

Small Group Leaders' Guide | Sermon Questions, Jan. 10th 2016

The Gospel in Relationships | Philemon 1ff – Philemon and Onesimus

Onesimus stole from Philemon. Onesimus found forgiveness in Christ. It was Philemon's task to find forgiveness in his own heart towards Onesimus. Travis answered two questions in light of this drama:

- Why release (Onesimus)? Because we have been released
 - Why reconcile? Because there was repentance on the part of Onesimus
1. Travis mentioned that this letter to Philemon is the only one in which he refers to himself as “prisoner of Christ Jesus.” What does that reveal about Paul's mindset towards Philemon? If Paul is slave to Christ, how then is he also free through him?
 2. Paul writes “yet I appeal to you on the basis of love...” when he had the authority in Christ to be bold. How are the outcomes impacted when one chooses love over authority?
 3. Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon “no longer a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother.” What relationships might you have that are based purely on worldly hierarchy and not spiritual reality? How might you begin to approach a change in them?
 4. Travis said the words “forgive” and “free” are the same in Greek. What lines might you be placing between them in your strained relationships? How can you be sure?
 5. What does the fruit of repentance look like for you in a relationship you need to address? How about for the other party?
 6. Will you be obedient to release those you've held captive? Will you be obedient to reconcile?
 7. Paul spoke words of life into Philemon's heart; how can you encourage others (in love) to be obedient to Christ and reconcile?