

# Responsibilities of an Elder

Titus 1:9-16

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Shepherd's Community Church

*“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.” (Hebrews 13:17)*

## The Ministry of Exhorting (9a)

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*(1 Corinthians 12:29; 1 Peter 5:3; Psalm 119:97; 19:10; 2 Timothy 3:17; Proverbs 19:2; 1 Timothy 5:17; Acts 6:2)*

## The Ministry of Refuting (9b)

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*(1 Timothy 4:1; Matthew 7:20; Ephesians 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 11:14-15; Matthew 5:19)*

## The Ministry of Guarding (10-16)

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*(Acts 20:29-30; 15:11; Matthew 7:15, 21-23; 23:26; 1 Peter 5:2; Romans 10:3; 1 Timothy 6:20; Hebrews 13:17)*

A spirit of obedience and submission to authority is fundamental to Christian living (Rom 16:19; 2 Cor 2:9; Phil 2:12; Philem.21; 1 Peter 1:2, 14). Submission is the fruit of genuine humility and faith. It is a mark of the Spirit-filled life (Eph. 5:18-6:9). The Bible says, first and foremost, “Submit therefore to God...” (James 4:7a). True submission to God naturally expresses itself in obedience and submission to earthly authority. Thus genuine submission to God and His Word expresses itself in obedience and submission in the home, in marriage, at work, in society, and in the local assembly of believers.

The effectiveness of any body of church leaders is measurably affected by the response of the people they lead. When God’s people act independently and in self-will, there is little growth, peace, or joy in the ministry of the local church. Only when believers properly submit to their spiritual leaders does the local church have any chance to be the growing, loving, joyous family God intends it to be.

Knowing that submission to authority is often resisted or resented, even by Christians, the writer bolsters his exhortation by adding important reasons for submission and obedience. Spiritual leaders should be obeyed because “they keep watch over [for] your souls.” The verb “keep watch” (*agrypneo*) literally means “keep oneself awake,” but here it is used metaphorically for watching, guarding, or caring for people. Like the ancient watchmen or shepherds of a flock, spiritual leaders must always be keenly alert, conscientious, and diligent. Watchfulness demands tireless effort, self-discipline, and selfless concern for the safety of others.

These leaders are involved in spiritual care. They are keeping watch for “your souls.” Above all else, these leaders keep watch for the spiritual welfare of the congregation. Their task, if taken lightly, could result in serious harm to the spiritual lives of God’s children.

Hebrews itself is an illustration of spiritual watchmen in action and reveals the critical need for spiritual watchmen. Serious problems existed among some believers: spiritual apathy and immaturity, neglect of the truth, compromise with Judaism’s old ways, fear of hardship, bitterness of soul, backsliding, and disregard of God’s shepherds. The leaders responsible for this needy community faced problems that required attention and action. However, their good pastoral efforts would be of little effect if the believers did not submit to their wise, loving leadership.