

**What are followers supposed to do?**

**6/5/2016**

**Many months ago, the first Sunday in April, to be precise,  
we began a sermon series on leadership in the church.  
That was to instruct us, and point us  
in the direction of considering additional elders,  
and the appointment of deacons.  
And so we have looked at leadership in general,  
and to elders, deacons and evangelists, in particular.**

**But there is another critically important piece of the puzzle,  
thing for us to think about, role we need to consider,  
the role of follower.**

**If there are no followers, then there can be no leaders.**

**Now we don't need leaders, if there are no followers.**

**We don't need elders, deacons, evangelists,  
prophets, apostles.**

**We still desperately need a savior,**

**but if we refuse to be followers,**

**then Jesus can't be our savior either,**

**because in order for him to be savior,**

**he must also be our Lord,**

**And if He is our Lord, then as he commands,**

**we must take up our cross and follow Him.**

**Not popular concepts in America,**

**where we all want to be the captains of our own ship,**

**and (here I quote the poem "Invictus")**

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate,  
I am the captain of my soul.

Yeah, good poem, perhaps, but not good theology.

What do the Scriptures say to us as followers in the church,  
about the relationship between us  
and those that are chosen by God to lead us?

3 passages with three commands each. Easy-peezy, right?

Oh, if we could just master these 3 simple passages,  
what a blessing for those who minister to us  
through servant leadership.

I Thessalonians 5- very young church.  
Paul was there for maybe 3 weeks,  
before being driven out by persecution.  
Not a wealthy church, according to II Corinthians 8-9,  
but a loving church.

As Paul is winding up his first correspondence with them,  
he writes in ch. 5:12-13-

**I Thess. 5:12-13**

<sup>12</sup> Now we ask you, brothers, to respect (know) those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. <sup>13</sup> Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.

**Did you catch the 3 commands?**

- 1. Respect or “know” those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord, and who admonish you...**
  - a. What is the basis for their admonishment?**

**The Word of God.**
  - b. What qualifies them? They work hard among you, so you should-**
- 2. Hold them in the highest regard... in love...**

**(What does THAT mean?)**
- 3. “Live in peace with each other.” How does that correspond to how WE should relate to leadership, since THAT IS the context?**

**Have you ever heard the phrase-**

**“Well, I love my elders but I don’t respect them.”**

**That’s a right interesting turn of phrase, don’t you think?**

**I don’t think this passage will let you get away with that.**

**Notice it does NOT say**

**that on every issue or every decision,  
you have to agree with them.**

**But it DOES command you to respect or “know” them.**

**What does that respect look like?**

**It looks like “holding them in the highest regard, in love.”**

**Brothers, I may not agree with you,**

**but I sure respect and love you,**

**for how hard you are working on my behalf.**

**I may not always see it or be aware of it,**

**but I know it’s happening.**

And instead of insisting on my own way, or kicking up a fuss,  
Command #3, “Live at peace with one another.”

“But I’m right and you’re wrong...”

“Nonsense. I’m NEVER wrong.”

We may not say that, but we sure do think it.

Elders, who have garnered input from the congregation,  
and prayed about an issue for weeks,  
and done their homework and know what is going on  
behind the scenes...

Nah, WE know better. We know what WE want.

#1. Respect.

#2. Hold in the highest regard in love.

#3. Live in peace with one another.

Next “followership” passage-

Hebrews 13:7

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you.  
Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their  
faith.

#1. Remember your leaders- who cared enough  
and loved enough and overcame their own fears enough-  
to speak the Word of God to you.

Hey, if it was easy, everybody’d be doing it...

but they’re not.

Remember those who did... and do.

**How often we forget our elders.**

**How often we take them, and the work they do, for granted.**

**We have no idea of what they have been through,  
Don't really WANT to know.**

**We just want a comfortable, air-conditioned building  
and comfy chairs, and a good kids program,  
and coffee and donuts...**

**But don't just remember them.**

**#2. Consider the outcome of THEIR way of life.**

**In this congregation right now,  
you have the three hardest working elders  
I have ever served under,  
(and I have served under some awesome elderships).**

- a. Their backgrounds are all different.**
- b. They have made mistakes, but learned from them.**
- c. They are humble.**

**Not a one of them is on a power trip,  
or HAS to have his own way.**

**Look at their lives, look at their marriages, look at their faiths.**

**Consider- think deeply about,  
pause long enough to ponder-  
the outcome of their way of life,**

**and #3. Imitate their hairstyle... NO.**

**Imitate the way they talk... NO.**

**Imitate their... FAITH.... YES!!**

**Imitate the way**

**they practically live out their relationships with God.**

These are the kind of men who have served as elders  
here in the past,  
and they are the kind of men you should be recommending,  
as we actively begin this round of  
the elder selection process.

**FIRST passage- I Thess. 5:12-13-**

1. Respect.
2. Hold in the highest regard in love.
3. Live in peace with one another.

**SECOND passage- Hebrews 13:7**

1. Remember.
2. Consider the outcome of their way of life
3. Imitate their faith.

Are you ready for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final passage  
for us to look at this morning?

Stay in Hebrews 13, and drop down to v. 17-

**Hebrews 13:17**

**Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.**

- #1. Obey your leaders, and
- #2. Submit to their authority.

Psst, folks, these are not “requests” from Scripture.

These are not like “the Pirate’s Code”  
 from Pirates of the Caribbean,  
 merely non-binding guidelines or suggestions.

They are written as inspired commands for us to follow.

Now, if an elder tells you to violate the Word of God,  
 to go against the clear teaching of Scripture,  
 then, as Peter says in Acts 5:29-  
 “We must obey God rather than men.”

No elders are perfect, infallible,  
 and they weren’t in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, either.  
 But let’s keep reading the verse  
 to understand what is going on here-

Hebrews 13:17

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority.  
 They keep watch over you as men who must give an account.

Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden,  
 for that would be of no advantage to you.

So if you need to disagree, do it agreeably.  
 If you have a concern, voice it respectfully,  
 as we have already seen.

Any eldership needs (+ values) input from the congregation-

1. Suggestions
2. Gentle correction
3. Honest inquiry

What NO eldership needs

is a constant drip, drip, drip of criticism.

NO eldership needs disobedient, rebellious, wayward,  
carping, critical, perfectionistic sheep.

There is this psychological principle  
called enlightened self-interest.

It is the opposite of "biting off your nose to spite your face."

"Enlightened self-interest" means-

I do what I do to play nice with others,  
because that is REALLY the best way  
for me to get what I need.

It's the quickest, most effective way  
for me to do what is best for me,  
even if it means a little "not getting my way" in the short run.

Isn't that what this verse, Heb. 13:17, is trying to say?

And ultimately, they must answer not just to you,  
but to the great God of Heaven for the decisions they make.

Which means they can't just placate people,  
they must serve the living God,  
even when it's not popular, but it IS right.

And so to I Thess. 5:12-13

1. Respect,
2. Hold in the highest regard in love and
3. Live in peace with one another.

And to Hebrews 13:7

1. Remember.
2. Consider the outcome of their way of life,
3. Imitate their faith, we add

Hebrews 13:17

1. Obey.
2. Submit to their authority and
3. Obey.

There now,

that one was easier to remember, now wasn't it?

Harder to follow through on, but easier to remember.

Think back to

1. loving parents or grandparents
2. GOOD bosses or employers
3. Military officers you respected.

What was the best strategy for having

the best relationship with THOSE individuals?

Wasn't it to do

exactly what Scripture is commanding us to do here?

This morning we embark on the journey

of selecting qualified men to add to our existing eldership.

As we do, we need to make sure

that WE reflect the qualities of godly followers.

**The church is not a democracy,  
but neither is it a dictatorship,  
or even an oligarchy, rule by a privileged few.**

**The church is a family, an organic body,  
the body of Christ, with Christ himself as the head.**

**And as we have already seen weeks ago,  
HE is the one who chose some to be elders and teachers.**

**If we are to be Biblical, then we lean into, we welcome-  
HIS pattern of governance for HIS family.**