

# Being Loyal to Jesus



## SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 2

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Ephesians 6:1–9; Matthew 18:1–5, 10; Colossians 3:21; 1 Timothy 6:1, 2; 1 Peter 2:18–25.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Masters, in the same way, be good to your slaves. Do not say things to scare them. You know that the One who is your Master and their Master is in heaven. And that Master treats [loves] everyone alike [the same]” (Ephesians 6:9, ICB).



The people who printed the Bible removed any verses that they thought would cause slaves to run away or fight against their masters.

**IN 2018**, people visited the Bible Museum in Washington, D.C. The visitors came to see a special Bible. The Bible was more than two hundred years old. The Bible was printed in A.D. 1808. The Bible was missing many chapters. The people who made this Bible removed 90% of the Old Testament and 50% of the New Testament! Our Bibles have 1,189 chapters. But the 1808 Bible had only 232 chapters!

Why was the 1808 Bible so short? Slavery was legal in America at that time. So, the people who printed the Bible removed any verses that they thought would cause slaves to run away or fight against their masters. The people who made the Bible left only the verses that they believed supported slavery. One of these verses is Ephesians 6:5, which many people misunderstand to this day. “You servants who are owned by someone must obey your owners. Work for them as hard as you can. Work for them the same as if you were working for Christ” (Ephesians 6:5, NLV).

As Christians, how do we understand what Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:5–9 about slavery? This week, we will learn how the Good News helps us to understand Paul’s message.

## ADVICE TO CHILDREN (Ephesians 6:1–3)

What advice does Paul give to children? Which Old Testament verses does Paul use to support what he says? Read Ephesians 6:1–3 for the answers. Also, read Matthew 18:1–5, 10; Mark 10:13–16 to help answer the questions.

Who are the children Paul talks about? When we know the answer to this question, we will understand better Paul’s advice. The word written as “children” in Ephesians 6:1–3 is “**ta tekna**” in the Greek language. “**Ta tekna**” can mean children who are young or old. In New Testament times, children were under their father’s control until the father was 60 years old (in Greek families) or until the father died (in Roman families). The children that Paul talks about are young enough to be trained by their parents (Ephesians 6:3). At the same time, these children are old enough to make the decision to follow Jesus.

Remember, Paul’s letter will be read in the house churches in the city of Ephesus. In his letter, Paul commands children in the house churches to obey and honor their parents (compare Ephesians 5:22; Ephesians 6:4, 5, 7–9). Paul wants adult church members to respect children as Jesus’ followers and to let them help out at church on Sabbath. In Ephesians 6:1–3, we learn important rules for being parents and for teaching children about Jesus.

Paul’s command for children to obey their parents doesn’t suggest that children must obey their parents without question. “If parents ask children to do something that disobeys Jesus, the children must obey God. The children must not worry about what will happen if they don’t obey. The children must trust God to take care of things.”—Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, page 293, adapted.

Paul finishes his advice to children by asking them to remember the fifth commandment. The Ten Commandments are very important to Paul (read Ephesians 4:1–6:9; also, read Ephesians 4:25, 28; and Ephesians 5:3–14). Paul starts his quote with, “You must respect your father and mother” (Ephesians 6:2, ERV). Then Paul adds, “This is the first command that has a promise with it” (Ephesians 6:2, ERV). Paul finishes his quote with, “If you respect your father and mother, you will live a long time and your life will be full of many good things” (Ephesians 6:3, NLV). No parents are perfect. But the fifth commandment shows us that God’s plan for our lives includes honoring our parents.



“**Ta tekna**” can mean children who are young or old. The children that Paul talks about are young enough to be trained by their parents (Ephesians 6:4). At the same time, these children are old enough to make the decision to follow Jesus.

## ADVICE TO PARENTS (Ephesians 6:4)

**Compare Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21. What reason does Colossians 3:21 give us for not making our children angry?**

The Book of Sirach was written by a Jewish man named Sirach. In his book, Sirach gives advice to parents. Many Jewish parents read this book during Paul's time. Here is some of Sirach's advice: "Fathers, if you love your sons, you will whip them often. . . . If you are too nice to your sons, they will make you sorry for it. . . . Punish your sons and give them heavy loads to carry in this life to keep them out of trouble. Then your sons won't upset you with their bad behavior."—*Sirach* 30:1, 9, 13, NRSV, adapted.

Paul's advice is very different from Sirach's advice. Paul warns, "Fathers, do not make your children angry. But teach them the things children need to know, and tell them what they must not do. Teach them what Christ would teach them" (Ephesians 6:3, WE). In Paul's day, fathers had full legal control over their children. Children were their parents' property. Fathers could punish their children with hard punishment or kill them for disobeying them. In some ways, a father had more control over his kids than a master had over his slave. That doesn't mean Paul is saying that owning slaves is okay. Paul is helping family members to build better trust and love. Paul invites Christian fathers to think carefully about how they punish their children. If fathers make their children angry, the children may not want to serve God. So, parents need to be careful.

"Fathers and mothers, in the home you must show God's love. You must ask your children to obey you. But don't shout at them to obey you. Let your words be loving and kind. . . .

"Be nice to everyone in your home. Do not say any word that will cause anyone to get angry. 'Fathers, don't make your children angry' [Ephesians 6:4, ERV]. This command comes from God. . . .

"God doesn't give parents permission to punish their children with mean and nasty words. God doesn't want parents to be rough with their children when they disobey. God's love must fill the hearts of the parents and government leaders. Then parents and leaders can teach the ones in their care about God's law."—Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, page 259, adapted.



**Paul invites Christian fathers to think carefully about how they punish their children.**

## SLAVERY IN PAUL'S DAY (Ephesians 6:5–9)

Read Paul's advice to slaves and slave masters: Ephesians 6:5–9; Colossians 3:22–4:1; 1 Corinthians 7:20–24; 1 Timothy 6:1, 2; 1 Peter 2:18–25. Write in your own words what you think Paul is saying.

---



---

We may be surprised by Paul's advice to both slaves and their masters. Maybe we have a hard time trying to imagine a picture of Christian slave masters sitting together with their Christian slaves in the same house churches. If the slave masters were really Christians, why didn't they free their slaves?

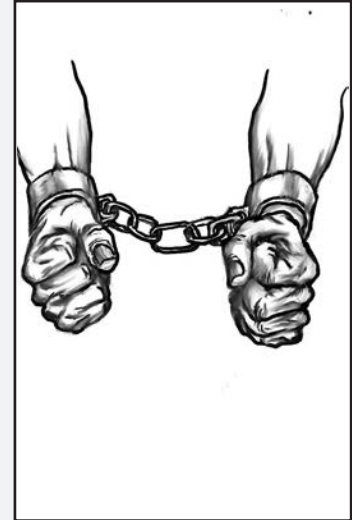
We must understand that slavery during New Testament times was different in many ways from slavery in American and European history. First, slaves in New Testament times were not all from the same race group. Second, house slaves were sometimes trained or educated. They could work as builders, doctors, or thinkers. Sometimes a master freed his house slaves after they served him. But most slaves were not freed.

Yes, slavery was different in some ways in the New Testament from the slavery in the 1800s. But no slavery is ever "good." All slavery is evil. No one has any excuse to make anyone else a slave. We can be thankful that God will judge and punish slave masters by His law.

The cry of ex-slave Publius Syrus breaks our hearts: "I wanted to die so no one would hurt me anymore because I was a slave. That is why death is so beautiful."

The Greek word for "slave" in Ephesians 6:5–8 is "**doulos**." Some Bible thinkers today wish to change this word from "slave" to "servant" to show that house servants often were educated and then later freed. But we must remember that all slaves, including house servants, belonged to their masters. Their masters had full control over them and could punish them at any time. So, the best way to write "**doulos**" in Ephesians 6:5–8 is "slave." "Slave" is the best word because it shows us that these men and women lived in danger at all times (Ephesians 6:9).

Slavery was part of life in Paul's time. His advice isn't about how to end slavery. His advice is about how both slaves and masters can live a new life in Jesus.



No slavery is ever "good."  
All slavery is evil.

**SLAVES WHO BELONG TO JESUS (Ephesians 6:5–8)**

**What does Paul ask Christian slaves to do? Read Ephesians 6:5–8 for the answer.**

---



---



**Paul also tells slaves to “work gladly as if you were working for the Lord and not for men” (Ephesians 6:7, WE).**

Paul asks Christian slaves to obey their masters. Paul also asks slaves to work for their masters as if they were working for Jesus. At the same time, slaves must remember that they belong to Jesus. So, they must not give their masters the loyalty that belongs only to Jesus. Paul’s ideas about slavery helped Christians in his day change the way they thought about masters and slaves.

Let’s read in Ephesians 6:5–8 some of Paul’s ideas about masters and slaves:

- Paul wants slaves to remember that their real Master is in heaven (Ephesians 6:5).
- Slaves must serve their masters with honor and respect in this life. They must serve them as if they were serving Jesus (Ephesians 6:5, 6).
- Paul also tells Christian slaves: “You must do more than obey your masters to please them only while they are watching you. You must obey them as you are obeying Christ. With all your heart you must do what God wants” (Ephesians 6:6, ICB).
- Paul also tells slaves to “work gladly as if you were working for the Lord and not for men” (Ephesians 6:7, WE).

When Jesus comes back, Christian slaves will get a reward for all their hard work they did for their masters in this life. That’s because these Christian slaves did their work for Jesus. So, these slaves may expect a reward from Him. Do you see how this idea offered hope to slaves? A slave may feel that his human master doesn’t like him and doesn’t encourage him in his work (compare 1 Peter 2:19, 20). But the Christian slave has a Master in heaven who cares about him and sees every good thing he does. This thought was comforting to Christian slaves in Paul’s day.

**Review the important rules that Paul gives slaves in Ephesians 6:5–8. How can these rules help us in our jobs today?**

## MASTERS WHO ARE SLAVES (Ephesians 6:9)

Imagine in your mind that you are a Christian slave master in Paul's day. You are in your house church where someone reads Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Your slaves are there, too, listening to the letter. How would you as a slave owner feel when you heard Paul's advice about slaves in Ephesians 6:9?

---



---

Paul gives slave masters this advice: "Masters, in the same way, be good to your slaves. Do not say things to scare them. You know that the One who is your Master and their Master is in heaven. And that Master treats [loves] everyone alike [the same]" (Ephesians 6:9, ICB). This advice was surprising to slave owners in Paul's time. Paul asked slaves to work hard for their masters. Now Paul asks slave owners to be kind to their slaves. Paul tells slave masters to stop being mean to their slaves and to stop hurting them. In New Testament times, masters punished their slaves in many ways (1 Peter 2:20). Some of these punishments included beating, selling, starving, putting slaves in chains, forcing them to have sex, and killing them.

Paul gives slave masters two reasons for changing their behavior:

1. As Christians, slave owners are, also, "slaves." They are the slaves of Jesus. So, Jesus is the Master of both the slave and the slave owner (compare Colossians 4:1).
2. God is the Judge of everyone. As our Judge, God is fair. He doesn't show more favor to one person than He shows to another person. God respects everyone the same. In God's eyes, the slave is worth the same as the slave owner. God loves both of them the same, too. So, slave masters should show slaves the same love and respect that God shows them (compare Philemon 15, 16).

Paul's message in Ephesians filled the hearts of Christian slaves with hope. Christian slaves were:

1. Adopted as God's children (Ephesians 1:5).
2. Saved by Jesus (Ephesians 1:7).
3. Chosen by God and given blessings (Ephesians 3:6).
4. Part of God's family in heaven (Ephesians 2:19).
5. Important members of God's church (Ephesians 3:6).



**Paul asks slave owners to be kind to their slaves.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Let's review the two most important Bible truths about children we learned this week. Paul taught us that:

1. We should respect children as Jesus' followers (Ephesians 6:1–3).
2. Fathers are responsible for teaching and training their children to serve the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

This advice helps us to remember the needs of children today. Paul's advice also helps us to understand our duty as parents. But how do we follow Paul's advice to slaves (Ephesians 6:5–8) and to slave masters (Ephesians 6:9) today? Many of us don't live in a country where slavery is legal. As Christians, we also know that any type of slavery is evil. So, what do we do with Paul's advice? Paul's advice is part of the Good News about Jesus. The Good News is not only good. The Good News also is the news we most need now for our lives. It is important for us to think about how to follow Paul's advice in our own time and place. The Good News can help us in all our connections with families, friends, and coworkers. The discussion questions below will help us to do this important work.



**Paul's advice is part of the Good News about Jesus.**

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Jesus said that when we show love for children, we show that we are ready to meet the Lord (read Luke 1:17; Malachi 4:6). What do Jesus' words mean for us today as Adventists?
- ② Many children have been hurt, forced to have sex, and feel a lot of shame. What is our duty to these children? How can we help them?
- ③ What duty does the church have to protect and care for the children in its care? What do we need to do to keep children safe and make our churches safe places for our kids?
- ④ Paul's advice to slaves and slave masters (read Ephesians 6:5–9) also is good advice for bosses and employees. How do you think Paul's advice can help workers in the workplace?
- ⑤ More than 40 million people are slaves today (<http://www.globalslaveryindex.org/>). What is our duty to these men and women today?

## A BOOK AND A RIDE

Alexei Arushanian was a 33-year-old Ukrainian man who lived in Poland. He earned his living by putting new windows into people's homes. Alexei finished working for the day and was late for his appointment with his wife. Before Alexei met his wife, he needed to stop for gas first.

At the gas pump, Alexei saw a young man who was trying to start his scooter. A large black bag sat on the back of the scooter. The young man was on his way to deliver this bag of food to a customer's house. Alexei couldn't speak the Polish language very well. But he wanted to help the young man. As Alexei filled up his gas tank and then paid for his gas, he wondered how he could help the young man. Back in the car, Alexei opened the window and asked, "What's wrong?"

The young man was Polish. He said, "My scooter won't start."

Alexei belonged to a group of church members who handed out copies of Ellen G. White's *The Great Controversy*. Their job was hard, because not many people were interested in reading. But Alexei saw a chance to share a copy with the young man. Alexei got out of his car and said, "I have a gift for you. It's a Christian book that teaches about the history of the Christian religion, from the time of the first Christians to the end times. I think you will enjoy it."

The young man took the book and thanked Alexei. Alexei got into his car. But he didn't drive away. He sat there and thought, "I can't just leave. I haven't done my duty as a Christian. Yes, I gave the young man a book. But I didn't take care of his need." Alexei opened the car door again. He said to the young man, "I can drive you where you need to go."

The young man asked with surprise, "Really?"

Alexei said, "Really. I'll take you."

The young man grabbed the bag of food. Alexei drove him about 2 miles (3 kilometers) to the address. The young man asked Alexei, "Will you wait for me?"

Alexei said, "Of course. I brought you."

On the way back to the gas station, the young man said, "In Poland, very few Christians stop and offer help. But you are a Ukrainian Christian and offered to help me." The young man said his name was Kamil. Kamil listened with interest as Alexei told him about God's love. At the gas station, a coworker from Kamil's workplace arrived to fix the scooter. Kamil had help, so Alexei left. Alexei was late to his appointment to meet his wife. But he was happy God had used him to help someone in need.

This quarter's 13th Sabbath Offering will support church work in Europe, which includes Poland. Thanks for giving a big offering.

## INSIDE Story

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Alexei said to the young man, "I can drive you where you need to go."

