



A Better Freedom:
Finding Life as Slaves of
Christ
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Eternal Emancipation

I will never forget the morning thirty years ago when William Lane looked over his glasses at me and said, “I am going to teach you how I read Scripture.” It seemed an unusual thing to say; after all, I could read. But in the years that followed, I slowly learned what it was he was talking about, how he “read” Scripture. He referred to it as “interacting at the level of the imagination,” and it will be my standard approach throughout this book as we wrestle with the biblical notion of slavery.

To read at the level of the imagination is to **seek to understand with the heart as well as the mind**. It involves putting yourself in the place of those who first heard the words of the text. Bill liked to stress that we must interact by means of the “*informed* imagination.” Which is to say that we must do our homework before coming to the text of Scripture by becoming familiar with first-century resources and wrestling with the original languages if need be. Only the informed imagination can listen responsibly and imaginatively. Otherwise we simply speculate with no connection to the real-life situation of the original hearers of the text.

Finally, be reminded that even though the focus of our discussion is slavery, **this is fundamentally a book about freedom**; what it means and the only way to ultimately find it. The early Christians found freedom by becoming slaves to Christ. How is that possible?

Though being “in very nature God,” Jesus came in the form of a slave. Why?

How is it that early Christianity was regarded as a slave religion?

Why did some of the first followers of Jesus sell themselves into slavery in order to set others free?

How could Africans, who neither spoke nor read the language of their captors, who were persecuted and kept in chains by a nation that called itself Christian, nevertheless come to Jesus en masse?

If we can cross that bridge between the heart and mind and wrestle with some of these difficult passages at the level of the imagination, we just might be able to find the answers to these questions, and more.

—From the introduction to *A Better Freedom*, by Michael Card