

Ephesians Chapter 6
Week 4, v. 5-6

Eph 6:5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ;

Slave <doulos> a slave (literal or figurative, involuntary or voluntary; frequently, therefore in a qualified sense of subjection or subserviency):--bond(-man), servant.

When Paul wrote this to the church in Ephesus in Rome, slaves were commonplace. Slavery was part of the Roman culture. This is the third and last relationship where Paul applies the general command 'to be submissive to one another', to a more specific relationship. From the definition above, we can note that a slave or servant can refer to someone who voluntarily places himself or herself under the subjection of another. With this in mind, all of us are to be servants to others. **What specific relationships come to mind where you would be subject to another?**

In the Encarta English Dictionary, the first definition of slave listed, is what we would expect to read: somebody *forced* to work for another. Farther down the list of definitions it says: somebody who *meekly* accepts being ruled by somebody else. The word slave has a connection to humility and submissiveness. Our greatest example of submission and service is Jesus.

Mark 10:44-45 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Romans 1:1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called [as] an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

2 Cor 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.

Gal 1:10 For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

Phil 2:5-7 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be

grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, [and] being made in the likeness of men.

The capacity we are to see ourselves in as believers are as servants in the body of Christ, servants in our relationships, in our families, at our workplace – every relationship we have is to be one of service. We are here to serve one another and ultimately to serve God for His glory. This holds true outside of our church family also. We are here as servants of the Lord, serving for His sake and honor, promoting His work and gospel.

Slaves are to be obedient according to Eph 6:5. this is the same word we looked at earlier in verse one.

Obedient <hupakouo> to hear under (as a subordinate), i.e. to listen attentively; by implication, to heed or conform to a command or authority:--hearken, be obedient to, obey.

Whether we are forced to follow or choose to follow, we are to obey. That means even if in our eyes something is fair or unfair, easy or difficult, we understand or don't understand, something is deserved or undeserved, we feel valued or mistreated, we are recognized or ignored, we obey. As long as we are not asked to sin against God, we are to humbly obey those in authority: parents, employers, leaders, husbands, governments and schools.

The attitude that accompanies our obedience is fear and trembling coming from a sincere heart just as if we were serving Christ. Our obedience is for *His* glory. The motivation to obey others is our love for God.

What does it mean to obey with fear and trembling?

With fear and trembling; reverentially, and with that fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom, and *which shall make you anxious to please him*. Family Bible Notes

1Ti 6:1 Let all who are under the yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor *so that the name of God and [our] doctrine may not be spoken against.*

Tit 2:9-10 [Urge] bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith *that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.*

1Pe 2:18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect [translated from the same word – phobos], not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.

Php 2:12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, *work out your salvation with fear and trembling*;

There are several more verses to support a mindset of fear of trembling. *What do you see as the main reason we are to obey with a mindset of fear and trembling? Whom do we ultimately serve?* Our service to God is born out of a heart of fear and trembling, not only focused on who He is, but on what He can do and what He has done for us. His love for us inspires us to obey.

Josh 24:14a Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth

Ps 86:11 Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.

How do you know if someone is sincere?

Sincerity <haplotēs> singleness, i.e. (subjectively) sincerity (without dissimulation or self-seeking), or (objectively) generosity (copious bestowal):--bountifulness, liberal(-ity), simplicity, singleness.

Dissimulation: to disguise or hide true feelings, thoughts, or intentions

Self-seeking: interested only in gaining an advantage over others, not in sharing or cooperating

Eph 6:5 (KJV) Servants, be obedient to them that are [your] masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in *singleness* of your heart, as unto Christ;

Sincerity: honesty and genuineness, authenticity

Singleness: consisting of one part, element, or quality

Singleness of heart would be the opposite of a divided heart.

Think! What is our ultimate goal? To serve Christ. We are single-mindedly (our thoughts on one thing only) serving others to glorify Christ. Nothing else should pre-occupy our thoughts except the satisfaction of being able to serve.

2Co 1:12 For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly **sincerity**, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you. (emphasis mine)

" 'Sincerity' is an interesting word. It comes from two Latin words *sine* (without) and *cera* (wax). Its meaning comes from the fact that in the ancient world, where the making of pottery was an important industry, dishonest potters would sometimes cover up cracks or flaws in their pottery by filling them with wax. In normal usage this might not be detected. But it could be seen if the pottery was held up to the light before it was purchased. Then the wax would show up as a lighter hue. Good pottery was sometimes stamped with the words *sine cera* (without wax) as proof of its good quality." J. Boice – Ephesians Commentary

The word Paul uses for sincerity carries the meaning of sincerity plus generosity. In areas where we serve, whether at home, work, etc., we are to serve our very best.

The opposite of being sincere is insincere. Hypocrisy reflects an insincere heart. **What actions might we see in someone who is not sincere in his or her faith? Why is the singleness of our own heart important to address? I can say I love the Lord, but then do my decisions put Him first?**

2Co 11:3 But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity [of devotion] to Christ.

Col 3:22 Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who [merely] please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

Sincerity means we aim to please from the heart, from within. Sometimes we can please outwardly so it looks good but our service does not come from a genuine heart.

1Ch 29:17a "Since I know, O my God, that Thou triest the heart and delightest in uprightness, I, in the integrity of my heart, have willingly offered all these [things;]

Whom are you serving when you make decisions to act or speak a certain way? Even in the mundane, repetitive duties of each day, we are to keep our eyes on God. He is the reason we can smile while performing tasks we may not especially enjoy.

Where does our true reward lie? Are we looking to be recognized here on earth or do we truly believe our ultimate reward is at Christ's feet in heaven? How does my attitude show what is important to me?

KJV translation of Eph 6:5 says *In singleness of your heart* instead of sincerity of heart.

With a simple, sincere desire to do what ought to be done. *As unto Christ*. Feeling that by rendering proper service to your masters you are in fact serving the Lord, and that you are doing that which will be well-pleasing to him. Albert Barnes' NT Commentary

Eph 6:6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

Eyeservice <ophthalmodoulela> sight-labor, i.e. that needs watching (remissness) Have you ever had to watch over someone to make sure they would do a thorough job? They will get something done because they need to or it's expected or it looks good but not because they want to do a good job. We do this when we are not convinced that they will do their best.

When we only give something 'eyeservice' we are careless or negligent about doing what is expected. In other words, our heart is not in doing our best. Think of the employee who works diligently only when the boss is around yet wastes time when he is away. How about the student who is quiet and attentive when the teacher is in the room but becomes the class clown distracting everyone when she walks out of the room.

Have you ever used the word 'half-hearted' or heard someone described that way? You can tell when someone is not sold out to what they are doing. There is no enthusiasm and no real interest in the result. Things are done only to the level that is needed to just pass or say it was done or it looks good to others. Everything we do, we are to do it to the best of our abilities, putting all our efforts into it because we desire to please God and give our best to Him. It's more than just looking good on the outside, it's being good or justified on the inside and then showing our gratitude to God through the things we do. Everything should point to Him, He deserves all the glory. Is your whole heart thoroughly devoted to serving one another?

Col 3:22 Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who [merely] please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

What is a man-pleaser?

Men-pleasers <anthropareskos> man-courting, i.e. fawning

The word fawning means to seek attention or try to win favor by flattery; to attempt to please somebody by showing enthusiastic affection

Mt 6:2 "When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

Lu 16:15 And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.

1Sa 16:7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God [sees] not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Others do not need to know all the ways we might serve God. Hopefully we all take advantage of the opportunities He places before us to honor Him. It may be a smile of encouragement to the person who looks like they're having a bad day, it may be an unexpected act of kindness or an unexpected offer to help, it may be a diligent and faithful effort to keep someone in prayer, it may be a response of love to someone who has treated you unkindly or unfairly. These are just a few ways that we might serve the Lord and our hearts are happy to do so simply because of who He is and what He has done. Our reward is eternal. **Are you motivated to gain the approval of people or of God?**

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Application

Ephesians 6:5 commands the submission of servant to master. Specifically, we are addressing those relationships in which we have voluntarily placed ourselves under the subjection of another.

Think of those you are directly under the authority of. If you are a child at home it would be your parents. If you are married, it would be your husband. How about employers, leaders in different areas and government?

What does submission in these areas look like? When would you not submit? What is the motivation to submit to authority?

Read the following verses and write down the attitude of serving that is described.

Josh 24:14a

Ps 86:11

Phil 2:12

2 Cor 1:12

Col 3:22

1Chr 29:17a

What is God saying to you through His word? How have you been encouraged? In what areas have you been challenged to look at more closely? Is there a plan of action God would have you take in the area of serving?

Within your family – husband and children

At your place of work

At church, in ministry

In other relationships

The second part of Eph 6:6 says: "doing the will of God from the heart". Do you serve because it's expected or someone is watching or others will think better of you? How is this different than serving from the heart?

Read Mt 6:2, Luke 16:15, 1 Sa 16:7 What are these verses saying?

Have you ever served begrudgingly? How does that affect your attitude? Read Col 3:23 and 1 Cor 10:31.

How would God have you apply Ephesians 6:5-6 to your life this week?