

I. Introduction and review.

- A. Church leaders are mentioned three times in the last section of Hebrews. 13:7,17,24**
- 1. We can assume, based upon the rest of the New Testament, that our author is referring to the Elders (Overseers, Pastors) of the church. Ti. 1:5,7 Acts 20:17,28**
 - 2. The New Testament pattern of plural mutually accountable leaders is followed. v. 7,17,24 Acts 14:23 Titus 1:5 Phil. 1:1**
 - 3. We do not appoint men to be Elders, but rather seek to recognize those to whom the Holy Spirit has given the qualifications and the gifts. Acts 20:28 I Tim. 3:1ff**
 - 4. God has also appointed Deacons to assist the Elders. Acts 6:1ff I Tim. 3:8-13**
 - 5. Hebrews 13 emphasizes the importance of remaining faithful to the unchanging truth of the immutable Christ, as taught by our faithful leaders.**
- B. There are many dangers to avoid when it comes to church leadership.**
- 1. Clericalism which denies the priesthood of all believers.**
 - 2. Egalitarianism which fails to respect the leaders God has appointed.**
 - 3. Authoritarianism which abuses the power of church office.**
 - 4. Individualism which refuses submit to any church authority.**

II. Church leaders bear a significant responsibility to God and to His people. v. 7,17

- A. Our overall responsibility is to bring spiritual benefit to God's people by keeping them in the unchanging gospel of the immutable Christ. v. 17d**
- B. We are to speak the Word of God. v. 7a 4:12 Acts 2:42 6:4 20:26-27 I Ti. 3:2 4:13-16**
- 1. We are to proclaim the gospel to the lost. II Tim. 4:5 Acts 4:29,31 I Cor. 2:2**
 - 2. We are to feed Christ's sheep, both publicly and individually. Acts 20:20**
 - 3. We are to proclaim God's Word comprehensively. Acts 20:27 II Tim. 4:2-3**
 - 4. Our job is not to be original, but to be faithful. v. 9 I Cor. 2:2**
 - 5. In order to do this we need to be devoted to the study of God's Word. Acts 6:4**
- C. We are to set an example of faith and conduct. v. 7b, 18 I Tim. 3:1-7 4:12 Titus 1:5ff**
- 1. Our lives must exemplify what we proclaim.**
 - 2. We should be men like those in Hebrews 11 whose present lives were controlled by their confident hope of future blessing. 11:1-2**
 - 3. God's people are greatly helped by positive flesh and blood examples. Jo. 13:12ff**
 - 4. Nothing is more destructive to the church than the public fall of one of its leaders.**
 - 5. Not only must we look good to others, but our inward lives should be holy so that we can have a clear conscience before God. v. 18b Js. 1:14-15 I Ti. 4:16**
- D. We are to lead the church. v. 17a I Th. 5:12b I Tim. 5:17**
- 1. The church is not a democracy. Pr. 14:12 Ro. 3:10ff**
 - 2. Nor is the church a dictatorship. I Pe. 5:3-5**
 - 3. Our authority is derived from Scripture.**
 - 4. Again, the importance of having plural mutually accountable leaders is obvious.**
 - 5. Leaders set priorities and vision for the life of the church and oversee ministries.**
- E. We watch over the souls of God's sheep. v. 17b 13:20 Ezek. 3:17-19 33:1ff Jer. 6:17**
- 1. Shepherds must protect the sheep from the wolves. v. 9 Acts 20:28-31 Titus 1:9**
 - 2. We must remain vigilant: awake and alert. Eph. 6:18 Mark 13:33 Gal. 1:6-7**
 - 3. We warn God's people of danger. 12:25,15,8 10:29-31 3:7-8**

- F. We are to be devoted to prayer. 6:4
- G. We are to serve willingly and joyfully, without complaining. v. 17c I Pe. 5:2
 - 1. We should not be surprised at hardship in the ministry. 11:1ff II Co. 11:23ff 12:15
 - 2. We should find joy in God and His people. I Th. 2:19-20
 - 3. Like Christ, we need to look to the joy set before us as we endure. 12:1-3
- H. We will give account to God for our leadership. v. 17b Ezek. 3:17-18 33:36 34:1ff
I Pe. 5:4 Js. 3:1 Acts 20:28 I Pe. 5:4 II Tim. 4:7ff

III. Church members should follow the leaders God has placed over them. v. 7,17-19

- A. God has placed leaders over the church for your spiritual profit. v. 17d Eph. 4:11ff
- B. Listen carefully to those who proclaim God's Word. v. 7a Acts 2:42 I Th. 5:12c
 - 1. Faithful preaching from the Bible is the Word of God to you. 4:12
 - 2. Give full attention to the public ministry of God's Word. Acts 2:42
 - 3. Seek individual counsel and instruction from your leaders. Acts 20:20 Pr. 24:6
- C. Follow their example of faith and conduct. v. 7
 - 1. We learn by watching. I Cor. 11:1 4:16 II Th. 3:7,9 I Tim. 4:12 John 13:15
I Th. 1:6 Phil. 3:17
 - 2. We need the right role models.
- D. Submit to their authority. v. 17a I Th. 5:12ff I Co. 16:16
 - 1. The author is expressing confidence in their present leaders, and perhaps some concern that they are not receiving the respect that is due them.
 - 2. Elders' authority only goes so far as the Bible. Gal. 1:8
 - 3. Be teachable and easy to lead.
 - 4. Elders also have to submit to one another. I Tim. 5:20 Gal. 2:11ff
- E. Bring them joy and not grief. v. 17c III John 1:4 Jer. 9:1ff
 - 1. How do sheep wear out their shepherds?
 - a. Some resent all authority.
 - b. Some refuse to commit to a local church.
 - c. Some grumble. Phil. 2:14 I Co. 10:10
 - d. Some want their ears tickled. II Tim. 4:3ff
 - e. Some are carried away by false doctrine. v. 9
 - 2. Your insubordination will put you in peril.
 - 3. How can sheep bring joy to their shepherds? III John 1:4 I Pe. 4:8-11 Eph. 4:12ff
Gal. 6:6 I Tim. 5:17ff
- F. Pray for them. v. 18-19 Acts 4:29 Col. 4:3 Ro. 15:30 II Co. 1:11ff Eph. 6:19 II Th. 3:1

IV. Concluding applications: Jesus Christ is the Great Shepherd of the sheep. v. 8, 20

Discussion Questions

1. What are the responsibilities of church leaders?
2. Why is it important that we have a plurality of leaders?
3. Why is it important that leaders set a good example?
4. What are the responsibilities of church members?
5. How can church members bring joy or grief to their leaders?
6. What limits are placed on the authority of our leaders?
7. How do these verses relate to their context of 13:8-16?