

Are You Worshiping Jehovah Acceptably? - Expanded

I wrote that article to lead the reader down a path. If i had stopped at every stepping stone to explain things in detail, it would have been very distracting.

Here i will add all of those details i left out. The entire original article is here, in black text, and the additions are in blue text.

When we read about Aaron and the golden calf he made, we wonder what could have made those Israelites reject Jehovah and worship the image of an animal instead. (Ex 32:1-6) Jehovah had just led them up out of the land of Egypt, out of slavery. Had they forgotten so quickly? No, they didn't forget. We know this because the reason that they had Aaron make the golden calf was so they could have "*a festival to Jehovah*" using the calf. (Ex 32:5) Yes, they wanted to offer sacrifices of thanks to Jehovah and rejoice in His releasing them from slavery. (Ex 32:5, 6)

They selected the image of a young bull because that was the most powerful beast they knew of. They probably thought the comparison would please Jehovah, the most powerful God.

Some disagree and say that the Israelites were worshipping the golden calf, and not Jehovah. They point to Exodus 32:4 as their proof:

(Exodus 32:4) Then he took the gold from them, and he formed it with an engraving tool and made it into a statue of a calf. They began to say: "This is your God, O Israel, who led you up out of the land of Egypt."

The Israelites were not saying that the physical gold statue that Aaron just made was itself the god who freed them from slavery. They were copying what the pagan nations around them did in their worship of false gods by making an image to represent their god. If someone came and destroyed that image did the pagans think that their god was now dead? No, of course not. Did they think that since there were multiple copies of the image that their god was not one god, but many god's? No, because it was just an image of their god that they used in their worship.

The Israelites had never used an image in their worship of Jehovah before so there wasn't a designated image. Aaron selected the image of a young bull to represent Jehovah, and the people accepted that choice with those words at Exodus 32:4.

So why did this make Jehovah angry? (Ex 32:10) Because they were worshipping Him in a way that was unacceptable to Him. (Ex 20:4) When Moses lingered up on the mountain the Israelites asked Aaron to make for them something tangible, something they could see in their worship of Jehovah. (Ex 32:1) In their minds they were still worshipping Jehovah.

No doubt the Israelites didn't think they were doing anything wrong. They even had the approval of

Aaron, their spiritual man in charge while Moses was away. They had just heard the word of God, that He did not approve of the use of images in worship. (Ex 20:4, 5) Ignoring God's instructions they acted according to their own reasoning, and did what they thought was right.

Let's not make the same mistake that they did. Instead of relying on what we think is right, let's look at the word of God ourselves and see if our worship is in compliance with scripture and therefore acceptable by God. Here are some scriptures that you should consider:

(1 Timothy 2:5) For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus,

(Matthew 23:10) Neither be called leaders, for your Leader is **one**, the Christ.

(John 14:6) Jesus said to him: "I **am** the way and the truth and the life. **No one comes to the Father except through me.**"

(Matthew 23:8) But you, do not you be called Rabbi, for one is your Teacher, and all of you are brothers.

(2 Corinthians 1:24) Not that we are the masters over your faith, but we are fellow workers for your joy, for it is by your faith that you are standing.

(Matthew 7:15) "Be on the watch for the false prophets who come to you in sheep's covering, but inside they are ravenous wolves.

(Luke 21:8) He said: "Look out that you are not misled, for many will come on the basis of my name, saying, 'I am he,' and, 'The due time is near.' Do not go after them.

(Matthew 24:23-25) "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look! Here is the Christ,' or, 'There!' do not believe it.²⁴ For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will perform great signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible, even the chosen ones.²⁵ Look! I have forewarned you.

(Mark 13:21-23) "Then, too, if anyone says to you, 'See! Here is the Christ,' or, 'See! There he is,' do not believe it.²² For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will perform signs and wonders to lead astray, if possible, the chosen ones.²³ You, then, watch out. I have told you all things beforehand.

(Luke 17:23) And people will say to you, 'See there!' or, 'See here!' **Do not** go out or chase after them.

(2 Peter 2:1-3) However, there also came to be false prophets among the people, as there will also be false teachers among you. These will quietly bring in destructive sects, and they will even

disown the owner who bought them, bringing speedy destruction upon themselves. ² Furthermore, many will follow their brazen conduct, and **because of them the way of the truth will be spoken of abusively.** ³ Also, they will greedily exploit you with counterfeit words. But their judgment, decided long ago, is not moving slowly, and their destruction is not sleeping.

(Deuteronomy 18:20-22) “If any prophet presumptuously speaks a word in my name that I did not command him to speak or speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet must die. ²¹ However, you may say in your heart: “How will we know that Jehovah has not spoken the word?” ²² When the prophet speaks in the name of Jehovah and the word is not fulfilled or does not come true, then Jehovah did not speak that word. The prophet spoke it presumptuously. You should not fear him.’

(Isaiah 2:22) For your own sakes, quit trusting in mere man, Who is only the breath in his nostrils. Why should he be taken into account?

(Psalm 146:3, 4) Do not put your trust in princes Nor in a son of man, who cannot bring salvation. ⁴ His spirit goes out, he returns to the ground; On that very day his thoughts perish.

(Jeremiah 17:5a) This is what Jehovah says: “Cursed is the man who puts his trust in mere humans,

(Colossians 3:23) Whatever you are doing, work at it whole-souled as for Jehovah, and not for men,

(2 Timothy 3:16, 17) All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be fully competent, **completely equipped** for every good work.

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Do you, as a Jehovah's Witness, say: *"Those scriptures are all fine and good, but Jehovah's witnesses are nothing like those Israelites, so what do those verses have to do with me? "*

Is that what you think? Well let's compare. (Ex 32:1-6)

The Israelites Loved Jehovah their God.
Jehovah's Witnesses Love Jehovah their God.

The Israelites gave up their precious gold earrings for Jehovah their God.
Jehovah's Witnesses give up their time and finances for Jehovah their God.

The Israelites gathered for a Festival to honor Jehovah their God.
Jehovah's Witnesses gather together in conventions for Jehovah their God.

The Israelites sang songs of praise to Jehovah their God.
Jehovah's Witnesses sing songs of praise to Jehovah their God.

The Israelites had a forbidden object in the center of their worship of Jehovah their God.
Jehovah's Witnesses have a forbidden object in the center of their worship of Jehovah their God.

What? Do you say that last one is not true? But is it? Let's add one more comparison:

The Israelites thought they were doing nothing wrong in their worship of Jehovah their God.
Jehovah's Witnesses think they are doing nothing wrong in their worship of Jehovah their God.

The Israelites had just been told that the use of idols for worship was forbidden, so they had to know that what they were doing was wrong, right?

Look at all of those quoted scriptures above. Jehovah's Witnesses have been reading those verses the entire time they have been Jehovah's Witnesses. They are very familiar with them. But just as the Israelites did not think that the directive about images applied to them, Jehovah's Witnesses do not think that those scriptures about false Christs and false prophets apply to them.

Are they correct? Are the Governing Body (GB) of Jehovah's Witnesses (JW) different from those false prophets described in those verses? Are the GB not God's representatives here on earth? They claim to be, and they seem to truly believe that they are. But consider these words of Jesus Christ:

(Matthew 7:22, 23) Many will say to me in that day: 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and expel demons in your name, and perform many powerful works in your name?' ²³ And then I will declare to them: '**I never knew you!** Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!'

Those men will call out to Christ with complete sincerity in their hearts. And they will point out the many fine and powerful works that they have performed in his name.

Christ does not deny their works. Nor does he deny their claim to come in his name. They truly have performed many powerful works. Just look at jw.org for the many examples they provide. And they have performed those works while claiming to represent him. But Jesus still tells them "*I never knew you.*"

Why does he say "*never*" to those "*in that day*"? Because from their very beginning they were "*false Christs and false prophets.*" (Mt 24:24)

How are they "*false Christs*"? They claim to be filling the position of Christ, just as the scribes and the Pharisees claimed the position of Moses. (Mt 23:2). And what is the position of Christ? "*Leader*" and "*Mediator between God and men.*" (Mt 23:10; 1Ti 2:5) Yes, they have assumed for themselves the

position of mediator and religious leader. But Christ tells us that he is our one and only mediator and leader. (Mt 23:10; Jn 14:6)

Do you say that you pray through Jesus, not the GB, so they are not your mediator? If that is your answer then you may be surprised to learn that the GB say that Christ Jesus is mediator only for those who are anointed. They don't mention it much, but the Questions From Readers in the August 15th 1989 Watchtower makes their stand on the subject clear. And they have not changed their stance since then. But the words in Timothy clearly contradict that:

(1 Timothy 2:5, 6) For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself a corresponding ransom for all—this is what is to be witnessed to in its own due time.

There it clearly says that Christ Jesus is mediator between God and "*men*" (Greek - anthrópos = mankind), not a certain group of men, but all of mankind.

The definition of a mediator is one who works with two parties to get them to work together amenably for a desired outcome. That is what the GB claim to do. They set the rules for what you should do and how you should act in order to please God. And they say that God speaks through them. That is acting as mediator.

But God made Christ our one and only mediator. It is not a shared position, which makes the GB false mediators, that is to say, false Christs.

How are they "*false prophets*"? For 150 years they have been saying "*the due time is near*", at times even providing dates (1874, 1878, 1914, 1918, 1925, 1975) for their predictions (Lu 21:8)

If you think that they got 1914 right, you are mistaken. They predicted that Armageddon would come in 1914. After 1914 came and went they relabeled their prophecy of 1914 as the start of the last days.

[w1892.01 p. 1355] "The date of the close of that "battle" is definitely marked in Scripture as October, 1914. It is already in progress, its beginning dating from October, 1914."

They taught that Jesus' parousia started in 1874, that Jesus started ruling in heaven in 1878, and that the Gentile Times would end in 1914 resulting in the end of Armageddon, the fall of false religion, the end of all earthly governments, the heavenly and earthly resurrections, and paradise on earth.

Of course when their prophecies prove to be false they just change them and say that the light got brighter. But Deuteronomy 18:20-22 (quoted above) does not say that they get to use that excuse.

If their claims at Matthew 7:22 are true, why does Jesus reject them? Because just as Jehovah rejected the worship of the Israelites for disobeying Him, those men are rejected because they are

disobeying Christ.

If they truly are performing powerful works in his name, and leading many people to Christ, how is it that they are disobeying Christ? Because they are taking up a position "*between*" Christ and his sheep which he strictly forbade them from occupying. That's why he calls them "*workers of lawlessness!*" (Greek - anomian = iniquity, disobedience, sin)

I have no doubt that the Israelites reasoned that the ban on carved images applied only to worshipping false gods, therefore it did not apply to them since they were worshipping the true God.

They were wrong.

Christians today who follow a human religious leader think that Christ's ban on doing so does not apply to them because their religious leader comes in the name of Christ, and leads them to Christ.

They are also wrong.

True, there are shepherds who "*take the lead*" (He 13:7), but they are strictly commanded to lead "*by example*" (Php 3:17; Titus 2:7; 1Pe 5:3), not by claiming authority.

Jesus gives clear directions to those who wish to hold positions of authority:

(Matthew 20:25-28) But Jesus called them to him and said: "You know that the rulers of the nations lord it over them and the great men wield authority over them. ²⁶ **This must not be the way among you;** but whoever wants to become great among you must be your minister, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave. ²⁸ Just as the Son of man came, not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give his life as a ransom in exchange for many."

What does "*lord it over*" mean? The Greek word Christ used (katakryrieuousin) merely means to exercise authority over others, to govern others. It does not refer to ruling harshly or oppressing others. The same goes for the Greek word (katexousiazousin), translated there as "*wield authority over*." No negativity is associated with those Greek words. (Mr 10:42-45) In fact, at Luke 22:25 Christ referred to those rulers as "*Benefactors*." The Greek word for benefactor is euergetés and means a *doer of good, a well-doer*. Other Bible translations render it *gracious lords, friends of the people, and everyone's friends*, showing the positive view of their benevolent rulership.

If what Jesus meant was that the apostles should not rule harshly, as current GB teaching on the matter claims, then he would have told them to do the opposite of that, which would be to rule gently and lovingly, to be "*Benefactors*". But he did not.

[w06 4/1 p. 19] Worldly despots "lord it over" others by imposing their will on them and insisting that they do things in a certain way, threatening sanctions if they disobey.

Although the GB write in the publications that elders should "*act as servants to their companions* (the flock), *not masters over them*" [w13 11/15 p. 28], what would the elders do if a JW were to disregard the directions of the GB? Complying with the directives from their masters those elders would treat that JW just like the "*worldly despots*" that 2006 Watchtower describes: They would threaten sanctions if they continued to disobey, that is to say, they would threaten them with judicial action.

We know how Jesus treats those who judge others for things that they themselves are doing:

(Matthew 12:37b) by your words you will be condemned.

(Luke 19:22a) He said to him, 'By your own words I judge you, wicked slave.

Yes, with their own words the GB condemn others for the very actions that they themselves carry out. Thus, they condemn themselves.

So if Jesus was not talking about harsh rulership, what was "*the way*" that he was referring to? He was referring to the mere act of exercising authority. And what is the opposite of that? **To not rule at all**. Yes, he said that "*whoever wants to be first (great) among you*" (Mt 20:21; Lu 22:30), must instead be your minister and slave. Instead of presenting themselves as authority figures, he directed them to take the opposite position of a slave and perform the lowly act of ministering to others.

I have reworded part of Matthew 20:25, 26 using Jesus' example of a benefactor. I will let you compare it to how the GB describe themselves:

You know that the rulers of the nations **gently direct** them and the great men **lovingly govern** them. ²⁶ **This must not be the way among you;**

Peter reiterates Christ's view on the matter:

(1 Peter 5:2, 3) Shepherd the flock of God under your care, serving as overseers, not under compulsion, but willingly before God; not for love of dishonest gain, but eagerly; ³ **not lording it over** those who are God's inheritance, but becoming **examples** to the flock.

Peter points out that the flock are "*God's inheritance*". The flock do not belong to the shepherds and therefore they do not possess the authority of ownership for them to be able to exercise it over the flock, just as they did not exercise authority over another man's slave. (Ro 14:4)

That helps us to understand why Jesus will say to them "*Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!*" at Matthew 7:23. If a parent saw that a stranger had come into their front yard and was ordering their children around, that parent would also be upset and tell that stranger to go away. That stranger was trespassing and did not have the authority to be there or to give orders to their children.

Taking the lead does not mean giving directions (orders). It means to walk out in front and lead by example. As Peter points out, those shepherding the flock are to lead by "*becoming examples to the flock.*" (1Pe 5:2, 3; He 13:7; Php 3:17)

That is why Christ refers to those taking the lead as "shepherds". They are to "*shepherd the flock of God*" (1Pe 5:2) as a shepherd of sheep does. A true shepherd does not walk behind the flock and drive it forward. He walks in front of the congregation by "*becoming examples to the flock*", and the sheep follow that example of their own accord, not under compulsion. (2Co 9:7; Phm 14)

One way that a JW can see the example set by the GB is to watch all of those videos of the GB members going house-to-house in their local communities each week, knocking on the doors and sharing the message from the Bible. What? Do you say that you can't find those videos at jw.org. Well, yes, i'm being sarcastic, because there are no such videos. As far as the GB are concerned, their requirements for you to do the preaching work are "rules for thee, not for me."

Do you say that their preaching work consists of providing many publications and videos for the world to read and watch? Well, if you were to follow their "*example*" (as the Bible tells us to do of those taking the lead) and create publications or make videos for the world to read and watch, you would get into serious trouble for following their example. **Again:** "rules for thee, not for me."

If the GB say that their time is filled with running the organization and they don't have time for the house-to-house work, well if they were truly following the example set by the apostles they would hand that work off to others so that they could devote their time "*to the ministry of the word.*" (Ac 6:3, 4) Yes, the preaching work (evangelizing) was the number one priority of the apostles.

Let's consider the term "Governing Body" for a moment. What is a governing body? Answer: A group of men who govern, who exercise continuous sovereign authority. (I would provide the Greek definition, but nowhere is a Christian "governing body" referred to in the Bible.)

Although the term "Governing Body" is not found in the Bible, was there a small group of men in the first century that formed a governing body like JW's have today? No, not the way the GB claim.

The GB say that there was a body in Jerusalem that governed the Christians of the day. Here is a scripture they quote to back up their claim:

(Acts 15:2) But after quite a bit of dissension and disputing by Paul and Bar'na·bas with them, it was arranged for Paul, Bar'na·bas, and some of the others to go up to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem regarding this issue.

The Study Bible Note for Galatians 2:9 says: "About 49 C.E., the apostle Paul visited Jerusalem to take part in the discussion by the first-century governing body on the matter of circumcision."

Is that accurate? Let's look at what really happened:

(Acts 15:6-20) So the apostles and the elders gathered together to look into this matter. ⁷ After much intense discussion had taken place, Peter rose and said to them: "Men, brothers, you well know that from early days God made the choice among you that through my mouth people of the nations should hear the word of the good news and believe. ⁸ And God, who knows the heart, bore witness by giving them the holy spirit, just as he did to us also. ⁹ And he made no distinction at all between us and them, but purified their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ So why are you now making a test of God by imposing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our forefathers nor we were capable of bearing? ¹¹ On the contrary, we have faith that we are saved through the undeserved kindness of the Lord Jesus in the same way that they are." ¹² At that the entire group became silent, and they began to listen to Bar'na·bas and Paul relate the many signs and wonders that God had done through them among the nations. ¹³ After they finished speaking, James replied: "Men, brothers, hear me. ¹⁴ Sym'e-on has related thoroughly how God for the first time turned his attention to the nations to take out of them a people for his name. ¹⁵ And with this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written: ¹⁶ 'After these things I will return and raise up again the tent of David that is fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins and restore it, ¹⁷ so that the men who remain may earnestly seek Jehovah, together with people of all the nations, people who are called by my name, says Jehovah, who is doing these things, ¹⁸ known from of old.' ¹⁹ Therefore, my decision is not to trouble those from the nations who are turning to God, ²⁰ but to write them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from what is strangled, and from blood.

This was during the time that the helper (the holy spirit) was still at work. But those verses describe them having an *"intense discussion"* about the topic. If they were being directed by the holy spirit no discussion would be needed. Peter even said that they were making *"a test of God"*. Direction from the holy spirit would not be doing that, showing that the holy spirit was not directing the discussion. At least, possibly, not until Peter spoke.

After hearing Peter, these men that the GB say were the first century governing body, became silent and finally listened to the men who came from Antioch. Then James spoke, and in verse 19 he tells us that it is his decision (not the decision of a governing body of men) that circumcision was not a requirement. The others apparently accepted James' decision since verse 28 tells us that they supported his decision.

It was 17 years into his ministry that Paul finally went to those men in Jerusalem. He didn't think much of them, referring to them in his letter to the Galatians as *"those who seemed to be important"*, followed by: *"whatever they were makes no difference to me"*, after which he said: *"those highly regarded men imparted nothing new to me."* (Ga 2:6) No, this was not Barnabas and Paul going up to men in Jerusalem whom they revered to share in a discussion with them. Those men were causing trouble for them and the Gentile Christians, so they for went there to set them straight in their error.

Here is another verse that the GB put forward to try and legitimize their claim to power today:

(Acts 16:4) As they traveled on through the cities, they would deliver to them for observance the decrees that had been decided on by the apostles and the elders who were in Jerusalem. ⁵ Then, indeed, the congregations continued to be made firm in the faith and to increase in number day by day.

That verse clearly does describes spiritual guidance to the many Christian congregations from anointed ones in Jerusalem. Why were they providing spiritual guidance? Because the holy spirit was active on them. As those verses in Acts chapter 15 show, they were not the only ones who the holy spirit was helping, but they were among them. (1Co 14:26-31)

(John 16:13) However, when that one comes, the spirit of the truth, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak of his own initiative, but what he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things to come.

Those men had the helper that spoke through them. (Jn 14:26; 15:26, 27) There were no Greek Scriptures yet. The guidance from the holy spirit came through the anointed ones at that time. Then they wrote down those instructions from the holy spirit, creating the Greek Scriptures.

Today the holy spirit does not speak to anyone. The self-appointed "Governing Body" in New York. even admit that the helper (the holy spirit) does not speak to them:

[w16.01 p. 23 par. 6] They (the GB) do not claim to have special knowledge or revelations.

[w17.02 p. 26 par. 12] The Governing Body is neither inspired nor infallible. Therefore, it can err in doctrinal matters or in organizational direction

[w20.01 p. 28 par. 5] They know that Jehovah does not necessarily give anointed ones more holy spirit than he gives his other servants. They (the GB) do not feel that they have a deeper understanding of Bible truths than anyone else.

Direct contact with the holy spirit ended long ago:

(1 Corinthians 13:8) Love never fails. But if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away with; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away with.

[it-1 p. 128] the power to transmit such gifts was unique with these apostles. Such miraculous gifts would therefore pass away with the passing away of these apostles and of those who had received these gifts through the apostles

The helper did not continue to pass on "*knowledge*" after the first century. But it doesn't have to. We

have the complete Bible now. The first century Christians did not yet have the Greek scriptures as their guide, so they had to rely on those anointed men to provide the knowledge from the holy spirit.

With the ceasing of direct guidance by the holy spirit, and the writing and assemblage of the Greek scriptures, mature♦ Christians no longer need other men to tell them what God requires of them. (♦Jn 21:15, 16)

(2 Timothy 3:16, 17) All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be fully competent, completely equipped for every good work.

With Christ our mediator and the Bible, we are "completely equipped". But the GB say that we are not completely equipped. They say that we also need their guidance and control. They write many instructions, that they say come from God, for their followers to obey. But Revelation 22:18 tells us what will happen to those who add to the instructions given to us in the Bible:

(Revelation 22:18) "I am bearing witness to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone makes an addition to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this scroll;

Unfortunately, due to the nature of man, many men long for control and power over others and the prestige that comes with it, which is why Jesus gave us instructions about such ones. (Mt 24:4, 5)

(Luke 21:8) He said: "Look out that you are not misled, for many will come on the basis of my name, saying, 'I am he,' and, 'The due time is near.' **Do not go after them.**

You do not get to choose whether or not you obey a governor. You must obey. In contrast Paul tells us in Hebrews 13:7 that "*as you contemplate how their conduct turns out, imitate their faith.*" Yes, it is up to us to decide. After we have contemplated how the conduct of those taking the lead turns out, that is to say, if after scrutiny we decide that their conduct is acceptable, only then should we "*imitate their faith.*"

If those taking the lead are not men who direct and govern others, who are the scriptures referring to when it speaks of those taking the lead? Note that the verses don't refer to someone who is given the lead, or is chosen to lead. They refer to someone who 'takes' the lead. Someone taking the lead is anyone who sets a good example as a faithful and good Christian. That's it. Nothing else.

Note that he does not say that if we judge their directions (orders) to be acceptable, to then obey them. No, but we are to examine their conduct. Why? Because those taking the lead are directed to use the example of their own conduct to lead the congregation. (1Pe 5:3) That actually works well in our everyday life as well, because the best way to teach someone is not to tell them, but to show them. As the old saying goes: "Actions speak louder than words." (Mt 5:16; 7:20) If we judge those

taking the lead to be setting a good example, only then should we emulate their conduct, because attempting to govern others is forbidden.

(Matthew 20:25, 26) ... "You know that the rulers of the nations lord it over them and the great men wield authority over them.²⁶ **This must not be the way among you;** ...

The NWT has also been translated in a way to promote their position of governance.

(Romans 12:8) or the one who encourages, let him give encouragement; the one who distributes, let him do it liberally; the one who presides, let him do it diligently; the one who shows mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

(1 Thessalonians 5:12) Now we request you, brothers, to show respect for those who are working hard among you and presiding over you in the Lord and admonishing you;

(1 Timothy 5:17) Let the elders who preside in a fine way be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard in speaking and teaching.

In those verses, the Greek word *proistemi* is translated as "*preside*", which means to hold a position of authority. But the Greek word has the definition of "early". Yes, they are to be "early", that is to say, get there before others, be ahead of others, be in front of others, take the lead. The Greek word that the NWT translates as "*preside*" is not about having authority over others. It's about setting a good example.

The same thing is done with the word "*overseer*". It is promoted as a position of authority.

[w08 10/15 p. 11] Keeping in focus this admonition to be obedient and submissive to the overseers in the congregations will help us to manifest a cooperative spirit.

But is that what this word encompasses?

(1 Peter 5:2) Shepherd the flock of God under your care, serving as overseers, not under compulsion, but willingly before God; not for love of dishonest gain, but eagerly;

The same Greek word used in those verses is translated differently here:

(Hebrews 12:15) Carefully watch that no one fails to obtain the undeserved kindness of God, so that no poisonous root springs up to cause trouble and many are defiled by it;

Is this second translation accurate? Yes, because the original Greek word means "*to look upon, to care for*". It's like if you took your child to a playground, and as you sit on the side you keep an eye on, not just your own child, but all of the children, to make sure nothing bad happens to them. You are

'watching' over them, not ruling over them. So the promotion of the word "overseer" by the GB as a position of authority over others is inaccurate. (see also Ac 20:28; Php 1:1)

Why does the NWT translate those Greek words as preside and oversee? Because translating them correctly would not support the position of power that the GB claim.

To make it very clear to his apostles that their position should not be a position of power he washed their feet, something that only a lowly slave would do. (Jn 13:3-17)

(John 13:15, 16) For I set the pattern for you, that just as I did to you, you should also do. ¹⁶ Most truly I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.

Clearly the GB do not understand. (Jn 13:12)

Well if Christ forbade them from exercising authority over others, what did Paul mean at Hebrews 13:17?

(Hebrews 13:17) Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive, for they are keeping watch over you as those who will render an account, so that they may do this with joy and not with sighing, for this would be damaging to you.

How is it that you are to be obedient and submissive to someone if they do not exercise authority over you? By following the example they set. Governing Body member Geoffrey W. Jackson expresses it well in his video: *Elders Take The Lead!* There he says: "We're not leaders, but we set the right example." "So, obviously, to take the lead means to do the work, to be a minister, to be a servant, to serve others." "...setting the right example, and then others following." (The full transcript is in my Transcripts folder) Yes, Hebrews 13:17 is an extension of Hebrews 13:7. First we must judge whether or not their conduct is acceptable, and if it is, we submit ourselves to imitating their good example.

Also note that the Greek word translated there as "*be obedient*" is *peithó* and means "*to persuade, to have confidence*". Yes, we should be persuaded by their good example and we should have confidence in them. That has nothing to do with obedience.

Are you setting a good example as a Christian for others to follow? If so, then you are taking the lead, whether you are a man or a woman. A good example is a good example, regardless of gender. And others would do well to follow ("*be obedient to*") that example. (Ro 12:9-16; He 13:24) "*Taking the lead*" does not mean taking charge of others:

(Luke 22:26) You, though, are not to be that way. But let the one who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the one taking the lead as the one ministering.

Paul gives us an example of the good conduct we should imitate.

(Titus 2:7, 8) showing yourself to be an example of fine works in every way. Teach what is pure with all seriousness, ⁸ using wholesome speech that cannot be criticized, so that those who oppose may be put to shame, having nothing negative to say about us.

No, setting a good example does not mean being a spiritual leader. Christ is our one and only spiritual leader. (Mt 23:10)

(Matthew 23:10) Neither be called leaders, for your Leader is one, the Christ.

How can you be someone who takes the lead if Jesus said that only he is our leader?

The original Greek word translated as "*Leader*" in that verse is *kathégétēs* and means "*a leader, teacher, guide, and master.*" All of those things rolled up into one. Someone taking the lead by setting a good example as a Christian does not make them our master. Only Christ is our master. So "*taking the lead*" and being our "*Leader*" are two very different things.

And taking the lead is not restricted to spiritual matters.

(Galatians 6:7-10) Do not be misled: God is not one to be mocked. For whatever a person is sowing, this he will also reap; ⁸ because the one sowing with a view to his flesh will reap corruption from his flesh, but the one sowing with a view to the spirit will reap everlasting life from the spirit. ⁹ So let us not give up in doing what is fine, for in due time we will reap if we do not tire out. ¹⁰ So, then, as long as we have the opportunity, let us work what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to us in the faith.

Yes, you can take the lead and set a good example in doing any fine work. And others would do well in following that lead.

The GB members deny that they position themselves as spiritual leaders, and yet they direct and determine every aspect of JW's worship and belief. They have also said that they are neither inspired nor infallible. [w16.01 p. 23 par. 6] But then they send out directives to the congregations around the world and claim that their knowledge and insight comes from God.

[ijwfq p. 41] "the members of the Governing Body are not the leaders of our organization."

The GB say one thing but do another. It is like someone arrested by the police for burglary denying that they are a burglar, saying: "I just break into other people's homes and take things that don't belong to me. I am not a burglar!" But as the saying goes: "Actions speak louder than words."

Their actions contradict their words. The following verses were written with such ones in mind:

(Ephesians 5:6) Let no man deceive you with empty words, for because of such things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience.

(2 Peter 2:3) Also, they will greedily exploit you with counterfeit words. But their judgment, decided long ago, is not moving slowly, and their destruction is not sleeping.

Yes, regardless of what they say, they have positioned themselves as your "master", and punish you if you disobey them. And that punishment has ruined many lives. It has even been the reason for many suicides. Of course if you ask them they will tell you that no JW has ever committed suicide because of being disfellowshipped. If you press them on the matter they will explain that those who committed suicide were disfellowshipped, therefore they were no longer a JW.

Those taking the lead are not to "*preside*" over the congregation. (1Ti 3:5) Note the difference in the words used at 1 Timothy 3:5.

(1 Timothy 3:5) for if any man does not know how to **preside** over his own household, how will he **care** for the congregation of God?

To "*preside*" (prostēnai) over, means to manage, to rule. Timothy says that is what a man does in his own home.

To "*care*" (epimelēsetai) for, means to take care of, to attend to. Christ used that same Greek word in his illustration of the Samaritan who "*took care of*" the man beaten by robbers. (Lu 10:34)

If you do research for 1 Timothy 3:5 in the Watchtower Library, you will find that it is used by the GB regarding the qualification of appointed overseers. But appointed by who, and to do what?

The GB say that the overseers in each congregation today are appointed by holy spirit [w20.8 27 ¶4], but they also say that they "*are appointed on the basis of Scriptural requirements*". [w13.11 22 ¶6] So in reality they are not appointed by holy spirit. Those men are appointed by other men who have judged the candidate to have met the requirements that are laid out in scripture. (1 Timothy 3:1-7)

(see my article "Appointed by holy spirit")

Today, the claimed "appointed" men enforce the rules set by the GB and govern the sheep in the congregations, but even Jesus rejected such a role:

(Luke 12:14) He said to him: "Man, who appointed me judge or arbitrator between you two?"

So what was the role of the appointed men in Bible times?

(Acts 20:28) Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the holy spirit has appointed you overseers, to shepherd the congregation of God, which he purchased with the blood of his own Son.

(Titus 1:5, 9) I left you in Crete so that you would correct the things that were defective and make appointments of elders in city after city, as I instructed you:... ⁹ holding firmly to the faithful word as respects his art of teaching, so that he may be able both to encourage by the teaching that is wholesome and to reprove those who contradict.

Yes, they were appointed, not to govern the flock, but to "*encourage*" them, as Paul also points out at Hebrews 10:25.

(Hebrews 10:25) not forsaking our meeting together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and all the more so as you see the day drawing near.

Titus 1:9 says that they are also "*to reprove those who contradict*". Contradict who or what? He was speaking of those who contradict the good news:

(Philippians 1:16) The latter are proclaiming the Christ out of love, for they know that I have been appointed to defend the good news;

Yes, it is the good news, the truth in the Bible, that is important, and those who contradict it need to be reproved. That verse is not talking about reproofing those that contradict men who claim to be appointed to a position of authority. If you say that the fact that they are able to reprove them shows that they are in a position of authority, you are wrong. You can reprove a complete stranger. It doesn't mean that you hold authority over them and that they must heed your words.

Paul tells us the reason for his own appointment:

(1 Timothy 2:7) For the purpose of this witness I was appointed a preacher and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—a teacher of nations in the matter of faith and truth.

Yes, it is "*faith and truth*" that are important.

But on the other side of the coin there are also those who have been appointed to be disobedient to the Bible:

(1 Peter 2:8) and "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." They are stumbling because they are disobedient to the word. To this very end they were appointed.

(Jude 4) My reason is that certain men have slipped in among you who were long ago appointed to this judgment by the Scriptures; they are ungodly men who turn the undeserved kindness of our

God into an excuse for brazen conduct and who prove false to our only owner and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Their judgment for brazen conduct was appointed to them "*long ago*".

(1 Timothy 2:2-5) concerning kings and all those who are in high positions, so that we may go on leading a calm and quiet life with complete godly devotion and seriousness. ³ This is fine and acceptable in the sight of our Savior, God, ⁴ whose will is that all sorts of people should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth. ⁵ For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus,

Yes, regarding those men who have placed themselves in high positions (such as the GB), it "*is fine and acceptable in the sight of our Savior, God,*" for us to have come to the "*accurate knowledge of truth*" that there is only "*one mediator between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus.*" But the GB have placed themselves "*between God and men.*"

(John 14:6) Jesus said to him: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

The GB tell us that we should only believe what they tell us is "truth".

(John 18:37) For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is on the side of the truth listens to my voice."

Christ tells us to listen to his voice, while the GB tell us to listen to them. If we discover "Bible truths" on our own that conflict with what the GB teach, or point out a flaw in their teaching, we are marked as apostate.

(Romans 1:18) For God's wrath is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who are suppressing the truth in an unrighteous way,

If you would bring a "truth" to your elders (one that contradicts the GB), even though you had clear and unquestionable scriptural proof, you would get into serious trouble because you dared to contradict the GB. And they would threaten you with judicial action if you were to discuss your findings with others in the congregation. That is the very definition of "*suppressing the truth.*" But that is how the elders are instructed to act by the GB.

(Romans 2:8) however, for those who are contentious and who disobey the truth but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and anger.

Those elders are guilty of '*disobeying the truth*' and '*obeying unrighteousness,*'

(1 Corinthians 13:4, 6) Love..., rejoices with the truth.

Yes, elders should rejoice with the truth, but they do not.

(2 Corinthians 4:2) But we have renounced the shameful, underhanded things, not walking with cunning or adulterating the word of God; but by making the truth manifest, we recommend ourselves to every human conscience in the sight of God.

The GB and their enforcers (the elders), are "*adulterating the word of God*" through their actions. But those who '*make the truth manifest*' even if it contradicts the GB have a good "*conscience in the sight of God*."

(John 8:45-47) Because I, on the other hand, tell you the truth, you do not believe me. ⁴⁶ Who of you convicts me of sin? If I speak truth, why is it that you do not believe me? ⁴⁷ The one who is from God listens to the sayings of God. This is why you do not listen, because you are not from God."

The elders listen to the instructions from the GB, even if it contradicts the Bible, because they are taught that being "*united in the same mind and in the same line of thought*" (that is to say, their line of thought) is more important than accurate knowledge. (1Co 1:10)

(John 8:31, 32) Then Jesus went on to say to the Jews who had believed him: "If you remain in my word, you are really my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

The elders should value his words over the words of the GB.

(2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12) That is why God lets a deluding influence mislead them so that they may come to believe the lie, ¹² in order that they all may be judged because they did not believe the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness.

They are misled, and do not want to hear the truth from the Bible. They only want to hear what the GB tells them is "truth." They value their position as elder more than they do Bible truth.

(2 Timothy 3:8, 9) these also go on opposing the truth. Such men are completely corrupted in mind, disapproved as regards the faith. ⁹ Nevertheless, they will make no further progress, for their folly will be very plain to all, as it was with those two men.

They do not want to hear the truths that you have found in the Bible.

(2 Timothy 4:4) They will turn away from listening to the truth and give attention to false stories.

So why do **The Governing Body** of Jehovah's Witnesses refer to themselves as such? Because they

have set themselves up to **govern** Christ's sheep.

That is in direct violation of Christ's clear directions at Matthew 20:26.

Their very title identifies them as being disobedient to Christ.

The GB have even said that they believe that they are going to receive instructions from God, and when they pass on those instructions, although those instruction may "*seem strange, impractical, or illogical*", they say: "*that will hardly be the time to second-guess the direction or to view it with skepticism.*" [w22.02 p. 6 ¶15, see also ws13 11/15 p. 20 ¶17]

That categorically and unequivocally contradicts the directions given to us in the Bible, which tell us to "*make sure*" (Php 1:10) and to "*test the inspired statements to see whether they originate with God.*" (1Jo 4:1; 1Th 5:21) We are NOT to unquestionably accept directions! That is how followers of false prophets are misled. We should follow the advice at Hebrews 13:9.

(Hebrews 13:9) Do not be led astray by various and strange teachings,

Stephen Lett (GB member) also talked about those "*strange teachings*" in the September 2022 JW Broadcast. Here is a quote:

"Jesus fully trusts the faithful slave. And all of us, even individual members of the Governing Body, should do the same. But what does the voice of strangers say on this subject? "Don't trust the faithful slave. He will mislead you!" And who often have the loudest voice promoting this false message? Apostates. Hebrews 13:9 labels false messages as "strange teachings." Yes, they are the teachings of strangers. Acts 20:30 says that apostates "speak twisted things." They do this in order to draw God's sheep away and make them followers of themselves. Something that's twisted is bent out of shape, or distorted. They speak twisted things by leaving out vital details, taking things out of context, or in some other way manipulating a truth into a lie or into a misleading half-truth."

Let's look at those two verses that Stephen references.

Here is the first one, in context:

(Hebrews 13:7-9) 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.
⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, and forever. ⁹ Do not be led astray by various and strange teachings, for it is better for the heart to be strengthened by undeserved kindness than by foods, which do not benefit those occupied with them.

Paul is telling them to scrutinize those who are taking the lead and not to be led astray by any strange teaching coming from them, because "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today*," so any teaching coming from those taking the lead that is "*strange*", that is to say different from what Christ taught, should be rejected. Here is how the New Living Bible puts it:

(NLB) Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. ⁹So do not be attracted by strange, new ideas

We are to contemplate their conduct because "*it is better for the heart to be strengthened by undeserved kindness (fine conduct) *than by* (strange) *foods.*" (Mt 13:9)*

As you can see, it is the GB who are taking out of context Paul's reference to strange teachings by those taking the lead, and twisting (distorting) it to refer to the words of strangers.

The second verse that Stephen references is in Acts. Here it is, also in context:

(Acts 20:28-30) Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the holy spirit has appointed you overseers, to shepherd the congregation of God, which he purchased with the blood of his own Son. ²⁹ I know that after my going away oppressive wolves will enter in among you and will not treat the flock with tenderness, ³⁰ and from among you yourselves men will rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves.

Paul is speaking to those which the holy spirit had appointed as overseers. Oppressive wolves would enter in among them. Only overseers could treat the flock either with or without tenderness. Yes, from among the overseers themselves, "*men will rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves.*"

(Note: The Greek word (barus) translated as "oppressive" refers to "heavy, weighty, burdensome". They are "*oppressive wolves*" because they weigh you down with burdens.)

So in both accounts Paul is warning us about those taking the lead, not about strangers. We are not to listen to those taking the lead when they speak strange and twisted things that Christ did not teach. (He 13:8) And they truly do "*speak twisted things*", taken out of context, "*to draw away the disciples after themselves.*" (Ac 20:30) Yes, they want you to believe their teachings and obey their directions.

If the GB do receive "strange" instructions to pass on to you, as they believe they will, you would do well to heed the Bible's warnings about such things:

(Galatians 1:8) However, even if we or an angel out of heaven were to declare to you as good news something beyond the good news we declared to you, let him be accursed.

If you point this out, or dare contradict or challenge them in any way, they label you as an apostate

who is going against God Himself, because they see themselves as your spiritual leaders and God's means of direction on earth. They clearly do claim the position of Christ. (Mt 23:10; Jn 10:8)

Now did Christ give those taking the lead a task to fulfill? Yes. They are to feed Christ's *"lambs"* and *"little sheep."* (Jn 21:15-17) *"Lambs"* are baby sheep. *"Little sheep"* are a bit older, but are not yet adults. These new ones to the teachings of Christ are fed the appropriate spiritual food for their spiritual age, that is to say, the proper food at *"the proper time."* (Mt 24:45)

Those who are new to the Bible need *"milk, not solid food"* (1Co 3:2), and those taking the lead have been given the task of serving that food to the lambs and little sheep. But once a sheep has matured they move beyond milk and feed themselves solid food. (He 5:11-6:2)

The directions Christ gave his apostles were to make disciples and baptize them. (Mt 28:19) He did not tell them to set up a governing body to tell his sheep what to do, how to think, and to direct every aspect of their worship. In that situation the sheep would be the followers of that governing body, but Christ wants them to be his followers. (Mt 23:10)

The problem is that once the lambs have matured and are ready to feed themselves solid food, the GB refuse to give up that position. Their actions are fulfilled in Christ's illustration of the cultivators. (Mt 21:33-41; Mr 12:1-9; Lu 20:9-16) Were those cultivators given the job of cultivating the landowner's crop? Yes. Did they cultivate the landowner's crop? Yes. Does that mean that the landowner is happy with them? No. What will the owner of the vineyard do? *"He will come and kill those cultivators."* (Lu 20:16; 2Pe 2:3)

Just as the cultivators wanted to keep the vineyard for themselves once the crops had matured, the GB want to keep the sheep under their control even after they have become mature Christians and no longer need their milk. But only one person should be between Jehovah and ourselves.

(1 Timothy 2:5) For there is... one mediator between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus,

Jesus warned us about such ones.

(John 10:8) All those who have come in place of me are thieves and plunderers;

If you want proof that they claim the position of Christ, all you have to do is go to the elders (as many have done) and tell them that you are no longer going to follow the teachings of the GB. Their response usually includes quoting John 6:68.

(John 6:68) Simon Peter answered him: "Lord, whom shall we go away to? You have sayings of everlasting life.

The elders are implying that leaving the GB is leaving Christ.

No doubt any of you who have considered leaving have even asked yourself 'Whom shall I go away to?' or 'Where shall I go?' And why is that? Because the GB have thoroughly conditioned their followers to believe that they are the "*mediator between God and men*" (1Ti 2:5) and that you need them to direct you in all spiritual matters. The minds of long-time JW's have been shaped and molded so successfully that they fear the idea of being in a position where no one is telling them what to do. Their indoctrination causes them to fear the freedom that true Christianity provides, like long-term prisoners who fear being released from a life of control and forced structure into a life where they make their own choices. (Ga 5:1; 1Pe 2:16)

What many newly-released, long-term prisoners experience is called Post Incarceration Syndrome. It is defined as institutionalized personality traits caused by living in an oppressive environment that demands passive compliance to the demands of authority figures, passive acceptance of severely restricted acts of daily living, the repression of personal lifestyle preferences, the elimination of critical thinking and individual decision making, and internalized acceptance of severe restrictions on honest self-expression, thoughts, and feelings.

But true followers of Christ have freedom. (Ro 8:21; 1Co 10:29; Ga 2:4; 5:1, 13; Jas 1:25)

(2 Corinthians 3:17) Now Jehovah is the Spirit, and where the spirit of Jehovah is, there is freedom.

Of course we are not given the freedom to act outside of Bible principles. (1Co 6:9, 10)

(1 Peter 2:16) Be as free people, using your freedom, not as a cover for doing wrong, but as slaves of God.

The GB even insert themselves into your baptism. Paul asked this question:

(1 Corinthians 1:13) Is the Christ divided? Paul was not executed on the stake for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

No, our baptism should be to none other than Christ and Jehovah. Yet JW Baptismal candidates must answer in the affirmative to the following question before being allowed to be baptized:

"Do you understand that your baptism identifies you as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in association with Jehovah's organization?" [od p. 206]

Our baptism should be pure, and only about our belief in God and Christ. It should not involve The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York.

Even our prayers are not to have another man between ourselves and God. Although we are to pray

for others (1Th 5:25), we are not to assume the responsibility of making other's prayers for them. As a Christian you are to say your own prayers. (Lu 11:2-4)

We are to personally pray through our mediator to God. (1Tim 2:5) Another man is not to say our prayer for us. Nowhere in the Greek scriptures are we told to allow another man to say our prayers for us, nor are there any examples of it happening, for this too would be placing another person between ourselves and Jehovah. Such prayers are a tool men use to unscripturally insert themselves between you and Jehovah God.

One verse some point out to promote others saying your prayers for you is 1 Corinthians 14:16.

(1 Corinthians 14:12-19) So also with you, since you eagerly desire the gifts of the spirit, seek to abound in gifts that will build up the congregation. ¹³ Therefore, let the one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. ¹⁴ For if I am praying in a tongue, it is my gift of the spirit that is praying, but my mind is unproductive. ¹⁵ What is to be done, then? I will pray with the gift of the spirit, but I will also pray with my mind. I will sing praise with the gift of the spirit, but I will also sing praise with my mind. ¹⁶ Otherwise, if you offer praise with a gift of the spirit, how will the ordinary person in your midst say "Amen" to your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? ¹⁷ True, you are giving thanks in a fine way, but the other man is not being built up. ¹⁸ I thank God that I speak in more tongues than all of you do. ¹⁹ Nevertheless, in a congregation I would rather speak five words with my mind, that I might also instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

1 Corinthians 14:16 is talking about gifts of the spirit, like when the spirit prompted someone to speak out in a different tongue or to sing out with praise, not one person saying another's prayer for them. Even when many were gathered together, they still spoke their own prayer. (Ac 1:14; 12:5, 12; 21:5; 2Co 1:1)

If the song of praise was in a different tongue, the hearers of it that do not speak that language would have been built up by the workings of the spirit, but they would not have known what was said. But if the spirit had prompted them to sing out praise in their own language then others could've said "amen" (so be it, I agree) because they would have understood what the one under the power of the spirit was saying. Although amen is said at the end of public prayers today, nowhere in the Bible is amen used at the end of a prayer where someone else has said their prayer for them.

Another verse some may point to is James 5:14.

(James 5:14) Is there anyone sick among you? Let him call the elders of the congregation to him, and let them pray over him, applying oil to him in the name of Jehovah.

The original Greek word (ep), translated as "over", means "on, upon, to, against, on the basis of, at" and does not give the impression of saying another's prayer for them, but refers to having that person

be the reason for your prayer, which is why other Bibles translate it as "pray for". As James reiterates at James 5:16: "pray for one another, so that you may be healed."

What about Matthew 6:9-13? Does Jesus describe saying other's prayers for them there? No. You can view Jesus' description of the model prayer in two ways. 1) He is speaking to a group of men, so he speaks in a manner that answers them as a group. 2) And he also is telling them to pray, not just for themselves, but to also have other's interests included in their prayers. Note that he did not give an example of assuming to speak for another, such as 'we thank you', or 'we request...'.

We may pray aloud, giving others the opportunity to agree (say amen), but saying other's prayers for them is being presumptuous. Not all listening may agree with what you are praying. How would God receive a prayer from you that inaccurately assumes the desires of others?

Yes, the GB, and their obedient servants (the local elders in each congregation), have put themselves "*between God and men.*" They tell the congregation that they must follow their directions if they are to please God. They tell them that disobeying them is disobeying Jehovah. "*Brazen conduct*" indeed! (2Pe 2:2)

The GB point to examples of the apostles directing the Christians in the first century and claim the same status for themselves. But those apostles had direct communication with the holy spirit.

(John 14:26) But the helper, the holy spirit, which the Father will send in my name, that one will teach you all things and bring back to your minds all the things I told you.

(John 15:26, 27) When the helper comes that I will send you from the Father, the spirit of the truth, which comes from the Father, that one will bear witness about me;²⁷ and you, in turn, are to bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

(1 Corinthians 2:10) For it is to us (the apostles) God has revealed them through his spirit, for the spirit searches into all things, even the deep things of God.

The apostles had the helper, the holy spirit, and it was working through those apostles till their death.

(1 Corinthians 13:8) Love never fails. But if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away with; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away with.

Yes, direct communication with the holy spirit ended. But fortunately for us they wrote down the information the holy spirit gave them, creating the Greek Scriptures and ending the need for direct guidance by the holy spirit. But the Christians of the day did not have the Greek Scriptures written and assembled for them to be able to follow Christ's written words, so they **had** to rely on those men to pass on the information from the holy spirit.

Think, for a moment, about the fact that knowledge from the holy spirit has ended. That means that when Jesus warned us about "*false prophets*", that would include any prophet today, because there are no true prophets today. There can't be, because direct communication with the holy spirit ended long ago. So anyone who says that they got information directly from the holy spirit is a liar and a false prophet. How often have the GB said that they received "new light" from Jehovah through the holy spirit?

Today, as 2 Timothy 3:17 says, we are "*completely equipped*" because we have those writings. But that does not stop the GB from telling their followers that they must also follow their directions. Yes, the GB brazenly position themselves between God and men:

"We also need to trust in the only channel that Jehovah is using today." [w20.7 p. 24]

"Some may feel that they can interpret the Bible on their own. However, Jesus has appointed the 'faithful slave' to be the only channel for dispensing spiritual food." [w16.11 p. 16]

"Just as anointed Christians do, alert members of the great crowd are sticking close to God's appointed channel for dispensing spiritual food." [w12 9/15 p. 26]

"Theocratic appointments come from Jehovah through his Son and God's visible earthly channel, "the faithful and discreet slave" and its Governing Body." [w01 1/15 p. 16]

They ignore Jesus' own words:

(John 14:6) Jesus said to him: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Another scripture that the GB try to use to prop up the position of authority that they have stolen is Matthew 24:45.

(Matthew 24:45) "Who really is the faithful and discreet slave whom his master appointed over his domestics, to give them their food at the proper time?"

That verse is part of a four point illustration that consists of a householder, a faithful and discreet slave, ten virgins, and three slaves whom their master gave talents to. Jesus begins the illustrations by saying "*know one thing*." (Mt 24:43) Yes, those four illustrations were to make a single point. And what was that point made in four different ways? That the householder will not keep awake and his house will be broken into. That some of those who make up the faithful and discreet slave, the steward of the house, will beat their fellow slaves, and will be punished for it when the master comes. That some of the virgins will not bring enough oil, and they will not be allowed in. That those slaves who do not increase their talents will be thrown out into the darkness outside.

(see my article "Know One Thing")

No, those illustrations are not there to provide a group of men with proof that they have authority and must be obeyed. Jesus provided those illustrations to warn the men who take the lead of what will happen to them if they overstep their assignment to feed the lambs and young sheep the spiritual milk they need to help them become mature Christians. (Jn 21:15-17)

What the GB are doing with verses such as Matthew 24:45 is similar to what the American government is doing with the Constitution of the United States. It was written to keep the government in check, but the government tries to turn it around and use it to control the people instead.

As pointed out above, the "*proper time*" to feed Christ's sheep (Mt 24:45) is when they are spiritually young and new to the teachings of Christ. And since there is a "*proper time*", that means that there is also an '**improper time**'. And when is that '**improper time**'? Answer: After the lambs and little sheep become mature Christians and can feed themselves solid food without interference from others.

(1 Peter 4:15) However, let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or a wrongdoer or a busybody in other people's matters.

(Romans 5:1) Therefore, now that we have been declared righteous as a result of faith, let us enjoy peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

(Acts 4:12) Furthermore, there is no salvation in anyone else, for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must get saved."

(1 Corinthians 3:1, 2) So, brothers, I was not able to speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to fleshly men, as to infants in Christ. ² I fed you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet strong enough. In fact, neither are you strong enough now,

(Hebrews 5:14-6:1) But solid food belongs to mature people, to those who through use have their powers of discernment **trained to distinguish both right and wrong.** Therefore, now that **we** have moved beyond the primary doctrine about the Christ, let **us** press on to maturity

Did you notice there in Hebrews how Paul refers to mature Christians as "*we*" and "*us*"? Yes, Paul acknowledges that mature Christians are on the same level as he is. (Mt 23:8) Note what the previous verses say:

(Hebrews 5:11-13) We have much to say about him, and it is difficult to explain, because you have become dull in your hearing. ¹² For although by now you should be teachers, you again need someone to teach you from the beginning the elementary things of the sacred pronouncements of God, and you have gone back to needing milk, not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who continues to feed on milk is unacquainted with the word of righteousness, for he is a young child.

There Paul refers to those who are taught by teachers as young children feeding on milk. He also said that "*solid food*" is for the mature. Note that he does not say that the "*solid food*" is only for a select ruling class, giving them the authority to interpret it and distribute it as they see fit. No, "*solid food*" is for all mature Christians, and they are mature because they are no longer "*dull in (their) hearing*" (ability to understand). They "*have their powers of discernment trained*", so they no longer "*need someone to teach*" them. Their trained discernment gives them the ability to feed directly on the "*solid food*" from the Bible.

Conversely, JW's are conditioned to perpetually rely on the GB to feed them spiritual food. They are never allowed to "*press on to maturity*" and rely on their own "*powers of discernment*."

What about you? Do you rely on teachers to explain the Bible to you? Or have you become the teacher who feeds directly on the "*solid food*" of the Bible?

Do you say: "*I am one of the teachers 'of the sacred pronouncements of God' that Paul spoke about in verse 12. I even have Bible students.*" Is that so? The GB have laid out in detail what you will study and when, the questions you will ask, and the answers that are acceptable. So do you really teach "*the sacred pronouncements of God*", or do you teach the pronouncements of the GB? If you were to break from their script and teach directly from the Bible, you would get into serious trouble for contradicting the teachings of the GB, be accused of forming a sect, and get disfellowshipped.

More and more JW's are coming to the realization that they no longer want to be fed as "*young children*". They want to step out from under the rule of a teacher so they can "*press on to maturity*" and feed directly on the "*solid food (that) belongs to mature people*." Are you such a person?

If you are reading this you are no doubt not a little lamb who is new to the teachings of Christ and need someone to lead you by the hand and feed you milk. You don't need someone to tell you how to worship Jehovah. You can sit at the adult table and eat solid food from the Bible yourself without someone spoon-feeding it to you. You can listen to Christ's voice directly, that is to say, you are spiritually mature enough to read and understand the Bible on your own without a human middleman. Christ should now be your one and only mediator between yourself and Jehovah. (1Ti 2:5)

Do you say that you don't understand everything in the Bible so you still need others to tell you what to think? Well note that Hebrews 5:14 describes a mature Christian as someone whose powers of discernment have been trained to know the difference between right and wrong. That's all. Complete understanding of the Bible is not a requirement. In fact, it is not attainable this side of Armageddon:

(1 Corinthians 13:12) For now we see in hazy outline by means of a metal mirror, but then it will be face-to-face. At present I know partially, but then I will know accurately, just as I am accurately known.

It is our heart condition that we will be judged on, not the amount of scriptural understanding that we have.

(Ezekiel 9:4) Jehovah said to him: "Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who are sighing and groaning over all the detestable things that are being done in the city."

That verse lists only one thing that makes one eligible for being marked for survival: a heart condition that causes one to sigh and groan over detestable things. Those people know the difference between right and wrong, and have chosen the side of "*right*".

(Luke 8:15) As for that on the fine soil, these are the ones who, after hearing the word with a fine and good heart, retain it and bear fruit with endurance.

Some people have convinced themselves that if they think and act the way others tell them to that they won't be held responsible for believing or doing anything wrong. But that is a wrong action in itself, and they will reap what they sow. (Mt 15:14) You are responsible for yourself. Entrusting your spiritual decisions to others does not remove that responsibility. In fact, it adds to your culpability. (2Pe 2:2)

Another lie that the GB promote is that they are the source of "new light" from Jehovah.

(Proverbs 4:18) But the path of the righteous is like the bright morning light That grows brighter and brighter until full daylight.

Light from Jehovah grows brighter, building on the previous light, like a dimmer switch on a lamp that makes the light brighter as you add to the power. But that is not what the GB do. They are constantly replacing previous light that they say came from Jehovah, with new light that they say also came from Jehovah. True light from Jehovah would never be replaced because it is never wrong. True light from Jehovah is a foundation of understanding that is built upon and added to, not replaced, proving that the "new light" from the GB does not come from Jehovah.

So where do we get light from if not from a group of men in New York?

(Psalm 119:105) Your word is a lamp to my foot, And a light for my path.

(Romans 15:4) For all the things that were written beforehand were written for our instruction, so that through our endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope.

(2 Peter 1:19) So we have the prophetic word made more sure, and you are doing well in paying attention to it as to a lamp shining in a dark place (until day dawns and a daystar rises) in your hearts.

Yes, the GB have twisted the scriptures to '*misled many*'. (Mt 24:5)

Jesus provides a two-part description of those we should not follow:

(Luke 21:8) He said: "Look out that you are not misled, for many will come on the basis of my name, saying, 'I am he,' **and**, 'The due time is near.' Do not go after them.

The GB come on the basis of his name saying "*I am he*" in that they claim that following their teachings and rules is the only way to be acceptable to God. (Jn 14:6; 1Ti 2:5) And they have been saying that the due time for Armageddon is imminent since the late 1800's. So they fit that two-part description. And what does Christ command us to do? **"Do not go after them!"** (Ex 20:4)

Of course Paul recommended that we continue to meet together, but for what purpose?

(Hebrews 10:24, 25) And let us consider one another so as to incite to love and fine works, ²⁵ not forsaking our meeting together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and all the more so as you see the day drawing near.

That's right, to incite to love and fine works, and to encourage one another. (Ro 1:12; 1Th 5:11) Not to be directed by a man, or group of men, who tell mature Christians what to think and how to worship. We have the Bible for that. (2Ti 3:17)

Now Jesus' commandment at Matthew 20:25-28 that those taking the lead (by setting a good example) are not to exercise authority over others goes both ways. They are commanded not to exercise authority over you, but that also means that you are commanded not to allow men to exercise authority over you in your relationship to Jehovah. (1Ti 2:5)

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Now that you have read all of this i ask you: Is Jesus Christ your one and only mediator between you and Jehovah, or like the Israelites are you doing what you think is right and allow men to govern you in your relationship with God?

Please, my Christian brothers and sisters, do not react to this article like those who heard Jesus speak in the synagogue:

(Luke 4:28) Now all those hearing these things in the synagogue became filled with anger,

Or like those that considered Paul their enemy because he spoke unpopular truths:

(Galatians 4:16) So, then, have I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?

Please believe what those scriptures say, even though they contradict the teachings of the GB:

(John 8:45) Because I, on the other hand, tell you the truth, you do not believe me.

For your own sakes, please choose what the Bible says over what the GB say:

(Ephesians 4:15) But speaking the truth, let us by love grow up in all things into him who is the head, Christ.

yb

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Dave

da.getmyip@gmail.com <http://da.getmyip.com/PDF/Ramblings>

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