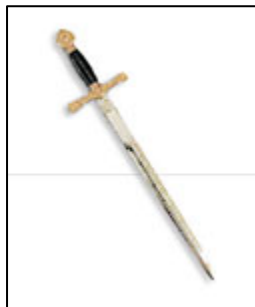


Where Are All the Servants?

“But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.” (Matthew 23:8-12)

And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest. And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors.’ But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.” (Luke 22:24-27)

It was not that long ago when we could purchase the “Benny Hinn Olive Oil” in exchange for a \$200 donation which not only netted a bottle of extra virgin olive oil with Benny’s portrait prominently displayed on the label, but a promise to plant an olive tree in our name in Israel. But not to worry if you missed out on the olive oil. A quick glance at Mr. Hinn’s website reveals quite a number of products which are readily available. For



instance we are offered the “Holy Land Candle Lantern” which is “accompanied by a scroll with a special message from Pastor Benny” and is “filled with the fragrance of frankincense”. Then there is the “Sword of the Word Letter Opener” purported to be “perfect for your home office or workplace”. And let us not forget the “Ten Commandments

Tablet Paperweight” which is “perfect in time for holiday gift-giving”. I

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only selected three from many pages of items for sale through his website. But taken together with the activities of his ministry and teachings which are a matter of public record, not to mention his millionaire lifestyle of mansions and private jets, can you seriously look me in the eye and state with confidence that he meets the biblical criteria which Jesus Christ Himself set forth for spiritual leaders? Does the purveyor of Christian knick-knacks embody what you would call a "servant"?



Jacob Prasch published the article "[What Are We Left With?](#)" in regard to the domination of the Christian leadership landscape by the likes of Hinn, Haggard, Bentley and a list shamefully too long to repeat here, which provides the answer, "What we are left with is a Christianity that is not scripturally Christian". I would offer that this should be no surprise since these Christian leaders, being the furthest thing from the picture of a servant, are not scripturally leaders to begin with.

In Dr. Bill Walthall's article "[Ted Haggard and Ted Bundy: More in Common Than a First Name](#)" he highlights the fact that the chief characteristic of people like Ted Haggard is narcissism, the almost pathological need to be simultaneously in the public eye and in control, the complete antithetical example of Christ's calling to be a servant. This is a particularly poignant article with clear applications to many more so-called Christian leaders than just Haggard.

And yet the overwhelming response to these and similar articles has been a public outcry that Haggard and his ilk are simply sinners who are being unfairly targeted for their human frailties and in need of our support to restore them to their former positions of leadership. Why is it that so many Christians fail to see that these are two separate issues? The authors of the articles mentioned above never assert that Brother Haggard cannot and should not be restored to fellowship as a member of the Body of Christ; the issue revolves around whether or

not such should be restored to a position of authority and ministry. These two things are **not** one and the same.

“Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits.” (Matthew 7:15-20)

If, like Jacob Prasch and Bill Walthall, someone should attempt to make the case that personalities such as Haggard or Bentley are not scripturally qualified to once again assume positions of leadership and influence, the most likely response encountered is, “You’re judging! You can’t judge! Why are you judging them?!?” I suppose it should be no surprise that those who cannot hold leaders accountable to the Christ-given standard of servanthood should be equally incapable of implementing the Christ-given command to be a spiritual fruit inspector. No one has ever said that these men are not qualified to be Christians should they repent and seek Him with all their heart, but this all seems to be an extension of our culture that you can do or say anything without having to step down from office if you simply apologize. Politicians and celebrities commit and utter incredibly insensitive and blatantly evil things in the course of practically every news cycle and we are told to forget about it because they apologized. Is that biblical? Does forgiveness of sin automatically mean there are no consequences for that sin?

And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:7)

When it comes to Christian leadership Paul provides a standard by which to measure whether someone can be restored or not to such positions. Can you see that when the likes of Haggard, Bentley, or

Bakker are exposed and brought down by secular sources that by definition they have forever lost "*a good reputation with those outside the church*" and have forever fallen "*into reproach*". In such cases can you see that their fall was **literally** due to allowing themselves to succumb to "*the snare of the devil*"? Then you should be able to see that the call for them to cease from pursuing a return to power and authority is not an assault on their **personal** Christianity but the very thing Scripture demands from them **personally**. If you really loved them – and I am referring to the definition of love as provided in Scripture – you would demand they never seek a return to power for their own good.

There are many ways in which the church in the Western world has assimilated the methods and thinking of a consumer-driven culture to infiltrate and replace the very teachings of Christ. One of the most prominent is that we no longer seem to seek and encourage leaders who by biblical definition are servants, but instead cherish the same qualities and qualifications as those of a corporate CEO or Hollywood celebrity. Few exceptions are the churches who would these days embrace someone whose resume was dominated with the likes of "a humble servant of Christ". I suppose it is just as rare as the number of applicants who actually aspire to being able to claim that qualification. (I think we should especially love and support the few that we are still fortunate enough to have in our midst.) But the question still begs, "Where are the servants?"

I appreciate that the average Christian is so willing to forgive someone of even the most egregious sin. Having been forgiven our own embarrassing list of sins it is a testimony to the work of the cross that we should be so unwilling to hold the sins of others against them. But why is this attitude so often offered without **any** balance of the requirement for accountability to God's Word and ways? We do not love our children any less when for their own good we hold them accountable to our rules and standards; why is it any different when it comes to our leaders and fellow believers?

But can I also offer that if we were ranking and selecting our leaders according to the degree to which they conform to the biblical standard of the shepherd/servant that we would have far fewer Haggard's and Bentley's to begin with? There is a kind of "chicken and the egg" thing feeding this phenomenon. Since we do not expect our leaders to conform to scriptural models or requirements – in fact we most often discourage it by encouraging them to mimic more coveted worldly attributes – we repeatedly reap what has been sown.

In His Love,

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