

Christianity in Action!

I. Announce:

- A. **Slide1 Baby Dedication:** *Ryan Estera Leia Basset* (mom/dad: **Ryan & Michelle**) Audrey 12, Luke 10. **Identity:** *Ryan* (lil king/queen) *Estera* (Esther/myrtle, branches symbol of **peace**) *Leia* (relaxed or **lioness**) *Basset*
- B. **Slide2 Building on Faith:** Last week we had a family meeting, and I asked you to **pray** about financially participating in ***Building on Faith***. **We are excited about this remodel because it will give more *spaces and places* for fellowship and uniquely designed areas for *our younger generation*.**
- C. As I have had more time over the last year to **pray** and **cast vision** for CM, I am focused on 2 things and we have them in our *CM Motto*.
1. **The 1st** is ***live out the Great Commandment***. I believe that creating more spaces where we can learn how to ***love our God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength*** and ***fellowship together*** as we learn to ***love our neighbor as ourself*** is important.
 2. **The 2nd** thing is ***to fulfill the Great Commission*** to ***go and make disciples globally***. Next week I leave for Nepal with Jen and Larry to continue to work on purchasing property for the Rohingya.
- D. **These are both big dreams, and big goals** but we can accomplish them together. **As I have prayed and sought God on the direction of Calvary Murrieta, this is the vision He has given me.**
1. **As a Church, we need to raise \$3 million so that we can continue to be debt free. 1 example is** if 600 families *or individuals* commit to give **\$5,000 over the next 2 years**, we would be able to accomplish our goals.
 - a) **That is about \$208 a month for the next 24 months.** Some of us can give **more** than that **and** some can give **less**.
 - b) We are asking you to ***prayerfully consider*** how much you are able to contribute through the next 2 years.

2. This is an opportunity to give *above and beyond your tithe* through a long term commitment. If you can financially contribute, you can go on the website, the app, or scan the QR code behind me or on signs outside. Your 2-year commitment is important because it allows us *to plan and move forward*. Thank you for allowing me to communicate my vision with you, and share how you can **participate** in this.

II. Slide3 Intro: *Christianity in Action!* A Postcard To Philemon (*his Fr.name* filet mignon)

A. Welcome to our *1 Week, 1 Night Series* of the book of Philemon.

1. Though **short in size** (335 words) it is **long in truth!**

B. Philemon is about *reconciliation and relationships* between Christians.

1. C.S. Lewis once said, *Everyone thinks forgiveness is a lovely idea, until he has something to forgive.*

C. Why Study This Book?

1. To understand **relational forgiveness** and **reconciliation**.
2. To wrestle through the **social and economic issue of slavery**.
3. To appreciate the *details* of the **providence of God**.
4. To see how **Christian brotherhood** cuts across **all economic classes** and **diversity of individuals**.
5. To deepen our **ethical convictions** regarding **doing what is right** regardless of the **unknown consequences**.
6. To see the **art of persuasion** in operation.

D. **Outline:** *Character of Philemon. Conversion of Onesimus. Confidence of Paul.*

III. Slide4 **CHARACTER OF PHILEMON (1-7)** Read

A. Slide5 What makes up a Postcard?

1. **Whom it is From:** **Paul** [A prisoner in Rome (under house arrest). Wrote prob summer of 62ad, along w/Col. & Eph.]

2. Whom it is addressed To: Philemon for sure. But I would add his wife, his son, & to the church in his house (pos peer pressure).

3. The Stamp/guarantor: Paul (vs.19).

4. The Postmark (when, and from where a piece of mail was sent): Rome.

5. Its Content: To inform Philemon that his slave was not only safe but saved. To ask Philemon to forgive Onesimus. Read (Col.4:9)

6. Sometimes a Picture: A picture of *friendship, acceptance, salvation, forgiveness, freedom, providence, reconciliation, grace*.

a) So here is an unforgettable picture of *Christianity in Action!*

B. (2) Apphia – probably his wife. Archippus – probably his son.

C. (3) *Grace to you ...* - as Paul asks this for him, he will in turn ask this of him.

D. Paul has *so much good* to say about Philemon. (4-7)

1. This was not empty flattery, it was *sincere Christian appreciation*.

2. Philemon was: a fellow worker (1), a man of faith & love (5), an effective Christian (6), a refreshing Christian (7), a man who obeyed God's will (21), a praying man (22).

a) How would your friends describe you? *Hmmm*

E. (5) Isn't this the best evidence of true Christianity? *a man of love & faith*.

F. (6) We say, *keep the faith*. Not Philemon, *shared the faith!* (communicate it w/others)

1. Paul prayed that his faith would *go to work* (be *effective*).

G. (7) Refreshing love! - The legend is told of a desert wanderer who found *a crystal spring of unsurpassed freshness*. The water was so pure he decided to bring some to his king. Barely satisfying his own thirst, he filled a leather bottle with the clear liquid and carried it many days beneath the desert sun before he reached the palace. When he finally laid his offering at the feet of his sovereign, the water had become stale and rank due to the old container in which it had been stored. But the king would not let his faithful subject even imagine that it was unfit for use. He tasted it with expressions of gratitude and delight, and sent away the loyal heart filled with

gladness. After he had gone, others sampled it and expressed their surprise that the king had even pretended to enjoy it. "Ah!" said he, "it was **not** *the water* he tasted, but *the love* that prompted the offering."

1. Many times **our service** is marked by *multiplied imperfections*, **but** the Master looks at our **motives** and says, *It is good!*

IV. Slide6 **CONVERSION OF ONESIMUS (8-16)** *Read*

A. (8,9) **Paul why not use your apostolic authority?** Because it would not help Philemon *grow in grace* or *gain a real blessing* from the experience.

1. **Law** is a much *weaker motivation than love*.
2. **So**, **no pulling rank**, **no issuing orders**, **just** an appeal on the basis of *love*.
3. **The reference to authority** is made to flash before Philemon's mind for just a moment, *only* to recede entirely to the background **when the spotlight is turned on the most dynamic motivating power in the entire universe, namely, love**. Hendriksen

B. (10) He now mentions his name *Onesimus* (which might have been like fingernails on a chalk *board*, or your phone alarm going off in the morning), **but** he does so by wisely sweetening his name with *my child* (in the faith).

C. (11) **Note, play on words**. [Onesimus' name means *useful*] **see** *useless/useful*

1. **What happened to Onesimus to make him start living up to his name?** [he accepted Christ]
 - a) **Has acceptance of the Christian faith made you useful?**

D. (12-14) According to Roman law, Onesimus could have been punished or even executed for his crimes.

1. **2-Fold:** Money he stole from Philemon (18); the price Philemon had paid for him.

E. **Slavery back then** - slavery was drastically different from *chattel* (property) *slavery* in the modern era. It was not based on race or Heritage. Slavery was usually from *failed crops* or *overwhelming debts*.

1. The one who **couldn't pay** their debt would indenture themselves to **someone who could pay**. During that time they would provide for their well-being, house, clothes, and often even education.
 - a) Some would eventually purchase their freedom, or be granted freedom.

Many held *white-collar, respectable roles* in society.
 2. **It is true that masters** had *a wide range of permissions* on how they could treat their slaves. **But** most philosophers and teachers frowned on *negative or harmful behavior towards their slaves*.
- F. **But now, Onesimus was free** – in the big city of Rome, he would simply lose himself in this faceless sea of people.
1. **But are you really free** when you are constantly looking over your shoulder? He was a fugitive & a thief. 2 shackles that would hinder his every move.
 2. Fortunate for him, God has *true freedom* waiting in the wings.
- G. **Interesting, liberty in Christ, however, doesn't mean being absolved from all earthly debts & responsibilities.**
1. Yes Onesimus, you made things right **w/God**, **but now** you need to make things right **w/Philemon**. [this was risky business]
 2. **Christ forgave him, but would Philemon?**
- H. (15,16) **Perhaps** this is what God was doing:
1. He **departed that** he might come back. He was **gone a short time so that he & His master might be together forever**. He left for Rome **a slave**, would return to Colossae a brother.
- I. Paul wants Philemon to see and consider God's glorious, overruling **providence**.
- Hendriksen*
1. **The providence of God is amazing**. A run away slave jumps a ship from Turkey to Italy (1300 mile journey). **Hides out in the Metropolis of Rome**

“never to be find out”. Then, by *the providence of God* he runs into Paul, and gets saved.

J. (16,17) Imagine a slave entering *the Masters family*. Now imagine a guilty sinner entering *Gods family*.

1. Paul wanted him to receive him back both in *the sp & phys sense*.
2. Don't just *forgive* Onesimus, but *receive him* as a social equal, and like *a family member*.

V. Slide7 CONFIDENCE OF PAUL (17-25) Read

A. (17) The doctrine of **Identification** (*receive him as you'd receive me*).

(18) The doctrine of **Imputation** (*charge that to my account*).

1. **Adams sin** was **imputed** to the whole world. **Mans sin** was **imputed** to Jesus. **Gods righteousness** is **imputed** to believing man.
2. Ps.32:3 *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity.*

B. (19) This is a 1st century IOU. [Paul was taking Onesimus' debt upon himself]

1. True reconciliation is not cheap, there is a price to pay. Paul knew this & was willing to pay the price himself.
2. Sometimes it costs your friendship (me and 2 pastors many years ago).

C. So what was Philemon's response to this Postcard? Did he forgive him? (we don't know)

1. But, **Ignatius** (early church father) writing 50 yrs later in a letter to the Ephesians, addressed *their wonderful minister, their bishop, named Onesimus*.

D. We clearly see this letter is also a picture of **Christ** as *the Redeemer of lost sinners*.

1. **Christ** found **us** as runaway slaves, law-breakers, rebels; but He forgave **us** & identified **us** w/Himself. [All of **us** are *Onesimus!*]
2. Look how a **useless** runaway became **useful**, though the transforming power of *the cross*.

3. As **Paul** was willing to *pay the price* to save a disobedient slave, so **Christ** paid the price on the cross for His wayward children.

4. **Christ** will have to say to **the Father**, *receive them as you would me*.

E. It wasn't easy for **Paul** in letting Onesimus go.

F. It wasn't easy for **Philemon** to take Onesimus back. (stole from him)

G. It wasn't easy for **Onesimus** to face his former master.

1. **But ... these men were Christians!** **And** that made all the difference.

2. * Did you know that this is the only epistle Paul writes where he doesn't talk about the cross & res? Not an oversight. He doesn't need to explain the cross, Paul is **demonstrating** it with his actions!

a) What an unforgettable picture of **Christianity in Action!**

3. It sounds like they put Col.3:12-16a into play!

a) **Slide8** Similar message to the church. Col.3:12-16a NLT *Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. 13 Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful. 16 Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives.*

H. Of course he ends with *grace*.

I. Keywords: identification, imputation, providence.