

1. We are going to continue this morning with our series dealing with the subject of submission.
2. I gave this entire series the title "My Favorite Sermon Series Ever."
3. I'm not sure for me that it is my favorite sermon series ever.
4. I must tell you. I'm ready for our pastor to move on to another subject.
5. In fact, last Sunday after church I told my wife I wished our pastor would preach about something else. That I was tired of this subject.
6. But yet, here we are again today.
7. Just to remind us. We have been talking about 3 different types of submission.

Healthy submission is mutual submission. Both people submit to one another. (shaking hands)

Unhealthy submission occurs when one person wants the other to submit, but they won't submit as well. (door mat)

Destructive or damaging submission is when one person demands or forces the other to submit without being willing to submit. (wrestling choke hold)

8. In the bible, any time we are commanded to submit to God or to or for others, it is healthy submission that God intends.
9. One of the things I want to emphasize again this morning is that God does not treat you in unhealthy or damaging ways, and he doesn't expect us to submit to unhealthy or destructive behavior by others.
10. When faced with unhealthy submission we have the right to refuse. And when faced with damaging or destructive submission we should run away as fast as we can.
11. But we should respond to and engage in healthy submission. Whether with God or with others. We cannot afford to throw all submission out the window because...all healthy relationships require healthy submission.
12. You and I will never have a healthy relationship with God or anyone else, if there is not mutual submission being displayed and lived out.
13. Submission is vital to our health and well-being as believers.

14. Submission is vital in our being able to resist the enemy in a way that causes him to flee and stop his attack.
15. Along the way we have looked at the subject of submission in a few different relationships.
16. I want to highlight a particular relationship this morning, and that will be our focus.
17. Before I tell you which relationship I am talking about, I think it's important to establish a couple of things.
18. In reality, I think I would be more comfortable if someone else were to talk about this relationship, especially since I am a part of that relationship. However, since this teaching can be applied to many different areas of leadership, I will continue.
19. Secondly, I want to be crystal clear that the basis for this message is thanks and gratitude.
20. I am grateful for the health I see in this relationship, and I am grateful for the things you do that make the relationship healthy.
21. In honor of Pastor Appreciation day, we are going to talk about the relationship between leaders and followers, in particular pastors and the people who follow them.
22. We're going to focus on one verse of scripture found in the New Testament book of Hebrews.
23. Most bible scholars agree that more than likely it was the Apostle Paul who wrote the book of Hebrews.
24. As the name suggests, it was written to Hebrews, particularly Jewish people who had converted to Christianity.
25. So just to be transparent, when Paul wrote this letter to the Hebrew believers and he spoke about leaders and followers, he was addressing his relationship with them, as well as all other leader/follower relationships.
26. That could be considered self-serving. Meaning he addressed the subject with them so as to get them to do what he wanted them to do.

27. The same could be said about my talking about this subject, except that in the letter to the Hebrews, if we put what Paul says to the test, we will find that he was not advocating unhealthy or destructive submission, but rather he was advocating for healthy submission. Mutual submission.

TEXT: **Hebrews 13:17** Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

INTRO:

1. For sure there is a benefit to Paul in talking about healthy leader and follower relationships, but Paul also makes it clear that there are also benefits to the followers.
2. The nature of the relationship should be one in which both parties benefit. And that is what we call healthy.
3. If you will give me just a moment, I would like to point out some aspects of Paul's encouragement in this verse that are healthy and not unhealthy or damaging.

Have confidence in you leaders.

1. The best definition I could find for the word confidence was this one.
2. Confidence: the feeling or belief that one can rely on someone or something; a firm trust.
3. So, from the perspective of someone who follows others. From the perspective of being someone who always has and always will have leaders over me, the idea of confidence is pretty important.
4. It's going to be pretty hard to follow someone if you don't feel or believe that they can be relied upon or trusted.
5. But Paul makes it clear that this confidence is not one sided. No only do the followers have to have confidence, but the leader has to lead in such a way as to promote confidence.
6. A leader has to be reliable and trustworthy. We know that is what Paul meant because later in the verse he identifies several responsibilities of the leader that are necessary for the followers to trust him.

7. So, first of all this is not blind trust. This is trust that is reasonable because the leader has proven he or she is trustworthy.
8. The second healthy aspect of this verse has to do with the act of submission.

And submit to their authority.

1. Again, I would like to point out that the kind of submission Paul is telling the followers to engage in is healthy submission, not unhealthy or damaging submission.
2. As a follower, I have been on the losing side of unhealthy or damaging submission.
3. I once worked for a pastor, and after 4 years of serving him, I made what everyone I talked to believed was a reasonable request.
4. Not only did the pastor tell me no for no good reason, he also threatened to put me in a bad light with others if I went ahead and followed through. He later lied about me in front of the church.
5. Another time, in an attempt to submit to a leader who was slightly over me, but yet to see if we could come to an agreement about some minor details of a project, when I asked a question he literally said, and I quote. Around here it's my way or the highway.
6. That is not what Paul is saying when he says submit to their authority.
7. First of all, the submission only happens as a result of the leader showing they can be trusted, and the follower recognizing the leader can be trusted.
8. Secondly, as I will point out in just a second, Paul makes it clear that the submission is not one sided.
9. The leader has to submit for the people who follow him. I say for and not to simply because it would be impossible for one leader to submit to a bunch of different people successfully.
10. Because in submitting to this person, another person would surely want the leader to submit to a different thing or in a different way. One person can't submit to everyone.
11. But the leader always has to submit for their followers. The one who makes the greatest sacrifice should always be the leader and not the follower.

12. I really like what **John Wesley's commentary** has to say about this call to submit.
13. **Submit yourselves - Give up (not your conscience or judgment of right and wrong, but) your own will, in all things purely indifferent.**
14. We are not told to submit to sin or wrong, but we are told to submit in other areas that just aren't that big a deal.
15. So those are a couple of areas in which the followers are to submit to the leader.
16. Now let's look at how the leader is to submit for their followers.

Because they keep watch over you – Responsibility.

1. The leader has a responsibility to watch over those who follow.
2. Several other versions of the bible use the word souls. Because they keep watch over your souls.
3. Meaning the care that the leader takes of those who follow is a matter of life and death. It's a matter of eternity.
4. When I think of caring for or watching over the souls of those who follow I think of the words of Jesus in the book of John.
5. **John 10:11-15 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. 14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me-- 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father--and I lay down my life for the sheep.**
6. That's not submitting to the followers, but it sure is submitting for the followers.
7. The leader's job is to get in the way of danger and lay his life down if necessary.
8. It's not only the responsibility to feed, but also to protect against the wolves who would try to destroy the flock.
9. Another area the leader is to submit in is...

As those who must give an account – Accountability.

1. Every commentary I read on this portion of the verse indicated that this had to do with the leader giving an account to God on how well they watched over the souls of those followers.
2. The leader always has to answer to God. The leader must be in constant submission to the Lord because the followers are the Lord's and not the leaders.
3. When I think of giving an account to God I am reminded of what the Lord told Ezekiel.
4. **Ezekiel 33:8-9** When I say to the wicked, 'You wicked person, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade them from their ways, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. **9** But if you do warn the wicked person to turn from their ways and they do not do so, they will die for their sin, though you yourself will be saved.
5. The last thing I want to happen is to get to heaven and the Lord have a list of people who are not there because I didn't do my job and say what He told me to say.
6. So, the followers have confidence and submit.
7. And the leader keeps watch and gives an account.
8. And the result when everyone engages in healthy submission is that there is a benefit to everyone.

Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

1. We've already established that the follower gains a leader who watches over, cares for, and protects.
2. And the leader gets to engage in a work that is a joy and not a burden.
3. So, for the remainder of this message I want to take some time and express ways you have made leading you a joy rather than a burden.
4. We want to say thank you. Thank you for the way you follow.
5. It's didn't take long for me to realize several ways you have and do bless us.

You let us be human.

1. Said another way, you are patient with our struggles.
2. Being a leader is miserable when you feel like you have to hide your struggles at all cost for fear of being found out.
3. But being a leader is a joy when you can be open and honest about your humanity.
4. One of the things I love about king David in the Old Testament is that he was open and honest with his emotions.
5. Psalm 32:3-5 When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. 5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD." And you forgave the guilt of my sin.
6. This was one of David's responses after it was revealed he had killed Uriah and sinned with Bathsheba.
7. While he kept it quiet it was killing him. But when he confessed it brought forgiveness and life.
8. There is life and freedom in being able to admit struggle as a leader and to be assured that you will not be rejected because of it.
9. In 2012 I realized I was on empty physically, spiritually, and emotionally. I realized some things needed to change in order for me to be healthy again.
10. And in order to make those changes I needed time to get away. I needed a sabbatical.
11. I was so afraid to tell the board at that time. But when I did they understood, and they supported me, and they gave me grace and freedom to heal.
12. It was a turning point in my health.
13. Patti and I have always been extremely grateful for the ways our kids were allowed to be kids. Imperfect kids.
14. We realized very early on that no one expected them to be perfect or live in a fishbowl of criticism.
15. I don't think I ever once said to them, you can't act that way. What will the people in the church think?

16. You have supported our kids and blessed them, and in the process been a tremendous blessing to us.

Words of encouragement.

1. So many times, I can't count, someone in the church has called. Texted. Sent a card or a note.
2. Spoken words of thanks and gratitude.
3. We have had people tell us how much they love us.
4. People who tell us they are praying for us.
5. People who have assured us that they believed in us. Sometimes when we didn't even believe in ourselves.
6. Proverbs 25:11-13 The right word at the right time is like precious gold set in silver. 12 Listening to good advice is worth much more than jewelry made of gold. 13 A messenger you can trust is just as refreshing as cool water in summer. (CEV)
7. Thank you for being a cool refreshment to us in the dry times.

Serving together.

1. Ephesians 4:11-12 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up
2. We are so grateful for people who don't expect us to do everything.
3. I don't think I have ever had someone say, well I'm not doing that. That's your job.
4. In fact, on numerous occasions I have had people say Pastor, you don't need to be doing that. That's not your job. You can't do everything.
5. And then rather than giving the advice and walking away they would pick up the load and say, let me help with that.
6. Feeling like you are all alone in the word is a burden, but having people who love the Lord and love you who are willing to be involved and serve and give is like music to my ears.
7. It is a joy.

Conclusion

1. Today I would like to close this service by saying thank you for being you.
2. There would be no we if there were not a you.
3. In fact, there are no leaders without followers.
4. Someone was quoted as saying, he who calls himself a leader, but has no followers is only going for a walk alone.
5. Thank you for being great followers and for making us good leaders.
6. It is our joy to submit for you and to serve you.
7. All – thank the Lord for healthy at BFA.
8. Thank the Lord we can have health in all our relationships.