

Better Together

FAITH FAMILY



06/21 • Better Together—Part 2

Is it just me, or does everyone crave a mentor? Who would not want an advocate, a person on your side, and who will give helpful answers to life's biggest challenges? Spiritually speaking, that is God's best-case scenario repeated over and over again. **Read Philemon.**

[This discussion sheet will prove more useful if you've listened to the corresponding message beforehand:
<https://subsplash.com/nblc/sermons/ms/+hskyyqg>.*]*

1. "Forgiveness is what brings us together and keeps us together. Focus upon Jesus' intentions is what keeps us from becoming codependent." What does this quote from Pastor Joe mean for your challenging relationships?
2. The letter to Philemon was written (and so with the whole Bible) to give us God's unconditional love that transforms us. As someone has said: "God loves us just the way we are; He loves us too much to leave us that way." How does this quote comfort you? Challenge you?
3. "To Philemon" (v. 1). Paul was a spiritual father—or mentor—for Philemon (v.19), Onesimus (v.10) and many others. Who has been a mentor or spiritual parent for you? What are specific ways that s/he has provided formative input for you?
4. "Be active in sharing your faith" (v. 6). Faith is central to everything in our lives, but is so easily compartmentalized. What are ways/contexts you get to share faith beyond Sunday worship?
 - Christian Books
 - A prayer-partner
 - A ministry team event
 - Your Five relationships
 - My Blessing List
 - Family Devotions
 - A Work Bible Study
 - A Connect Group
5. "share faith so that you will have a full understanding of all we have in Christ" ... "for I have derived much joy and comfort" (vv.6-7). Mentorship is reciprocal. When was a time you have given to others only to find you got more than you gave? (cf., Acts 20:35).
6. When coaching Philemon, Paul appealed to love, not law (vv. 8-9), not to guilt, but through grace. When was a time you did something because you loved someone? When was a time you did something because you were forced to? In both cases you still did what you did; was there any difference in the outcome?
7. Paul's mentor relationships had their ups-and-downs. John Mark broke trust on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:13) so that Paul didn't want him on the second. (Acts 15:37-40). Onesimus was a runaway slave who stole from Philemon (Philemon 18). But John Mark became a key teammate to Paul (2

Timothy 4:11). And Onesimus became “useful” (v. 11) and a “brother” to Philemon (vv. 15-16)—and maybe even the Bishop of Ephesus! When have you seen God redeem hard relationship experiences to grow everyone involved?

8. Who are people you can lean into this week to grow in your faith (i.e., who can be a Paul to you)? Who are people you can lean into hoping to influence for Christ (i.e., who can be an Onesimus to you)?

Summary: God uses people to reach people and to grow people. This is true in each of our lives, but becomes more powerful when we are intentional. Like a good hug, relationships that share faith work both ways. These mutually beneficial mentor relationships usually take place in specific contexts. We are blessed when we remember to approach others seeking to give rather than to get. Of course, we’re all sinner-saints and will inevitably face conflicts, but God redeems even these painful events! Therefore, we lean into relationships with expectation—motivated by the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Prayer for Our Nation

Heavenly Father, God of peace and harmony, You would have Your children on earth live together in peace and quietness. Frustrate the plans of all evil people who would stir up violence and strife; spoil the weapons of those who delight in war and bloodshed, and according to Your holy will, end all wars in the world. Lead us to confess the truth of Your Word and Spirit to crucify our sinful tendencies and to root out all evil that would lead to strife and discord, so that to the best of our ability, we may be at peace with our neighbors. Mercifully hear our prayer and grant us peace in our days.

Lord in Your mercy, hear our prayer.
(Adapted from the *Lutheran Book of Prayer*).

Prayer for Your Five

Savior, more than fifty verses of the Bible spell out how other Christ-followers and I are to relate to “one another.” There is no way we can fulfill these verses just from our gatherings on Sundays. To know You, Jesus, is to be active in sharing faith with others 24/7—the whole week. Help me to be more intentional to serve others in my faith family. Stir me to want to lean into the faith of brothers and sisters in Christ so that I will be spurred-on in my own faith disciplines. Create in me a yearning for the excitement of growing closer to You, Jesus, and seeing others grow too. I ask for Your inspiration to seek steps to take and act in these ways toward (who?) this week. Lord in Your mercy, hear my prayer.

Prayer for Your Blessing List

Lord, just as You used Paul to bring Philemon and Onesimus into a saving relationship with You, please use me to make You known to others in my life. Forgive me if I’ve been unintentional about recognizing the people all around me each day whom You seek to save through me. Open my eyes to see who You want me to pray for each day. Show me opportunities to demonstrate care to these people every week. Prod me by the Holy Spirit to step past fears about inviting them to worship, sharing a link to resources through NBLC media, and/or even asking them to come to my Connect Group. I know that You have left me in this broken and hurting world for a reason: to make Christ known. Help me see how all my other interests and goals relate, ultimately, to what You, Jesus, want to do through me. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.