

To the Shepherds

The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me: "He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain." (2 Sam 23:3-4)

He who rules should exercise his authority with care — with diligent, zealous exertion. Rom 12:8 — God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then *administrators*. 1 Cor 12:28 — The gift of administration, leading, governments are ways of serving in building up the Body of Messiah. They are a participation in the Lord's own leadership and headship over His body, the church.

The Holy Spirit is quenched if the coordinator of the community disregards the Spirit's presence in the community as a whole and in each person in the community.

Like Solomon, every leader needs a listening heart (1 Kng 3:9, Amp) to listen to God and to each person whom He has entrusted to his leadership. Certainly he needs a discerning heart to distinguish the good from evil of those in his care — the gift of "testing the spirits" (1 Jn 4:1; 1 Ths 5:19-22). He needs a heart to hear both sides of the issue, and the ability to make sound judgments, to distinguish between spirits, a heart of willingness and patience.

In exercising authority the government in a community needs to be attentive to the Holy Spirit who speaks in each person in the Body. Therefore, the unique dignity of each person in the community must always be a prime consideration of every leader. For the leadership carries on the work of the Good Shepherd who calls each of His sheep by name. Each one is called to his unique place in the Messiah's Body, which he can fill only by being the person the Messiah wants him to be.

No elder, father, or mother ever *owns* the person in his or her charge. Everyone under the care of a head must always be revered as a son or daughter of our Father in heaven who belongs first of all to Him, but is to be directed in the Way so as to be led

by His Spirit. In giving direction the leaders' aim must always be to show each person in their charge how to discern the Spirit's leading and to follow Him, and how to hear the Bridegroom's voice (Jn 3:29), the Good Shepherd's call (Jn 10:3), and thus become the person that his Father meant for him to be also. Then there is no room for any dichotomy¹ between the sheep and the shepherds, that is, if all honor one another as sons and daughters of one Father, led by the same Spirit to do His will.

Respect for each individual as a unique person for each one's contribution to the building of the Body is in proportion to how completely he develops as the unique person our Master is calling him to be. It is only within the Body and in relationship with all the other persons in it that each one reaches his own potential, being all He wants him to be.

Since the Spirit speaks to each person who is under the leaders' care, the leaders' aim is always to show each person how to surrender to our Master and His Spirit (Heb 13:17). Only to the extent that each one is directly submissive to the Holy Spirit is he useful to the Body. The leaders help each person discover his true purpose and to fulfill his responsibilities within the Body. All else is lawlessness — lawless deeds (Tit 2:14).

The leaders' focus is for each one under their care to reach his fullest worth or potential in Messiah (Rev 3:4; Phil 3:10-16; Eph 4:15) so as to hear the words in Mt 25:21 and 23 (Jn 12:26; 14:15,21). The leader inspires each one to assume full responsibility for his own decisions and actions. Each one must be guided to find, accept, and fulfill his unique personal role in the Body (1 Cor 12:12-26), thus becoming the full person our Father called him to be (Eph 2:10; 4:11-16; Col 1:27-29).

Eph 4:11-12 must happen *until* verse 13, so ensuring that Eph 2:10 and 4:11-16 happens will be a full-time job for the leaders who watch over the souls of those

¹ Dichotomy — the division of a class into two mutually exclusive subclasses, such as separating minerals into gold and not gold. (But we are *all* gold. Heb 13:17 is not dichotomous, but we are all under one Head.)

entrusted to their loving care. Lk 19:13 — “Be occupied in this one thing until I come” — as their occupation in this life.

The leaders, like John the Baptist, must decrease as the ones they direct more and more fully follow the Holy Spirit. The leaders must be sent out as others fill their place. It is a continual flow and being sent out to swarm to other towns in their region.

The goal of all leadership and spiritual direction is to show each person how to let the Holy Spirit be his director. The leaders help each to discern the Spirit in his own life and to make personal decisions in mature responsibility. Each one then is directed to assume more and more responsibility for his personal life and for his place and role in the Body of Messiah.

Every leader and parent must know how to be patient, and not expect maturity to come without a long process of growth, but still expect obedience from the very first.

In our role of trainer we must not make the mistake of expecting our children (physically or spiritually) to be perfect before the children could possibly have grown to perfection, and by our perfectionist demands expose the children to the danger of utter discouragement in the face of these unreasonable demands. We have to accept the person where he is (Col 3:21), not exasperate² him and exacerbate³ the situation.

The fundamental principle in leadership is this: respect and safeguard first of all each one’s personal dignity and freedom.

True leadership inspires full maturity and personal responsibility in those who are led. So submission is never passive surrender without awareness of his own responsibility, but rather active and responsible cooperation with the leader for the good of everyone concerned. Maturity does not make you independent, but is the ability to follow leadership and hear the voice of Messiah wherever and from whomever. Effective

² Exasperate — to provoke to anger.

³ Exacerbate — to make a disagreeable feeling or condition worse.

authority and submission to authority are essential for true community, and community is impossible without them (Ps 133).

We have got to help those under us to make decisions, not make them for them. We have got to listen to them and make decisions upon how the Spirit has spoken through them, not being arbitrary,⁴ despotic,⁵ or capricious.⁶

We make others useful to Messiah (Phlm 1:11)

No one is ever “used” in the community of love; all are brothers and sisters in Messiah, and each one lovingly, willingly, joyously gives himself in generous service, because he knows Him who did.

Those to whom our Father has given authority are *never threatened*.

⁴ Arbitrary — based on random choice or personal whim.

⁵ Despotic — to exercise absolute power, especially in a cruel or oppressive way.

⁶ Capricious — given to sudden and unaccountable changes of mood or behavior.