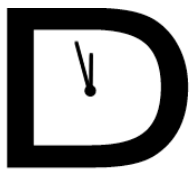


DECISION

Devotion

5. Devoted to Church Leadership

December 8, 2009



DECISION

2. Decision Study Notes – December 8, 2009

Devotion to Church Leadership

To be devoted to God means to be submitted to service.

To be submitted to service is to be submitted to the shepherds over us

Key Verse: Hebrews 13:17

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves..."

This study Adapted from <http://www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/1642.htm>

Christian Ethics - ***Submission and Supplication*** by John MacArthur

Hebrews 13:7-8, 17-19

v. 17 - *"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves . . ."*

This verse delineates a **Christian's responsibility toward God**, who mediates much of His rule in this world through men. Throughout the Old Testament, God mediated His rule through kings, prophets, and judges. In this age, **God mediates His rule through Spirit-controlled [Spirit-led] men and governmental authorities**. And someday, God will mediate His rule in the living Christ who sits on the throne of David and rules the world (Ps. 2:6-12).

1) The Persons of Leadership

At this time, God is ruling His people through **Spirit-led men in the church**. They do not rule for their own sake however; **they rule in the place of Christ as His undershepherds**. Our submission is not only to them, but ultimately to God.

- **Ephesians 4:11** ... "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." *God gave spiritual leaders to the church to instruct it.*
- **Acts 14:23** - Paul and Barnabas "ordained elders in every church" in the cities of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch.
- **Titus 1:5** - Paul instructed Titus to "ordain elders in every city" In every local congregation there were to be men who ruled.

It is true that there needs to be comprehensive interaction between the leaders and the congregation, but the rule of the church **always belongs to gifted men placed in control [leadership] by the Spirit of God**. They serve as part of God's chain of command within the framework of the church. The phrase "*them that rule over you*" is basically one word in the Greek: hegeomai. It means "chief or leader." It is translated "*governor*" in Acts 7:10 and "*chief*" in Luke 22:26. It is the **responsibility of those men to determine the direction of a church by presiding over it, teaching the Word, and reproving and exhorting the flock with patience and meekness** (2 Tim. 4:2).

2) The Perils of Leadership

In 1 Peter 5, Peter delineates several perils of being an elder or overseer of the church:

- **Covetousness** – 1 Peter 5:1-3 "Feed [pastor] the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight of it, not by constraint but willingly; not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock." Some people want to rule because they covet authority, a professional position, bigger churches, or more money. They end up being petty tyrants who dominate their churches. But an elder is not to lead as a dictator; rather, he is to be an example. Paul said this to Timothy: "... be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12).
- **Conceit** - "In like manner, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (vv. 5-6). In the pastorate, there is the peril of desiring to be exalted above others.

- **Compromise** - "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith . . ." (vv. 8-9). There's always the danger of compromise: Don't give in to Satan by watering down your convictions for the sake of expediency.

3) The Payment of Leadership

1 Timothy 5:17 - "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine." The next verse states, "... The laborer is worthy of his reward." The clear implication is that "double honor" refers to monetary compensation.

4) The Practice of Leadership

- **1 Thessalonians 5:12 (NIV)** - "*Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you.*" Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to have a deep appreciation for their spiritual leaders who labored on their behalf. It's a tragedy when pastors and elders are led around by the congregation. God intended the church leadership to rule and have oversight of the congregation. However, that doesn't mean that elders rule as dictators. They must be responsive to the needs of people.
- **1 Peter 5:4** - Pastors and elders are undershepherds of Christ: "*And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*" **Elders have a tremendous responsibility to feed and care for the flock, to warn it of impending danger, to discipline its members when they stray from the path, and to provide direction.**
- **1 Timothy 3:1** - The "*office of a bishop* [Gk. *episkopos* = 'to watch over'] . . ." involves watching over the affairs of others. The Greek term for "bishop" was a title used by the Athenians for officers that were sent to manage the affairs of a subjected state. The office of a bishop is a serious position. The church has the responsibility of obeying the teaching of their leaders and submitting to their authority, because they rule in the place of Christ.
- **John 13:20** - Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me." Submitting to those who have been placed in the rule of the church is the equivalent of receiving Christ, and the Father as well. Being subject to leaders is your obligation to God. When there aren't Spirit-filled leaders who rule well and people who obey the Word that they teach, a church will experience disunity.

[Why should we submit to church leadership?]

The rest of verse 17 tells why the congregation should submit to leadership:

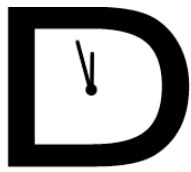
1) Accountability to Jesus (v. 17b) "... for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account . . . "

Church leaders watch over the congregation like shepherds: They watch over their sheep, care for them, prevent them from going astray, and protect them from harm. They are responsible to watch them carefully, knowing that they must give an account to God for the way they ministered to the souls that were entrusted to them.

- **James 3:1-2 (NIV)** - "*Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.*" Unfortunately, when a man of God who leads others falls, he usually doesn't fall alone; he causes many of those who are following him to stumble as well. That is what causes "greater condemnation."
- **1 Timothy 4:16** - "*Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.*" Since church leaders can be a determining factor in the salvation of those who follow them, it is important how they live. Someday they will have to give an account to the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, of how they ruled over their congregations.

2) An Attitude of Joy

- [Gives Joy] For the Pastor (v. 17c) - "... *that they may do it with joy, and not with grief.*..." You should submit to the leaders of your church because of the joy that it brings them. I think the most grieved group of men are often ministers who deal with stubborn congregations that will not submit to them. That robs them of the joy of their ministry. The word "grief" conveys the idea of groaning over a thankless task. There are many men whose ministry is thankless labor. A congregation ought to submit for the joy of the one who labors for them.



DECISION

4. Decision Breakaway Discussion – December 8, 2009

Devotion to Church Leadership

Focusing on the Facts - Discuss

1. What spiritual leaders did Christ give to the church? [What titles?]
2. Whom does the rule of the church always belong to, according to the New Testament?
3. What are some of the perils of being a leader in a church?
4. What are elders that do a good job ruling worthy of?] (1 Tim. 5:17-18) [What does this look like today?]
5. What are some of the responsibilities of pastors and elders as undershepherds of Christ?
6. What will a church experience when it fails to obey its Spirit-filled leaders?
7. Why must the leaders of a church watch over their congregations carefully?
8. What usually happens when a spiritual leader stumbles that makes him susceptible to "*greater condemnation [or judgement]*"? (James 3:1)
9. What attitude does a submissive congregation bring to a pastor? (Heb. 13:17)
10. When is submission to a church leader not appropriate? How should such a situation be handled? (1 Tim. 5:19-20)
11. Why do men of God in places of leadership probably bear the brunt of Satan's attack?
12. Whom are Christians supposed to pattern their lives after, according to Hebrews 13:7? Why is Jesus Christ the supreme example?

Pondering the Principles – On Your Own

1. Do you think your pastor could praise your congregation as much as Paul praised the Philippians and the Thessalonians? Have you ever wondered if your church is a cause of joy or grief to him? What does your church need to do to bring joy to your pastor? Is there anything you could do specifically that might help motivate the members to have submissive spirits? If your pastor is struggling under the pressure of many responsibilities, are there some that could be fulfilled by qualified church members? For your own part, dedicate yourself to being a cause for joy to your church leaders, and you will certainly profit from it.
2. Although your church leaders may have never asked you to pray on their behalf, are you praying for them regularly? What things can you ask for? If you have never asked how you could pray for them, have them give you a few suggestions. Because of the nature of their roles as leaders, they may not be eager to have you pray for their most personal struggles. Therefore, realizing their humanness, you can assume that they can use your prayers in the areas of humility, faithfulness, contentment, purity, and encouragement.
3. Since your church leaders and Jesus Christ are the examples that you should follow, how often are you interacting with those leaders and reading the Bible in order that you can observe and imitate their lives?

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