

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## *Old Hickory Church of Christ*

841 Old Hickory Blvd.  
Jackson, TN 38305

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### **A Christian's Responsibility to the Elders**

People making personal choices regarding which passages of Scripture they believe and which ones they don't is no new practice. But such behavior must be forsaken by all who desire to please God (1 Thess. 4:1) and be Christians (Jas. 2:10).

Lately, there seems to be a spreading disease of blatant disregard for admonitions given by the shepherds of the flock to souls in their care. Can a Christian refuse to be overseen by God's authorized overseers without incurring the wrath of God? Can he refuse the spiritual admonitions, the pleadings from God's word from those authorized by God to watch for his soul? Can he refuse communication with the elders (or *any* who are spiritual, Gal. 6:1) by not welcoming them in his home, or asking them to leave when they are there to do what Christ commanded them to do? Where do Christians get the notion that they can refuse to receive the word of God from their shepherds, quit the church, but yet, go somewhere else and maintain their fellowship with God? Such fellowship *cannot be maintained* (1 John 1:6-7)! Such behavior does not describe the Bible's picture of the submissive Christian (Jas. 4:7).

Because of the prevalence of these conditions, let us be reminded of the doctrine of Christ regarding the Christian's responsibility to his elders:

- **APPRECIATE THEM:**

1 Thess. 5:12 -- But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction,

- One cannot fulfill the obligations of this command by failing to give them proper respect and by failing to recognize their leadership. They have charge over you in the Lord.

- **ESTEEM THEM VERY HIGHLY IN LOVE :**

1 Thess. 5:13 -- and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.

- God's flock must hold them in high regard, not for reasons of personal prominence or superiority, but for the sake of their work. This is to be done in love, the inner motive for willingness to be led.

- **OBEY THEM:**

Heb. 13:17 -- Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

- Christians yield to their shepherds, trustingly following their direction. They have a solemn responsibility.

- **SUBMIT TO THEM:**

Heb. 13:17 -- Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with

grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

- Rebellious insubordination is totally out of place in the kingdom of God. Christians control themselves and place themselves under God's overseers. Self-will must be yielded to the leadership to avoid chaos in the body.

- **GIVE THEM NO OCCASION FOR GRIEF:**

Heb. 13:17 -- Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

- Elders can never do their best work for the Chief Shepherd when the sheep are causing them pain and grief. The anxious discharge of their constant responsibility should not be burdened by the sickening regrets for those who fight their every effort for good and slip back into spiritual ruin.

- **CALL ON THEM:**

Jas. 5:14-15 -- Is anyone among you sick? *Then* he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

- Elders are mature and spiritual men that feed the flock with spiritual food and help in time of trouble. It is appropriate to call for the ones who care for your spiritual welfare when you have a problem.

- **RECEIVE NOT AN ACCUSATION AGAINST THEM:**

1 Tim. 5:19 -- Do not receive an accusation against an

elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.

- This is the Lord's safeguard against malicious gossip and false, unsubstantiated charges against God's servants. False accusations and contrived blame are satanic and sinful.

- **COUNT THEM WORTHY OF DOUBLE HONOR:**

1 Tim. 5:17 -- The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

- Not only are they worthy of veneration, but also remuneration for their services. Many serve with wearisome effort and toil, mostly supporting themselves to do it.

- **SUPPORT THEM IN EVERY WAY:**

True Christians support their God-fearing elders! There is no other right way. Even in civil affairs, citizens owe certain duties to the God-appointed authorities (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:17; 1 Tim. 2:1-2; Titus 3:1). They deal with spiritual problems in Christ's church, meekly instructing those who have veered off course (2 Tim. 2:25). Only the rebellious think, "What I say and do is my business and mine alone."

Pray for them (1 Tim. 2:1-2). They pray for you!

God's elders show forth His specified plan, His glorious work, the tremendous responsibility and the Lord's commands, which must be obeyed to abide in the Vine (John 15:1-ff). Hear the voice of the Son of God and live (John 5:25)! "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;" (John 10:27).

- GFS

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# Is the Church of Christ a Cult?

One man jokingly wrote that a cult was any group he didn't like. He was pointing out the tendency to use prejudicial or inflammatory language to describe those with whom we disagree. People sometimes throw the word cult around out of fear of the unknown and as a way to avoid open-minded investigation.

Of course, there are religious cults that are spiritually, emotionally, and sometimes physically dangerous and damaging. Deciding what is a cult and what isn't can be difficult because there is not one, all encompassing, definition which can be applied in every situation. While using care to avoid unsafe religious groups, we also need to resist the temptation to label as a cult any group we aren't familiar with or which seems different from what we are used to.

"According to cult expert David Halperin, most cults are groups organized for the purpose of venerating an authoritarian, usually self-proclaimed leader. This leader claims to have a special relationship with God or with some other supernatural force, a relationship that imbues him or her with special powers." [*A Parent's Guide To Teens And Cults*].

Because some people are unfamiliar with the church of Christ they have wondered if we are a cult.

Here are some reasons why we do not fit the cult description:

- We do not have a human leader. Christ is the Head of the church ([Ephesians 1:22](#)).
- We do not claim to have special revelation (knowledge) which others do not have -- we believe the Bible is our sole authority ([II Timothy 3:16,17](#)).
- Reason from Scripture is used in teaching, not pressure, manipulation, or control tactics ([Isaiah 1:18](#)).

- Every member is to study and understand God's Word, not following any man or group ideology ([I Corinthians 4:6](#); [II Timothy 2:15](#)).
- We do not isolate ourselves, but are to be in the world while not being of the world ([John 17:14,15](#); [Matthew 5:13, 14](#)).
- We are not closed minded, but are willing to "test all things" ([I Thessalonians 5:21](#)).
- We are not antagonistic, but believe, "if it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" ([Romans 12:18](#)).
- Zeal is expressed in ways controlled by God in the Scriptures ([Romans 10:2](#)).
- Without exception, we are committed to God's high standard of morality, refusing to compromise anything revealed in the New Testament.

Being a follower of Christ has always been about faith based on personal study and investigation. True faith and its expression may seem strange, even extreme, to those who are unfamiliar with faith as revealed in the New Testament. Different or devoted does not mean cultic.

Our desire to do what is right in the sight of God must drive us to search for and find His true Will as revealed in the Bible. These are the people you will find in God's true church. A cult tries to decide for you -- God's people want you to look to God in His Word to decide for you!

- David Diestelkamp, via The Sower, Vol. 51, No. 4, July/August 2006

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**SUNDAY'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: "A Question from the Question Box!" (text: Rom. 13:1-7); Sunday evening: "Judges: Jumble of Turbulence!"

**SCHEDULE:** Our Fall Gospel Meeting will be July 29-Aug. 3, with Aaron Andrews.