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Bosses and Employees

6: 5-9

Bosses and employees DIG: Does the Bible condone slavery? In what ways do Rabbi Sha'ul's instructions to slaves (to work with integrity whether the master is watching or not) apply to employees today? Paul reminds masters that they are their slaves and are both serving the same Master (God). In what ways does this truth apply to bosses or managers?

REFLECT: In what way is ADONAI honored by your diligent work in your job? How do you think God will reward those who do good work? What is the proper way to handle a problem you might have with a person in authority - whether a parent, employee, or anyone else? Do co-workers appreciate your work? More vitally, is Yeshua happy with it?

Servant leadership is the best leadership and the easiest to follow.

Sha'ul's use of the word **slave** should not be confined with the oppressive version of **slavery** that plagued some societies (like in America). In Judaism, slavery was an acceptable form of servitude, used by a person to voluntarily pay off some debt. Instead of contemporary bankruptcy laws, a Jewish **slave** could choose a master that suited him as he sought to improve his life situation. Jewish slaves were even guaranteed many rights from their Jewish master (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy**, **to see link click Cz - The Hebrew Slave**). Among these rights would be just treatment and even a limited time of servitude of seven years, until he was set free at the Sabbatical Year (see the commentary on Leviticus **EI - The Sabbath Year**).



To illustrate the positive nature of slaves within Isra'el, the Torah even states that sometimes a slave would not want to leave his benevolent master! To prove his allegiance, the slave in such cases was commanded to have his ear pierced on the door of the house (see the commentary on [Exodus Dz - If You Buy a Hebrew Servant](#)). Roman **slavery** of the first century was significantly different but also included some protective rights. A modern reader of **Ephesians** would better understand this passage, if the terms **slaves and masters** were replaced by **employees and bosses**.

The right submission of employees (6:5-8): With this context in mind, **the apostle** gives the following recommendations: **Slaves (Employees), obey your human masters (bosses) with the same fear, trembling and single-heartedness with which you obey the Messiah (6:5)**. The idea is to do the work we are assigned to do, without complaining, bragging, criticizing the work of others, or being disruptive in any way. Such **obedience** does not imply inferiority, but is in keeping with the idea of biblical **submission**, that is, fitting into **God's** order (see [Bu - The Necessary Foundation](#)). **Bosses and workers** may stand as equals before **ADONAI**, but it would wreak havoc in the workplace if there were no order. In fact, the writer points out that **the employees** are to obey with the same kind of respect **they** have toward **Messiah**. Believers should be known as some of the best **workers**, which may open up some good discussions about perspectives on life.²⁴⁴

Rabbi Sha'ul reminds the **Ephesian** believers that their work ethic has a direct impact on their future blessing in **the Kingdom of God**. **Slaves** had a responsibility to work hard. Like **the Ephesians**, we are to work diligently with no ulterior motive. We should be excellent **employees** because it is the right thing to do in the sight of our true **Boss**. Consequently, our good work ethic is not just on display when people are **watching** us. **Don't obey just to win their favor, serving only when they are watching you (or eyeservice); but serve as slaves of the Messiah, doing what God wants with all your**

heart (Ephesians 6:6).²⁴⁵

Paul exposed the kind of service that appears to be spiritual but is really just a put-on, a show, an act to get approval. **He** called it **eyeservice** - serving others just to impress people with how spiritual they are. This was the main sin of the Pharisees. They turned helping others, giving, and even prayer into a performance for others. **Yeshua** hated their attitude and warned: **Be careful not to parade your acts of tzedakah in front of people in order to be seen by them! If you do, you have no reward from your Father in heaven (Mt 6:1).**²⁴⁶

The true believer understands that he or she is really serving **Yeshua**. Like **Paul** told the believers in Colossae: **Whatever work you do, put yourself into it, as those who are serving not merely other people, but the Lord (Colossians 3:23).** And again **his** consistent message to the believers in Ephesus was to **work willingly as slaves (employees), as people do who are serving not merely human beings but the Lord (6:7).** This repeats and reinforces what Paul had just said. Thus, the labor is sincere from the heart. One definition of integrity is "being righteous when no one is watching." But the reality is that our **King Messiah** is always watching so we should have the highest motivation for the best work ethic.

Remember that whoever does good work, whether he be a slave or a free man, will be rewarded by the Lord (6:8). **ADONAI** credits and rewards are always dependable and always appropriate. A **boss** may not appreciate or even be aware of the good work done, perhaps because **he** is indifferent or because someone else takes the credit for what is done. But **God** knows and **God** rewards. No good thing done in **His Name** and for **His** glory can pass **His** notice or fail to receive **His** blessing.²⁴⁷

The submission of employers (6:9): The overall context of the entire passage applies here as well. **Masters (bosses)** might be tempted to abuse **their employees**, as was often the case in Roman society. But such is not the case in the community of **Messiah**. **Bosses** are warned not to threaten **their employees**, as is so common in the world. **And bosses, treat your employees the same way. Don't threaten them (6:9a).** Servant leadership is the best leadership and the easiest to follow. The book of **Nehemiah** is one of the great teaching and example of leadership, both in a positive sense (see the commentary on **Ezra-Nehemiah Bt - The Third Return: Nehemiah - A Manual for Leaders**), and a negative sense (see **Ezra-Nehemiah Ch - The Completion of the Walls Despite Opposition: Ten fatal flaws that derail leaders**). **Bosses** should keep a balanced approach as **they** remember that they actually work for the same **boss** as **their employees**. **Remember that**

in heaven both you and they have the same Master, and he has no favorites (6:9b). Such a work environment will actually decrease stress and help build a positive atmosphere that will often help the business prosper especially under **God's** loving conditions.²⁴⁸

The impartiality of **ADONAI** is the closing truth in **Paul's** discussion on **submitting to one another**. **Spirit-filled** believers - whether **husbands** or **wives**, **parents** or **children**, **bosses** or **employees** - are to be mutually **submissive** because **they** are equally loved, equally cared for, and equally subservient to a common **Master, their Savior and Lord, Yeshua Messiah**.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that **You** are such a wonderful **Father**! It is so much easier for **Your children** to honor **their hard boss** when **they** realize that all that they do is seen by **You** and **You** will reward **them** according by **their** heart attitude in all **they** do. **Whatever you do, work at it from the soul, as for the Lord and not for people. For you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as a reward. It is to the Lord Messiah you are giving service. For the one doing wrong will be paid back for what he did wrong, and there is no favoritism (Colossians 3:23-25).** Though there are always trials and problems and life may seem unfair, when **Your children** lift **their** eyes to behold your steadfast love (**Psalms 63:3**), then life and work seem so much easier. **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18).***

*How wonderful that **You** bless **Your children**, those who love and worship **You (John 1:12)** as **their Lord and Savior (Romans 10:9-10)**, with the promise of eternal rewards when **they** serve **You** with loving hearts. **For no one can lay any other foundation than what is already laid - which is Yeshua the Messiah. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear. For the Day will show it, because it is to be revealed by fire; and the fire itself will test each one's work - what sort it is. If anyone's work built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward (First Corinthians 3:11-14).***

*Wow! an eternal reward is worth living for! Please help **bosses** and **employees** to view each other through **Your** eyes, to act kindly toward each other for **Your** sake and to pray for each other so that by their loving example, **their boss/employees** may come to love **You** as **their Lord and Savior**. Then **they** will be brothers in **Messiah** and someday both **boss** and **employees** would be able to joyfully greet each other in heaven, as part of the family of **God (John 1:12)**. In the holy **Name** of **Messiah** and by the power of **His** resurrection.
Amen*