

## ***HOW TO BE A SLAVE OF CHRIST JESUS***

**2 Peter 1:1**

**By Andy Manning**

The title of this sermon is “How to be a Slave of Christ Jesus.”

Let me begin with a question. **What does it mean to be a Christian?**

What if I were to tell you that the word “slave” just might be the best description of the Christian life? **We are slaves of Jesus Christ.**

1 Simeon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Peter referred to himself as a servant of Christ Jesus.

First of all, let’s take a closer look at that word.

The Greek word for servant is *doulos*.

What does the term “*doulos*” mean?

The best translation of this Greek word is not servant, but slave.

That’s how the old Holman Christian Standard Bible puts it; that’s how the New Living Translation puts it.

The **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament**, a foremost authority on the meaning of Greek terms in the New Testament says, “The emphasis here is always on serving as a slave.”

Why do most English translations use the word “servant” instead of “slave”?

Because when people today think of slavery, they think back to the African slave trade in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in which slaves were so badly mistreated and abused.

But when Peter referred to himself as a slave, he didn't mean that he was mistreated and abused by Christ.

He referred to himself as a slave because there is an aspect of the master-slave relationship that gets to the core of what it means to be a Christian.

But, truth be told, the word "slave" really is the best translation of the word *doulos*.

Here's why.

A servant is hired; a slave is owned.

A servant works for wages, and can quit if he wants to; a slave gets no wages, and cannot quit.

And that's what this word *doulos* is referring to; not a hired servant, but an owned slave.

Peter is saying here that he is a slave of Christ Jesus.

**Are all Christians slaves of Christ Jesus?**

Absolutely.

In **1 Peter 2:16** Peter is writing to Christians in general. "Submit as free people, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but as God's slaves." Peter refers to all Christians as God's slaves.

**So what does the word "slave" mean?**

To answer that question, we need to look at what slavery meant when Paul wrote this book.

Slavery was very common in the Roman Empire. During the first century, one out of every two people in the Roman Empire was a slave.

What did it mean to be a slave?

A slave is one who is subject to the will of his or her master.

**Kyle Idleman** wrote, “A slave has no rights. A slave has no possessions to call their own. A slave in Jesus’ day didn’t even have a personal identity. A slave doesn’t get time off or get to clock out at the end of the day. A slave doesn’t get to negotiate.”

To a Greek, slavery was the worst possible social status. No freedom, no rights, no ownership, no legal recourse, no access to courts at all, no citizenship, no possibility to serve in the military, you couldn’t do what you wanted, you couldn’t evade unpleasant tasks, and you were totally dependent upon your owner for provision and protection.

The **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament** says, “The emphasis here is always on serving as a slave. Hence we have a service which is not a matter of choice for the one who renders it, which he has to perform whether he likes it or not, because he is subject as a slave to an alien will, to the will of his owner.”

**John MacArthur** wrote, “Servants are hired; slaves are owned. Servants have an element of freedom in choosing whom they work for and what they do. The idea of servanthood maintains some level of self-autonomy and personal rights. Slaves, on the other hand, have no freedom, no autonomy, or rights. In the Greco-Roman world, slaves were considered property, to the point that in the eyes of the law they were regarded as things rather than persons. To be someone’s slave was to be his possession, bound to obey his will without hesitation or argument.”

**William Barclay** wrote, “Slaves know no law but their master’s word; they have no rights of their own; they are absolute possessions of their master, and they are bound to give their master unquestioning obedience.”

## **Why are we called “slaves of Christ Jesus?”**

We are “slaves of Christ Jesus” because Christ owns us. We are His possession.

We are His possession in two ways.

**First, God created us for Himself.** He did not create us to please ourselves; He created us to please Him, and in so doing to find the greatest joy in life.

**Second, Christ bought us when He died for our sins on the cross.**

Before Christ, we were slaves to sin, headed for eternal separation from God in hell. But Christ’s death and resurrection redeemed us or freed us from sin.

But Christ did not purchase our freedom from sin so that we could live for ourselves; that’s still sin. He purchased our freedom from sin so that we could live for Him.

**2 Corinthians 5:15** says, “And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the one who died for them and was raised.”

By His death, Christ paid the penalty for our sin; He bought us. And Christ sets us free from the power of sin when we are saved and He regenerates us, giving us a new heart.

Let me put it this way. God created us to glorify Him, but we can’t because we are born into sin. So Christ freed us from sin through His death on the cross so that we could glorify God.

So we are doubly owned by God. We are God’s slaves in two ways – created for Him; and bought by Him.

## **Bond-slaves**

But if we want to be even more accurate, then it might be best to translate this word *doulos* as **bond-slave**.

The word "bond" literally meant one who is tied to another.

A bond-slave is one who chose to be another's slave.

And that's a more accurate picture of the Christian life. Christ does not force us into slavery; we willingly choose to be slaves of Christ Jesus.

In the Old Testament law, if an Israelite got into debt and could not pay it off, he became the property, the slave of his debtor.

But he was only a slave for six years.

In the seventh year, the law demanded that he be set free.

But on some occasions, if a slave loved his master and his master's family, and if he felt that he would be better off as a slave than as a free man, he could choose to become a permanent slave to his master.

This was a bond-slave. He was willingly choosing a life of slavery.

And they had a ceremony for this.

The slave would be taken to the tabernacle, where the priest would lead him to the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl.

From that time on for the rest of his life he would be the slave, the property of his master.

And that's a good picture of the Christian life. We are slaves, yes, but by our own choice; Christ has not forced us into slavery; we have chosen to be His slaves.

Christ died to free us from sin, and to free us to live for His glory. But the choice is ours. We can give ourselves in slavery to Christ, or we can remain in slavery to sin.

So as Christians, we are bond-slaves of Jesus Christ. What does it mean to be a bond-slave of Jesus Christ? 3 things.

## **How to Live as a Bond-Slave of Christ**

### **1. Give Christ complete ownership of your life.**

Remember, being a slave means that you own nothing. Everything that you have belongs to your master.

And that's what it means to live as a bond-slave of Jesus Christ. Give Him complete ownership of your life.

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20** says, "19 Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body."

Since Jesus bought you from slavery to sin, you are not your own. Everything you have belongs to God.

To be a slave of Christ means giving Him ownership of everything you have. Give Him complete control over your treasure, your toys, your time, your temple (body), your talents, your tongue, your thoughts.

To be a slave means that you are not an owner; you are a manager.

You don't own your bank account; you manage it for Christ. You don't own your possessions – your house, car, boat, toys, etc. – you take care of them for God.

This means that you aim to please Christ in everything you say and do.

You treat everything you have as if it belongs to Christ, and you use it for Him, and in a way that pleases Him.

Kyle Idleman went on to write, “There is a legal document called a ‘quitclaim deed.’ It’s used when a person is signing over all rights to a property or a possession that they once had a share in. When they sign a quitclaim deed they are giving up whatever claim they once had. They are surrendering all their rights. When Jesus invites us to follow there’s not a lot of paper work involved, but he’s looking for some kind of a quitclaim deed. When you decide to follow him you are signing over your house, your car, your bank accounts, your career, your marriage, your children, your future, and anything else that you once laid claim to. You have no more rights and nothing can be withheld. You deny yourself and sign a quitclaim deed on your life.”

## **2. Give Christ your total obedience.**

Remember that a slave is totally obedient to the will of his master.

There’s no argument. There’s no complaint. There’s no hesitation. There’s just immediate obedience.

That’s what it means to be a slave of Christ Jesus. Total obedience.

In **John 14:23** Jesus said, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word.”

As slaves of Christ Jesus, our job is to obey Christ. We must obey Him with every arena of our lives – our sexuality, our money, our time, everything.

I heard a pastor say that this is the definition of success for a Christian: Read your Bible and do what it says. I can’t put it any better than that.

We’re always looking for ways to teach our kids about obedience. So God gave me a good analogy a few weeks ago. I noticed that when the phone rings or receives a text, my kids stop what they are doing and sprint to the phone. I’m not

sure why they are so eager to get to the phone. Maybe they are bored out of their minds and they are just hoping someone will call with some exciting news. Who knows? But then it hit me. That's what obedience should look like. So that evening at Bible time I told the kids, "Do you know how you stop what you are doing and sprint to the phone when it rings? That's what you are supposed to do when Mom or I give you a command. Stop what you are doing and quickly fulfill the command."

And that's how we should treat Christ's commands. We should obey immediately; right away; quickly; and with a good attitude.

### **3. Give Christ your singular service.**

A slave is fully devoted to His master's business; He lives for His master's interests; He lives for His master's agenda and purposes.

A slave does not work for Himself; a slave is not trying to build his own brand, or his own company, or his own business.

That's what it means to be a slave of Christ. We live to serve God. We are here to work for God; to accomplish God's purposes. We are here to accomplish God's goals, God's mission.

To be God's servant means that God accomplishes His work through us. That's why we are here.

Do you know what the word minister is? The word minister simply means servant. When you think of it like that, then every Christian is a minister of Jesus Christ. You are a minister. Your job is to minister to Jesus Christ.

As a slave of Christ, your job is serve the Lord.

Find out what God is trying to do in the world, and get to work.

What is God doing in the world?



One of the primary things is He is building the church in order to reach a lost world. So to serve Christ, serve in the church.

As a slave of Christ, serve Christ 24/7. In all that you do and see, aim to please Him, and live to serve Him.

At work, your real boss is Christ.

In marriage, your primary aim is to please Christ.

As a parent, you are raising your kids for Christ.

When you go vote, you are voting for Christ. We serve Christ in all that we do.

We should always be praying, “Lord, what would you have me do right now?”

Being a slave means you have a master. And a slave cannot have two masters.

Jesus said in **Matthew 6:24**, “No one can serve two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other.”

As a slave of Jesus Christ, that means we serve Him, not ourselves, and not others.

We take care of ourselves, but it is so that we can better serve the Master.

And we serve others, but it’s because our Master has commanded us to do so. It means we ultimately don’t aim to please others; only Christ.

As a servant of Christ, you can’t be a people-pleaser; you are a Christ-pleaser.

You can’t live to make yourself famous; your job is to make Jesus famous.

You can't build your own kingdom; your job is to build Christ's kingdom.

## **CONCLUSION**

So being a slave of Christ, or a bond-slave of Christ, means complete ownership, total obedience, and singular service.

Ultimately this is what it means **to deny yourself.**

Jesus said in **Luke 9:23**, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me."

Have you ever wondered what Jesus meant by "deny yourself"? The concept of "slavery" is the best analogy.

**Kyle Idleman** wrote, "The phrase 'deny himself' isn't just the idea of saying no to yourself – or even resisting yourself. The idea here is that you do not even acknowledge or recognize your own existence."

**Idleman** went on, "Choosing to become a bond-slave was an act of complete self-denial. A bond-slave gave up all their rights to the master. He is agreeing to give up all his possessions to the master. A slave couldn't pick and choose what was part of the deal. He couldn't say, "I'm going to be a slave, but I want to keep the car, and I need every other weekend off. I need to have a room with a view." It wasn't a negotiation. A bond-slave would say, "Everything I have, everything I am, I sign over to you."

The idea of being a slave to Christ is very important because today the way that many people view Christianity is that God is Santa Claus, and

His job is to give them gifts and make them happy; and

Jesus is their personal assistant to help them accomplish their dreams; and if you just love God enough, He will give you health, wealth and prosperity, and make all your dreams come true.

But that's not true Christianity. Christianity is about being a slave to Christ.

**John MacArthur** wrote, "In contemporary Christianity the language is anything but slave terminology. It is about success, health, wealth, prosperity, and the pursuit of happiness. We often hear that God loves people unconditionally and wants them to be all they want to be. He wants to fulfill every desire, hope, and dream. Personal ambition, personal fulfillment, personal gratification – these have all become part of the language of evangelical Christianity – and part of what it means to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Instead of teaching the New Testament gospel – where sinners are called to submit to Christ – the contemporary message is exactly the opposite: Jesus is here to fulfill all your wishes. Likening him to a personal assistant or a personal trainer, many churchgoers speak of a personal Savior who is eager to do their bidding and help them in their quest for self-satisfaction or individual accomplishment. The New Testament understanding of the believer's relationship with Christ could not be more opposite. He is the Master and Owner. We are His possession. He is the king, the Lord, and the Son of God. We are His subjects and His subordinates. In a word, we are His slaves."

Have you heard of **Bill Bright**? He was the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. He wrote the tract called "The Four Spiritual Laws" that presents the gospel. More than 2.5 billion copies have been distributed worldwide. He was central to the Jesus Film which has been seen by more than 4 billion people in 660 languages around the world. But if you were to visit his gravesite, you would only find three words on his tombstone: **Slave for Jesus.**

That's a great example for us. We are slaves of Christ Jesus.