

Responsibilities in the Shepherded church

I. The Elder (this has already been covered in the previous chapters)

- A. Responsible to God
 - 1. Since it is God's flock
 - 2. They will give account for the sheep
- B. Responsible for the sheep
 - 1. Spiritual and physical needs
 - 2. Protection

II. The congregation's responsibility to their elders

A. I Thessalonians 5:12

- 1. How to treat those who
 - a. Diligently labor among the people
 - b. Have charge over the congregation in the Lord
 - c. Give instruction
- 2. What you are to do:
 - a. v.2 - "Appreciate them"
 - 1) "Know" (KJV); "Respect" (RSV; NIV); "Be considerate to" (JB); "Acknowledge" (NEB); "Recognize" (Phillips)
 - 2) Grk: "oida" - To know, take interest in, understand, recognize, or to be intimately acquainted with or stand in close relation to (in this case, probably means to recognize)
 - 3) Examples:
 - a) I Cor 2:11 - "knows" the thoughts of a man
 - b) 2 Cor 5:16 - "recognize" no man according to the flesh
 - b. Esteem them highly in love

- a) Esteem - syn. = to prize, respect, appreciate, honor, praise
- b) They are to be esteemed IN LOVE

B. Hebrews 13:17

1. Obey your leaders

- a. Elders are not to be lords (1 Pet 5), yet they are to be obeyed
- b. Obey is from “peitho”, but its form is passive here. As a passive verb, it means either to “obey” or to “be persuaded”

“some passages... permit either transl., w. dat. *be persuaded by someone, take someone’s advice, or obey, follow someone*”

- p. 639 in BAGD’s lexicon

c. Examples of this verb *when in the passive form*:

- 1) Luke 16:31 - persuaded
- 2) Acts 21:14 - Persuaded
- 3) Acts 5:36 - Followed him
- 4) Acts 23:21 - Listen to

d. So, the sense of “peitho” is not to be coerced, but to give deference to elders willingly with a submissive attitude

2. Submit to your leaders

- a. Same idea as “obey”, except this word is stronger
- b. Means to “yield” or “give way to”
- c. Example of the stiff-necked Israelites to their leaders (Heb 3-4)

3. Make their work a joy not a grief

- a. By giving deference to them
- b. Causing elders grief is not no profit to you
- c. Consider Moses in Numbers 11:4-15 - Moses has had it with them

4. Elders will give an account for you

- a. Luke 16:2 - As a steward
 - b. Ezekiel 3:17-21 - 100% of the responsibility for you is not theirs
5. All this shows that an elders has both the responsibility AND the right to inspect his sheep and his flock for their health. We are to submit.

C. I Timothy 5:1-2

1. Respect older men as fathers
 - a. "Older men" -Greek: "presbuteros", which is the word for "elder"
 - b. The context implies that this is not talking about the officer, but about an older man, hence the translation, "older men"
 - c. This includes but is not limited to the overseers in a congregation
2. An older man is not to be sharply rebuked
3. An older man is to be appealed to as a father

D. I Timothy 5:17-20

1. Give double honor to elders who:
 - a. "Rule" well - Grk: "Proistemi" - To rule, manage, lead, care for
 - b. Work hard at preaching and teaching
 - 1) Elders were involved in preaching
 - 2) The wording of this passage suggests that not all elders preached or taught publicly
2. Honor (Grk: "Time")
 - a. Definitions:
 - 1) Honor, reverence or respect. Examples:
- I Tim 6:1; Acts 28:10 - "honor"
 - 2) Value or Price. Examples:

- a) Acts 5:2; 19:19; I Cor 6:20 - "price"
 - b) I Pet 2:7; Col 2:23 - "value"
 - c) Acts 28:10 - "honored us"
- 3) Honorarium, compensation - was used of a physicians and an elders "honorarium"
- 4) Rationale for honoring elders (v.18)
- a) Do not muzzle an ox while threshing
 - If this for an animal, how much more so for a person to reap fruits of his labor
 - Same rationale used in I Cor 9:7-14 for preachers
 - b) The laborer is worthy of his wages
 - c) Note: This idea of honoring financially is also given for widows in v. 3-16
- 5) Note the modifier "double honor"
- a) Seniors are worthy of honor by virtue of gray hair
 - b) Elders who rule well are worthy of double honor
3. Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of 2 or 3 witnesses
- a. Leaders are exposed to unfair gossip beyond everyone else
 - b. This instruction safeguards innocent leaders from false accusations
 - c. Therefore any charge must be confirmed by at least 2 or 3 witnesses
4. Those that continue in sin are to be rebuked in the presence of all
- a. Compare to Matt 18:15-17
 - b. This is for those that "continue" in sin
 - c. Even in the rebuke, it should be with no disrespect (5:1)

d. The rebuke should be in public

- 1) Since elders are to be examples, this is necessary
- 2) So that others would be fearful of sinning

III. Summary

- A. Christians are to recognize or acknowledge their elders
- B. Elders are to be highly esteemed in love
- C. Elders are to be obeyed (or deferred to)
- D. Sheep are to submit to their shepherds
- E. Christians are to make their elders' work a joy, not a grief
- F. Elders are to be respected as Fathers
- G. Elders are to be given double honor. this is more than just words, but includes honoring them financially as well.
- H. An accusation against an elder should not be entertained unless on the basis of at least 2 or 3 witnesses
- I. The elder who persists in sin is to be rebuked publicly.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are specific ways you can “know” or “recognize your elders?”
2. Why should you recognize your elders?
3. Explain what it means to “obey” your elders.
4. How can you specifically make your elders joyful in their ministry? How can you give them grief?
5. There is no profit in giving elders grief, but can it actually be harmful? Explain.
6. If there are no elders in the body, do I Thess 5:12 and Heb 13:17 no apply to us? Explain.
7. Suppose an elder came over to your place to inquire about some personal problems he feels you may be having. Is it any of his business? How should you react? Why?
8. What does it mean to give elders double honor?
9. When and why should double honor be given? What does double honor communicate?
10. Suppose someone comes to you and tells you that one of the elders curses at his work. What should you do? Why?
11. Is it ever appropriate to rebuke an elder? If so, how and when?
12. How submissive should you be to an elder?