

## LESSONS FROM ONESIMUS - AYANDA DLAMINI

Onesimus is a minor Biblical character, especially when compared with major characters like Paul, Silas, Abraham, Isaac, Timothy, Peter, and so many others. He only features in two small sections in the New Testament, a) Colossians 4:9 where he appears in a list of thank-yous Paul writes to the church in Colossae and b) Philemon 10 (onwards) another of Paul's letters where, writing from prison, he appeals to the church to receive Onesimus who he (Paul) has sent to be an encouragement to them.

What we know of Onesimus is that he used to be a slave to Philemon but he escaped slavery under him, meets Paul, and gets saved due to Paul's influence and preaching. And the two of them become very close friends.

When Paul sends Onesimus he is sending a very close friend and so he appeals to the church to receive him as they would a brother in Christ or, in fact, Paul himself. He uses these words, *"I'm sending to you my very heart."* This gives us such great insight into the type and quality of friendship Paul and Onesimus had – they were best friends, really close.

I believe that God is using this to highlight the friendships in our lives and is asking us, "Of what quality are your friendships? Do they need addressing or improving?"

God wants us to have friendships that improve the quality of our lives and make us great vessels to shine the light of the Gospel wherever we go.

I've heard this saying, "You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with" and the Bible says, *"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."* So it seems to me that friendship is a tool that God uses not only to bring quality to our lives but also to make us effective vessels for the Gospel on this earth.

Maybe, like a pot plant, your friendships need some pruning, watering, weeding, or attention. And sometimes it's not just about the time we give to them but the attention we give to their quality.

I hope you're encouraged, challenged, and blessed.

Have a great day!