



PHILEMON

from bondservant to brother



Sermon Follow Up Guide

Memory Verse:

Philemon 1:6

and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.

Prayer:

Help us to be encouragers in the faith.

Reading Plan:

Monday:	Philemon
Tuesday:	Micah 1
Wednesday:	Micah 2
Thursday:	2 Corinthians 1
Friday:	2 Corinthians 2
Saturday:	2 Corinthians 3
Sunday:	Psalms 1

Song for the Week:

Build My Life by Passion

Consider:

How does Paul's introduction teach us about Christian identity?

Read Matthew 22:37-39 and discuss its connection with Philemon 1:5.

Does verse 6 imply that sharing your faith can be ineffective?

What is "every good thing that is in us," that verse 6 talks about?

When was a time that you "derived much joy and comfort" from the love of someone in the church?

Can the fellowship of believers be more draining than refreshing(v7)? Why? How does this change?

How might it influence Philemon's attitude towards Paul's difficult request to know that Paul prays for him?

Application:

I commit to see myself in light of the Gospel.

I commit to pray for my church.

I commit to look for the positives in the people around me.

Coming Next Week
Philemon 1:8-16



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Sermon Notes

Philemon 1:1-7

“The Encouragement Before The Request”

1. The _____ in Christ

2. The _____ of Prayer

3. The _____ of Love



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Sermon Transcript

Philemon is one of the shorter books of the Bible but is also one of the more controversial. We're going to spend 4 weeks walking through the text and hopefully, by the end, we'll be a congregation that has a solid grasp on the purpose and meaning of these 25 verses.

Philemon was written around 62AD and it's written from Paul - who is in prison- to Philemon who is a wealthy Christian in the city of Colossae. The high altitude overview of the book, is that Paul wants Philemon to forgive a runaway slave and take him back as a brother in Christ.

But this is a huge request. It goes against culture, It goes against pride. It goes against common sense. It goes against economics. It goes against man's wisdom. But the church was never called to do what makes sense to this world. We have always been called to do what make sense in God's Kingdom. That's Paul's mind in Philemon.

Even though the godly thing was clear in this situation, man's heart can be slow to warm to the fire of truth. How do you bring someone to the fire, though? That's where Paul begins with these 7 verses. He's gently leading Philemon to the truth of what he needs to do.

We can all relate to this, right? How many times do you know what's right but need some prodding to go through with it. Maybe for you, it's forgiveness, like it is with Philemon. It's much more helpful if the request to forgive comes after proper encouragement.

We should all struggle with the question this situation forces on us. Why is Paul asking a slave owner to forgive a slave for running away? Shouldn't Paul ask the slave to forgive the slave owner for his enslavement? Shouldn't Paul ask the slave owner to repent for "owning" men? We'll be looking at these questions more in depth when Paul gets to them, for now, we accept what happens in the book as we search the introduction for the instruction it gives.

The letter starts with Paul's characteristic introduction, naming the writers and the recipients:

1 Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To Philemon our beloved fellow worker **2** and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:

In his introduction, it's very easy, right from the start, to see the importance placed on our identity. How does Paul label people? In view of Christ. In view of the role in God's church.

It's very different from the way the world teaches us to label people. The nice one, the mean one, the salesman, the teacher, the poor, the rich. No - Paul labels us as brothers and sisters, fellow workers and fellow soldiers.

Can you see the difference in the labels?

When the world creates labels, it divides, it hurts, it puts importance on temporary things. The world wants you to earn your label and it wants you to know that there's always a chance for you to lose what you've earned. You can lose your job, you can lose your money, you can lose your popularity. And if you rest in the label the world gives you, you can then, lose your identity. But God's Word offers you something so much better. Christ offers you something eternal that can't be lost.

Because Jesus took your place on the cross, because of the glorious gospel, you're given a label that you can't lose. Unlike the world, it doesn't depend on your effort or anything you can earn. Unlike the world, God's labels for you bring unity, community, and dependence on Him.

Paul labels himself a prisoner for Christ Jesus, which really has two meanings. He was literally a Roman prisoner under house arrest when writing this letter. He was a prisoner because of his allegiance to Jesus. It's also metaphorical. He is a prisoner for Christ Jesus. He is bound to the work of Christ. He is a slave to Christ, as he says in 1 Corinthians.¹ It's a wondrous label. One we should all want.

Then he calls Timothy a brother and Apphia a sister. Timothy and Apphia weren't born siblings, they're born again siblings. They're family. That's the standard for Christian community. You know what doesn't make someone a brother? Similar interests. A similar place in life. Similar wealth or lack of it. Similar country of origin. Similar skin color. But these are what the world tells you builds true community.

And our churches have bought into it. Not long ago I heard this in a presentation. Church A is full of older families. The younger families are mainly children of the older people. They're not reaching many in their community. Not baptizing many.

Now, a pastor comes along and decides to reach these young families that aren't being reached by Church B. And that church explodes. They don't have all that many older families, but they are bursting at the seams with younger families.

Now, another pastor comes along and realizes that Church B is reaching younger families, but mainly the wealthier families. No one is doing ministry and reaching the poor young families. So this new pastor plants Church C and does an excellent job reaching the poor young families in this area. They're growing and baptizing.

Finally, Church D is right over here. And church D is much like church A. Older families. A few younger families.

We were told this was a fine model. A working model. They called them affinity churches.

I was so heartbroken listening to that model. I was heartbroken because it makes the defining motivation for community in the church everything but the Gospel. These speakers were saying that race, that age, that interests were the reason for Christian community.

O God! May that not be so. The only ONLY reason for Christian community is the Gospel. We are brothers and sisters not because of our place in life, but because of Christ's place in our lives.

Do you know what happens to church A if affinity is the reason for community in a church? It dies in the next 30 to 50 years. Do you know what happens to church B if affinity is the reason for community in the church? It dies in 80-100 years. Do you know what happens to all these churches if the Gospel is actually the reason for community? They never die. Let's be the church that never dies.

Here's the problem. For many years, local churches may have said that the gospel was the main reason for their community, but their actions, their subtleties betray their words. It's a radical thing to look at someone who is

¹1 Corinthians 7:22 For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ.

different from you in every way and feel love. I'm not talking about pity, or novelty, or flattery. I'm talking about an all in, genuine, life giving love.

It's only something that the Holy Spirit can do.

Paul, Timothy, Philemon - they were family.

Philemon is a beloved fellow worker. It's a label that's full of unity and common purpose. Paul and Philemon have the same goal and they're not passive in that goal, they're active. They're working towards that goal. We should all be fellow workers. Don't sit and watch. Work.

Really this label is one of respect. Not everyone is a worker that calls themselves a Christian.

And Archippus is labeled as a fellow soldier. No doubt Paul cares about the spiritual war being waged in Colossae. He wrote Philemon around the same time he wrote Ephesians where he urged the church in Ephesus to put on the armor of God. A soldier is alert. A soldier knows his purpose. A soldier depends on his brothers in arms and his brothers depend on him. A soldier keeps himself ready for battle. And a soldier indeed fights the battles.

Even in his introduction Paul is setting the table of fellowship. He carefully lays the place settings to show his care, his concern, his respect and his love.

He continues in verse 3 by saying, "**3** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

This is a standard blessing, but I love it. What more could we ask for in the Christian life? Grace and peace. It wraps up so much of what Christ has done for us. Paul makes clear that our grace and peace come from God. Our God is the source of unmerited favor. He is the source of tranquility. If your grace and peace didn't come from God, you don't have a real grace or a real peace.

Verses 4 5 and 6 show us the example of prayer.

4 I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, **5** because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, **6** and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.

How important is prayer to the Christian life? Is prayer important to you? Prayer is important to Paul. He thanks his God always when he remembers Philemon in prayer. Verse 5 tells us why: because he hears of the love and the faith that he has for Jesus and for other Christians. This is a clear reflection of Matthew 22:37-39

37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. **38** This is the great and first commandment. **39** And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Philemon is carrying out the two greatest commandments. But not only is he loving God and loving others, people are talking about it. Somehow Paul is getting news of how Philemon is living. And it's good news! We all know how fast bad news can travel. But in the church, things should be different. Because of the grace and peace that flows through our veins, we should be interested in good news spreading fast. We should be talking about the good things people are doing. We should be eager to share good news! Somebody say, "talk about it!" Yeah! We should talk about it. We are encouragers. We aren't discouragers. We build people up! We don't tear them down. We confront sin, sure. But we don't dwell there. Remember, Paul is talking to a slave owner, but Paul is an encourager. Christians

are encouragers. Talk about the good things. Look for the good things. Praise people when you see them honoring Christ. Pray thanksgiving for them. Pray blessings for them. Talk about it to men and to God.

Lakeview, we can be a church that is different than the world. You know, sometimes you can walk into a place and feel the weight of it. You can feel the burdens of the people walking around. You know what I'm talking about? Have you ever felt that?

I was in a restaurant the other day and a couple of their employees were griping to each other the whole time I was eating. I mean, they were bringing me down and I didn't even know what they were talking about. They were full of gossip and tearing down other employees. It doesn't even take words, though. It can just be body language. It can just be the spirit of a person.

You know what the remedy for that worldly weightiness is? Encouragement! Imagine a place where people actually hold their tongues when they want to say something negative about something or someone else. Imagine a place where people don't feel threatened by saying positive things about other people! Imagine a place where the positive things we say honor Christ!

This honors Christ. This is what we want. This is what God's church should be about. It's what Paul was about.

And when we do need to instruct, encouragement is the honey in the medicine. It's important to encourage even when we need to say hard things.

So Paul's example of prayer in verse 5 is of thanksgiving for the good things God is doing through Philemon.

In verse 6 it's a prayer of supplication on Philemon's behalf. He asks God to give them the kind of discipleship that produces "the full knowledge of every good thing that is in them" for Christ's sake. Look, we can share our faith with each other and do it in such a shallow and bibleless way that we don't really benefit much. Paul wants Philemon and the church in his home to have a full knowledge of what God has given them. This happens when we go deep with our faith. This is why I think our small groups are so important. It's where we can really go deep with each other and in God's Word.

So Paul is praying for this church to really understand the gifts of the Holy Spirit in their lives, so that Christ can be honored. His prayer for Philemon points back to Christ. He doesn't want good things for Philemon so he can be proud and lift up his own head. He wants good things for Philemon so he can even more passionately point to Christ and lift Christ up.

We should always understand that God's goal is God's glory. Never lose sight of that in your Bible reading. Even in this introduction where we see the importance of identity and encouraging one another, we are reminded - this is all about Christ! Because I never had to save myself - I couldn't. Jesus had to save me. And he did. Jesus took my place. He's eternally worthy of our praise and being the central figure of scripture and our lives. Let's be diligent to keep him rightly elevated to the throne of our hearts.

We should note Paul's example of prayer for the church in the approach to making a hard request of Philemon. He's about to make a really difficult demand of Philemon and he's going to speak with some firmness. But by being able to

genuinely say, “look man, I’ve been praying for you. I’ve been thankful for you. I’ve been asking God for these really good things for you.” Paul is able to make his request with a gentleness and with Philemon knowing, “oh, you know what? Paul really does want what’s best for me. This isn’t an easy instruction to receive, but I can trust Paul because he’s praying for me. I can trust Paul because his greatest hope for me is that I would have the full knowledge of every good thing that is in me for the sake of Christ.”

Are you praying for the people God has in your life? Don’t wait for conflict to begin praying for those around. Pray even now that God would be working in the lives of your brothers and sisters.

The last point we’re going to talk about today comes from verse 7. “For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.”

In verse 7 we see the result of love. Paul has gotten much joy and comfort from Philemon’s love. But why has joy and comfort come from his love? Because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through him.

We should be sources of love and joy and comfort and refreshment to those around us. It’s cool because Paul is just an indirect beneficiary. He’s getting the joy and comfort of Philemon’s love secondhand. He’s wearing that worn out shirt he got from goodwill. But praise God for that!

This is what happens when our love is deep and wide. When we love God and love others. Your investment in people never stops with that person. Philemon has loved the people around him so well that they are encouraging people in cities far away because of it. Who is your love benefiting?

We need to be people who spread that love of Christ. Because, here’s the thing, the love we have in us from the Holy Spirit is different than anything the world has to offer. Or is it? I mean, is it? Do you feel like it is? Do you feel a love in Christ that is different than the love those far from Christ have? We have it. The Holy Spirit puts it there.

When you practice loving people well - when people are refreshed from your love for them, then you’re going to have second hand impact where the whole church receives joy and comfort. So go ahead! Love well! Love with eagerness!

Be patient. Be Kind. Don’t envy. Don’t boast. Don’t be arrogant or rude. Don’t insist on your own way. Don’t be irritable or resentful. Don’t rejoice at wrongdoing. Rejoice with the truth!! Bear all things. Believe all things. Hope all things. Endure all things.²

Love well because Christ loved you well. Love well because there’s a reward for you when you do.

We’re going to give you a time now to turn to God in prayer. You’ve heard His Word. Respond to it. Come to the altar and pray. Repent if you need to repent. Praise if you need to praise. Christ wants you as you are.

² 1 Corinthians 13:4-7