

## THE DISADVANTAGE OF TITLES

Isaiah 2:17 ... "The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day"

In our previous devotional we spoke of disappointments and how we can mistakenly place a burden on friends for our happiness. In today's lesson we will discuss something that can also affect our relationships with others, which is the barrier to friendship caused by titles.

In my 12 years in the Philippines, I have been continually troubled by how people try to elevate and honor me by calling me "Sir Dan," or "Sir Evans." I understand that Philippine culture is deeply entrenched in Spanish traditions that Filipinos absorbed during 400 years of colonization. Old European society, which includes Spain, was class-oriented. Average citizens were required to bow and submit to the upper classes. It was a way for people with wealth and political position to control society. And, it is still largely practiced in the Philippines.

I am uncomfortable when you insist on calling me "Sir Dan," because that is how one addresses someone who is deemed superior. I am just like you. I should not be treated as superior or esteemed. I should not be respected because of my nationality, size, education, or profession. You and I should be able to communicate and work together for the cause of Christ, the improvement of education and nutrition, and service to children and senior citizens without limiting our relationship through labels or titles.

When you insist on addressing someone as a title, you place a barrier between them and you. It is, of course, true that many Filipinos such as doctors, lawyers, politicians, teachers and business owners, love the attention of being treated as superior persons and they fulfill their self-absorbed roles very well and dramatically. Some walk and carry their heads like they are superior. We cannot fix their attitudes. But, many of the people we deal with every day do not want to be treated in superior terms; they (and myself) are much more comfortable being treated as common or average people because, in God's eyes, we are the same. I am simply: Dan.

When you call me "sir," you are telling me we cannot be friends, only colleagues or associates for a certain business or ministry purpose. When you use any label to address another person, you are building an invisible wall between you and them. I have even heard wives refer to their husbands as "Mr." That tells me their relationship is more business oriented, than the product of love.

I urge you to look at other people through God's eyes. God sees no difference. And, because he created each of us, God knows we are not different. He knows better than anyone that you and I are the same, despite our differences in education, responsibilities, or talents. Titles are a disadvantage in our relationships. They often constitute false respect and make true friendship difficult. Today's verse tells us that prideful men will eventually be brought down and humbled before God. Let us reserve our highest respect for God, and treat one another as equals; children of our creator with no differences except for our experiences.

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