

# Dr. Gary Meadors, Knowing God's Will, Session 8b, Values, Part 2

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Welcome back. We are in lesson GM8. And we've had to divide 8 into section A and section B. That's reflected in your table of contents.

But when I got into this, I realized I was way over time. Therefore, I had to divide it out. I don't want to shortchange this issue.

Okay. In slides 1 to 18 of your GM8, you will notice that we talked about a lot of things about values. And we concluded that with the slide you're looking at now, slide 18, looking at the fruit of the spirit and 2 Peter's wheel of love.

We've been talking about love as a major component in decision-making. And the scriptures give you lists of virtues and vices, and so forth, to work that out. It requires you to think a great deal about what it means to live that way.

And that's part of knowing God's will. Now, let's go on in this lecture to slide 19, which deals with what we call levels of values. This is a very important item that I need to address with you just a little bit.

Levels of values. Okay. Biblical commands.

This is pretty obvious. The Bible is our worldview, but within the Bible, we get commands. Those are the bottom-line aspects of values.

Do what God says. Now, in the interpretation of the Bible, you have to deal with what that command means, mainly if you're dealing with something in the Old Testament that is perhaps descriptive of things that happened then. But there's lots of normative teaching in the Old Testament, and you have to work that out.

So, you've got biblical command values. You have community values. We're going to talk about them, and they have a different definition.

You have personal preferences, which are your values. Now, we're going to look at how they work out as well—determining the level of your values at the moment.

This is very much like, in a sense, you're trying to determine whether the Bible is being direct, implied, or created construct, or sometimes you bring that over here, too. You determine the level, and that depends upon one's understanding of the fine lines between what and how Scripture teaches. So, we're sort of back to the three ways the Bible teaches, and that will divide values out as well.

There's direct teaching, perhaps imperatives, and there are implied teachings, and the community may take those implied teachings in one way or another, and there are also the personal preferences that your communities will develop. So, you've got to have an awareness of your values and where they fit in relation to how they break out into different categories. I adjust a little bit because I know you don't want to see me, but I want to see you, okay? That's metaphorically speaking.

Okay, now, levels of values. Let's talk about biblical commands. Well, there's clear and direct teaching in the Bible, and yet we do have to do interpretations such as, Thou shalt not kill.

The Ten Commandments have prescriptive value. Even the commandment at the Sabbath has prescriptive value, but it has to be adjusted in some sense from a nation, a civil situation, into the church, and people do that differently. But there are biblical commands, and yet, Thou shalt not kill is not an easy command to deal with.

Does that mean there cannot be war? Does that mean you can't do self-defense if someone breaks into your home and is going to kill your family? And Christians will answer those differently as well. So, you have direct commands, and even direct commands require that we investigate Scripture and the interpretation history to deal with that. We identified normative teaching requires interpretation, often driven by the creative constructs of theological systems.

And so, the prescriptive and descriptive levels of teaching direct, applied, and creative constructs are always at work when you're using the Bible. This can become a very manipulative domain because people can claim that what they say you should be doing is a biblical command when it may not be at all. Therefore, we have to tie our ideas to the text and not allow them to float out and become deified outside and have their own little lives.

So, the normative teaching is going to be a biblical command itself, but we've got to establish that. If we find a command that is not negotiable, that is, it's clear, it's for all time, and it's not really debated much, even in the church, that's a non-negotiable command. That's a non-negotiable value.

I think my implication, thou shalt not kill, has a non-negotiable value of human life, and yet that's not what the command is about necessarily. But it does imply the value of human life. So, you can see these things interact a great deal, and one model that I've taught you already has to be brought into your study of various values that you're recognizing and applying.

All right, here again, as I just mentioned, we have to review the three levels of how the Bible teaches. Teaching intent is direct, it's implicational teaching and creative

constructs. We always need to know when we're claiming the Bible where we are on this pyramid, and then that comes over into value clarification as well.

Okay, let's talk about the values themselves, community values. Community values, church, this would be a church, might be in your church constitution, and that has a whole new dimension to it. It may be unwritten.

For example, I pastored a church, and the older folks in the church thought it was not a good idea. In fact, they may have even thought it was a sin to have a church picnic on Sunday. You shouldn't be playing baseball on Sunday.

You shouldn't be doing this or that. Sunday's a day of rest, and I talked to them about this, and I said, look, a lawyer who lives uptight all week long playing a game of ball and getting absolutely exhausted physically might be the best rest he can get to release himself. See, so there are a lot of different perspectives on that question.

Culturally, traditionally derived values about things. The Sabbath is a big one, of course, among different communities, and it depends on how you should treat it. There are all kinds of illustrations there, but it's biblically connected, even though it's still a traditional thing.

Via theological and social systems, you've got implied teaching and creative constructs that come into play. So, community values. When you deal with your constitution in a church, the rules and regulations, basically what they are, that guide the membership in that church, you have to ask yourself these questions.

Is that the direct teaching of the Bible? Is it an implied teaching, or is it a creative construct? Has it become a community value that the Bible does not demand, but we think best represents the way a Christian would live? Just understanding that would help a lot of churches because most people deify their own convictions and their own understandings without having a clue what it means to negotiate the text that they might be citing. Okay, the relational dimension. In Romans 12 to 14, 1 Corinthians 8 to 10, we have the weaker brother and the stronger brother.

I'm not going to go into these texts here. I've talked about them some in my course on 1 Corinthians on the Biblical e-learning site. I'm not going to go into them here, but they certainly present to you the fact that you can do what's okay and still offend somebody and have to deal with that in a community.

You can't push people too fast to move from being in the world in a certain way to being in the church. We've got to always be sensitive to their maturation. Now, if they refuse to mature, as far as I'm concerned, they cease to be weak Christians, and they have become belligerent Christians, and there are different rules of engagement for that.

But the fact is, is that this is a very sensitive area and you need to think about it in your community values and how you frame them and form them. Community values are often debated. I've been; I've had a church that has community values that I observe but don't agree with because they're not Bible values, but they're community values.

I chose to be there, so I chose to agree and go along with that. If I can't go along with it, I'll find another church because I can't violate that constitution in that regard. So they're often debated, but they're binding by agreement of a membership.

But let me make this very clear. They are not deontological. Now, there's that big word.

They are not the ought, but they may be the consequences that that church wants to develop. So they're consequential. So community values are important, and they're a part of the system, they're a part of Christian life, and yet they don't have the same kind of authority as biblical values that are deontological by nature and are agreed upon as binding.

They're not necessarily normative for all. They're negotiable. And I say, when you write a church constitution, and you decide God's will for that church and its behavior, you need to take that into consideration and make it clear that these are church values; they're community values that we believe function best.

They are negotiable, and they're not direct teaching values. See, if you frame your constitution and things in this manner, you're going to save yourself a lot of arguments with people. And you'll be better off.

All right, there are personal preferences. So, we've got biblical commands and values, we've got community values, and now we have personal values. Personal preferences, I call them.

They are values. Sometimes, they get deified, and they become pretty important values to people. My convictions are organized in a variety of ways.

And my convictions change over time. They should change because I grow. I understand things better than I used to.

And some things that used to bother me don't bother me anymore, and that's okay because it's right. There are some things that didn't bother me that do bother me now. So, we are constantly in this flux of our personal preferences, and we have to recognize them.

You've got to know what's biblical, you've got to know what's community and why, and you've got to know what's personal. And you shouldn't press your personal convictions on another person without an awful lot of discussion, if ever. I should have self-critical awareness that my convictions are not biblical commands.

Wow. You know, we can thank the Lord that churches aren't as bad as they used to be. When I was growing up in the 60s as a new Christian, these personal preferences were deified in most places.

And there was some crazy stuff that pushed me off in the wrong direction of understanding God and understanding what God expected. Some people say, well, the church was backslidden because it changed. No, the church finally came to grips with reality and grew up and quit being cultural.

Therefore, that's something that every church, community, and individual has to work through. And if you have a personal preference that's a strong conviction for you, and yet most of the other people don't have it, that's okay. They have to be kind to you, and you have to be kind to them.

You don't force your conviction, and you live it. They don't force you to violate it. And that's part of living in a community with personal convictions and personal values.

In fact, I want to make that change so that we don't forget that preferences are values. So, my convictions are that I have to relate to this issue of self-denial may be appropriate. It may be appropriate for me to squelch what I know is okay for the sake of someone who's in the process of learning.

And that's what Romans and Corinthians, I think, talk about to some extent. Self-denial may be appropriate. It's not necessary, but it may be appropriate.

It is performed knowingly, not by manipulation. Man, there is a big thing for a pastor. How do you teach people appropriately something that you're going to not do, but you don't manipulate them into not doing it because it's okay to do? Well, pastors have to maneuver, not manipulate, excuse me, maneuver.

I have to maneuver through an awful lot of things with people. Personal preferences are always negotiable. They're to be talked about, and they're to be examined.

But if a person is not able to walk away from a personal preference that you don't think has anything to do with the Bible, it's okay. Leave them alone. Let them have that personal preference, love them anyway, and don't ostracize or make them feel bad.

Frankly, you don't tell them, no, you're really stupid. You have that preference in it. I may do the Bible.

No, they've got it for a reason. Try to find out what the reason is. What is it in their background? What is it in their upbringing? That's so precious to them that you don't even understand it.

That's how you work personal preferences in a community. All right. Now, that brings us back to this, which we've seen several times, and I'm sure you're thoroughly tired of seeing it.

Hang in there. All right. The organizing worldview and value set.

Here's a bunch of issues. Some of them have direct biblical teaching. Some of them have implied biblical teaching.

Sometimes, some of them do not directly address the implications of wide-open things. Another thing is the education of your children. The Bible doesn't tell you how to do that.

Now, you can certainly find some implicational principles about education, but the fact is, at the end of the day, how you educate your children, home, private, charter, or public, is always very much a matter of historical and geographical context. That's something that would be in a personal preference domain. So, as you organize your values, you have to know which domain of values they are in.

Are they biblical values? Are they community values? Are they personal preferences? That's extremely important. The one that probably stands out to most people, and I noticed that this slide is a little too far to that side. I may have to adjust the slide.

But the issue of social drinking, alcohol use in the church, that's one that over my 50, 60 years of being a Christian and watching how this moves from strict to open, open to strict, that's one that really is on the gamut of personal values. Because you can't use the Bible to teach, that teetotalism is God's way. It just won't work if you read the Bible carefully.

Elderly care, lawsuits, church poverty, lots of things. Lawsuits, for example, 1 Corinthians isn't against lawsuits in America. It's against lawsuits in a Roman culture where they had vexatious litigation and lawsuits.

That's another whole lesson that you can go look at in my Corinthians. So, your answers to these questions are determined not only by your worldview but by your values. So, worldviews and values are constantly working and vying for attention in your life.

Now, I'm not going to review this one again. I've talked to you about it before. I've talked to you about Genesis narrative and 2 Peter, but you can look at Lot.

Abraham and Lot tells you a lot about values, okay? We come back to the transformed mind again. What is it? Well, in relation to values like in worldview, it is a process of education that brings our worldview and values into conformity with biblical teaching. I can even add to that it brings them into focus and conformity with biblical teaching.

You can add things to this. That would be good. The transformed mind leads to a decision-making process that is the conscious engagement of our worldview and value system in the everyday struggle of life.

Are you starting to get the point? Knowing God's will is not just praying and asking God to tell you what it is. And that's not even part of it, frankly. But it is negotiating the teaching of Scripture with the issues of life that you confront.

I think that the worldview and value system will help you achieve that. And I'm just giving you the start. It's a huge domain.

Spiritual expediency isn't going to do it because there's too much undefined and unclarified for that domain. I don't care how many charts you have. It's just not going to work.

All right. Components that emerge in a biblical model. First of all, in a biblical model of values, we should reflect God's image.

We're to be his representatives. You can't be your, and you can't be God's representative and walk up and shoot somebody for no good reason. Or do this.

I mean, you could just bring almost any explanation. For example, the list of values for the pastor in 1 Timothy 3 is mostly personal values. They're biblical values.

They're personal values. Don't be a bully, which is part of that list. That's not the word that's used in most translations, but that's what it's talking about.

You can't be a bully and reflect God's image. God's not a bully. One Old Testament scholar said God was the dirty bully of the Old Testament.

Well, he'll have to answer for that someday. Now, God is God. He's not a bully.

Lots of bullies in churches. There are lots of bullies in life, and you don't reflect God's image when you're a bully. And so, our biblical model has to reflect on how we reflect God because we are his representative.

The Genesis 3 fall affects all of life, physical and mental. I've said that, and I say it again. Romans 12 demands a transformed way of thinking.

Discernment is a rational process. It's not an emotive process. It's not a process off the top of your head.

It is a process of sustained thinking about actions according to the Bible in your current culture. The Bible must be interpreted on its terms. You've got to know the description.

You've got to know the prescription. You've got to ask what's normative. You've got to ask what it meant for the original audience so that I can have some clue about what it means for me as I contextualize it into my own context.

So, the Bible has got to be interpreted. It's not an armchair approach to the Christian life. Be a student.

Seek to learn to whatever extent you're capable, to whatever extent you can. You are responsible to carve out some time in your week to do that. It may only be 15 minutes.

It may be an hour. But I think we can find more time than we do if we face the music of this. Because as a person in a church, you're responsible for doing this.

God will be responsible here. Be a student. We are free to discern within our nature.

Freedom is bound by nature, by our worldview and values, which express themselves knowingly or unknowingly. If you're unknowingly operating on worldview and values, your freedom is perhaps wrongly restricted. Or maybe you're wrong in your lack of restriction.

So, you see, it all comes together here. Freedom is never really free. Freedom is something that you have to discern in terms of life.

Our worldview provides wisdom, not vice versa. Wisdom comes from our worldview. Wisdom is not pragmatism.

Do the wise thing. Yes, but you've got a lot to learn as to what the wise thing is. It's not what you think off the top of your head.

Now, someone may say, well, geez, that's awful hard. It ought to be easier than that. Well, tell God.

Don't tell me. He gave us a pretty impressive, challenging scripture for which we are going to be held accountable. And it's time that we started taking that seriously.

Take what you've learned so far and apply some questions from your context that are not treated by direct teaching and run it through the chart that I've given you. I've given you the last slide in your notes here. But you need to take that slide and print it individually so that you can see it.

I have to do that. You can print the slide individually. Have a nice big page.

And this is a chart that I made up. This has even been borrowed in a business book. I got a letter one day asking me if I could use my chart because they like the decision-making setup.

They just accommodated it to a business setup. And you can do the same thing. Let's see how it flows.

Let me just show you how it flows. A decision comes to you. The first question you ask when making any decision is whether it is covered by a clear command. If you decide it's covered by a clear command, wherever you are in life and in your ability to read the Bible, you decide it's a clear commandment, and then you have an obligation to obey that command.

That's the end of the discussion. Easy. What's not easy is 10 years later, you decide that wasn't as clear as I thought it was.

Then you've got to come back and do it again. So, it's never static. Well, what if it's not covered by a clear command? Well, then, you've got to study for clarification.

There, you get into the applied creative construct levels. You get into the nature of the levels of values as you understand your worldview. I mention here that you should consider Romans and First Corinthians as you study for clarification.

I could put a lot more here, but I don't have room. You get the point. The conclusion.

If your conclusion is yes, it's an expectation of God. Even though at the beginning I didn't think it was clear, I've come to see it's an expectation. Then you go back, and you obey it.

If it's not an expectation, you've still got more work to do. Process data through your biblical worldview and values set. This block here you could think of as that heart in

your head on my little people images that I give you about worldview values and so forth.

This block is not sacred. There are lots of issues in here that I'm going to bring up to you, but a lot of these might not apply. You may think of other issues.

That's why we have ceteris down here. Because the issues are going to run through the grid of discerning wisdom with an attitude of submission to God's sovereign providence and to his word. What is our attitude? It's carried out with an attitude of prayer for discerning wisdom.

And by the way, that's not a miracle. To have wisdom means you get into the scriptures and learn your worldview. That's what James is actually saying.

And an attitude of submission to God's sovereignty and providence, you work these through your values and your worldview. Okay, let's think about a few of them here. First, you identify the values that underline the decision.

You compare these to your value model, and you probe biblical teaching. For example, one of the first things in any decision is your critical self-awareness. This decision should be, I've given you other models, and we'll give you more, where you write it out.

You write out the decision you're going to make. You've got to be clear. You've got to be tough on yourself and make yourself be clear and as articulate as you can be.

Yes, it is a task. Okay, you come to your critical self-awareness. What about that issue do you think you're biased about? That would be a question for that.

Are you biased about this? Well, you've got to know yourself, see. Your critical self-awareness. Here's a very interesting one.

Your human place in life. When you're making a decision, whether you're single, whether you're married, if you're married with children, if you're married with children and they're gone, if you're married with children and your parents came to live with you. We're not going to entertain the kids coming back.

Suppose your parents came to live with you. Every one of those categories has biblical values that affect your decisions, and you've got to work through that in making the decision. You say that's too much work.

I just want God to tell me what to do. Okay, live your naive life. Live your life, and then you go out naively, do what you want to do, and all of a sudden, you realize, oh my, I didn't understand what God wanted.

He told me wrong. That's what you want to say. You don't have the nerve.

Blame God. So, you blame yourself. I didn't pray enough.

I didn't do this enough. I didn't do that. Forget it.

You're barking up the wrong trees. Get into evaluating worldview and values. And there are worldviews and values for all of those categories of human obligations.

Circumstantial Providence. I've made decisions in life that I didn't want to make, but I felt that in the Circumstantial Providence, it was something I needed to do. And that's life.

And sometimes there are negative circumstances. Sometimes, they're positive circumstances. I am getting older.

I'm not going to tell you how old I am because you think I'm younger than I am. I'm going to keep that. Circumstantial Providence.

We've got to take that into consideration because we can't fight city hall. God has created us, and we have certain issues in life. It could be health.

It would not be a good idea for a paraplegic to say, I want to be a missionary in Japan. Or I want to be a missionary to China. Well, there's Circumstantial Providence that ought to factor into that.

And you can go, maybe you can go, and maybe it would be great. You'd be like Jody, who made a life out of a bad situation. But you got to be very careful with this.

Research the opinion and your current issue. You've got to research scripture, research the world, and find opinions about what you're doing. You'll see a logical tradition and understanding.

What does it mean to be a Baptist or a Presbyterian or an Anglican or whatever when you're coming to this decision? So, you see, these things are part of your processing, your role, and your personal obligation in God's kingdom. I've turned down some pretty good churches. Some big ones.

I could have made more money. I could have had more respect. We'll go into that one.

Teachers don't get much respect in the church sometimes. People don't like our questions and our probing. But your personal obligations in God's kingdom.

I can't do anything else. I've got to teach. In fact, I'd have trouble with my wife because I try to teach her.

That's not a good idea. Gentlemen, be careful how you try to teach your wife. You're not the teacher when it comes to that.

You may be the leader, but you better be careful. All right? Your desires. The Psalms tell us over and over again that God will give us the desires of our heart, of our mind.

Now, you've got to do an awful lot of thinking about that. I desire to be a prolific author who wrote a hundred books. Well, forget that.

I know what it's like to write a book. And I haven't written the most challenging kinds of books. And I've taught more than I've written.

I lived in a life where I had to create new courses all the time because of the changing curriculum. So, I've got all kinds of providential circumstances that have kept me from my desires. I'd like to do more videos.

And as I used to tell Elder Brent, I'm getting to do some, and hopefully more. But that comes into asking the question, what's God's will in this situation? The Council of Informed People in France. That needs to be fixed there.

It got off kilter in the chart—the Council of Informed People in France. Listen to people.

How many of us have ever listened to our parents? Listened well. How many of us listened to people we respected? We heard, but we didn't listen. If I'd listened, I'd be better off in some ways.

I would have made choices I kind of wish I would have made that I didn't make because I didn't listen. We are not good listeners. It's important that we learn from the views and approval of the community to whom you answer.

You realize that you don't make the choice to be a pastor. The community, according to Timothy, decides whether you should be or not. You can say, I'm calling God to be a pastor.

That's nice. Okay, sit down. We're going to talk to you.

We're going to watch you. We're going to listen to you. We're going to test you to see whether you should be or not.

And we'll decide. That's what Timothy says about that. In America, you just move down to the next church and tell them that's what you should be.

In the Bible, the community decides whether these leaders are appropriate or not. And it goes on and on and on. You say, well, this is too complicated.

I didn't sign up for this. No, you didn't. But you got it.

Gary Friesen, on his website, criticized me and said, you got to be a seminary professor to follow meters. Well, you know, I'm not going to see that as a criticism but a compliment. You should strive to know the best you can, the Word of God.

And all of us live on a different continuum. You should strive to learn. You should strive to know.

Every Christian has to be a lifetime learner because you're adjusting your worldview and your model and your values to the model that you want to live by. So you identify, and you evaluate your options and decisions. It's not always just one thing.

There might be options available. There are options in biblical interpretation on this side of heaven. And there may be options in your decision.

You have to figure that out. You make a decision, usually. You've run this all through.

You have to make a decision. Otherwise, you'll be what I call a Romans 7 Christian, a water cycle Christian. You read Romans 7, and that's the doobie doobie doo chapter in the Bible.

What I want to do, I can do. What I don't want to do, I end up doing. It's the doobie doobie doo chapter.

However Romans 7 ends, and Romans 8 begins. Thank God that I emerged from Romans 7, where I was in this cycle without moving. And people who can't make decisions are worse off than people who make decisions and has to back up and up and make a different decision.

You have to decide sometimes. Plot a course of action. Periodically review your decision.

Decisions are virtually never set in stone. But your decisions morph as you move through life and as God frames you as a person. Adjust or continue in your decision.

So that chart looks complicated, but what it is the way your mind works. You just have to educate yourselves. You've got to bring into your worldview and value

structure, into your transformed mind, what it means to make decisions in God's world.

Now there are lots of decisions. I'm not going to go through all this. I feel I should be a full-time foreign missionary.

You could run that through our chart. And every one of those categories, in some sense, is going to answer that. It's not just how I feel.

It's whether I can demonstrate and validate God's call in my life. I feel like it's God's will for me to be a physician. Well, that's a great and noble thing.

But if you flunked out of college, you're probably not going to be a doctor. My family and I are not happy in our church. Should we make a move? Well, maybe I'll take your unhappiness with you.

You know, it's like one fellow said one time, you don't find a perfect church. You find a church that's willing to put up with your imperfections. That's pretty wise.

That was from a seat in a seminary chapel. Pretty smart. Should I marry or remain single? Well, there's an interesting one because you can immediately go to the Bible.

The normative thing is to marry. Genesis talks about that. The New Testament talks about it.

It assumes it. It even expects the Jews expected their leaders to be married. And the church should have married men as pastors, and they should have children.

That's not a requirement. I'm not going to go into that right now in the qualifications list. If you're not married, you don't have children, and you can't be criticized for that.

But the fact is, I think we're a little wiser having someone who's married and someone who has children because they have had to deal with variant wills and belligerences on their children. And husbands and wives have to learn to get along with each other. And that is a playground where people can get along with people in the church.

So, there's wisdom to that. The Bible doesn't call people single. It's not even Corinthians.

That's a very misused text. Like Paul said, if you've got the gift, then you don't have to marry. But if you burn with passion, you ain't got the gift.

Okay? Very few people have the gift. Now, there is a negative providence where sometimes people don't get married who would like to be married. But providence, negative providence in their life doesn't lead them in that direction, doesn't help them fulfill that desire or fulfill what God expects of them.

Well, that's another question, isn't it? Okay. So you've got the idea now, and we're going to be moving on from lectures seven and eight on worldview and value set. And we're going to talk about components.

There are certain components that emerge in a biblical model. Some of these lectures won't be quite as long as you've gotten used to with me. We're going also to talk more about processing our decisions.

I'll come back and be a little more specific with a number of things. After that, we go to part three, discernment, which requires addressing subjective challenges. Frankly, these lectures are some of my most fun lectures to help you understand what conscience is and to give you a view of what I think the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit.

I am thrilled to be able to do that, even though there's a lot of controversy and differences of opinion about that. So, we're coming close to the end of part two. Discernment requires a worldview and values model.

And we're going to move into the subjective domain of life, and how we have to learn to live with it and deal with it, and how it deals with us in relation to that worldview and models. So, thank you for today. And you can breathe a sigh of relief.

We were only about 43 minutes this time, about 20 minutes less than my normal, or a little bit. But we'll be moving on. And hopefully, you can start to see the end from our beginnings.

I know it was a little slow. It just has to be that way. But now we're beginning to see the rubber hit the road, as the metaphor and the proverb say.

We're really going to get into some things that are going to start to turn us on. But you won't be turned on if you don't pay your dues by listening to the various lectures and coming to this point. So if you didn't, go back and do it because it will be a great benefit for you.

Thank you, and have a great day.