

Christian Perspectives: In Honor of Pastors Appreciation Month

By Pastor Gord Horsley

Abiding Place Ministries

Why do churches teach believers to be accountable to our spiritual leaders?

Because the Bible requires it.

Even more importantly than secular authorities, like our bosses, government, etc., Christians must be obedient and submissive toward their spiritual leaders who are charged with the responsibility to watch out for our souls.

Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you."

Not only are Christians to be accountable to the authority of a spiritual leader, but this passage also shows that believers should be a part of a local Church where such pastors and elders can be found. Hebrews 10:25.

One cannot really be accountable to spiritual supervision without a commitment to a Church. Nor can a person be accountable if they merely drift from one Church to another, week after week making themselves inaccessible from the supervision, teaching, encouraging, direction even some correction by a pastor who knows something about their personal lives, and lays down their lives for them and for the love of God.

Despite what some people like to think, God has no lone rangers! Accountability to the continuity of ministry and leadership is vital to God's plan for his Church, to provide the necessary checks and balances to produce solid spiritual growth.

One common reason that some Christians hop from church to church, or abandon church participation, is that they foster an independent spirit which resists authority. They do not wish to be corrected or to confront truths they would prefer to avoid. Without accountability to authority, a believer develops itching ears? 2 Tim 4:3.

They look for teaching that agrees with their own opinions, instead of Objective instruction, which is the whole counsel of God's word that will force them to face their areas of immaturity and help them grow stronger in their spiritual walk with God. Some believers with an independent attitude will contend that they don't need the Church or spiritual leaders that they have God's Spirit to teach them.

Indeed, every believer has the personal indwelling of Holy Spirit to guide us, transform us into the image of Christ, 1 John 2:27, but this does not discharge us from the Biblical counsel and ministry of the Church Heb 13:7,17, Prov 11:14,15, 2 Corin 13:1. The Church is Christ's plan for his followers, in which he is the head! Eph 5:23, and has commissioned his church to represent him and his authority in this world 2 Corin 5:20, Matt 18:17-20, John 14:12. He has given the Church Gifts, Eph 4:11-13 for the sake of unity. He has ordained Elders, deacons, and pastors, to supervise and manage Christ's flock Acts 14:23, 1 Tim 3:10-13, and additional teachers, Evangelists, Apostles, Prophets to train, teach and equip the saints for service.

Clergy, Pastors and ministers are not lone rangers either. They too are accountable to authority of overseers, Bishops, Apostles, who may offer counsel, reproof or discipline when necessary to keep the church or body of Christ safe. You cannot have Godly authority unless you are under authority Acts 21:18-24. All believers should understand authority according to the word of God. Leaders are held to a higher account, and must meet biblical qualifications a moral Godly lifestyle Matt 7:15,16, Gal 5:19-25, 1 Tim 3:1-7, and they proclaim the uncompromised word of God 2 Tim 3:16, Romans 1:16. It is best for us all to cooperate with our spiritual leaders

who are following the biblical example of a spiritual leader, for Christ's sake and the sake of unity in Christ Jesus, don't rebel or give them a hard time.

The bible warns that contempt towards God's obedient servant is equal to contempt towards God himself Exodus 16:2,8 Numbers 16 Acts 5:1-11. Not only are we to have overseers, Pastors and elders, to keep us safe, but we should get to know them 1 Thess 5:12,13. So often, the people in the church want their pastor to know all about them ? however Paul says that believers should get to know their leaders, that is to know their lifestyle, their sincerity, their integrity, their passion for the Lord and his church, but most important the pastor's love for his people in the congregation that God has allowed He or She to Shepherd for a season. To us as pastors, we are all under-shepherds to the great shepherd Jesus Christ.

Getting to know your pastor or elders provides a tangible example to follow and a deeper understanding and respect for all they do; a strong trust will be formed between you and your pastor, to get you through the many trials we face in the Church today.

Pastoring is a lonely and at times an endless job, finding good support and partnership to see the vision of our local churches flourish is not easy. God has also required of us according to his word to respect the authority over us, even if that authority isn't perfect. Spiritual leaders are human and do make mistakes, but the Lord still demands our respect of them, they are his servants, not ours!

He placed them there, he reserves the right to correct or reprove as he sees fit Psa 105:15. Certainly, leaders and pastors must be held accountable for their behavior, even corrected or disciplined, but by those over them, in an honorable way, and in a god-like way, in love and respect.

God is always about restoration, especially when repentance and forgiveness has been asked. Believe me, he does not mess around with his leaders, we are on a tight leash, so to speak. God has no trouble keeping leaders on track. If you can recall that even after King Saul had become disobedient to God and corrupt, he remained as the anointed King over Israel for quite some time.

Saul eventually became jealous of the heir to his throne, David, and began a relentless manhunt to kill him. At one point, David and his men stumbled across Saul encamped in a cave and had the opportunity to kill their sleeping pursuer, but instead, David chose to quietly cut off a portion of Saul's robe as evidence to show his unwillingness to kill Saul when he had the chance to do it.

But the Lord convicted David's heart that not only was it wrong to slay God's anointed, it was wrong to even touch and cut his robe. 1 Sam 24:5,6 ?The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord.?

Respect toward authority is not limited to our actions, but even relates to how we speak of our Pastors. The Bible warns against lifting our tongue against the Lord's servants, even though they might be worthy of criticism. When the Apostle Paul was unjustly punished for preaching the good news, he spoke defiantly until he realized that he was addressing Ananias, the high priest. Paul apologized and said, ?I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, you shall not speak evil of the ruler of your people? Acts 23:5.

Just imagine, even though this high priest was an enemy to the Gospel, and was wrong to have Paul slapped on the mouth, yet he was still a spiritual authority whom Paul was obligated to respect. If Paul was not permitted to speak against Ananias, then you certainly don't have any right to badmouth Godly, spiritual leaders. It is an act of rebellion, for which you will answer to God. All of us in the body of Christ need to understand authority, especially in the times we live, lawlessness is so ramped, lack of love for fellow man, no respect for authority or God himself.

It is happening all over the world, but we are not of this world, let us not act like it either. Please let us respect our leaders, help us make a difference in a world that is indifferent to the order God has placed, not only in the Church, But in the world as well. Please! Appreciate your spiritual leaders.

Help us Pastors and leaders, as we help you make a stand for righteousness in this hurting world. Don't forget to thank your Pastor

for his or her hard work! We are all looking out for your best interest. We do what we do to help people have a closer walk with Christ and following a biblical lifestyle which leads to eternal life, but most of all we do it because we are called to bring glory to God.