

*Call No One
Father*



Matthew 23:6-12

“And they love the place of honor at banquets, and the chief seats in the synagogue, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called by men, Rabbi. But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”



Let's Start With "Rabbi"

- "Rabbi" was a term of respect for Jewish teachers. Sometimes applied to Jesus by His disciples (John 1:38, Mark 9:5 & 11:21) and to John the Baptist (John 3:26). Interesting that the only times Matthew records a disciple calling Jesus Rabbi are by Judas (Matt. 26:25, 26:49).
- Jesus does not refuse the title, but also does not seem to put any stock in it as a matter of honor. Some called Him "teacher" or "rabbi" and didn't mean much by it (John 6:25, Matt. 12:38, 22:16, 22:24, Luke 19:39).



Call No One “Father”

- Not even your father? Clearly, other Bible writers use the term in its literal sense plenty of times (Eph. 6:1-4, Col. 3:21). They also use the term figuratively (1 Cor. 4:15, 1 Thess. 2:11). Paul calls both Timothy and Titus “son” or “child” in his letters to them.
- Paul’s use of the “Abba, Father!” phrase in Romans 8 implies common usage of “father”, otherwise it loses its meaning. We cry to God as our Heavenly Father with similar love and dependence as a child crying out to his/her physical father.



Are We Leaderless?

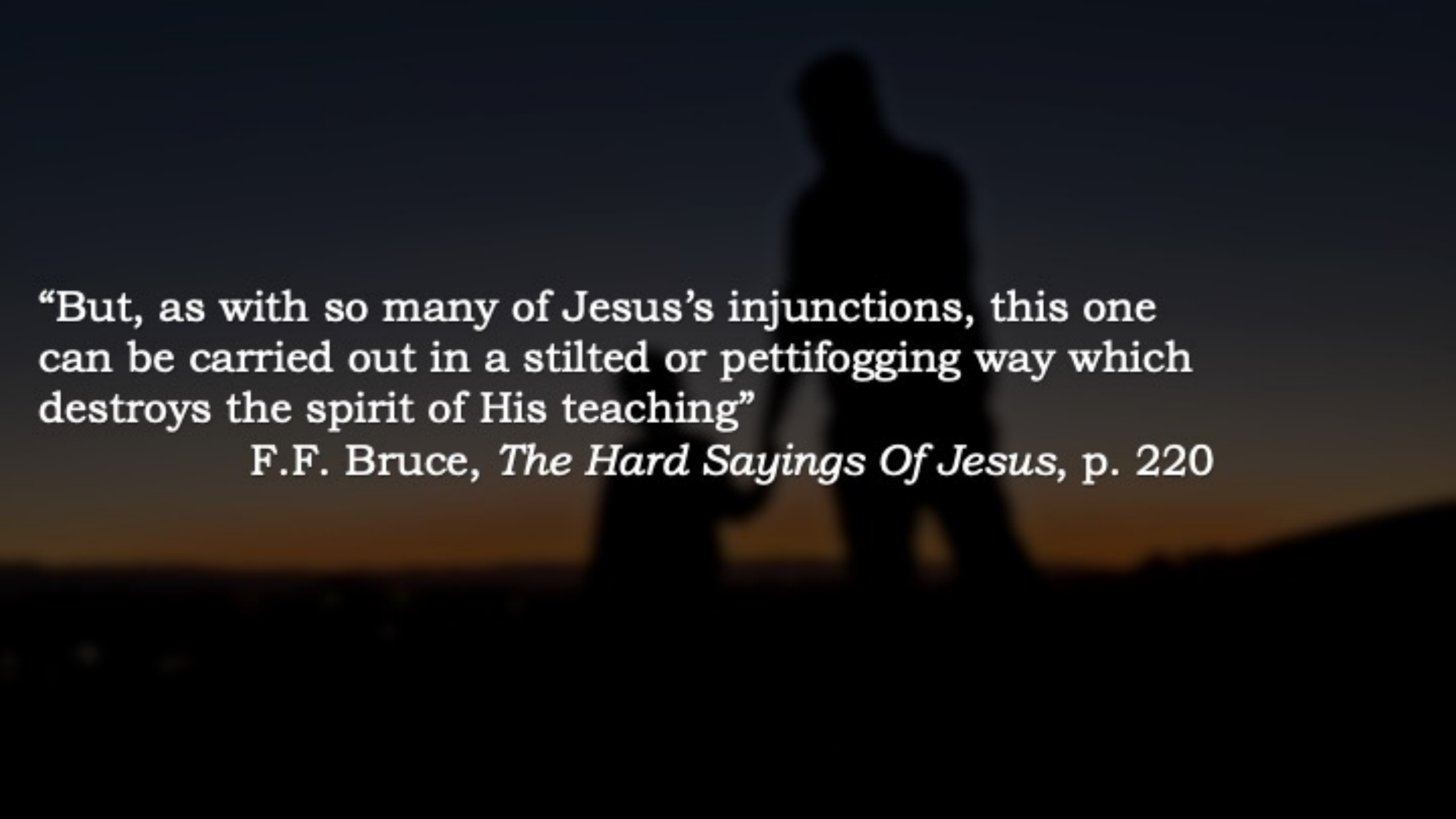
- Third, Jesus speaks against calling other people “leaders.” Yet, Christians are expected to lead in many ways, and we are to recognize the leaders among us.
- Romans 12:8
- Hebrews 13:7
- 1 Thess. 5:12
- 1 Timothy 5:17
- The issue isn’t recognizing someone as a teacher, a father, or a leader. So what is the problem Jesus is addressing?

Titles
vs.
Descriptions



***The Pharisees
loved the privileges
that came with
special titles***





“But, as with so many of Jesus’s injunctions, this one can be carried out in a stilted or pettifogging way which destroys the spirit of His teaching”

F.F. Bruce, *The Hard Sayings Of Jesus*, p. 220



Focus On The Real Issue

- Instead of worrying about whether we can call our dads “father” or recognizing someone as a great “teacher” or honoring our “leader”ship, we should stay focused on Jesus’ point – the pursuit of honorific titles and their privileges.
- True fathers serve the needs of their children, even to their detriment, and never need recognition. Good teachers rejoice in their listeners’ spiritual growth, and always remember they will be judged more strictly (Ja. 3:1). Real leaders never lead for sordid gain, and always are the first to get their hands dirty (1 Pet. 5:1ff).