

“Friends 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

The letter from the imprisoned Apostle Paul to a church leader in Colossae named Philemon is the most intimate of all of Paul’s letters found in the New Testament. Paul wrote the letter requesting Philemon to receive his new brother in Christ, Onesimus, an estranged slave of Philemon. At the core of this letter are principles of what it means to be **IN** Christ. Onesimus was now a brother **IN** Christ. Therefore, he was returning to restore their relationship now as brothers rather than master and slave. This restoration would be a powerful demonstration of forgiveness found among people who are **IN** Christ.

Through Paul’s greeting found in verses 1-3 we discovered what it means to be a Family **IN** Christ. As a family we serve the same Master, live in the same body, work for the same purpose, fight the same enemy, and extend the same grace.

Through Paul’s prayer for Philemon found in verses 4-7 we learned what it means to be a Fellowship **IN** Christ. As a fellowship we partner together for the sake of the Gospel in order to multiply disciples of Jesus. We share a sacrificial love for one another the way we love Jesus. We share an effective life transforming Gospel-centered ministry. Finally, we share in building up the body by imitating Jesus.

Paul addressed his request in verses 8-20. These verses taught us what it means to Forgive **IN** Christ. The point of Paul’s letter was to ask Philemon to forgive Onesimus for his rebellion against his master. This was a tender issue, however, Paul was confident that Philemon would do as he asked. We learned when we forgive others **IN** Christ, we actually are displaying the Gospel that has changed us. On the other hand, our failure to forgive others **IN** Christ will work against our efforts to make disciples and sends a confusing message about what we believe about our own salvation.

The final message from verses 21-25 taught us about being Friends **IN** Christ. Paul was a Gospel-centered friend. He always encouraged his friends to obey Jesus. He was a true comrade and fellow soldier for the sake of the Gospel. He modeled the life of Christ by showing forgiveness to his co-laborers. And he was a man who breathed grace on others because of the grace Jesus gave to him.

As you prepare to meet with your Missional Community this week examine your friendships **IN** Christ. How are you living out these four principles of a Gospel-centered friend **IN** Christ? Do you always encourage others to obey Jesus? Are you willing to lay down your life and agenda for the sake of your brothers and sisters? Are you modeling a Christ-like lifestyle before others? Do you frequently breathe grace on your friends? As you reflect on these questions and think about those who are in your Missional Community, be encouraged that you are Friends **IN** Christ!

Message Outline

I want you to pursue Gospel-Centered Friendships IN Christ.

A True Friend **IN** Christ will...

1. Encourage Obedience to Christ (21).
2. Pursue Camaraderie in Christ (22).
3. Model the life of Christ (23-24).
4. Breathe Grace from Christ (25).

Missional Community Guide
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New Day Church

William Whaley

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Philemon 21-25

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 21-25:

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.