

**March 6-10, 2017**

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5 MINUTES / 5 DAYS

*I thought this week we'd look at a small, lesser known book of the Bible. The book of Philemon is a letter the Apostle Paul sent to Philemon, a wealthy slave owner in the city of Colosse. Philemon owned a slave named Onesimus, and they must have had a complicated relationship. Although the Bible doesn't give us the full story, it is interesting to imagine God working behind the scenes to bring them to a unique, redeemed place as slave and owner.*

**MONDAY**

**Attitude Determines Our Actions**

*Philemon 1, Luke 6:45, James 1:14-15*

We aren't told specifically that Onesimus was sulking around Philemon's house with a bad attitude; but we do read at one point that Onesimus was not useful to Philemon, and we know he eventually ran away. So, let's think about what precipitates someone running away – generally lots of negative thinking. Onesimus made a choice everyday when he woke up, as we all do, whether to work with a happy heart or to brood over the fact that he was a slave. James tells us that it is our own desires that lead us astray to sin. We need to check our thoughts often and see if they are leading us astray.

*Evaluate if you are living your life with "stinkin' thinkin'" or if you are facing each day with an "Attitude of Gratitude," seeing it as an opportunity to serve the Lord regardless of your circumstances.*

**TUESDAY**

**Let's Be Useful**

*Philemon 1; 2 Peter 1:3-8*

Onesimus. Aren't you glad your mom didn't name you that? His name means useful. I don't know about you, but "useful" is not a very glamorous sounding purpose. My kids have names that mean things like "God's Gift" and "Love and Grace". I don't know if Onesimus was named by his mother or if he was born into slavery and his owner was hoping that his name would be self-fulfilling. But, we do know that after Onesimus met Jesus, Paul wrote, *Onesimus hasn't been of much use to you in the past, but now he is very useful to both of us.* Whether it sounds glamorous or not, I want to be useful to God's kingdom. I want to focus on eternity and remember what really matters, and put my all into being useful for the Greatest Purpose!

*Have you found a way to be useful to the Lord at Bible Center? If not, contact Christy Corbin, our volunteer coordinator, at [ccorbin@biblecenterchurch.com](mailto:ccorbin@biblecenterchurch.com).*

*Glorifying God by producing more maturing followers of Jesus.*

**WEDNESDAY**

**The Refreshment of Kindness**

*Philemon 1:4-7*

*...your kindness has often refreshed the hearts of God's people.* These were Paul's words to Philemon. Have you ever had a day where you just needed a kind word? Or has someone ever done something so thoughtful and kind for you that you were cheered enough by their actions that it changed the course of your day? I have, and this is the kind of person Philemon had become. I have also had the blessing and privilege to be the one giving the kindness away. I will be honest, sometimes helping someone in a very practical way, causes us to receive an even bigger blessing than we are giving. This is the way God wants His family to operate. We are to look after one another and live in community, making sure that all are taken care of.

*Have you refreshed anyone with your kindness recently? Try to today!*

**THURSDAY**

**Courageous Honesty**

*Philemon 1:12-19*

Sometimes I think Paul's direct approach is somewhat akin to a physician with bad bedside manners – he points out an issue without much thought to the way it is being conveyed or received. But I also find his honesty refreshing. He told folks exactly how it was. He led Onesimus to the Lord while they were in jail together (which means Onesimus wasn't in there for reasons as noble as Paul's). Paul grew to know and love Onesimus and spent time teaching him. At some point, Paul told him he needed to return to his master Philemon and make things right. But Paul did not send him away without a parting gift; it was a letter to Philemon encouraging him to welcome the errant slave back and not as a slave this time, but as a brother. Then, in case Philemon may think he is too good to humble himself this way (after all this slave had defied him) Paul adds the fact that Philemon owes Paul his very soul! It took some courage to write to Philemon this way, but Paul has the courage to be honest.

*Have the courage to be honest – it may change someone's life.*

**FRIDAY**

**To Be Continued...**

*Philemon 1*

The story of Philemon and Onesimus is the ultimate cliffhanger; the first to-be-continued story. You see, we don't know how Philemon reacted to Paul's letter. We don't know if he took vengeance on his runaway slave and had him punished or if, as Paul asked, he welcomed him as a brother. I like to assume the second, but we don't know! Imagine it from both men's perspectives; Philemon had every right to be angry and Onesimus had every reason to fear. But remembering God's grace and our humble acceptance of it – this story is the perfect picture of Christ. And, we all get to write our own ending. What will we choose? And, if we do choose to ask God for His grace and receive His free gift, will we be willing then, to extend that grace to others who are in need of it?

*Be a grace receiver and then a benefactor, passing it on to others!*