



South Sub Church

May 17, 2026

Navigating Conflict, Hurt, and Reconciliation **“Power, Posture and the Way We Appeal”**

Philemon 1:8-11(NLT)

⁸ That is why I am boldly asking a favor of you. I could demand it in the name of Christ because it is the right thing for you to do.

⁹ But because of our love, I prefer simply to ask you. Consider this as a request from me—Paul, an old man and now also a prisoner for the sake of Christ Jesus. ¹⁰ I appeal to you to show kindness to my child, Onesimus. I became his father in the faith while here in prison. ¹¹ Onesimus hasn't been of much use to you in the past, but now he is very useful to both of us.

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. Have you ever had to ask someone for a favor that felt uncomfortable? What made it hard?
2. What's a time someone appealed to you in a loving way instead of demanding something?
3. How do you typically respond when someone asks you for help?
4. What makes a request feel respectful rather than forceful?
5. Have you ever seen someone's life completely change for the better?

Objective Bible study questions (observation):

1. What does Paul say he could do because of his authority in Christ (verse 8)?
2. What does Paul choose to do instead of commanding Philemon?
3. How does Paul describe himself in verse 9?
4. Who is the person Paul is appealing for?
5. How does Paul describe his relationship with Onesimus?



6. What happened to Onesimus while Paul was in prison?
7. What does the name Onesimus mean, and how does Paul use that meaning in verse 11?
8. What was Onesimus like to Philemon in the past?
9. What has Onesimus become now to both Paul and Philemon?
10. Where is Paul writing from during this appeal?

Interpretive Questions (meaning):

1. Why does Paul choose to appeal in love rather than command with authority?
2. What is significant about Paul calling Onesimus his “child”?
3. How does the transformation of Onesimus reflect the power of the gospel?
4. Why does Paul highlight the change from “useless” to “useful”?
5. What might this passage suggest about forgiveness and second chances?

Application questions (life response):

1. When have you relied too much on authority instead of love in your relationships?
2. How can you approach difficult conversations more like Paul does here?
3. Is there someone in your life who deserves a second chance?
4. How can you help someone else grow in their faith like Paul did with Onesimus?
5. What is one relationship where you can choose grace over control this week?