

STUDY NOTES

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

A SERIES at NEW CITY CHURCH

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The following content is based on the message "Humanity, Divinity, and the Gospel" on 7/29/18 at New City Church in Phoenix, AZ. The following is not meant to be a full synopsis but rather a brief look at the main ideas. To use this Study Guide effectively you must listen to the message found at <http://newcityphx.com/sermons/>.

Leaders using these study notes for group study and reflection should read the Biblical text thoroughly before beginning, using this resource as assistance and not relying solely on this material for insight. We encourage all leaders to pray and ask the Spirit for revelation as they lead their respective community groups.

PRAYER

Pray and ask God to lead the discussion as everyone gets to share.

SCRIPTURE: PHILEMON 1-25

WHEN THE GOSPEL INTERSECTS LIFE

Philemon was an influential person in the church at Colossae. Onesimus was a servant who ran away from Philemon. Onesimus was put in prison and met the apostle Paul. In this letter to Philemon, Paul appeals to Philemon from the position of a brother in Christ. That is the basis of it. Yet, Paul is a human being and his emotions and human experiences are all over this short letter.

The Gospel is the ultimate intersection of humanity and divinity.

- *Why is it encouraging to see that many of the heroes in the Bible don't have stories that seem perfect?*

THE THEOLOGY AND HUMANITY OF PAUL'S APPEAL

Paul says that he could command Philemon to receive Onesimus back, but he would prefer to appeal to the love in Philemon's heart. Paul reminds Philemon of

the status of believers under Jesus. When Onesimus placed his faith in Jesus, he became a brother in Christ to Philemon.

The Gospel means complete equality before God.

- *How is it counter to our nature to view others in complete equality?*

THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL'S APPEAL

Paul trusted that Onesimus would be helpful to Philemon. Paul placed a lot of trust in both Onesimus and Philemon. People might think that Paul never experienced betrayal. However, there were multiple times when people deserted Paul. Paul knew what it was like to be abandoned. With the Good News of Jesus, there will be moments where we receive bad news.

The Gospel means that we will have difficult times.

- *Have you ever been abandoned by someone because of the Good News of Jesus? If so, how?*
- *Have you ever felt abandoned by someone in general? If so, how did that feel?*
- *What are usual reactions when someone feels abandoned?*

THE FORGIVENESS OF PAUL'S APPEAL

Just like he had to do in his own story with people who deserted him, Paul is asking Philemon to forgive Onesimus. Forgiveness is an obligation of the Gospel, even after being deserted. This doesn't mean that all relationships will be reconciled, but it does mean that we should find forgiveness in our hearts.

The Gospel obligates us to forgive.

- *Why do you think the Gospel of Jesus obligates us to forgive?*
- *Why would it be important to note that forgiveness doesn't mean that all relationships will be reconciled?*
- *Emotionally, why is it important to forgive as a part of the healing process?*
- *Pray with each other to have the strength to forgive.*