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## **Following Our Shepherds**

### **1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-13; HEBREWS 13:7, 17**

#### **Introduction**

1. Perhaps you have heard this statement, "The times, they are a changing."
2. I don't know who is responsible for speaking these words, but they are filled with truth.
3. We live in a day and age when there is an overemphasis on individual rights and powers.
4. One of the results of such a mind-set is disrespect for authority of any kind.
5. However, as we saw last week, God has placed some as leaders within His church.
6. Jesus, prior to His crucifixion, taught His disciples a different style of leadership.
7. This has come to be known as "servant leadership."
8. Jesus presented this style of leadership to His disciples on the occasion when James and John came to Jesus and asked to "sit, one on [His] right and one on [His] left, in [His] glory" (Mark 10:37).

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9. When the remaining disciples became indignant at James and John's request, Jesus spoke these words:

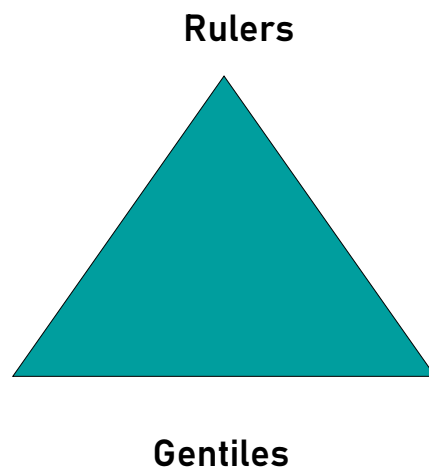
"You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for

many.”” (Mark 10:42–45, NASB95)

10. Notice two things which Jesus said about the style of leadership employed by the “rulers of the Gentiles:”
  - a. They “lord it over” the Gentiles — they dominate and oppress their subjects.
  - b. They “exercise great authority over them” — they exploit them.
11. However, Jesus said to His disciples, “it is not this way among you” (v. 43).
12. In other words, the leadership style among the disciples and those in our Lord’s church was to be different:
  - a. “Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant” (v. 43b) — he voluntarily renders useful service to others.
  - b. “Whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all” (v. 44) — he forfeits his own rights in order to serve.

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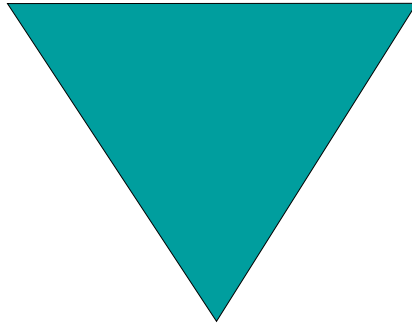
13. The first is the way Jesus said the rulers of the Gentiles function:



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14. The second is the way Jesus expects His church to function.

**Church**



**Apostles, Elders**

15. This is the way that Jesus taught His disciples to lead and by extension the elders within the church.
16. Just as a shepherd goes before his sheep showing them the way and making sure they are kept safe and have the proper nourishment in order to flourish, so Shepherds or Elders lead the church of God over which the Holy Spirit has made them overseers.
17. Tonight, I want us to look at three passages of Scripture in order to better see this leadership style and our response to it.

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**I. First Thessalonians 5:12-13**

“But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.” (1 Thessalonians 5:12–13, NASB95)

**A. THE SHEPHERDS’ LEADERSHIP**

1. They “diligently labor” among us
2. They “have charge over [us] in the Lord”
3. They “give us instruction”

## **B. THE RESPONSE THE SHEEP [CHURCH]**

1. We “appreciate” them
2. We “esteem them very highly in love because of their work”

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## **II. Hebrews 13:7**

“Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.”  
(Hebrews 13:7, NASB95)

## **A. THE LIVES OF PREVIOUS ELDERS**

1. They “led” us.
2. They “spoke the word of God” to us.
3. The “conduct” of their lives had a positive result.

## **B. OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO THEM**

1. We are to remember these things about them.
  - a. How they led us.
  - b. The principles of God’s Word which they instilled within us.
  - c. The outcome of their lives.
2. Imitate their faith.
  - a. These men demonstrated a life of faith before us.

- b. We are to remember that life and imitate that faith.

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### **III. Hebrews 13:17**

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.” (Hebrews 13:17, NASB95)

#### **A. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF OUR SHEPHERDS**

1. They lead us, they are our “leaders.”
  - a. Just as the Great Shepherd “guides [us] in paths of righteousness,”
  - b. So our elders are busy guiding us in the direction which helps us grow in our faith.
2. They “keep watch over [our] souls”
  - a. Just as the Great Shepherd
    - 1) Makes us “lie down in green pastures”
    - 2) Leads us “beside quiet waters”
    - 3) “Restores [our] soul”
  - b. They work to know the condition of their sheep.
    - 1) Are we receiving the proper rest and nourishment for our souls?
    - 2) Are there things in our lives which are threatening our spiritual well-being?

#### **B. OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO OUR SHEPHERDS**

1. We “obey” them.
2. We “submit” to them.

3. We do everything possible to see that they are able to carry out their responsibility with “joy and not with grief”.
  - a. Not only do we “obey” them and “submit” to them, we encourage them in their work.
  - b. As Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica, we let them know how much we appreciate them for the work they are doing.
4. Notice the words at the end of this verse: “for this would be unprofitable for you.”
  - a. When our elders are doing all within their power to guide us in the way we should go,
  - b. Any obstinacy on our part, any refusal to submit will result in God’s judgment upon us for our behavior.

## **Conclusion**

1. These five men who lead us as our Elders (Shepherds) have a tremendous responsibility.
2. As I said last Sunday morning, they are not perfect men, but they are doing the best they know how to lead us in the direction they believe God wants us to go.
3. Pray for them, that God will give them the wisdom, courage and strength to faithfully lead us toward our heavenly home.
4. Pray for their families, their wives, children and grandchildren who patiently share them with us.
5. Personally tell each man how much you appreciate them and that you are praying for them.
6. Hold them in the highest regard because of the work in which they are engaged.
7. Pray that on that final day we may all stand together in that eternal home which God has prepared.

8. Let's make it our goal, as a congregation of God's people, to the extent that it depends upon us, that we will not to leave anyone behind, but that we will all make it safely to our heavenly home.