

Understanding Spiritual Authority

Spiritual leadership in the local church is a fact of life in the New Testament (compare Acts 14.23; Philippians 1.1; Titus 1.5; Hebrews 13.24; etc.). These persons are responsible for carrying out the will of God in their ministry as bondservants of Jesus Christ (Acts 20.28; Ephesians 4.11; Titus 1.7; Hebrews 13.17; First Peter 5.4; etc.). The purpose of this study is to better understand the nature of this authority and our response to it.

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A. The nature of spiritual authority

1. Terms used to describe the nature of church leaders

The terms *elder* (Acts 14.23; First Timothy 5.17; Titus 1.5; First Peter 5.1), *overseer* (Acts 20.28; Philippians 1.1; First Timothy 3.2; Titus 1.7), and *pastor* (Acts 20.28; Ephesians 4.11; First Peter 5.2) are used interchangeably in the New Testament to refer to those entrusted by God with the responsibility to lead His people. Look up these words in a good dictionary and give a brief explanation of what each term tells us about the nature of their leadership.

<i>elder</i> (presbyter)	<i>overseer</i> (bishop)	<i>pastor</i> (shepherd)

2. What God expects from spiritual leaders

The following passages specifically mention those things that God expects from spiritual leaders in their ministry to His flock. Meditate on each passage and give a brief summary of what each teaches on this matter.

<i>Matthew 28.16-20</i>	
<i>Acts 6.1-6</i>	
<i>Acts 15.1-6</i>	
<i>Acts 20.28-32</i>	
<i>First Corinthians 16.15-16</i>	
<i>Ephesians 4.11-12</i>	
<i>First Thessalonians 2.7-12</i>	
<i>First Thessalonians 5.12-13</i>	
<i>First Timothy 3.1-7</i>	
<i>First Timothy 4.11-16</i>	
<i>First Timothy 5.17-22</i>	
<i>Titus 1.5-9</i>	
<i>Second Timothy 4.1-5</i>	

<i>Hebrews 13.7, 17</i>	
<i>James 5.14</i>	
<i>1 Peter 5.1-5</i>	

3. Summary of findings about the responsibilities of spiritual leaders

B. The response to spiritual authority

1. Terms used to describe the believer's response

The following terms are used in the New Testament to describe the believer's response to spiritual authority. Look up these words in a good dictionary and give a brief explanation of what each term tells us about the nature of our responsibility toward spiritual authority.

<i>appreciate</i>	
<i>esteem</i>	
<i>honor</i>	
<i>imitate</i>	
<i>obey</i>	
<i>regard</i>	
<i>submit</i>	

2. What God expects from us in our attitude toward spiritual authority

The following New Testament passages specifically mention those things that God expects from us in our attitude toward spiritual authority. Meditate on each passage and give a brief summary of what each one has to say on this matter.

<i>Matthew 28.16-20</i>	
<i>First Corinthians 9.3-18</i>	
<i>First Corinthians 16.15-16</i>	
<i>Galatians 6.6</i>	

<i>Philippians 2.25-30</i>	
<i>Philippians 4.15-17</i>	
<i>First Thessalonians 1.5-7</i>	
<i>First Thessalonians 5.12-13, 25</i>	
<i>First Timothy 5.17-19</i>	
<i>Hebrews 13.7, 17-19</i>	
<i>First Peter 5.5</i>	

3. Summary of findings about our responsibilities to spiritual leaders

4. Proverbs on reproof and instruction

The book of Proverbs can provide us with key insights on how we should respond to reproof and instruction. Meditate on the following passages and give a brief statement as to what each one says concerning this matter.

<i>Proverbs 3.11-12</i>	
<i>Proverbs 9.7-12</i>	
<i>Proverbs 10.17</i>	
<i>Proverbs 12.1, 15</i>	
<i>Proverbs 15.12, 32-33</i>	
<i>Proverbs 17.10</i>	
<i>Proverbs 19.20, 25, 27</i>	
<i>Proverbs 25.12</i>	
<i>Proverbs 27.5-6</i>	
<i>Proverbs 29.1</i>	