

# ***Is Your Pastor Your Authority?***

## **Introduction**

Shepherding the body of Christ is by nature a valuable, morally excellent, beautiful occupation. (1 Timothy 3:1) The true biblical pastor is to be thought very highly of and affectionately cherished by the body of Christ because of their hard work in unselfishly protecting and caring for them. (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)

This study is by no means a critical attempt to degrade the biblical work of the pastor. It is, however, an attempt to clarify the often misunderstood and sometimes misused role of the pastor in today's church. Why this concern over the role of the pastor in the body of Christ? There are many reasons, but one reason I want to focus on in this study relates to the leadership style of the pastor and its effect on the church.

In certain segments of the body of Christ, it's not uncommon to hear a professing Christian state that they can't "go against their authority". A person might say this if someone other than their pastor presents them with an interpretation of biblical truth which differs from their pastor's interpretation. You might also hear it in reference to advice they're given concerning an issue or decision which differs from the advice they've received from their pastor or his opinion. I wonder what such believers think if the differing interpretation, advice or opinion comes to them from another pastor. In that case, who do they consider to be their authority? They should consider both men to be their authority if they're going to be consistent in their belief.

Does God intend for his church to be led the authority of men? Does he want the authority of men to divide his body? Is the pastor of a local church "the authority" for each of the members of the body of Christ that attends his church? Does his authority rest only in his own local church? Does the pastor have the right to operate as if it's "my way or the highway" as some do? Is rudeness and arrogant humiliation toward those who don't see things the pastor's way or do what he says ever justifiable? This study will address these questions through an examination of the biblical text related to the issue of authority in the local church. It begins by looking at Hebrews 13:17.

## **Obey them that have the rule over you (Hebrews 13:17)**

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. (Hebrews 13:17)

At a glance, Hebrews 13:17 may seem to communicate the following things:

- As in the secular world, there exists a chain of command within the church
- There's a division of authority between Pastoral leadership and church body
- Pastoral leadership is at the head or top of the chain of command under God
- The church body is underneath pastoral leadership in this chain of authority
- The church body is to obey or do what Pastoral leadership commands or says
- The church body benefits from doing what Pastoral leadership says

As a fairly new believer I was introduced to the concept of authority in the church by a pastor of an Independent Baptist Church through a Bill Gothard seminar called The Institute of Basic Life Principles. The teachings of Bill Gothard mainly influence Independent/Fundamental Baptist style churches. This seminar taught that submission to authority figures such as local pastors provides an divine umbrella of protection to believers who submit obediently to their authority. Authorities are those that are positioned over us whether it be in the church, business, education, government or family. Those that fail to obey their authority are said to be in rebellion and will incur God's discipline. Here's an excerpt from Bill Gothard's website [www.billgothard.com](http://www.billgothard.com) concerning what he terms the umbrella of headship:

The responsibility of protection is one of the primary functions of headship. This is true of the head of a church, the head of a family, the head of state, and the head of a company. Headship also involves levels of responsibility. In business, there are management levels. In government, there are jurisdictional levels. And in the military, there are ranks of authority; each one operates under a "chain of command" from the head.

I also encountered a similar doctrine within Calvary Chapel churches where the Pastor-teacher is considered to be in the position of Moses as leader and the church body is to obey "their Moses" like Israel was supposed to or face God's discipline. Independent Baptist churches also seem to be under this influence to varying degrees.

The purpose of this message is to examine this teaching biblically to determine if it's true. In doing so, the following questions will be addressed biblically:

- Is the biblical role of the pastor to be the head of the local body of Christ?
- Does Jesus Christ intend for his church to have a chain of command or authority?
- Is the body of Christ, the church, responsible to do what the pastor says?
- What effects does this pastoral leadership style have on the body of Christ?

### **Moral truth is determined only by scripture**

Acts 2:42 tells us that the first believers devoted themselves to the apostles teaching. The apostle Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13 that the teaching of Christ can't be divided. In other words, our teaching must be in agreement with Christ's teaching like the teaching of the apostle's was. In Paul's day it was famous

teachers like Paul, Apollos and Cephas who were attracting herds of followers. When these followers gave more authority to the teaching of their favorite teacher than they did to the teaching of Jesus Christ, it caused arguments and division in the body of Christ.

We live in a day when the majority rules and most everyone wants to be in the flow of the mainstream. This isn't new because human nature hasn't changed. Even professing Christians are caught up in the world's herd mentality.

Today we follow great teachers of the past and present like C.I. Scofield and many others depending upon our denominational or theological bent. These gifted men are given to the church for her edification. Their teaching can be of great help to the believer seeking to grow in their knowledge of God's Word. The Lord, however, never intended for anyone's own private misinterpretation of his truth to usurp authority over the correct interpretation of the truth. For this reason, the church is responsible to evaluate the teaching of gifted men against the clear teaching of his word.

The acceptability of church teaching, attitudes and actions is to be determined only from the sound doctrine of Jesus Christ and his apostles found only in the 66 books of scripture. Truth isn't to be determined by comparing ourselves against any other individual person or group of people inside or outside any period of church history. (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 2 Corinthians 10:12-18)

Allegiance to gifted men rather than to the giver of gifts has divided the body of Christ up into various groups. Each of these groups unintentionally miss the mark of absolute biblical truth to varying degrees. However, as a result of human pride and misplaced allegiance to men rather than God's Word, various groups find it difficult to truly love and accept members of other groups.

In determining the intended meaning of ***“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves”*** from Hebrews 13:17 we must consider the teachings of Jesus on authority in the church. Any conclusions or applications we draw from Hebrews 13:17 must agree with the teaching of Jesus Christ and his apostles. When scripture is interpreted properly, the meaning of one verse or passage of scripture on a topic won't differ from the meaning of any other verse or passage on that same topic.

### **The teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ on authority**

What did Jesus Christ teach the church about authority among his followers? The three passages of scripture below quote the Lord Jesus on the subject of authority and leadership style in the church. These passages are as follows:

But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:25-28)

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. (Mark 10:35-45)

And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. (Luke 22:24-26)

In the passages above Jesus Christ is teaching his followers that they aren't to lead others in the same manner that Gentile leaders do. Gentile leaders would refer to leaders who operate according to the principles of Satan's antichristian worldvalue system. They are worldly, carnal or secular minded. They're thinking isn't spiritual and led by the principles and commands of God's word; although in some cases we do find the secular system integrating some of the leadership principles Jesus taught simply because they work at times for the best interest of the business.

Jesus points out that the authoritative, chain of command leadership style typical of the antichristian world system isn't the organizational model he intends for his church. Jesus clearly states that his followers aren't to function like secular organizations which promote people to positions of authority over others. Jesus' greatest followers will be those who look up to others by serving their needs.

Consider that a servant has no power to be an enforcer. They have no position of power over others. They don't have an elevated position of authority from which he can emotionally or physically threaten and coerce others to conform to his will. He doesn't have the power to fire or reject others. A servant only has the power to love and sacrifice themselves for others. The power of the servant is in the power of the Holy Spirit leading them to provide a Christ-like example for others to freely, willingly without authoritative coercive threats, choose to follow.

Strongs #2715 translated “exercise authority” in Matthew 20:25 means that the political rulers of the world system wield a powerful, authoritative sway over those under their political control. Jesus says in Matthew 20:25 that they exercise dominion over others. The Greek word, Strongs #2634 *katakuriuo* translated **exercise dominion** in Matthew 20:25 is translated as “**being lords over**” others in 1 Peter 5:3. Jesus isn’t only condemning selfish ambition in wanting to climb the ladder of success in order to assert control over others. He’s also indirectly condemning the secular organizational model itself in statements such as, “Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you” and “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so”.

Worldly organizations reward their benefactors who selfishly climb the organizational ladder in order to rise to a privileged position of authority over others.

Jesus is also indirectly teaching that there’s no need for a ladder or chain of authority among groups of his followers. Jesus didn’t choose a chairman among the 12 apostles. He taught them to function on the same level together. He emphasized by his example that the greatest leaders among them would be those that best serves the needs of others.

If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves (Philippians 2:1-3)

If the best place to be in relation to others is looking up to them in order to serve their needs, why would Jesus want his followers to organize themselves in the same way that worldly organizations do? Why would he want his followers to create an organization offering people the chance to rise to positions of authority over others? We think that we can structure ourselves like the world and then act Christlike. We don’t realize that the structure itself affects our character because God never intended for anyone in his church to exercise authority over others like the Gentiles do. He alone is the head of his body, the church. The pastor of a church isn’t it’s corporate head. One of the many steps in the road to spiritual revival in his body is to humble ourselves under his authority and eliminate the world’s hierarchal structure within any group of professing followers of Jesus Christ.

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. (Ephesians 1:22-23)

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. (Colossians 1:18)

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: (1 Peter 5:1-6)

If Jesus so clearly is opposed to his followers patterning themselves after the secular, Gentile authoritative, chain of command style organization; how is it that so many of his followers have established churches and christian organizations patterned after the style of these organizations?

First, we've been programmed by this world to operate that way. Secondly, it comes naturally to sinful human nature to want to be superior to and control others. Third, we're under the mistaken idea that order must be externally enforced rather than internally produced through Spirit controlled submission to God's Word and one another. Finally, I believe the church has patterned its organizational structure after the world's model primarily because of a misunderstanding of the teaching of scriptures such as Hebrews 13:17.

Now that we have looked at Jesus' teaching on organizational behavior and structure, we must remember that the interpretation of verses like Hebrews 13:17 can't conflict with his teaching on authority in his body.

### **Obey them that have the rule over you**

Hebrews 13:17 opens with the words "obey them that have the rule over you". The word translated **obey** in the KJV is the greek word (Strong's #3982) peitho meaning to trust, have confidence in, be persuaded by and strive to please. Precisely the same word is used in the next verse, Hebrews 13:18 and it is translated **trust** in the KJV.

The word translated "have the rule over" you in the KJV is Strong's #2233 hegeomai meaning to go before, to lead by accompanying to a point of destination, or to rule and have authority over. Should we interpret hegeomai to mean "rule and have authority over" if Jesus taught that his followers shouldn't exercise authority over others like secular leaders do? Absolutely not! Consider that if hegeomai is interpreted to mean rule in the sense of having authority over others, it would be inconsistent with Christ's teaching on authority recorded in the gospels. Because of this, hegeomai should be interpreted in this verse to mean lead, not rule. Lead means to set a precedent example of the servant lifestyle of Christ for others to follow. This meaning is consistent with the teachings of 1 Peter 5:1-5 and Luke 22:24-26 which say:

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; **Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.** And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, **all of you be subject one to another**, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. (1 Peter 5:1-5)

And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, **The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.** (Luke 22:24-26)

As a result, the intended meaning of Hebrews 13:17 isn't "submit to the authority of your pastor and do what he says". The meaning is intended to be as follows:

***"confidently trust the sound biblical teaching of your pastor and follow the Christ-like example he sets in humbly serving God and others."***

### **"Over you in the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)**

Another way that the use of the secular model of leadership is rationalized in the church is due to a misinterpretation of 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13. This and similar verses use the phrase "**over you**" in the Lord. The words "over you" seem to indicate to minds pre-conditioned by working in secular organizations that the pastor is in an elevated position of authority in God's chain of command over others in the body of Christ. Is this true? What is meant by "over you" in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 and other verses.

The word translated over in the KJV is Strong's #4291 *proistemi*. It literally means to stand in front of others. It implies leading by example and providing others unselfish protective care.

1 Thessalonians 5:12 goes on to teach that church leaders labor **among** the body.

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

The word **among** is the greek preposition *en* meaning in, by or with. It doesn't mean to positioned above or over others. It's used in 1 Peter 5:1-3 where again it's translated among:

The elders which are **among** you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is **among**

you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

Acts 20:28 uses the word over as follows in the context of church leadership:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, **over** the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Interestingly, the word translated **over** in Acts 20:28 is Strongs #1722 or the preposition en translated **among** in 1 Thessalonians 5:12.

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor **among** you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; (1Thessalonians 5:12)

Because Acts 20:28 translates Strongs #1722 as over, it appears that the overseers are on top of God's authoritative chain of command within the church. The use of **over** rather than **among** in Acts 20:28 plays into the hands of those who would misuse the scripture to teach that the church should operate in an authoritative, chain of command manner like worldly organizations do. But remember if we do this, we are contradicting what Jesus taught us about group leadership and authority.

Note that among is used in 1 Thessalonians 2:7 in illustrating the way that the apostle Paul led by example in his ministry.

But we were gentle **among** you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:

This gentle cherishing of others is the same leadership style that God intends for fathers who rule (Strongs #4291) or care for their children according to Ephesians 6:4. This words **nurture** and "**bring them up**" mean that fathers are responsible to nourish, cherish and train children to maturity.

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

The proven ability to rule well (Strongs #4291) meaning to care for his own children well is a biblical prerequisite to becoming a pastor according to 1 Timothy 3:45.

One that **ruleth** well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

### **Admonishing and speaking the truth in love**

In addition, 1 Thessalonians 5:12 tells us that the leadership work that is done by the pastors **among** the body of Christ consists of admonishing. To admonish is to mildly or gently warn and correct others.

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

Admonishing is speaking the truth in love as Ephesians 4:15 teaches is the responsibility of gifted men like pastors and teachers in the body of Christ.

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

Speaking the truth in love means to teach God's word to others with an affectionate, brotherly love for them. It doesn't mean to authoritatively command others as a CEO leads a business or a political leader controls his nation. The church isn't a financial bottom-line oriented organization to be led by the coercive, authoritative external political power of a pastor functioning in the manner of a corporate executive officer. Being a living body rather than an organization, the church is to be served by those whose Christ-like character and spiritual gifts equip and qualify them to serve as bishops, elders and pastors. These individuals exist primarily to serve the Lord Jesus Christ by exemplifying the life of Christ and speaking all of the truth in love to the body of Christ. The shepherding work of these members involves first studying and then obeying and teaching sound doctrine from the word of God. It involves exposing false doctrine and identifying and rebuking false teachers in order to protect the body of Christ. Their lives, like the Apostle Paul's, are to be modeled after the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the word of God. A survey of the New Testament will reveal that a significant amount of time was spent by both Jesus and the apostles exposing false doctrine and identifying and rebuking false teachers. This was also the experience of the prophets of the Old Testament. Jesus' preaching ministry was obviously characterized by the blunt, fiery rebuking style of the Old Testament prophets. Matthew 16:24 informs us that the public opinion of him according to his disciples was that he was either a resurrected John the Baptist, Elijah and Jeremiah. (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Acts 20:25-31)

### **Consequences of the misunderstanding of pastoral authority in the body**

When a pastor believes he's the authority in his church he breeds an unhealthy dependence upon himself within the minds of church members. The local body of Christ under his authoritative power is subtly conditioned over time to let him do their thinking for them. They learn to stop asking questions. They lose the Berean-like motivation to study the scriptures and share gems of truth with others. They feel endangered if they disagree with him. As they observe the pastor's reactions to those that question his misinterpretation of scripture or unbiblical methods, they learn that it's safer to simply go along with him and play his game according to his rules to remain in his favor. As a result, they often act like they agree with him because they've learned that he'll either publicly humiliate them or reject them if they question or disagree with him. His overemphasized, misinterpreted teaching on the

importance of submission to pastoral authority in the church echoes in the minds of his subjects. They remain fearfully paralyzed of questioning his authority or deeply resentful of his abuse of his position. Their church experience begins to become more of an appeasing of the pastor rather than a joyful, refreshing act of worship filled with fresh discovery of God and his truth. The fire of the Holy Spirit is quenched in their lives as they fall victim to the fear of man-their "authority".

The Lord never intended for his body to become dependent upon the authority of a pastor. What the Lord intends is biblical unity based upon mutual submission to one another under the authority of his truth among all members of the body of Christ, including the pastor. The work of his body is accomplished through the diversity of functional gifts that the Holy Spirit has distributed among its members. As these gifts function in love, the body begins to grow and mature. United effort isn't the result of a pastor's authoritative rule over the body. The work of the ministry isn't intended to be driven top down by a church pastor directing the church like a CEO according to the corporate vision and goals developed in secretive board meetings. The work of the ministry is to be the result of the body's humble, mutual submission to one another and the working of spiritual gifts through each member as they submit to one another in love. This is the teaching of Ephesians 4:1-16.

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Paul told the Roman church as recorded in Romans 15:12 that he felt that the Roman church members were able to admonish one another. He made it clear that it wasn't just the leaders of a church that could admonish the body of Christ.

Jesus taught the church that members should handle their own disputes and discipline issues. (Matthew 18:15-20)

Paul taught that the church was responsible to publicly correct sinning leaders. (1 Timothy 5:19-21)

1 Peter 5: 5-6 tells the entire church, leadership included, to humble themselves under God's authority and to be subject to one another.

Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Pastors, elders and bishops exist among the body as older members of the body of Christ qualified by their proven, mature christlike character and spiritual gifts to feed the body and be examples of Christ. ( 1 Timothy 3:1-7)

The scriptures are clear that being over someone in the Lord has to do with their functional duty to lead by following Christ's example as a caring shepherd and servant. Such a person is motivated by love for the body, not a desire to profit financially off it's members.

1 Peter 5:1-6 teaches also that Christ is the chief shepherd or *archipoimen*. He is the head of the church. The one chief. He alone is Lord over God's heritage. His truth is it's authority.

**Elder** is the word *presuteros* literally meaning older or senior. **Feed** means to nourish and furnish pasture for food for the flock the shepherd is caring for. This work has nothing to being over the flock in a top position in God's chain of command giving pastors the ultimate, authoritative final say in all activities and decisions affecting the members of the body of Christ.

Scriptures like 2 Thessalonians 3:4,6 in the KJV New Testament quote Paul using the words "we command you". This doesn't imply "we order you or else" as a corporate boss would. It simply means that we declare, announce and transmit God's authoritative word to you.

The word of God is the church's authority. The role of the pastor is to accurately determine the one true intended meaning of a biblical passage and show how the moral truth it contains should be specifically applied in relations with God, the church, family, employers, customers, neighbors, businesses, schools and government.

It's a terrible abuse of a person's emotional freedom in Christ to lead a believer to

feel that they must think and act in agreement with their pastor in everything or they risk rejection by him and or the discipline of the Lord. This attitude fosters an unhealthy emotional dependency upon a pastor causing emotional immaturity in others. It stifles the use of spiritual gifts and the unique individuality needed in the body for it to mature. It offers leaders unfair upper handed control through instilling false guilt and unhealthy fear in others.

If you've been operating in this mindset, I pray that the eyes of your heart will be opened through the spirit of wisdom and revelation to allow the Lord Jesus Christ to be the head of His church and you His servant among, not in controlling command of, his body.

It may seem easier for the pastor to lead a church through the authority of position rather than the power of example. Although today's church appears to benefit financially from its unbiblical structure as 501c3 corporation rather than a living organism, it will remain lukewarm until it is restructured according to biblical truth. This yoking together of the body of Christ with the unbelieving world or secular state is in direct conflict with the teachings of 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, Romans 12:1-2 and Colossians 2:8 and the corresponding biblical principles of holiness and separation from the antichristian world system.

If you're the victim of a pastor who hasn't correctly understand his role, pray and share your feelings and the content of this study with him. There is a lot of deprogramming and retraining required within the leadership of the current body of Christ. You can help the situation by not continuing to allow him to misrepresent the character of Jesus Christ in this manner. Supporting unbiblical leadership methods isn't helping the body of Christ mature as the Lord Jesus Christ desires. It's a hindrance to individual spiritual growth and overall testimony of the church in the world.