



South Sub Church

May 24, 2026

Navigating Conflict, Hurt, and Reconciliation **“New Identity that Rewrites Old Labels”**

Philemon 1:12-16(NLT)

¹² I am sending him back to you, and with him comes my own heart. ¹³ I wanted to keep him here with me while I am in these chains for preaching the Good News, and he would have helped me on your behalf. ¹⁴ But I didn't want to do anything without your consent. I wanted you to help because you were willing, not because you were forced. ¹⁵ It seems you lost Onesimus for a little while so that you could have him back forever. ¹⁶ He is no longer like a slave to you. He is more than a slave, for he is a beloved brother, especially to me. Now he will mean much more to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord.

Sermon Summary:

Relationships can be complicated. They don't always turn out the way we hoped. Some are strained, some are distant, and some feel too complicated to fix. Misunderstandings, hurt, and unresolved tension can leave us wondering if anything could ever change.

The gospel speaks to more than just our eternity. It speaks directly into our relationships. In this series through the book of Philemon, we'll discover how the gospel provides a real pathway for healing what's broken, rebuilding trust, and pursuing reconciliation - even when it feels messy or costly. No matter how complicated a relationship, there is hope for a better way forward.

Fun, non-threatening Ice Breaker questions:

1. What's a relationship in your life that changed over time for the better?
2. Have you ever been reunited with someone after time apart? What was that like?
3. What makes a relationship feel like family rather than just friendship?
4. How do you handle situations that feel out of your control?
5. What's one example of something bad that ended up being used for good?

Objective Bible study questions (observation):

1. What does Paul say he is doing with Onesimus in verse 12?
2. How does Paul describe his feelings about sending Onesimus back?
3. What does Paul say Onesimus has become to him?
4. What did Paul wish he could have done with Onesimus (verse 13)?



5. Why did Paul decide not to keep Onesimus without Philemon's consent?
6. What does Paul say might be the reason Onesimus was separated from Philemon for a while (verse 15)?
7. How long does Paul suggest Philemon will now have Onesimus?
8. How does Paul describe Onesimus' new status in verse 16?
9. In what two ways does Paul say Onesimus is now a brother?
10. Who does Paul say especially values Onesimus?

Interpretive Questions (meaning):

1. Why is it significant that Paul calls Onesimus "my own heart"?
2. How might God have used Onesimus' separation for a greater purpose?
3. What does it mean that Onesimus is "no longer like a slave"?
4. How does this passage redefine relationships within the body of Christ?
5. Why does Paul emphasize that Onesimus is both a brother "in the flesh and in the Lord"?

Application questions (life response):

1. Is there a situation in your life where God might be working behind the scenes for good?
2. Are there relationships where you need to start seeing someone as a brother or sister in Christ?
3. How can you show respect and consideration for others' choices like Paul does?
4. Is there someone you need to welcome back or restore in your life?
5. How can you live in a way that reflects unity and equality in Christ this week?