



CHANGING HEARTS WELS PRISON MINISTRY

GRADES 5-6

TEACHER EDITION PHILEMON AND ONESIMUS

Philemon 1-25

Looking Ahead

THEME: We love others because God first loved us.

SCRIPTURE TEXT: Philemon 1-25

See the People's Bible: Harlyn J. Kuschel, Philipians, Colossians, Philemon, pages 1-6 and 210-228.



AIM: How did Paul urge Philemon to show his love for Onesimus?

TRUTH: Paul urged Philemon to welcome back Onesimus as a brother in the Lord.

SUMMARY AND APPLICATION:

Philemon, a Christian and church leader, had a slave named Onesimus who ran away. Upon reaching Paul, Onesimus confessed his sins and became a follower of Christ. As a matter of Christian love, Paul writes a letter urging Philemon to welcome back Onesimus no longer as a slave but as a brother in Christ.

Out of love for our Savior, we love and welcome others into or back to the family of believers.

MEMORY TREASURES: 1 John 4:19; John 13:34



Teaching the Lesson

INTRODUCTION: Begin by asking the children what it means to be someone's slave. Explain that Philemon's relationship with

Onesimus was similar to an employer and an employee in our time. In today's lesson we will learn about a Christian man named Philemon who was generous, loving, and devoted to the work of God and the church. This man had a slave named Onesimus. We will learn how the Apostle Paul urged Philemon to show his love for his slave Onesimus, who had sinned against him.

Explain to the children that during this account Paul, who was a Roman citizen, was under house arrest for proclaiming God's Word. This meant Paul was chained to a soldier/guard while he lived in his own rented dwelling in Rome. He was allowed to receive friends and visitors. Paul continued to proclaim the gospel to all with whom he came into contact while he waited for a trial.

OPENING DEVOTION: Show the students a picture of the human body. Discuss how amazing it is that all the parts work together, such as the heart and arteries, the hands and feet, the brain and the eyes. Each part has an important function, but all work together as a whole. As the body of believers, we each have different gifts

and abilities to use for God's kingdom. We use them in love for Christ and each other. Discuss some of the children's abilities and how they are used in love for one another. For example, some children have the gift of compassion and use it when another student is struggling. *Some students may have a parent who is incarcerated. That student may have struggles that are a result of this parent's absence in the home. Or the parent may have been released from jail or prison and is now trying to rebuild family relationships and find employment. Another student may have the gift of encouragement. Maybe this gift is used to bring joy to the child with an incarcerated parent, who is unable to attend church or school functions with his or her child.*

Look at **John 13:34**. A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

(Point to the picture of the human body.) The different parts of our bodies have specific functions, yet they all work together as a whole. How will we treat one another as fellow members of the body of Christ, the church? *(We treat each other with love, just as Christ loved us. Specifically, we forgive, we encourage, and we welcome one another.)*



Studying the Lesson

1. How had Philemon refreshed the hearts of believers? (Philemon 1-7)

a. Read Philemon 1-2. How does Paul address Philemon in this letter? *(He addresses Philemon as a dear friend and fellow worker.)*

b. As an active member of the church in Colosse, for what purpose did Philemon offer his home? *(Philemon offered his home as a place for Christians to gather for worship.)*

c. Read Philemon 3-7. In addition to his home, what else did Philemon freely give to refresh the saints (believers) in Christ Jesus? *(Philemon freely gave his love and showed his generosity to fellow believers.)*

Discussion Point

Philemon refreshed the hearts of believers by generously opening his home for worship and showing love to them by using his abilities as a worker in the church. He put his faith into action.

Discussion Point (application)

Philemon's actions showed love for the family of believers. Finish these sentences to show what it means to be a member in the family of believers.

1. We belong to ____.
2. We treat each other with ____.
3. If one of us is hurt, we ____.
4. If one of us is in trouble, we ____.
5. If one member is picked on or gossiped about, we ____.

Explanation

1. the body of Christ/the church
2. love/respect
3. are sympathetic/help
4. are there to help/encourage
5. step in and defend him or her

2. What caused Paul to write a letter to Philemon? (Philemon 8-16)

a. Read Philemon 8-11. Why was Paul a prisoner for Christ? *(He was under house arrest because he was preaching God's Word.)*

b. What happened to Onesimus when he reached Paul? *(He became a believer, and as such, confessed the wrongs he committed against his Philemon.)*

c. How did Onesimus put his faith into action? *(Onesimus became useful to Paul. Perhaps he acted as Paul's personal servant and messenger.)*

d. Read Philemon 12-16. What closer relationship could Philemon now have with Onesimus? *(They could be brothers in the Lord.)*

Discussion Point

Paul wrote the letter to urge Philemon to accept Onesimus back as a brother in Christ.

Discussion Point (application)

If possible, play the contemporary Getty hymn *His Mercy Is More*, especially verses 1 and 3, for the students on YouTube.

His Mercy Is More

Vs. 1:

What love could remember no wrongs we have done;
Omniscient, all-knowing, He counts not their sum.
Thrown into a sea without bottom or shore;
Our sins, they are many, His mercy is more.

Vs. 3:

What riches of kindness He lavished on us;
His blood was the payment, His life was the cost.
We stood 'neath a debt we could never afford;
Our sins, they are many, His mercy is more.

According to the words of this hymn, what does God lovingly do with our sins because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross? *(He forgives our sins and remembers them no more.)*

Look at **1 John 4:19**. We love because he first loved us.

Why does God forgive us when we sin? *(He forgives us because he loves us.)*

Christ's love for us moves us to love each other. Love binds us together as one family, one church.

3. Why was Paul confident Philemon would forgive Onesimus and accept him as a brother in Christ? (Philemon 17-25)

a. Read Philemon 17-21. For what did Paul offer to pay? *(Paul offered to pay for the loss of service Philemon missed when Onesimus ran away.)*

b. What did Paul mean when he said to Philemon, "... you owe me your very self"? *(Philemon's faith in Christ was a result of Paul preaching God's Word.)*

c. Read Acts 9:26-28. Tell what Barnabas did for Paul (Saul). How were these actions like those Paul did for Onesimus? *(Barnabas helped Paul [formerly Saul] be accepted by the other believers. He spoke well of Paul and told them how Jesus had changed Paul. Paul was now doing the same for Onesimus. He wanted Philemon to accept Onesimus the way Paul had been accepted.)*

Discussion Point

Paul knew that Jesus changes hearts. Paul's heart was changed, and he saw how the other believers' hearts in Jerusalem were changed to accept him. So he was confident that Philemon would accept Onesimus because of Jesus.

Discussion Point (application)

Have the students look at Luke 15:7 and 10. There is much joy in heaven when someone repents and trusts Jesus for forgiveness.

Have the students list some ways there may be joy on earth when former inmates or their children are welcomed by other believers. *(Responses will vary. Some possibilities include: We get to see how thankful they are that Jesus has saved them and that other believers care about them, especially since many people probably look down on them. People that once were lost often have much more joy in their hearts because they don't take forgiveness for granted. We get to see faith grow and become stronger as people live for Jesus. We may learn to appreciate our own faith more as we realize that only the grace of God keeps us from being in a similar situation.)*



How did Paul urge Philemon to show love for Onesimus? (Paul urged Philemon to welcome back Onesimus as a brother in the Lord.)

Application

All of us are in need of forgiveness, including people who have been released from jail or prison. We can welcome them into the family of believers with our words and actions. We can also help the children whose parents have been incarcerated feel welcome at church, Sunday School, or other church activities.

At this point have the children practice (through role play) what they could say to welcome someone to church.



Lesson Activity

Concentration Game:

Each group of four children should have 20 index cards for this game. Have the students

think of ten ways to show love to each other as members of God's family. They should write each way on two cards so that there are ten matching pairs of cards. Examples:

- Forgive one another
- Welcome each other to activities, church, Sunday School
- Encourage those who are struggling
- Help one another when needed
- Study together for a quiz
- Give a compliment

Shuffle the cards and lay them out in five rows of four cards. Students take turns turning two cards over at a time. If they match, they pick them up and take another turn. If they don't match, they turn the cards back over and the next person takes a turn. Keep playing until all the cards have been matched in pairs. The student with the most matches wins.



Closing the Lesson

Close with the following prayer.

Lord Jesus, thank You for loving us. Help us to show love to others by helping them and welcoming them to church and Sunday School.