

## Only Servants and No Masters

Hebrews 13:7

*“Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you;  
and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.”*

It is always important for believers to have role models. Let me speak a word to our young people at Emmanuel. There may be a few odd things about “older Christians” (i.e. elders), but the truth is, any church that is filled with a combination of older Christians and younger Christians is a healthy church. With youth you have excitement and vitality; with seniors you have stability and wisdom. We need both. In this text the author of Hebrews is encouraging Christians to *remember* those who led them in the faith.

1. The objects of remembrance are in the past tense.
2. The verse speaks of leadership, not authority.

The question for us this morning—young and old—is a simple one: **How does a Christian lead others?** There is not a single verse of scripture that allows any believer in Christ, or anyone holding a Christian position, to “rule over” others. Let me say that again—to be clear: There is no “ruling over” in Christianity. Some churches and Christian ministries build their organizations on the concept of spiritual authority. They base their philosophy of leadership on the world’s way and a wrong understanding of the Bible.

*“Remember them which have the **rule over** you”* (Hebrews 13:7 KJV).

*“Obey them which have the **rule over** you, and submit yourselves”* (Hebrews 13:17 KJV).

*“Salute all them that have the **rule over** you, and all the saints”* (Hebrews 13:24 KJV).

### I. The word “over” is not in the original Greek text of any of the three Hebrews 13 verses.

It was added by the King James translators of the Greek in 1611 for unknown reasons. Maybe it was an attempt to validate the existing hierarchy of Priests, deacons, and Bishops in the Anglican church.

### II. The word “rule” means “to lead” or “to guide” and never means “authority over.”

*Hegeomai* means to go before, lead, as a guide or pioneer. Jesus said to His disciples, *“The one who is greatest among you ... the leader (hegeomai) ... must be the servant of all”* (Luke 22:26). The best biblical descriptor of a Christian leader is *“to regard others more important than yourself”* (Phil. 2:3). There is a biblical word that means ‘to rule over.’ It is the word *arche*. It is used six times in Hebrews. In every instance it is used as a description of Jesus Christ who is the arche ruler over all the nations.

### III. The word “obey” means “to agree through gentle persuasion.”

*“Obey them which lead you* (it is incorrect to say ‘rule over you’)—Heb. 13:7. Let them persuade you. In Oklahoma we take “obey” to mean “get it done because I said so.” But the writer of Hebrews is encouraging Christians to remember their heroes in the faith and let their lives persuade them. If you hear it said, “Do what I tell you because I am your spiritual authority” put on Nikes and run. *“We don’t have dominion (arche) over your faith, but we are servants for your joy”* (2 Cor. 1:24).

So this verse is a call to remember those Christians who lived their lives well and be persuaded by them.

*“Remember those who had (past tense) been your guides, who led the way with the Word: whose faith you imitate, considering the strong way they finished their life.”* (Hebrews 13:7)