

# Servanthood Leadership

Maturing In The Faith: Shelf 3 — Volume 22

There are fundamental concepts in the Scriptures concerning relationships that are often quite contrary to the accepted behavioral norms of the world in which we live today.

One of these Spirit-inspired norms is critical in defining how Christians are to relate with one another as the organic body of Christ. This is a relational norm that is often the most violated



Meercats Looking Out For One Another.

mandate of the New Testament, particularly in view of the incarnation of the Son of God. Jesus explained this to His disciples, *“You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them. And their great ones exercise authority over them. But it will not be so among you”* (Mk 10:42,43).

## A. Fellowship Without Lordship

No interpretation need be exercised to understand what Jesus meant in the statement of Mark 10:42,43. **He simply mandated that there would be no lordship authorities among His disciples.** Nevertheless, this very clear mandate in reference to relationships among Christians is a principle that is often ignored by those who seek to rule over their fellow disciples. When this command is ignored, the relationship that disciples must maintain with one another becomes very dysfunctional. In fact, if one would seek to relate with his or her fellow Christian in a lording manner, then he or she is not walking according to the gospel. We must never forget that living according to

the gospel is living according to One who humbled Himself from being in the spirit, to being in the flesh of man. Our gospel relationship with one another is defined in this way in the following statement of the Holy Spirit through Paul:



The Leadership Of Jesus Is Different Than The World.

*Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God. **But He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross** (Ph 2:5-8).*

**Christians must behave in their relationships with one another as the Son of God behaved in His incarnational relationship with us.**

- 1. T or F:** The behavior concepts of leadership among Christians is the same as it is among those of the world.

In order to explain the relational servitude by which His disciples were to function as His body of gospel-obedient believers, Jesus illustrated His teaching on relationships with the practice of slavery that was common in the socio-economic structure of the Roman Empire. Jesus used the relationship of slaves (bondservants) with one another to define the relationship that Christians, as fellow slaves, would function with one another in His kingdom.

**When One Becomes A Christian, He is Born Into A Community Of Slaves.**

Slaves were **fellow** bondservants (or, servants) (Mt 18:28-35; 24:45-51). They were equal among themselves. Jesus explained that the disciples' relationships with one another must be **as fellow slaves who were equal with one another**. The disciples understood the slavery of the Roman Empire, and thus they understood what



**HE DIED FOR US**  
And ... We Die For One Another!

Jesus meant when He spoke of them as fellow slaves of one another (Mk 10:44,45).

**There is no competition among slaves as to who is the greatest or who is in control.**

2. **T or F:** The disciples in the first century better understood the social responsibility of being a bondservant than we do today.

## **B. Fellow Workers In Christ**

Being “fellows” in Christ meant that **no disciple was given the right to have authority over any other disciple**. Before His departure from them, therefore, Jesus reminded His disciples that **all authority among all His fellow bondservants would always remain with Him** (Mt 28:18). Discipleship, therefore, **meant serving one another as fellow workers in Christ**, not being in positions of authority over one another.

After the ascension of Jesus, the Holy Spirit continued to define the relational function that the disciples were to have with one another. The Spirit first focused on the reason for the disciples’ relationship as fellow members of the body. They were *“fellow heirs with Christ”* (Rm 8:17), and thus *“fellow heirs of the same body”* (Ep 3:6). The Gentiles were *“fellow citizens”* in the household of God (Ep 2:19). Now if the disciples were called to be “fellows” in reference to their salvation and kingdom citizenship, then, as Jesus had previously stated, **there were to be no lords or rulers among them**. The definition of disciples being “fellows” in their relationships with one another dismisses the possibility that one “fellow” should rise up over his other “fellows” in Christ.

**Discipleship Means That We Are Fellow Heirs And Fellow Citizens.**

**There are no bosses among fellow heirs.**

A good example of how the disciples were to behave in reference to their relationships with one another was stated by Paul in reference to Andronicus

and Junia. These two were his *“fellow prisoners who are notable among the apostles”* (Rm 16:7). Being “notable” does not mean being exalted with authority over the apostles. They were fellow prisoners “among,” but not over one another in the kingdom. Aristarchus and Epaphras were likewise fellow prisoners with Paul in Rome (Cl 4:10; Pl 23). There were no lords or rulers among fellow prisoners.

3. **T or F:** There must be ranks of authority among the disciples in order to keep order.
4. **T or F:** The fact that there was no rank of leadership among the apostles of Christ is an example that there should never be such among the disciples.

### C. Equally Among Bondservants

“Fellow” means that we equally share in the same thing, and have the same mission in life. Christians equally share together as heirs with Christ. All Christians have assumed the same mission of Christ to the world (See Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). If required, Christians equally share together as prisoners for Christ. They equally share together as citizens of the kingdom. And if necessary, they equally share together as *“fellow bondservants”* in their organic function as members of the body (Cl 1:7).

Herein is the definition of the disciples’ relationship with one another as members of the body of Christ. The absence of lords and rulers among the disciples means that there is an equality among fellow citizens. Disciples cannot equally share as fellow workers if some “fellows” are designated with authority over their fellow disciples. As soon as one of the “fellows” assumes authority over his fellows in Christ, then the one who assumes authority has made his fellow bondservants his subservient fellows. With this assumption of authority, therefore, he has denied the fellowship of equality among the disciples (See 3 Jn 9,10). He has revealed that he is not following the incarnational journey of the Son of God from heaven into this world in order to be made in the likeness of those He served (See Jn 1:14).

**Equality assumes fellowship, and thus fellowship assumes that the disciples are responsible for one another.**

An example of the disciples being responsible for one another is what the disciples did when the church was first established in Acts 2:

*Now all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they sold their possessions and goods and divided them to all, as everyone had need (At 2:44,45).*

5. **T or F:** Any disciple can assume authority over any other disciple without violating the principle that Jesus established for the apostles in the context of Mark 10.
6. **T or F:** If one is to follow the example of Jesus in His incarnation to service our problem of sin, then it is necessary that every disciple find a why he or she can serve the needs of others.

### **D. Fellow Workers In Christ**

Timothy was a fellow worker with Paul, though Paul was not a boss over Timothy (See Rm 16:21). Paul would not rule over the faith of the Corinthians, but reminded them that he was a fellow worker with them (See 2 Co 1:24). Titus was a partner and fellow worker with Paul (See 2 Co 8:23). The two sisters, Euodia and Syntyche, were also fellow workers with Paul (See Ph 4:3). In their relationships with one another, the disciples in the New Testament were identified to be fellow workers, or servants of one another (See Pl 1,24; 3 Jn 8; Rv 6:11). Being fellow workers meant that no one disciple had any authority over any other disciple.

**Being fellow workers assumes that the workers are responsible for one another.**

This is the secret to the dynamic function of the body of Christ. If there are no lords or rulers among fellow members, **then each fellow member must take ownership of his or her responsibility to be a functioning member in the body.** All members must assume their responsibility to function equally, **though**

**equality does not mean that they function in the same way.** We are all blessed with different gifts (See 1 Co 12:12-31). With the control and authority of only one Head, each fellow member assumes his or her role to function with his or her gift that was granted by the Head in order that the body function in this world.

In order to function to the best of their ability, the disciples should organize their gifts with one another. In this way the whole body functions in harmony as each member uses his or her gift to the fullest potential in order to service the needs of others.

**Dysfunctions in the body result when members refuse to function as fellow parts of the body (See Ep 4:7,8,11-16).**

**There is no competition for power or exaltation of gifts among equal fellow workers.** If Paul had authority over Apollos, then he on one occasion, could have commanded him to go to Corinth (1 Co 16:12). Since Apollos did not go when Paul requested, Apollos was not sinning against some “apostolic authority” that was supposedly invested in Paul. This one example in the behavior of Paul illustrates what Jesus meant when He stated that there would be no authorities among His disciples (Mk 10:42,43).

Another example would be the relationship between Paul and Barnabas. When Paul and Barnabas disagreed over taking John Mark on the second mission journey, Barnabas was not rebelling against any so-called apostolic authority of Paul (At 15:36-41). Paul, Apollos and Barnabas were all fellow workers, and thus, neither of them had any authority over the other, and neither had any authority over the function of the church as a whole. And for this reason, each of these men assumed their responsibility to use their gifts to be functioning fellow workers in the body of Christ. In this why they were all living the gospel of Christ because they were living as He lived for us. They thus became good example of church leadership.

**There is no such thing in the New Testament as “apostolic authority” in reference to the relational function of the members of the body of Christ with one another.**

7. \_\_\_\_\_ Which disciple (or disciples) were identified by the Holy Spirit to be servants of others?  
(A) The Corinthians, (B) Timothy, (C) Titus, (D) All the preceding
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Who did Paul not command to go to Corinth?  
(A) Apollos, (B) Timothy, (C) Titus, (D) Peter
9. **T or F:** Though Paul and Barnabas disagreed over taking John Mark on the second mission journey, Barnabas was not violating some “apostolic authority” that some believe Paul had.

## E. Living Together Incarnationally

We live in a world of lords and rulers. For this reason, our social environment makes it quite difficult for some disciples to leave the business boardroom of the corporate world, and then function in equality as fellow workers among the disciples. The boss in the boardroom is often tempted to treat his fellow workers in the body as his employees. The owner of a company often seeks to be the president of the local church. Those invested with authority in government sometimes seek the same among the disciples.

However, leaders among the members of the body do not lead with authority. The notable leaders among us do not “*lord over those entrusted*” to them, but function as “*examples to the flock*” (1 Pt 5:3). When disciples take ownership of their responsibility to function as fellow workers of the body, it is then that the body grows.

Leadership  
Among Disciples  
Is By  
**EXAMPLE.**

**Gospel-obedient people behave according to the behavior of the Son of God who became a slave to the spiritual needs of the world.**



### CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

1. What is the difference between the authority structures of the business world and the servanthood leadership of the body of Christ?
2. What is the relationship that slaves have with one another?

3. What does the word “fellow” imply concerning the disciples’ relationship with one another?
4. What is the difference between authority over one another as opposed to being responsible for one another?
5. What does the example of Paul and Apollos prove in reference to the relationship that fellow workers have with one another?

For continued research on this subject,  
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in the *Biblical Research Library*.  
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### ABREVIATIONS

#### OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

#### NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pi**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**

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