

MESSAGE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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Senior Pastor Marty Grubbs continued in our series, *The Next Right Thing*, teaching from the New Testament book Philemon. The apostle Paul wrote this letter to Philemon from prison where he had befriended a runaway slave who was owned by Philemon. Paul had grown to love the slave, Onesimus, who had become a fellow Christian while in Paul's company. Paul could have had Onesimus stay close to him, but knew the right thing to do was to send him back to Philemon. He did so with a plea for Philemon to free Onesimus and have him serve the Lord where he would be most useful. Paul appealed to the mutual love of the Lord when asking Philemon to do the next right thing.

SCRIPTURE

PHILEMON

¹ To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker— ² also to Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier— and to the church that meets in your home:

³ Grace and peace to you[a] from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, ⁵ because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus. ⁶ I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. ⁷ Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people.

⁸ Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, ⁹ yet I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love. It is as none other than Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus— ¹⁰ that I appeal to you for my son Onesimus,[b] who became my son while I was in chains. ¹¹ Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.

¹² I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you. ¹³ I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. 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.

¹⁷ So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. ¹⁸ If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. ¹⁹ I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me your very self. ²⁰ I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. ²¹ Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

²² And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers.

²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. ²⁴ And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.

²⁵ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stood out from Marty's message?
2. Read the letter to Philemon. What do you learn about Paul, Onesimus, and Philemon?
3. What was Paul's request to Philemon?
4. What did Paul base his appeal on? Why was this a bold plea? What were Philemon's choices?
5. Have you faced a choice between what would be best for you versus what is best for the Lord? How do you weigh those choices? (Consider when you've held your fate, or that of another, in your control, and have had to sacrifice for the sake of the Lord.)
6. How can we pray for you?

PRAYER

Thank God for the letters of Paul that capture struggles much like those we face in our own life. Ask God if there is something in your life where you need to consider the work of the Lord as you determine your next right thing to do, especially when you hold the fate of others in your hands.