

In Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 23, we read in respect to God's first established institution, the family, that the "husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church". Many times, as we seek to discern the Word of God in this verse, we find ourselves dwelling on the previous verse which commands the wife to "submit to her husband", while often overlooking the verse following. Immediately thereafter in verse 25, we see the enormous responsibility given to the husband, which is to "love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it". Unfortunately, many times this seems to be our propensity; while disregarding our own responsibilities, we find ourselves pointing out and demanding those of others.

As we turn our focus to God's second established institution, the church, are we surprised that in the same way, we find ourselves focusing on the responsibilities of the pastor¹, and yet not acknowledging that we too have a responsibility to him. Indeed we may teach Sunday school, a youth group, or be active in a ministry in the church, and thus conclude that we are fulfilling our responsibilities in the local body. However, we very rarely seem to concentrate on our responsibilities toward our pastor. Without a doubt, scripture is very clear as to the pastor's responsibilities as well as to the traits of servitude that he should possess. Again I emphasize, it is rare that we turn the table and look at our responsibilities toward God's chosen man.

First of all, we must recognize the office of the Under-Shepherd of God (which is the shepherd under the Great Shepherd²) in this dispensation, as well as his God given authority.³ This is God's called and chosen man for such a time as this, to be the overseer and the protector, and to "feed the church of God, which he (the Lord Jesus Christ) hath purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28) In recognizing this, we can not only begin to respect the authority, but also appreciate the love of the office, as was often indicated by Paul. This should then motivate us to show that same respect and love toward the pastor. In doing so, we can fulfill the command

of God for us to "esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)

As we just spoke about the responsibility of the pastor to oversee and protect the flock, we must understand that the church can not be protected unless they want to be. So then, the church must obey and submit to that authority⁴. Not only as the spoken word of man, but as the Word of Truth proclaimed by God's man. The church should not only seek to do this in cases where in doing so there is no sacrifice, but in all times, as in duty.⁵ It is also understandable that a great part of that protection comes in the form of teaching the flock. If the church body is not willing to obey the pastor as he submits and follows the Word of God, he is then unable to protect them, and thus unable to fulfill his responsibility. We must give great consideration as to how our actions and decisions affect our pastor. Although he will not be held responsible for our action, we indeed will be help responsible for hindering his effectiveness.

We must also be vigilant to not only listen to our pastor, but also to observe him. We must be sure to "follow their lead" as some would say, as they follow the Lord Jesus Christ. As we see their faith and holiness lived out and their example of Christian living, this too should be our focus and desire to follow suit.⁶ Once we are born-again and the transformation of change (2 Corinthians 5:17) begins as we become more like our Lord Jesus Christ, it should be our desire to be around and seek the example of those who are filled with the Holy Spirit.

It is imperative that we keep in mind that it continues to remain our responsibility to search the scriptures, for our command to obey is voided, when the teaching from the Office is found to be contradictory to the Word of God.

There are at least two areas that I believe most church members recognize as an important and crucial responsibility owed to the pastor. The first is its responsibility to pray for him. As with any ministry, this is the most important area, how much more so for the pastor. If Satan and his

demons are going to attack anyone, I can also guarantee you that the pastor will be first on their list. Thus, we must pray and pray earnestly, as we strive together.⁷

Secondly, it is that of the physical and monetary needs. I don't believe any Christian would expect that the pastor not be

compensated for his work. Although sadly enough, churches often find themselves a little less generous with the pastor's compensation, then they are with their chicken salad, during a church dinner. It is surprising to hear, at what standard of living the pastor and his family are sometimes expected to live. However, we are commanded to give "double honor" and reward to the elder, thereby caring for his physical, earthly, and monetary needs.⁸ This stresses the importance of tithing to the storehouse. There is a need for the church members to understand that their first responsibility is to their local church and pastor, especially in a day and age when much of God's money is being stolen from him and given to Para-church and other organizations. Along the same lines, the church member needs to keep in mind that the same principles that apply to the tithes and offerings, also apply to their time. Many times we find that Christians are more than willing to get involved with "ministries" outside the local church, and yet are not willing to do so within, where they are needed and commanded to serve. It is commanded of the members to support the local church with tithes and offerings as well as with their time and talents which thus provides for the needs of the pastor.⁹

As part of caring for the needs of the pastor, it is also important to remove as many of the temporal responsibilities that he is faced with, so that he can focus on prayer and his study of the

"A church that is penurious with a pastor violates the Scripture. Rarely does such a church manifest spiritual power or progress. The principles revealed in 2 Cor. 9:6-10 are worthy of consideration"

The Doctrine and Administration of the Church, Paul Jackson

⁴ Hebrews 13:17

⁵ Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary – Hebrews 13:8

⁶ Hebrews 13:7, Hebrews 6:12, 1 Peter 5:3, 1 Thessalonians 1:6, 2 Thessalonians 3:9

⁷ Romans 15:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:25

⁸ 1 Timothy 5:17-18, Luke 10:7

⁹ This I Believe, pp. 125, 1 Corinthians 16:2, II Corinthians 9:7, Leviticus 27:30

² This I Believe, pp. 137

³ 1 Peter 5:2-3

scriptures.¹⁰ It is these things that the deacons are to assist in, and the church members gladly allow them. However, we must remember that each and every church member is a servant, and they too have a responsibility to assist the pastor in area's such as housekeeping, visitation, clerical, as well as any other way that may be helpful to him. We can look to the example of Phebe in Romans 16:1 to see that you don't have to be a deacon to be a servant.

In closing, we need to remember that the pastor is human, and the office can be one of discouragement, loneliness, and even frustration at times. It is not only the local body's responsibility to adhere to the above mentioned items, but also to assist in the protection of his spiritual well-being, thus the importance of encouragement. I wonder how often the pastor receives such encouragement, even after a sound doctrine filled sermon, in comparison to the number of criticisms overall. Ironically enough, it might only begin with our faithful attendance in all the services, in which the pastor pours his love into throughout the week, which would act as a great encouragement.

He is our bishop, our elder, and our pastor; ordained by God to love, nourish, oversee, and protect, and we are his sheep.¹¹

- David C. Mills

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¹⁰ Acts 6:4

¹¹ Basic Theology, pp. 455