

Better Together

Developing my relationships in the local church

INTRO:

In previous generations, Christians have often drawn up lists of their duties as church members, both toward their leaders and toward each other.

That's what we're going to do in this study. We can't look at everything the New Testament teaches about our duties as church members, but we can cover some of the main points. We're going to look at four major passages in this study.

With each, once we're done reading each passage, go through each and list the duties that these passages lay on us as church members. (Some of these commands apply to how we relate to non-Christians; feel free to pass over those since in this study we're focusing on life within the church.

As church members, we have the duty to imitate and submit to our leaders, to regularly assemble with the church, and to love and serve our fellow members. All of these duties are means by which we grow in godliness and help others to grow.

Duties toward Whom?

Next, go back through the list and write down whether each duty is toward church leaders, other church members, or God himself.

Hebrews 13:7 ⁷ Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation.

Duty (verse #)	Who Am I Responsible To?	Why?
Remember our leaders (Heb. 13:7)	Leaders	The "outcome of their way of life" is eternal blessing
Imitate our leaders (Heb. 13:7) (" <i>whose faith follow...</i> ")	Leaders	

There is much that we can learn from the spiritual leaders that God has given us. Their chief goal is speaking the Word of God to us as members of the body. The spiritual leaders are given to use to help us grow in the knowledge of Christ thereby increasing our maturity as a follower of Christ.

Their life should also be an example to us. Their faithfulness to Christ and His Word should prompt us to do likewise. This highlights great responsibility on the leaders of the church to run their race well, to not become a stumbling block to the faith of the congregation.

Hebrews 13:17 ¹⁷ Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you.

Submission is not something that our flesh typically enjoys, yet every phase of life carries with it an element of submission that is necessary. Chiefly, as followers of Christ, you and I must submit to Christ. Then beyond that, marriage has its own unique roles of submission. As children, we are called to submit to the authorities that God has placed in our lives. As citizens of a country, we are called by Scripture to submit to the governmental authority that God has allowed over us.

Ultimately, Scripture teaches us that all authority flows from God (Romans 13). The church then is no different. Christ established the role of the pastor to help shepherd the flock under his authority. The structure is Christ - the pastors - the members. We are called as members to submit to the leadership that that Christ has established in His church because ultimately it is a direct submission to Him.

What does this submission not look like?

Blind obedience of unbiblical teaching or commands

If the pastor calls us to do things that are directly against Scripture, then we do not follow or submit because ultimately our submission is to Christ and His Word. The answer is that the command to submit to church leaders does *not* mean that they can command us to do whatever they want, because church leaders' authority extends only as far as they are faithfully teaching the Word of God. (1 Corinthians 11:1)

Submitting to an authoritarian or abusive pastor

What does this submitting look like?

- **Attentiveness to Teaching - Acts 2:42**
- **Following their leadership -**
- **Handling disagreements with humility**
- **Receive correction well**
- **Pursue church participation**

Naturally, this passage carries with it great sobriety and responsibility for the church leader. It reminds us of the great care we ought to take in our own lives with our attitudes, behavior, and actions.

There is a good graph below exemplifying the action, who I am responsible to, and why.

Duty (verse #)	Who Am I Responsible To?	Why?
Obey our leaders (Heb. 13:17)	Leaders	To submit to our leaders is to our advantage.
Submit to our leaders in a way that makes us a joy to serve (Heb. 13:17)	Leaders	

1. *What are some ways that you already imitate your church leaders' way of life (Heb. 13:7)? What are some ways you can grow in imitating them?*

We often emulate those around us or even those who are good leaders. We want to follow good examples because we then experience the fruit and blessing that they are experiencing. We can do this through asking questions, inviting our pastors to be a part of our lives, embracing their preaching and teaching.

2. *What does submitting to and obeying your church's leaders look like in real life (Heb. 13:17)? Give some concrete examples.*

Hebrews 10:24–25 ²⁴ And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: ²⁵ Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Hebrews 10:24-25

Duty (verse #)	Who Am I Responsible To?	Why?
Consider how to stir each other up to love and good works (Heb. 10:24)	Other Members	The day of salvation and judgment is drawing nearer
Not Forsaking assembling, but instead regularly assembling with the church (Heb. 10:24)	Other Members	
Exhort one another (Heb. 10:25)	Other Members	

3. *Have you ever considered that church attendance is a duty toward your fellow church members (Heb. 10:24–25)? Why is this the case? How should this impact what you do on Sunday morning?*

Romans 12:3-18 ³ For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. ⁴ For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: ⁵ So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. ⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith; ⁷ Or ministry, *let us wait* on *our* ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; ⁸ Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, *let him do it* with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

⁹ *Let* love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. ¹⁰ *Be* kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; ¹¹ Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; ¹² Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; ¹³ Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. ¹⁵ Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. ¹⁶ *Be* of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. ¹⁷ Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Let's walk through this passage together: All of us have a gifts to utilize in Christ's church. We are not a small insignificant part of the body. We play crucial roles in the health of the congregation through the gifting of the Spirit.

However, Paul warns us to guard against pride that will seek to disrupt the unity of this body. Note the uniqueness of this list: for every gift given, there is an assumed action with it. - Let us. There is no room for passivity in the body. If you are not actively engaged and serving, then the body fails.

What is your gifting and how are you utilizing it with the church?

Notice the other attitudes that should dominate the relationships between believers.

Love, holiness, kindness, unity, humility, preference, prayerfulness. We should also be burden bearers, forgivers, and peace-makers. The standard is high for how we ought to conduct that relationships that God has given us in His church.

4. Why is it important as church members not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought? What will happen if we do think of ourselves more highly than we ought?

5. Which do you think is harder: to weep with those who weep or to rejoice with those who rejoice (Rom. 12:15)? Why?

6. Did anything on this list surprise you?

7. Are you surprised by how much the New Testament speaks of our duties toward our fellow church members? Why or why not?

8. Does the command to submit to and obey church leaders mean that they can command us to do whatever they want? Why or why not?

The answer is that the command to submit to church leaders does *not* mean that they can command us to do whatever they want, because church leaders' authority extends only as far as they are faithfully teaching the Word of God. (1 Corinthians 11:1)

9. Pick one of the duties we see in these passages and commit to prayerfully working on it for the next few weeks. What are some practical steps you can take to practice this?

Duty (verse #)	Who Am I Responsible To?	Why?
Think of ourselves with humble, sober judgment (Rom. 12:3)	Other Members	All of these commands are grounded in “the mercies of God” by which Paul appeals to his readers (Rom. 12:1–2). “The mercies of God” refers to the gospel which Paul has expounded in the previous eleven chapters.
Use our gifts to serve others (Rom. 12:6)	Other Members	
Genuinely love others with brotherly affection (Rom. 12:9–10)	Other Members	
Outdo one another in showing honor (Rom. 12:10)	Other Members	
Serve God diligently from the heart (Rom. 12:11)	Other Members	
Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer (Rom. 12:12)	God	
Contribute to others’ needs; show hospitality (Rom. 12:13)	Other Members	
Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep (Rom. 12:15)	Other Members	
Live in harmony with other members (Rom. 12:16, 18)	Other Members	
Do not be proud, but associate with lowly people (Rom. 12:16)	Other Members	
Do what is honorable in the sight of all (Rom. 12:17)	Other Members	
Live peaceably with all (Rom. 12:18)	Other Members	