You Serve The Lord Christ

COLOSSIANS 3:22-25 (BSB) · SMALL-GROUP LESSON · DIGDEEPER.AI

The Big Idea

The work nobody sees you do, for people who never say thank you, is actually being watched and repaid by a Judge who never plays favorites, so you can pour yourself into it as if Christ himself were the one you're working for.

Opening Lines

Think of one thing at your job you only do well when someone is watching. We all have one. Paul wrote to people who had no boss they could impress into freedom, and he told them something that changes what that task means.

Before You Teach

- Goal: Get the room to see their most thankless, invisible task as service handed directly to Christ, who is watching and keeping a record. If one person leaves ready to do a hidden job the same whether the boss is in the building or not, you've hit the mark.
- If you're short on time, cut: Cut the extended historical detail on the Roman slavery spectrum if time is short. Keep the Onesimus-and-Philemon-in-the-same-room fact; that single image carries the weight.
- Where the moment lives: In the moment a person names their own thankless task out loud and admits Christ is watching that exact corner they've been cutting. Not in the slavery history, but in 'It is the Lord Christ you are serving' landing on their own Tuesday.
- Your prep: Do the central exercise yourself first: name your own task you only do well when watched. If you can't say it out loud, you can't ask them to.

Run It In Your Setting

The same lesson, sequenced three ways. Pick the one that fits your group and your clock.

CLASSROOM · ~20 PEOPLE · 45 MINUTES

Classroom opening, the cold-read question (5). Read the passage aloud with the full silence-wait (3). Historical setup, Onesimus and Philemon in the same room (7). Teach 'work heartily / ek psychēs' with the pouring cup (8). Questions 1-4 (17). Land on the big idea and out-loud commitments (5). Transformation happens at the 'from the soul' image colliding with their own thankless task. Cut the slavery-spectrum detail first.

SMALL GROUP · ~8 PEOPLE · 60 MINUTES

Small-group opening, everyone brings their watched-only task to mind (6). Read aloud, silence-wait (3). Onesimus fact (5). Teach the word with the cup (8). All five questions, slowing hard on 3 and 5 (28). Commitments out loud, each person names a task and a

wrong (7). Close praying their actual words back to God (3). Transformation lives in question 5 when someone names the unfair thing out loud. Cut question 4 first if pressed.

COFFEE · 2-3 FRIENDS · 30 MINUTES

Coffee opening, the leverage tension (4). Read the passage together (3). One fact: Paul spoke to the people everyone else ignored (3). Skip the formal word study; just say 'work from the soul, pour the whole cup' in a sentence (3). Questions 2, 3, and 5 only (13). Each of you names one task and one wrong, then a short spoken prayer (4). Transformation happens in the honest naming, not the teaching. Cut question 3 if the conversation on 5 is real.

Silence

Here's a habit for every lesson you'll ever teach, and this week we drill it deliberately: after you name a Scripture reference, stop talking and wait until every person has actually found it. This is level four, so I'm asking for a hard, specific rep. Don't call out a page number. Half your room is on a phone, a tablet, or an app with no fixed pages, and 'page 942' only helps the people holding your exact edition. Instead, say 'Colossians three, verse twenty-two,' then go completely silent and watch hands and eyes until the last person lands, print or screen, before you say one more word. That pause protects the newcomer who can't find Colossians without singling them out, and it protects everyone else too. The reps get harder because the silence will feel unbearable to you long before it's actually too long. Count to yourself if you must. Let the room catch up.

Why This Passage Matters

Most of the people in your room work jobs where the good stuff goes unnoticed. The extra care, the honest hour, the thing done right when it would have been easier to fake it. And most of them have quietly concluded that faithfulness in those moments is a sucker's game, because nobody sees and nobody pays. Paul writes into that exact ache, and he writes it to people with far less leverage than anyone in your room will ever have. Enslaved believers, owning nothing, able to be sold at a word, with no court to appeal to. Roman letters barely acknowledged such people existed. Paul turns and addresses them face to face as souls with a Master in heaven, and he tells them their hidden labor is seen, weighed, and repaid by a Judge who cannot be bribed. That is either the most naive thing ever written or the most subversive. This is the passage that dignifies every invisible Tuesday your people will ever live. You get to hand a tired room the news that God keeps a record no manager can lose. Few things you teach will land closer to where they actually live.

Catch the Fire First

Before the room does this, you do it. Sit down this week with the passage and pick your own task, the one you only do well when someone's checking. Prepping a lesson thoroughly versus winging it because nobody grades a Bible teacher. The email you

answer carefully versus the one you dash off. Name it specifically, and then do that one task this week as if Christ is the reader. When you walk into the room, you're not delivering a concept. You're telling them what happened when you tried it on your own thankless corner first.

Bring Your Own Story

- A time you cut a corner because you were sure no one would ever check, and what it did to you inside.
- A moment you worked hard for someone who never once thanked you, and how you kept going or didn't.
- Sample polished-vs-real — Polished: 'I've learned to always give my best regardless of recognition.' Real: 'I redid a report at 11pm that nobody was going to read closely, and I only did it because that verse was stuck in my head.'
- Guardrail: tell it real, not raw — the version that helps the room, not the one you're still bleeding from.

Three Ways to Open

CLASSROOM: "Reading this cold, with no backstory, what strikes you as strange about who Paul is talking to and what he tells them? Say what jumps out before anyone tells you what it's supposed to mean."

Start with a question that rewards fresh eyes over Bible knowledge, so the newcomer can win.

SMALL GROUP: "Every one of us has a task we only do well when someone's watching. You don't have to say which one out loud yet, but bring it to mind now. We're going to look at what Paul says to that exact instinct."

Make it personal and universal at once so nobody feels singled out.

COFFEE: "Paul writes this to slaves, the people with zero leverage, and instead of a coping strategy he gives them a boss they can't see. What would it change if you really believed Christ was the one you clock in for?"

Lead with the tension the passage actually resolves.

Teaching the Word

Teach the phrase 'work at it with your whole being.' In Paul's Greek it's ek psychēs, literally 'from the soul' or 'out of the whole self.' Not neatly, not with a smile plastered on, but with your insides in it. Here's the physical image: hold up a cup and pour it out completely, right to the last drop, nothing held back in the bottom. That's ek psychēs. Not measuring out just enough effort to pass inspection, but tipping the whole thing over into the task. Now put that next to the reality of the person Paul's addressing, someone pouring themselves out for a master who may never notice. And Paul says, do it anyway,

because the pouring isn't for the master. It's for the Lord. Say the line and then stop. 'It is the Lord Christ you are serving.' [Let the silence sit. Don't rescue it.]

Discussion Questions

1. Reading this cold, what surprises you about who Paul chooses to speak to and how he speaks to them?

Coaching note: Let a newcomer answer first if they will; fresh eyes catch the shock of Paul addressing slaves directly. Don't correct, just draw out.

If it stalls: Yes or no: if you were writing rules for a household, would you even bother writing to the people at the very bottom? Paul did. Why do you think that mattered?

2. What's the difference between doing a task 'while they are watching' and doing it 'from the soul'? Where do you actually feel that difference in your own week?

Coaching note: Push for a concrete task, not a principle. If someone gives a slogan, ask 'which task, though?'

If it stalls: Name one thing you do better when your boss is around than when they're not. Just one.

3. Paul tells people who legally could inherit nothing that they'll 'receive an inheritance from the Lord as your reward.' What is he doing to their whole idea of who they are?

Coaching note: This is the gospel breaking the world's categories. Let it land slowly; don't rush to application.

If it stalls: If the world says you're worth nothing and God calls you an heir, which one do you tend to actually believe about yourself?

4. How is 'there is no favoritism' both terrifying and comforting at the same time, depending on where you're standing?

Coaching note: Draw out both sides: comfort to the crushed, terror to the one who's been cutting corners. Don't let them land on only the comfortable half.

If it stalls: Whose corner would you rather God overlook, someone else's wrong done to you, or your own? He overlooks neither. How does that sit?

5. What is one thankless or unfair thing in your life right now that you'd have to hand over to God to actually live this passage?

Coaching note: This is the commitment question. Slow down. Let the silence do its work; someone will speak. Don't fill the gap.

If it stalls: Finish this sentence out loud or in your head: 'The wrong I keep rehearsing is _____.' You don't have to say it, but name it to yourself right now.

Questions You May Hear

"Is Paul endorsing slavery here?"

No. In the very same delivery he sent the letter to Philemon, telling a slaveholder to receive his runaway back 'no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a beloved brother.' The gospel was dismantling the system from the inside before it had the legal

power to abolish it.

"How does this apply to me if I'm not enslaved?"

The principle is the same for any work done under someone else's authority, especially work that's hidden or thankless. Paul's point is that Christ is your real employer, and he sees the corner you were tempted to cut.

"What does 'an inheritance from the Lord as your reward' actually mean for a slave who could own nothing?"

Under Roman law a slave was property, not heir, and could inherit nothing. Paul tells him God names him an heir anyway, secured not by status or bloodline but by belonging to Christ. That's the gospel breaking the world's categories in two.

"Does 'Whoever does wrong will be repaid for his wrong' mean God punishes believers?"

It's a statement about God's unbribable justice cutting both ways. The master who could beat his slave unpunished and the slave with no court both stand before the same Judge who shows no favorites. Nothing done in secret escapes him.

For Experienced Leaders

- When you name the reference, go silent and wait for the last screen and the last page to land. Your discomfort with the pause is not the room's discomfort.
- Resist teaching the whole history of Roman slavery. One fact, Onesimus and Philemon reading these words in the same room, does more than a lecture.
- Catch the newcomer after: 'Really glad you came, no pressure to know anything, that's the whole point.' Then learn their name before they leave. That's what brings them back.

Landing the Lesson

Commitments: Before we close, say it out loud: name the one task this week you'll do the same whether anyone's watching or not. And name the one wrong you're handing to the God who shows no favorites.

Close by praying out loud over the actual tasks and wrongs people just named, using their words. Don't reach for a written prayer; naming their specific thankless job and the specific injustice they're entrusting to God, back to God, is the whole point.

If you run out of time: If the room only gets to question three tonight, stop there and stay there. Someone realizing they're named an heir is worth more than rushing to the application. Let it be enough.

Midweek follow-up: A week later, text one person: 'Did you do the task you named, even when nobody was checking? How'd it go?'

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/colossians/3-22-25/lesson

Handout

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During the lesson:

- Reading this cold, what strikes you as strange about it?
- One task I only do well when someone is watching:
- 'Work from the soul' — pour the whole cup out. Where in my week am I only pouring out just enough to pass inspection?
- 'There is no favoritism' — one wrong I keep rehearsing that I could hand to God tonight:
- The keepable line, in my own words: what does 'It is the Lord Christ you are serving' change about tomorrow?

Take-home actions:

- Pick the one task you do well only when watched, and this week do it fully whether the manager is in the building or not.
- Before you clock in, say out loud: 'I am doing this heartily, as for the Lord.' Then do the next thing with actual care.
- Tonight, instead of rehearsing an injustice again, name one wrong you're entrusting to the God who shows no favorites, and let him keep it.

Your quiet, unseen faithfulness today is already counted by the God who never overlooks a thing.