

Facilitator:

1. Open with Prayer
2. Welcome any newcomers
3. Give a 5-minute review of Peppy's sermon

Facilitator:

Please don't feel you have to cover every question. They become increasingly deeper and more thoughtful toward the end. It may help to highlight questions you want to be sure to cover, depending on the dynamics of your group and the time available. Try to keep your discussion to an hour and a half at the most.

## **CONNECT Group study questions for April 17 - Philemon 1-21**

### **Title: Put It on My Tab**

**Facilitator:** Have the group follow along in their Bibles as you read.

**Philemon 1-21** *Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved fellow worker and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.*

*Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, no longer as a bondservant but more*

*than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.*

*So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.*

*Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.*

Truly He taught us to love one another;  
His law is love and His gospel is peace.  
Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother;  
And in His name all oppression shall cease.  
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,  
Let all within us praise His holy name. —from O Holy Night

**Question:** Paul—mediator, arbitrator, peacemaker, and writer of the letter to Philemon—was not above using leverage to get what he wanted Philemon to do. As an apostle, he could have commanded Philemon, but he didn't. Instead, he appealed “for love's sake.”

Find the pressure points in Paul's letter and answer why you think the “for love's sake” appeal was more effective. **Hint:** One pressure point was that the letter was not private, but also addressed to the church at Philemon's house.

**Question:** When he appeals to Philemon “for love's sake” and then asks that anything owed be charged to his account, Paul is using his relationship in Christ to bring about reconciliation between Onesimus and Philemon.

To achieve reconciliation between two brothers or sisters in Christ, have you, or would you ever, offer to “charge that to my account” as Paul did? In other words, how important to you is reconciliation among believers?

**Question:** In 1 Corinthians 13:5 Paul wrote that love does not take into account a wrong suffered. Some versions—the ESV, for example—render it as “is not irritable or resentful,” but the Greek uses an accounting term for keeping record of wrongdoing.

Discuss how keeping account of wrongs suffered and resentment go hand-in-hand. Does keeping count create resentment or does resentment make you keep count? **Facilitator:** Let the discussion continue, but suggest that the two feed off each other and grow to entangle and defile others. Have them turn to and read Hebrews 12:15.

**Question:** Onesimus returned to his master at great personal risk. He could have been severely punished or he could have paid with his life.

How did Onesimus exercise the dynamics of faith and grace to reconcile with Philemon?

**Question:** Are you a Paul, a mediator and peacemaker, an Onesimus in need of forgiveness regardless of the risk or cost, or a Philemon, challenged to throw away the scorebook “for love’s sake” and for reconciliation in the church? For most of us, we have been or are one of each at some time or another. Share with the group experiences you have had as any or each of the three characters.