

TEXT Ezekiel 33:1-11; Jeremiah 3:15

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES Ephesians 4:11-17; 1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Peter 5:1-5

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that as the ministry submits to God and bears the responsibility of the Body of Christ, just so we must submit to those who “watch for our souls” to be entitled to God’s favor and blessing.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls. — Hebrews 13:17

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour 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. — 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13

**ANSWER
TITLE:** **Warning Signs**

**SEARCH
TITLE:** **Submission to
Spiritual Leaders**

REFERENCE INFORMATION

Ezekiel was a prophet during the captivity and was carried to Babylon in approximately 597 B.C., eleven years before Jerusalem was destroyed. In 597 B.C., King Jehoiachin surrendered Jerusalem to the Babylonian army, and was taken into exile. With him went 10,000 men—statesmen, soldiers, and craftsmen (2 Kings 24:14). Among them was Jeremiah’s younger contemporary, Ezekiel, then in his mid-twenties. Ezekiel was in training as a priest, looking forward to doing service in the Temple, as did his father before him. Exile in the plains of Babylonia, far from Jerusalem, meant the end of all his hopes. However, five years later when Ezekiel was thirty (the age at which he would probably have taken up his duties as a priest) God called him into service as a prophet. The call was accompanied by a vision of God which colored his entire ministry.

As he declared God’s message to the exiles, a great weight of responsibility rested on Ezekiel. He saw himself as a “look-out” who must give warning of danger or be held accountable. One of his most characteristic themes was that of individual responsibility before God. Ezekiel was an extraordinary man—imaginative, and by training, a man who appreciated and understood ritual and symbol. He was passionate and dedicated, and utterly obedient to God.

The watchman was one who guarded a city or the headquarters of an army. Watchmen were set on city walls, on specially built towers, or on hilltops. These towers were of varying heights, all the way from ten feet to an occasional forty feet, and not always connected with the city walls.

YOUR OPENER

Submission to Spiritual Leaders

TEXT: Ezekiel 33:1-11; Jeremiah 3:15

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KEY VERSE: And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour 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.

— 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13

RESPONSES

1. The Law and the words of the prophets were among the instrumentalities chosen by God to reveal His will to the people. You might also bring out that the patriarchs—Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—were the spiritual leaders of their families and entire households. When Moses was given the Law, God spoke to the people through him and the priests who, through their sacrifices, represented the people to God. Use this to discuss with your students that from the beginning God was vitally interested in the spiritual welfare of His people and expected them to be submissive to the leaders He had chosen to instruct them.

2. Discussion of this question should revolve around the thought that, although immediate physical death may not be the punishment as it often was in the days of the Law, those who disobey suffer spiritual death.

3. He gave them apostles (overseers), prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry and for the edifying of the church. Help your students parallel the procedures the church uses today to those used in the Early Church as to the ministering of the Gospel and the administration of the church. Focus on the thought that today, too, workers are appointed to various positions in the church and assigned certain responsibilities for the administration and spread of the Gospel.

The Word of God teaches us in many places that the ministers are instructed by God to feed us His Word, and they will be held accountable as to whether they have done this. We are taught to obey those who have the spiritual responsibility for the welfare of our souls.

1. How did God provide for the spiritual leadership of His people in Old Testament times? See John 1:17 and 2 Peter 1:21.

2. Under the Law, it was vitally important for the people to obey what "Thus saith the Lord" as it was revealed to them through His priests and prophets. Punishment, many times death, was inflicted on those who disobeyed (Hebrews 10:28). There are many places in the Scriptures where we are shown the importance of being obedient to those God has put in a position of authority over us. Why should His commands be obeyed and the instructions from His ministers and pastors be heeded in our day?

3. What provisions did God make for the spiritual leadership of His people in the New Testament church? See Ephesians 4:11,12.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. The leader of a church congregation is usually called a pastor. Webster defines *pastor* as one who is a “shepherd of the flock,” or one who feeds the people spiritually. Note some of the responsibilities of a shepherd in Bible times, and parallel these duties to the duties of a pastor.

5. Why is it important that a pastor, or one with similar responsibilities, seek God’s guidance and wisdom in all the decisions he makes for the welfare of the congregation, and that he be faithful to the soul of each one?

6. Many times, students in school are taught to think things out for themselves, to question authority and, indirectly, not to submit to their elders. How does Hebrews 13:17 refute these humanistic teachings?

7. At what age should children be taught to honor and obey their elders and ministers? See Isaiah 28:9.

8. What kind of life does God’s Word command His ministers to live? (Titus 2:7,8) What effect will this type of example have on a minister’s congregation and on others who meet him?

9. Why is it not necessary for us to fully understand the reason for each decision made by the ministry in order to heed it?

4. As your class discusses some of the responsibilities of a shepherd, they may mention: he finds food and water for the flock; he tries to safeguard them from harm; he provides shelter; he keeps count to be sure none are missing; he attends to their injuries or ailments. Your students should be able to parallel many of these responsibilities to the spiritual duties of a pastor. The main thought to be emphasized is that pastors and other church leaders are ordained of God and their instructions should be heeded by the congregation, much as a sheep heeds the shepherd’s voice.

5. He must give account to God for each soul he has led and instructed and counseled—or failed to instruct and counsel—when the responsibility was his.

6. This verse is a specific command to obedience and submission to those in authority. Discuss how the humanistic teachings mentioned can lead into a lack of respect for parents, those in authority, and the ministry.

7. It is necessary to begin training at a very early age. The character of a child is molded before he ever starts to school. One who is taught at a young age to obey his elders is more likely to continue to do so. One who is taught to honor the ministry is also more likely to continue to do so.

8. Titus 2:7,8 brings out that a minister must strive to live an exemplary life. In doing this, he is setting forth an effective Christian example to those whom he may influence. By honoring and submitting to those in a position of authority over him (such as to his senior pastor or overseer), he may be able to put a desire in others to do the same.

9. Your students should see that the ministry is endeavoring to follow God’s perfect will and would do nothing which they did not feel was for the good of the flock (or church). Discuss some examples of children obeying their parents even though they did not understand fully, knowing the parents did what they felt was good for them. Jesus’ disciples did not always understand the reason for His commands, but they obeyed and received a blessing for obedience. Just so, we will receive God’s favor and blessing if we heed His Word given through His ministers.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

In what way is a minister like a watchman on the wall?

How should we treat a minister?

What is a minister? (1 Peter 5:1-5)

How should you feel about those whom you must obey?
How should they be treated?

What is the key to being able to submit to authority?

Is it the natural thing to want to obey those who have the rule over you? Why or why not?

What is submission?

How can we teach children respect for their pastor?

What place does the pastor have in our lives?

The ANSWER story emphasizes the need to obey traffic signs, and compares that need to our heeding the warnings given to us by the ministry for our own good. Name some warnings given that will affect our eternal destination.

THINGS TO DO

Bring a lump of clay to class. Shape an object while explaining that, as a Christian, we must be of a clay-like quality, willing to conform to God's plan which says that we must obey those who have the rule over us.

Act out a brief skit. Have a coach instructing ball players, some players not listening. Then have the coach talk to them about what could happen to them and their team because they didn't listen. Relate this to listening to our ministers, Sunday school teachers, etc.

Another skit could portray a worker doing a job. The boss comes in and explains something to do, then leaves. The worker doesn't do what he was told. The boss comes in

and sees it was not done. He explains the trouble it caused the company and the job.

Show your students a road map. If you were going on a trip to a place where you had never been, a very difficult place to find, you would be wise to follow the road map. The road map was drawn up by people who knew the roads. You only have to follow their directions to find your way to the destination. The Bible tells us to obey them that have the rule over us. We have to submit to God and what He commands if we are ever to come to the desired destination.

Answers for ANSWER

I Will Obey

Our ministers want us to receive God's blessing. This message tells why we should obey our ministers. Begin at **start** and trace the words of Hebrews 13:17 through the maze. The first word of the verse is traced for you.

START • O-B-E-Y-T-H-E-M-T-H-A-T
K E H P R P O E C R O H
I E-V-O-E R-E-H-T-E-V-A
A F F K L-U R C I A B N
T Y-O-U J V C T N I-T-Y
N T H A-N-D-S-U-B-M-S-O
L H-T C H F O E M Y L U
Q E R-O-F-S-E-V-L-E-S-A
S Y B C N Q F L E V S X
M W-A-T-C-H-F-O-R-Y-O-U
F T-Y-E R M A J E S U R
I H B H-T-S-A-S-L-U-O-S
V A F A S O L T C-C-O-U
L T S-T-G-L-V-E-A J S N
A M-U K T-I-O Y-E-H N T
FINISH • Y-O-J S W E D M S T D T
K E H-T-I J Y-A R T-A-H

Sometimes it is easier to obey when we know why we should.

