

Philemon: Receive the Slave as a brother

Growth Group Weekly Lesson Oct. 2/3

Spend time praying to invite God into your discussion.

What questions did you have from the message?

Read Philemon aloud together. What observations you have? What questions do you have?

Verses 1-7

In Paul's introduction to the letter, he uses a lot of family words to refer to Timothy, Apphia, and Archippus, and Philemon. **Why does Paul choose to use this family language here and in other letters?**

Read Ephesians 1:3-6 and John 1:9-13

Through faith in Jesus, we are adopted into the family of God. We all have our own families (parents, siblings, spouses, children, grandchildren, etc.), and within our earthly family we have different values and rules that we often abide by. Most of these values are unspoken, but shape how we interact within the family as well as with people outside of our family.

-What are some of the values from your family that influence how you interact within your family? How does that affect how you interact with people outside of your family?

-In God's family, there is a new value system that we have. Read Phil. 2:1-4 and Acts 2:42-47.

-What are some of the values that the family of God has?

-How has this new value system changed how you interact with your family? With others?

-What are some challenges to following this value system in your life?

-Which family takes priority in God's Kingdom? Our immediate family (parents, spouse, children, etc.) or the family of God?

-What if your family members are not believers?

Verses 8-20

Paul introduces us to Onesimus, Philemon's slave who recently wronged him and ran away. Onesimus has now become a follower of Jesus, which means that Onesimus is adopted into the family of God. Philemon would have been within his rights to punish Onesimus for his wrongdoing.

-Because Philemon and Onesimus are now in the same family, what should Philemon do with Onesimus according to Paul?

Values/Principles of the Kingdom from Jesus:

- Love your Enemy and those who persecute you (Matthew 5:43-48)
- Love your Neighbor as Yourself (Mark 12:31)
- Love One Another as I have loved you (John 13:34)

In these passages, Jesus tells us that those who follow Him will live by these principles and heart attitudes. As we grow in spiritual maturity, we also grow in our love for others because we become more like Jesus. Read 1 Cor. 13:1-3.

-How do you often measure spiritual maturity?

-How does Paul measure it in 1 Cor. 13?

There is a notable lack of Paul proclaiming Jesus' death and resurrection in this letter. Rather than writing this in words, he chooses to represent Jesus' sacrificial mediation himself. Paul is willing to take on the cost of Onesimus' sins to reconcile him with Philemon.

-How can we model Jesus' reconciliation and love for others?

In your own life, there are most likely some family members (both earthly family and God's family) who you have been in conflict with.

-When you experience conflict, how do you usually respond?

-If your go-to response is not in love, what do you need to do to have your heart changed?

Which character in this letter do you identify with most right now?

Philemon: You have been wronged by someone and need to reconcile and welcome them in love.

Onesimus: You have wronged someone and need to confess, repent, and ask for forgiveness.

Paul: You know people who are in conflict and have the ability to bring peace.