

This Great Mystery

Ephesians and the Secret God Kept for Ages

Session 10. Children, Fathers, Slaves, Masters

Reading: Ephesians 6:1-9

Part One

Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

The group discovers how verse 9 quietly subverts the master-slave relation from the inside, and weighs honestly why Paul regulates an institution the gospel is built to dissolve rather than calling for its immediate abolition.

Catholic Touchstone

Every human authority answers to the one *Kyrios* in heaven, with whom there is no partiality, so no baptized person may ever be treated as a means, and the Church now names the enslavement of human beings a grave violation of the seventh commandment.

This is the session leaders are most tempted to rush past, and the one this group most needs. Last week the mystery was unsealed: Christ and the Church, one flesh. Tonight Paul walks that mystery into the two remaining rooms of the ancient household, the nursery and the slave quarters, and something strange happens in each. Children and slaves, people the moral literature of the age talked about but never to, are addressed directly, as members of the assembly, before their fathers and masters are addressed at all. Then verse 9 detonates quietly: masters must render to their slaves the very same good-willed service slaves were just told to render, must give up threatening, which was the engine of the whole system, and must remember that they share one Master who does not look at faces. Your group has heard the accusation that the Bible endorses slavery. Do not protect them from it; this passage, read closely, is the answer, and they should find that answer themselves. Handle the room gently: some of them have fathers who provoked them to anger, and the fourth commandment can land on a bruise.

What You Need to Know

Household codes, and what Paul does to the genre

Greco-Roman moral writing had a settled convention for discussing the household: the writer addresses the free adult male and tells him how to manage his wife, his children, and his slaves. The other parties are subject matter, not audience. Aristotle can describe a slave as a living tool, an instrument with a soul. Paul takes over the familiar three-pair structure and breaks its deepest rule: he speaks to wives, children, and slaves directly, and in each pair he speaks to the subordinate party first. In a world where the letter was read aloud in the assembly, that means the slave in the room heard the apostle address him by name as a moral agent whose daily work could be done as to Christ, before his master was addressed at all. Simply being spoken to was a dignity the culture did not offer.

The father's power, and its new boundary

The Roman *paterfamilias* held sweeping legal authority over his children, in the old law extending, at least in theory, to power of life and death, and in practice covering property, marriage, and discipline for as long as he lived. Verse 4 puts two fences around that power that Roman law never did: a prohibition, do not provoke your children to anger, and a positive charge, bring them up in the *paideia* and instruction of the Lord. The father is demoted from owner to steward. He answers to a Father, and his authority exists for the child's formation, not the child's use.

Roman slavery, without whitewash

Do not let the group soften Roman slavery into mere employment. It was often brutal, it included the mines and the lash and sexual exploitation, and slaves made up a vast share of the empire's population, by many estimates something approaching a third in the large cities, though ancient numbers are uncertain. It differed from American race slavery in some respects, manumission was common and slavery was not tied to skin color, but it rested on the same premise: that one human being can be another's property. Keep both honesty and precision here; the steelman depends on it.

Why the answer lives in verse 9

Three moves in a single verse. First, *ta auta*, do the same to them: the good will, the service from the heart that slaves were commanded in verses 5 to 8 is now commanded of masters toward slaves, which makes the relation mutual, an echo of 5:21. Second, forbear threatening: the threat was the enforcement mechanism, the one thing that made the institution run, and Paul removes it. Third, the *kyrios* wordplay: the earthly *kyrioi* have a *Kyrios* in heaven, and with him there is no *prosopolempsia*, no receiving of the face, no partiality. Slavery's ideological foundation was the claim that some persons simply outrank others by nature. Verse 9 denies that claim at the top of the universe. A master who must serve his slave's good, may not threaten, and stands beside his slave before the same impartial Lord is a master whose mastery is already dissolving. The Church took this seed seriously: within a few centuries St. Gregory of Nyssa was preaching what is often counted among the earliest surviving sustained attacks on slaveholding itself, and the Catechism today forbids the enslavement of human beings outright at paragraph 2414.

Pastoral note for this room

Two live wires tonight. First, the fourth commandment: some in your group have absent, harsh, or abusive fathers, and 'honor your father' can sound like a demand to pretend. Be ready to say plainly that honor is not submission to abuse, that obedience belongs to childhood while respect endures (the Catechism itself distinguishes these), and that for some people this week's honoring will be a guarded prayer from a safe distance. Second, slavery is not a museum piece: trafficking and forced labor are present-tense evils, which is exactly why the Church's teaching at CCC 2414 is written in the present tense. Leave room for anger at the history; the text can bear it.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

The commandment with a promise

Paul quotes the fourth commandment from the Decalogue and notes that it is the first commandment carrying a promise. In its original setting the promise is long life in the land God is giving Israel. Paul, writing to Gentile children in Asia Minor, quietly universalizes it: that you may

live long on the earth. The land promise has widened to the world, which is this letter's habit; the inheritance of Israel keeps opening outward to the nations. The children in the Ephesian assembly are being placed inside Israel's covenant story, at the age of obedience, as full members.

The God who is no respecter of faces

The declaration that there is no partiality with God is itself Old Testament language: Deuteronomy 10:17 declares that the LORD is not partial and takes no bribe, and defends the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, precisely the people without social standing. Paul is not inventing a nice idea; he is aiming Israel's oldest confession about God's justice directly at the household's most unequal relationship. The impartial God of Deuteronomy now stands behind the slave.

From regulated to redeemed

Israel's own law regulated slavery while planting release inside it: the Hebrew slave freed in the seventh year, the jubilee logic of Leviticus 25, the astonishing command of Deuteronomy 23:15-16 not to return an escaped slave to his master. Scripture's pattern with entrenched evil is often pedagogy rather than instant demolition: God meets a people where they are and buries inside their law the principles that will one day overturn what the law tolerated. Paul stands in that pattern, and the Church's later, absolute rejection of slavery is that seed grown to its full height.

Voices of the Church

Read these aloud where they land. Each is either a direct citation or an honest summary, labelled as such.

St. John Chrysostom, d. 407

Preaching on this very passage to the parents of Antioch and Constantinople, Chrysostom presses verse 4 hard. In substance he tells fathers: you spare no expense to have your son taught rhetoric and set up in a career, yet you give no thought to the discipline and instruction of the Lord; you are shaping an orator and neglecting a soul. Raise the child first for Christ, he urges, train him like an athlete for God, for a child formed in holiness is a greater legacy than any estate, and everything else you give him will follow rightily from that.

Homilies on Ephesians and his treatise on the right way for parents to bring up their children. Summary of St. John Chrysostom's teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. Most of your group are not parents yet, but some will be, and all of them are deciding right now what they believe formation is for. This lands on career anxiety.

St. Gregory of Nyssa, d. c. 395

Preaching on Ecclesiastes' line 'I bought male and female slaves,' Gregory turns on the slaveholder in the congregation. In substance he asks: you have bought a human being; tell me the price. God made this creature in his own image and appointed him ruler over the earth; who is so arrogant as to think himself the owner of God's image? What pile of coins did you decide was equal to a human nature? You have condemned to slavery one whose nature is free, and you have set a price on someone God made priceless.

Homilies on Ecclesiastes, Homily 4. Summary of St. Gregory of Nyssa's teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. This is what the seed in verse 9 grew into within three centuries: a bishop of the Church attacking not cruel masters but the owning of persons itself.

St. Josephine Bakhita, d. 1947

Kidnapped in Sudan at about seven years old, sold and resold, beaten and scarred, she was so traumatized that she forgot her own name; her captors called her Bakhita, 'fortunate.' Sold at last into a household in Italy, she came to know a different kind of master. In the Venetian dialect she called God il Paron, the Master, and Benedict XVI recounts her discovery in substance: above all the masters who had owned and abused her there was a different Master, the living Lord, and this Master had himself been flogged, and this Master loved her, awaited her, and called her his own. Knowing that Master, she said, she was truly free, and she spent the rest of her life as a Canossian sister telling others they had the same Master.

Her canonization testimony, as recounted by Benedict XVI in Spe Salvi 3. Summary of St. Josephine Bakhita's teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. Bakhita read verse 9 from underneath, and the word she chose for God is the exact wordplay of the verse: the masters have a Master, and hers was good.

Catechism Connection

The Catechism says

CCC 2214-2215. The divine fatherhood is the source of human fatherhood and grounds the honor children owe their parents; filial respect flows from gratitude toward those who gave life.

CCC 2217. Obedience toward parents belongs to the child living at home and ceases with emancipation, but respect and honor never cease. Useful pastorally for adult children, including wounded ones.

CCC 2222-2223. Parents must regard their children as children of God and respect them as human persons; they bear first responsibility for their education, which answers to verse 4's charge.

CCC 1934-1935. All persons possess the same nature and origin and enjoy an equal dignity; every form of discrimination in fundamental rights is incompatible with God's design. The doctrinal home of 'there is no partiality.'

CCC 2414. The seventh commandment forbids acts or enterprises that lead, for any reason, to the enslavement of human beings, to their being bought, sold, and exchanged like merchandise. The seed of verse 9 in its full-grown, binding form.

Thread Watch

Thread Watch

The mystery (develop). Resolved last week: Christ and the Church, one flesh. Tonight show its social consequence. The mystery that flattened the Jew-Gentile wall in chapter 2 and reordered marriage in chapter 5 now reaches the last and hardest wall in the house, master and slave. Do not re-explain the mystery; let someone in the group notice the pattern at question 9 and name it.

The walk (develop). This is the final room of the walk section that began at 4:1. Worthy walking has now covered speech, purity, marriage, childhood, and work. Next week the walk ends in a stand.

Inheritance and possession (develop). Verse 8 pays slave and free from the same account: whatever good anyone does he will receive again from the Lord. The inheritance sealed in 1:14 is distributed without partiality. Connect briefly at question 4.

The powers (develop). Verse 9 lifts every eye to a Master in heaven, above every earthly hierarchy. That upward look is the doorway to next week, where Paul names the real enemy and it is not flesh and blood. Plant one sentence of anticipation at the close; do not preview the armor.

In Christ, in him, in the Beloved (develop). Children obey 'in the Lord'; slaves work 'as to Christ.' The little phrase has now consecrated every ordinary relationship in the letter.

Head and body (develop). Light touch: the household is being re-membered as the body was, every member

joined directly to the Head, so no member belongs to another member as property.

Objection Bench

Leader only. Do not raise these unless someone in the room does.

So adult children have to obey their parents about careers, dating, everything?

No. The Catechism itself (2217) says obedience belongs to the child at home and ceases with emancipation; what never ceases is respect and honor. Paul is addressing children in the household, and even their obedience is 'in the Lord,' which bounds it: no parent may command sin.

Doesn't 'bring them up in discipline' bless harsh punishment?

Read verse 4's first clause: do not provoke your children to anger. *Paideia* is formation, training, the whole shaping of a person, and the verse's explicit prohibition falls on the father's harshness, not the child's spirit. Colossians 3:21 adds the reason: lest they become discouraged.

My father was abusive. Am I commanded to honor him?

Honor is not pretense and it is not submission to abuse. It can mean truthful acknowledgment of the gift of life, prayer for a parent's soul, refusal of hatred, and boundaries that protect you. Say this gently and out loud if the question surfaces; someone in the room is carrying it.

Didn't the Church itself tolerate slavery for centuries, so citing CCC 2414 is convenient?

Be honest: Christians, including churchmen, owned slaves, and the development was slower and less consistent than it should have been. But the trajectory is real and runs one direction: Paul's seed, Gregory of Nyssa's attack, repeated papal condemnations of the slave trade, and the abolition movements, which were overwhelmingly staffed and driven by Christians reading these very texts. Development that arrives late is still development, and its root is verse 9, not the Enlightenment alone.

Session Goals

1. Trace the structure of the household code and notice that Paul addresses the subordinate party in each pair first, directly, as moral agents.
2. Discover the source and promise of the commandment Paul quotes, and what he does to the land promise.
3. Find the three moves of verse 9, mutual service, no threats, one impartial Master, and articulate how they hollow out the master-slave relation from inside.
4. Face at full strength the objection that Paul's silence endorses slavery, and answer it from the text without whitewashing the history.
5. Connect the pattern to the resolved mystery: the union of Christ and the Church keeps flattening every wall the world builds.

Time Note

Planned for 75 to 90 minutes

Roughly: Win 10 minutes, reading 5, questions 1 to 3 (children and fathers) 20, questions 4 to 6 (slaves and the pivot of verse 9) 20, question 7 (Philemon discovery) 10, question 8 (steelman) 15, question 9 and Send 10, closing 5. The steelman is the summit; protect its 15 minutes even if everything else compresses.

If you are running long, cut in this order.

1. Cut the Dig Deeper on 1 Corinthians 7:21 first.
2. Compress question 3 (verse 4 on fathers) to a two-minute leader summary if the children-and-parents discussion runs long.
3. If still tight, convert the Philemon discovery at question 7 into a leader read-aloud rather than a group hunt; the Exodus discovery at question 2 stays live no matter what.

Part Two

Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Pray together

Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, we come to you tonight as sons and daughters. Thank you for the parents who gave us life, and be near to any of us for whom that thanks is complicated. Lord Jesus, you took the form of a servant and were obedient unto death; teach us tonight what your Word does to power. Holy Spirit, you sealed us for the day of redemption; open this hard passage honestly, and do not let us look away from it. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win

Open questions. No wrong answers. Let everyone speak before you move on.

W1. What is a rule from the house you grew up in that made no sense to you as a kid but makes sense to you now?

W2. Think of the best boss, coach, or teacher you have ever had, and the worst. What was the actual difference in how they used their authority?

The first question can surface family pain; receive whatever comes warmly and do not press. The second question is quietly loading verse 9, so listen for the word 'threat' and remember who said it.

Read

Read aloud

Three readers. Reader one takes 6:1-4, reader two takes 6:5-8, and reader three reads verse 9 alone, slowly. Ask the group to listen for who is being talked to, not just about.

Build

Numbered inductive questions. Ask, wait, let the group work the text. The ANSWER boxes are for you to share after the discussion, not before it.

Who gets spoken to

1. Paul addresses four groups in these nine verses, and two more last week. List all six pairs in order. In each pair, who does Paul address first? Now the strange part: in the standard moral handbooks of Paul's world, who was the only person in the household the writer ever actually addressed?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Wives then husbands, children then fathers, slaves then masters: in every pair the socially subordinate party is addressed first, and addressed directly. Greco-Roman household writing ran the other way; the moralist spoke to the free adult male about how to manage everyone else, and Aristotle could call a slave a living tool. This letter was read aloud in the assembly, which means the children and the slaves of Ephesus heard an apostle speak to them, by name as a class, as moral agents whose obedience could be offered to Christ. Before Paul says

a single word about their duties, the form of the passage has already said something the culture never said: you are a person, and you are in the Church on the same floor as your father and your master.

Live discovery

Split the room in two. Half find the commandment in Exodus 20, half find it in Deuteronomy 5. Read the wording carefully and report back what promise is attached.

Let them find it. Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16

2. Paul says he is quoting 'the first commandment with a promise.' Let's go find it. What is the promise in the original, and what has Paul done to it?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

It is the fourth commandment, the hinge of the Decalogue, and the promise in both places is long life in the land the LORD your God gives you, with Deuteronomy adding that it may go well with you. Paul keeps the promise but quietly drops 'the land' and writes 'the earth.' Gentile children in Asia Minor were never promised Canaan, so Paul does what this whole letter does with Israel's inheritance: he opens it outward to the nations. A child obeying her parents in Ephesus is standing inside Sinai's covenant, and the promised land has become the whole world. Notice also what it means that children get a commandment at all: obedience at their age is not just house rules, it is covenant membership, something they can offer to God.

3. Verse 4 turns to fathers. A Roman father held nearly absolute legal power over his children for as long as he lived. What does this one verse forbid him, and what does it assign him?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

It forbids provoking: the needling, the impossible standards, the anger-farming that a man with total power can inflict without ever technically doing wrong. And it assigns him a task: bring them up in the *paideia* and instruction of the Lord, where *paideia* means the whole formation of a person, not just punishment. Roman law gave the father rights; Paul gives him a job and a boundary, and both exist for the child's sake. The father is not an owner but a steward who answers to the Father from whom every family is named (3:15). For anyone in the room whose father broke this verse over them: the verse is on their side. Paul saw what a provoking father does to a child and forbade it in Scripture.

Dig Deeper

Colossians 3:21 is this verse's twin and adds the reason for the prohibition: lest they become discouraged. Paul has watched a child's spirit go out like a lamp.

The slave's work relocated

4. Read verses 5 to 8 again slowly and list every phrase that tells the slave who he is really working for. What do these phrases do to the master's ownership, and what does verse 8 promise?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

As to Christ; as servants of Christ; doing the will of God from the heart; as to the Lord and not to men; he will receive the same again from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. Five times in four verses, Paul relocates the slave's work: the earthly master loses ownership of its meaning. The slave's real employer, real audience, and real paymaster is Christ, which means the most degraded labor in the empire can be worship, and no master can touch that. Then verse 8 opens the pay window and puts slave and free in the same line before the same Lord: the inheritance we have tracked since 1:14 is distributed without partiality. Be careful with the group here: this dignifies the worker, not the institution. Paul is arming the slave's interior life, not blessing his chains, and the proof is what happens next in verse 9.

The pivot

5. Verse 9 begins: 'Masters, do the same to them.' The same as what? Trace it backward through verses 5 to 8 and say precisely what masters are being commanded. Then look at the next clause: what single tool does Paul confiscate?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

The same refers to what slaves were just commanded: render service with good will, from the heart, as to the Lord. So masters must serve their slaves' good, with good will, from the heart. The relation has just been made mutual, and we have heard that move before: 5:21, be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ, still governing everything. Then the confiscation: forbear threatening. The threat was not a detail of ancient slavery, it was the engine; the entire system ran on fear of the lash, the mines, the auction block. Paul removes the engine and leaves the frame standing, and a machine without its engine may look the same from the street, but it no longer runs. A master who must serve his slave and cannot threaten him is a master in name whose mastery is quietly dissolving.

6. One Greek word appears again and again in verses 5 to 9, translated sometimes 'master' and sometimes 'Lord.' Count its appearances. What is Paul doing with it, and what does the final phrase, 'there is no partiality with him,' do to the whole idea of slavery?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

The word is *kyrios*. Slaves obey their earthly *kyrioi*; they serve the *Kyrios*; they receive from the *Kyrios*; and the *kyrioi* are told their own *Kyrios* is in heaven. Every time an Ephesian master heard his title, he heard it pointing above his head. The masters have a Master, and Bakhita's word for God, *il Paron*, the Master, shows a slave hearing this verse exactly right. Then the last phrase: *prosopolempsia*, literally receiving of the face, partiality. Heaven does not see the social mask; the God of Deuteronomy 10:17 is not partial and never was. Slavery's deepest claim was that some persons outrank others by nature. Verse 9 denies that claim at the top of the universe, and once it is denied there, its days below are numbered.

Dig Deeper

Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11 say out loud what verse 9 implies: in Christ there is neither slave nor free. Ephesians has been building that sentence brick by brick since chapter 2.

Live discovery

Have everyone find the letter to Philemon, one page, near the end of the New Testament, and read verses 15 to 16 aloud together. Then have one person scan down to verse 21 and read it too.

Let them find it. Philemon 15-16; Philemon 21

7. Paul once wrote an entire letter, his shortest, about one runaway slave being sent back to his Christian master. Let's watch him apply tonight's verse to a man with a name.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Paul asks Philemon to receive Onesimus back no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother, both in the flesh and in the Lord. Both in the flesh and in the Lord: not just brothers on Sunday and property on Monday, but brothers in every sphere at once. And verse 21, 'knowing that you will do even more than I say,' is a raised eyebrow that many readers ancient and modern have heard as a request for the man's freedom, though Paul, characteristically, makes Philemon reach the conclusion himself rather than ordering it. This is verse 9 with a face on it. Notice the method: Paul does not command from outside, he rearranges the relationship from inside, brotherhood first, until owning the man becomes unthinkable.

Dig Deeper

1 Corinthians 7:21 shows Paul telling slaves who can gain their freedom to take the opportunity. He is not romanticizing slavery; where the door opens, walk through it.

The hard question, at full strength

8. Now the objection your group has already met online, and it deserves its full weight before anyone answers.

Build then press

The strongest form of the objection. Paul had a clean chance to say 'slavery is evil, free them,' and instead he told slaves to obey their masters with fear and trembling. Slaveholders in the American South preached from this exact passage, and they were not misquoting it; the words are right there. If an inspired moral teacher, given a direct opening, regulates an abomination instead of condemning it, then the simplest explanation is that these letters are documents of their age, reflecting its blind spots, not a revelation standing above it. A merely human Paul explains this passage better than an inspired one.

Answering from the text. Start by conceding what is true, because it is: these verses were preached from slaveholding pulpits, Christians including churchmen owned slaves, and abolition came centuries later than it should have. Do not defend that history; the Church does not. But now read what the passage actually does, because the objection depends on not reading verse 9. Paul addresses slaves as brothers and moral agents, which the genre never did; he hands the slave's work and reward to Christ, out of the master's reach; and then he commands masters to render the same good-willed service to their slaves, strips them of the threat that made the system run, and stands master and slave side by side before one impartial Master. Every premise slavery rested on is denied inside these five verses. Ask the group the honest historical question: what were Paul's actual options? He was writing to house churches of a few dozen people, with no vote, no army, and no standing, inside an empire whose economy was slavery and which crucified revolutionaries. A proclamation of abolition would have freed no one and gotten every slave in the room killed. What Paul does instead is plant a charge in the foundation: brotherhood, mutuality, one impartial Lord. And the fuse burned: Gregory of Nyssa

attacking slaveholding itself by the fourth century, and, in the end, abolition movements led overwhelmingly by Christians who had these texts open. The slaveholders had to quote verses 5 to 8 while covering verse 9 with a thumb; the abolitionists just moved the thumb. That is also, notice, how Scripture itself describes God's way with entrenched evil, divine pedagogy, meeting a people where they are while burying release inside the law, and Israel's own law already sheltered the runaway (Deuteronomy 23:15-16). Say the last part honestly: it is fair to grieve that the seed grew so slowly, and Catholics can hold that grief. But a text that dissolves slavery from the inside is not a text of its age. Its age is all around it in the ruins, and this text is why.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The objection is strong exactly as far as verses 5 to 8, and collapses at verse 9: mutual service commanded of masters, threatening forbidden, one impartial Master over both. Paul, with no political power, denies slavery's premises rather than issuing a proclamation that would have freed no one, and the Church's trajectory from Gregory of Nyssa to CCC 2414, the enslavement of human beings forbidden outright, grows from this seed. The honest concession stands alongside the answer: Christians misused these verses and were too slow, and the verses themselves are what finally condemned them.

9. Step back to the whole letter. Where have we seen Ephesians do this before, take a wall the world thinks is permanent and quietly flatten it? What does that pattern have to do with the mystery we unsealed last week?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Chapter 2: the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile, broken down, one new man. Chapter 5: husband and wife, reordered under mutual subjection and Christ's cross-shaped love. Chapter 6: parent and child bound into one covenant, master and slave set before one impartial Master. The mystery, Christ and the Church united as one body, one flesh, is not an idea that leaves the world as it found it. A body cannot have one member owning another member; every wall inside the household falls for the same reason the wall in the temple courtyard fell. And one step further, pointing at next week without opening it: if the walls between people are coming down, who is actually holding the world in bondage? Paul is about to name the real enemy, and it is not flesh and blood.

Send

Open questions. Let these land in silence if they need to.

S1. Everyone in this room is under somebody's authority and has some authority over somebody, a boss, a younger sibling, a team, a group chat you run. If verse 9 got applied to how you hold your small piece of power this week, what would actually change?

S2. Tonight we sat with a passage people use against the faith, and we did not flinch. How does it change your confidence, or your honesty, to know the hard texts can be read all the way through?

Live It This Week

Practices

1. Honor your father and your mother concretely this week: one call, one letter, one real thank-you for something specific. If that relationship is wounded, your honoring can be a single guarded prayer for them

from whatever distance is safe; that counts, fully.

2. Pick your most invisible task of the week, the dishes, the data entry, the shift no one sees, and do it deliberately 'as to the Lord and not to men.' Once, on purpose, with attention.

3. Find the one place you hold power over someone and rule by low-grade threat, the sharp tone, the silence, the hanging deadline, and forbear it for seven days. Replace it once with the good-willed service you would want from above you.

4. Pray one decade of the Rosary this week for the millions still enslaved today, trafficked and in forced labor, and for their masters' conversion. St. Josephine Bakhita, pray for us.

Scripture Memory

Ephesians 6:9

"Masters, do the same to them, and forbear threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him."

Ephesians 6:9

Closing Prayer

Pray together

Lord Jesus Christ, Master who knelt with a towel, we have read tonight what your gospel does to power, and we hand you ours. Bless our parents, living and dead; heal what is broken between us and them. Make our hidden work worship. Where we have ruled anyone by fear, forgive us and teach us your way. And for every man, woman, and child still held in slavery tonight, break the chains, Lord, and hurry. Through the prayers of St. Josephine Bakhita, who called you her good Master, amen.

Part Three

Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in this session, in order. Print this page and keep it in front of you.

Primary text

- **Ephesians 6:1-9** three readers: 1-4, 5-8, and verse 9 alone

Discovery passages

- **Exodus 20:12** the commandment, first tablet's hinge
- **Deuteronomy 5:16** adds 'that it may go well with you'
- **Philemon 15-16** no longer as a slave but a beloved brother
- **Philemon 21** 'even more than I say'

Supporting passages

- **Ephesians 5:21** mutual subjection, still governing
- **Ephesians 3:15** the Father from whom every family is named
- **Deuteronomy 10:17** the LORD is not partial
- **Deuteronomy 23:15-16** do not return the escaped slave
- **Colossians 3:21** lest they become discouraged
- **Galatians 3:28** neither slave nor free
- **Colossians 3:11** Christ is all, and in all
- **1 Corinthians 7:21** gain your freedom if you can

Terms

- **kyrios.** lord, master; the same word for the earthly masters and the Master in heaven
- **prosopolempsia.** partiality, literally receiving of the face
- **paideia.** formation, training, the whole raising of a person
- **doulos.** slave, bondservant

Catechism

- CCC 2214-2217. filial honor; obedience ends, respect endures
- CCC 2222-2223. parents' charge to educate and respect their children
- CCC 1934-1935. equal dignity, discrimination incompatible with God's design
- CCC 2414. enslavement of human beings forbidden