

Family Matters

All in the Family, Part 2

Understanding Our Roles

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / Feb. 3, 2019

- **What Does It Look Like to Submit to a Specific Group of Spiritual Leaders?**

God's Word assures us that God Himself designed our world to include the balance and interplay between human authority and submission in government, in the workplace, in the home, and in church.

Hebrews 13:7 "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God..."

v. 17 "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls..."

v. 24 "Greet all your leaders..."

We know God intended for the local church to have designated leaders, because in **I Timothy 3** Paul gives Timothy, who was pastoring the first church in Ephesus, a list of qualifications as to who should serve as an elder or deacon in his church.

- What does it look like to submit to a specific group of spiritual leaders in your life?
- **You Should Expect Your Spiritual Leaders to Point You to an Authority That's Higher than Their Own**

Hebrews 13:7 Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God..."

The most important thing your spiritual leaders do is point you away from them and back to God's Word, whether it's in teaching, preaching, counseling, encouragement or in setting the direction and mission of the church.

Study the Scriptures yourself to see if what they're saying lines up with God's Word. The Christians in Berea did that after Paul spoke to them, and Paul commended them for it.

Acts 17:11 "Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."

- **You Should Expect Your Spiritual Leaders to Say 'Follow Me as I Follow Christ'**

Spiritual leaders won't be perfect, but when they blow it, they should own it and model what it looks like to humble themselves, to ask for forgiveness and to repent.

Hebrews 13:7 "... Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith."

God holds church leaders to a higher standard and holds them accountable not just for doctrinal purity, but personal purity as well.

I Timothy 4:16 "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers."

Paul modeled this in his own life. See **I Corinthians 11:1**, **I Corinthians 4:16**, and **Philippians 3:17**.

- **You Should Be Willing to Trust and Follow Your Spiritual Leaders as They Care for Your Soul**

Hebrews 13:17 “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

- **Obey your spiritual leaders**

The Greek word for ‘obey’ in **v. 17** is the word ‘peith’ that means to be persuaded by someone, to trust someone, or to rely on someone. The word can be translated ‘obey’ because that’s what you do when you trust someone. You follow them and obey their guidance.

- **Submit to your spiritual leaders**

The word for submit is the Greek word ‘hupeik’ that only occurs here in the New Testament. It’s a more narrow word that means to make room for someone, to yield to someone or submit to them.

The tone and posture of these words could be communicated like this: have a bent towards trusting them, a disposition to support them, an inclination to yield or comply with their guidance, as well as a desire to imitate their faith and their walk with the Lord.

The meaning of **v. 17** is not a heavy-handed authoritarianism, but a humble, loving leadership that points you to God’s Word and says, “Follow me as I follow Christ.”

The Bible is not unaware of the potential for spiritual leadership abuse. See what Peter says in **I Peter 5:1-5**.

- **Make it a joy for your spiritual leaders to shepherd you**

Resisting the care of your spiritual leaders does not put you ahead, but behind.

V. 17 is commanding you to do whatever you can to make it a joy for your shepherd to shepherd you, instead of leaving them groaning.

- **You Can Only Trust and Submit to Your Earthly Shepherds After You’re Trusting in the Ultimate Work of Your Great Shepherd - Jesus**

It’s no accident that there’s so much of Jesus in the midst of a chapter that makes reference to your earthly, less-than-perfect spiritual leaders in the church. See **Hebrews 13:20-21**.

Hebrews 13:20-21 “Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

God knows what He’s doing! He’s given us each other. He’s given us our Great Shepherd, Jesus, and He’s given us earthly spiritual leaders in the local church.