



Throw Another Pebble on the Pile: One Woman's Leadership Journey in the Church

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A triumphant memoir, Throw Another Pebble on the Pile is about answering a call to church leadership despite the misogynistic roadblocks set in the way.

Michelle Felice's memoir *Throw Another Pebble on the Pile* is about overcoming discrimination as a woman pastor in a Canadian Baptist church.

The book opens with a startling scene: Felice was met with shock and awe when she introduced herself as a pastor in 2017 while attending a conference for fellow pastors. She was greeted with a ridiculous question: "How can a woman be a pastor? Women menstruate!" It was not the first time that a man had attempted to discredit her ability to lead a church congregation.

The book then reflects on Felice's childhood cultivation of her relationship with God, reflecting her keen knowledge of the Bible. She perceived a call to church ministry as a young adult, but her marriage and family led her to a more pragmatic career as an X-ray technologist. Still, she was an active member of her church community. After being invited to serve as a volunteer for the children's ministry, she transitioned to a staff position, whereupon it became clear to the lead pastor that Felice's gifts and talents were those of a preacher. Encouraged, she attended seminary and obtained her master's degree, learning to formulate theological arguments to combat the constant onslaught of discrimination.

The organizing conceit of the pile of pebbles appears throughout—an extended metaphor for individual acts of discrimination. Each act of injustice perpetuated against Felice increased the weight of the load. The pebbles are akin to macro- and microaggressions: Some comments were tiny, laughable pebbles, others boulders that manifested serious obstacles to Felice's career and the unity of her church community.

In addition to such personal slights, the book works through issues including patriarchy, the objectification of women, and workplace discrimination, proffering insights into how religious communities perpetuate discriminatory practices under the guise of orthodox biblical interpretation. At times its organization is too loose; orienting details, including time stamps, are not always included. Still, the book moves forward with a sense of triumph: After twenty years of membership in her church, Felice proved to be not just a faithful congregant but an effective church leader, building bridges among marginalized communities and representing her church with pride at national conferences. Hers is a story of support that passes the torch: She equipped women from numerous churches to become leaders in their own communities, even knowing that the bylaws that governed her church community meant that she would never be eligible to become the head pastor herself.

Throw Another Pebble on the Pile is a testimonial memoir about persevering as a pastor to claim joy in the face of relentless discrimination.

PAIGE SOTO (November 26, 2024)

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