

The Book of Ephesians

Ephesians 6:5-9

Session 57: Notetaker

Man's Way to Greatness	God's Way to Greatness
Focus on	Focus on
Emphasis on	Emphasis on
Concern for	Concern for
Desire	Desire
Yearn for	Yearn for
Aspire to be	Aspire to
Seek	Seek
Need to	Need for
Strive to	Strive to
Interest in	Interest in

Session 57: Notetaker

Fig. 2

1. _____
 - An independent spirit is the basis of _____
 - A disrespectful spirit is the basis of _____
 - A condemning spirit is the basis of _____
 - An ungrateful spirit is the basis of _____
 - A lazy spirit is the basis of _____ and _____
 - A bitter spirit is the basis of _____
 - An impure spirit is the basis of _____
2. _____
 - Correct any _____
 - Fulfill any _____
 - Acknowledge our wrong and _____
 - _____ when necessary
 - _____ to avoid offending others
3. _____
 - Ask _____
 - Find their _____ in the command
 - Ask them to point out any _____
 - Discern _____ in the situation

4. _____

- Remove any _____ to being creative
- Use _____ to expand your frame of reference
- Gain insight from _____
- _____ to accomplish the goal

5. _____

- Have the spirit of a _____
- _____ without condemning
- Present your _____
- Explain how it will _____
- Leave the _____ up to him

6. _____

The Book of Ephesians

Ephesians 6:5-9

Session 57: Godly Labor of Servants and Masters

We are now entering a new form of doctrine. In Ephesians 6:5-9 we have the godly labor of servants and masters.

Ephesians 6:5 Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; ⁶ Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; ⁷ With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: ⁸ Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether *he be* bond or free. ⁹ And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

It is important to remember that everything we are covering is an extension of Ephesians 5:18, which began this section on godly labor.

Ephesians 5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but **be filled with the Spirit;**

And, the operating principle behind being filled with the Spirit is found in verse 21.

Ephesians 5:21 **Submitting yourselves one to another** in the fear of God.

This form of doctrine (verses 5-9) is the third illustration which Paul gives of how, in being filled with the Spirit, we are to submit ourselves to one another.

Before we get started, I want to present some principles to guide our study.

Firstly, these words are not addressed to the world at large. Why not? Because the world is incapable of doing what the apostle is teaching. The godly practice of this doctrine is only to people who are “filled with the Spirit.”

We should have discovered by now that this “faith” that Paul is teaching us includes the whole of our life, and affects every relationship. This doctrine makes

us different, so that nothing that we do is the same as that done by the unsaved. Of course, they may do the same things, but they do them in a different way; they are motivated by different reasons.

The unsaved wife may submit to her husband, and the unsaved husband may love his wife, but neither of them have the motive to present their marriage as a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church. As a result, there will always be a missing element in their marriage. That is not to say they cannot be happy together; but it is to say that they will never experience the fulness of that divine institution. The reasons behind our actions are just as important as the actions, and unless those reasons are rooted in the doctrine, we are operating out of our flesh.

The same is true for parents and their relationship with their children. We are all laboring within the divine institution of family, which is the foundation for society itself. Again, only by obeying the doctrine will we bring that institution to its fullest potential.

And now we come to the workplace and the relationship between what Paul terms, “servants and masters.” Just as with the previous expressions of marriage and family, here is another relationship whereby we submit ourselves one to another. I want us to understand that what Paul is about to teach is quite unique. This is something that cannot be found anywhere else. There are other teachings that appear to be like it, but that is because they have borrowed from it. Just as there are teachings which simulate Bible doctrine, but they omit the most vital part of the teaching; that God is to be the source of our actions in response to the teaching.

So, let’s not forget the point we are making; that Paul’s doctrine is unique and is not meant for the unsaved world, as it would be impossible for the unregenerated man to obey it the way it is meant to be obeyed.

The second preliminary principle is that Paul assumes that his audience has undergone a profound change at the very core of their being. Hence, he addresses his epistles to the churches, members of local assemblies, those who have a new nature, people who are new creatures in Christ, people of whom it is

true that “old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.” This has been assumed since the first chapter of the epistle.

Thirdly, Paul also assumes that the people he is writing to have a knowledge of doctrine and the ability to work out that doctrine in their own personal circumstances. If we do not know the doctrine, we cannot apply it. If we lack understanding, we cannot put it into operation.

When Paul presents us with a form of doctrine, we understand it, we believe it, and then we determine what we are to do in light of the doctrine. This is how we live out of our positional sanctification so that we are sanctified practically. But, if we do not understand or believe the doctrine, then we will not be engaged with our sanctification in this matter of servants and masters, and we certainly will not be laboring with God in the institution of work.

Just as with every relationship, Paul’s first instructions are to those under authority, this time he exhorts the servants first, and then the masters.

Ephesians 6:5 **Servants**, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

What all is included in the designation of “servants?” In Paul’s day, slavery was ubiquitous. Additionally, there were hired servants who were paid wages. By this use of the term servants, Paul would include everything from being a bond slave in the past, to being a present-day employee of a company.

Verse 5 begins instructions to those under any work authority by exhorting them/us to be obedient to those who are their/our “masters.” The “masters” would be everyone from the slave owner, to our present-day employer. And what does Paul say to do? To be obedient to them who are your masters.

Here is what Paul does not say; he does not tell slaves that because they have become Christians, their condition as slaves has been abolished. Do you recall back in 1 Corinthians, there were some husbands or wives who had come to faith in Christ, and erroneously thought that they should leave their unbelieving

spouse? And what were Paul's instructions? Not to put them away, but to dwell with them according to knowledge.

There were children who after coming to faith in Christ, thought they now did not have to submit to their unbelieving parents, but Paul does not give them leave to do so. In the same way, for one who was a slave, faith in Christ was not an excuse to change their status. We will see this as we work through the passage.

Instead, when a slave heard the gospel and trusted Christ, the exhortation from Paul was to obey them that are your masters. But Paul did not leave it at that. On top of that instruction he gives eight qualifiers for that obedience.

Before we get into the qualifiers, let's talk about what it means to obey. We live in a day and culture that does not like that word "obey." Obedience is seen to be synonymous with being lesser or inferior. This is the way the world thinks, not your heavenly Father.

So far in Ephesians we have talked about having a great marriage, being a godly husband or wife; having a great family, being a godly child or parent; and now we are talking about having a great work-life, being a godly servant (employee) or a godly master (employer). We will talk about the role of the master later; for now we are talking about obedience. Instead of despising obedience, we should be great in obedience by being godly.

True greatness requires becoming great in the right areas. This means we must learn to be great in faith, in godly character, in wisdom, in self-control, in patience, in kindness and in love. Stop and think about each of these for a moment. For example, becoming great in faith includes the ability to visualize what God is desiring to do in and through us. It means we learn to walk by faith and not by sight. It means making decisions that are consistent with the ways of God rather than our natural inclinations which are contrary to scripture.

If we are to serve, if we are to exhibit godly obedience as Ephesians 6:5 instructs us that if we desire to make an impact on men and angels to the glory of God, then we must understand the following ways of God.

1. Understand how God uses the doctrine in Paul's epistles along with the circumstances of our life to build the character of His Son in us.
2. Realize that all power belongs to God, who gives it to human authorities for His purposes.

Power and authority are not claimed by parents, husbands, and other leaders. Neither is that power given to them by others. Power and authority are given by God. That is the principle.

Romans 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. ² Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

Let me step aside here for just a moment to make an important point. Firstly, I have commented on this in detail in the notes for Romans 13:1-7. This is found in book 2 of the Sonship Life Series, Godly Justice. Secondly, the "powers" of Romans 13 are positions of governmental authority.

When Paul says the "powers...are ordained of God," he is not saying that God devised the various forms of government which are presently in the world, and neither is he saying that the people in those positions of power have been installed by God. Nevertheless, Paul exhorts believers to "be subject unto the higher powers" because the positions which those powers hold over men are given to men by God Himself by ordinance, which means that human government is a divine institution.

There is also, if we can call it this, a power structure (a structure of authority where there are positions of authority and the accompanying responsibility, and positions under authority and the accompanying submission) in marriage, and in family, and in work.

The natural state of mankind is to resist authority and strive to be our own boss. This independent spirit is the opposite of a servant's heart. Our tendency to respect authority is usually strengthened by a wrong concept of human power.

We assume that power claimed by anyone is given to them by other people. This is wrong, as power ultimately comes from God.

Pilate was confused about this fact when Jesus was brought to him for trial.

John 19:10 Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? **knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?** ¹¹ Jesus answered, **Thou couldest have no power *at all* against me, except it were given thee from above:** therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

As we recognize that God gives power, we are able to understand the purposes of God through authority which provide motivation for us to learn godly character.

3. Understand that our service is always with a spirit of obedience.
4. Discern the higher purposes of God when He allows us to suffer under the hand of human authority.

The character qualities that are essential for making an impact to the glory of God cannot be adequately developed without first being under authority. This is true for us, just as it was for Jesus during His earthly ministry.

Hebrews 5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

God gives power to human authorities so that His specific purposes can be carried out through them. For example, the purposes of marriage include picturing Christ and the church to the world. The purpose of family is to present a picture of God as Father and us as His children. God gives power and authority to government officials for the praise of those who do His will and the punishment of those who do evil (Romans 13:3-6).

Often, when people read a verse like verse 5, they ask if this includes doing something they believe is wrong. Of course, the Bible is not instructing us to commit sin by being obedient. We should understand that there is a godly way to suffer for not doing wrong and there is a wrong way to suffer.

Let me explain. When we are asked by an authority figure to do something which we believe is morally wrong or that violates the word of God, or causes us to commit sin, and we decline to obey their instructions, we may well suffer in some way. When this happens, it is easy to think that we are following Christ, and we are suffering for Him. But there is a wrong way to decline an evil command and it begins even before we disobeyed.

The following are six Steps of Action to take when asked to do something you think is wrong.

1. CHECK OUR ATTITUDE

We are talking about attitudes before we talk about actions because our actions are often the result of our attitudes.

- An independent spirit is the basis of **disloyalty**
- A disrespectful spirit is the basis of **disobedience**

What if I do not respect the authority over me? It is important to distinguish between an authority's position under God and his human personality. We respect the position, while at the same time we may be very aware of his personality deficiencies.

- A condemning spirit is the basis of **self-righteousness**
- An ungrateful spirit is the basis of **pride**
- A lazy spirit is the basis of **poverty** and **dishonesty**
- A bitter spirit is the basis of **selfishness**
- An impure spirit is the basis of **self-indulgence**

2. DEVELOP A CONSCIENCE WHICH IS VOID OF OFFENCE

Acts 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and *toward* men.

The single greatest hindrance to having a conscience void of offence is the feeling that the ones we offended were wrong too. In fact, we often feel they were more wrong than we were. This is a scheme of the Adversary. By focusing on blaming them, we attempt to assuage our own guilt, but in the end, we are forced to live with both guilt and blame.

Our natural inclination is to find other people or circumstances which are to blame for what we have done. The greater our guilt, the more we must blame.

The resulting bitterness and guilt are devastating to our mental and emotional wellbeing and provide the basis for strongholds to be built up in our soul.

- Correct any **wrong attitudes**
- Fulfill any **unfinished directions**
- Acknowledge our wrong and **ask for forgiveness**

It is essential that we recognize and confess wrong actions against those whom we have offended. This can be more difficult than we realize. We are so involved with our thoughts and emotions that we fail to realize the attitudes which we are actually reflecting to the people around us.

More than we realize, people are reacting to our attitudes. It is therefore essential to learn how to “judge ourselves” in wrong attitudes in order that we be not judged by others, and by the Lord.

- **Make restitution** when necessary
- **Limit freedoms** to avoid offending others

3. DISCERN BASIC INTENTIONS

- Ask **what their goals are**
- Find their **frame of reference** in the command

First, a wrong frame of reference on our part comes from thinking that when we are told to do something wrong, that we must either be blindly obedient or exhibit a spirit of disobedience. That is not the case. Secondly, discover the frame of reference for the authority. In other words, discover what is going on with them that makes them give you a wrong command.

- Ask them to point out any **blind spots**
- Discern **God's goals** in the situation

4. DESIGN CREATIVE ALTERNATIVES

- Remove any **resistance spirit** to being creative

- Use **difficulties** to expand your frame of reference
- Gain insight from **the doctrine**
- **Design an alternative** to accomplish the goal

5. APPEAL TO AUTHORITY

- Have the spirit of a **learner and servant**
- **Explain your convictions** without condemning
- Present your **creative alternative**
- Explain how it will **reach his goal**
- Leave the **final decision** up to him

Only when we have applied the above five steps are we scripturally ready for step six, if indeed it comes to that.

6. SUFFER FOR NOT DOING WHAT IS WRONG

When we work for someone in the way Paul is about to explain in verses 5ff, this process is given power to work.