

Followers

[Psalm 100] Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

YES! The Lord is GOOD! I'm glad He's my shepherd – none could be better. [

But, before you kick back thinking I'm glad I'm a sheep, nothing to do but follow the shepherd, stand around in the sun, munch good grass and say baaa! every once in awhile, I've got a message for you:

Sheep have responsibilities too!

This lesson is about our responsibility as FOLLOWERS.
Did you think that just the leaders have responsibilities?

No, if we don't do our job as FOLLOWERS, bad things can happen.

1 Kings 21 - Account of Jezebel and Naboth. Jezebel was the queen, Naboth a man with a vineyard she wanted. He wouldn't sell.

Ugly story of greed, deceit and death.

Much like today.

[1 Kings 21:8-11] So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed *them* with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that *were* in his city, dwelling with Naboth. And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people: And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And *then* carry him out, and stone him, that he may die. And the men of his city, *even* the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, *and* as it *was* written in the letters which she had sent unto them.

Jezebel wrote Elders and Nobles (Hold your place here, we're coming back to it)

Not so noble, not so wise

You'd think they say, Oh No! We can't do that. Why did they agree?

[Jude 16] These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling *words*, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

Personal gain! They wanted the Queen to like them - to be set on high!

Wicked leaders caused righteous man to suffer and perish – they'll pay!

[Matt 18:6] But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Yes there are wicked leaders and they'll be dealt with, but **what of the little one?**

That word "offend" – gr. skandilidzo – means to trap or snare.

The little one is trapped – he's stumbled – he's dead

Do **we** have responsibility to watch out for the trap? - YES!
The leaders don't do evil just by themselves, Continue...

[1 Kings 21:13] And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died.

"in the presence of the people" **They** carried Naboth out – **they** stoned him!

Weren't the sons of Belial known to them as contemptible liars?
Couldn't they have just said NO?

They could have, but for whatever reason – they didn't and a good man died
And later they, and the elders and nobles would be judged as well.

Yes, FOLLOWERS have responsibility – for THEMSELVES and for OTHERS.

WHAT CAN WE DO? How do we prevent being led astray?

We use what God has given us.

[2 Peter 1:3] According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

God has given us these things so we'll LEARN and grow in Godliness.
This is our responsibility – to learn of things that pertain to life and Godliness.
Even as followers we need to be able to recognize what is Good and what is Bad. This is something we MUST do, our ultimate salvation depends on it:

[Philippians 2:12-15] Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

Work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. God has given the way of salvation, through Christ, but it's our responsibility to obey – to work it out.

This is serious! It's our responsibility, **our duty** to study and learn.
To UNDERSTAND and to OBEY and to DO the will of God – His good pleasure!
But to be blameless and without rebuke also. To be the sons of God – worthy of Him.

Not just when times are easy – when there aren't any problems,
No, (V15) we must do this in the midst of perverse and crooked world, to shine as lights!

Yes we'll have temptations like that of Jezebel and the wicked leaders.
Men will try to call us away for their own purposes and we must know enough and be strong enough **NOT** to follow them.

BUT! There's a complication - our duty is also to OBEY.

[Heb 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.

“Have the rule” – In accordance with God's law!
Soldiers face this. They must obey orders.
Yet they must NOT obey unlawful orders.
We need to submit ourselves – but not blindly.
We have to know what is lawful and what isn't.
We can't “take it easy”. Not for a moment! We need to be working at this!

LORD WANTS THERE TO BE LEADERS -- IT'S HIS PLAN

[Eph 4:11 ...] And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹²For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: ¹³Till 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:

God has appointed them – for His reasons to fulfill His goals.
v12 – what they do – (perfecting of saints)
v13 – the goal – (ALL come in unity of the faith ...)
God has given these men the ability to carry out these goals.

But He didn't stop there, there's a warning:

[Eph 4:14-15] ¹⁴That 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; ¹⁵But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

We can't stay as children, led astray by men – we have to grow up and assume our responsibility for our souls – and those around us.

We grow – INTO HIM – CHRIST! This is our job as FOLLOWERS – it's what we have to do. We have to grow in knowledge and NOT be like children.
If we don't, then we remain children, being led astray as those in Jezebel and Naboth's time – with similar results

We have the Ephesians as an example, they grew:

[Rev 2:1-3] Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; ²I

know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: ³And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

Wow! Could we do that? How tough would it be?

We also may be tried and tested as the Ephesians.

Will we be able to pass the test?

How easy is it to try or test those which say they are apostles – but are not?

We better be able to!

And then NOT rest on our laurels either, as he continued telling the Ephesians:

[Rev 2:4-7] Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. ⁶But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

We can't kick back, we can't relax! As **followers** we must be constantly vigilant.

[1 Peter 5:8] Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

WE START AS BABIES

We all know this from the world.

We're born and we grow. Some grow well, some don't. Some die.

God knows this – He made it that way.

That's why he sets some to be leaders in HIS church.

To the elders at Ephesus he wrote:

[Acts 20:28] 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.

Elders are **given** this responsibility from God, they don't assume it themselves.

It's HIS church and HIS people, elders are to watch over it – to over see it.

We need to **follow** them if we want to survive. We need to stick together so they **can** watch over us and protect us. That's **our** responsibility, otherwise:

[Acts 20:29-30] For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

There will be wolves seeking to destroy us; wolves from without and also from **within** the flock. God has appointed as protectors of the flock, elders.

But, that's not the end of the story. We also have a part to play. **We** need to be watchful ourselves because on judgment day **We** will be the ones standing before God – WE will be the ones that have to give an account of what we've done – and NOT done. If the wolves get us and take us away from the flock – SHAME ON US! if we weren't watching and following the shepherds God appointed.

We **have** to develop discrimination, to tell good from bad.
ALL of us do! Not just the elders.
We **all** are expected to grow and not remain babies.
We know this from the world – it's the same spiritually:

[Hebrews 5:13,14] For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Sheep learn this, it's expected of them:

[John 10:4,5] And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. ⁵And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers

Sheep have to KNOW the voice of their shepherd and recognize when it's NOT their shepherd that's calling them.

Sheep have to WATCH their shepherds and DECIDE to follow them. And TO follow them and do as they direct. If not - they'll die!

[SLIDE] Leaders are to be EXAMPLES! The **follower's** duty is to **WATCH** them and follow their example:

[1 Peter 5:1-4] 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: ²Feed 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; ³Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. ⁴And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Elders don't Lord it over the flock – commanding them to do this and that. They lead by their example and the followers have to be careful to watch. An Elder's reward is NOT on this earth. It's from God, not from men and people in the flock. Beware of the shepherd who is dealing with the wolves, demanding payment from the flock or lording it over the flock, regarding them as HIS. The sheep need to be WATCHFUL for this!

Followers, the sheep, **have** to watch, because it's the by the **good** behavior of the elders and leaders that the sheep know their shepherds:

[1 Cor 11:1] Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

Are the elders Christlike? Yes – follow them then.
What if we don't know Christ? How will we tell?

It's obvious then WE, the followers, must know Christ – our chief shepherd.
If we don't , if we can't see Christ, if we're blind, what?

[Matt 15:14] Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

If we don't know Christ, we're going to have a tough time if our leaders are blind aren't we.

How do we tell what's right and wrong? GO TO THE BOOK!

[Hosea 4:6] My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

If we DON'T go to the book, If we **reject** knowledge, God will reject us!
But if we DO go to the book, we are blessed in God's sight. Paul preached in the synagogue of the Jews in Berea:

[Acts 17:11] These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

This is what the Ephesians did and were commended for.
Yes, as Christians we have a GREAT responsibility – to live up to that name.
To follow Jesus, to be his disciples, to be as He is:

[Luke 6:40] The disciple is not above his master, but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.

INVITE

I've been talking of our responsibility as followers.

But you have to decide to be a follower in the first place.

Before thinking how to be a sheep, you must realize you **are** a sheep in the first place

[Psalm 100:3 Know ye that the Lord HE is God, it is He that ... we are sheep of]

Are you a sheep? You better be

[Matt 25:31-34] When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: ³²And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: ³³And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Sheep enter in, Goats cast out

Have you gone astray?