

Follow Your Spiritual Leaders

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God's Word identifies not only the requirements for those in positions of spiritual leadership, but also the attitudes and actions we are to display toward our spiritual leaders. Use the following questions to help evaluate how well you are fulfilling your responsibilities as a follower.

"We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thess. 5:12–13).

- Do I regularly take time to recognize my spiritual leaders and to identify the contributions they have made in my life?
- Do I respect those who minister spiritually to me?
- Do my spiritual leaders know that I admire and love them?
- Do I express appreciation and gratitude to my spiritual leaders for their labors on my behalf?
- Do I speak well of my spiritual leaders to others?

"Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith" (Heb. 13:7).

- Do I seek to learn from the lives of my spiritual leaders?
- Do I seek to emulate godly characteristics in the lives of those who have taught me the Word of God?

"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 . . ." (Heb. 13:17).

- Am I responsive to the direction of my spiritual leaders?
- When my spiritual leaders stand before God to give account for my life, will they be able to do so with joy?
- Am I spiritually accountable to anyone in a position of spiritual authority? Do I allow anyone to "watch for my soul"?

- Do I make it easy for my spiritual leaders to lead me spiritually?

“Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father . . .” (1 Tim. 5:1).

- When I have a concern about a spiritual leader, do I approach him prayerfully, respectfully, and humbly?
- Have I been careful to avoid “attacking” or “confronting” my spiritual leaders?

“Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses” (1 Tim. 5:19).

- Am I careful to avoid making charges against my spiritual leaders, apart from going through the necessary biblical channels?
- Am I careful not to plant seeds of disloyalty by giving evil reports to others about my spiritual leaders?

“For when one says, ‘I follow Paul,’ and another, ‘I follow Apollos,’ are you not being merely human? What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed . . . I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth” (1 Cor. 3:4-6).

- Am I careful to give God the glory for the spiritual growth and fruit in my life?
- Am I careful to avoid exalting one spiritual leader above others?
- Do I realize that ultimately it is God who is at work in my life, and that those men who have most impacted me are merely His servants?
- Do I avoid a sectarian spirit, refusing to take sides with one leader against others?

“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer deserves his wages’” (1 Tim. 5:17-18).

- Do I express honor in tangible, practical ways to those who lead me spiritually and minister the Word of God to me and to my family?
- Are the financial needs of the pastoral staff in our church being adequately met?
- Have I invested financially in the lives of those who have discipled me and helped me grow in my walk with God?

“One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches” (Gal. 6:6).

- Am I investing materially in the lives of those who teach me the Word?
- Do I look for opportunities to minister to the practical needs of my spiritual leaders?

“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions . . . Brothers, pray for us” (1 Tim. 2:1-2; 1 Thess. 5:25).

- Do I thank God for the leaders He has put in my life?
- Do I pray faithfully for the men who are in positions of spiritual leadership over my life?
- Do I take initiative to find out how I can pray for my spiritual leaders?