

LEADERSHIP IDENTITIES IN MATTHEW 20:24-28 AND ITS EXEGETICAL
RELEVANCE TO THE CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN MINISTER

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ABSTRACT

A wrong concept about Christian leadership has become a growing reality. The researcher is concerned about the growing misconception and trend of leadership in the Christian circle today. The church today is faced with a gross misunderstanding of what a Christian leader – follower relationship entails. With the current trend of assuming that leadership strength is equated with the number of followers at a leader's command, abuse of leadership privileges is getting high. In the midst of these misconceptions, a proper examination of Matthew 20:24-28 with an attempt to understand the teaching of Jesus on servant leadership against the background of the worldview of leadership will help in checking the misconceptions among Contemporary Christian leadership. This work is an attempt to explore the concept of leadership from both secular and biblical perspectives. It highlights what biblical concept of leadership meant to various scholars and what it meant in the Bible by exegetically looking at Jesus' teaching in Matthew 20:24-28. The writer identified some relevance to contemporary Christians. The research finds out that 'servant' and 'slave' are two key words which Jesus used to teach his disciples what leadership in the kingdom entails in contrast to the world's system of leadership. Hence servant leadership which is characterized by service should be the Christian approach to leadership. It is therefore recommended that true biblical teaching on the subject of leadership should be encouraged to provide a better clarification of biblical injunctions on what Christian leadership should be in our homes, churches, societies and the world at large.

5.2 CONCLUSION

In this teaching of Jesus, the passage shows that leadership in God's kingdom is different from leadership in the secular realm. The world's leadership system is characterized with exertion of power and authority over followers. Greatness in the world system is connected to how much power and authority one has acquired. It

informs the unhealthy competition and quest for more power that characterize those who seek secular leadership.

There is a sharp contrast of leadership approach in the Kingdom of God against that of the world as demonstrated by Christ. Christian leadership must not be modeled after that of the world. Christian leaders are not to seek for positions and all the privileges that go with them. It should rather be characterized with serving others.

Two crucial words used by Jesus to describe who a Christian leader is are 'servant' and 'slave' this connotes service. Hence servant leadership which is characterized by service should be the Christian approach to leadership. The disciples of Christ and by extension all believers in Jesus Christ are to imbibe the lifestyle of service to all. Jesus defines greatness as service. The illustration of his sacrificial mission is a powerful model for all believers to emulate.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

After a careful exegetical study of Jesus' teaching on the subject of leadership as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew 20:24-28, it is necessary to make the following recommendations:

Nigerian biblical scholars are encouraged to carry out exegetical researches on the subject of leadership to provide a better clarification of biblical injunctions on what Christian leadership should be in our homes, churches, societies and the world at large. Lack of sufficient biblical exegetical persuasions on Christian leadership is creating a vacuum. Christian leaders are readily accepting methods that work without balancing it with biblical injunctions. As a result one can find different styles and approach to leadership among Christians with varying motives. This is not helping the

church of Christ. The researcher believes that now is the time that Christians need a unified understanding of what Christian leadership is as Jesus projects in Matthew 20:24-28.

Believers should be made to strongly realize that there is a very sharp contrast between Christian leadership and leadership in the secular realm. Hence, they must not imbibe hook and sinker the circular prescriptions for leadership. In an age where packaging sells, believers must learn to desist from whatever leadership packaging that goes against the spirit of Jesus' concept of leadership. Jesus is the true model of Christian leadership. And believers should be encouraged to learn genuine leadership from the true leadership model Himself, who demonstrated and taught it. No other man deserves to be the model irrespective of how much seemingly success he has achieved.

Pastors should be challenged to revisit the right leadership attitude as projected by Christ and imbibe it as well as teach their congregations to replicate such in their day to day living. They are to teach and bring believers to the knowledge of the facts that they are all leaders by biblical mandate. Hence the biblical concept of leadership must inform the orientation of their congregations.

Leading according to Christ's principle would be a cherished venture. The Bible is highly regarded as the final authority over faith and life. This leadership model presented by Jesus therefore should not be debated but wholeheartedly embraced by all Christians. The researcher strongly submits that when the Jesus' servant leadership model is given its due place, then will Christian leadership have more potency to influence the world for Christ.