SERMON CHEAT SHEET

USEFUL | PHILEMON 8–16

Main Theme: Christ does not find useful people; he makes them.

Remember Who You Were Without Christ

When Paul speaks about the runaway slave Onesimus, he first describes him as a child beloved in the faith and emphasizes that his transformation comes before any consideration of his past mistakes. The Greek word for useless is the same as the word for Christless, showing that our spiritual state and practical usefulness are closely linked. Our ability to serve comes directly from our identity in Jesus, not from natural abilities. Remembering our past before being rescued by grace leads to true gratitude and encourages us to enter the work God has prepared for us.

Receive Who Christ Has Made You

Paul calls Onesimus his very heart, showing that the gospel completely changed this man's value and status. The identity of being useful in Christ was established long before Onesimus returned to Philemon's house. Usually we see our willingness to serve as something to wait for until we feel fully qualified or are personally asked. Yet when we receive the identity given by God, we should act on it today with confidence that Christ has already prepared us to serve.

Re-engage as Who You Actually Are

Real spiritual growth involves becoming actively involved with the people God places around us. Onesimus showed his value by practising love, caring for Paul when he was tired, and sitting with faithful brothers like Timothy. God is calling our church to be a community where generations overlap, passing wisdom gained through difficulty to younger believers and helping each other carry burdens. We re-engage by seeking those who need encouragement, taking open opportunities, and serving as a thank offering for what Christ has done.

LIVE IT OUT THIS WEEK

- This week, look among the congregation for someone tired who could use practical encouragement or support.
- Promise to serve regularly in a particular ministry area, such as Sunday school or greeting, rather than waiting until you feel completely qualified.
- Make a deliberate effort to support a child or a teenager in the church by explaining how Christ has acted in your life.

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Ask for a heart filled with deep gratitude that always recalls the grace that saved you from spiritual poverty.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the courage to move beyond self-doubt and accept the identity Christ has given you.
- Ask God which particular brothers or sisters in your church family need your presence and assistance this week.