

THIS WEEK, I WILL SEEK TO SERVE
OTHERS BY...



WEEK 26 – HOUSEHOLD RELATIONSHIPS
PART 3 (SLAVES AND MASTERS)
COLOSSIANS 3:22–4:1

TODAY'S VERSES:

Colossians 3:22-4:1
Deuteronomy 23
Exodus 21:16
1 Timothy 1:10
Mark 9:35
Matthew 20:26-28
Romans 3:23
Galatians 3:28
1 Corinthians 12:13

Today in Colossians we continue looking at a new understanding of what were called “household codes.” Household codes governed how people within a household would/should act and interact with one another. They laid out who had authority and what responsibilities each person in the household were (by law) committed to. Today we look at slaves and masters.

How has the Gospel changed your understanding of cultural issues?

Paul’s words were revolutionary, because rather than dreaming of impossible freedoms, Paul moves to offer practical guidelines centered in the family and household.

- **The history of slavery and the Church is...difficult.**

When the Bible was written, *all* of the cultures the Biblical writers engaged involved slavery. Biblical commands consistently undermined the power of slave owners in the ancient world. Only the Bible taught that every single human being, slave or free, is made in the image of God and carries worth.

- **God didn’t create or condone slavery; He gave regulations to an existing condition people created.**

The Old and New Testaments clearly state that slavery is wrong; owning a person as property is wrong. Many Bible translations will use the word **bondservant** or simply **servant** to translate “slave” because ancient slavery was different from how it was practiced in the western world.

Spend some time discussing your understanding of slavery in the past and in our world today.

Greco-Roman household codes prescribed that men were the master over everything. Paul’s reframing of household codes are subversive because Roman codes never addressed women, children, or slaves directly. Paul, however, addresses all three before he addresses the man in relation to them. Rather than placing the male as the sovereign center, Paul places Jesus at the center. With Jesus at the center, all the old boundaries break down and the hierarchies begin to blur. In Jesus, relationships are transformed and should be characterized by humility and respect as all parties imitate Christ.

How would our relationships change if we imitated Christ?

Today’s “household code” should remind us that where we may be advantaged with power or privilege, we are called to humble ourselves, sacrifice, love, listen, and treat our fellow human beings as our equals. Paul is pushing for a full life for both slaves and masters with words that were revolutionary—in time, it brought the downfall of slavery as an institution. It was also revolutionary in that it brought fullness to the Christian’s life, whether slave or master, immediately.

Where are you advantaged? How could you use that advantage and privilege to serve, listen to, and love others?

Paul accompanied his instructions with “it is for the Lord.” Pagan slaves served their master because they were bound by fear; Christian slaves served *better* and with more hope because they trusted God. As Christians, we should be the *best* workers because we are working for Jesus first; there is an intrinsic nobility in work offered to God.
