

LEAD SHEET

Philemon Living A Life Of Forgiveness April 23, 2017

FAITH SKILL: DIALOGUE WITH GOD

If you want to know God better, talk to Him!

GETTING STARTED

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think it was so hard to come up with things to say while playing the game "No Ums"?
2. When are some other times in life when it's hard to know what to say to someone? Like when?
3. Have you ever had someone come up to you, someone who had done something that hurt you, and apologize? What did you say?
4. Have you ever had to ask someone for forgiveness? What did you say? How did they react?

Today we're going to talk about forgiveness, and we're going to do it by studying the New Testament book of Philemon.

DIGGING IN

Philemon is one of only three people to whom Paul writes directly (*Timothy and Titus are the others*). In Timothy and Titus, there is a problem within the church that needs fixing and advice to share to his protégés. In Philemon, he is attempting to deal with a relationship problem.

There are two key figures in this book, which we will read in a second in it's entirety.

Don't worry, it's only 25 verses long!

The first person is Philemon, to whom the letters are addressed, a friend of Paul's from Colossae and the owner of a slave named Onesimus, the second key figure. Let's read about the drama between Philemon and Onesimus.

Read Philemon 1-7

Discussion Questions:

1. What type of relationship does Paul seem to have with Philemon? What words in the text make you think that way?
2. What types of things does Paul associate with Philemon in verses 5-7? (*love, faith, fellowship, etc.*)

Read Philemon 8-25

Discussion Questions:

1. What does Paul ask Philemon to do? (Forgive Onesimus.)
2. How did Paul meet Onesimus? (When he was in prison, Onesimus was converted.)
3. What has Paul instructed Onesimus to do? (To go back to Philemon.)
4. Paul challenges Philemon to stop thinking of Onesimus as a slave and instead think of him as what? (A brother.)
5. Why do you think forgiveness is so important to Paul?
6. If someone wronged you in such a way, would you be able to forgive him or her? Why/why not?
7. Why do you think we sometimes hold grudges?

MAKING IT REAL

There is a lesson for everyone in this small New Testament book. Let's start by gaining some additional perspective.

Discussion Questions:

1. Who are you more like in this passage? Philemon (needing to forgive), Onesimus (needing forgiveness), or Paul (acting as peace-maker)?
2. Have there been times in your life when you've had to forgive someone for doing a great wrong? Are you willing to share it now?
3. Have there been times in your life when you've needed forgiveness? For what?
4. Was there a time when you had to make peace between others? How did it go?

Forgiveness is a central teaching of the Gospel. Without forgiveness, there is no Good News! And yet sometimes it's so hard to grasp and even harder to give. But in this real-life drama that we've read, one thing ties everything together - Jesus Christ.

As we mentioned earlier, Philemon lived in Colossae. This letter likely gets to him a little before the letter Paul writes to all the Colossians, but there's a verse in Colossians that is worth memorizing as it pertains to forgiveness.

Read Colossians 3:11

Perhaps when Paul was writing this he thought of Philemon and Onesimus. We will never know. What we do know is that since Jesus has forgiven us, we are called to forgive others.

Discussion Questions:

1. Would you be willing to forgive someone if they did not seek your forgiveness? Should you?
2. What does holding a grudge against that person cost you?

There is no doubt that there is some serious stuff in our lives that make forgiveness hard. But no matter what anger you have inside, no matter what baggage you carry, the message of Philemon rings true.

Read Matthew 18:21-35

Discussion Questions:

1. How is the story that Jesus tells like the story of Philemon and Onesimus?
2. How does this passage relate to your life?
3. What do these verses say about God's willingness to forgive us if we do not forgive others?

Forgiveness is not easy, but if we claim to follow Jesus, we must be filled with mercy for those who have done us wrong. Perhaps you have something in your past that you have yet to forgive. Maybe you need forgiveness from someone else. I think we should pray that God will work in our hearts to convict us of a lack of forgiveness or, if we need it, our need to repent and ask someone else to have mercy on us.

CLOSING PRAYER

Encourage your students to spend some time praying and contemplating which side of forgiveness they fall on today. Do they need to forgive someone who has done them wrong? Have they hurt someone that they need to "return to" and ask for mercy? Tell them to pray silently until you close for the group. Give them plenty of time for this prayer exercise.