

Love Your Neighbor (Lessons From Philemon)

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Introduction:

- Overview of Philemon
 - 3 Main Characters
 - Philemon
 - Onesimus
 - Paul
- All three of the main characters teach the reader about what it means to “love thy neighbor”.

Thesis: Christians Need To Love Those Who Are Hard to Love

Text: The Book of Philemon

1. God Expects Christians To Show Love For Others (1-9)

- (4-5) *I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers, because I hear of your **love** and of the **faith** which you have toward the Lord Jesus and **toward all the saints**; and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake. For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, **because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.***

2. God Expected Onesimus To Show Love For His Neighbor Philemon (10-14)

- Onesimus would not want to go back to his owner.
- But under law he “belonged” to him.
- Loving neighbor often means doing things you don’t want to do. (scary, costly, intimidating, time consuming).
- “Loving Our Neighbor” is not always convenient.

3. God expected Philemon to Show Love Toward His Neighbor Onesimus (15-17)

- Onesimus had wronged him, but Philemon was not to treat him harshly in return.
- True neighborly love does not take into account wrongs suffered.
- We need to show the same love for all Christians no matter what may be in the past.
- This would not be easy for Philemon, but it was necessary.

4. Paul gave an example of neighborly love in his promised restitution to Philemon (18-20)

- Paul was willing to go out of his way to help his new brother Onesimas and his longtime brother Philemon.
- Paul did not owe this to Philemon or Onesimus.
- This is an example for all.
- Step up to help others when they don’t deserve it and when it is “not your responsibility”.

Conclusion:

- God expects us to love our neighbors at all times.
- (20-21) *“Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, since I know that you will do even more than what I say”*
- Are we fulfilling this great command?