

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

For the week of December 10-16, 2023

“MAKE YOUR WORK COUNT”

GETTING STARTED

To the facilitator: Use this section to introduce the topic. If possible, give a brief recap of the sermon.

Share a memorable point, a spiritual lesson, a personal application, a question, or something that challenged you from the sermon last Sunday.

If you could have any job for a day, what would it be, and why?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Ephesians 6:5-9.

1. Ephesians 6:5 encourages servants to serve with sincerity of heart as they would serve Christ. What does that mean and what would it look like for the Christian?
2. Ephesians 6:6 emphasizes doing the will of God from the heart. How can believers align their work with God's will? Do you ever recognize your work as holy? Why is it such a challenge to see work as sacred and unto the Lord?
3. Consider the challenge of wholehearted service (Ephesians 6:7). How does the attitude of wholeheartedness contribute to a positive work environment? Can you share personal examples or experiences that reflect a spirit of wholehearted service?
4. Ephesians 6:5-6 emphasize the importance of obeying and respecting authority. Discuss challenges that believers may face in maintaining a respectful attitude toward authority figures in the workplace especially if there are conflicts.
5. How does Ephesians 6:9 challenge your approach to leadership? In what ways can a leader exemplify authenticity and treat others justly and fairly? Do you think there is a shortage of Christians who practice verse 9?
6. How might the awareness of divine reward (verse 8) for good deeds impact the way you work or lead? Is it wrong for a believer to desire reward? Are actions driven by a desire for recognition or personal gain wrong?
7. Share a highlight that has impacted you in the study of Ephesians.

NEXT STEPS

Your life at work should show that God is at work in your life.

- ☐ I will work as unto the Lord.
- ☐ I will work with a heart of seriousness, sincerity and enthusiasm.
- ☐ I will lead with authenticity and fairness.
- ☐ I will seek to please the Lord in whatever I do.
- ☐ Don't forget to:
- ☐ Go through the devotionals every day this week.
- ☐ Have a regular daily time of prayer and reading of God's Word.

CLOSING THE SESSION

Close the session by taking the time to pray for one another. Consider the following as you pray:

- Pray for spiritual maturity in your character as one who works and as one who leads.
- Pray for relationships to grow with other Christ-followers, that you will encourage and care for one another.
- Pray for your unsaved family, friends, and loved ones.
- Pray for protection, provision, healing and comfort for everyone who's going through physical, emotional, mental and spiritual pain.

BIBLE READING GUIDE

December 11	Ephesians 6:1-4
December 12	Ephesians 6:5-9
December 13	Genesis 1:26-31
December 14	Ephesians 6:10-20
December 15	Ephesians 6:21-24
December 16	1 Kings 19:1-9
December 17	Galatians 4:4-7

SLAVERY IN BIBLE TIMES WAS MORE LIKE INDENTURED SERVANTHOOD

[Slavery in the Greco Roman cultures of the New Testament] is more like indentured servanthood. It's not what we think of as slavery. When you and I see the word “slave” in the Bible, you immediately think of 17th, 18th, and 19th century New World slavery: race-based, African slavery. When you do that, when you read it through those blinders, you aren't understanding what the Bible's teaching.

Historian Murray Harris ... wrote a book about what slavery was like in the 1st century Greco-Roman world. He says that in Greco-Roman times, number one, slaves were not distinguishable from anyone else by race, speech, or clothing. They looked and lived like everyone else and were never segregated off from the rest of society in any way. Number two, slaves were more educated than their owners in many cases and many times held high managerial positions. Number three, from a financial standpoint, slaves made the same wages as free laborers and therefore were not themselves usually poor and often accrued enough personal capital to buy themselves out. Number four, very few persons were slaves for life in the first century. Most expected to be manumitted after about ten years or by their late thirties at the latest.

In contrast, New World slavery—17th, 18th, 19th century slavery—was race-based, and its default mode was slavery for life. Also, the African slave trade was [started] and resourced through kidnapping, which the Bible unconditionally condemns in 1 Timothy 1:9-11 and Deuteronomy 24:7. Therefore, while the early Christians, like Saint Paul ... discouraged [1st century slavery] ... saying to slaves, “get free if you can,” [they] didn't go on a campaign to end it. [But] 18th and 19th century Christians, when faced with New World-style slavery, did work for its complete abolition, because it could not be squared in any way with biblical teaching.

So the point is that when you hear somebody say, “The Bible condones slavery,” you say, “No it didn't—not the way you and I define ‘slavery.’ It's not talking about that.”

Source: Timothy Keller, in the sermon “Literalism: Isn't the Bible Historically Unreliable and Regressive?” Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, New York (preached 11-5-06); source: Murray Harris, Slave of Christ (IVP, 2001)