

## BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, Nov. 28, 2010

Passage: Col. 3:22-4:1

Memory Passage: Col. 3:23-24

### DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

### READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Col. 3:22-4:1.** Why does Paul talk about slaves and masters in this section dealing with family relationships? How do you think Paul views slaves who are in the church at Colossae (see 1:2 for help)?

(b) Is Paul condemning slavery in these verses? Is he affirming it? How would you describe Paul's view of slavery if you only had Col. 3:22-4:1 to inform your opinion?

(c) **Read 1 Cor. 7:21, Eph. 6:6-9, 1 Tim. 1:10 & Rev. 18:11-13.** What do these verses teach about the NT view of slavery? Since 3 of the 4 passages are written by Paul, do they change your understanding of what Paul thinks of slavery? Do you think slavery in the 1<sup>st</sup> century was different than the slavery in the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, or from slave trade today? How was it different?

(d) *Family:* **Read Col. 3:22-4:1.** Explain that slaves in the 1<sup>st</sup> century were part of many households, and therefore it makes sense for Paul to deal with the slave/master relationship in this section. Also explain that in the 1<sup>st</sup> century there were many types of slaves: Some were Imperial slaves who held positions of status like policemen or bookkeepers, some were slaves of the state similar to our government employees, some were skilled craftsmen and some were teachers of children. There were also miners (the worst slave situation in the 1<sup>st</sup> century having a life expectancy of about 3 years) and agricultural slaves (the closest to the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century slaves we had in America). Begin a discussion about what these jobs would look like, how they would feel if they were each type of slave, how they might view their masters, would they desire to be free, etc. You will build on this discussion throughout the week.

### DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

### READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Col. 3:22-4:1.** Even though we are not in slavery today, these passages still have much to say to us concerning our work ethic. The main point of application will be in our employee/employer relationships, with the commands to slaves being applied to employees/those under authority and the commands to masters being applied to employers/those in authority. Why do you think Paul uses the term "earthly masters" in v. 22? Is he trying to make a distinction? If so, between who?

(b) So we are not in danger of just skipping over an obvious command, what does Paul mean when he says "obey in everything?" Is there anything outside of this command (in other words, does "everything" mean "everything?") If not, what might be excluded from this command?

(c) How would one obey "by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers?" Have you ever obeyed your boss in this way? What ways are you tempted to do this in your current position under the authority of another? How should you handle others who expect you to obey in this way so that you don't "outshine" them at your job?

(d) In v. 22, "sincerity" means "singleness of purpose or motivation." How does a single-minded heart that fears the Lord help you understand how you should obey your earthly masters? What does this look like? How is it different from those who obey "by way of eye-service, as people pleasers?"

(e) *Family:* Tell a story about two brothers who have been assigned the task of cleaning the attic. As they are left alone to work, one of the boys sits down and begins to play with a new item he has found, but the other continues to work. The second boy begins to tell the first boy that he needs to join in the task they have been assigned, but the first boy says he is busy doing something else. After a short while, their mother is heard coming up the stairs to check on them, and the first boy jumps up and begins to work. After the mother leaves, he sits back down to play rather than work. Begin a discussion with your family about what the motivations are of each brother, and get them to understand the double-mindedness and selfishness of the first brother (he is both trying to be lazy and appear to please his mother). Then read Col. 3:22 and explain that as we understand these verses and how they apply to us today, we know that slaves = anyone under authority and masters = anyone who has authority over another. Walk them through how each brother is found in this verse, discuss the merit of working like the second brother in everything we do, and point them toward the joy that comes when we are slaves who work with "sincerity (which means "singleness of purpose or motivation") of heart, fearing the Lord."

### DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

### READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Col. 3:22-4:1.** When we "do our work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men," what is the reward we receive? What is this inheritance? Why should it motivate us to obey as unto the Lord?

(b) Think about the slaves in the Colossian church who heard this letter read. How do you think they felt when they were promised "the inheritance as a reward" for their obedience? (Hint: How many of them do you think had earthly inheritances to

look forward to?) What are your emotions when you consider that you were a slave to Satan but now are a slave to God (Rom. 6:22), and will receive an inheritance from Him? Write a psalm/poem of praise to reflect these emotions.

(c) *Family*: Remind your family about the discussion you had on Day 1 about the different types of slaves there were in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Lead your family in a discussion about the difficulty some of these slaves would have had if their masters were cruel or abusive (think of some of the specific jobs and what cruel masters might look like). Then Read Col. 3:23-25 and discuss how these slaves would obey these verses, and how these verses would be an encouragement to obey, in light of wicked masters. Then shift the discussion to what it looks like today to be obedient to these verses even if one's boss is cruel.

#### **DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT**

#### **READ THE PASSAGE**

(a) **Read Col. 3:22-4:2**. Who is Paul speaking to in v. 25, the slave or the master? Why did you choose your answer? What does the content of v. 25 have to do with the one you chose (either slave or master)? Is it an encouragement or a warning?

(b) Why do you think Paul dedicated 4 verses to slaves and only one verse to masters? If you are a person in authority over others, write down at least 3 ways that you can treat your subordinates more “justly and fairly.” If you are someone submitted to the authority of another, in what ways do you think your master/boss could treat you more “justly and fairly?” Remember these suggestions so that when your future entails having greater authority over others you will have a better idea of how to rule justly & fairly.

(c) What is the motivation for both master and slave in these verses? How does this motivation encourage us to obey these verses? How does this motivation bring us strength to endure bad bosses or bad employees?

(d) *Family*: In advance of your lesson, come up with 6-8 different situations in which someone in authority has to act. Make each situation different, and take them from real-life scenarios in work situations. **Read Col. 4:1**. Give your family the details of the situation but not the decision made or action taken by the one in charge. Have your family discuss how they would treat these subordinates “justly & fairly” given the situation you brought forth. Encourage them with suggestions, both good and bad, in order to get discussion started if needed. Also, make sure you push with further questions so the suggested actions are contemplated fully (in other words, if an action is suggested that is not fully just or fair, question it so more thought is given).

#### **DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT**

#### **READ THE PASSAGE**

(a) I am out of space for this week, so we will close our study in this way: **Read Phil. 2:5-8**. We have learned this week that we have been, as believers, transformed from slaves to sin into slaves of God (Rom. 6:22). How does Phil. 2:5-8 relate to Rom. 6:22? Since Jesus gave us this example, how does this help us understand and obey the commands found in Col. 3:22-4:1? Consider this: Freedom for the Christian is being a slave to Christ. How counter-intuitive and counter-cultural this is! **After meditating on Phil 2:5-8 and Rom. 6:22**, write down several implications these truths have on your life, and several ways you will apply these truths to your life this week (in other words, how do these truths make a difference for you today?).

If you are in need of another family devotion, use your whiteboard to compare Phil. 2:5-8 & Rom. 6:22 (connecting Jesus' humble, servant-work on the cross to the purchase of our freedom as slaves of God). Then spend time sharing with your family all of the ways that Christ's humble cross-work enables us to live in obedience to these commands in Col. 3:22-4:1.

**DATE:** November 21, 2010

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*Christ-centered Families Part IV: Slaves & Masters*