

Reading: Joshua 1:1-18

*“You younger, submit yourselves to the elder” (1 Pet 5:5)*

Obeying our spiritual leaders is actually obeying God. Any act against the leaders is sin against God. When Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses, it was the **Lord** who heard it and punished them severely (Num 12:1,2). Submission to elders means the humbling of ourselves “under the mighty hand of **God**” (1 Pet 5:5,6). He who says that he obeys God but does not obey his leaders is a liar; the truth is not in him!

Leaders are not democratically elected but they are divinely appointed. The relationship between pastors and people must be that of a *guru* (master) and a disciple. In this discipling ministry to which the leaders are commissioned, obedience on the part of the disciples is indispensable. Once Jesus challenged His disciples, “Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?” (Lk 6:46).

It’s easy to obey a leader who is efficient and charismatic. This is a secular trend. But in spiritual leadership, it is not the efficiency of the person as much as his sufficiency that’s of God; and it’s not charisma but character (2 Cor 3:5,6).

We obey leaders primarily because they are anointed and appointed by God. We enable them to function effectively when we remember them lovingly, follow them sincerely, obey them willingly, pray for them fervently and encourage them verbally and practically (Heb 13:7,17,18,24). Those who rule well, “especially those who labour in the Word and doctrine,” should be counted worthy of “double honour” (1 Tim 5:17).

Blessed are the leaders who have followers concerning whom they can testify as Paul wrote about Philemon: “Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say” (Phile 21). At the same time there is a potential danger for leaders who have implicitly obedient followers. They must not take advantage of them and become dictators. Paul and Peter, who were leaders and shepherds themselves, have laid down timeless principles for leaders to follow in their ministries (1 Tim 4:12; 5:1,2,21; 1 Pet 5:1-4). Whole-hearted obedience is a natural response to wholesome leadership.

*Oh, teach me, Lord, that I may teach,  
Thy precious things Thou dost impart;  
And wing my words, that they may reach  
The hidden depths of many a heart!*

*(Frances R. Havergal, 1836-1879)*

**A Prayer to make us a Blessing**

O *lead* me, Lord, that I may lead  
The wandering and the wavering feet;  
O *feed* me, Lord, that I may feed  
Thy hungering ones with manna sweet.

Lord, *speak* to me, that I may speak  
In loving echoes of Thy tone;  
As Thou has sought, so let me seek  
Thy erring children, lost and lone.

O *strengthen* me, that, while I stand  
Firm on the rock, and strong in Thee,  
I may stretch out a loving hand  
To wrestlers with the troubled sea.

O *teach* me, Lord, that I may teach  
Thy precious things Thou dost impart;  
And wing my words, that they may reach  
The hidden depths of many a heart.

O *fill* me with Thy fullness, Lord,  
Until my very heart overflow  
In kindling thought and glowing word,  
Thy love to tell, Thy praise to show.

O *use* me, Lord, use even me,  
Just as Thou wilt, and when, and where,  
Until Thy blessed face I see,  
Thy rest, Thy joy, Thy glory share. Amen!

— Frances Ridley Havergal, 1836-1879

“If anyone cleanses himself, he will be a vessel for honour,  
sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.”

(2 Timothy 2:21)