

Respect Due Elders

4-2-23

1 Thessalonians 5:12–13 (ESV)

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

When we look at this letter and the context in which it was written we have a better understanding of why the subject “Respect Due Elders” was deemed necessary. Paul gives the gospel message to Gentiles before the Jews run him out of town. Now Paul writes a letter back to these baby believers who only have a pagan background. He tells them they are chosen and are an example to all believers. He clears up questions about the resurrection, rapture, and Jesus’ return. Now Paul instructs these baby believers about their respect toward leaders in this newfound church. These instructions are as important today as they were then.

#1 We ask you, brothers, is a plea to believers. Ask means a request from a friend. Therefore, Paul makes a request to the Thessalonians as a friend. This is beneficial but no pressure.

#2 We kindly ask, “to respect those who labor among you.” Respect – This word is almost never translated “respect” in the Greek. The most common translation is “to know” meaning to know one’s net worth or to get to know them and recognize them for who they are.

Labor – This word means to grow tired with toil. This is not about diplomas or position, but it is about people who labor.

We kindly ask you, “to get to know the net worth of your leaders and recognize those who labor among you.”

#3 Those who are over you in the Lord. Over you means presiding rule. In many cases it means “maintain”. The verb means care which entails sincere interest without eroding one’s authority or respect. Based on 1 Timothy and Titus, Paul is clearly identifying these leaders as Elders who were appointed from the earliest days of the church. Christian leaders are under the Lord’s authority. These were people recognized by their labor in the church. **The Holy Spirit gave these leaders the responsibility to care for God’s church.**

Acts 20:28 (ESV)

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

We kindly ask you, “to get to know the net worth of leaders and recognize those who labor among you who preside over you and care for you under the Lord’s authority.” This connection of believers with leaders is not a small thing.

Supporting a leader makes us a partner with them in their work, as if we preformed the ministry ourselves.

3 John 8 (ESV)

Therefore, we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

Therefore, the church must know their leaders and their net worth and commitment to the truth. Thus, the church shows its appreciation for their labor. When the congregation fully supports the leader, they become fellow workers with the leader. God will bless “those” who honor their leaders “as much” as HE will bless the leader himself. When believers are united with Christ in respectful submission to Christian leaders who labor for the Lord, they are serving the Lord and receive a leader’s reward. **The reverse holds true.**

2 John 10–11 (ESV)

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, ¹¹for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.

Anyone supporting false, misled, or lazy leaders is a partner with them and will receive the same harsh judgement from God. **We must know someone’s net worth before we align ourselves with them.** We should pass this message on to young believers and those evaluating who they should align themselves with. **It makes a difference where you go to church, and it makes a difference who your pastor is.** Honor Elders who draw lines which “exclude teaching and practice” which is not in harmony with the revelation of Scripture. Godly leaders care for and guide the church.

#4 These leaders are responsible to admonish you. Admonish means to “put in mind” or to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. This admonishment is necessary for spiritual growth.

We kindly ask you, “to get to know the net worth of leaders and recognize those who labor among you who preside over you and care for you under the Lord’s authority who put in your mind things cooperating with the Holy Spirit.”

After coming to know the net worth of these leaders who labor among you, Paul gives the church one more instruction.

#5 Once we know these leaders, we are to esteem these leaders very highly in love because of their work. “Very highly” is a very forceful word meaning beyond exceeding. Hold these leaders in esteem beyond and exceeding all measure because of their personal and specific work. The congregation must identify them and esteem them.

We kindly ask you, “to get to know the net worth of your leaders and recognize those who labor among you who preside over you and care for you under the Lord’s authority who put in your mind things cooperating with the Holy Spirit.” Hold these leaders in esteem beyond and exceeding all measure because of their personal and specific work.

This is important as we see churches and pastors stray from the Scriptures. Also esteem faithful leaders because God holds them accountable for their ministry to the church to you.

Hebrews 13:17 (ESV)

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.