

Everyone's Invited

[Philemon 1-25](#)

My friend Ray was a dealer in illegal drugs, but meeting Christ brought radical change to his life. He is now one of our church's most enthusiastic members. Well-dressed and socially adept, Ray found quick acceptance and blended easily.

One day Ray brought with him two friends struggling with substance abuse. Their hair was unkempt, they wore "street clothing," and they were wary of unfamiliar church surroundings. As Ray introduced them to an elderly woman during the service, the woman coldly turned away without speaking. Their suspicions confirmed, the pair hasn't returned.

1. When have you ever felt excluded by a group? Describe your experience and feelings.

2. Read [Philemon 1-25](#). What is Paul's purpose in writing?

Describe the tone of his letter.

3. What methods does Paul use to encourage his readers ([Philemon 4-7](#))? 4. Why would Paul rather make a loving appeal than a command ([Philemon 8-9](#))?

5. Onesimus's name meant "useful." How does Paul play on this name ([Philemon 11](#))?

Why do you think Paul made this pun in a serious letter?

6. What changes are implied in Onesimus's life ([Philemon 10-12](#))?

7. How does Paul approach the topic of reconciliation in [Philemon 12-16](#)?

8. Martin Luther wrote, "Even as Christ did for us with God the Father, thus Paul also does for Onesimus with Philemon." How does Paul use his own standing with his readers to further the cause of Onesimus? (See especially [Philemon 17-18](#).)

9. What feelings do you think Onesimus had about returning to his former masters?

10. While slavery is obsolete today, to what types of people might we apply this study?

11. It's all too easy to count the Onesimuses out of the fellowship we enjoy. How might an "exclusive" attitude affect Christian community?

12. Think of some individuals who need to feel included in your group or church. What can you do this week to reach out to them?