



Chapter 4 Obedience is not Unqualified Obedience

Nor is it a command to believers to allow themselves to be controlled by power hungry Church leaders who “need” to feel powerful through controlling the flock of Christ.

Now it is time to take up the array of words surrounding the themes of submission and obedience. Words that have stricken fear in the hearts of God's people, and at times have been the clubs in the hands of leadership to gain the control they desired over those they led.

Marital Leadership

We will see that the same form of obedience that Christ calls the wife to, in Ephesians 5, is the form used to describe the believer's submission to Church leadership. And in Ephesians the overarching principle is that those who lead and anticipate submission must first have demonstrated their unconditional love and humble service for those they lead.

Eph 5:25 (NKJV) Husbands, *love* your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church and *gave* Himself for her,

As husbands are to love and serve their wives so leaders are to love and serve the bride of Christ.

No Rights to Demand!

It is important also to note that in no place in the New Testament are husbands or leaders ever given the right to demand submission of their wives or followers. Their only hope for submission is their followers' submission to Christ and their ability to perceive the love their leadership has for them. If these two elements are defective in any way there is nothing the leadership are allowed to do to effect submission.

It needs to be said here, when Church was turned into a business, an organization, or a corporation, the nature of leadership mutated into a form that allows for and even necessitates control, whereby demands, restrictions, job descriptions, etc., become the norm, and alignment with Jesus' call to servant leadership becomes compromised and virtually nullified. In reality if you stand back and take a candid look at how churches run today, they function very much like a business. In fact business practices permeate most/all facets of church activities. This may not be obvious at first glance... For how can one hire and fire Church employees without exercising demand oriented submission. While such use of authority is variously handled better in some Church institutions, the change all too often leads to abuses. Leaders who understand Jesus' call on their lives find themselves in a double bind - a call to lead the general congregation without demands and a necessity of leading their staff with many demands. All too often lines of distinction become blurred and leadership transition into those who lead the entire Church by demands.

From my perspective, the smartest thing the devil ever did was to sell the Church on becoming

a business, ruled by Church officers and religious politics. From the moment the Church became a business it changed its approach to ministry, and the body has never been the same since. Let me say it loud and clear, right here, Church should never have become a business! If we do any one thing, it should be that we change this in our concept of Church. Once remove the “business” element, and everything else will change too.

Voluntary Submission

We will begin by looking at the principal New Testament word for submission to Church leadership - “*Hupotasso*” - as we described before, it means “*to lose or surrender one's own rights or will voluntarily, rather than as a result of compulsion.*”

It is composed of two words “*Hupo*” and “*Tasso*”. “*Hupo*” means to “*come under*” and “*Tasso*” means “*to arrange in an orderly and respectful fashion*”. Add to this the voluntary dimension, and it becomes clear that the implication is that the believer is to willingly and voluntarily (not by constraint) arrange his life in an orderly fashion under the leadership authority of servant leaders.

In the home, young children are to obey their parents by compulsion if necessary, and in the work place, employees are to obey their employers by compulsion at times, if they wish to maintain their jobs, and in the military, soldiers are to obey their commanders by compulsion, and in politics, politicians are to obey the will of the people, in a representative government, but when we come to the local Church and marriage this is not the case. The institutionalization of the Church makes this principle functionally impossible.

The local Church is composed of those who have voluntarily chosen to identify with a local expression of the body of Christ. As such their voluntary participation is to be respected and guarded, and not treated as though their unqualified obedience was expected. This mutual respect and consideration is to mark this voluntary fellowship, association, and equal partnership of saints. Nothing prohibits a believer from leaving one fellowship to connect to another less abusive form of Church leadership. There are no Scriptures that treat leaving one local fellowship in favor of another fellowship, that is a more grace oriented fellowship, as if that leaving were equivalent to divorce, yet to listen to some leadership you would get the impression that they thought it was.

I believe Jesus purposely refrained from speaking such a thing, either Himself, or by inspiration through His apostles, because He knew there would be immature Church leadership that would rise up, and men and women who would abuse their authority, and He didn't want the experience with local Church to become something more akin to bondage than to life.

We recommend all believers, who are troubled by abusive or unbiblical forms of leadership, to seriously consider leaving their current fellowship, in favor of a form of leadership that more fully honors the headship of Jesus Christ. Jesus should be the one to tell you if, and when, this is to take place, but by all means pray about this matter, rather than allow it to so wound your heart that you end up completely giving up on His Church and the entire concept of leadership.

In fact, Jesus' words in John 10:5 leave the strongest of indications that when under shepherds fail in their use of authority their flocks will flee from them, and should do so, so that they might follow the leadership of Chief Shepherd of their souls - The Lord Jesus, through the leadership of those who shepherd after His heart.

Apostolic Teams

It is also important to say, at this point, that the writers of the NT, rather than limit this word to some sort of “Senior Pastor” role, they apply it equally to all “workers” in the kingdom, who express and manifest the gracious wisdom, love, and leadership of the Lord - see 1 Cor. 16:16. All the workers were to be respected, because of their labors in behalf of the body, and because they manifested the life of Christ. Leadership in general was known to be true leadership by the way they handled themselves. Respect was not accorded to them simply because they carried a title, but because they represented the image of Christ to the flock. (See also 1 Thess. 5:12)

As each of us transition in our understanding, from the error of a business modeled Church, with a CEO Senior Pastor, to that of the smaller and simpler relational Church in the home, we must be careful that we don't reject all the New Testament teaches about leadership, but that we make a full transition into true biblical leadership and respect for the workers God sends our way. We must not be a people that reject all forms of leadership just because we have been wearied by the false leadership of the institutional Church. Leadership, in the manner outlined by the apostles, is a blessing, and is spread among all the workers God raises up in the body.

It is God's desire to protect and oversee His body through a multitude of caring leaders. Of them we anticipate and expect a degree of wisdom, grace, and love that potentially excels the broader body of Christ, not that the broader body will necessarily lack these evidences of Christ, but our expectation should always be that the character of Christ is consistently manifest among the workers. Since their authority is not connected to a title or position, it is entirely connected to their character and the fruit of their labors.

There is fast developing a Spirit inspired and called network of godly leaders, who are being raised up and will be raised up and sent forth by the Spirit through the Churches into the broader body of Christ. As these leaders come to be known they will carry His grace and authority into the body. Their authority will be that which is recognized as being a manifestation of Jesus' authority, rather than a self willed authority to achieve their personal goals. They will be known as representatives of His authority and wisdom. His Word will be in them, and expressed through them. As the local leadership and body recognize this authority, Jesus will be able to guide His flock in ways that have never before been seen by the body of Christ. They will be wholly unlike the false or counterfeit apostolic movement, tied to the current institutional Church. This false movement seeks to maintain the structures the Lord Jesus has clearly called to be dismantled, due to their commitment to their religious systems of security and significance, based in the will of man and for the glory of man. The Lord will expose this false approach for what it is, and will do so by raising up a host of bonified leaders, who, by the manifestation of the grace, wisdom, love and power of Christ, make evident the leadership He has brought to His Church. It will not be necessary for them to tear down the old. The Lord Himself will do this, by bringing forth the genuine. No one who has tasted of good wine desires that which has turned stale and bitter.

I'll take this a step further, and I believe it is the Spirit of God that urges me to take it to this next step, but I firmly believe we are going to see close knit and well developed apostolic teams develop over the next few years. They will be composed of one or more senior apostolic leaders, on the order of a Barnabas, Timothy, or Titus level of apostolic authority. I do not believe we will see the Lord raise up Paul, Peter, James, and John level apostles, with the full authority to write additional scripture, but of course only the Lord knows what He is going to do.

Right now, in various places throughout the world, God is training true apostles to raise up Churches and leadership to lead them. We will see an increase in this calling. I know of two such brothers right now, that I would consider functioning at this level. In the United States it would be Frank Viola, and in Australia it would be Brett Jacobson. Both brothers evidence the skill and spiritual authority to take the Church to the next step in God's work of restoration and reformation.

In both cases they are proven Church planters, leadership trainers, and able teachers of the body of Christ. I'm not saying these are the only two such brothers, but they are clearly the advance guard of what God is doing. We will see more.

In their case they are each training up additional workers who will follow in behind their foundation laying, to further encourage and raise up local leaders. As time goes by those raised up by full apostles will be released into the broader body of Christ, to move in a more or less full time status of apostolic teachers, who will move among the body, throughout the earth. They will form the "workers/laborers" that Paul refers to 1 Thessalonians 5:12 and 1 Corinthians 16:16. When there are sufficient numbers of these roving leaders, to train, encourage, and edify the body of Christ, the Church will rapidly grow to become the Church it was in the time of the first apostles. Until this network forms by the Spirit the Church doesn't stand a chance of regaining its place as a true world shaping force.

Let me also add that this network will not be the coordinated effort of an apostolic organization of apostle makers. It will be 100% relational and led by the Spirit. God Himself will make the connections between apostles and those to be trained for apostolic/teaching labor. What we DO NOT need are more professional ministry agencies/businesses led by CEO types who won't rest until they've raised up some form of ministry legacy for themselves. True apostles will always manifest the exact same humility as Paul references in 1 Corinthians 4:8-13 :

1Corinthians 4:8 Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you! 9 For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as *last of all*, like men *sentenced to death*, because we have become *a spectacle* to the world, to angels, and to men. 10 We are *fools* for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are *weak*, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we *in disrepute*. 11 To the present hour we *hunger and thirst*, we are *poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless*, 12 and we labor, *working with our own hands*. When reviled, we bless; when *persecuted*, we endure; 13 when *slandered*, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like *the scum of the world, the refuse of all things*.

That's a pretty impressive resume wouldn't you say? Are you ready to enroll in training for that kind of life and experience? Be sure to add in 2 Corinthians 11:23-33. I'll tell you what, I would never allow myself to relate closely to or be trained by anyone who lives the lavish lifestyle of the American televangelist. They make a mockery, by their lavish lifestyles, of all that the original apostles stood for. Don't follow those kinds of leaders. Run from them, shun their teaching and their ministry. They serve their own bellies, as Paul references in Philipians:

Philipines 3:17 Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. 18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their end is destruction, **their god is their belly**, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

The leadership God is raising up want nothing to do with the rooster strutting platform ministry, to be seen of men:

Matthew 23:5 But all their works they do to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries (*expensive suits, fancy cars, and leer jets*), and enlarge the borders of their garments (*expensive homes, church buildings, and properties*),

They're happy to sit privately with a few individuals who are hungry for the things of God, and share with them the things they've learned from the Spirit over the years. They're not impressed with their oratorical skills, they don't refuse to minister if the crowds won't be large and they can't

take their own offerings and keep all they get the people to give. These things are the furthest thoughts from their minds. They've learned to trust the Lord for their provision and have no desire for wealth and prestige. They are hidden men, men who have no desire for fame and glory. Their desires are simple - focus the body on Jesus and build them up for the work of the ministry. They take seriously Paul's teaching in 1 Timothy 3:

1 Timothy 3:3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, **not a lover of money**.

The world is longing to see the genuine ministry of godly leaders and believers emerge in the earth. Christianity worldwide is mocked as the flesh it is, and for good reason. Even unbelievers can spot a phony from the real thing. When the Church has put away its foolishness and returned to humble service of the world then the world will open its ears again to what the Church has to say to it. Until that time the true Church will remain hidden underground, developing integrity, true apostolic understanding, and the power of Christ.

I'd also like to take this section in one other direction that I believe is a very critical need of the Church coming out of traditional settings. It is this...and brace yourself..., there is not one single expression of the localized body of Christ, I.e. gathering of the Church, that is a truly legitimate gathering, that is not closely related to an apostle of Christ. Their leadership are at best quasi leadership, and the foundations of their gathering is at best faulty and fragile. The Church cannot be the Church it has been called to be without being built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, and by this Paul was referring to apostolic ministry well beyond he and the twelve apostles of Christ's choosing.

Someone may well ask a few questions of the above statements:

1. Are you saying our gathering wasn't formed by the Lord? No, I'm not saying that.
2. Are you saying our gathering displeases the Lord? No, I'm not saying that.
3. Should we disband because we don't have or know a genuine apostle? No!

I believe the majority of the Church that has come out of the institutional Church has come out at Christ's calling and in obedience to His call. They are pleasing to Him, and He is doing great things among them. Nevertheless, they are not truly legitimate fellowships, in the fullest sense, until they are rightly related to at least one genuine apostle. They should continue to meet, but they should actively seek the Lord for the provision of true apostolic oversight. Through such oversight, leadership can be set in place, and the body can begin to enjoy the protection and added blessing that they were meant to experience when all the pieces of the Church puzzle are in place.

There is no New Testament indication that Pharisees, who have been converted to the right understandings of the Lord, are then able to lay hands on themselves and set themselves into eldership and leadership in the body of Christ, yet this is what we have taking place, because the Church has for so long been without true apostles.

How do true apostles develop, without laying hands on themselves, if there are no genuine apostles in apostolic succession from the original twelve? This is indeed a dilemma, and not one easily solved, but the body must resolve this problem if it is to mature into the Church of Jesus' desire. It seems most logical that what will emerge are those clearly called by God to plant new Church gatherings, operate in the full signs of an apostle, and become recognized unofficially as obviously gifted by God to operate in this role in the body. As such recognition spreads so their ministry of oversight expands, and over time they will find God sealing their ministry by reproducing apostolic leadership through these proven apostles. We should expect to see an ever increasing number of true apostles being raised up to serve the body of Christ. I'm confident this is happening now, and will only grow over time. I have no idea how many such men are in the earth

now, but I'm confident they are being raised up, and more will follow.

As each fellowship discovers the Spirit's choice of apostolic oversight for their lives grace and strength will be imparted to that fellowship, and they will experience the wholeness the Lord designed for His Church. Until that time these small home fellowships will tend to flounder and struggle, as they wait for God's work to increase in the earth.

Church is a Voluntary Association

Because the local gathering is a voluntary association no believer should be made to feel less committed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ for feeling the need to disengage from a leadership that they are concerned about. Now, I'd like to qualify the "voluntary" element. When I say voluntary, I mean that in a societal sort of manner. In terms of the believer's responsibility to obey the Lord, and be where He wants them to be, the matter of "voluntariness" takes on a different meaning. I cannot come and go where I please, but must wait on Him for guidance and timing. But, from the perspective of a leader to the flock he oversees, he must do so with an understanding that if he fails to lead biblically his people are free to walk away from him. Certainly there are right ways and wrong ways to leave a local Church, but leaders must not treat their flocks as though they owned them or as if they were expected to live and die in one local Church. Leaving a local Church is not equivalent to divorcing a mate.

In this regard, a very unhealthy attitude has developed among traditional leaders, and it surrounds them referring to a given gathering as being "their Church." We'll take this up later, but for now, suffice it say, the Church belongs to no man, except the Man - Christ Jesus.

Because this word "submit" is used in a variety of contexts, we will limit our discussion of it to passages dealing with leadership.

It is used of believers submitting to servant leadership in 1 Cor.16:15,16 and 1 Pet.5:5.

1 Cor 16:15 (NKJV) I urge you, brethren; you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints; 16 that you also **submit** to such, and to everyone who works and labors with us.

1 Pet 5:5 (NKJV) Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you **be submissive** to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

Everyone Submits to One Another

It is significant to note that whatever Paul & Peter thought about submission it went far beyond submission to just elders and leaders. Their use of this word clearly indicates that this concept of submission relates to everyone in the body of Christ. If we were to ask them, "*Are we to submit to the elders in our local Churches?*" They would undoubtedly have answered, "*Yes, and to everyone else who walks according to the commandments of Christ.*" If it be recognized that whatever this submission principle is all about it is much more a submission to Christ in one another than it is to a specific class of individuals. This is why it is such an arrogant thing for leaders to demand submission of their followers as though because they held a specific office it conferred to them a unique power and authority over the lives of their followers. If leaders have any special elements to their leadership it is that they are especially responsible to reflect the nature and revelation of

Jesus. They are to be able to detect and convey the Word of the Lord. Thus, leaders will at times submit to those they are leading, simply because they may evidence having the Word of the Lord for a given issue at hand. To fail to portray a willingness towards this fluid form of submission is to evidence a false authority. This is what “systems” religion is all about...men controlling people, in the name of Christ, and for very self interested purposes.

This principle of unilateral submission is evident in Ephesians 5 as well.

Eph 5:21 (NKJV) *submitting* to one another in the fear of God.

It is Jesus we are Submitting to

Submission, in the Church, is something we do when we realize that someone is obviously and convincingly speaking on behalf of God. If it becomes obvious that what is being said represents the mind of Christ, then no matter who it is, they are to be submitted to as if they were Christ. The responsibility of leaders is to consistently speak the mind of Christ, by virtue of their calling, maturity, and gifting. As such we would anticipate submitting to their leadership more than perhaps to others, simply because their role in the body of Christ is to bring the mind of Christ to bear on every facet of life. But if their character calls their words into question, or if their communication of the Word is mixed with arrogance or error then their authority to lead has been diminished, since their authority rests in their character and accurate communication of the Word of Christ, and not in their being a leader alone. The notion that anyone in the body of Christ is worthy of obedience, simply because they hold a particular position, office, or have a title is completely foreign to any of the apostle’s teaching. As we have said previously, no positions, offices, or titles, are connected with leadership. These designations are all fabrications of the institutional Church.

It is used of believers submitting to the leadership of God in Heb.12:9; Ja.4:7.

Heb 12:9 (NKJV) Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in *subjection* to the Father of spirits and live?

James 4:7 (NKJV) Therefore *submit* to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

It is used of wives submitting to their husband's leadership. Eph.5:22; Col.3:18; 1 Pet.3:1,5.

Eph 5:22 (NKJV) Wives, *submit* to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

Notice, “*As to the Lord.*” This is always behind every apostolic discussion of the subject of submission. They never think of submission without it being “*As to the Lord.*” In this way people are protected from following just anyone who commands their obedience. This phrase “as to the Lord” implies that what Jesus provided by the indwelling Spirit would be normative for all believer’s and not just leaders. It was anticipated that the body of Christ would be a praying, obedient, and submissive people first and foremost to Christ. As such they were to grow in their ability to hear His voice and obey His Word to them, no matter who it came through. They were to be a Spirit listening people. Otherwise utter chaos would be the norm in the lives of those submitting to their Church leaders. This is the acid test, the fail safe principle, the measuring rod for all who would see themselves as leaders and all those who would follow them. They must be able to hear the Lord and accurately convey His mind. If their ability, in this area, does not exceed that of the body, then their leadership is null and void. The very notion of leadership implies they, above all else in the body, are able to hear His voice and accurately communicate it. If it turns out they aren’t then they are disqualified. In lieu of this, they are not allowed to fabricate authority out of thin air, or some religious title.

If husbands or Church leaders ask or expect some obedience from their followers, that compromises the follower's conscience or sense of the will of God, they are not required to submit to that expectation. Of course if the counsel had been correct and the one following had rejected it, then their failure to follow the Word of Christ will likely have its negative effect, and leaders must learn to step aside and allow such negative effects to take place. Leaders cannot allow their desire to protect their sheep compel them to use force or coercion to protect the sheep. If a sheep is bound and determined to walk with the wolves then all the godly leader can do is stand back and allow it to happen, and be there to heal that sheep when it comes to its senses and desires healing.

Col 3:18 (NKJV) Wives, *submit* to your own husbands, *as is fitting in the Lord*.

1 Pet 3:1 (NKJV) Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, 5 For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being *submissive* to their own husbands,

It is used of Christ being in submission to the Father's leadership. 1 Cor.15:28

1 Cor 15:28 (NKJV) Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be *subject* to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

Everything comes back to this. All submission is ultimately to God alone, and only man secondarily, as he reflects the will of God.

Church is not another term for Military Barracks

Another word that we come into contact with in the New Testament is the word "*Hupakouo*," and the word "*Hupakoa*". These words are compound words made up of "*Hupo*" and "*Akouo*". "*Hupo*" means to come under, and "*Akouo*" means to hear a voice, so the two in combination mean to "*Hear a command and come under that command*."

It is interesting to note that this word is **never used in a context of a believer hearing the verbal commands of leadership and coming under those commands.**

It is apparently just too strong of a term for the apostles to use in this context. However, even if were used it would still have to mean "*to come under the authority of the spoken Word as it reflects the Word of Christ*."

It is used for children and slaves, but not followers of Church leadership or spouses to one another.

This undoubtedly provides an insight on leadership and their attitudes towards their own authority. So often leaders have felt that it was their role to give commands and the people's role to listen and obey, but apparently the Holy Spirit missed an opportunity to agree with them and inspire the apostles to use this word to convey that thought. Leaders are not to think of their flocks as their children or slaves to command. Not that abusive leadership is allowed towards children and slaves, but certainly it is a stronger form of leadership than is appropriate for the flock. The flock are not my children or my slaves, they are my friends, brothers, and sisters, members of my believing community, my fellow sojourners, and those I submit to as well, on the way to a heavenly city. They are not my personal army that I have the authority to command as if they were my soldiers to order about. The shepherd is not the drill sergeant, the commanding officer, or the

General of the Allied Forces. He is to be a Gentle Servant Leader.

A Closer Look at Hebrews 13

We will conclude this section with a combined look at Hebrews 13:17. Because it is the most frequently abused passage on this whole subject of submission to Church leadership we will expand the translation of this verse to expose the writer of Hebrews real intent.

Heb 13:17 (NKJV) *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.

We will begin with the word “*Obey*”. It is derived from the Greek word *Pathometha* - which means to *obey as a result of being convinced or persuaded by and confident in the correctness of what is being said*.

This word does not command blind obedience. In connection with Hupako “*be submissive*,” this verse is teaching that the believer is to yield and obey as a result of being **convinced or persuaded by and confident** in the correctness of what is being counseled or taught. (While this word appears to be a compound of Hupo and Akouo it isn’t. We have previously indicated such a compound would leave an impression of authority to give a verbal command that is to be explicitly obeyed. This compound is apparently avoided purposely, when addressing the matter of leadership authority.)

Leadership are not allowed to command absolute obedience just because they are leaders. They are responsible to present their character and their wisdom in such a manner that they inspire confidence in those they lead.

I believe it is worth a digression here to say this: When Church is about brothers and sisters dwelling in a believing community together, in a non hierarchical environment, where the only building is a home, where the only sanctuary is a living room, where the only pulpit is the “place” we all speak from into one another’s lives, then this form of godly leadership is neither a great stress, nor all that difficult. The institutional form of Church has made everything difficult unnecessarily. It was meant to be simple, relational, and loving. The making of the Church into a business, which ultimately necessitates some form of CEO leadership, leads to all kinds of abuses of biblical New Testament leadership. Keep it simple, relational, and not of a business nature, and the stress is kept manageable.

This is the only place where this word is used in relationship to leadership. In every other case it is always referring to either persuasion or confidence. It is used 30 times in these ways. The following are just samples - Mt.27:20; 28:14; Acts 19:8; Rom.8:38; Phil.1:6; 3:3; 2 Thess.3:4 and would be worth the readers time reading and considering.

It also carries the strong idea of “*Trust*”, in such passages as Mt.27:43; Phil.2:24; Heb.2:13.

Every other place this word is used for “*obey*,” the element of obedience, as a result of being convinced by something or someone, is clearly evident - Acts 5:36,37; Rom.2:8; Gal.3:1; 5:7.

For leaders to think they can lead without first having established trust and confidence in those they lead is nothing short of arrogance. It takes time for people to trust. It takes repetition of gentle serving behavior to relax the sheep enough to follow peacefully. Those who violate this principle in favor of “*getting something done*,” ultimately lose much more than they ever gain.

Our next phrase “*be submissive*,” comes from the word *Hupeiko* - a compound of “*Hupo*” and “*Eiko*”. Again “*Hupo*” means to **come under**, and “*Eiko*” means to **yield, be weak before**. The two in combination mean *to yield under the authority of someone else*. It carries the notion of a voluntary compliance or weakness of resistance before, due to the persuasiveness of their love, care, and example.

It is only used in Heb.13:17, and carries the idea of **yielding to the servant authority** of those over you in the Lord. And this will only take place, when properly applied, in situations where leaders inspire their followers to follow them as a result of having used confidence inspiring wisdom and a spirit of humility expressed in service and mutual submission.

We have already looked at the phrase “*Rule over*,” so we won't repeat that study. Now notice a combined translation taking into account the study presented on each of the key words in this verse:

Expanded Hebrews 13:17

Heb 13:17 (NKJV) **Obey** (as a result of being convinced, persuaded, and confident of the correctness and spirit of what is being counseled or taught) those who **rule over** you (who are esteemed due to manifesting a gentle non-coercive servant's heart), and **be submissive** (yield to the servant authority of those over you in the Lord, as unto the Lord), 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.”

All too often leaders have read the phrase “*those who must give account*” and have felt an undue weight of responsibility put upon them. It is not the leader's responsibility to secure the obedience of those he leads. It is the leader's responsibility to lead his flock in such a servant and grace oriented manner that when the Chief Shepherd appears and asks the under shepherd for an accounting of his leadership he can in all honesty of conscience reply that he had consistently led his flock with gentleness and humility, skillfully ministering the Word while attempting to inspire confidence and trust in those he led. He will not be held to account for those who messed up their lives while properly shepherded, but he will certainly be held to account for having abused his leadership and caused his flock to wander off to the wolves due to attempting to escape abusive leadership. A simple study of Ezekiel, chapter 34, will make this quite clear and very serious.

As is so often the case with New Testament Greek words, they come out of a culture and a pool of meanings, rather than being easily reduced to one simple word. Each word carries with it an expanded meaning. These three words, as defined, indicate a far different meaning than is generally ascribed to this verse.

This is not blind obedience to power hungry leaders, but rather it represents the type of obedience and submission based on the kind of leaders they are to obey. Far from allowing for abusive and coercive leadership it calls for those who can only anticipate obedience as they have been successful in being gentle teachers of truth, having convinced and created confidence in those they desire to lead. They must be leaders who clearly manifest a humble servant's heart and whose leadership inspires confidence and yielding on the part of those who follow. If the people are not convinced, and if the leadership have not inspired their followers by their conduct and character, then in effect their leadership is null and void, and their only recourse is to take the time to create such confidence and yielding in their flocks, by so lovingly serving them and setting an example of a gentle servant, that the people in time relax and follow their lead. To use any other means or technique, whether it be salesmanship or abusive authoritarianism, is to disqualify the leader in the eyes of God and his flock. Not a permanent disqualification, but an evidence that time and growth is needed to adjust the leader's concepts and character.

Don't Give up if you don't Measure Up

It is important to say here, for those who are hurting with what has been said so far, that re-qualification is always possible. Many who read these words may be feeling about now that they should step out of ministry and do something else. Quite to the contrary. The mercy and power of Christ is such that if a leader will humble him or herself and acknowledge, in humility, that they have not measured up to Christ's standard for servant leadership, He is more than able to develop this kind of leadership. It is appropriate to make apologies to those they have exercised abusive authority over, but having done so they will frequently find that such transparency and humility will be the very thing to create the beginnings of new love and trust for the leader.

We live in a day where people are so hungry for genuinely humble and loving leaders. We are used to corruption in the realm of political leadership and all too often we are familiar with either Church leaders who have embezzled money from the Church, run off with the Church secretary, or led with abusive force those they were commissioned to love and serve.

If those who presently hold offices of Church leadership will humbly evaluate their leadership style, and make themselves accountable once more to their flocks, it is just possible that their honesty and transparency may well turn the flocks they lead around and lead them into a wonderful season of refreshing and renewal. Humility will always, in time, lead to exaltation.

Phil 2:5 (NKJV) Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a Bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He *humbled Himself* and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has *highly exalted Him* and given Him the name which is above every name,..."

Summary

Let's summarize, into 18 statements, what we have discovered thus far:

1. Leadership is first and foremost to be the result of loving service to those whom they are over.
2. Leaders are only allowed to pursue a following by gracious and humble service operating through the example of love.
3. The Leader is forbidden to exercise authority against a follower for the leader's personal advantage.
4. The Leader is never allowed to pursue the control of those who follow him so as to fulfill his personal agenda for their lives, rather than truly seeking the mind of Christ for them. The ability to further God's agenda will be evidenced by the followers being ready to embrace that agenda.
5. Leaders are not to lead with selfish goals in mind.
6. Leaders are to be a pattern, example, model or standard in the image of Christ.
7. Leadership in the body of Christ only functions when the people willingly and voluntarily follow them. Coercion is not an option for leadership.
8. Leaders are to reject their every tendency towards compulsion or oppression to achieve their goals.
9. Leadership requires a patience expressed towards the body. A leader is to hold his every goal lightly, trusting the Lord to fulfill His goals, and not leaning on manipulation to accomplish his will for his people.
10. Authority in the body of Christ is reflected authority. Only as Christ leads through us do we have any authority. He always leads patiently and lovingly. The leader is not allowed to press for his personal agenda.
11. Leadership is to be gentle and often deferring to those who are weak and insecure in the face of

- a leader's authority. It is better to lay aside one's authority in favor of serving than to demand submission and wound the sensitive believer.
12. The only place for strong leadership authority is when declaring the clear commandments of Christ.
 13. Leadership is more than anything else a call to lovingly care for the flock, not exercise control over.
 14. The Leadership that the body is called to obey and follow are those who carry their leadership like Jesus taught His disciples in Luke 22. All others have no divine authority to lead, even if they hold a specific office and are ordained to it. Title does not confer authority; example and heart attitude does.
 15. Submission must be a voluntary matter, not something that can be forced. Local Church is not synonymous with military service.
 16. Leadership hasn't been granted the right to command, but being a leader demands of the leader the responsibility to serve and be an example.
 17. Submission is to be anticipated when the follower has seen sufficient love, revelation of Jesus, and wisdom, to convince them of the accuracy of their leadership, but it is not to be expected.
 18. Only as the body trusts and has confidence in a leader does he actually have authority in their lives. Authority derived through any other means is stolen authority and will destroy all confidence in leadership.