

## Hard Spots



Have you ever been asked,  
“But isn’t that just *your*  
interpretation?”

There is a rule for  
interpreting the Bible  
that says every  
passage of Scripture  
has one proper  
meaning and many  
possible applications.



Ephesians 6:5-9 is an example.

LITERALLY it refers to slaves  
and masters.

A familiar APPLICATION goes  
like this:

Slaves = workers, employees

Masters = bosses, employers

Sermon: “How to be a Good  
Boss or Worker.”

Consider ANOTHER  
POSSIBILITY. Let’s begin by  
taking a closer look at the situation  
of slaves in Paul’s society.

As near as we can determine, there were some 60 million slaves spread throughout the Roman Empire.

- ✓ 1 out of every 5 people you bumped into was a slave.
- ✓ 1 out of every 3 in the city of Rome.

And while it is true that *“Afro-American slavery was worse than Roman, Roman than Greek, and Greek than Hebrew”*— still, a slave is a slave is a slave.

And it is hard to imagine many worse conditions than slavery.

- ✓ There was cruelty
- ✓ There was indignity
- ✓ There was hopelessness

Suggest a SYLLOGISM:

Major premise	Ephesians 6:5-9 is about slaves, Christian slaves
Minor premise	Slaves = hard living
Conclusion	Ephesians 6:5-9 is about Christians. It is especially concerned to teach us how to live when life is painful, difficult, or hard.

**Four Principles for Living Christianly in the Face of Difficult Circumstances.**


**I. GOD'S PATTERN: GOD'S NORMAL METHOD IS NOT TO REMOVE US FROM DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES BUT TO RELEASE US WITHIN THEM**



*“Slaves, obey your earthly masters...”*  
(Ephesians 6:5)  
*“Each one should retain the place in life the Lord has assigned him... Were you a slave when you were called? Don’t let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so”*  
(1 Corinthians 7:17, 20-21)

**ILLUS.:** Warren Wiersbe’s  
“go/grow” principle.


**II. GOD’S LOVE**  
(Ephesians 6:5-6, 9b)



- Three Possible Mistakes:
- A. It Is Possible to Acknowledge God’s Lordship in Your Life and Deny His Love
  - B. It Is Possible to Acknowledge God’s Love and Deny He Is Lord
  - C. It Is Possible to Deny Both that He Is Lord and that He Loves Us

Proper Response:  
Acknowledge the Lordship of the Loving God in Everything You Experience


**III. GOD’S FOCUS**  
(Ephesians 6:5-6a, 7)



Where you focus determines your ability to cope.

**ILLUS:** Matthew 14:22-33—  
Peter walking on water.

**IV. GOD'S FUTURE**  
(Ephesians 6:8-9)




**ILLUS.:** Cotton Mather

*“Alas, the vanity of human affairs!  
There are many men and things that are scarce mentioned by history that deserve a mention more than some that are universally celebrated.  
“There will be a resurrection of names as well as of bodies.”*

*“All the good that you have done  
All your prayers  
All your alms and the steps of your watchful walk with God  
All the brave efforts of your self-denial  
All the continued desires to serve God and his people and your neighbors  
“They, being sprinkled by the blood of the Lamb, shall be found in the Lord’s book of remembrance.  
“They shall be proclaimed in the golden streets of the city of God.”*

**CONCLUSION:**

What do we believe that is helpful because it is true?



We believe

- In God’s Pattern:** that release within our circumstances may be better than removal from them
- In God’s Love:** that God not only loves us, He is Lord over everything that could ever happen to us
- In God’s Focus:** that Jesus is bigger than our problems
- In God’s Future:** that all of this world is a preparation for the next

