

The Watchtower Society teaches that Jehovah's Witnesses MUST Obey the Elders:

Quotes from The Watchtower, August 1, 2001 Issue, Page 14:

First, since "oneness" is to be observed, a mature Christian must be in unity and full harmony with fellow believers as far as faith and knowledge are concerned. He does not advocate or insist on personal opinions or harbor private ideas when it comes to Bible understanding. Rather, he has complete confidence in the truth as it is revealed by Jehovah God through his Son, Jesus Christ, and "the faithful and discreet slave." By regularly taking in the spiritual food provided "at the proper time"-through Christian publications, meetings, assemblies, and conventions-we can be sure that we maintain "oneness" with fellow Christians in faith and knowledge.- Matthew 24:45.

Quotes from The Watchtower, January 15, 2001 Issue, Page 21:

How is Jesus' leadership manifested? One way is through Christian overseers, the "gifts in men." (Ephesians 4:8) Revelation 1:16 depicts anointed overseers as being in Christ's right hand, under his control. Today, Jesus directs the arrangement for elders, whether such men have a heavenly or an earthly hope ... they are appointed by holy spirit in harmony with Scriptural requirements. (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9)

Quotes from The Watchtower, August 15, 2000 Issue, Page 28:

What are some ways in which you might develop such loyalty? One would be by cooperating with your local congregation elders. (Hebrews 13:17) Recognizing that Christ is the appointed Head of the Christian congregation, mature Christians are loyal to those appointed "to shepherd the congregation of God." (Acts 20:28) How inappropriate it would be to challenge or undermine the authority of appointed elders! You should also feel a sense of loyalty to "the faithful and discreet slave" and the agencies that are used to disseminate spiritual "food at the proper time." (Matthew 24:45) Be quick to read and apply the information found in The Watchtower and its companion publications.

Quotes from The Watchtower, August 1, 2000 Issue, Page 6:

What has he [Jesus] done to accomplish all of this in order to strengthen the Christian congregation? "When he ascended on high . . . , he gave gifts in men." (Ephesians 4:8) These "gifts in men" are Christian elders, who are appointed by holy spirit and are given the authority to care for the spiritual interests of fellow believers.-Acts 20:28.

For this reason Paul counsels: "Remember those who are taking the lead among you, who have spoken the word of God to you, and as you contemplate how their conduct turns out imitate their faith." Since these faithful men follow Jesus' steps closely, it is certainly the course of wisdom to imitate their faith. Then Paul adds: "Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive, ["continually recognizing their authority over you," The Amplified Bible] for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will render an account; that they may do this with joy and not with sighing, for this would be damaging to you."- Hebrews 13:7, 17.

What happens when such direction is disregarded? Some members of the early Christian congregation did just that and became apostates. Hymenaeus and Philetus are mentioned as men who subverted the faith of some and whose empty speeches 'violated what is holy.' One of their assertions was that the resurrection had already taken place, evidently either a spiritual or a symbolic one, and therefore there was no further resurrection in the future under God's Kingdom.-2 Timothy 2:16-18.

Quotes from The Watchtower, June 15, 2000 Issue, Pages 12-16:

Honor the Ones Given Authority Over You

Congregation elders are worthy of our honor because 'the holy spirit has appointed them overseers, to shepherd the congregation of God.' (Acts 20:28)

An outrageous example of not honoring God-appointed theocratic leadership was that of Korah. As a Kohathite, what a privilege he enjoyed serving Jehovah at the tabernacle! Still, he found fault with Moses and Aaron, God's anointed leaders of the Israelites. Korah banded together with other chieftains of Israel and brazenly told Moses and Aaron: "The whole assembly are all of them holy and Jehovah is in their midst. Why, then, should you lift yourselves up above the congregation of Jehovah?" How did Jehovah view the attitude of Korah and his supporters? God viewed their action as dishonoring Jehovah himself. After seeing all those on their side swallowed up in the earth, Korah and the 250 chieftains were destroyed by a fire from Jehovah.- Numbers 16:1-3, 28-35.

There are many examples in the Bible of those who honored individuals in authority, even when these misused or abused their authority. David was one such fine example. King Saul, under whom he served, became jealous of David 's achievements and sought to kill him. (1 Samuel 18:8-12; 19:9-11; 23:26) Still, though having opportunities to kill Saul, David said: "It is unthinkable, on my part, from Jehovah's standpoint, to thrust my hand out against the anointed of Jehovah!" (1 Samuel 24:3-6; 26:7-13) David knew

that Saul was in the wrong, but he left it up to Jehovah to judge him. (1 Samuel 24:12, 15; 26:22-24) He did not speak abusively of or to Saul.

Honor Those Taking the Lead

Congregation elders are appointed by holy spirit, yet they are still imperfect and make mistakes. (Psalm 130:3; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Acts 20:28; James 3:2) As a result, some in the congregation may feel dissatisfied with the elders. How should we react when we feel that something in the congregation is not handled just right, or at least so it seems? Note the contrast between the first-century false teachers and the angels: "Daring, self-willed, they [false teachers] do not tremble at glorious ones but speak abusively, whereas angels, although they are greater in strength and power, do not bring against them an accusation in abusive terms, not doing so out of respect for Jehovah." (2 Peter 2:10-13) While the false teachers spoke abusively of "glorious ones"-elders who were given authority in the first-century Christian congregation-the angels did not speak abusively of the false teachers who were causing disunity among the brothers. The angels, being in a superior position and having a keener sense of justice than humans, were aware of what was taking place in the congregation. Yet, "out of respect for Jehovah," they left the judgment to God.-Hebrews 2:6, 7; Jude 9. Even if something is not handled just the way it should be, should we not have faith in Jesus Christ as the living Head of the Christian congregation? Is he not aware of what is happening in his own worldwide congregation? Should we not respect his way of handling the situation and recognize his ability to control matters? Really, 'who are we to be judging our neighbor?' (James 4:12; 1 Corinthians 11:3; Colossians 1:18) Why not bring your concerns before Jehovah in your prayers?

Because of human imperfection, difficulties or problems may arise. There may even be times when an elder errs, causing some to be disturbed. Our acting hastily under such circumstances will not change the situation. It may only serve to aggravate the problem. Those having spiritual discernment will wait on Jehovah to set things straight and administer whatever discipline may be needed in his own time and way.-2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 12:7-11.

Quotes from The Watchtower, June 1, 1999 Issue, Pages 16-19:

But what about the "gifts in men" themselves? How can we show that we appreciate them?

We can demonstrate our appreciation for the "gifts in men" by being quick to heed their Bible-based counsel and decisions. The Bible advises us: "Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will render an account; that they may do this with joy and not with sighing, for this would be damaging to you." (Hebrews 13:17) Notice that we must not only "be obedient" but also "be submissive" to those taking the lead. The Greek word for "be submissive" literally means "be you yielding under." Commenting on the expressions "be obedient" and "be submissive," Bible scholar R. C. H. Lenski says: "One obeys when one agrees with what he is told to do, is persuaded of its correctness and profitableness; one yields . . . when he has a contrary opinion." When we understand and agree with the direction of those taking the lead, obedience may come readily. But what if we do not understand the reason behind a particular decision?

Here is where we may need to be submissive, or yielding. Why? For one thing, we need to trust that these spiritually qualified men have our best interests at heart. After all, they well know that they must render an account to Jehovah for the sheep committed to their care. (James 3:1) In addition, we do well to remember that we may not know all the confidential facts that led them to an informed decision.-Proverbs 18:13.

What about being submissive when it comes to judicial decisions? Granted, this may not be easy, especially if a decision is made to disfellowship someone we love-a relative or a close friend. Here again, it is best to yield to the judgment of the "gifts in men." They are in a position to be more objective than we can be, and they may know more of the facts.

And let all of us be determined to show our appreciation for the "gifts in men" by being obedient and submissive to them

Quotes from The Watchtower, August 15, 1998 Issue, Pages 12-14:

while elders today are imperfect, we still ought to recognize them as "[appointed by] the holy spirit [to be] overseers, to shepherd the congregation of God." They deserve our support and respect.-Acts 20:28.

we must be careful about judging by outward appearances. If we put our confidence in Jehovah, we will not doubt his choices. Although his earthly congregation is made up of imperfect humans, who have no claim to infallibility, he is using them in a mighty way. Jude, Jesus' half brother, warned first-century Christians of individuals "disregarding lordship and speaking abusively of glorious ones." (Jude 8-10) Never should we be like them.

Jehovah apparently chooses for certain responsibilities individuals who have the particular qualities necessary to guide his people in the way he wants them to go at that particular time. We ought to strive to recognize this fact, not second-guessing God's choices, but being content humbly to serve where Jehovah has placed us individually. Thus we show that we have made Jehovah our confidence.-Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 2:3.

Each of us might ask himself: 'Do I sometimes run ahead of Jehovah and the elders appointed in the congregation, trying to speed things up or do things my own way?'

Quotes from The Watchtower, June 1, 1998 Issue, Pages 16-17:

Another problem that Jude addresses is the lack of respect for divinely constituted authority. For instance, in verse 8 he charges the same wicked men with "speaking abusively of glorious ones." Who were these "glorious ones"? They were imperfect men, but they had responsibilities conferred upon them by Jehovah's holy spirit. For example, the congregations had elders, who were charged with shepherding the flock of God. (1 Peter 5:2) There were traveling overseers too, such as the apostle Paul. And the body of elders in Jerusalem acted as a governing body, making decisions affecting the Christian congregation as a whole. (Acts 15:6) Jude was deeply concerned that certain ones in the congregations were speaking abusively of, or blaspheming, such men.

To denounce such disrespectful talk, in verse 11, Jude cites three more examples as reminders: Cain, Balaam, and Korah. Cain ignored Jehovah's loving counsel and willfully pursued his own course of murderous hatred. (Genesis 4:4-8) Balaam received repeated warnings that unquestionably came from a supernatural source—even his own she-ass spoke to him! But Balaam selfishly continued to plot against God's people. (Numbers 22:28, 32-34; Deuteronomy 23:5) Korah had his own position of responsibility, but it was not enough. He fomented rebellion against the meekest man on the earth, Moses.—Numbers 12:3; 16:1-3, 32.

How vividly these examples teach us to listen to counsel and to respect those whom Jehovah uses in positions of responsibility! (Hebrews 13:17) It is all too easy to find fault with the appointed elders, for they are imperfect, as all of us are imperfect. But if we dwell on their faults and undermine respect for them, might we be "speaking abusively of glorious ones"? In verse 10, Jude mentions those who "are speaking abusively of all the things they really do not know." Some will, at times, criticize a decision made by a body of elders or a judicial committee. Yet, they are not privy to all the details that the elders had to consider in order to reach a decision. So why speak abusively about things they really do not know? (Proverbs 18:13) Those who persist in such negative talk could cause divisions in the congregation and perhaps even be likened to dangerous "rocks hidden below water" at gatherings of fellow believers. (Jude 12, 16, 19) Never would we want to pose a spiritual danger to others. Rather, let each of us resolve to appreciate responsible men for their hard work and devotion to the flock of God.—1 Timothy 5:17.

Jude cites an example of one who respected duly constituted authority. He writes: "When Michael the archangel had a difference with the Devil and was disputing about Moses' body, he did not dare to bring a judgment against him in abusive terms, but said: 'May Jehovah rebuke you.'" (Jude 9) This fascinating account, unique to Jude in the inspired Scriptures, teaches two distinct lessons. On the one hand, it teaches us to leave judgment with Jehovah. Satan evidently wanted to misuse the body of the faithful man Moses in order to promote false worship. How wicked! Yet, Michael humbly refrained from bringing a judgment, for only Jehovah had that authority. How much more, then, should we refrain from judging faithful men who are trying to serve Jehovah.

Quotes from The Watchtower, May 15, 1998 Issue, Page 18:

The great crowd are also being tested in connection with theocratic procedures. The worldwide Christian congregation is directed according to divine principles and theocratic standards. This means first of all recognizing Jesus as the Leader, the one appointed as Head of the congregation. (1 Corinthians 11:3) Willing submission to him and to his Father is manifested through our faith in theocratic appointments and decisions related to our unitedly doing Jehovah's will. Furthermore, in each local congregation, there are men appointed to take the lead. They are imperfect men whose faults we may readily see; yet we are urged to respect such overseers and to be submissive.

Quotes from The Watchtower, September 1, 1997 Issue, Page 16:

In what sense, though, do they "look down on lordship" and speak "abusively of glorious ones"? They do so in that they despise divinely constituted authority. Christian elders represent the glorious Jehovah God and his Son and, as a result, have certain glory conferred upon them. True, they make mistakes, as did Peter himself, but the Scriptures urge members of the congregation to be submissive to such glorious ones. (Hebrews 13:17) Their shortcomings are no reason to speak abusively of them. Peter says that angels do not "bring against [false teachers] an accusation in abusive terms," although it would be richly deserved. "But these men," Peter continues, "like unreasoning animals born naturally to be caught and destroyed, will, in the things of which they are ignorant and speak abusively, even suffer destruction."—2 Peter 2:10-13.

Quotes from The Watchtower, August 1, 1997 Issue, Pages 8-13:

When a brother is in a position of responsibility, his faults may become more apparent. How easy it is to pick at 'a straw in our brother's eye while ignoring a rafter in our own!' (Matthew 7:1-5) Dwelling on faults, though, can breed disloyalty. To illustrate, consider the contrast between Korah and David . Korah bore much

responsibility, and he had probably been loyal for many years, but he became ambitious. He came to resent the authority of Moses and Aaron, his first cousins. Though Moses was the meekest of men, Korah evidently began to look at him with critical eyes. He likely saw faults in Moses. Those faults, however, did not justify Korah's disloyalty to Jehovah's organization. He was destroyed from the midst of the congregation.-Numbers 12:3; 16:11 , 31-33.

David , on the other hand, served under King Saul. Once a good king, Saul had actually become wicked. David needed faith, endurance, and even some ingenuity to survive jealous Saul's attacks. Yet, when David had a chance to retaliate, he said that it was 'unthinkable, from Jehovah's standpoint,' that he commit a disloyal act against one whom Jehovah had anointed.-1 Samuel 26:11.

When some who are taking the lead among us seem to err in judgment, speak with harsh words, or seem to show favoritism, will we complain about them, perhaps contributing to a critical spirit in the congregation? Will we stay away from Christian meetings as a form of protest? Surely not! Like David , we will never allow the faults of another to move us to be disloyal to Jehovah and his organization!-Psalm 119:165.

God's earthly organization today is far superior to the Jewish system with its temple. Granted, it is not perfect; that is why adjustments are made at times. But neither is it riddled with corruption, nor is Jehovah God about to replace it. Never should we allow any imperfections we perceive within it to embitter us or move us to adopt a critical, negative spirit.

When a dear friend or even a family member chooses a course that violates Bible principles, we may feel that we are torn between loyalties. Naturally, we feel loyal to family members. But never should we put our allegiance to them ahead of our loyalty to Jehovah! (Compare 1 Samuel 23:16-18.) We would neither help wrongdoers to conceal a serious sin nor side with them against elders who are trying to 'readjust them in a spirit of mildness.' (Galatians 6:1) Doing so would be disloyalty to Jehovah, his organization, and a loved one. After all, to stand between a sinner and the discipline he needs is, in effect, to block an expression of Jehovah's love from reaching him. (Hebrews 12:5-7)

Quotes from The Watchtower, March 15, 1996 Issue, Pages 17-18:

When something is said or done in the congregation that we have difficulty understanding, loyalty will keep us from judging motives and will help us to take the position that perhaps it is a matter of judgment. Is it not far better to dwell on the good qualities of the appointed elders and other fellow believers rather than on their shortcomings? Yes, we want to guard against all such negative thinking, for it is related to being disloyal! Loyalty will also help us to obey Paul's directive "to speak injuriously of no one."-Titus 3:1, 2.

When there has been a disfellowshipping, loyalty requires that we back up the elders, not trying to second-guess whether there were sufficient reasons for the action taken.

Quotes from The Watchtower, August 15, 1994 Issue, Page 29:

You can also do much to promote harmony by cooperating fully with the elders. "Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive," says Hebrews 13:17, "for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will render an account; that they may do this with joy and not with sighing, for this would be damaging to you." True, the elders are imperfect men, and it might be easy to find fault with them. Yet a critical attitude breeds mistrust. It can ruin your joy and adversely affect others in the congregation. The apostle Peter thus gave this advice: "You younger men, be in subjection to the older men. But all of you gird yourselves with lowliness of mind toward one another . . . Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."-1 Peter 5:5, 6.

Quotes from The Watchtower, February 1, 1993 Issue, Page 16:

With the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, God used him and his immediate apostles and disciples to serve as His spokesmen. Later, the anointed faithful followers of Jesus Christ were to serve as a "faithful and discreet slave" in communicating to Jehovah's people how to apply Bible principles in their lives. Godly subjection meant recognizing the instrument Jehovah God was using.- Matthew 24:45-47; Ephesians 4:11-14.

The facts show that today "the faithful and discreet slave" is associated with Jehovah's Witnesses and represented by the Governing Body of these Witnesses. That body, in turn, appoints overseers in various capacities-such as elders and traveling representatives-to direct the work on a local level. Godly subjection requires each dedicated Witness to be in subjection to these overseers in keeping with Hebrews 13:17: "Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will render an account; that they may do this with joy and not with sighing, for this would be damaging to you."

Quotes from The Watchtower, November 15, 1992 Issue, Pages 20-21:

As Jehovah's dedicated Witnesses, all of us must be loyal to him and to his organization. We should never even contemplate turning aside from God's wonderful light, pursuing an apostate course that can lead to

spiritual death now and eventual destruction. (Jeremiah 17:13) But what if it is hard for us to accept or fully appreciate some Scriptural point presented by the faithful slave? Then let us humbly acknowledge where we learned the truth and pray for wisdom to deal with this trial until it comes to an end with some published clarification of matters.-James 1:5-8.

Our hearts should impel us to cooperate with Jehovah's organization because we know that it alone is directed by his spirit and is making known his name and purposes. Of course, those shouldering responsibility in it are imperfect. (Romans 5:12) But "Jehovah's anger got to be hot" against Aaron and Miriam when they found fault with Moses and forgot that he, not they, was entrusted with God-given responsibility. (Numbers 12:7-9) Today, loyal Christians cooperate with "those who are taking the lead" because that is what Jehovah requires. (Hebrews 13:7, 17)

Quotes from The Watchtower, June 1, 1992 Issue, Pages 18-19:

The apostle Paul singled out a group of Christians that especially deserve our love. He said: "Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will render an account; that they may do this with joy and not with sighing, for this would be damaging to you." (Hebrews 13:17) Those taking the lead in the congregation are the elders. True, these men are not perfect. Nevertheless, they are appointed under the supervision of the Governing Body. Sometimes, in order to keep the congregation clean, elders have to disfellowship an unrepentant wrongdoer. (1 Corinthians 5:1-5) This protects the congregation. It may also help the wrongdoer. Often, such discipline has helped to bring a sinner to his senses. What, though, if the one disfellowshipped is a close friend or a relative? Suppose the individual is our father or mother or our son or daughter. Do we nevertheless respect the action taken by the elders? True, it may be difficult. But what an abuse of our freedom it would be to question the decision of the elders and continue to associate spiritually with one who has proved to be a corrupting influence in the congregation! (2 John 10, 11)