

What Makes a Church Great?

Philemon 8-16

"For this reason, although I have great boldness in Christ to command you to do what is right, I appeal to you, instead, on the basis of love." - Philemon 8-9

Main Point: When the church is motivated by love and focused on the restorative message of the gospel lives are changed

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

Have you ever experienced someone give an appeal on your behalf? What was it like to have an advocate such as that?

*Describe a time when you felt absolutely useless.
When have you felt useful to someone or in some situation?*

Sometimes as Christians we are willing to sacrifice what God teaches because we want to be popular with a group of people instead of being obedient to God. Sometimes we ignore what scripture says because we don't want people to be offended by its teaching. But the power of God's church comes riding on the tracks of His Holy Word...every part of it. These qualities and actions may surprise you because they may not fit your description of what makes a church great.

Read Philemon 8-16. The first thing that makes a church great is:

1) **OPERATING ON THE BASIS OF LOVE. Refer back to v. 8-10.**

Have you ever operated on the basis of commanding someone to execute your direction? (If you have kids that's an easy one!) Describe a time you chose to lovingly nudge someone in the right direction instead of using force.

Read **John 13:34-35**. How has Jesus loved us? How does His desire here apply to Philemon? To us?

What type of relationship does Paul describe as having with Onesimus? (v.10) How is he hoping such a relationship would impact the decision of Philemon and his church?

Who do you have a chance to be a spiritual 'father' to? What steps can you take this week to advocate for them in their relationship with the Lord?

2) **BELIEF IN THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL. Read v. 11-12.**

The name Onesimus means “useful.” How did Paul play on that meaning in v.11? What turned the life of Onesimus around to be one of great usefulness?

Read **2 Corinthians 5:17**. What new things was Paul hoping Onesimus to accomplish? What new things have come in your life since the gospel? What testimony would you share?

How is the message of the gospel counter to the culture we live in? How have you seen the power of the gospel at work in your life and the lives of others?

3) **BELIEF IN RESTORATION. Read v.13-16.**

If there was anybody who believed in the restorative power of the Gospel it was Paul. Why was his imprisonment for Christ so ironic?

The same restoration Paul knew was now being experienced by Onesimus. He was restored to Christ and now it was Paul's goal to restore him to Philemon. Putting yourself in Onesimus' shoes, how do you think it felt to have someone seeking to restore his life?

Read **Luke 15:4-6**. How would you describe God's pursuit of reconciliation?

Paul talks to the church of Corinth in **2 Corinthians 5:11-14**. How does this passage apply to us and our church when it comes to reconciling and restoring others to Christ?

Apply It:

As a church we must believe in the power of God's word to restore those lost to sin. When we present His message to the world with love, there will be people who respond in faith. Who can you share God's love and message with this week? Who needs restoration with God? What relationships have been broken in your life that could be restored with love?

Pray:

God bring us back to the simple gospel. We pray our lives would be centered around the Good News of salvation and restoration through Christ. Holy Spirit move in our hearts to bring others with us in our pursuit of you and your holiness. Amen.

Coming up at VillageChurch:

June 10-14: Getaway - High School Camp

June 17: Father's Day

July 1-4: Getaway - Middle School Camp

July 8th: Baptism