

Discussion Guide

questions to help start or continue conversations about faith

Discussion Guides accompany the weekly message.

Passage: Philemon

Observation (look at the text):

- v. 1-3 What does Paul communicate in the opening of his letter to Philemon?
- v. 4-7 As Paul opens the letter, how does he encourage Philemon?
- v. 8-17 How does Paul describe Onesimus? What is Paul's appeal to Philemon? Who was Onesimus to Philemon before they were separated? Who does Paul instruct Philemon to now consider Onesimus? How Does Paul instruct Philemon to receive Onesimus?
- v. 18-20 What instruction and promise does Paul give and make to Philemon regarding the debt Onesimus owes Philemon?
- V.21-25 As Paul closes the letter, how does he encourage Philemon? What statement of faith does Paul make as he closes the letter?

Interpretation (understand what it means):

- v. 1 Paul wrote the letter to Philemon while imprisoned in Rome. Why does he say he is a prisoner of Christ?
- v. 2 Why did Paul also address a very personal letter to Philemon to other followers of Jesus?
- v. 4-7, v. 21, & v. 25 Why is it important that Paul wrote words of encouragement to open and close his letter to Philemon?
- v. 8-17 The letter doesn't clearly state what happened between Philemon and Onesimus.
 - What can we conclude from the text about Philemon's relationship with Onesimus?
 - When Onesimus approached Philemon with a letter from Paul in his hand, what do you think Philemon's initial response was?

- o After reading the letter, how do you think Philemon responded?
- o We know from the opening of the letter, Paul addressed the letter to others beyond Philemon. Do you think Paul did this, so that these “fellow soldiers” and “church members” would help Philemon and Onesimus reconcile?
- V. 18-19 Paul acknowledges that Onesimus owes Philemon a debt. How does Paul reconcile this debt with Philemon on behalf of Onesimus?

Application (apply the Word of God to life):

- When you read Paul’s letter to Philemon, in your walk with the Lord right now, who do you most empathize with or relate to – Paul, Onesimus, Philemon, a fellow soldier, or a supporting member of the church?
- Is there someone right now in the body of Christ you need to seek out and ask for forgiveness and reconciliation?

Read Romans 5: 6-11. Just as Philemon and Onesimus were separated and even enemies, in our sin condition, the Bible teaches us we were enemies of God and separated from Him. Christ died for us to pay our debt of sin. We don’t deserve His sacrifice of love, but still He showed us divine grace when He died for us to reconcile us to God, the Father, to Himself, and to the Holy Spirit. Paul instructs Philemon to show Onesimus divine grace and receive him back as a brother, even though he was formally his slave, and even though Onesimus does not deserve this divine grace.

- Have you received God’s divine gift of grace and love in the person of Jesus Christ? What are you waiting for? Today is your day of salvation. Receive Jesus today and be saved.

Read Matthew 6:14-15. Forgiveness is a BIG deal for our heavenly Father.

- Is there someone right now, you need to show grace to, forgive and reconcile with? What will you do?