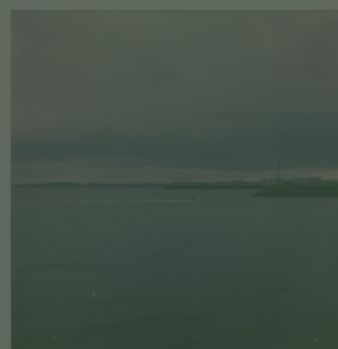
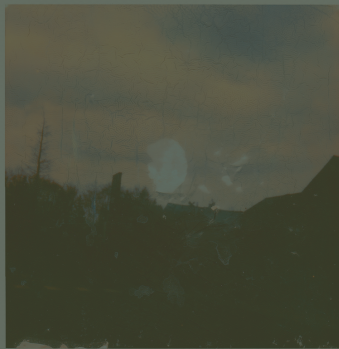
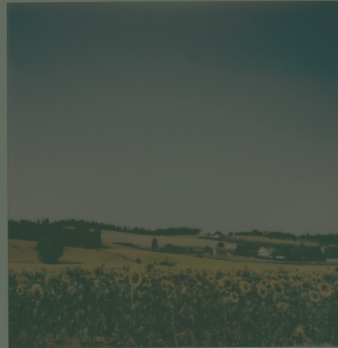




Philemon

A TESTAMENT OF GOD'S GRACE

Matthew McBirth • 6 Sessions



SESSION 1: Mirroring Grace

Opening Considerations:

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy the brother, To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker...

Phile. 1

- A Strange and Notorious History...
- Philemon is “a testament of the _____ of God's _____ to transform the _____ into family.”

The Setting of Philemon: ***Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother. (Phile. 1)***

- Paul normally refers to himself as an _____. But here he refers to himself as a _____.
- Paul is likely imprisoned in _____.

Three Instruments Required to Mirror Christ: ***To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker ... (Phile. 1-7)***

1. God's Grace

❖ Colossians 1:20-27: The Model

- God and the Son (Jesus) love each other, and this love extends to the cosmos.
- The cosmos includes people that Jews wouldn't associate with: Gentiles.
- Christians reciprocate love and loyalty to Jesus, and it serves as faith to God.

2. Love

❖ Chiasm: A literary tool that is designed to create parallels and bring focus to ideas.

A. ***I hear of your love for all the saints.... (Phile. 5)***

B.

B.

A. ***I have received much encouragement from your love. (Phile. 7)***

❖ How is Philemon to mirror Christ?

3. Faith

❖ Chiasm points to faith.

A. ***I hear of your love for all the saints (Phile. 5)***

B. ***and your faith toward the Lord (Phile. 5)***

B. ***I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective (Phile. 6)***

A. ***I have received much encouragement from your love. (Phile. 7)***

❖ “Sharing faith” ...

❖ How is Philemon to mirror Christ?

Discussion Questions for Reflection:

1. What have been your thoughts on the book of Philemon prior to this session?
2. Have you seen God's grace transform a relationship from estranged to mended?
3. What are examples in your church or community of people “sharing faith” as Paul describes it?
4. Read Colossians 1:15-29: How can the church mirror Christ today?

SESSION 2: The Paradigm of Grace

Opening Considerations:

- ❖ Changing paradigms is difficult...
- ❖ Philemon must go from a _____ paradigm to a _____ paradigm.

TEXT

...I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. (Phile. 9–10)

- ❖ Five times Paul refers to himself as imprisoned... (***Phile. 1, 9-10, 13, 23***)
- ❖ Paul communicates the why with the what.

CONTEXT: Old Paradigm

Formerly, he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful both to you and to me. (Phile. 11)

- ❖ The Master-Slave Paradigm: Four false assumptions about slavery in the ancient world
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
- ❖ The cultural norm was to see slaves as objects and tools, rather than as human beings.

SUBTEXT: New Paradigm

I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you (Phile. 12)

- ❖ When grace is our paradigm we see people as _____.
- ❖ Paul communicates the paradigm shift by _____ himself to Onesimus in two ways:
 - First way...
 - Second way...
- ❖ What is the what and the why of the paradigm shift?
 - Philemon is to see Onesimus as _____ because Onesimus is now _____'s family.

Discussion Questions for Reflection:

1. How does the information relate to your understanding about slaves in the first century?
2. Have you ever had to go through a big paradigm shift on how you viewed people or yourself?
3. What are ways you have treated someone like an object?
4. What is a practical way to see and treat people like Christ in your daily life?

SESSION 3: Trusting Grace

Opening Considerations:

- ❖ Three elements come into play with interpersonal relationships: _____, _____, _____.
- ❖ Philemon is often thought of as a book of _____.

TEXT

Read Philemon 12-19

- ❖ Reconciliation as a process
 1. _____ (vs 18)
 2. Re_____ (vs 12)
 3. Re_____ (vs 18-19)
 4. _____ (vs 16)
 5. Re_____ (vs 17)

CONTEXT: Three theories of the situational context of Philemon

1. Onesimus the Fugitive
2. Amicus Domini Theory
3. Onesimus the Aid of Paul

SUBTEXT

Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him (Phile. 15)

- ❖ Paul invites Philemon to do two vulnerable actions
 1. Reflect _____
 2. Act _____
- ❖ Reconciliation is spiritual AND _____.

Discussion Questions for Reflection:

1. What is an example from your own life where fear began to decay a relationship?
2. What step of the process of reconciliation do you struggle with the most?
3. What does it look like for you to reflect on God's providence?
4. What is an example in your life or community's life of broken relationships mending?

SESSION 4: Welcoming Grace

Opening Considerations:

No longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother.... (Phile. 16)

- ❖ Do you think Paul requested Philemon to free Onesimus from slavery or something else?

TEXT

- ❖ Three Words of Hospitality
 1. Proslambano (**vs 17**)
 2. Etoimazo Xenia (**vs 22**)
 3. Aspazomai (**vs 23**)

CONTEXT

- ❖ Four Big Steps of Hospitality in the 1st century:
 1. At least two _____
 2. Welcoming of _____ into the _____
 3. Exchange of _____
 4. _____ of strangers

SUBTEXT

- ❖ Seeing hospitality in Philemon:
 1. Two Strangers? ☐
 2. Welcoming the Stranger? ☐
 3. Gift Exchange? ☐
 4. Transformation of Identity? ☐

Discussion Questions for Reflection:

1. How does hospitality in the first century compare or contrast to hospitality today?
2. Have you ever received or shown hospitality in a way that changed the relationship?
3. In what ways can we describe the Gospel of Jesus as a form of hospitality?
4. How can the church show this type of hospitality today (individually or corporately)?

SESSION 5: Enfleshing Grace

Opening Considerations:

- ❖ If we had an Afterword of Philemon, what would be the aftermath of Paul's request?

TEXT: ***Philemon 20-25***

- ❖ What does it look like to do even more than what Paul asked?
 - Two Rhetorical Clues:
 1. ***I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become in my imprisonment. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is useful. (Phile. 10-11)***
 - Paul only mentions Onesimus by name once.
 - From *Archreistos* (useless) to *Evchreistos* (useful).
 2. ***I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me ... for the Gospel. (Phile. 13)***
 - Paul desires for Onesimus to be with him for the Gospel's sake.

CONTEXT: Paul's Dual Desire

- ❖ Desire One: Slave to Freedman
 - Manumission – the freeing of a slave – involved three elements:
 1. Master legally sets the slave free.
 2. The manumission took place in community.
 3. The slave had a change of name.
 - Verses 10-11 in context sound like a verbal enacting of the manumission ceremony.
- ❖ Desire Two: Philemon's House to God's House
 - Status Ranking in the first century world:
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 - Verses 13 and 21 in context...

SUBTEXT

Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers. (Phile. 23-24)

- ❖ Paul and Mark's Broken Relationship
- ❖ Onesimus goes on to become _____ of Ephesus.

Discussion Questions for Reflection:

1. In what ways is the Christian life like a manumission ceremony?
2. What are some ways you can show your obligation to God's household in your daily life?
3. Prayerfully reflect on if there is anyone in your life that you need to reconcile with.

SESSION 6: Preaching Grace

This handout gives more space for note taking for viewers who desire to preach the book of Philemon.

❖ Five Groups in the Preaching/Reading Process:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. Original _____
5. Contemporary _____

❖ Split the congregation into two primary sides...

1. Team _____
2. Team _____
3. Additionally, both sides are team Paul

❖ What are ways to invite the congregation to join in the performance of the letter?

❖ Philemon is a testament of the power of God's grace to transform the estranged into family.

1. How can you preach on reconciliation so that people understand it cognitively?

2. How can you preach on reconciliation that demonstrates understanding it wholly?

❖ Additional Resources:

- Beale, G. K.. *Colossians and Philemon*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019.
- McKnight, Scot. *The Letter to Philemon*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2017.
- Video: "One Hit Wonders: Philemon" at Ozark Christian College (Joplin, MO), 2022.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FhIvqzs8a8&pp=vgUgb3phcmmsgY2hyaXN0aWFuIGNvbGxIZ2UgcGhpbGVtb24%3D>

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