



# Welcome!

## WEST VALLEY CHURCH OF CHRIST

October 10, 2021

### **The Role of Submission as It Surrounds the Business Meeting**

As we mentioned a couple of weeks ago, the aim of Jesus for His church is unity (John 17:20-23; 1 Corinthians 1:10). It's pretty natural for us to think of unity in terms of interpersonal relationships, but in order to please Christ we must also think of unity on the congregational level. Paul calls us to walk worthy of our Christian calling by, among other things, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). Don't overlook the very next phrase: "There is one body" (4:4a), a reference to Jesus' church (1:22-23). The principle of submission that we explored last week has more to teach us as we reflect upon congregational leadership.

Two passages have special significance in this discussion:

"And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

"Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of *their* conduct... Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

These passages most naturally find their application in relation to the elders of the church. We learn elsewhere that both Jesus and the Holy Spirit have given elders the overseeing work alluded to in these passages (1 Peter 5:2-3; Acts 20:28). However, it's important to remember 1) these passages don't explicitly mention elders; 2) these passages don't simply "go away" when a Scriptural eldership doesn't exist. Christians are called by these verses to submit to congregational leadership; if an eldership does not exist, Christians should look to submit to God's next tier of leadership: the Christian men of the congregation.

Christian men themselves are also not immune to the call to submit; in fact, they are frequently called to operate as everyone else does: under the principle that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. When I worked with the church in Melbourne, Australia, we were without elders. A big decision came up: after years of worshiping in a rented hall, we had the opportunity to buy a small shop and convert it into a church building. As we talked about this possibility in our monthly men's meeting, it became clear that one of our brothers was against the idea. He had been a Christian there in Melbourne longer than any of us and had always dreamed of having a "proper" church building. However, given property prices in Melbourne and the availability of loans to faith groups, such a building simply was not realistic. Had this brother dug in his heels, it is likely that we would not have moved forward with the project out of a desire to maintain unity. However, when this brother saw that he was in the minority and that reasonable, faithful Christians believed this to be in the best interests of the church, he not only submitted to the decision we ultimately made to buy the shop, but he also actively joined us in the efforts to get the shop ready to become a place of worship.

Church leadership cannot exist without church followership. May God bless with the humility of heart and mind needed to answer His call to submit to our leaders.