

Our Duties Toward the Elders

by Bryan Gibson

NOTE: This is just an outline study, which means you need to do some further study on your own. Look up the passages cited to more fully understand the points made in the outline.

I. Attitudes Toward the Elders

A. “Recognize” them (1 Thessalonians 5:12).

1. NAS, NIV: “appreciate”
2. Thayer: “to have regard for one, cherish, pay attention to...”

B. “Esteem them very highly in love” (1 Thessalonians 5:13).

1. The reason given: “for their work’s sake.”

C. Exhort them as fathers (1 Timothy 5:1).

1. The above passage likely refers to older men in general, but would certainly apply to elders.
2. Approach them with love and respect, as a child would his own father.

D. Count some “worthy of double honor” (1 Timothy 5:17-18).

1. This applies to those who “rule well...especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.”
2. Based on the quotation in v. 18, this honor could include financial support.

E. Do not rush to judgment (1 Timothy 5:19).

1. Do not listen to an accusation against them, unless there is proof—“two or three witnesses.”
2. This admonition is easy enough to follow—if we have the proper regard for them.
3. If the accusation can be proven—“those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear” (1 Timothy 5:20).

II. Conduct Toward the Elders

A. Make their job enjoyable (Hebrews 13:17).

1. Constant complaining will certainly not make it enjoyable.
2. The Israelites made life miserable for Moses—with their envy of his authority, and their constant complaining.

3. The easiest way to make their enjoyable is to be faithful to the Lord.
- B. Be at peace (1 Thessalonians 5:13).
1. This admonition comes at the end of a passage dealing with our duties toward elders.
 2. This is one way to make their task enjoyable. Envy, strife, and division will do the opposite.
- C. Obey them; be submissive to them (Hebrews 13:17).
1. You may not agree with every decision they make, but unless it causes you to sin, your responsibility is clear.
 2. To rebel against them is to rebel against God. Keep in mind—these men were made overseers by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28).
- D. Imitate them (Hebrews 13:7).
1. These men have demonstrated maturity, or else they wouldn't have been appointed.
 2. They are “examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3), and so their example should be imitated, in so far as they are imitating Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).
- E. Call them when in need (James 5:14).
1. Note where the responsibility to call is placed—on those who are sick. In other words, don't wait to be called.
 2. Yes, elders should be watching, but they can't always know every need.
- F. Pray for them (1 Timothy 2:1-4).
1. Elders may not be specifically in view in this passage, but if it is proper to pray for rulers in general, it should be more so for those who rule over the flock, for those who watch for our souls.