Whistle While You Work
Whistle While You Work

Sermon Notes

August 3-4, 2013

I. The Bible and Slavery
   A. Old Testament
      1. The Old Testament laws about slavery
      2. Old Testament wisdom about slavery
   B. New Testament
      1. New Testament teaching about slavery
      2. New Testament attitudes about slavery
      3. What the New Testament leaves out

II. Imitators of Christ
   A. Be Being Filled
   B. Submissiveness
   C. Christ all encompassing in life:
      1. Wives
      2. Husbands
      3. Children
      4. Parents
      5. Slaves
      6. Masters
   D. The Witness of a Life of Submission
      1. The Kingdom of Heaven trumps this kingdom every time
      2. The winsomeness of submission and honoring God
Read Ephesians 6:5-9

In this chapter, Paul discussed a third group. Whereas, the first two groups were directly involved in family relationships (wives and husbands, children and parents), this group was outside the immediate family.

Question One:
- How does Paul want the slaves to treat their masters?

Question Two:
- How does Paul want the masters to treat the slaves?

Question Three:
Masters were to treat their slaves in the same way, that is, to please the Lord in their dealings with them. Slave owners were not to keep threatening them, but to treat them justly and fairly.

- What are examples that you can share about being treated justly and fairly?

Question Four:
- What does the phrase, “serving as to the Lord, and not to men” mean?

III. Working for God!

A. Abiding Relationship
1. God sees and hears
2. Motives
3. Diligence
4. The key to change in me, my co-workers, and my boss!

B. Masters
1. Kindness
2. God plays no favorites!
Life Group Questions for
August 3-4, 2013
Message = Whistle While You Work

Ice Breaker: Tell about one of the best workers you’ve ever been around. What made them so great in your eyes?

Read Ephesians 6: 5-9.
1. Tell what you observe about this passage.

2. Have three people read Ephesians 6: 6 in different translations. What do you think the word *eye-service* means when it is mentioned in the NASB or the NKJV?

3. In what way does Paul’s writing give dignity and meaning to any and all kinds of honest work?

4. Is it a struggle for you to work for God rather than for your boss? Please explain.

5. How do you typically deal with the stress you have at work? Is it working for you?

6. How are you doing personally when it comes to staying in the constant knowledge that God is near and desires to communicate with you?

7. How would you rate your witness at work? A 1 means you have no viable witness at work, and a 10 means you are an effective evangelist at work.

8. Pray for one another.

Table Talk

Elementary

Bible Passage: Ephesians 6:5-9

Question 1 - What do you want to be when you grow up? Recently my 4-year-old shared with us that “when I’m a grownup, I want to race cars and make roads.” It’s never too early to start thinking about what you want to do with your life. What do you think makes someone a good employee?

Question 2 - What is your current job description? [Example: you are a student (at school) & a brother/son/daughter/friend/etc. at home.] You do not currently get paid to go to school or to be a responsible/respectful son/daughter. But that does not mean that you don’t have certain responsibilities in order to be successful in these roles. What do you need to do to be successful in the classroom? (Hopefully you mentioned that you should be respectful toward your teacher!) What do you need to do to be a successful son/daughter? Brother/sister? How seriously do you take these roles?

Question 3 - What does it mean to serve the Lord wholeheartedly? What does it mean to serve the Lord and not people?
**Table Talk**

**Preschool & Nursery**


**Day 1: Read Ephesians 6:5-9**
As a family, talk about different kinds of jobs that would be familiar to your children. Discuss how those jobs can help others. God gives us many kinds of work opportunities and they are all important and helpful. Ask your children what their special jobs are. The most important job they have as a child is learning. Talk about ways they can be the kind of learner that God wants them to be. (Use Ephesians 6:6-7 for ideas.)

**Day 2: Read Proverbs 14:23, Luke 19:10**
Talk about the important job Jesus had to do while he was here on Earth. He is still doing that job now and He uses us to help Him. God wants us to do our best and work hard for Him in all our jobs. When we do, we are rewarded. Discuss, again, how being a good learner will help us to be good workers for God.

**Memory Verse:**
“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.” - Colossians 3:23

**Day 3: Read - Colossians 3:23**
Share examples of how you can work together as a family to help Jesus with His job. What are some things you need to learn to help you with that job? Remember, when it gets hard to be a good learner or worker...we can pray and ask God to help us!

**Activity:**
Write down some of the familiar jobs you discussed this week on slips of paper or index cards. Take turns choosing a job and then acting it out to see if others can guess the job. Offer hints or help to younger children. After guessing the correct job, talk about how that job can help others and what would happen if nobody did that job. Have fun!

**Personal Devotion Pages**
The following pages are designed to help you enjoy a regular time alone with God. We have divided up the curriculum to help us grow wherever we are in our relationship with God and in our knowledge of His Kingdom.

**LEVELS:** Since we are a Colorado church, we use skiing imagery to communicate the different levels of intensity and time involved in relating to God.

**BEGINNER:** If you are new in your relationship with God, we encourage you to try the exercises under this symbol:

![Green Circle]

**INTERMEDIATE:** If you have walked with God for some time and would like a little more challenge and more time involvement, try the exercises under this symbol:

![Blue Square]

**ADVANCED:** These exercises are for people who have walked with God for some time and display maturity in their relationship with Him.

![Black Diamond]

These exercises provide a practical way to encounter God and His truth on a regular basis. There are no rules here. Please don’t hurry through the process. Slow meditation and memorization seems to soak in better than cramming.

Enjoy!
Day One

1. Take some time to praise the Lord for who He is and enjoy thanking Him for what He has done in your life lately.


3. Ask God if He is pleased with your motives, efforts, and words while you are at work. Ask Him to show you how to grow in the knowledge that He is always with you.

   - Memorize Ephesians 6: 5-6.

Day Five

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ. Work hard, but not just to please your masters when they are watching. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart. Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free.

~Ephesians 6:5-8, NLT

At the core of Paul’s teaching to wives, husbands, slaves and masters is this: the life of a believer is focused on an abiding relationship with God. Because God has become the center of our lives, we now live moment to moment in fellowship with Him, seeking to honor Him with every motive, with every effort, and with every word.

Wives submit to husbands as to the Lord. Husbands love wives as Christ loved the church. Slaves obey masters as they would obey the Lord. Masters treat their slaves as if God was watching their every move.

Our every motive springs out of the knowledge that God sees and hears. He is present. He cares about what motivates me. He doesn’t just come around once in a while. He doesn’t miss a thing!

This may sound like we are to operate out of fear, should’s and ought to’s. However, Paul’s emphasis is on worship, not on seeing God as a dominating, controlling God.

Father, thanks for always being with me, for always seeing me, and for being available continually. I love you!
Day Five

1. Take some time to praise the Lord for who He is and enjoy thanking Him for what He has done in your life lately.

2. Meditate on Daniel 1: 8-20. Ask the Lord to teach you about Daniel’s attitude toward his masters in this story.

3. Pray for people at work who have great difficulties in their lives. Ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom to know how to pray for them.

4. Finish your Bible memorization today.

Day One

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ.

~Ephesians 6:5, NLT

Paul has spent all of chapter 5 of Ephesians teaching us how to practically be imitators of Christ. He has talked all about learning to be being filled with the Spirit, which is the real secret to clever imitating. No one can imitate another better than the person we are imitating themselves! If that person, through some miracle of regeneration, could continually fill us with His Spirit, then the chances of successful imitating go way up!

Practical spirituality is Paul’s passion. Though he soars like an eagle with his incredible insights into the mystery of the Gospel, he crawls through the trenches of practicality when addressing everyday struggles. After talking about how to be continually filled with the Spirit, he helps wives understand how to respect their husbands, and husbands to truly cherish their wives. Children are even taught to honor their parents and parents are taught how to discipline wisely.

Now, Paul comes to talk to slaves and masters. In Roman and even Jewish culture, slavery was common. Instead of seeking to change the political landscape, Paul teaches slaves how to deal with the hardship of forced labor. Neither Jesus nor His disciples spent time trying to change unjust laws and national politics. Their focus was on changing the heart. Cultures and politics change as the people become transformed from the inside out.

Father, teach me today to focus on internals, not externals. Give me wisdom to speak to people’s hearts rather than to their heads.
Day Two

1. Take some time to praise the Lord for who He is and enjoy thanking Him for what He has done in your life lately.


3. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you in praying for your coworkers.

4. Talk to the Lord about difficulties you have at work and ask Him for wisdom to know what to do about them.

5. Continue memorizing and meditating on the scriptures for this week.

Day Four

And in the same way, you masters must treat your slaves right. Don’t threaten them; remember, you both have the same Master in heaven, and he has no favorites.

~Ephesians 6:9, NLT

Spending only one verse on masters is interesting. Once again, he’s not telling them to free their slaves, stop the oppressive trade of human lives, or make new laws against slavery. He tells the masters how to treat their slaves! Because Paul is not about the kingdom of this world, he speaks only to issues that affect the Kingdom of Heaven.

Paul’s words, though few, are profound. Masters are absolutely no better than slaves in God’s eyes. They are equally responsible to treat others with honor and dignity. He must remember that although he is a master of men, he is still the servant of God.

(William Barclay)

Imagine what kind of work world it would be where workers were treated with great dignity and work was done to the glory of God. There would be absolutely NO NEED for workers unions. Think about how many people’s lives would be enriched because there would be greater job security, as well as product excellence! My guess is that if masters universally treated slaves as Paul suggests, then the institution of slavery would not have been maligned as it has been. Frankly, I think the whole institution would have gone the way of the mastodon in a matter of time.

Father, show me where I am not treating others as precious in Your eyes. Show me how to show honor and respect to those who work for me, or those for whom I work!
Day Four

1. Take some time to praise the Lord for who He is and enjoy thanking Him for what He has done in your life lately.


3. Pray for your boss. If you are the boss, pray for God to show you how to respect and honor your employees in a deeper way than you do now.

4. Continue meditating on and memorizing the scripture for this week.

Day Two

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ. Work hard, but not just to please your masters when they are watching. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart.

~Ephesians 6:5, 6, NLT

Citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven operate on a different set of values than do the citizens of this world. Paul’s exhortation to slaves in this passage seem to rub against the grain of our natural intuition. Our American values tell us to speak up against injustice. We are naturally bent toward rallying against unjust institutions and oppressive ways of thinking. Paul’s thinking is deeply rooted in Jesus’ thinking. They both teach that submission is a much more effective means of bringing about change than are rebellion and protest. Take a minute to internalize that thought.

The comfort for slaves in the midst of a possibly very difficult situation is to live every moment in fellowship with God. Joy comes to the slave, or the modern day employee, as he learns that his real master is God. When a person realizes that they work not for their earthly master or boss, but for God, their attitude changes.

The slave is to work with excellence, not seeking the approval of their earthly master, but the approval of God, who sees not only my work ethic, but sees my internal motive as well.

Though this sounds lofty and virtuous, practicing it proves to be difficult and should be seen as a work in progress. While I am working, God is at work IN ME.

Father, help me remember to work in constant fellowship with You this week!

12
1. Take some time to praise the Lord for who He is and enjoy thanking Him for what He has done in your life lately.


3. Bring at least three friends or loved ones to the Lord and ask Him to bring them to repentance and faith. Ask Him to show you how you can boldly love them and speak the words of Jesus into their lives.

4. Continue meditating on and memorizing the scripture for this week.

Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free.

~Ephesians 6:7, 8, NLT

Paul’s thinking is ingenious. He understands that, as a believing slave works with enthusiasm and excellence, he will begin to stand out from all the other slaves. His master will begin to question him, wondering why he is so winsome and diligent. This will give the slave the opportunity to explain the life change that has occurred because of slavery to Christ. As the other slaves begin to ask him why he is working so happily and diligently, it gives him another opportunity to share about the hope that is within him.

My attitude speaks louder than my words. People pay much more attention to my attitudes than to my words. If I go around the workplace talking about Jesus, but am slack in my work, cutting corners whenever possible, and trash talking the boss, my words become the words of a hypocrite. At that point, I’ve lost my audience.

Paul then tells us that God will reward us for doing good. He doesn’t tell us how this will happen, or when it will occur, but he has no problem telling us to expect a reward for doing good.

At this point, we must clarify the difference between selfish motives and self interest. Selfishness is rooted in self-centeredness. Self interest can and should be selflessly motivated. To illustrate, if I give my wife a gift because I want to manipulate her to do something for me, that would be selfishness. However, if I give something to my wife for the sheer joy of seeing the surprised look on her face, then I am operating in self interest.

Father, thank you that you reward those who seek You and those who honor You in their work!