The Letter To The Hebrews
Obeying Leaders Who Watch Over Your Souls
Hebrews 13:17

Who are the leaders in the New Testament church?

There are two offices of leadership in the New Testament church —
Elders (also called pastors or overseers) — a plurality of male leaders who shepherd the flock.
Deacons — men and women who help the Elders shepherd the flock.

What does Jesus Christ call these leaders to do?

He calls them to "keep watch over your souls."
This is like what a shepherd does with sheep: loving, caring, feeding, bringing back, protecting.
So Jesus Christ wants every believer to have a leader who is watching over his or her soul.

What motivates leaders to keep watch over your souls?

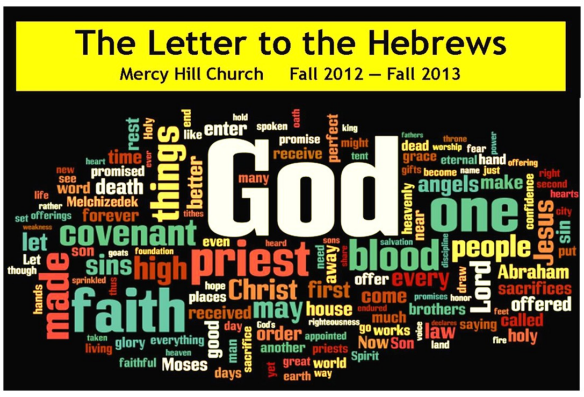
There are lots of motivations — like passion for Christ's glory, and love for the flock.
But here the motivation is — knowing that we will give an account of how we have watched over your soul.
When Christ returns, every leader will give an account to Jesus for how we have cared for the flock allotted to us.

How should we respond to these leaders?

We should obey and submit to them.
This DOES mean giving weight to the counsel of your leaders, and after prayer and consideration obeying it.
This does NOT mean obeying your leaders over Christ and his Word.
This does NOT mean keeping your opinions or disagreements to yourself.

Why is it so important to obey and submit to your leaders?

Because not to do so will be to your spiritual disadvantage.



HOME GROUP DISCUSSION OF SUNDAY'S TEACHING

(Sometimes in our home groups we talk about Sunday's teaching, so we can work together on responding to God's Word — asking questions, sharing insights, talking together.)

Do you agree that Jesus wants every believer to have someone watching over his or her soul? Why or why not?

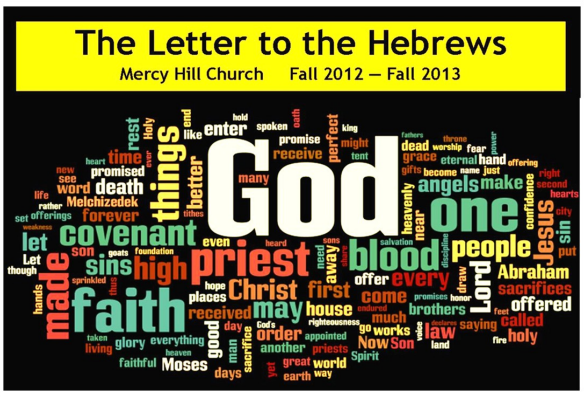
How many souls do you think a leader effectively watch over?

How effective are our home groups in watching over souls? What could we do to improve?

What gets in the way of obeying and submitting to our leaders? How does this verse address that?

What does the author say in v.17 that helps leaders not become too authoritarian? Or abusive?

What does the author say in v.17 that helps followers obey and submit?

What is your biggest take-away from this passage?

Share prayer requests that come up in the discussion, jot them down below, and pray for each other.