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ALL ONE IN BODY OF CHRIST

Comedian Rich Hall provides this handy guide for determining one's financial position: *"When you go to work, if your name is on the outside of the building, you're rich. If your name is on your desk, you're middle-class. If your name is on your shirt, you're poor."*

We live in a class-conscious society, though we like to pretend we do not. We concern ourselves with the material trappings that display our status: the homes in which we live; the vehicles we drive; the clothes and accessories we wear; the "toys" we buy. Even the ways we refer to ourselves are calculated to elevate us in the eyes of

others. Why else does the garbage collector need to be known as a "sanitation engineer," or the person who bags your groceries called a "courtesy clerk"?

Because we are accustomed to class distinctions in life, we come to expect them in the church. Denominational religion fosters this notion — certain individuals are designated "clergy" and assigned special titles: "reverend," "father," "bishop," "monsignor," "cardinal," "pastor," "pope." People without these titles are given to understand that they themselves are somehow lesser mortals. The clergy are special — they know

what God's word says, and insofar as you need to know any of it, they'll interpret it for you. After all, an unordained, untitled person such as yourself can't be expected to comprehend the deep mysteries of faith.

The New Testament, however, clearly reveals the fallacy of the clergy concept. Among the people of God, *"there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all"* (Colossians 3:11; Galatians 3:28).

No distinctions of class exist in the body of Christ. All Christians belong to the same holy, royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6). The church has no head except Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18).

The word "reverend," which appears only in Psalm 111:9 in the King James and American Standard Versions of the

Old Testament, is in this verse descriptive of God: ***"Holy and reverend is His name."*** (More recent translations usually substitute "awesome.") Can any man rightly be addressed by an adjective God's word only applies to the Almighty Himself?

Similarly, Jesus taught, *"But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ"* (Matthew 23:8-10). If God alone is "Father" by the testimony of His only begotten Son, what would inspire anyone to assume such a title for himself, or to bestow it on any other man? Names like "pope," "cardinal," and "monsignor" are foreign to the Scriptures.

Many people incorrectly believe the Bible uses "pastor" to designate a single individual

overseeing a congregation (usually the local preacher) and “bishop” to indicate one who oversees multiple churches. In fact, in the New Testament the terms pastor (literally, shepherd), bishop, elder and overseer are used interchangeably as descriptive nouns (not formal titles) for the same office: the plurality of men appointed to the oversight of a single local congregation (Acts 14:23; 20:17-38; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5). In no instance in the New Testament do we find record of any one individual having oversight either of a single church or of several.

The Scriptures make a clear distinction between elders or pastors and men whose primary work is preaching and teaching. These latter men are variously called evangelists (Ephesians 4:11), ministers (1 Timothy 4:6), or preachers (Romans 10:14). Again, these terms are not official titles, but simply words that describe the

work being done. And nowhere does the Bible assign the evangelist or preacher the task of governing or shepherding the local church.

People like fancy titles. They like the feeling of “class” such titles afford. But the church of God isn’t an exercise in class warfare between its members — it is God’s instrument of spiritual warfare against His adversary in the world (Ephesians 3:10; 6:12). In Christ, there’s no upper class, middle class, or lower class. There’s only one class — the obedient souls the Lord has added to those being saved (Acts 2:47).

— Michael D. Rankins



***“I will bless the LORD at all times;
His praise shall continually be in
my mouth. My soul will make its
boast in the Lord; the humble will
hear it and rejoice.”***

Ps. 34:1-2



MONTHLY CHALLENGE

DIRECTIONS: Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.

1) Inviting Others Challenge

John 1:43-45 *"The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me.' Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.'" Sometimes all it takes to bring someone to Jesus and see remarkable changes take place in their life is to simply offer them an invitation. Invite them over to your home for coffee or a meal. Invite them to come join you to bible study or worship. Invite them to come along on an outing with other Christians. Whatever the situation, it truly is amazing what is possible all from a simple invitation to come and check things out for themselves. This is how Jesus was able to encourage others to become fully devoted disciples. "And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, 'What do you seek?' They said to Him, 'Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?' He said to them, 'Come, and you will see.'" Jn. 1:38-39. Let's commit ourselves this month to inviting others to come learn about Jesus.*

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

Isaiah 6:1-8

"In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.' And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.' Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with it and said, 'Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.' Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and whom will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"