

Small Group Discipleship Guide

Ice Breaker

Question: Think about a time you felt overlooked, undervalued, or treated unfairly — at work, at home, or somewhere else. How did you respond, and what did you wish you had done differently?

Scripture Reading

Have someone read **Ephesians 6:5-9** aloud:

Slaves, obey your humanmasters with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as you would Christ. Don't work only while being watched, as people-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing God's will from your heart. Serve with a good attitude, as to the Lord and not to people, knowing that whatever good each one does, slave or free, he will receive this back from the Lord. And masters, treat your slaves the same way, without threatening them, because you know that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

Setting the Scene (2 minutes)

Pastor Phil was upfront — this is a passage full of tension. Paul isn't condoning slavery; he's speaking into a broken world where it existed, and telling people who loved Jesus how to walk worthy of His calling even inside evil circumstances. The whole conversation rests on one statement from verse 9: *there is no favoritism with God*. He sees every person — slave and free, employee and boss, overlooked and celebrated — with the same eyes. And that changes everything about how we live.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Message

1. Joseph, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Esther — all of them lived in unjust, powerless situations, yet each one was faithful and God used each one in remarkable ways. Which of their stories resonates most with you right now, and why?
2. Paul's instruction to slaves — obey as if obeying Christ, work even when no one is watching, serve with a *good attitude* — this is hard enough as a free person. What makes it genuinely difficult for you in your current work or life situation?

3. History tells us that the early church began treating slaves as equals — sitting together at the Lord's table, purchasing slaves' freedom, allowing former slaves into church leadership. How does that history challenge or encourage the way you think about equality and dignity in your own community?

Going Deeper

4. Verse 8 says God will give back to each person — slave or free — the good they have done for Him. Pastor Phil said: *"This life isn't really about us, it's about the kingdom of heaven."* How does that perspective change the way you think about your work, your circumstances, or a situation where you feel like your faithfulness goes unnoticed?
5. Pastor Phil reframed submission as *allowing each other to care for one another* — and said that's the biblical principle underneath all of it: love God, love others. Where in your life is that kind of mutual care the hardest to give or receive?
6. Pastor Phil asked: *"Are you going to allow other people to dictate how you live, or are you going to remember that God doesn't show favorites — and that He wants to build His kingdom through you?"* Where do you feel most tempted to let your circumstances determine the quality of your faithfulness?

Personal Reflection

Ask yourself: - In what area of my life am I waiting for someone else to change before I give my best? - What would it look like to serve that situation as if I were serving Jesus directly?