

“Family IN Christ”

Use this guide as a tool to help you prepare to experience spiritual transformation in a practical way. It is a flexible guide that will help you discover, own, and apply the truths of God’s Word.

Message Summary

Paul was in prison in Rome. The Gospel, however, was unhindered and going out from Paul’s mouth. Interestingly, one man who came to Paul was an escaped slave by the name of Onesimus. He had traveled hundreds of miles from the city of Colossae where he was the slave of a wealthy man named Philemon. Philemon happened to be a friend of Paul and a leader in the church at Colossae. Paul led Onesimus to faith in Christ. Onesimus was a changed man! Because he was now **IN** Christ, Paul led him to obey Christ in all of life.

At some point in time, Onesimus had stolen something, either money or other valuables, from Philemon and then fled to the city of Rome hoping to lose himself in the sprawling city. Onesimus’ plan, however, failed in that he providentially came into contact with the apostle Paul and came to know Christ. Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon because he knew both men, who were now **IN** Christ, needed to restore their relationship. But there was one potential disaster in such a plan. In those days, a fleeing slave, especially one who stole from his master, would have rightly been killed if he returned. But now that both Onesimus and Philemon were Christians, they played under different rules. They were both **IN Christ**. Therefore, Paul sent a letter by the hand of Onesimus and another man named Tychicus to remind Philemon of his Christian duty to forgive.

Paul was concerned about the personal relationship between Onesimus and Philemon, and the work of Christ in the city of Colossae. He knew that Satan desired to dismantle the work in Colossae and the way he could do that was through building a broken relationship between Onesimus and Philemon. Therefore, Paul took pen in hand and began to write his most personal letter, reminding Philemon, Onesimus, and the church that they were one **IN** Christ.

Today Satan desires to dismantle you and me. He desires to dismantle the work of Christ. One way he desires to dismantle the church is through individualism. Individualism leads to consumerism. In other words, when we become focused on what we can get out of the church, how this affects our own life only, then we become consumers and begin to treat the church like a vending machine. But as Christians, we are **IN** Christ. So what does it mean to be **IN** Christ?

This letter teaches us at least four aspects of being **IN** Christ. We will take each one per week. First and the subject of this week’s message, this letter teaches us we are a Family **IN** Christ. Second, it teaches us we are a Fellowship **IN** Christ. As a fellowship, we work together for the sake of the Gospel. Third, we Forgive **IN** Christ. Many think they know what forgiveness really is, however, most people don’t really know what forgiveness is at all as it relates to one another. Finally, we will see that we are Friends **IN** Christ.

As you prepare your heart to meet with your Missional Community this week, examine the questions on the next page and apply them to this text. Be prepared to discuss your answers. Be prepared to hold one another accountable for what you learn. Keep in mind that your Missional Community is the place where you will live out the truths of this message as a Family **In** Christ!

Message Outline

I want you to know and believe that we are a family in Christ.

As a Family in Christ...

1. We Serve the same Master (1a)
2. We Live in the same Body (1b)
3. We Work for the same Purpose (1c)
4. We Fight the same Enemy (2)
5. We Extend the same Grace (3)

Group Discussion

Use the following questions to help make application of God’s Word to your Head (What God wants me to know), to your Heart (What God wants me to desire/value), and to your Hands (What God wants me to do).

In regard to Philemon 1-3:

1. What does this passage say about God’s character?
2. What is God doing here? How does this passage fit in the overall narrative of the Bible?
3. What is God saying about me?
4. Where am I not living by faith? How do I return to faith?
5. How should I practice this in everyday life?

Weekly Prayer Focus

- **Church:**
 - Pray that God would give us new believers and covenant members.
 - Pray that all who have believed the Gospel will obey Jesus in believer’s baptism.
 - Pray for new relationships that will lead to Gospel conversations.
 - Pray for the elders as they lead us to accomplish the mission.
 - Pray for the Missional Communities to establish their goals and objects and begin to live them out.
- **Local:**
 - Pray for the Friday Night Beach Bonfire Outreach and the developing friendships. Pray these will lead toward Gospel conversations.
 - Pray that God would burden us with the lostness in our cities, neighborhoods, and at work.
 - Pray that God will identify 5 people you can begin to invest in and engage with the Gospel.
- **Global:**
 - Pray that God would give you a heart for the nations.
 - Pray for the new believer in SEA and for those who have heard the Gospel.
 - Pray for A&M in SEA and their team as they seek to lead a church planting movement among the unreached.
 - Pray for Good Shepherd Ministries and Bill & Sandy Younger.
 - Pray for Servants Hearts Ministries and Bob & Georgette Kornegay.
 - Pastor Abraham and his church in Guatemala.