

RESPECTING THOSE WHO SERVE (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)

I. We are to be attentive to them.

- A. The word “know” carries the idea of being attentive to someone.
 - 1. In this case, we are to be attentive to the elders.
 - 2. We are to look to them with the proper attitude.
- B. Paul does not leave us in the dark as to why we should be attentive to them.
- C. We should know them because they labor among us.
 - 1. The word labor carries the idea of great toil and effort.
 - 2. Secular Greek writers used it to reference workers who would work until exhaustion.
 - 3. Good elders are those who work hard for the congregation in the areas commanded by God.
- D. Elders are over us in the Lord.
 - 1. Over is also translated as preside over or superintend.
 - 2. 1 Timothy 5:17 translates it rule.
 - 3. This shows that elders have authority.
 - 4. One cannot rule who has no authority.
 - 5. Elders are not to lord it over the congregation and flaunt their position.
 - 6. Rather, they oversee, feed the flock and tend to the spiritual needs of the flock.
 - 7. Since they have the authority to rule over us, we have the responsibility to obey them (Hebrews 13:17).
- E. They admonish us.
 - 1. This is both a positive and negative word.
 - 2. Elders encourage and warn.
 - 3. If they are all positive they are wrong and if they are all negative they are wrong.
 - 4. Elders are to strive for balance.
- F. These three qualities make up a good elder.
- G. Some of the most respected men in our brotherhood that I know are those elders who possess these three qualities.
- H. Because they do rule over us, we are to be attentive to them by seeing their work, being obedient to them and receiving their admonishment in an appropriate manner.

II. We are to esteem them.

- A. We are to hold these men in high regard.
- B. It is not a lord and serf relationship.
 - 1. In the Middle Ages, the serfs would work the land of the lord of the manor.
 - 2. They did so out of fear and the lord was distant from them, off in his castle.
- C. The relationship of a member and the elders is based on love.

1. We should see the efforts of our elders and love them for the work that they do.
 2. It is a great sacrifice to fulfill the position of elder.
 - a. There are family sacrifices that have to be made.
 - b. There are time sacrifices that have to be made.
 - c. The work of an elder comes first.
 3. The elder who rules well knows his flock and they know him.
 4. Because of this interaction, we esteem the elders in love.
 5. We care for them because we know they are constantly caring for us.
- D. We aren't to esteem them highly in love simply because they hold a position or have a title.
1. We hold them up in esteem because of the work that they are doing for us.
 2. The work that they do is worthy of respect and honor.
 3. Notice this statement by J. Noel Meredith: "When leaders lead with the recognition that they are doing the work of the Lord and when members hold such men in high esteem in love, a harmonious and victorious church will be the result. Such a church is a wonderful place to be and a wonderful place to raise your family."
- E. In preaching school, they told us to hold up the elders before the congregation as much as possible.
1. We need elders who will work.
 2. Elders work harder, just like we all do, when they feel appreciated or held in proper regard.
 3. They know they aren't going to achieve rock star status, but they need to be encouraged and uplifted by us.

III. **We are to be at peace among ourselves.**

- A. The language of the sentence is such that shows the Thessalonians were presently at peace and Paul is telling them to stay that way.
- B. Wherever brethren are at peace with one another, the work is being done that is good and right.
 1. Satan does not like that.
 2. Wherever peace is, the devil will soon be to stop the work.
- C. Many of the problems in a congregation are personality conflicts and differences of opinion.
 1. We should be able to work these out amongst ourselves peacefully.
 2. When we do this, the elders can be about the business of the Lord and figuring out how best to build up the congregation.
- D. Sadly, much of an elder's time is taken up with fighting fires that pop up in the congregation.
 1. He would rather be at work saving souls and feeding the flock.
 2. However, he has to be a referee or an umpire too often and the real work of the church is hindered.
- E. It is our duty as Christians to make the work of an elder as easy as possible when it concerns us.

1. It ought to be our goal to never give the elders any cause for concern about us.
 2. Their work is geared toward taking care of problems and weak members so as not to lose any.
 3. We should strive to not fall into either of those categories.
 4. The only concern the elders should have about us is that we are getting fed properly.
- F. We can do this by making sure that we get along with one another in the congregation.
1. Ephesians 4:1-3 show us how to get along with each other.
 2. Passages such as Ephesians 4 should be read and applied by all Christians.

Some of this material came from a manuscript by J. Noel Meredith.