

STANDALONE

LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

Today's Passage: Philemon 1-22

For the week of July 13th

MAIN POINT

When others treat us wrongly, we are to relate to them with forgiveness. In so doing, we treat others as Jesus treated us.

COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

Use these questions to start discussion and learn more about others in your Life Group.

Ask volunteers to share an experience in which they did something as a child or teenager that their parents did not want them to do. Did their parents find it easy or difficult to forgive them? Explain why.

What makes forgiveness hard in some cases and easier in others?

A variety of things contribute to how easy or difficult it can be to forgive someone who wrongs us. Paul addressed the issue of forgiveness in his letter to Philemon. A slave named Onesimus had run away from his master Philemon and perhaps had even stolen money from him. Paul acknowledged that Philemon had been wronged. Yet, he also challenged Philemon to forgive Onesimus. As we study this text, we do so hoping that God will help us let go of any unforgiving attitudes we may be harboring. To forgive those who mistreat us is not easy, but it is always important, for this is precisely what He did for us in Christ.

SCAN HERE FOR ADDITIONAL
COMMENTARY ON TODAY'S LESSON



GROW TOGETHER

Read Philemon 1-7 (ESV).

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:*

3 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

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.* **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."*

Why did Paul say he was thankful for his friend Philemon?

Paul cited evidence of love and faith in Philemon's life. How are love and faith apparent in your life, both at church and in the community?

What affect was Philemon having on the believers in his church? Who are some Christians in whose presence you are refreshed? What is it that makes these people refreshing to be around?

What might be the opposite of being a person who refreshes others by his or her fellowship? How can we avoid being that person?

Just as Paul had observed Philemon and the positive impact of his service to Christ, people are watching believers today to see if our walk matches our talk. We should seek to have a positive impact on others, refreshing and energizing them in the faith.

Read Philemon 8-13 (ESV).

8 “Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, 9 yet for love’s sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus— 10 I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. 11 (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) 12 I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. 13 I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel”

What does it appear Paul wanted Philemon to do, based on these verses? Why do you think Paul appealed to Philemon on Onesimus’ behalf? What was the basis of Paul’s appeal to Philemon?

Should our forgiveness of others depend on whether the person deserves our forgiveness? Explain. Is that how God forgives?

Is love something we feel, or something we do? What about forgiveness—is it an emotion or a choice? Explain.

We can offer our forgiveness to others on the basis of love, as we have experienced God’s grace. This forgiveness must be given willingly, not under compulsion. As believers, we can grow in love as we do what is right because it’s the right thing to do.

Read Philemon 17-22 (ESV).

17 *"So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. **18** If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. **19** I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. **20** Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.*

***21** Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. **22** At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you."*

Paul wanted Philemon to think of him as a partner. The Greek word translated "partner" is related to *koinonia*, which means fellowship, in the sense of partnership. It describes one who shares responsibility or experiences with another. Paul referred to Titus as his partner in 2 Corinthians 8:23.

What would it look like if each member of our group considered himself or herself a partner in the ministry of the gospel? What would need to change before that was true?

What benefits are there when we partner with other believers to accomplish the work of Christ?

How does this partnership or fellowship hinge on the forgiveness we extend to one another?

How did Paul want Philemon to accept Onesimus? How did he acknowledge the harm Onesimus's sin had caused?

MAKE AN IMPACT

Discover how you can apply today's lesson to your life so you can impact the world.

How does your expression of forgiveness picture the grace of Jesus Christ to those around you? How can you do that without calling attention to yourself?

What are you doing to remind yourself of God's grace to you in Christ? How will you express your gratitude to Christ for His forgiveness?