



First Baptist Church Selmer

"ORDER IN THE... CHURCH!" • HUMBLE SUBMISSION •
1 TIMOTHY 5:17-6:2; HEBREWS 13:17 • 5/12/2024

MAIN POINT

A healthy church demonstrates love for its God-appointed leaders by willingly submitting to their spiritual leadership.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Although it can be difficult to give specifics, have you ever been hurt in church before?

Why is church hurt sometimes more difficult to forgive than other hurts in our lives? (For instance: losing a job)

Church hurt is a very real thing and a very real problem! But what do we do about it? From the pastor to the pews, it is likely that everyone has been hurt in church at one time or another. Some may have been classified as 'worse than others' but the pain is the same. It is extremely difficult to move past the way that so-called 'Christians' can sometimes treat one another.

Just imagine if Jesus had been hurt by people in the church...

How does knowing that Jesus knows exactly what it is like to experience church hurt, help you?

How did Jesus respond to His hurt?

As a church family, our goal is to live beyond resentment or bitterness, press on past painful moments with hope, and extend grace to one another relentlessly. We are to live and model the life that Jesus lived before us. Jesus was not immune to people in the

church campaigning and casting votes against Him even to the point of death, but as Jesus looked down on them while hanging on the cross, He muttered, *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."* (Luke 23:34)

Paul taught Timothy that the love we have for people in our church is like that of family. Today we will see how, despite the potential hurts we have from church, it is vital to our spiritual growth to sit under the teaching and protection of trusted leaders in our church. As we will see, the leaders of our church serve us well, and we should love them well in return.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 TIMOTHY 5:21-25.

21 "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. 22 Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure. 23 (No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.) 24 The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. 25 So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden." (ESV)

Despite previous hurts, how have you experienced God's grace as a part of our church family?

How could you extend grace more faithfully and sincerely to others—even those who have hurt you?

Paul tells Timothy about the importance of vetting and choosing spiritual leaders in the church. Obviously, with the amount of false teaching being taught, a breakdown of selecting appropriate leaders was present. *"Do not be hasty in laying on of hands"* was a direct statement on the appropriateness of taking time in the selection process of a new pastor or leader in the church.

Although it is possible for church hurt to occur from anyone, including leaders, most hurt comes simply from the spiritual immaturity of other believers. While no one in the church

is an expert or perfect example, Paul tells Timothy that faithfulness and humility should be consistently on display in the life of any holding leadership positions. Likewise, evidence of these things ('good works') would also be seen for all to see since they *"cannot remain hidden."*

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 13:17.

17 *"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you." (ESV)*

What reasons for obedience to our church leaders does the writer of Hebrews give in this passage?

In what situations might you need to *"obey your leaders and submit to them"*?

What impact does it have on your daily life knowing that your church leaders will give an account to God for their care for your soul?

Why might we, as church members, be asked to give an account of how we responded to those church leaders he placed in our lives?

In these verses, the writer of Hebrews challenges us to obey and submit to our leaders. The idea is to follow our leaders as they follow the Lord. Without question, there is no such thing as a perfect leader. However, there is a such thing as a trusted leader. Since our church leaders are set to give an account to God for your sake, we should support them in any way we can.

According to the writer of Hebrews, what is the best way to show support for our leaders (v. 18)?

The chief support for Christian leaders is not monetary, but prayer support. It takes spiritual weapons to fight a spiritual war, and the chief spiritual weapon is the sword of the Spirit, wielded in prayer. Only with God's power can leaders accomplish God's work.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 TIMOTHY 6:1-2.

1 "Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. 2 Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved.

Teach and urge these things." (ESV)

How does this passage translate to our culture today in terms of how we should respond to the requests and demands of those placed in leadership and authority over us?

How does this instruction relate to your work situation specifically, either as one in authority or one under it?

Paul moves directly into addressing humility in submission to those whom God has placed over us. Although it is no secret that slavery existed in the first century, it is somewhat different than our understanding of American slavery. The primary use of slavery during this time was not forced, but individuals often 'sold themselves' as bondservants. These bondservants would sign an agreement to work for a 'master' to work off a debt that was owed. This did not mean that masters and bondservants' relationships were always of the highest quality but that their relationships carried the responsibility to honor God above all else.

Paul specifically cautioned bondservants to be respectful, particularly if they had "*believing masters*" (v. 2). The New Testament consistently instructs Christians to be servants since therefore we, ourselves, are bondservants to Christ Jesus. Here Paul used the mirror image of bondservants (or slaves) behaving in a way pleasing to Christ.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How can we show love for those in the church who may have previously hurt us?

How can we be an encouragement to our spiritual leaders at church this week?

As a group, how can you display thankfulness for God placing leaders over us to encourage and challenge us in our spiritual growth?

PRAYER

Thank God for the godly leadership in our church. Thank Him for giving each person in our group the blessing of a church family. Ask Him for discernment and grace for each person at our church as we strive to be a church that pleases Him.

COMMENTARY

| 1 TIMOTHY 5:21-25; 6:1-2

5:21. The temptation for many people, even those in leadership, is to avoid the uncomfortable, especially when it involves disciplinary actions against a colleague. But Paul was unequivocal when he told Timothy to keep these instructions without partiality and to do nothing out of favoritism. Objectivity and impartiality are important for a pastor if he is to lead well. The leader must exercise judgment in the same way that God discharges it—without favoritism. Paul added a special import to this instruction by giving his charge in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels. Paul called as his witnesses God, the judge over all; Jesus Christ, the coming judge of the earth; and the elect angels—those who carry out the righteous judgments of God. Since the pastor and the church embody Christ in this present world, they must act in ways that do not compromise the nature of their Lord.

5:22. The undercurrent throughout this letter is an unblemished Christian witness. This maintains its strength through pure doctrine and pure living. It almost seems unnecessary, in view of all Paul has written, that he should have to warn Timothy to not be hasty in the laying on of hands. The descriptions of false teachers and the list of qualifications for elders and deacons would seem to preclude hasty recruitment to the office of church leadership. This is why Paul demanded impartiality when exercising leadership decisions. He also emphasized patient, careful selection of church leaders.

Paul ended this thought with a sober warning: *“And do not share in the sins of others.”* Careless selection of those called to represent God and His church can involve the appointing pastor in the sins of those selected. Through the laying on of hands, a leader identifies with the ordained person, touching him with blessing as well as approval. Haste

or sloppiness in appointing people to ministry can also lead to personal compromise. What is overlooked in a fellow leader may be more easily excused in one's own life.

5:23. After warning Timothy not to be dragged into the sins of others, Paul gave this young pastor a health tip: stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses. This sentence seems out of place, sandwiched between verses about sinfulness.

This verse should not be used as a license to encourage the drinking of alcohol. It is more likely that, in order to clarify his directive for Timothy to keep himself pure, Paul put in this exception clause. He wanted to keep Timothy from being drawn into the same wrong thinking and practices as the false teachers who promoted a brand of asceticism (1 Tim. 4:2-3). Denial may have its place at times, but it is not law. Those who insist on particular codes of behavior without flexibility wander dangerously close to the legalism Jesus so vehemently opposed. Perhaps Timothy needed to be reminded of grace.

5:24-25. Everyone will realize the fruit of their life's efforts, whether good or ill, and whether now or later. Paul stated that the sins of some men are obvious. Some people are so given to sinful behavior that their sins precede them, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them. This phrase probably refers to the selection of church leaders. Some people are unfit for the ministry. Paul understood the human heart, so he warned Timothy that the sins of others trail behind them. These were people who practiced in duplicitous living, who faked spirituality on the outside while a life of sin persisted within. That is why caution and patience are needed in appointing people to ministry. Time and observation will eventually reveal the inner spirit.

6:1. Though Paul did not condone slavery (he condemned the slave trader along with murderers in 1 Tim. 1:9-10), it is clear that, for Christians, social redemption is secondary to personal redemption. Cultural changes occur out of the transformation of individual lives and the witness of the church. This is why Paul could write that all who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect.

Paul wanted to guard the reputation of the gospel as much as possible so that the kingdom of God did not become entangled with the kingdoms of earth, thereby hindering the true message of Christ. Consequently, Paul told slaves to give respect to their masters, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered.

It is also a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith that all people are equal before God. The cross of Christ is the great leveler, with the powerful and the powerless coming

to salvation in the same, simple way. And so, though it may seem scandalous to us, God longs for the salvation of the oppressor as much as the oppressed. And this is great news for us, because we can easily be identified as both.

When a hierarchy of authority exists, whether in government, social relationships, jobs, or within the church, God always requires the giving of honor and respect to those in power. In our own time and culture, this could certainly be applied to employee and employer relations. It reflects the divine order of God as our head.

6:2. A new dimension is introduced when slave and slave owner are both Christians. Though Christian faith makes many proclamations about freedom (Luke 4:18–19; John 8:32; 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 3:28), it does so in recognition of a spiritual reality that is not yet realized in the social context. Christianity brings us into new relationships with one another, but the fullness of these relationships is not always achieved immediately, or even in this life. That is why slaves who have believing masters are not to show less respect for them because they are brothers.

Some of the wealthy Christians of New Testament times had slaves and stewards in their households. Embracing Christianity did not free the slave from his situation, nor did it lessen his obligations of service to his master—quite the opposite. Coming to Christ creates a new relationship, not only between the individual and God but also between the individual and other people. Slaves and masters were now brothers, bonded together in God's family. This increased the obligation of service to one another.

In fact, entry into God's family holds the believer to a higher standard. The slave is to serve them even better. Why? Because those who benefit from their service are believers, and dear to them. Here is that exceptional love for which Christians and the church should be known—love that overrides roles, titles, jobs, and economic status and works for the benefit of others. Of course, Paul's instructions were based on mutual respect and submission to one another. The balancing instructions to masters are found in his letter to Philemon and also in Ephesians 6:9.

| HEBREWS 13:17

13:17 When a servant of God is in the will of God, teaching the Word of God, the people of God should submit and obey. This does not mean that pastors should be dictators. "*Neither be lords over God's heritage.*" (1 Peter 5:3) Some church members have a flippant attitude toward pastoral authority, and this is dangerous. One day every pastor will have

to give an account of his ministry to the Lord, and he wants to be able to do it with joy. A disobedient Christian will find on that day that the results of disobedience are unprofitable, not for the pastor, but for himself. (Warren Wiersbe - *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary*)