

**Is authority to be exercised from the top down, or from the bottom up, in the church and Kingdom of Jesus Christ?**

*Mat 20:20-28 (KJV, NKJV, NIV)*

One day the mother of James and John asked Jesus if her two sons could sit on His right and left hand in His Kingdom. Jesus replied that He was not able to grant this request. This is for the Father to decide. The other ten apostles were angry with James and John for making this request through their mother. So Jesus called them together and reminded them, that the rulers of the nations exercise dominion, and lord it over the people, and those who are great rule over them.

**“But,” said Jesus, “it shall not be this way with you. Whoever will be great among you, let him be your servant; and whoever will be chief among you, let him be your slave.”**

Then in v28, Jesus said, **“It is just like Me. I did not come to be served, but to serve others.”**

In this passage, Jesus is saying, that **authority among His people is to be exercised from the “bottom up.” This is how He, as the Son of Man exercised authority.**

**From Jn 13:4-17**

The night Jesus was betrayed, He washed the disciples’ feet. In doing this He was taking the place of a servant/slave. He was saying, **“If I, your Lord and Master have taken the place of a servant/slave to you, you are to do the same to one another.”**

In this passage, Jesus is saying, that the **authority of His disciples, is to operate through servanthood to others.**

**From Lk 22:24-27**

Also on the night Jesus was betrayed, after taking the Last Supper, there was a dispute among Jesus’ disciples as to who was considered to be the greatest. Jesus repeated the teaching He had given previously in *Mat 20:20-28*, and **reminded them that although He was seated in a place of authority, He was among them as One who serves.**

Here again Jesus is stating that in His church **authority operates from the “bottom up”.**

It is very important to realise and remember, that **servanthood in God’s Kingdom, is to flow out of a secure identity of who we are in Christ and God.** From the beginning of our Christian service, we have to know our identity.

(For teaching on this read Pastor’s Notes numbers: 91,127,261.

**From Phil 2:3-8**

Avoid competitive strife and pride, and **in humility recognise others as worthy of respect**, and of being served and helped in love, (v3). Do not just be concerned about your own things, **but help others to make progress too**, (v4). Have the attitude of Jesus towards others, (v5).

**He had a secure identity in God.** He knew Who He was/is in His equality with God, as God, (v6). **But He made Himself of no reputation.** He laid aside His divine glory as God and **took the form of a servant/slave**, and was made just like us, (v7).

As a man **He humbled Himself to be obedient to God’s will and go the way of the Cross for all of us**, (v8).

In this passage Jesus is the **Example of Complete Authority, taking the place of servanthood** to others, to bring us salvation.

**From Mat 18:1-4**

When the disciples asked, “Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?” (Please note that Kingdom of Heaven and Kingdom of God are identical terms. Refer to *Mat 19:23*, *Mk 10:24*, and others.) Jesus called a little child and set him in their midst. He said, “Unless you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. **And whosoever shall humble Himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.**”

In this passage Jesus is saying that **authority in God’s Kingdom is to operate through child-like humility and servanthood.**

**Every believer has been given authority by God and Christ.** Authority goes with responsibility. As we have responsibility, say as parents, or as witnesses to Christ to those around us, so too, we have been given authority to perform these duties and many others. Our authority must operate out of love to others, not for selfish motives. Love to others is seeking their highest good. The Bible says, “By love serve one another,” *Gal 5:13b*. **Humility is taking the place of serving others in love, out of a secure identity, by the leading of the Holy Spirit.** Our authority must not operate out of fear and insecurity or else it can be harsh and violent towards others. Get rid of fear and find secure identity in God. Use your authority to be a blessing to others in love and the fruit of the Spirit of God.

**Please refer to No 68, Pastors’ Notes, “Authority in the Church and how it is to operate.”** What do we mean by authority? The relationship between authority and power. God is the source of all authority. The authority of Jesus. Those to whom God has given authority. The right use of authority in the Church and in the Kingdom.