

## General Topics :: titles

**titles - posted by rainydaygirl, on: 2015/5/15 16:59**

i was reading: Matthew 23:8-10 New King James Version (NKJV)

8 But you, do not be called "Rabbi"; for One is your Teacher, the Christ and you are all brethren. 9 Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. 10 And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.

Jesus Himself taught that we are not to use titles and yet today the church uses them all the time? Why? Why are some called "pastor" when Jesus said to use no titles? In reading the New Testament I find descriptions used to describe relationships but I can not find any examples where titles are used in addressing people in daily life? are there any?

rdg

**Re: titles - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2015/5/15 17:47**

One short perspective on this, I wrote this devotional thought on the verse:

And do not call anyone on earth "father," for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. - Matthew 23:9

Leaving a Presbyterian Church today at the end of the service we sang 3 amens, which is typical in many reformed churches dating back to the times of Luther, Calvin and others. This practice was an earlier practice in Church history going back even past the time of the reformation to more eastern Church practice. Sometimes we are quick to think that is useless or why follow that practice anymore, by doing so we can uproot and nullify hundreds of years of Church history and practice. It is hard to believe it is true but during the times of the Apostles on the earth there were creeds and very basic simple liturgy in early Church meetings. It is clear through the Epistles that there were common sayings that at times were repeated by the entire Church body. Evangelicals in America come from a rich lineage of denominations that stem mostly from the reformation period all of these carry with them traditions and practices that date back to the early first 200 years of the Church.

In modern days the word Pastor is acknowledged as the leader of a Church, it is interesting to know that that word is only found once in the New Testament (Ephesians 4:11). What this term has been associated with is rather to speak of the Overseer, Elder, or Bishop, depending on which translation you use (1 Timothy 3:1). That word in Greek is "episkopos" which can be translated oversight, overseer, literally one who has oversight over others. Even the word Pastor which means Shepherd conveys the idea of one having responsibility over others. Other words used to convey Church leaders in history were also Presbyter, Priest and Father. In the term Father we see this carried in the New Testament writings in many places where Paul himself speaks in this way (1 Corinthians 4:15, 1 Thessalonians 2:11). John Calvin says, "While Paul claims for himself the appellation of father, he does it in such a manner as not to take away or diminish the smallest portion of the honor which is due to God. But they whom he is graciously pleased to employ as his ministers for that purpose, are likewise allowed to share with him in his honor." When we read Matthew 23 in context we see our Lord was speaking of "hypocrisy" and those taking any credit from God to themselves in an wrong way. Multitudes of modern evangelical pastors call themselves "teachers" so it is not the title itself that is wrong but the heart disposition behind it. One could not have any title but be filled with pride and seeking honour and recognition. As our Lord concludes with saying, "The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Matthew 23:11-12).

**Re: - posted by rainydaygirl, on: 2015/5/15 18:13**

thank you for the response but still i wonder why we do something that Jesus commands us not to do? why call so so by a title when Jesus commanded against this practice? As I said I can find no where in the New Testament where people are addressing one another with titles as we do today. I just learned today that the word "Deacon" actually meant "servant" in the greek. that is interesting when you think about how most organized religions today hold to titles and roles.

Even Paul never instructed anyone that I can find to address him with a title. he spoke about his relationship with Timothy being like that of a father to a son but i can't find any place where he was addressed in such a manner??

its interesting that while Paul led many as an apostle he always came across as a servant. learning that true Church is about being servants to one another as a family with Jesus as the HEAD.

rdg

edit for spelling error

**Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2015/5/15 18:58**

Sister,

Here is a verse for example: Philippians 1:1

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons.

You are very much right that all true leaders should consider themselves "servants" as Paul and Timothy do so here.

They mention 2 offices: Overseers and Deacons.

Overseers - The word "overseer" (Gk. episkopos ) properly, an overseer; a man called by God to literally "keep an eye on" His flock (the Church, the body of Christ), i.e. to provide personalized (first hand) care and protection (note the epi, "on").

Deacons - Greek word diakonos (διάκονος) standard ancient Greek word meaning "servant", "waiting-man", "minister", or "messenger". A biblical description of the qualities required of a deacon, and of his household, can be found in 1 Timothy 3:1-13

Elders - Another word for leaders in the Church are: Elder (greek: presbyteros) is the most commonly used term for elder in the New Testament, stemming from presbus, elderly. While no specific age is given, the connotation of seniority and experience in this term emphasizes the nature of the position and the character of the person, implying maturity, dignity, experience and honor. The modern English words "priest" or "presbyter" are derived etymologically from presbyteros. qualifications for presbyters are given in 1 Timothy 5.

When Paul says together with the "the overseers and deacons." he is giving them titles by stating that is their role (title).

Galatians 1:1 Paul, an apostle.

Clearly many phrases like this in the New Testament are speaking of the office or title, it could be correct to say the Apostle Paul, yet the wording given is Paul, called to be an Apostle, or "an apostle." etc.

Though the emphasis of the early Church was on a familial aspect, there was a clear sense of the authority of leaders in the New Testament. I personally see the Shepherd and Father terminology much more embedded in the mindset of early

y Christians then governmental ruler etc. The eastern culture is different then the western culture and is much more relational and family based.

**Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2015/5/15 19:05**

I think both Greg and rdg raise good points. I used to see this as a serious issue when I was very fond of a certain type of house church movement which is very much against organized churches. Personally I would still prefer to do without the titles but see this as an "in-house" debate among Christians and not as a serious issue which should divide us. Some pastors from organized churches do not seem to like using titles for themselves (a few examples that come to mind are Zac Poonen and John MacArthur). Nowadays, if I discern that it's that important to a pastor to be addressed by the title, I tend to choose to call him by the title out of respect even though I would not prefer it. I do not believe I'm disobeying the Matt. 23 passage in doing that. I believe that what matters is where one's heart is when addressing someone by a title. In other words, do we call them by titles because we place them on a forbidden pedestal or simply out of respect? I've always found it interesting to note that we do not see titles used for evangelists that much other than in certain charismatic circles.

**Re: , on: 2015/5/15 19:05**

Quote:  
-----rdg said: but still i wonder why we do something that Jesus commands us not to do? why call so so by a title when Jesus commanded against this practice?  
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I think it boils down to ego. People want a title.

1 Cor. 4:6-21 speaks nicely about this topic. Also, 2 Cor. 11 (entire chapter).

I've been to numerous Protestant churches and some get offended when you don't refer to someone with their 'title'. I laugh because their title gives them no real authority.

Paul would refer to himself as an apostle but...he'd state how many beatings he got. Note the two citations in 1st and 2nd Cor. I mentioned.

Also, note how many '1st baptist church of...' and '1st assembly of god church of ....' and '1st Presbyterian church of...' there are. Much of the Western church has a lot of ego, pure and simple.

Quote:  
-----rdg said: its interesting that while Paul led many as an apostle he always came across as a servant.  
-----

I think this was true for much of the early church. Peter, John, Andrew, etc. They were all servants with different tasks. One steered the ship, another cleaned the deck. I believe it was this equality that helped foster the Kingdom of God during the early church. They took Jesus' teachings serious.

**Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2015/5/15 20:25**

Just to clarify, I do not doubt for one moment that the "offices" or "roles" or "functions" of pastors/elders/bishops and deacons and deaconesses are biblical and in operation today. I think that the main thing rdg is stating here is that in the Word we do not see ministers placing a "title" in front of their names, such as "Apostle Paul" or "Evangelist Philip" or "Deacon Stephen". Instead we see them addressed by their regular names and their roles are mentioned afterward but not in the sense of a title. Again, I think there's a good case for that and I think it shows humility on the part of God's servants. The title "Reverend" also comes to mind. I do not understand how it is that that title came into being among protestants considering what it seems to imply.

**Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2015/5/15 21:07**

Thought I'd try to reason briefly concerning the distinction between an "office/role" and a "title". Some people who hold certain positions do have titles before their names (such as doctors and government officials). But there are also many of other types of offices or lines of work which do not come with "titles" as we are referring to here. For example, you won't usually hear someone being called "Nurse So and So" or "Office Administrator So and So". Instead those types of workers are addressed by their regular names first and then their role usually comes after their names. I think it's because society has not deemed those types of workers to be worthy of such honor as other types of workers. And I think that's probably why we do not see God's ministers addressed with titles in front of their names in the Word, because the Lord wants all his people to be humble, including those in authority such as pastors. That's not to say that the pastoral and deacon's offices aren't worthy of honor and respect, but simply to say that they must not be esteemed more highly than they ought. I think it's a good testimony when we see a leader refusing to place a "title" in front of their name as opposed to demanding one as we seem to see much of today.

**Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2015/5/15 21:52**

One more thing for clarification :). I also do not doubt for one moment that the Word of God clearly teaches that pastors have a real authority delegated to them in the local church. I know that some who are part of the house church movement deny that authority and endeavor to place pastors on the same level of authority as everyone else. I think that that view weakens the actual role of the pastor as taught in Scripture. That said, I also do not see that as an "essential" issue.

**Re: - posted by rainydaygirl, on: 2015/5/16 10:47**

I do think it has to do with ego. men/women want titles, that want power and authority. those who have been given true responsibility become servants and do so because of the desire and love for Christ and His Church.

rdg

**Re: titles - posted by Theophila (), on: 2015/5/28 14:14**

I have learned by hard experience when I meet a minister who needs to have a title to feel respected....I give them a very wide berth.

If as a minister, you need other brethren to attach a proper title to your name, 'Houston, we really have a problem'.

On the question of biblical authority, I don't disagree that spiritual shepherds do have spiritual authority over the sheep but it's not something the sheep give them. The Lord, Who called them bestows it on them. Getting a seminary/bible college degree doesn't grant anyone spiritual authority.

And yes, I believe all brethren are equal before the Lord, their roles notwithstanding. That said, in matters of corporate life and function, the elder/pastor/bishop does have the last word.

Reminds me of the strong words our Lord used with respect to the Nicolaitians in the book of Revelation. Strong and true words. Let all who need to be addressed by titles take those words to heart.

**Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2015/5/28 14:48**

Quote:  
-----Reminds me of the strong words our Lord used with respect to the Nicolaitians in the book of Revelation. Strong and true words. Let all who need to be addressed by titles take those words to heart.  
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I wrote this short devotion on this topic if you are interested;

The Doctrine of the Nicolaitans

But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. - Revelation 2:6

We are taught things and all around us others are taught the same things so we are not prone to question is it right what we are believing. For many Bible passages this happens where there is an modern accepted definition and to question it makes you seem almost rebellious against others. Seldom many go past what they heard to research that possibly early believers thought of this passage and doctrine. The early Church Fathers at times help us understand some of these terms that we would simply have to guess otherwise at the meaning. Many modern believers take the word etymology of Nicolaitans, Nico meaning "victory" and Laitans meaning "people." In short, the modern belief by some is that the doctrine was the separation of special clergy above normal believers, and that those clergy controlled and ruled over them. Many who hold to this view that God hates such things are usually in modern autonomous evangelical assemblies who feel any leadership over a group of local churches is wrong.

We get a much different picture when we delve into Church history. It was commonly held amongst many of the early church leaders that the Nicolaitans were followers of the deacon Nicolas of Antioch (Acts 6:5) who ended up teaching wrong doctrines. Irenaeus said, "The Nicolaitanes are the followers of that Nicolas who was one of the seven first ordained to the diaconate by the apostles. They lead lives of unrestrained indulgence. The character of these men is very plainly pointed out in the Apocalypse of John, as teaching that it is a matter of indifference to practice adultery, and to eat things sacrificed to idols." What is sobering to us in this is that Nicolas again was one of the specially chosen Deacons who were chosen by the Apostles before the Lord. Balaam also was a prophet of the Lord who erred and his doctrine and teachings are condemned in the the same practices as the Nicolaitans. We see in context that they were teaching to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication (Revelation 2:14-15). Interestingly, these were the chief matters condemned by the decree of the Apostolic council (Acts 15:29). So we see a much different picture from early Church history and namely the Book of Acts. It also paints for us a very sobering account of an early Bishop of the Church apostatizing into false doctrines that the Lord hated. May God keep us away from such errors and to confess and follow the faith once given to the saints (Jude 1:3).

**Re: - posted by Theophila (), on: 2015/6/9 20:31**

Thank you, brother.

Interesting view but it still doesn't detract from the fact that titles create a false dichotomy in the Church body; the 'anointed' ones and the regular/ordinary brethren.

I do not believe the offices mentioned in 1 Cor 12 and Ephesians 4, were titles to be affixed to names. I believe they are callings and giftings bestowed on individuals for the edification of the Body. Having read some of brother Watchman Nee's writings, I believe he was a prophet. How ridiculous it would be to refer to him as Prophet Watchman Nee! Same with brother Zac Poonen. There's just something very wrong with titles in the midst of the brethren.

**Re: , on: 2015/6/9 21:15**

I am deeply offended that being called Rev is somehow inappropriate.  
Can I change my handle to Bro Cashinow?

**Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2015/6/10 1:20**

I do not believe in titles like Rev, Pastor etc. Even Paul referred to roles in Church as Overseer, deacons etc. He never used them as titles before a name to refer to someone or even himself. They are roles and responsibilities, not titles before or after their name. For example wanting someone to be called with a title, say Pastor or Rev so&so is clearly against God's word.

There is just one title that Jesus gave to all of us, which is, 'We are Just unworthy slaves, who only did what he was told'. Any other title is clearly unscriptural.

Roles and responsibilities are not unscriptural, to be an overseer in Church is not unscriptural but seeking to be called an Overseer as title before one's name is wrong.

**Re: - posted by Theophila (), on: 2015/6/10 7:40**

Dear one,

Have you researched the etymology of the word, 'Reverend'?

I could be wrong but from my little search, it seems to mean 'one to be revered' or 'one worthy of great honor'. Also seems to me only the Lamb of God is worthy of such a title.

A personal question: would you feel less respected in your fellowship if the brethren called you, 'Bro. Cashinow' if prior to now, you were referred to as 'Rev'?

Just a thought....

**Re: - posted by twayneb (), on: 2015/6/10 11:23**

I pondered this question for a bit so I could crystalize what I wanted to say. Jesus said that leadership in the body of Christ should not be as the gentiles who lord over those they are called to lead. Let's face it, most all of us have grown up in a heathen or gentile culture. We see leadership much as we see the carrot that is dangled in front of us. The next level is always a tantalizing temptation for our human ego. We easily bring the culture of the business world with the CEO and multiple layers of leadership, each with its own level of power and prestige, into the church. This causes us to very selfishly pervert Biblical truth about leadership.

I have seen people clamor for leadership in the church. They think they should be looked upon as a leader and are offended when this does not happen according to their own estimation. Yet they still desire to be looked upon as leaders so they can have the prestige of position.

The absence of leadership is anarchy, even in the church. God has set leaders in the body of Christ. Leaders are examples and servants to the body. Jesus said that if a person desires to be great in the Kingdom, that person must become the servant of all. Leadership is set in the body for specific purposes. Elders or Bishops (the terms are Biblically synonymous) are given the task of oversight of the body much as a shepherd oversees and feeds his flock. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are gifts to the body for the purpose of bringing the body into maturity. They are ordained by God alone, recognized by mature, established leadership in the body, and minister almost exclusively to the body, which in turn ministers to one another and to the world around them. Deacons are given ministerial oversight of specific aspects of servant ministry to the church, i.e., the feeding of widows.

As long as the title we apply is simply descriptive of the ministry, the title is not a bad thing. It is much the same as calling a hand saw a hand saw because we use it and our hand to saw a piece of lumber. But if our perversion of Biblical leadership with the Gentile paradigm leads us to seek the title for selfish purposes, better to have no other title than brother or sister so and so. Hence Jesus' instruction on Matthew 23.

We must come to the place where we see the body of Christ as it should be. We are one interconnected whole in which each member is responsible for walking in the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to supply to the body as God has ordained him or her to supply. Anything else is born of jealousy and envy from the flesh after the pattern of the world, and not after God.

Unfortunately we as the church are so influenced by the world (We have not heeded Romans 12:1-2) that a Biblical pattern of leadership in the church is rare and a worldly, ladder-climbing pattern is often the norm.

I also see a form of leadership "worship" that takes place as well. We hold our favorite leader in such a reverential position that we form a denomination with his teaching or even his name at the head. True Biblical leadership is in mutual submission to the body just as the body is in submission to that leadership, and all are in submission to Christ.

In our fellowship, the man who God called to be pastor is the one whom God entrusted with the primary vision for our body. In that we are all in submission to him. Yet, he is also in submission to the others who God has raised up to be overseers in the body. Decisions are made by mutual consent in most cases and it is amazing to watch the way the men come to the table having heard the same thing from the Holy Spirit. I cannot recall a time when we have not been in unity, but we are committed to laying before God in a case of disagreement until we know what He desires for His body. We are simply servants who desire to carry out His will for our church so that He might use us to reach our community. I pray that this attitude continue. It is really the key to unlocking what God desires.



So titles for the sake of identification are no big deal. Titles for any other reason are a big deal. I guess it is all the attitude of the heart. That being said, I think downplaying titles is probably wise.

**Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2015/6/10 11:31**

To me I am not against titles, they have been used by 95%+ (my guess) of all Christian leaders for the last 1900 years. I wrote these 2 short articles on topics related to this, mentioning the scripture passage in Matthew 20 that you mentioned :

Being A Spiritual Leader is like Being a Slave

And whoever wants to be first must be your slave. – Matthew 20:27

Our Lord shows us in this passage we are looking at that the oneâ€™s that desire to be great and feel called of the Lord to be leaders need to seek to be servants. The mother of two of the Disciples comes to our Lord and asks if they could sit in the places of honour in the coming kingdom. Jesusâ€™ response did not nullify her request as he stated that these positions were only to be given by his Father in heaven. Yet he did take the opportunity to teach his followers a lesson of the type of leaders he was looking for in his kingdom. He shared that the worldâ€™s rulers and kingdom work in a way of force, and strength. But those in his kingdom are to operate as servants and slaves. Leaders who are performing duties for another in lowliness and serving other people as being owned by God himself. Seeking to be in such a position in Godâ€™s kingdom is death, meaning that you must die to yourself and spend your life serving others. Jesus did not in anyway say there were not leaders or that they were not be respected and be over people. What he said is that the heart of leaders that truly represent his kingdom are to be slaves and have servitude as their foundation. If you are a leader of a Church or movement you need to write –slave– on your office door, you are a slave of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:1) and you need to do his bidding. When leaders assume positions in the Church who have not died to their carnal nature and are not slaves, they can do great damage to the work of God's kingdom. An un-crucified leader will be against the purposes of God, just like Judas who in the end crucified our Lord.

We should also realize that leaders in the body of Christ though they are slaves still have great authority from the Lord. Believers are to willfully submit under the authority of true leaders in the body of Christ and cannot be forced. If you are not able to submit to a servant leader then go to another Church or place where you can. It is damaging not just to yourself but to others when you fight against God ordained leadership as imperfect as it can be at times. Godâ€™s way is the way of peace and he has a place for you to be to submit under authority where brethren are slaves in their position of leadership. The Apostle Paul says to Timothy that those who desire to be an Overseer desire a good thing (1 Timothy 3:1). Yet it is not to a life of luxury and happiness but suffering as a slave for others that one commits to in being a Christian leader. Spiritual Eldership is very solemn because those leaders will account for those that submit to them (Hebrews 13:17). If we do not submit to Christian leaders then they will not give account for us, so submitting ourselves to them is very important. When we submit to a Overseer we are putting ourselves under their protection, it is a choice of the will, we must still use our judgment and reasoning but realize we have safety in submissiveness and humility. The world teaches independence but the Church teaches submission as the way of godliness and life in believers. True freedom is found in submission and humility under slaves of Jesus Christ. What a truly upside down kingdom, but a glorious kingdom we are in as believers.

Church Hierarchy and Submission To Spiritual Authority

Instead, we were like young children among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her children. 1 Thessalonians 2:7

There are believers in our day that teach and believe that any hierarchical authority in the Church is wrong. That to submit to a Christian leader as above one is wrong and to have any leaders who are above other leaders is wrong also. Such thinking lauds the idea of the autonomous local Church, meaning that believers can act independently and freely in a local area without any jurisdiction or control. But as we look at the New Testament as a whole we see the Church was anything but autonomous. The Church was a family, they were co-dependent, they were submissive to Apostles, evangelists, elders and prophets would travel amongst different Churches in cities. Paul the Apostle says to the believers in Thessalonica: –Even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority– (1 Thessalonians 2:7). Clearly he was teaching that as an Apostle of Jesus Christ they had authority given to them by God (Matthew 28:18). Though acting as spiritual parents they did not desire in anyway to impose control or authority on people but came with tenderness, love and meekness. Our Lord said his leaders would not impose themselves like the gentiles over others but rather to com

e as slaves. The word picture of an infant needing the help of the mother is very revealing showing the need for believers to submit to their spiritual leadership for the good of the believers to be fed the pure milk of the Word of God (1 Peter 2:2).

Such leaders such as Apostles had spiritual authority over local Elders and were respected as such. This submission was willing as people respected those Apostles especially that saw our Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh (John 1:14). Cyprian says, "The Lord warns us, He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. (Matthew 12:30) He who breaks the peace and the unity of Christ, is an opponent of Christ. He who gathers anywhere than in the Church, scatters the Church of Christ." Though God's Church is far from perfect we need to submit to the plan of God in establishing leadership and those who can feed and care for believers. No denomination or Church work is perfect, each has faults and problems over time. We are to seek to be humble, join with what God is doing (1 Peter 5:5). Seek to submit under Church leadership that is meek like Moses was (Numbers 12:3). For Paul the Apostle spoke of himself as being gentle, like children amongst the believers. As slaves yet having authority like a master. To fight against hierarchy and leadership in the Church is going against God's order. Find a place where you can submit under godly men and start to gather with the Lord helping those sheep who are astray. The work of God will go on, God will always establish a wineskin for his work in any generation.