

Name: _____

Date: _____

PHILEMON AND ONESIMUS

“That the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.” (Philemon 1:6)

Objectives

Knowledge of God’s Will	God desires for us to share our faith through loving others. God seeks sanctified vessels that can be useful for Him.
Knowledge of God	God is love and our strength.
Good Work	Recognize the least in church and learn to care for them. Confront our wrongs by first repenting and then changing ourselves.

A. Philemon: A Loving Master

Simply knowing our Lord Jesus does not make our faith effective or fruitful. Unless we constantly work, grow, and mature in our faith, our faith can easily fall flat and become ineffective. Our faith becomes effective when, like with Philemon, others see the good that we do for the sake of Christ Jesus (Phm 1:6).

1. **Love the least of these:** Jesus reminds us that we show love to the Lord when we show love to those around us (Mt 25:37–40). Philemon may have regarded Onesimus as an unprofitable slave when he ran away, but when he returned, he had become much more than that: a brother in Christ, in need of love and forgiveness.
2. **Do it for Christ:** Paul urged Philemon to accept Onesimus not out of duty or responsibility, or by force, but willingly out of his love for Christ. When we do all things for Christ, we and others will witness fruitful results.
3. **The power of forgiveness:** The central message of the cross is forgiveness, which is the greatest manifestation of Christ’s love for us (Rom 5:8). To forgive others, we must first humble ourselves, understand the love that Christ has shown us, and reflect upon our relationship with Christ. Jesus clearly taught that we must forgive others because God first forgave us, and to do so, we must let go of any resentment towards those who have wronged us.

B. Onesimus: A Returning Servant

The name Onesimus means “profitable, useful.” Onesimus served as Philemon’s slave, but upon incurring losses for his master, he ran away to Rome, where he met Paul and was converted. As a runaway slave, Onesimus could have received severe punishment, yet he still returned.

1. **Confront our mistakes and be transformed:** To become a profitable worker in Christ, we must admit our sins, and ask God for the determination to change our ways. Just as Paul’s letter strengthened Onesimus’ decision to return to his master, we have God’s promises to strengthen and help us in our path to becoming a useful vessel for the Lord (Phil 4:13).

