



Growth Group Discussion Questions
Lesson: FELLOW SERVANTS AND CO-HEIRS
Key Bible Verses: Colossians 1:3-8; Colossians 4:7-9; I John 3:1;
Romans 8:14-17; Ephesians 3:2-6; I Peter 3:7
Spring Quarter - Lesson 4 - Week of April 25, 2021

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

- What is something you feel God is showing you right now?
- When you think about fellow Christians, what are some words you would use to describe your relationship with them?

DISCUSSION

In this lesson, we are going to drill deeper into the ancient language of the New Testament. We will explore some specific terms used by New Testament authors to describe how Christians should think of and relate to each other within the Church. Taken together, these terms paint a rich picture of fellowship, mutual affection, and a shared mission.

In the original language of the New Testament (ancient Greek), the terms we will explore all have the prefix *syn-*, which gives a word the connotation of being or doing something together with someone else. This *syn-* prefix made its way into English in words like synergy, which means to work together.

When encountering words like this in the New Testament, most biblical translators will translate them as fellow-something or co-something, which brings out that feeling of togetherness. These words do not convey hierarchy and authority but mutuality and common purpose. In this lesson, we will explore instances of two *syn-* prefix Greek words in the New Testament, commonly translated as fellow servant and fellow heir.

Fellow Servant. In the New Testament letters, especially the letters of Paul, we get a glimpse of relationships within the early Church. There is, of course, theological content in the letters, but there is also relational content. Paul would mention specific people in the various churches around the Mediterranean, and in doing so, he would describe them. He would give us a sense of their personal qualities and how they had served to advance the gospel. It is easy for us to skip over personal content because it does not seem especially relevant to our lives today. But if we pay attention, we get glimpses of the beauty of Christian fellowship.

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul describes two people as fellow servants: Epaphras and Tychicus. Let's first read about what Paul has to say to the church in Colossae about Epaphras. Read Colossians 1:3-8.

1. What stood out to you about these verses at the beginning of the letter?
2. How does Paul describe the Colossian church?

3. What role did Epaphras play in the spiritual development of the church in Colossae?
4. Why is it significant that the apostle Paul would refer to someone like Epaphras as his fellow servant?
5. What other words did Paul use to describe Epaphras?

A little later in Paul's letter to the Colossians, he introduces Tychicus, who is described as a fellow servant. Read Colossians 4:7-9.

1. How is Tychicus described by Paul?
2. What seems to be some of the tasks assigned to Tychicus? Why are they important?
3. Why is it important that we think of ourselves as servants?
4. Why is it important that we think of each other as fellow servants, as Paul thought of Epaphras and Tychicus?
5. How does thinking of ourselves and each other as servants promote health in the Church?

We are, therefore, servants. We serve Christ. We serve each other and we serve with each other. We serve those who don't know God. Thinking of ourselves and each other as servants is an important aspect of experiencing life in the Church. But, as God often does, he holds up two things to be true that seem contradictory. He is full of both grace and truth. He is a God of love and justice.

In the same way, we are fellow servants of Christ, and we are also fellow heirs. Servant is a lowly term, implying that others are more important than we are. Heir, on the other hand, is a term of honor. But the New Testament teaches that both are true; we are fellow servants and we are fellow heirs.

Fellow Heir. To be an heir is to be a child of someone with an inheritance to give. As we know, we enjoy fellowship with God as His children because of Jesus. Read I John 3:1. As God's children, we stand to inherit the blessings that come with being a part of His family.

Read Romans 8:14-17.

1. Abba is an ancient Aramaic word that is roughly equivalent to "Da-da." It's an affectionate word used by a young child for his father. What does this tell you about your relationship with God through Christ?
2. What do you think it means that we, the Church, are co-heirs (or fellow heirs) with Christ? How should this affect our relationship with each other?

In Ephesians, Paul brings out this idea of being fellow heirs when discussing how God has brought together Jews and Gentiles in the Church.

Read Ephesians 3:2-6.

1. What is the "mystery" Paul is talking about?
2. Jews and Gentiles did not get along well in certain first century congregations. What groups in the Church today might struggle with viewing each other as co-heirs? How can we help to bridge the divide?

In one of his letters, Peter speaks of husbands and wives as co-heirs together. Peter is encouraging husbands to view their wives as their spiritual equals - a radical perspective considering the patriarchal culture of the first century Roman world.

Read I Peter 3:7.

1. Why is it important for husbands and wives to view each other as fellow heirs?
2. How might a failure to do this hinder one's prayer life?

Keys To Remember

- Paul called the people who served in his ministry fellow servants.
- We must think of ourselves as servants of Christ and consider each other as fellow servants.
- Within the Church, we are co-heirs with people who are different from us.
- Husbands and wives should view each other as fellow heirs of God's promises.

Prayer Focus

God help me to view myself as a servant on a daily basis and help me to remember that I am your child.