

February 22, 2009

Philemon

From Useless to Useful

The Call of Christ into His Mission:

The Reorientation of Vocation

Bring a Study Bible or a Bible Commentary to your Small Group discussion.

Commentaries online:
www.biblegateway.com
www.crosswalk.com

Use these resources to learn more about the context of this letter and the characters involved in this story.

Read the Introduction to Philemon in a Study Bible

Read Philemon

Explore the relationships between these 3 men:

Describe Paul's relationship with Onesimus (vs 10-11).

Describe Paul's relationship with Philemon (vs 1-9, 17-22).

Describe Philemon's relationship with Onesimus (vs 12-18). Imagine what the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus might have been like before Onesimus ran away. In what ways was Onesimus useless to Philemon? In what ways might he become useful to Philemon?

Explore the reorientation of each character:

Onesimus

What does Onesimus risk by returning to Philemon? What does he hope to gain? Imagine what might have changed for Onesimus.

Philemon

What does Philemon risk by accepting Onesimus as a brother rather than a fugitive slave and thief? In what ways is Paul asking him to be reoriented because of Jesus?

Paul

What does Paul risk & sacrifice by sending Onesimus back to Philemon? What does he hope to gain? What do you notice about the tone and language Paul uses in this letter?

Who do you identify with?

Onesimus

Has your relationship with Jesus called you to "do the right thing" and face a situation from your past that put you at risk? Is there currently a situation like this? Who might come along side you in this?

Philemon

Where do you have the authority to treat others like brothers & sisters in Christ rather than subjects? What does this story teach you about who you can be because of Christ?

Paul

Do you have a Philemon or Onesimus in your life? What would you have to risk to help them become the best they can be in Christ? What do you learn from Paul about how to do that?

Pray Together!

Let your prayers be guided by what you discussed today.