Title: The biblical concept of *doulos* in the Gospel of John

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Abstract:

This study addresses the biblical concept of *doulos* as expressed in the Gospel of John. Specifically, it purposes to define *doulos* in the context of John 15:15. Did Jesus invalidate his *Kyrios-douloi* relationship with His disciples in favor of a *Philos-philoi* relationship? The study of the occurrences of *doulos* in John’s gospel affirms that this gospel contributes to a rich understanding of *doulos* as portrayed in Scripture.

Following a general introduction to a dissertation in chapter 1, is an introduction to the Gospel of John and a survey of the relevant literature.

The background study in chapter 2 begins with an analysis of the Hebrew ‘ebed in the OT—usually translated as *doulos* in the LXX. The study of *doulos* then proceeds to the NT and the extrabiblical literature. The exploration of the biblical and extrabiblical literature identifies some important elements that shed light upon John’s usage of *doulos* in his Gospel.

Chapter 3 presents the exegesis and exposition of texts where the word *doulos* occurs in the Gospel. The discussion is divided into two main sections: the literal uses of *doulos* in John 4:51 and 18:10, 18, 26, and its metaphorical uses in 8:34-35, 13:16, and 15:15. John 14, as the immediate context of both chapters (13 and 15), is also addressed. These etymological and
exegetical studies in chapter 3 provide valuable insights in defining the doulos concept in John’s Gospel, and especially in clarifying the key text of the study—John 15:15.

The implications of the study in chapter 4 are drawn from certain selected areas of theology: servanthood and soteriology, servanthood and ecclesiology, and servanthood and eschatology. These implications are not intended to fully explicate these areas of theology, but rather to determine in a preliminary way the theology significance of the doulos concept in these three aspects of servanthood in the Gospel of John.

Chapter 5 presents the summary and conclusion of the study, which centers in the essence of Jesus’ words in John 15:15—that He would no longer call His disciples douloi but philoi. With these words, Jesus did not mean that He had terminated the disciples’ servanthood and replaced it with the new relationship philoi. Instead, both terms remain valid and complement each other. Thus, Jesus (God) remains in one sense kyrios—one who is worthy of obedience, reverence, and worship; yet at the same time a Philos—a personal steadfast Friend to every believer. The believer’s corresponding relationship to this Master-Friend is both douloi—willing servant, and philoi—grateful friend. In the merging of these two concepts, John seems to envision an inseparable bond between divinity and humanity—a bond formed to endure the tests of time and eternity.