



[re]vision

May 23/24, 2020 | Who Do You Really Serve?
Ephesians 6:5-9 | Dave Hook, Pastor of Worship Arts

I. Introduction

A. Recap

Submit to one another (Eph. 5:21)

1. Our submission is a part of our worship.
2. We no longer determine our conduct based on the culture or circumstances, but based on the model of Jesus.
3. Our reverence for Jesus shapes every earthly relationship.

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A. Bondservants

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Purity of heart (sincerity), plus consistent focus and obedient faithfulness, multiplied by authentic, from-the-heart passion, equals a quality Kingdom product.

Doing the very best _____, with the very best _____,
for the very best _____.

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[RE]VISION

Who Do You *Really* Serve?

Ephesians 6:5-9

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(All Scripture references and notes)

I. Introduction

A. RECAP

There were two specific passages Pastor Ryan read from in Ephesians 5 that I want to read again. Listen to verses 1&2 in Ephesians 5:

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (Ephesians 5:1-2).

A little later, he read from verse 21, regarding the relationship between husbands and wives, where Paul instructs us to

submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Ephesians 5:21).

Did you get that? Submit to one another ...

Then Pastor Ryan offered three key points drawn from these specific verses:

1. Our submission is a part of our worship.
2. We no longer determine our conduct based on the culture or circumstances, but based on the model of Jesus.
3. Our reverence for Jesus shapes every earthly relationship. It is this specific point that really lays the groundwork for today's sermon.

B. Illustration

Now, before we go further, let offer an illustration to frame the context of our message.

3D movies (glasses) blockbusters. going back to 2D can be a disappointment.

We need this to drive a car, catch a ball, thread a needle.

Spiritual connection

2D world: watching the world parade by: Reduced to reports, charts, surveys, guidelines and second/third hand reconstituted stories. Leaves me suspicious, constrained and reactionary. What's really going on? Blurry and distorted.

It's in these times that we need to go back and view this world from God's perspective - the lens of the gospel and His plan for everyone. Greater depth and clarity - similar to seeing things with 3D vision-that's God's vision.

Where you are (social distancing, testing, stay at home):

Before all this, we would tell graduates "get out there and pursue a job you can feel passionate about and fulfilled, follow your dreams!" Now, we might be saying "I'm happy to have a job."

Some are busier-maxed out - it never stopped

Some longing to just be back with your co-workers

Others kinda liking this season

Still others - depressed, scared, worried - this 2D living has got you stitched up and feeling enslaved.

This passage may be more relevant than we think.

Let's read our passage and I will offer some practical insights regarding how we work and relate to those we work with.

II. EPHESIANS 6:5-9 (ESV)

5 Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, 6 not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, 7 rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. 9 Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

I'll admit, in the past I would gloss over this passage, either because I just felt it wasn't relevant to my world or if I tried to study it, it just got confusing and overwhelming.

How I was taught to read the Bible - Read it, look at the footnotes in my study Bible and then ask, "God what do you want to say to me through this passage." All well and good, but limited perspective, so when I'd hit hard topics and passages like this, I was bewildered or even confused.

- Slavery has been with us since the beginning and is still around today

- Or we are taken back to the days of the Civil War (May 20th 150th ann. of the battle of Antietam, some have said bloodiest battle in history; 23,000 men died or wounded, changed the course of the Civil War). Both sides prayed for God to intervene, and drew insight and encouragement from the same Bible.

All true - but there is much more to this.

God's narrative transcends time, national idealism and circumstance. We have to understand these things from God's perspective and plan for everyone. And when I superimpose this 3D perspective over passages like this one in Eph 6 glimpses of a whole different contract emerge and the passage comes to life. I begin to see what God is doing and sense and invitation to join Him in His work.

(reminder - Thursday night Q&A with RP, JR and myself) this passage and what the Bible says about slavery.)

First of all - let's "put the glasses on," and begin with God's perspective in mind, and to do that, you have to begin with the end of the passage. Look right at the end of verse 9:

"there is no partiality with Him."

Again, Pastor Ryan taught on this last week- God shows no partiality.

Ever heard the phrase "the ground is level at the foot of the cross?"

Note on Eph. 1-3 and weekly reading

What exactly does God want to do? Look at Ephesians 1:9-10

He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. (Ephesians 1:9-10)

and listen to a portion of Ephesians 2:13-17:

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. . . that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. (Ephesians 2:13-17)

and last of all, the beginning of Eph 4:

I (Paul) therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Out of the soil of these scriptures springs a principle that should be deeply rooted in our spiritual DNA and how we are to relate to everyone and everything; above and beyond our job descriptions and any career path we take- this should permeate every daily task and meeting for each day; it's what I call the GREAT INVITATION.

Cosmic plan - making all things one in Christ and reconciling us to Himself and one another. Paul - the ministry of reconciliation in 2 Cor.

What if Paul led a revolt - not only would have slowed the furtherance of the gospel, but it might have worked in opposition to it as well. 2D living is issue-driven living, not purpose-driven. What we see here is 3D - I almost called this message "how to do everything."

God is reconciling all things to himself - this is re-visioning our perspective in the workplace, friends. I hear many praying for awakening (my own vision of churches filled) I think this awakening might happen at work and at home. Living in grateful surrender and submission to His plan and purpose. Living out His narrative above all others.

III. APPLICATION

So - how does this play out for us when we sit down to the computer screen or maybe if and when we (praise God) head to work this week?

Here are some thoughts I think might summarize this -a 3D perspective on work.
Let's bring this down to ground-level. 4 key words and statements:

A. Bondservants

1. (v.5, 7) **OBEY - When your boss tells you to do something, act like Jesus told you to do it.**

Why did Paul start with slaves in this address?

You want to be a good leader? Become a good follower first.

Proverbs 1:7 says, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." And Jesus said, "do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

Quick note before we move on - don't miss this; we should never do things our boss tells us to do if they are illegal/unethical, or contrary to God's Word. That's not what I mean here, just to be clear. Otherwise - honor Christ by doing what your boss says.

2. (v.6-7) **FOCUS - You work for an audience of One**

nothing to lose, nothing to prove, nothing to gain (credit to Os Guinness for this in The Call).

Focusing on Who I work for and Why will always determine How I work.

Work is worship - NT word for worship - to serve, where we get our word Liturgy. Our daily work is a liturgy, a worship service. Many writers of worship theology call this an all-of-life worship orientation. God and his plan at the center of all we do.

we are called to be "Christ incarnate" in the places we live and work. We are, after all - *the Body of Christ*.

get this: Your work matters. He sees you and your work, even when no one else is looking.

What does the old hymn say - "Riches I heed not nor man's empty praise, Thou my inheritance now and always. Thou and Thou only be first in my heart, High King of heaven my Treasure Thou art."

3. (v. 5-6) **EXCELLENCE - Go unfiltered.**

How we do something is just as important as what we do and How we work reflects upon WHO we work for.

- Our times (illius. juice exp.) unfiltered, non-GMO, no substitutes, unprocessed. The world longs for and pays top dollar for products like this.

Sincerity means unadulterated, pure, "unfiltered" - this is definitely about the quality of work we produce. As we abide in Christ and work with Him, our goal shifts to producing lasting fruit. This is a matter of the heart (exec. center). If work is worship, then we work the same way we would approach our worship to the Lord - with all our being, from the heart.

I don't like to reduce the Christian life to a set equations or formulas, but there is a pattern here:

purity of heart (sincerity)

+ consistent focus and obedient faithfulness

X by authentic, from-the-heart passion

=a quality Kingdom product.

proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of the darkness into His marvelous light (**Peter 2:9-10**):

we are his workmanship created for *good works* in Christ (**Eph 2:10**).

And this can happen even in the most limited, darkest and most oppressive work environments.

The Bible is filled with people who faithfully and humbly showed up and worked hard, in spite of the circumstances, and you know what, God showed up, He worked through them and blessed them!

This is what it means to pursue excellence; Doing the very best you can, with the very best you have, for the very best reason.

Go unfiltered.

4. **MOTIVATION Live and work for the Final Day.**

It has been said that Martin Luther lived by a motto he often repeated:

"I have but two days in my calendar - Today, and the Day I stand before Christ."

Eccl. 12:13-14 says, *Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.*

At the end of our lives, when we stand before the Lord, He's not going to ask "what happened to you?" but rather "what did you do?"

Want to pursue position, power, possessions, go ahead, burn yourself out, go for it! The Father will simply say, "ok -you already received your reward." See Matt. 6.

Our work, here and now, can have eternal value and worth.

We can work in a way that is purposeful and motivating when we let this driving vision be our gyroscope-keeping us on course and in balance.

With this 3D perspective in mind, we can find a reason to get up and to keep going everyday no matter what have to face and endure.

B. Now - What about Masters (employers) -

it's simple, do the same thing (v.9)

The same principles apply as servants. Remember the act of mutual surrender and submission to one another as unto Christ the Lord.

Galatians 3:28 reads: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

I think Gal. 5:13-15 embodies the way we should lead and treat one another in every sphere of life: **For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another (Gal. 5:13-15).**

You want to be a successful leader or employer? Follow the way of Christ who said, **"the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."** (Mark 10:45).

If you are in a place of leadership, learn to love your staff - see them the way Christ does, stop being intimidated by them or trying to dominate them. It takes work, it takes time, no magic formulas, just pouring yourself into them, celebrating who God has wired them up to be, caring for them and partnering with them.

Remember, you are leading with Jesus, and he said: **"greater love has no one than this than to lay down one's life for his friends. (John 15:13)"**

IV. Conclusion (my story)

I've only known two career paths in my lifetime: teaching and church leadership. I have been slowly coming out of a fog that has existed for about 20 years now. You see, I have spent the majority of my life and ministry unhappy.

My resume - worked at lots of different places and moved a lot. Most of the time - God's leading and blessing. New opps, new places to grow and do new things - or just sheer promotions!

Sometimes - driven by my discontent and disillusionment with my work situation. sound familiar? I thought if I changed my working environment or the people I worked for, it would all be better - 2D living.

Granted - things were really never ideal, and I didn't have any good mentors or examples of healthy leadership in my life. Too many heroes that let me down. too many church models and projects that went nowhere. Trying to be what I thought I should be and what everyone was telling me to be. But I was enslaved - turned in upon myself. Driven by my need to be significant, successful, all about position, power and reputation. At the start, I hit the gas pedal and set out on a trajectory towards spiritual burnout and disappointment. I got angry and resentful. But back in 2002, God visited me as I was reading Ex 21 - ironically a passage about bondservants and their masters, listen:

Now these are the rules that you shall set before them. When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing. Ex. 21:1-2

The traditional form of slavery in the OT and in the middle east was chattel slavery - the slave was purchased and became property of the owner, as well as his wife and children.

But here, we see that God made provision for the freedom of the slave, every 7 years, he was offered the opportunity to go free.

The moment I read this passage, I realized that this is a picture of my relationship to Jesus, and all these other verses came flooding into my mind, like **1 Cor. 6**, where it says that we are bought at a price and we

are to honor God with our bodies. Jesus bought me with His life... or **John 15** when Jesus said “you did not choose me - I chose you I appointed you to bear fruit, David”

Or **II Cor 5**, where we are told that the love of Christ controls us . . . “and he died for all,” - for me, so that I no longer live for myself but for Him who for my sake died and was raised.

My deliverance from slavery included Jesus freeing me from who I was and what I could have become.

Now listen to **Ex 21:5-6**, this was a defining moment for me-

But if the slave plainly says, “I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,” then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever. Ex. 21:5-6

This picture of sweet surrender has been a scene that has revised (re-visioned) my way of looking at life and ministry.

- **You and I, we will worship and serve someone - I choose Jesus. I don't want to be free!**

And in moments when I forget, when I am insecure, when I feel neglected in this journey or forgotten, Jesus comes along and invites me again into His life and I no longer work for Him, but with Him.

This has made all the difference. Im still in progress, believe me. Know this friends, the more you fight for the freedom to control, the more you will lose it. But the Bible says

whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. (Matt. 16:25 NLT)

CLOSE

As we wrap things up today, I want to encourage you to look at these times through the 3D lens of God's plan and purpose - reconciling all things to Him in Christ. We are called to live this narrative out at home and in the places we work. And as we take on this 3D perspective, living as members of His Kingdom, a 4th dimension is introduced, and next week, Pastor Ryan will speak about that as we finish our “Re-vision” series with a look at Ephesians 6:10-24. Until then, remember these words from Paul in Colossians 3 and let them guide you this week . . .

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as though you were working for the Lord and not for people. 24 Remember that the Lord will give you as a reward what he has kept for his people. For Christ is the real Master you serve.

Colossians 3:23-24 Good News Translation (GNT)

Grace and Peace to You in Him, Emmanuel Faith