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Mastering Obedience

Key References: Ephesians 6:5-9; *Messages to Young People,* chap. 70, pp. 228-230; *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 10, pp. 135-138; Our Beliefs nos. 11, 22, 17



Sabbath

DO Do the activity on page 46.

powertext

"Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people" (Ephesians 6:7).

powerpoint

We serve God when we serve others with our whole heart.

Imagine what it would be like if you had no choice about when you got up in the morning, no choice about what you ate, where you went, or what you did? How do you think you would feel? That was just what it was like to be a slave in Bible times.

In the early years after Jesus' death, many Christians were slaves. The good news of salvation has always struck a note with those who are the most hopeless, and who is more hopeless than a slave? Slavery was common in most of the world, and in some places, such as the cities Paul visited, slaves far outnumbered masters. Most of the churches Paul started had both masters and slaves as members.

A Roman citizen might own hundreds of slaves, and he was free to do with them as he chose. A master could beat his slaves, torture them, or even murder them. If a slave tried to defend himself, the master might wipe out his entire family. It was a tough life, but not an



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Sunday

READ Read Ephesians 6:5, 6 and this week's lesson, "Mastering Obedience."

MAKE Make a paper chain. On each link, write a word of the power text, Ephesians 6:7. Begin to memorize it.

PRAY Ask God to help you submit to those in authority.

Monday

READ Read Ephesians 6:7-9.

THINK How is wholehearted work the best service?

SERVE Do several acts of service wherever there is a need. Try to be unnoticed when you do your acts of kindness.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray for all those who serve others.

Tuesday

READ Read 1 Corinthians 9:19.

THINK How can you make yourself a slave to everyone in order to win them to Christ?

RESEARCH Research from history slaves that were faithful and Christlike to their masters. What impression did that leave on their masters? How did their masters treat them in turn?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray that God will help you to serve Him and others faithfully.

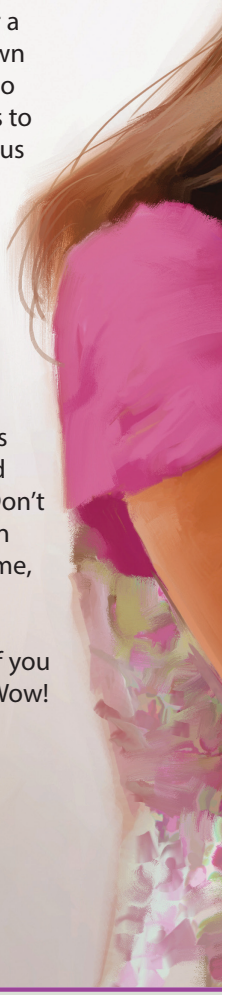
uncommon one, so it's not surprising that Paul talked directly to slaves in several places in his letters, and even wrote the entire letter of Philemon to a slave owner about his slave.

Since slavery is no longer legal anywhere in the world, you might be tempted to just skip over what Paul had to say on the subject. But even though we are in little danger of being bought, sold, or owned by someone else, there will always be other people to whom we must answer. Now it's parents, teachers, coaches. Later it will be a boss or a spouse, and believe it or not, your own kids. Life is filled with responsibility to and for other people, so Paul's words to slaves are still filled with wisdom for us today.

"Obey your earthly masters with . . . sincerity of heart," wrote Paul (Ephesians 6:5). Sincerity of heart. That means honestly. Genuinely. Because you mean it, not just because you have to do it.

"Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart" (verse 6). Hmmm. Don't just do what you're asked to do when someone is watching. Do it all the time, from your heart.

"Obey . . . just as you would obey Christ. . . . Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord" (verses 5-7). Wow! Treat your slave master—that lousy,





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Wednesday

READ Read Romans 6:6, 7.

THINK How can you receive freedom from sin?

WRITE In your Bible study journal, write changes you need God to make in your attitude and actions.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God to change your heart.

Thursday

READ Read Isaiah 1:19, 20.

REFLECT What do these verses teach about the consequences of our actions? Why is obedience to authority figures the right choice, even if it requires hard work?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God to help you be His obedient child.

Friday

READ Read Romans 6:16.

TALK Talk with your family about this Bible verse. Why is it important that you choose carefully whom you obey? Where does obedience to sin lead? Where does obedience to God lead?

SHARE Share with your family what you have learned about service this week.

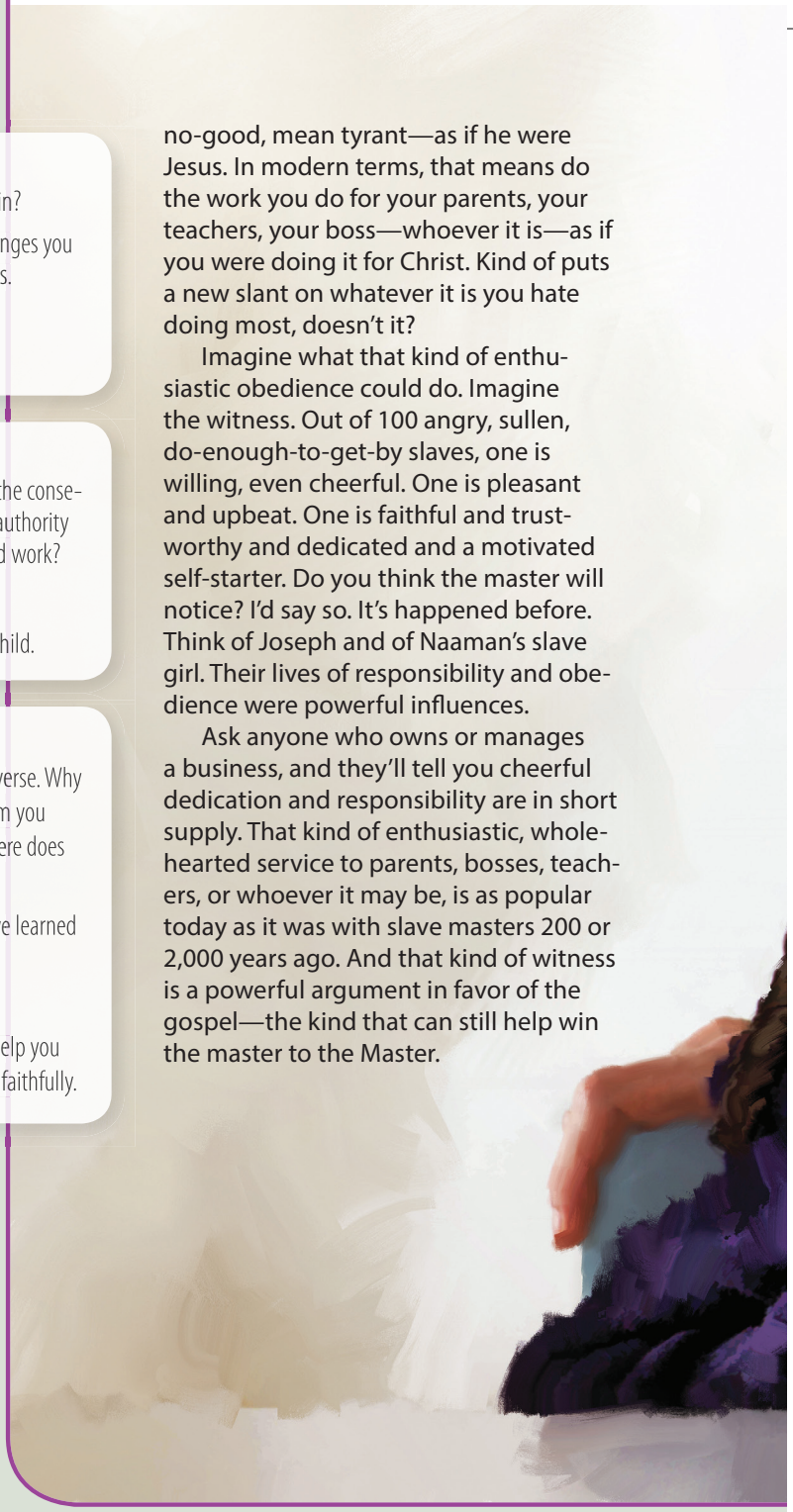
REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray with your family, asking God to help you serve one another obediently, cheerfully, and faithfully.

no-good, mean tyrant—as if he were Jesus. In modern terms, that means do the work you do for your parents, your teachers, your boss—whoever it is—as if you were doing it for Christ. Kind of puts a new slant on whatever it is you hate doing most, doesn't it?

Imagine what that kind of enthusiastic obedience could do. Imagine the witness. Out of 100 angry, sullen, do-enough-to-get-by slaves, one is willing, even cheerful. One is pleasant and upbeat. One is faithful and trustworthy and dedicated and a motivated self-starter. Do you think the master will notice? I'd say so. It's happened before. Think of Joseph and of Naaman's slave girl. Their lives of responsibility and obedience were powerful influences.

Ask anyone who owns or manages a business, and they'll tell you cheerful dedication and responsibility are in short supply. That kind of enthusiastic, wholehearted service to parents, bosses, teachers, or whoever it may be, is as popular today as it was with slave masters 200 or 2,000 years ago. And that kind of witness is a powerful argument in favor of the gospel—the kind that can still help win the master to the Master.





PUZZLE 5

TRUE LOVE PUZZLE

Instructions: Finish the Bible verse below by substituting for each letter the second letter before it in the alphabet. For example, "f" would become "d" and "c" would become "a." When you get to the beginning of the alphabet, you start from the end again.

"If you **nqxg og, mggr oa eqoocpfu" (Lqjp** 14:15).