

Building New Believers

Philemon 17-25

*"Since I am confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say."
- Philemon 21*

Main Point: Part of our responsibility as followers of Christ is to build up new believers

Introduction: Use the following questions to introduce the topic of discussion -

Have you ever dealt with a faulty foundation? What did you do to fix it?

Share a time in your life when someone gave encouragement that made a difference in your life.

One of the biggest callings we have as a church and as believers in Jesus is to build up and support those who follow Jesus. Building someone up in Christ starts with the right foundation which is faith in Christ, which Onesimus already had. But Paul wanted to take his faith and the faith of Philemon and his church to a new level by seeing the redeeming grace and radical forgiveness Jesus put on display. Paul's challenge to Philemon gives us a glimpse of how we are to build up those around us.

Read Philemon 17-25. There are three lessons on building a new believer:

1) **BE AN ENCOURAGEMENT. Refer back to v. 17-18.**

How did Paul stick his neck out for Onesimus here? Why would this have been an encouragement to him?

Read **Romans 1:11-12**. How does Paul indicate we can encourage one another? How has someone else's faith encouraged you in your life and walk with God?

In 1 Thessalonians 5:11 Paul says "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing." Who has God placed in your life recently that you can encourage? A neighbor? A co-worker? A new believer, or maybe someone in your VGroup?

2) **BE SUPPORTIVE. Read v. 18-19.**

What debt was Paul saying he would repay for Onesimus? When has someone supported you by paying a debt you couldn't handle?

Paul was taking a load off of Onesimus by offering to pay the debt for whatever it was he stole from Philemon. How is this a picture of Jesus? Read in **Matthew 11:28-30** and **Galatians 5:1**. Discuss how God has removed the yoke of slavery in your life.

Read **Galatians 6:1-2**. How can your VGroup be supportive of one another and carry one another's burdens? What sin or guilt are you carrying around that your group can surround in prayer for?

3) **HAVE FAITH. Read v. 20-25.**

Paul expressed his confidence in Philemon that he would do the right thing according to God's laws. How is this counter to what we might expect from a man whose slave ran away and stole from him?

How are we instructed to act when wronged by others? Read **Matthew 5:39** and **Matthew 18:21-27**. Could Paul have put the same faith in us when confronted with wrongdoing?

When has someone put their confidence in you and what you can achieve? How can you show someone else the same faith in their abilities and how God has gifted them?

Apply It:

Who have you been investing in recently? How can you encourage and support the people in your life and VGroup this week? Make a point to write a note, make a phone call, or pray with someone in your life who needs to know you are with them and beside them.

Pray:

Heavenly Father we thank you for the redeeming power of Jesus blood. Thank you that because we are forgiven we can forgive others. Help us Lord to show our support and love to the people you have called to live beside us in this life so that our faith would be strengthened and with it, your Kingdom. Amen.

Coming up at VillageChurch:

June 17: Father's Day

July 1-4: Getaway - Middle School Camp

July 8th: Baptism