
EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

"...FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE..." ~ EPHESIANS 4:12

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HONORING ELDERS

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Elders are worthy of esteem. They are designed by God (Titus 1:5). All who serve should be loved for their work. When elders seek to do their work according to God's way they are a blessing. Elders are not merely vestigial organs, nice to have but not really needed. They are not necessary evils, just men to administrate so we can avoid dreaded business meetings. Elders are to be the epitome of godly men who love souls. What is our responsibility toward them? How can we grow nearer to God by esteeming men who serve as elders?

We grow nearer to God when we obey and submit to those who watch for our souls (Heb. 13:17). In order to draw near to God, congregations must have a frame of mind that matches the leaders they select as elders. The congregation's responsibility is to obey. Obey is a word used when talking about full agreement of the thing to be done. It may be what you want and would have done of your own volition if you had thought of it. However, what do we do when the elders take a course of action we don't agree with? The Bible teaches that congregations are also to submit to the elders. Submit carries the idea of obeying even when a thing may not have been your choice. Congregations obey when their judgment agrees with that of the elders, and they submit when their judgment differs.

Churches have the mutual relationship God intends when they have men who are recognized as competent watchmen for souls. Elders can do their work best in an environment where people are willing to be submissive and obey.

Next, if elders are referred to as shepherds (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet. 5:2) there must be a flock. There can be no shepherd without any sheep. All the things a shepherd does that makes him a shepherd required sheep. Shepherd's protect and provide for sheep by taking them out to pasture and bringing them in. They defend their flock and care for them when they are blind and lame. They heal the hurt. We have an ideal shepherd, and He calls the sheep just like a shepherd. He does a shepherd's work but that relationship depends no more on the shepherd to be right than sheep. In fact, great emphasis is placed on the sheep. He calls them by name, leads them out, and they follow. Sheep will not follow the voice of a stranger. We draw near to God when the sheep know the voice of their shepherds. There can be no good shepherding without a flock that knows their shepherds and hears their voice (John 10:10-16).

Furthermore, we are nearer to God when we follow the lead of elders. **“Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor...”** (1 Tim. 5:17). The rule of elders and their work is a secondary consideration in this passage. The principle point is addressed to those who work with elders. Yes, elders rule but the word “rule” is not the word for a king's rule nor a despot. It is a picture of one in front and came to be the idea of a leader. In military circles, capable, brave soldiers would follow their leaders

into battle. The leaders would be the ones out front leading the attack. Though elders are adjudged as capable leaders, they cannot lead if no one follows. By definition, leader suggests someone to be led. We draw nearer to God by not only following, but following with the right attitude: respect. Further, elders are worthy of honor. Honor was a word used to describe chief men, like elders of a city or family. They were the honored, respected men who were expected to have wisdom. Note that elders do not have authority to compel or make people follow. Elders lead and people follow when there is respect.

Consider what happens when a congregation fails to follow, fails to be considerate, and fails to respond to their elders. The work and rule of elders will be difficult at best. When a congregation fails in their responsibility toward their elders, do not be surprised to find disheartened, discouraged, bitter men who become less and less what elders ought to be. Do not be surprised that they end up where they are not even respectable Christians, much less exhibit some proficiency at being Christian.

Finally, when elders do not act like elders ought to by showing solicitous care, protection and consideration, the congregation suffers. No church prospers under Diotophian dictators and bullies. When elders and the congregation exist in an adversarial role they destroy one another. However, when elders are trying to be what they ought to be and the congregation is working at their relationship toward them, the result is up building to a congregation. We grow nearer to God by creating an atmosphere in which elders grow and perform better because of the congregation's attitude toward them. Congregations

perform better because of what elders do. When God’s provision for elders in every church works, it works great. Abuses of God’s provision are terrible and destructive in the end. Will you obey, submit to and honor your elders?

NOTES: _____

AM LESSON:
Immodesty: The Wrong Reason for Clothes

PM LESSON:
Why The Law Then?
(Galatians 3:19-4:11)

“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”
(MATTHEW 28:19-20)