

A REVELATION OF..... SERVANTHOOD AND LEADERSHIP

**ONE OF A SERIES OF REVELATIONS ON VARIOUS
ASPECTS OF SCRIPTURE, AS INSPIRED BY THE
HOLY SPIRIT.**

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A NOTE FROM DAVID.....

Approximately 4 years after becoming a Christian, one memorable day the Lord stopped me as I was reading the Bible, at Revelation 12:11. It was a day that changed my life! For the Lord told me to base my life and build a ministry, upon this verse. He proceeded to explain to me the full meaning and implications of these amazing 29 words hidden away in the Bible's last book, the final book to be opened to man's understanding.

The verse is quite well known in Spirit filled churches - well at least the first two parts are. But the third, and most vital section, is so often ignored. You will now see why! It talks about a people who are able to overcome satan.

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

None of us like the third part of the verse - do we? But it contains the secret of how we are to come to maturity in our walk with Jesus. (Hence the name of this ministry.) We love living our dreams and desires. Dying to self, replacing our dreams with those Jesus has for us, becoming servants to Him and others, is not really part of our plan! Yet it is what our Lord has always required of us as individuals, and is what He is calling His church to, in these 'end time' days.

A short time later He gave me these basic principles of servanthood and servant leadership which have been expanded and developed, as always should be the case as we live and grow in Him. So this isn't the final word or revelation, but Gods revelation and the experience of one man endeavoring to apply it to his life.

His servant and yours

David Tait

PART 1

THE BACKGROUND

DEFINITION OF TERMS

THE CONCISE OXFORD DICTIONARY

SERVE: (Verb) Do service to, Be useful to, e.g. *serve the Lord or God* Be religious or virtuous, *serve the devil* Be wicked.

SERVANT: (Noun) Devoted follower, person willing to serve another.

SERVICE: (Verb) Use, Assistance.

MINISTER: (Verb) Render aid or assistance.

BIBLE DICTIONARIES

SERVANT OF THE LORD

I. The Old Testament

The term ‘servant’ (*‘ebed*) occurs as frequently outside Duhm’s selected passages as within them (e.g. Is. 41:8f.; 43:10; 44:1f., 21; 45:4; 48:20), with reference to the nation of Israel. It is also used in the OT for individuals in a close relationship with God, such as the Patriarchs, prophets and kings, and particularly Moses and David (e.g. Gn. 26:24; Ex. 14:31; Dt. 34:5; 2 Sa. 7:5; Is. 20:3; Am. 3:7). But in the ‘Servant Songs’ a distinctive conception of ‘servanthood’ comes into sharper focus, so that without divorcing these passages from their context most scholars continue to speak of a ‘Servant figure’ as a distinct element in the prophet’s message; and the most distinctive element in this figure is that of obedient, undeserved suffering, leading to death, as the means of taking away the sin of his people and ‘making many to be accounted righteous’.

The language about the Servant is often strongly individual, describing the birth, suffering, death and eventual triumph of what is apparently a person

rather than a group. Various historical identifications have been proposed, such as Moses, Jeremiah, Cyrus, Zerubbabel or the prophet himself. But the traditional interpretation, Jewish and Christian, is that the Servant is an ideal individual figure of the future, God's agent in redeeming his people, *i.e.* the *Messiah. In later Palestinian Judaism this was the dominant interpretation (Hellenistic Judaism was apparently more favourable to a collective interpretation), so that the *Targum of Jonathan on Is. 53, while clearly embarrassed by the idea of Messianic suffering to the extent of drastically reconstructing the text to eliminate this implication, still explicitly identifies the Servant as the Messiah (see text in Zimmerli and Jeremias, *The Servant of God*², pp. 69-71; and for other early Jewish interpretations, *ibid.*, pp. 37-79).

II. The New Testament

a. In the teaching of Jesus

Is. 53:12 is explicitly quoted in Lk. 22:37. There are further clear allusions to Is. 53:10-12 in Mk. 10:45 and 14:24. Mk. 9:12 probably echoes Is. 53:3, and other possible allusions have been found in Mt. 3:15 (cf. Is. 53:11), Lk. 11:22 (cf. Is. 53:12; not a very likely allusion) and in the use of *paradidosthai* ('be delivered') in Mk. 9:31; 10:33; 14:21 (cf. Is. 53:12). In addition the voice at Jesus' baptism (Mk. 1:11), outlining his mission in terms of Is. 42:1, must have influenced Jesus' thinking.

Note the concentration in these allusions on Is. 53, and particularly on vv. 10-12 where the redemptive role of the Servant is most explicit. In Mk. 10:45 and 14:24 in particular the vicarious and redemptive character of Jesus' death is stressed, in terms drawn from Is. 53.

b. In the rest of the New Testament

The actual title 'servant' (*pais*) is confined to Peter's speech in Acts 3:13, 26 and the prayer of the church in Acts 4:27, 30, but the influence of the Servant figure is clear also in 1 Pet. 2:21-25; 3:18, suggesting that it featured prominently in Peter's understanding of Jesus' mission. Paul's explanations of Christ's redemptive work often contain ideas, and sometimes verbal allusions, which suggest that he too saw Jesus' work foreshadowed in Is. 53. (See *e.g.* Phil. 2:6-11; Rom. 4:25; 5:19; 8:3f., 32-

34; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:21.) The use of 'lamb of God' by John (1:29, 36) also probably shows the influence of Is. 53:7. Heb. 9:28, 'to bear the sins of many', echoes Is. 53:12.

There are also a number of formal quotations from Servant passages, with reference to Jesus and the gospel, *viz.* Mt. 8:17; 12:18-21; Jn. 12:38; Acts 8:32f.; Rom. 10:16; 15:21. None of these is with specific reference to Jesus' redemptive work, and some focus on other aspects of his mission, but all testify further to the early church's conviction that the Servant figure, and particularly Is. 53, was a divinely ordained pattern for the Messianic mission of Jesus. 1

MINISTER. (Noun) The Heb. term $m^{\epsilon}\check{s}ārē\bar{t}$ (LXX leitourgos) and its correlates normally refer to temple service, or else to the ministration of angels (Ps. 104:4); but in a more general sense Joshua is the $m^{\epsilon}\check{s}ārē\bar{t}$ or 'minister' of Moses (Ex. 24:13; Jos. 1:1), and Solomon's ministers (1 Ki. 10:5) are his domestic servants. In the NT the characteristic word is diakonos, at first in a non-technical sense, and then in Phil. 1:1 and in the Pastorals as the title of a subordinate church-officer. It refers to service in general, temporary or permanent, either by bond or free; but it has the special connotation of waiting at table (the corresponding verb is used in this sense, Lk. 12:37; 17:8, and Martha's trouble was excess of diakonia, Lk. 10:40). Christ appears among the disciples as *ho diakonōn*, 'one who serves' (Lk. 22:27), and he can be described as a diakonos of the circumcision (Rom. 15:8); following the example of this lowly service, the greatest of Christians should be a minister to the rest (Mt. 20:26; Mk. 10:43).....

In the Christian understanding of *ministry, whether official or otherwise, the minister renders a lowly but loving service to God or man. 2

1*The New Bible Dictionary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1962.

- MINISTER:** (Noun) One who serves, as distinguished from the master.
- (1.) Heb. meshereh, applied to an attendant on one of superior rank, as to Joshua, the servant of Moses (Ex. 33:11), and to the servant of Elisha (2 Kings 4:43). This name is also given to attendants at court (2 Chr. 22:8), and to the priests and Levites (Jer. 33:21; Ezek. 44:11).
- (2.) Heb. pelah (Ezra 7:24), a “minister” of religion. Here used of that class of sanctuary servants called “Solomon’s servants” in Ezra 2:55–58 and Neh. 7:57–60.
- (3.) Greek leitourgos, a subordinate public administrator, and in this sense applied to magistrates (Rom. 13:6). It is applied also to our Lord (Heb. 8:2), and to Paul in relation to Christ (Rom. 15:16).
- (4.) Greek hyperetes (literally, “under-rower”), a personal attendant on a superior, thus of the person who waited on the officiating priest in the synagogue (Luke 4:20). It is applied also to John Mark, the attendant on Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:5).
- (5.) Greek diaconos, usually a subordinate officer or assistant employed in relation to the ministry of the gospel, as to Paul and Apollos (1 Cor. 3:5), Tychicus (Eph. 6:21), Epaphras (Col. 1:7), Timothy (1 Thess. 3:2), and also to Christ (Rom. 15:8). 2

TRANSLATION OF ' SERVANT' FROM HEBREW TO ENGLISH

As usual, the rich Hebrew language of many nuances has a number of words that are combined together to be translated as ' servant' in English.

EBED: A slave or a servant.

It applies to:

1. A person at the complete disposal of another. (Genesis 24:1-67)
2. One who works for a master. (Deuteronomy 15:12-18)
3. A slave who has given up all personal rights to serve his master.
4. A slave in the service of a king.
5. A person serving in attendance to the temple sanctuary (1 Samuel 3:9)

ABAD: To work and (in any sense) to serve.

It applies to:

1. A person who tills the ground.(Genesis 3:23)
2. A person who looks after or keeps a garden. (Genesis 2:15)
3. A priest who serves the people. (Numbers 18:7, 23)

SAKIYR: A person who works for wages.

It applies to:

1. A hired servant. (One who wasn't allowed to eat the Passover of their master's family).(Exodus 12:3-5)
2. A temporary resident who is taken into a house as a slave. (Leviticus 25:6)
3. Not applicable to a ' love-slave' . (Leviticus 25:39-42)

SHARATH: One who is a doer of menial and insignificant tasks.

It applies to:

1. A priest ministering or serving in his priestly office." (Exodus 28:35-43)
2. A priest who ministers continually before the Ark of the Covenant." (1 Chronicles 16:37)

AN EXAMPLE: Joshua was a `sharath' to Moses." (Exodus24:3)

SERVANTHOOD IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES

To be regarded as a servant, was indeed the highest honour that could be accorded during Old Testament times. The principle person to whom this was honour was applied was Moses, the one to whom God spoke face to face.

⁶ he said, “Listen to my words: “When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. ⁷ But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. ⁸ With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?”
(Numbers 12:6-8) 3

In the first chapter of Joshua, God emphasized the servanthood of Moses 3 times (See A Revelation of... The Power of Three) As *Moses my servant* (verse 1), *my servant Moses* (verse 7) and *Moses the servant of the Lord* (verse 13). In reality, 'servant' was his semi official title!

And Moses the servant of the LORD died there in Moab, as the LORD had said. (Deuteronomy 34:5)

It was a title and mantle that his successor, Joshua, retained.

27 After these things, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of a hundred and ten. (Joshua 24:29)

God even extended this principle of servanthood to the non-believing King Nebuchadnezzar whom He used to achieve His purposes.

3All scripture is from *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984 unless otherwise stated.

*Now I will hand all your countries over to my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; I will make even the wild animals subject to him.
(Jeremiah 27:6)*

And of course, this greatest of all titles was used in the predictions of the coming of Jesus.

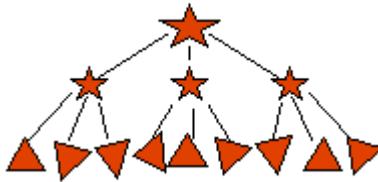
'Listen, O high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch. (Zechariah 3:8)

And in the famous ' Servant of the Lord' prophecy in Isaiah, which Jesus himself quoted.

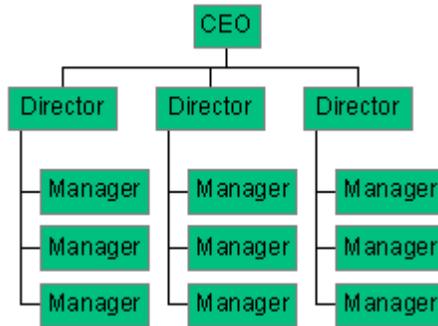
*'Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.
² He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. ³ A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; ⁴ he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope.'* (Isaiah 42:1-4)

To be acknowledged as a servant then, was the very highest accolade from the beginning of time.

TRADITIONAL MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES



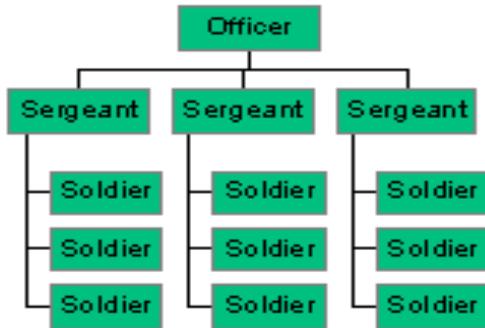
Traditional management structures are based on a hierarchical system. Authority and direction comes from the top of the pyramid and is passed down through the ' chain of command' from the boss through managers and supervisors to the workers.



In the business world you have the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who is the one responsible for setting the direction in which the company is to head. His plan is implemented through, in this example, directors and managers. If the company is big enough, there are likely to be further layers of supervisors and foremen through whom authority is delegated, before you reach the workers at the base of the pyramid.

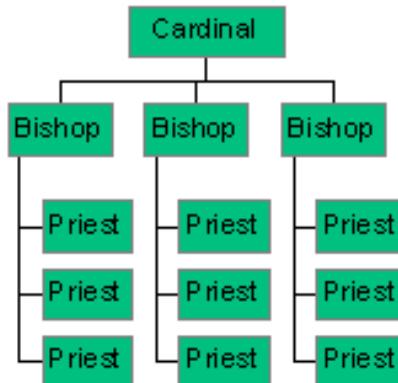
Authority and decision making come from the top of the organization and are progressively implemented in greater detail as you move down through the managerial levels.

Under a typical production based management system, one manager can effectively be responsible for up to 8 subordinates.



In the army you have a system of officers ranking from the General down to a lieutenant who relay the instructions from above to the non-commissioned sergeants and corporals, finally to the soldiers themselves.

And traditionally too, the church has been organized along similar lines.



While Job Titles may vary from denomination to denomination, the effective structure is much the same as is found in business or the army. Authority, in this case, hearing from God, comes from the top of the organization and is implemented by those further down the spiritual ' chain of command' .

While many attempts have been made to adjust or completely change this downward form of management structure, it remains firmly embedded in the psyche of man and management in the world today.

PART 2

A REVELATION OF..... SERVANTHOOD AND LEADERSHIP

JESUS - THE ULTIMATE SERVANT

His earthly mission and ours, was succinctly summed up when

²⁵ Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’ (Matthew 20:25-28)

Yes, Jesus came as the ultimate servant, and paid the ultimate price for His servanthood to His Father - and his devotion to us.

The prophet Isaiah particularly, was given this revelation on several occasions.

⁶ he says: ‘It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.’ (Isaiah 49:6)

¹³ See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. (Isaiah 52:13)

¹¹ After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and

he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:11-12)

Jesus made himself a servant and we are instructed to follow His example and do likewise.

⁴ Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:4-11)

For this He received the ultimate accolade and reward.

³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. ⁴ So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. (Hebrews 1:3-4)

And He became the highest of the high who will rule and reign forevermore!

*But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. ⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy."
(Hebrews 1:8-9)*

A REVOLUTION!

Yes, Jesus came to turn the world upside down! Nowhere is this truer than in the realm of leadership. Unfortunately however, Christians generally have been unable to grasp and assimilate this principle. Even the few who have grasped its significance have found it extremely difficult to apply.

For we are so thoroughly ingrained in the ways of fallen man, that we simply can't help ourselves when it comes to organizing and leading our churches and ministry organizations. We invariably fall into the trap of doing things in the way they have always been done, and proven, over thousands of years.

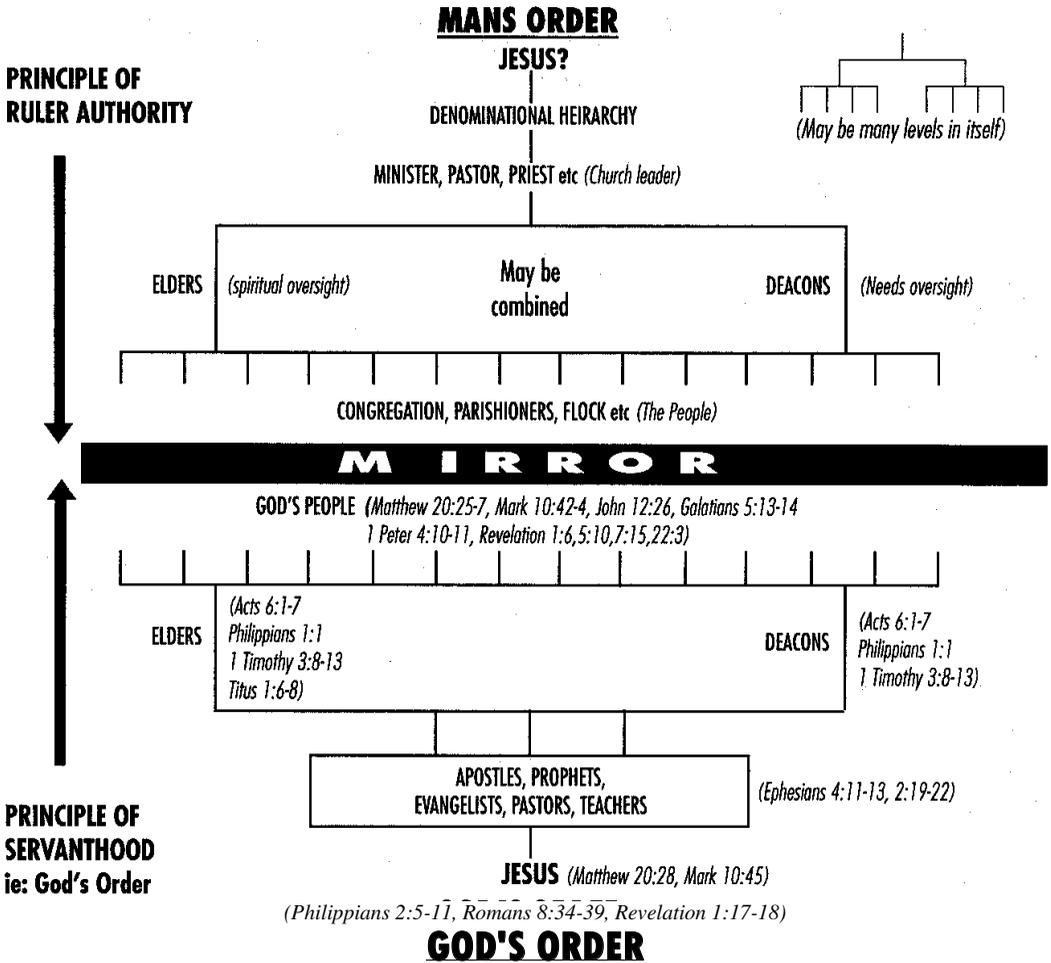
Pride too, gets in the way, for those who are leaders. Most naturally enjoy the status and influence perceived to go with it. For we all love to be loved, or at least, respected, by others. Social position is a hugely motivating influence in human society.

But Jesus came to change all that! He came preaching a message that the first will be last and the last will be first. He set an unsurpassable example of the application of this principle, the principle of Servant Leadership.

The best overall description of Jesus' character, is that of ' a servant' . It is the only explanation that enables us to understand what He did and why He did it. A 100% servant heart, motivated by love for people, is what fully differentiates His character from that of other people. For He displayed the perfect, proven, ' selfless' nature of God compared to the perfect, but unproven nature of Adam and Eve before they sinned.

It is not natural for us, it is a hard road to walk, yet it is what Jesus desires of us. Ultimately servanthood will set the foundation for the development of his united (in Spirit), pure, righteous, Bride for whom He is waiting. A radical idea, but vital for the times in which we now live. Are we prepared to live as Jesus lived?

ORGANISATION STRUCTURES



The classic way this has been done throughout the millennia has been through an authoritarian structure of, first of all, the family, the basic production unit of early society, and in much more recent times, of business, today' s modern production unit.

Other elements of society, such as the army, government and spiritual organizations have developed structures along similar lines, amended to suit their particular requirements.

The key element in all these is the flow of authority from a person or small group of people at the head of the organization downwards through layers of increasing numbers of people. Generally the size of the organization determines the number of layers through which the instructions need to flow.

The ' church' in all its multitudinous variants, has nearly always patterned itself upon this proven worldly example.

Each church or denominational grouping will claim that Jesus is the ' top man' from whom all others take their instructions. The Pope, Bishop, Overseer or whatever name may be given to the most senior human within the organization, will then interpret this. From there, ' God' s will' will be transmitted down through the various layers of the hierarchy until it finally reaches the people.

Even ' independent' churches generally follow this traditional pattern, but with less layers of ' management between pastor and people. The pastor - or maybe the elders and deacons - will assume control, passing their instructions from God directly to the congregation. But the same principle applies. It' s just that the layers are fewer.

THE PROBLEMS

1. Misinterpretation of God' s Words

The basic problem under this authoritarianism type system from a church perspective, is what happens when the ' leader' at the top of the pyramid, the one who hears from Jesus, hears incorrectly. Instructions to those below

are at best, a mix of God' s desires and ones own, at worst, entirely those of the leader. For no human has 100% of the truth, 100% of the time. If one did, he or she would either have reached perfection, or else be God himself!

I have met only 2 people who claimed to have achieved perfection, and in both cases it was soon obvious they hadn' t. For the essence of the Christian walk towards maturity is submitting our ' fallen' worldly nature to our ' born again' godly one. Even the great apostle Paul, experienced this - and he wrote two thirds of the New Testament!

²¹ So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. (Romans 7:21-5)

So even the godliest person will make mistakes in the interpretation of what God says to and through us.

2. A Cost of Sin

Adam and Eve were created with a servant nature, to look after the Garden of Eden on God' s behalf.

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. (Genesis 2:15)

However, when they exercised their free will and became ' independent' of God, we saw the introduction of a new authority structure, based on the principle of one dominating another. The perfect first example of this is found two chapters later, immediately after the fall, when Cain exerted the ultimate authority by murdering Abel, as he was angry with him.

So mankind' s sinful desire to dominate is reflected in the authoritarian style of organisation that so dominates the world and permeates the church.

3. Authoritarianism

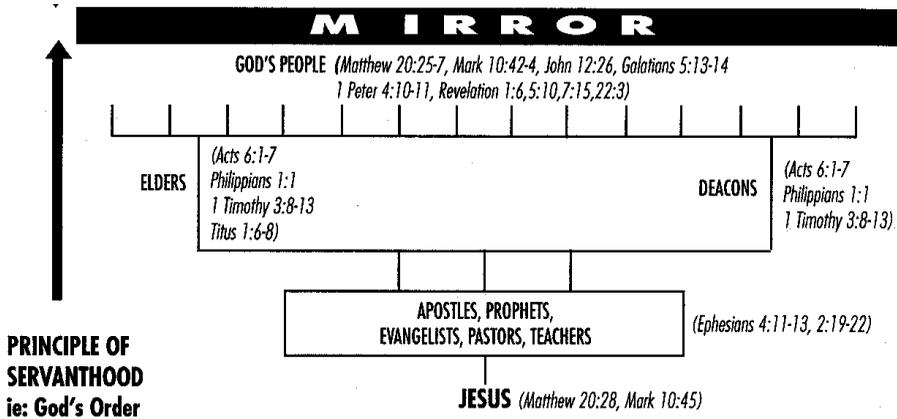
...is not God' s way. No matter how humble a person is, the insidious nature of an authoritarian, worldly organisation structure will eventually pervade, to a greater or lesser extent, ones personality. So you frequently see leaders starting off as servants in God' s will, but gradually formalizing their structures along worldly lines until finally, dogma takes over from Spirit and another denomination or movement emerges, usually under the domineering authority of the person to whom the initial revelation was given. So the Jesus example of servanthood reverts to the worldly way of domination. In fact, it is quite remarkable how similar the 2 words ' domination' and(om)ination are!

THE SOLUTION

...is to get back to a management structure of ' servanthood' , both in our lives and the church. This first existed in the Garden of Eden and was later, perfectly modeled by Jesus.

As illustrated on page 16, the transformation from Man' s Order to God' s Order is achieved through applying a ' mirror image' to traditional organisation structures. By turning the world on its head, by turning the world upside down. Surely, these are highly accurate descriptions of the life of Jesus! He caused a revolution and we need to, too!

THE ' BRIDE' CHURCH



A MIRROR IMAGE OF TODAY' S CHURCH

Applying the Principle of Servanthood to today's church organisation structure is a radical, but necessary, requirement if we are to build a church based upon the principles Jesus espoused and become the model of the single (no pun intended!), united in Spirit, Bride for which Jesus is returning.

GOD' S PEOPLE FIRST

At the top of the inverted pyramid are the people. The Church exists...

¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Galatians 4:12-13)

Summarized, it could read, ' to prepare the people to become like Jesus.'

The church exists for the benefit and training of the people. The people, and not the leadership, as under the worldly system, (where the leadership is above the people on the pyramid, and therefore more important) are to be the focus of the church.

The elevation of leadership is not a new problem. It has existed since Adam sinned. Jesus stated it clearly to the Disciples.

⁴² Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'
(Mark 10:42-5)

You cannot get it put any more plainly than in verse 44, '*whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.*'

The principle of servanthood is succinctly described in the ' Golden Rule' ,
' Love your neighbour as yourself.' We ignore this at our peril.

*¹³ You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. ¹⁴ The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'
¹⁵ If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. (Galatians 5:13-15)*

Is this not the case today, where the church spends more time infighting than in taking the message of Jesus to a needy world.

Spiritual gifts are given to leaders, not for our own glory, but to serve others.

¹⁰ Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:10-11)

Matrys, the first to reach perfection, and whose example we are to follow by laying down our own will for that of the Lord Jesus Christ, are fulltime servants.

And he said, 'These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore, 'they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. (Revelation 7:14-15)

And in the final chapter of the Bible, those who enter His Kingdom will be the servants of God and the Lamb.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. (Revelation 22:1-5)

Our servanthood skills are not somehow 'magically' acquired when we reach our final home, but are to be forged and honed here on earth, in the church, through serving others. By putting God's people first.

ROLE OF ELDERS AND DEACONS

Put in simple terms, the role of the elder is to serve the people's spiritual welfare while a deacon is to care for their physical needs.

1. Elders

The character traits required of an elder, however you see the position as being within the church hierarchy, reflect the attitudes held by one who serves others. Not overbearing, hospitable and holy, to highlight a few.

⁶ An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. ⁷ Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁸ Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. (Titus 1:6-9)

The elder is not there to control either the people or the pastor, but to help the people in the fellowship to grow spiritually.

2. Deacons

The office of deacon was established specifically to serve the spiritual leaders and the people in the practical matters of living daily life.

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ² So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, 'It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³ Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.' ⁵ This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶ They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. ⁷ So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:1-7)

Regrettably, in many church situations, the role of elder and deacon is seen as one of status, position and control, for that is the worldly view of one appointed to a such a ' position' .

However, in God' s order, such an appointment is to give the office holder a greater opportunity, and also obligation, to serve the people in the congregation.

The appointees are not to be chosen because they are the pastor' s friends who will go along with what the pastor wants! Nor, on the other hand, because they are the real power brokers and seek to control the church! Rather because, amongst the people, they have the greatest spiritual (elders) or practical (deacons), most mature servant hearts.

A PASTOR LED CHURCH?

Since the Reformation in the 16th century, and particularly over the last 100 years, the church has been both pastor led and pastor driven.

Put in its simplest form, pastoring has normally been the only paid ministry position in the church. So, very often, the work has been left up to the pastor, or minister or priest. Conversely, often too, the pastor has taken over the running of the church, ruling it with an iron fist, as ' God' s' chosen one whose word (of course, it is really God' s word - or so it is claimed!) is law. This is particularly prevalent amongst ' Spirit-filled' churches.

As pastoring is generally the only paid ministry position within the church, should an individual with a different ministry gift desires to work full time for the Lord and get paid for it, they have to become a pastor, even though this is not their gifting. And most likely, they will end up becoming unhappy and unfulfilled in the role. The church too, will probably have problems.

The pastoral job is summarized as:

² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. (1 Peter 5:2-4)

Pastors are to be shepherds over God' s flock as humble servants, building up the people to do the work through following the example they set.

The pastor, very often a teacher too, is not necessarily a visionary, an administrator, an evangelist or prophet, all aspects of leadership that are necessary to grow a successful church.

a. The Problem

One of the key problems in today' s church is the dominance of ' pastors' in the leadership of the church.

I am privileged to minister, in various ways, to thousands of pastors around the world, in many different cultures and societies. It is obvious to me that many of these fine people, while suited to the pastoral role perfectly, are not so gifted when it comes to running their churches in the way they are expected to do.

Are we asking too much of our pastors, to be the shepherd, teacher, administrator, visionary, planner, recruiter, etc., etc.? The simple answer is ' yes' ! Nor is it the way God intended it to be.

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13)

For the job of running a church effectively requires a greater range of skills, or giftings, than one normal person can reasonably be expected to have.

b. The Solution

The Lord desires a ' team approach' towards church leadership. A team consisting of:

Apostle:	God' s messenger - the visionary.
Prophet:	Application of message to local situation.
Evangelist:	Evangelism, encouragement of the people.
Pastor:	Shepherd
Teacher:	Trainer

A team of servants, where each member is not seeking personal status but rather, committed to working together as a team to train the people to do the work.

This is radical in two ways.

1. A team approach to leadership.
2. Getting the people to do the work.

A TEAM APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP

The position taken by many pastors today, particularly in ' Spirit-Filled' situations is that they are the ones who hear directly from God for their church, so their word is law. Sadly, this is not an exaggeration, but a reality of today' s church.

This problem is rooted in the worldly system of the domination of one human over another. This is reflected in the traditional, hierarchical management structure upon which the organisation of both the world and the church are based. But it is not God' s way!

²⁴ *Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest.* ²⁵ *Jesus said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves*

Benefactors. ²⁶ But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. ²⁷ For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. (Luke 22:24-7)

God's way is based on co-operation, not domination. Of one serving another. Indeed, the greater the level of responsibility, the greater the servant heart required. The more that others needs are to be placed ahead of ones own. This is precisely the opposite of what the world understands. Yet it was what Jesus set the ultimate example of.

Looking at the roles of the five ministry giftings, it is apparent that the primary responsibility for guiding the direction of the church should be in the hands of the apostles and prophets, for that is there gifting. Scripture confirms this logic.

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22)

This doesn't simply mean a change from pastors to apostles and prophets being the 'top dogs' in the church, radical though that might be in itself! But the true apostles and prophets will be imbued with such an attitude of servanthood, that they will flow as part of the team, recognizing the contributions made by all the members of it. This is beautifully reflected in Jesus appointment of the most effective apostle of them all, Paul, when He met with him on the Damascus road.

*¹⁵ "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?'
" 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. ¹⁶ 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant*

*and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you.
(Acts 26:15-16)*

Paul was not appointed as ' boss' over the gentile churches, but to be their servant. And what a servant he turned out to be!

In the world, the workers are expected to serve the managers. Unfortunately, this is the way of most of the church too. The congregation are encouraged to ' serve the vision' of the pastor. While each church needs a common vision, the primary role of the pastor is to help the people achieve their godly visions, for the ' many' people can collectively achieve far more than an ' individual' pastor can ever hope to. So the pastor should be pleased when one of the people he has shepherded rises above him or her in terms of their spiritual gifting. The reality in today' s church however is, all too often, that the reverse is the case. For, due to worldly influences, true servant hearts are the exception, rather than the rule.

Currently, this team approach to leadership is not encouraged in most churches. There are problems in the people with different ministry gifts understanding and appreciating each other' s motivations. In my experience, evangelists, prophets and pastors, in particular, have difficulties in relating to each other. Because of their different approaches and giftings, these relationships are not going to change until each one puts service to the other above their own desires.

This is not letting others take advantage of you, which is ' submission' in a worldly sense, as is often practiced in the church, but helping each other achieve the individual ministry goals the Lord has given. It truly is, an attitude of heart.

The Role of the Bishop: The overseeing of groupings of churches, whatever the title given, is an extremely difficult role, for these people are to be even greater servants than the ones they oversee. It is not to be ' a role of control' ! The higher (actually lower!) we are in the hierarchy, the more like Jesus we need to be. The role is not one of dictating ' God' s will' to your churches, but to work as part of the team to help all those with

ministry giftings discover and apply God' s will in their particular situations.

GETTING THE PEOPLE TO DO THE WORK

For this to happen there needs to be changes in thinking of both the leadership and the people.

The Leaders: The primary role of church leadership is not doing God' s work personally, but in training others to do it! The 5 fold ministry giftings are designed for that purpose.

¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. (Ephesians 4:12)

The two primary servant roles of Jesus were in meeting the needs of the people and training His followers to do the same. Nothing has changed. Leaders are to be servants to their community and to train their own people to follow their example. This is the only way God' s inverted pyramid organisation structure can function effectively.

Jesus however, was not a slave! He served by choice, not compulsion. Compulsion is an authoritarian, worldly principle. If you don' t do your job as instructed by management, you will be fired.

God' s Kingdom works on the opposite principal. We choose to obey God and serve others of our own free will, because of our love for Him. The greater the gifting and the greater our position in God, the greater servant we are to be.

The world cannot understand this nor, unfortunately, does most of the church, for it is based on worldly principles of authority and organisation structure. God is requiring His church to put worldly ways behind it, and return to the servanthood and team principles modeled by Jesus.

The People: As they pay the pastor, their ' worldly' expectation is that the pastor should do the work on their behalf. For this is what we would expect

upon paying for other goods or services. Many pastors accept this as their role. But as we have seen in Ephesians 4:12, it is the people who are to do the work.

Evangelism is the classic example of this. Believers need to be convinced and trained, not to speak on street corners, for that is the evangelist's gifting, but rather, to be Jesus to others, so that others may be persuaded by our lives to seek the truth. We do this not by preaching, but by reflecting Jesus servant nature to those we come into contact with.

This needs to be taught by the leaders to the people, but most importantly, it needs to be modeled by leadership. For you cannot expect the congregation to be greater servants than their leaders.

WHERE IS JESUS?

How is it possible that Jesus could be at the bottom of the pyramid? It is simple really. For in God's economy, the bottom is the top! The one who is the greatest servant will be given the greatest place. An application of the principle, 'the first shall be last and the last shall be first' .

This is clearly set out in Philippians.

⁵ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11)

Jesus first made Himself nothing - then God exalted Him above all. And even though He has now been lifted up to the right hand of God, He is still acting as a servant as He intercedes for us.

³⁴ *Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.* ³⁵ *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?* ³⁶ *As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’* ³⁷ *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.* ³⁸ *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,* ³⁹ *neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:34-39)*

This is a profound mystery, the full implications of which we will not grasp until we meet Him face to face. For He is the first and the last, the Exalted One, yet the ultimate servant.

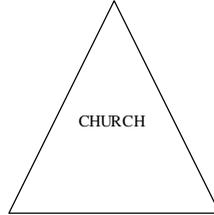
¹⁷ *When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: ‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.*
¹⁸ *I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. (Revelation 1:17-18)*

As we absorb the principle of servanthood into our lives, the dichotomy, the seemingly irreconcilable distance between the two decreases. We gain an understanding, through experience, of the power of this basic principle of living a godly life.

HOW CAN IT WORK?

MAN' S ORDER

PRINCIPLE OF RULER AUTHORITY

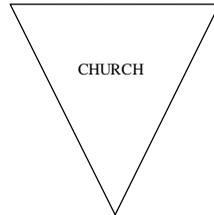


STABLE BASE

We understand the Principle of Ruler Authority, for it is a part of our fallen human nature - the domination of one over another. To our eyes it is a logical, stable structure. And most organizations, ranging from business to the military, to church, are organised along this principle. We generally feel comfortable in this situation, as we understand how it works.

GOD' S ORDER FROM MAN' S VIEWPOINT

PRINCIPLE OF SERVANTHOOD



UNSTABLE BASE

To mankind, the Principle of Servanthood, when applied to an organisation is foolhardy in the extreme! There seem to be a mass of the least skilled people at the top, who are unlikely to agree amongst themselves most of the time, dictating how the organisation is to be run.

Of course we occasionally pretend, at election time in democratic countries, to apply a human version of the servanthood principle to

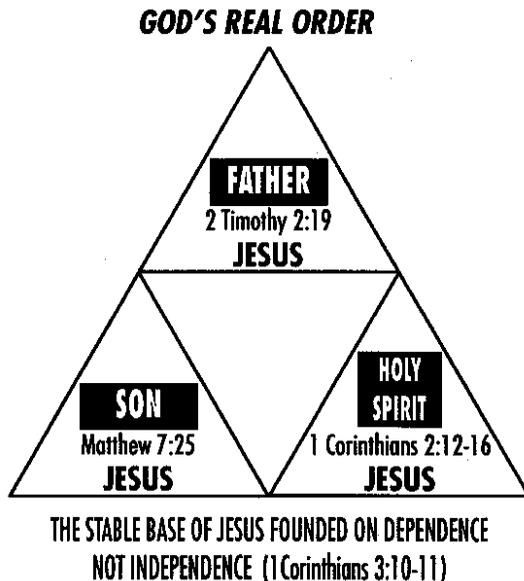
political government. The day after the elections are over, the government quickly reverts to the authoritarian style - until the next election! We all smile, or cry, when a politician claims to be the ' peoples servant' , for we know that, through our fallen human nature, this is unlikely to be the reality. Self interest nearly always wins!

GOD' S TRUE ORDER

Is based upon us becoming like Jesus, the ultimate servant. For the Godly model to work well, we at all levels, from people, to pastor, to pope, need to be applying the principle of servanthood to our lives.

This is going to require a radical change in our way of thinking and an even greater change in the way we live.

While we can somewhat determine to become a servant to others, we first need to become a servant of the Father, as Jesus was. For He could not have served the people as He did without seeking out His Father' s will and then doing it. It is the same for us! God' s order can only be built by total obedience to the Fathers will, as shown to us through the life of Jesus. Then, and only then, will we be able to operate in the true servant role He desires of each one of us.



THE FOUNDATION

As we look at our diagram we can see that our unstable base is extended, made stable as we build our lives upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. Lives based on godly dependence rather than worldly independence.

¹⁰ By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. ¹¹ For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:10-11)

For, by definition, a servant must have a master. So the church and our lives are to be built upon obedience to will of God the Father as revealed through the Holy Spirit and demonstrated in the life and Word of Jesus.

FOUNDED UPON JESUS

Jesus is revealed in the Word, the Bible, the God inspired record of His life. We are to do what he did. To be dependent upon His example:

²⁴ “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. (Matthew 7:24-25)

REVEALED THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is our day to day communication channel, advising us of the truths of God and the direction he desires us to take in our daily lives.

However, as it is written: ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him’— ¹⁰but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. ¹¹ For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² We have not received the spirit

of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. ¹³ This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. ¹⁴ The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: ¹⁶ 'For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?' But we have the mind of Christ.
(1 Corinthians 2:9-16)

DOING THE WILL OF THE FATHER

Jesus provided the ultimate example of obedience when He agreed to die for you and me.

³⁹ *Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.'* (Matthew 26:39)

Obeying God's will is shown in us through the lives we lead. If we confess to belong to Him, we are obligated to do His will, to lead servant lives. For the true servant has turned away from the wickedness of self-centred, fallen man.

¹⁹ *Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: 'The Lord knows those who are his,' and, 'Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.'*
(2 Timothy 2:19)

JESUS - REFLECTION OF THE FATHER - PROMISER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Our life and faith is founded upon and centred round the person of Jesus.

⁶ *Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'* ⁷ *If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.'*

⁸ Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.' Jesus answered: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. ¹¹ Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. ¹² I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. ¹⁵ 'If you love me, you will obey what I command. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.
(John 14:6-17)

For in Jesus is all truth. As we become more like Him, both individually and as a church, we will get closer to restoring the mankind's servanthood role, seen in the Garden of Eden, before the 'fruit' got in the way.

²¹ To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ²² 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.' ²³ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (1 Peter 2:21-5)

TODAY' S LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE!

The ' setting apart' of leadership to a place ' of honour' above the people, permeates the culture of today' s church. The church will not change until a true attitude of servanthood permeates leadership as the Scriptures specify.

²⁶ But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. ²⁷ For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.
(Luke 22:26-7)

It is done in so many subtle ways, that many of us are completely unaware of what happens. Please read on with an open mind and do not immediately take offense! These include.

- 1. Dress:** While the robes and regalia of the ' high church' are the most obvious example, there are more subtle ones too. Many ministers and pastors wear a ' dog collar' , as a uniform to distinguish their position from the people. Even subtler are those who decry dog collars but button up their shirt to the collar instead, a ' Clayton' s' dog collar.

Still others dress up in an expensive suit and tie, which their congregation cannot either afford or choose not to wear. In many places it is thought that the Holy Spirit comes dressed in a suit and tie, and speaks with a shout! The exact opposite of what the Holy Spirit truly is, but it feels and sounds good to our worldly nature.

From the Old Testament when the Lord appeared to Elijah:

There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁰ He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." ¹¹ The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the

mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by. Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. ¹² After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' (1 Kings 19:9-13)

And with Jesus in the New:

'And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. (Matthew 6:5-8)

And as Jesus did:

³⁵ *Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.* (Mark 1:35)

Of course, culture impinges heavily in the area of dress codes. But it does not affect the overriding principle of not overdressing to separate, to effectively place oneself above your people.

Some cultures too, effectively live their lives through their pastors. Seeing one dress and live at a standard above them pleases them. This is not scriptural and all too easily leads to the situation that Jesus criticized the Pharisees for, even if it is not intended.

⁴⁶ *‘Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. ⁴⁷ They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely.’* (Luke 20:46-7)

2. **Seating:** Taking or expecting the place of honour.

At any function the guests of honour will sit ' nearest the action' . Normally at the front, or in the middle, in the case of a circular arrangement, where honored guests become ' the centre of attention' as the well-known saying goes. Jesus clearly saw the problems of pride that can so easily arise.

⁷ *When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: ⁸ ‘When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. ⁹ If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this man your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. ¹¹ For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.’* (Luke 14:7-11)

a. **IN THE CHURCH:** How does this apply in the church? In the seating pattern throughout! The pastor/s will sit in the front row, more often than not on the left hand side. I am not sure why the left, but that is my experience of the many churches I visit. The elders and the deacons will sit in the next row/s, then the keenest members with finally, the least committed at the back.

Amazingly, this pattern applies with children too, in Africa. The keenest ones, and they are really keen and responsive, will sit at the front, while the ones you can see don't want to be there, emigrate to the back!

This 'natural law' unfortunately develops both a comfort zone and a class system within the church. Ask the people at the back if they would like to sit at the front! "No, that's for the really spiritual ones. We're not good enough to sit there!" And how many pastors want to sit at the back? Yet experience again tells me that the back is usually the best place to get a spiritual and physical overview of what is happening in the church.

The concept of servanthood should make leadership think again about taking the 'best seat' in the front row/s.

b. **OUTSIDE THE CHURCH:** We need to follow the pattern of the previous scripture. Do not accept better food than others. Or being served first. Or sitting in the most comfortable seats separated from others.

3. Pastor Entering During or After Worship: Again, this is a very common practise. And other than the obvious spiritual side, for the pastor needs the worship more than anyone else, the late entry again separates one from the people. Time needed for prayer is no excuse. Simply come earlier!

4. Preaching From a Pulpit: When you go into an older cathedral you see the preacher go up the stairs to a raised pulpit where literally, they speak down to the people.

Of course, we don't do that in modern churches! Or do we?

Firstly, we will generally speak from a raised platform. This is of course, practical, to be seen by the people. But how high does it need to be? Can we come down off it?

Secondly, very often still there is a considerable gap between the stage and the people. Maybe the choir, or leadership, sits here at a 90-degree angle to others, so pushing the congregation further back.

Thirdly, most preachers will stand behind a pulpit. Practical again, for something is needed to hold our notes. But does the pulpit have to be so big and ornate?

5. **Guests or Leaders on Stage or in a Special Area:** Separated and raised above the people. Often looking at the back of the preacher. Maybe they know the best view! But surely, they cannot receive all the Lord has for them in that position.
6. **Larger, Classier Chairs for Pastors and Guests:** Why should the pastor be more comfortable than the people? Because he is better at staying awake? Or perhaps because he doesn't have to listen to his own preaching! Further spiritual separation.
7. **The Use of Titles:** This is probably the worst, yet most ingrained and difficult to change means of separation of leadership from the people. And it is not Biblical!

⁸ 'But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. ⁹ And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. ¹⁰ Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. ¹¹ The greatest among you will be your servant. ¹² For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Matthew 23:8-12)

Let's have a look at the Letters of the New Testament where the writers introduce themselves to the people they are writing to.

ROMANS: *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle*

1 CORINTHIANS: *Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes,*

2 CORINTHIANS: *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,*

GALATIANS: *Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by man,*

EPHESIANS: *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,*

And others similar to these by Paul:

JAMES: *James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,*

1 PETER: *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,*

2 PETER: *Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,*

2 JOHN: *The elder,*

JUDE: *Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James,*

REVELATION: *The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,*

In each and every case their ministry gifting and position is used as a job description and not a title! In fact, Paul, James, Peter, John and Jude all describe themselves as servants!

Yet in the church, we use job descriptions as titles more than they do in the world! This clearly reveals the level of pride that exists amongst the leadership of the church today. Supposedly in the name of honour! In reality, to raise one up!

This is particularly so amongst ' Pastors' and ' Revs' . While you may argue that the title is simply showing respect to the position, the reality is that the title automatically places a barrier between ' the Pastor' and the people.

Apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher should never be spelt with a capital! Unless, of course, they are at the beginning of a sentence, and then only to keep English teachers happy!

³ *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.* ⁴ *Each of you should look not only*

to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: (Philippians 2:3-5)

The role of leadership is to be that of a servant, as illustrated in the introductions to the Letters above.

¹⁰ Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 4:10-11)

The church will not move into the fullness of servanthood until the use of the ministry gifts as job titles ceases.

Worldly ways have penetrated and influenced the church in many ways. The problem is that we often don't realize how much we have been affected by the world and its way of doing things. The enemy in fact takes, twists, and exaggerates these things so that become more extreme inside the church than in the world!

We need to seek the Father's will for our lives through the guidance of the Holy Spirit to follow the example Jesus gave us in His Word if we are to be truly become the servants we are meant to be.

RELYING UPON THE GIFTS

A big danger for those in ministry is to rely upon their spiritual gifts rather than upon the gift's giver!

Prior to a trip to Africa to share with leadership there, the Lord gave me a dream. Please, this is not meant to be theologically precise, but it graphically makes a vital point for all involved in ministry. Here it is:

Two people died and went to heaven. They knocked on the Pearly Gate and asked St Peter to let them in. (As you can see this is not a theological presentation!)

"Why should I let you in?" St Peter asked.

The first person was a beautifully dressed pastor. He replied, "I have had the largest church in town for 20 years. My people loved me as if I was God. I have seen 2,000 people saved and 4,000 people healed. I think I deserve to come in."

The second person, a cleaning lady, was dressed in a dirty, plain blue smock. She explained, "Well, St Peter, I don't have any of the spiritual gifts the pastor had. I haven't done much for you at all, really! But I did clean the church each week. And the toilets too, as no-one else would. And when my neighbour was sick, I looked after her children, and took her some meals. So please, may I come in."

St Peter then did something really strange. He said, "Take your clothes off! For your clothes represent your spiritual 'gifts' which now are to be returned to God. You have only had them on loan."

And when they took their clothes off, the Pastor was fat and flabby underneath. For he had relied upon his spiritual gifts to get him into the Kingdom. He had started off with a good relationship with Jesus, but over the years, as he got busier doing God's work, he had let his relationship slide. His 'ministry' had taken him over and was all consuming in his life.

His quiet times reduced in quantity and time until finally, they stopped altogether. Yet he still looked to be a good Christian, for his pastoral spiritual gifts carried him through.

The cleaning lady however, had a beautiful, shapely, firm body, for she had been working out in the gymnasium of the 'fruit' of the Spirit.

The dream ended.

Who got into heaven? That revelation is up to you. But who had stored up most treasure? We all know the answer to that!

Now we can better understand the meaning of a favourite saying of Jesus, "The first shall be last and the last shall be first."

And it helps explain:

²¹ 'Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matthew 7:21-3)

For it is by our 'fruits', not our 'gifts', that we shall be known in the Kingdom of God.

Amazingly, on that trip, when in Botswana, I stayed with Pastor Henry, who employed a cleaning lady in a blue smock, just as I had seen in my dream. I spoke to her. Like most cleaning ladies, she didn't talk too much. But when it came time to go home, she took off the smock. Underneath she was wearing a tight top and blue jeans. What a transformation! She was a beautiful young lady! What a confirmation!

You see, as leaders, we can so easily rely upon our gifts to get us through. The genuine pastoral gift for instance, includes having a servant heart. So we can look to be a 'fine' Christian, even when we neglect our relationship

with Jesus, and forget to grow ' fruit' in our life.

But it is the ' fruit' , not the ' gifts' , that we take with us into eternity. Would you rather look good for a few years here on earth, or grow everlasting fruit lasting forever?

I' ve always had an eye for the best bargain! You too?

SERVANTHOOD - A WAY OF LIFE

Some little time ago now, my wife Kathy and I were individually told by the Lord to shift to another church in a different city. We were both surprised - but obedient. Within 6 weeks we had uprooted ourselves and shifted 300km to where we now live.

Changing churches is always a culture shock! This was no exception! For the spiritual emphasis was entirely different. Our previous church centred round teaching, prayer, warfare and prophecy. But our new church is based upon serving the community and through this, evangelism. And it is growing.

Searching for a single description of Jesus that incorporates the various facets of His nature (actually the Fruit of the Spirit) the word 'servant' best fits the bill.

As we come to maturity and develop large, luscious, ripe, juicy fruit in our life, so we naturally will take on more of the role of a servant. Then we will be as Jesus was. Surely the aim for all of us!