

Chapter One

New Principles for Leadership

“Not so with you!”

The Great Commission

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20

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Not only did Jesus teach a new set of virtues and principles for governing the leader-follower relationship...

... he also boldly denounced the religious teachers of his day for their abuse of authority and making a public show of their religiosity.

Jesus forbade his followers from acting like the “rulers of the Gentiles” who abused their authority and power over the people for their own selfish ends...

To his disciples he said: “not so with you” (Luke 22:26).

1. Humility

17 Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, 18 “We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death ¹⁹ and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!”

Matthew 20:17–19

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- Betrayed
- Condemned to die
- Given over to the Gentiles
- Mocked
- Flogged
- Crucified
- Raised from the dead

20 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. 21 "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom." 22 "You don't know what you are asking,"

Jesus said to them. “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?” “We can,” they answered.²³ Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.”

Matthew 20:20–28

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24 When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers.

Matthew 20:20–28

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25 Jesus called them together and said,
“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles
lord it over them, and their high officials
exercise authority over them.

Matthew 20:20–28

NIV84

²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Matthew 20:20–28

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The Promise of Suffering and Death

They did not understand that according to God's plan, suffering precedes glory, the cross comes before the crown, loss before rewards, and serving before reigning.

2. Humble Servanthood

³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

John 13:3–5

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¹² When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. ¹³ “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

John 13:12-15

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The symbol of an authentic Christian leadership is not the purple robe of an emperor, but the coarse apron of a slave; not a throne of ivory and gold, but a basin of water for the washing of feet.

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Do Not Be like Worldly
Rulers:
Luke 22:24-27

24 Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. 25 Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors.

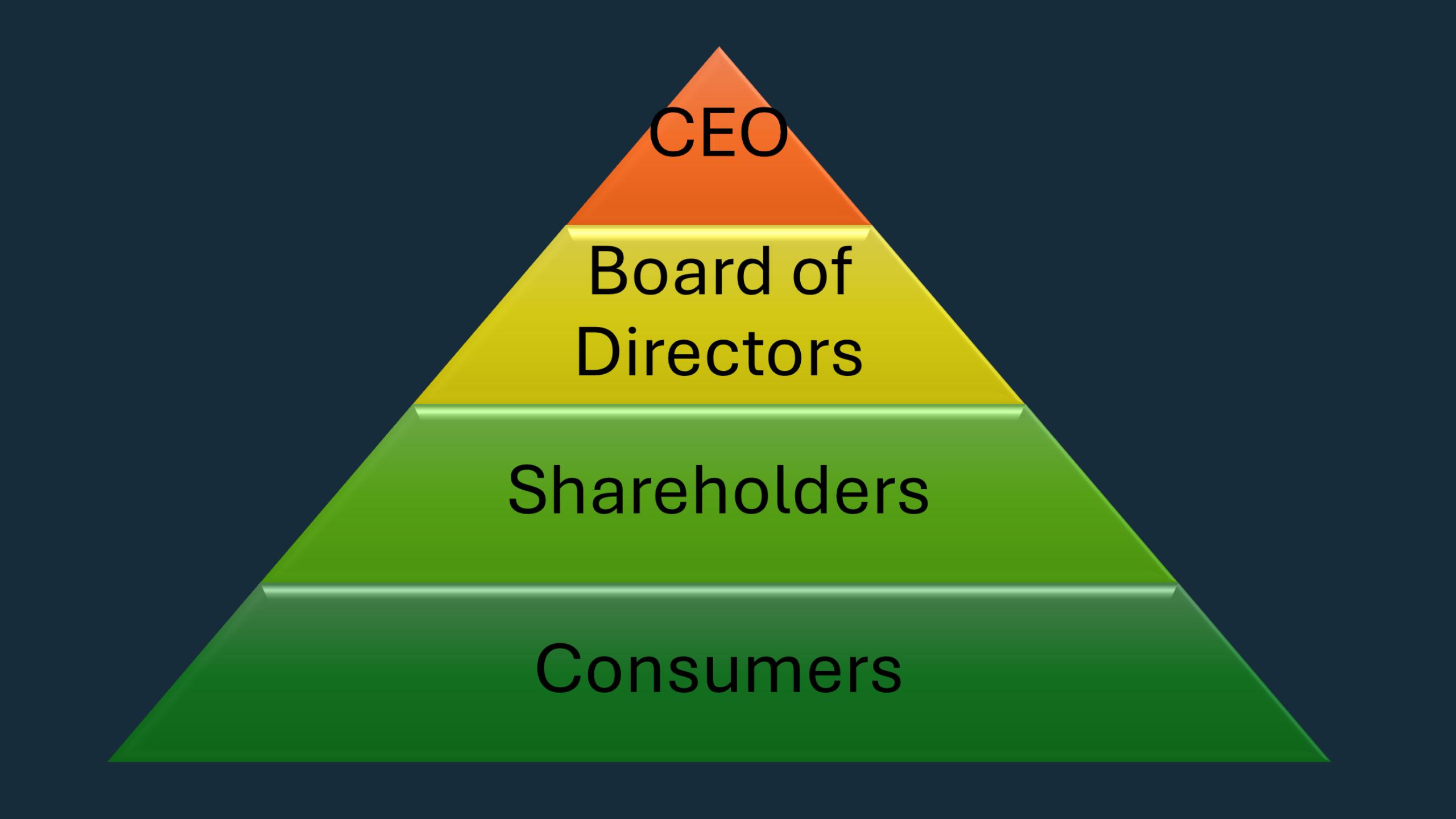
Luke 22.24-27

NIV84

²⁶ But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. ²⁷ For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

Luke 22.24-27

NIV84

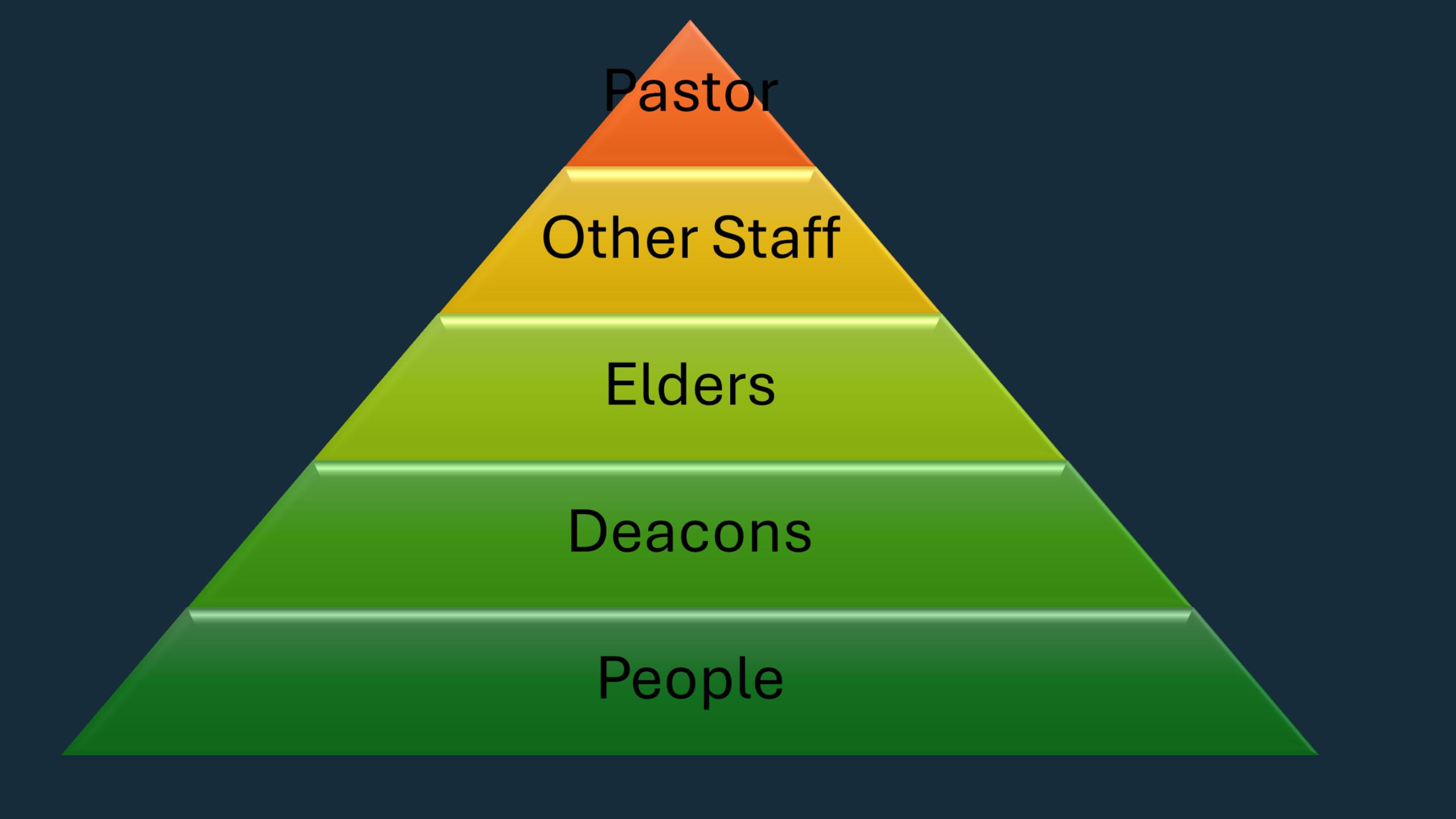


CEO

Board of
Directors

Shareholders

Consumers



Pastor

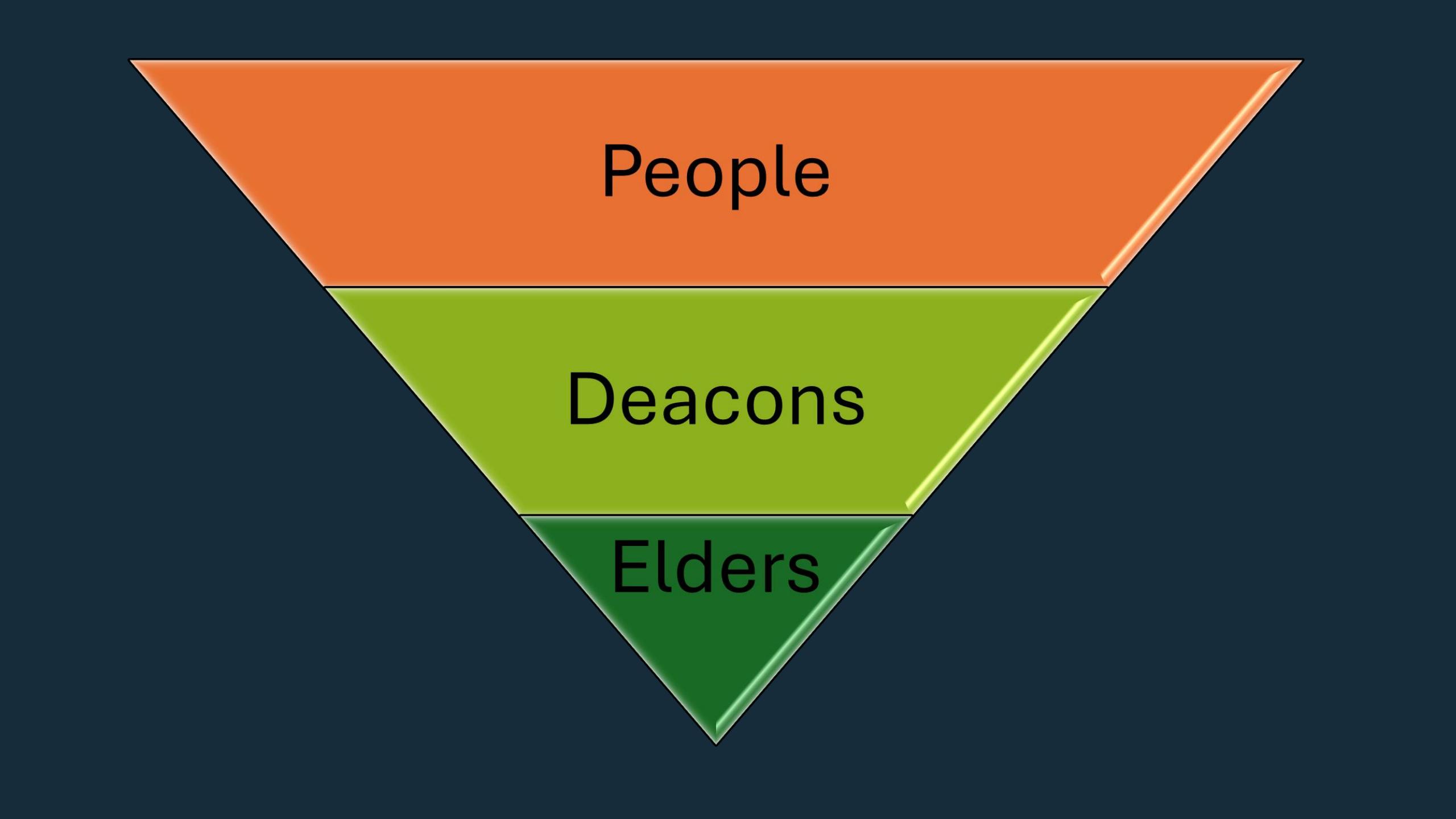
Other Staff

Elders

Deacons

People

“Jesus reverses the leadership pyramid: instead of someone at the apex at the top and everyone serving that person, Jesus turns it upside down. The leader is at the bottom, serving people above himself. So it's a complete reversal.”



People

Deacons

Elders

3. Brotherly Equality

Do Not Be like Them:
Matthew 23:1-12

² “The teachers of the law [scribes] and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat.

Matthew 23:2

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Scribes

“Experts in the law” or “teachers of the law”

Pharisees

Scribes and Pharisees are not identical. Most scribes were Pharisees, but not all Pharisees were scribes. The scribes were the recognized interpreters of the Jewish law. Their origins are traced to the time of Ezra. The earliest scribes were priests, but the later ones were laymen. The Pharisees in the time of Jesus consisted of about six thousand Jewish laymen who scrupulously sought to carry out the scribal rulings... When [Matthew] wrote, the Pharisees were the almost unrivaled leaders of Judaism.

Stagg, F. (1969). Matthew. In C. J. Allen (Ed.), *Matthew-Mark* (pp. 210-211). Broadman Press.

The scribes and Pharisees sanctimoniously separated and elevated themselves above the people. They were image managers. They craved honorific titles, sacred clothes, the places of honor at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues. They loved the praises of people (Matt. 6:1–2, 5, 16). In short, they were religious hypocrites who used and abused the people (John 7:49; 9:34).

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- Hypocrites (six times in the passage)
- sons of hell...
- blind guides (twice); blind fools; blind men; blind Pharisee
- whitewashed tombs
- snakes
- brood of vipers

Jesus's most severe denunciations were directed at the religious elite of his day. No one has ever exposed the true heart of religious hypocrisy and the ugliness of religious pride like our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 23:1–33). Using the strongest language conceivable, Jesus publicly censured the priests and scribes of his time for their greed, pride, and abuse of power (Matt. 23:13–33)...

They made the temple in Jerusalem into a money-making machine to enrich themselves (Mark 11:15–19). They devoured widows' houses (Luke 20:47). They “were lovers of money” (Luke 16:14). They used people to enhance their own prideful status. They imposed heavy rules upon the people, thereby keeping them in spiritual bondage.

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³ So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.

⁴ They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

⁵ "Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long;

⁶ they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues;

⁷ they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.'

8 “But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one teacher and you are all brothers.⁹ And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven.¹⁰ Nor are you to be called ‘teacher,’ for you have one Teacher, the Christ.¹¹ The greatest among you will be your servant.¹² For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Matthew 23:8-12

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Euthymius Zigabenus says: “... Rabbi means “my great one,” “my Master,” apparently a comparatively new title in Christ’s time.

Robertson, A. T. (1933). Word Pictures in the New Testament (Mt 23:8). Broadman Press.

Rabbi-was a term of respect... ‘my master,’ the use of which as a title of respect by which teachers were addressed occurs first within the last century before the destruction of Jerusalem. In a similar way was formed Rabboni... an Aramaic form of the title used almost exclusively to designate the president of the Sanhedrin, if a descendant of Hillel, from the time of Gamaliel I...

In later times the title of Rabbi appears to have been conferred officially upon such as were authorized in Palestine to decide ritual or legal questions ... but there is no evidence of its use in this sense before or in the time of Christ...

Rabboni is even more respectful; and in the two passages where it is used of Christ (Mk 10:51 and Jn 20:16) ...

Christ forbids His disciples to covet or use [Rabbi].

Moss, R. W. (1911–1912). RABBI, RABBONI. In J. Hastings, J. A. Selbie, A. B. Davidson, S. R. Driver, & H. B. Swete (Eds.), *A Dictionary of the Bible: Dealing with Its Language, Literature, and Contents Including the Biblical Theology* (Vol. 4, p. 190). Charles Scribner's Sons; T. & T. Clark.

⁸ “But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. ⁹ And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. ¹⁰ Nor are you to be called ‘teacher,’ for you have one Teacher, the Christ. ¹¹ The greatest among you will be your servant. ¹² For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Matthew 23:8-12

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Human teachers who faithfully proclaim and interpret God's Word are to be appreciated, loved, and highly esteemed by those they serve (1 Thess. 5:12-13) [because of their work]. But they are not to seek honor, much less demand it or glory in it. They need to remember that they are neither the source of truth, which is God's Word, nor the illumination of truth, which is God's Spirit.

Matthew, vols. 1-4: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary:

Human teachers, including the apostles whom Jesus addressed on this occasion, are all brothers with every other believer. No man's calling, however unique, justifies his being given a title intended to portray him as being spiritually superior.

Matthew, vols. 1-4: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary:

“... one wonders how often these titles are used without implying unbiblical ideas about a greater worth or value of the individuals to whom they are assigned. One similarly wonders for how long the recipients of such forms of address can resist an unbiblical pride from all the plaudits. It is probably best to abolish most uses of such titles and look for equalizing terms that show that we are all related as family to one Heavenly Father (God) and one teacher (Christ)...

Blomberg, C. (1992). Matthew (Vol. 22, p. 343). Broadman & Holman Publishers

“Brother” or “sister” has a good Christian pedigree and is suggested though not commanded by v. 8, but these terms often sound stilted in the modern world... In American Christian circles perhaps the best goal is to strive for the intimacy that simply makes addressing one another on a first-name basis natural.

Blomberg, C. (1992). Matthew (Vol. 22, p. 343). Broadman & Holman Publishers

4. Christlike Love

12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.

1 Thessalonians 3:12

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There is no way that a Christian leadership team can work together effectively without God's love flowing through each of its members toward the others. Love is the secret ingredient in all successful team efforts.

The Strongman Model vs. The Christlike Servant Model

Wherever you travel in the world, you will encounter the strongman style of leadership. The strongman model is the self-oriented style of leadership that concentrates power in one person and rejects genuine transparency and accountability.

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This style of leadership is concerned with wielding power, gaining wealth, and promoting oneself. It seeks to control, dominate, and manipulate. It is dictatorial and authoritarian. It outright rejects any concept of shared leadership. Strong men want loyal subordinates, not colleagues. They may claim to serve people, but their claims are empty and self-serving.

The Diotrephees Syndrome

⁹ I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. ¹⁰ So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.

But the one who is fond of being the
pre-eminent one among them,
Diotrephes...

The New Testament: An Expanded Translation

What the People Want

Unfortunately, we have to admit that a strong, autocratic style of leadership is often outwardly successful and popular. Many people want to follow a strongman leader, a Diotrephes-like figure, a man they deem anointed by God with power to rule. They want the tough-minded, singular leadership style of the world.

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This was certainly true of the Corinthian believers. Paul didn't fit their Greco-Roman concept of the strongman leader, thus the Corinthians became easy prey for the so-called “super apostles” who misled and abused them (2 Cor. 11:19–21). To some of the Corinthians, Paul seemed weak and unimpressive, certainly not great or first in status.

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They may have thought, as some do today, that the concept of “servant-leader” is a contradiction of terms and not really a practical, workable leadership concept.

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Summary of the Servant-Leadership Model