she had wronged, who interceded for her.

Let’s contrast Deborah and Jael, an example of good female leadership, with Jezebel and Athaliah, an example of women also exercising authority. We often hear about Deborah as judge and then get into all this discussion about whether or not she was supposed to be a judge, was she exercising authority, was Barak in the wrong. When I read that section of Scripture, those questions don’t concern me. I’m much more interested in whether or not Deborah was doing what the Lord wanted her to do. It’s obvious that she was. It is also obvious that she was very aware that the appearance of exercising authority should not rest with her. She was the one who said to Barak, “No, I shouldn’t go into battle with you because the glory is going to go to a woman.” He said, “I want you there.” The glory did end up going to a woman, but it wasn’t Deborah. It was Jael. You can certainly see the leadership demonstrated by Deborah and the spirit in which she operated. She was doing whatever God had given her to do to serve His people. Jael then saw Sisera coming, knew that he was the enemy of God’s people and said in her very nice woman’s enticing voice, “Come into my tent. Have a glass of milk. Have a nice little sleep.” When he fell asleep, she took the tent stake and put it through his skull. She would not have had the courage to do that if Deborah hadn’t led well, let her know that when you’re talking about protecting God’s people and doing God’s work, this is OK.
Now let’s contrast it with Jezebel. Jezebel was also a woman who was certainly a leader and she certainly exercised authority. When one reads Scripture it was Jezebel who killed the prophets. It was Jezebel who was after Elijah. It was Jezebel who pushed Ahab to get Naboth’s vineyard. So what’s the connection with Athiliah? Athiliah would have either been Jezebel’s daughter or stepdaughter. Athiliah is the only woman who became queen over Judah. The way she did that - she was really a skunk - was to try to “destroy the royal house,” i.e. kill her grandchildren. God ordained that she miss one, Joash.

The Scriptural examples we have which combine female leadership and with exercising authority, are not exactly positive, to say the least. When talking to women about leadership and authority we need to focus on those examples of women who led without exercising authority and the results of such leadership. Then compare them to those women who led and exercised authority and study the results of their actions. It becomes pretty clear as to how the Lord wants women to lead.

Women in today’s WELS churches are leaders just as they are in their own homes. This has been true for the entire history of the Christian church. Recognize this fact. I wonder if any of this group heard, as I did, who it was in Professor Siggelkow’s family who said, “I don’t want my children to be raised in this Reformed structure.” It was his great-grandmother. In my own background, it was my Lutheran great-grandmother who said to the man she married, “My children are not going to be raised with the falsehood of Rome. They are going to be raised Lutheran.” From that ancestry, one of my uncles counted there are something like nine or ten pastors and a whole group of schoolteachers. But again, it was my great-grandmother who took the lead in the matter.

Women have been leaders in the church. Look at the world around us including our own homes. All who are married know that in the house, the tone that the wife sets is really powerful as far as what’s going on in that home. If she’s happy, the house is happy. If she’s not happy, the house isn’t happy. Women are very much leaders. They are the ones who are shaping the next generation. What they teach their children about respecting their fathers, about the church, makes them very powerful leaders in their own homes.

If the church doesn’t provide leaders for WELS young women to follow, our society will. That’s a scary thought, but very true. Everyone grows up looking for someone to follow. If our young girls are growing up in a group that says, “Christian women aren’t leaders. Don’t follow them,” who will they be following? Society? Why do some of our young, Christian women, and I repeat, young, Christian women, not understand why a pro-abortion stance isn’t right? Why do they not understand it? Who have they been following? Have they been led to believe that a woman in the church isn’t worth following and that she isn’t worth listening to? I don’t know. I think that in the minds and the eyes of our young women, we have to elevate our Christian women leaders and not try to keep them down. The next generation of women is going to be following somebody. If they’ve been told, “Don’t follow that Christian woman leader,” they’re going to follow somebody else.

Look at your congregations. See those women who have followers. These are your leaders whether they are in an official position or not. See them. Watch out for women like me. Everywhere I go, people end up behind me. I have had young women say to me - it scares me and it ought to scare the rest of you - “You are my hero. I want to be like you.” That scares me because whatever I do, whether it is following Scripture or whether it is not following Scripture, that group is going to be behind me. There are leadership qualities one inherits from one’s parents. Leadership is a gift. There are some learned leadership qualities, especially some of the “technical” things. But for a long time in my mind, talented, gifted people are those, when asked, “How do you do that?” reply, “I
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don’t know. It just happens.” The talented, gifted women leaders among us are the ones who, like me, when asked, “Why are so many following you?” reply, “I don’t know. It just happens.” These women are in our WELS congregations in rich measure. See them. Understand them. Listen to them. Because wherever they go, there’s going to be a shift. These are the women who, when they walk into a room with a discussion going on, heads turn toward them. And when they say something, the group generally says, “Yeah, that’s a good idea.” They’re the ones who when they come onto the scene, will draw everyone else’s attention.

Once the women leaders have been identified, we as a church need to better value and develop the leadership abilities of these gifted women the Lord has given the WELS. As the Zambians say, “Don’t talk to us short.” In the US, when we talk to someone short, it refers to being short tempered. That’s not what the Zambians mean. They mean, “Don’t talk to us like children.” Often, in a good sense, women and children have been used in the same phrase. We hear, “Women and children first.” “Take care of the women and children.” The words are used together so often that in some minds, “women and children,” become synonyms. We aren’t children. We don’t think like children. We don’t act like children. We need to be valued as adults. “Don’t talk to us short.” When talking to a child, phrases like, “because I said so,” “because I’m your father,” or “because I’m your mother,” will suffice as explanation. However, when talking to another adult, much more explanation is required. Don’t merely try to “talk us out of” our view points either. Listen to and value what women bring to the discussion. So, treat us like adults and “don’t talk to us short.”

Women make up about 50% of any church body. They represent 50% of the gifts the Lord has bestowed on His church to carry out His work. Men and women are different and yet complementary to each other with men in the headship position. Men rely heavily on facts. This is a really important distinction. Women rely heavily on perception and intuition. Men accept a perception as truth only if supported by facts. Women accept a perception as truth until and unless it’s proven false by facts. This is a huge difference in the way we approach things.

Women rely on something called intuition or perceived reality. The dictionary defines intuition as, “a conclusion that is arrived at without supporting data.” Women do that a lot. How? Why are men not very good at it? It has to do with the way the LORD created male and female brains. This created difference has become quite clear in recent years. In the brain there are two halves. The one half really excels with things like logic and fact orientation. The other one is more artistically sensitive. There is communication between the two halves, but before a male is born, a surge of testosterone shrinks one half of the brain and destroys some of the connections. This is good because it explains why men are able to focus on one thing without being sidetracked. Women, however, have a lot of “crosstalk” between the two brain hemispheres. Not only do we have a lot of “crosstalk” and awareness of what’s going on around us, but it’s attached to emotion. The emotional part of a woman’s brain is much bigger than a man’s.

What does that mean when trying to understand intuition? It means that when I see something that has gone on, I will, without consciously thinking about it, relate it to another time when that same set of circumstances has occurred. Additionally, the emotion that occurred the first time is triggered the second time. This is very valuable in the nursing/medical field. That’s where I learned to understand intuition. I need to explain that a bit more. Good intensive care nurses, good emergency room nurses, good nurses in general, experienced nurses, will often be able to perceive, and will be able to tell a physician, when someone is going to get sick. In the body there is a mechanism identified as homeostasis. If one starts to seriously bleed, a lot of people don’t realize this, the blood pressure doesn’t drop immediately because your body sends into action all these coping mechanisms
to keep the blood pressure up. As a matter of fact, there is generally a slight rise in blood pressure. The percentage of red blood cells measured, called the hematocrit, doesn’t drop for two to four hours after the bleeding’s begun. Liver failure isn’t apparent until 90% of the liver isn’t functioning. This is also true with kidney failure. There is this whole time span between when something serious has occurred and the facts substantiate that it has occurred.

Good nurses, experienced nurses, because they have seen it before, will pick up on pre-crisis signals. Most physicians, when notified, “So and so is going to crash,” will ask, “What’s wrong? How’s the blood pressure?” If answered, “The BP is still OK, but they’re going to crash,” the good physicians will come in before the crisis develops. That’s intuition operating in a way that it is really useful. The physicians are operating in a complementary way with the nurses in that they don’t demand the facts before they come to help. They trust the intuition of the nurses.

How does that apply to us? The role that emotion plays - and this goes right into why I pursued this opportunity to speak to this group - is that I’m worried. My intuition tells me that this issue in the WELS is approaching a crisis state and it has potential for doing great harm. The discussion I heard earlier today about the role of demonstrating deeds of love in WELS mission outreach is a good example of something for which women are well suited. Women are especially suited for such areas of ministry because they’re relationship oriented. Women rather quickly identify where needs are. When ministering cross-culturally, women “sense” physical needs more quickly than men. So we really can’t afford to lose the gifts of WELS women at this time in our history can we?

Ten years ago, if someone said the WELS was in danger of losing large numbers of valuable Christian women, I would’ve discounted the idea as an overreaction. At that time, the women who were leaving our church didn’t like the phrasing about submitting. They were rebelling against the fact that men have headship. What I’m seeing now is a division among our God-fearing, committed Christian women. They’re going into two different camps, and that worries me. In the one camp we find the women who have been studying Scripture yearn to use their talents, which include leadership and administration, in the service of the Church. They’re compelled by Scripture to use their talents in the service of the Church. However, this group is too often told by that same Church, “No, you can’t.” So the problem for them comes down to this. God is saying, “Use your talents for me,” and the Church is saying, “No, you can’t.” What are these women to do?

In the other camp we find women - and these are mostly 40, 50, 60-year-old women - who have been present during most of this 40 year controversy about the role of women in the WELS. They come from the 1960s when the WELS rightly identified exercising authority over men as contrary to Scripture and told our women not to follow the pagan world on “women’s lib” issues. What women in this age group have heard repeatedly is to use leadership skills is a sin; to use administrative skills is a sin. Many of these women are conscience bound to not use talents, if they are “the wrong” talents.

So now we find two groups of WELS women – and remember, these are our committed, Christian women, one group getting frustrated because they feel conscience-bound to use their gifts in the work of the church, and the other group anxiety ridden because they think they’re sinning if they are using them. We have to deal with this and deal with it now.

I’ve been leading a women’s Bible study for over 10 years. We started in Genesis and we’re working our way through the Bible. Because of my foreign mission work, I’m aware of what goes on in other churches. I am convinced more and more that the Lord through the WELS has protected the true orthodoxy of Scripture. Our Confessions agree and line up with Scripture every time. Our use of
the sacraments agrees with Scripture every time. “I’m saved by grace alone.” It agrees and lines up with Scripture every time. To relate this to what Isaiah said, the truth of Scripture is too great a gift for a group of 400,000 people. We need to mobilize our men and women and get this message out. There’s a whole world out there dying to hear it.

How do we mobilize our women? To begin with, equip our women to be good Christian leaders. Remember that they’re leading because they’re those defined as having followers. If they aren’t equipped with Scripture and aren’t Spirit driven, where are they going and how many are going with them? Stop telling Christian women to stop leading! Recognize that they are leading and equip them to be good Christian leaders.

Jesus Christ is the best example for any Christian to follow. However, on the subject of leadership roles for women it’s very difficult to use His example because I can’t look at Jesus without seeing authority and leadership right together. When we use Scriptural leadership models for women we need to use Scriptural models of leadership without authority. Women can’t lead like Jesus did. We don’t lead by exercising authority. We have to lead like the godly women led. I would suggest that the great “she” of Scripture, the Church, together with the many positive biblical women examples be utilized as models for women.

Notice, I said that we women should be doing the studying together with an equipped leader. A Bible study by a man on women’s issues often misses the points that women are looking for. Men are just not coming from the same place. The words men use don’t mean the same thing to the women that they do to men. We need to equip our women leaders with armor that fits us. Remember when David went to fight Goliath? Remember the equipment he was given? He was given Saul’s armor, the king’s equipment. It didn’t fit. It didn’t work. He took it off. Women can’t use men’s spiritual equipment either. Our Christian brothers have to work with us so that we can be equipped in a way which assists and serves us.

Our men and women leaders need to work together to address this situation. We need “flat-line” thinking to balance all of the “heart action.” The same automatic triggering of emotion that warns us of danger can also suck us accepting something false. If a woman’s first experience with something was good, anything that resembles that experience tends to be swallowed pretty easily unless some “flat-liner” says, “No, there’s a problem here.” We need to have our men and women working and thinking together to get it straight.

Here again is my conclusion: WELS Women Leaders in the Church: Use them or lose them. I feel the WELS is approaching a crisis on this issue. Listen to us. It’s not a command. It’s a plea. Attitudes have already pushed some women leaders to use their talents outside of the church, as they feel unwelcome in the church. But what is the real question? Not whether or not some WELS women are leaders. They’re there. Recognize them, value them, equip them, use them or lose them. The tough question, which we need to work together on, is this, “What leadership positions can be and, perhaps, are best filled by someone with a woman’s perspective and talents?” That would have to be a question for another symposium. But it is a question which must eventually be answered. There’s one other thing I want to share with you. There is a nursery rhyme that keeps coming into my head. When my niece was four years old, she loved this thing about Little Bunny Foo Foo hopping through the forest, scooping up the field mice, and bopping ‘em on the head. Down came the Good Fairy and she said, “Little Bunny Foo Foo, I don’t want to see you scooping up the field mice, bopping ‘em on the head.” Do you know why this is connected in my head? There are some Bunny Foo Foos out there who have been scooping up your women field mice and bopping ‘em on the head. Those field mice are trying to
Leadership for WELS Women

do what the Lord wants them to do. The field mice can’t do anything about the Bunny Foo Foos. It’s our Christian brothers who have to be the Good Fairies and say, “Little Bunny Foo Foo, I don’t want to see you scooping up the field mice and bopping ’em on the head.” What happens among the field mice when what seems to us as random scooping and bopping, is the one group of field mice is going to say, “I’m not going to get bopped. I’m getting away from those Bunny Foo Foos.” The other group is going to say, “Freeze. Maybe he won’t see us.” What results is 50% of our church body which is rendered ineffective.

Last point: In today’s world can the WELS afford to have half of its talent bank ineffective?

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