

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

FRIENDS FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER

READ PHILEMON VERSES 8-22

Although we don't know exactly what happened with Onesimus, we get the sense that he offended Philemon at some point and now Paul is vouching for him. Paul spends most of this short letter trying to bridge that trust between his dear friends.

We've all been in these positions at some point. Maybe you've had to ask for forgiveness or help bridge forgiveness between friends. Maybe you've been in Philemon's place and had to work up the courage to forgive someone of hurting you. **THINK** of a time or two when you've had to deal with forgiveness.

Because none of us is perfect, we continually have problems popping up here and there. Who are you needing to forgive at the moment? Is there someone you need to ask forgiveness of? Do you have friends who need your help? **BEGIN** by praying for your situation. **REPLACE** Onesimus' name with another and **PRAY** this passage over that person.

Let's look at some other scripture verses on forgiveness.

FORGIVE OTHERS AS GOD HAS FORGIVEN YOU.

- *Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. (Colossians 3:13)*
- *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:31-32)*

CROSS OUT the feelings we're supposed to get rid of. **CIRCLE** the feelings we're to have toward one another. How do we make that bridge from bitterness to forgiveness? Knowing where we're supposed to be isn't the same thing as getting there. Oftentimes, God is the only bridge. **PRAY** for God to transform your heart.

BE READY TO FORGIVE OVER AND OVER AGAIN.

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." (Matthew 18:21-22)

How can someone forgive over and over again? The best way to envision repeated forgiveness is in the picture of a long marriage. Over the course of years, it can be done. **FIND** a couple who's successful at it, and **DO** what they do. The same principles can be applied to other relationships.

AVOID MAKING OTHERS FEEL OVERWHELMED.

If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you to some extent--not to put it too severely. The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. (2 Corinthians 2:5-8)

As Bill Hybels, a prominent pastor and leader, likes to put it, "Keep short accounts," meaning deal with a problem as soon as it happens and move on without using it against the person in the future. It's another way of saying, "Wipe the slate clean." How can you begin to keep shorter accounts?

LOVE WILL LEAD TO FORGIVING OTHERS.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. (1 Corinthians 13:4-6)

PRAY for God's love to overflow in you today. **LOOK** for specific ways to intentionally love others, especially others who have hurt you.

FORGIVING OTHERS IS THE PRIORITY.

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you,²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. (Matthew 5:23-24)

God is all about reconciling relationships. We are to love God and love others, but by loving others we are loving God. Reconciliation is just plain hard, but it can be so fruitful. Do you have a relationship that needs a reconciliation? **TAKE** a small next step this week.