****

**Monday: Sincere Obedience**

**PRAY:** Ask God to speak to you from His Word.

**READ: Ephesians 6:5**

5 **Slaves**, **obey** your earthly masters with **respect** and **fear**, and with **sincerity of heart**, just as you would **obey Christ**.

**UNDERSTAND:** *get a deeper understanding of the key words*

* **Slaves** (Greek: *doulos*): servant, bondservant, devoted to another
  + “Servants” is a better term. “Slaves” is not the best english term to use here.
  + Our modern view of slavery is not what Paul is referring to in this passage. In first century Ephesus, a servant was an integral part of the family. While some servants were abused and mistreated in that culture, most servants were treated as devoted family members. In most cases, servants willingly offered themselves to a household much like we willingly offer our employment to our employer. Paul is not approving of slavery as a practice.
  + Therefore, we should apply this passage to how we serve and treat those in authority over us at work, church, home, and anywhere else.
* **Obey** (Greek: *hypakouō*): to listen and submit to a command (Romans 6:17)
* **Respect** (Greek: *phobos*): fear, reverence
  + Though this word can mean fear, here it refers to reverence.
  + We are called to respect and honor the position of those in authority over us.
  + Also see Romans 13:1-7.
* **Fear** (Greek: *tromos*): trembling, coming from an attitude of humility (Phil. 2:12)
* **Sincerity of Heart** (Greek: *haplotēs sy kardia*): virtue, selfless attitude, honesty
  + Paul is referring to our motives behind our obedience to our leaders.
  + We should serve our leaders out of a selfless and humble attitude.
* **As You Would Obey Christ:** this should be our chief motivation

**APPLY:** *What is this passage calling me to do?*

Obedience to those in authority over us can be a struggle. Sometimes those in positions of leadership can be hard to follow. Your boss may be one of those people. But this passage does not give us an option. We are called to obey and respect those that God has placed in authority. And God can use our humble sincerity to be an example to those around us.

**Make a list of people that are in a place of authority over you.**

**Which ones do you struggle to follow? Why?**

**How does this passage help you with those struggles?**

**PRAY:** Ask God to help you serve your leaders with sincerity and humility.

****

**Tuesday: The Right Motivation**

**PRAY:** Ask God to speak to you from His Word.

**READ: Ephesians 6:6**

6 Obey them not only to **win their favor** when their **eye is on you**, but as **slaves of Christ**, doing the will of God **from your heart**.

**UNDERSTAND:** *get a deeper understanding of the key words*

* **Win Their Favor** (Greek: *anthrōpareskos*): men-pleasers, courting the favor of others
  + This refers to having a selfish motivation.
  + We do not serve our leaders just so they will be impressed with us. We serve them because God commands us to. We owe our obedience to those God has placed in authority over us (Colossians 3:22).
* **Eye Is On You** (Greek: *ophthalmodoulia*): eyeservice
  + This refers to performing tasks with diligence when being watched and being sluggish when not being watched.
  + This is an issue of integrity. If we only work hard when the boss is present, we are cheating them and stealing from them.
* **Slaves of Christ** (Greek: *doulos Christos*): faithful servants of Christ
* **From Your Heart** (Greek: *ek psychē*): the soul, the essence of our existence
  + We obey Christ because He indwells the deepest part of us.
  + Because Christ lives in us we ought to serve our leaders for Christ’s sake.

**APPLY:** *What is this passage calling me to do?*

As Christian workers, we should always serve our leaders with integrity. While it is common to only work hard when our boss or supervisor is present, Christians should set a different example. Our leaders should know that we are working diligently in their presence and in their absence. Not to only to win their favor, but to honor and respect our leaders.

**Why is it important to work with integrity?**

**What are the consequences of not working with integrity?**

**Do you work hard for recognition or because it’s the right thing to do?**

**PRAY:** Ask God to help be a person of integrity in every area that you serve others.

****

**Wednesday: Who Are You Serving?**

**PRAY:** Ask God to speak to you from His Word.

**READ: Ephesians 6:7**

7 **Serve wholeheartedly**, as if you were **serving the Lord**, **not people**,

**UNDERSTAND:** *get a deeper understanding of the key words*

* **Serve Wholeheartedly** (Greek: *douleuō eunoia*): to render service with a good will
  + This phrase refers to serving with benevolence.
  + This means that we should go above and beyond what is required.
  + Christians should always be committed to serving with excellence.
* **Serving the Lord** (Greek: *hōs kyrios*): obedience to the ultimate authority
  + Christ the Lord is our ultimate authority. We are accountable to Christ.
  + We serve others as if we are serving Christ, because we are serving Christ.
* **Not People** (Greek: *ou anthrōpos*): not only for the sake of people
  + God has placed leaders in authority over us for a reason.
  + Therefore, in serving our leaders we are actually serving God.

**APPLY:** *What is this passage calling me to do?*

If we believe that we are only serving people, we will serve half heartedly at best. When we understand that we are ultimately serving Christ, we will give more than is required. In serving this way we show Christ, not only to our leaders but also to those serving with us. This is not optional nor is it dependent on the quality and character of our leaders. We are serving Christ first and foremost.

**What do you think it means to serve wholeheartedly?**

**How does that apply to your workplace, church, and community?**

**How does knowing that you are ultimately serving Christ change how you serve?**

**PRAY:** Ask God to help you serve others as if you are serving Him.

****

**Thursday: Fair Wages**

**PRAY:** Ask God to speak to you from His Word.

**READ: Ephesians 6:8**

8 because **you know** that the Lord will **reward** each one for **whatever good** they do, whether they are **slave or free**.

**UNDERSTAND:** *get a deeper understanding of the key words*

* **You Know** (Greek: *oida*): to know or understand definitively
  + Paul is saying that this is something we should know with certainty.
  + Paul is describing a non-negotiable principle in this verse.
* **Reward** (Greek: *komizō*): to receive back what was invested
  + “Reward” is not the best translation of this term.
  + When we think of getting a reward we don’t often relate it to the integrity or quality of our work. In our sin nature, we often want what we haven’t earned.
* **Whatever Good** (Greek: *ean agathos*): useful, excellent, upright, honorable
  + What we will receive back will be in proportion to our good work.
  + This principle is also found in 2 Corinthians 9:6.
* **Slave or Free:** this principle applies to all people in all circumstances

**APPLY:** *What is this passage calling me to do?*

There is an ideology today called equality of outcome. This view says that it’s not enough to have equal opportunity for everyone, but we must also have equal rewards for everyone. This has led to a culture of rewarding everyone just for showing up. However, Paul is teaching that what we receive will be in proportion to what we have done. You reap what you sow every time. This is how God designed life to work.

**What are the negative consequences of reward mere participation?**

**Do you serve to be rewarded or because it’s the right thing to do?**

**Why do we want to be rewarded beyond our level of commitment?**

**PRAY:** Ask God to help you work and serve with excellence.

****

**Friday: No Favoritism**

**PRAY:** Ask God to speak to you from His Word.

**READ: Ephesians 6:9**

9 And **masters**, treat your slaves **in the same way**. **Do not threaten** them, since you know that he who is **both their Master and yours** is in heaven, and there is no **favoritism** with him.

**UNDERSTAND:** *get a deeper understanding of the key words*

* **Masters** (Greek: *kyrios*): a title of honor respect and reverence
  + This is specifically referring to the owner of household servants.
  + For application purposes we should read this passage with employee and employer relationships in mind. This could also be applied to supervisors and volunteer leaders.
* **In the Same Way** (Greek: *poieō autos*): refers back to the previous verses
* **Do Not Threaten** (Greek: *aniēmi apeilē*): to give up making threats
  + Christian leaders should not threaten those under their leadership.
  + Making threats is an indication we are not leading well. Threats come from a place of anger. We should never let ourselves become angry to the point of making threats.
* **Both Their Master and Yours:** everyone has the same ultimate authority
  + Since we are all under the authority of Christ, we should lead with humility.
  + We are accountable to Christ to how we lead the people that He has placed under our leadership and care.
* **Favoritism** (Greek: *prosōpolēmpsia*): partiality, respect of persons
  + Christ does not give leaders any special treatment just because they lead.
  + In fact, leaders are held to a higher standard. Leadership is a stewardship. We must lead responsibly and with great care for those we lead.

**APPLY:** *What is this passage calling me to do?*

If you are a leader you are called to lead with excellence. But more than that, you are called to care for those you lead. Christian leaders should never mistreat those under their authority. If you are not a leader, this passage may help you realize the level of pressure and accountability your leaders are dealing with. Extend leaders grace so they can lead well.

**How does this passage help you to be a better leader?**

**How does this passage help you understand the responsibility of leadership?**

**PRAY:** Ask God to help you understand and apply what you learned.

****

**Saturday: Prepare for Sunday**

**REVIEW:** Take a few minutes to make a list of what you’ve learned this week.

**PRAY:** Ask God to use this time to help you get familiar with Sunday’s scripture passage.

**READ: Ephesians 6:10-24**

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God,so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people. 19 Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

21 Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. 22 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

23 Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

**THINK:**  *Go ahead and underline key words and phrases.*

Start thinking about what this passage is saying.

* What stands out to you in this passage?
* What do you think is the main idea?
* What parts are confusing or hard to understand?
* How might this passage help you to follow Jesus better?

**PRAY:** Ask God to prepare you for tomorrow’s worship service.