

**An Unfaithful,
Thieving Slave
Becomes a Servant of
the Almighty God**

It is to God's glory when relationships are restored. What are the primary reasons they are damaged?

Lack of trust

Differing expectations

Unforgiveness

Lying and deception

Lack of faithfulness

Gossip

Communication problems

Selfishness

Are any relationships so severely damaged that they're beyond God's restorative power?

Review to Understand the Epistle to Philemon

Written by Paul (to Philemon), likely, while under house arrest in Rome around A.D. 61

Philemon hosted the Colossian church in his home

Onesimus, Philemon's slave, ran away and stole from him

Paul met Onesimus and introduced him to Jesus

Paul sent Onesimus with the letter to Philemon

The idea that once we become followers of Christ, we are all equal in God's Kingdom was radical in 1st Century Rome

Philemon 1:7-9 (NLT2) ⁷ Your love has given me much joy and comfort, my brother, for your kindness has often refreshed the hearts of God's people. ⁸ That is why I am boldly asking a favor of you.

I could demand it in the name of Christ because it is the right thing for you to do. ⁹ But because of our love, I prefer simply to ask you.

Consider this as a request from me—Paul, an old man and now also a prisoner for the sake of Christ Jesus.

Paul, continues to compliment Philemon for His character and prepares to ask for the big favor.

With Paul being held captive as an old man, this should also help motivate Philemon to listen to him. Especially since his imprisonment is because of his commitment to Jesus.

Paul speaks of his authority to command those in the church to follow Jesus in showing grace and mercy but leaves it up to Philemon to decide.

Are there those in your life willing to ask you the hard questions?

Philemon 1:10-13 (ESV) ¹⁰ I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. ¹¹ (Formerly

he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.)

¹² I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. ¹³ I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel,

Paul identifies Onesimus as his spiritual son since he introduced him to Jesus. Are you working on developing spiritual children?

An unfaithful, thieving slave has now become near and dear to Paul – and a great help to him. Have you considered how you can support those who are severely persecuted for the sake of Christ?

The name 'Onesimus' means "useful". Paul cleverly uses a play on words to describe Onesimus's saving transformation.

Can we agree that praying for persecuted believers is worth our time?

Philemon 1:14-16 (NIV2011) ¹⁴ But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do would not seem forced but would be voluntary. ¹⁵ Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever— ¹⁶ no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother.

He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord.

When it comes to acting graciously and lovingly, it is so much more powerful when it is genuine.

Looking at your brothers and sisters in Christ, do you know we're all equal in value? In Christ, our nationality, our occupation, etc. has no bearing on our value – we're all one in Christ.

How Onesimus left lowered his position even more, but he is returning as an equal to Philemon.

How can God's grace and love be used through you to restore others?