



RUNNING, RETURNING, AND RECAPTURE; THE STORY OF ONESIMUS

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BIBLICAL TEXT(S)

*"No matter what
your circumstances,
remember Who is
with you and what
He has promised."*

–Pastor
Dan Gill

*"Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, yet I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love. It is as none other than Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus— that **I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me**". (Philemon 1:8-11)*

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you." (Deuteronomy 31:6)

"The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." (Deuteronomy 31:8)

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9)

"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." (Genesis 28:15)

*"So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand". (Isaiah 41:10)*

*"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. **That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come**". (Ephesians 1:18-21)*

*"Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. **He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you**. They will tell you everything that is happening here". (Colossians 4:7-9)*

MESSAGE SUMMARY

Paul is writing from a Roman prison to a wealthy slave-owner, Philemon, who became a believer in Colossae. For whatever reason, Philemon's slave, Onesimus, ran away and is now with Paul in Rome. The culture of the time, due to the Hellenistic worldview and Roman Empire, was dominated by global trade, because of which there were enforced heavy taxation and a large slave labor force.

The Scriptures are full of people who ran. Adam and Eve ran and hide when they sinned, Cain ran when he killed Abel, Jacob ran after stealing Esau's birthright, Moses fled Egypt when it was discovered he killed a man, David ran from King Saul when his life was under threat, and Peter ran back to his nets when he denied Christ. However, running or leaving is only the beginning of the story. God may probe in your life—even in areas, you don't like very much, to return mentally to places you have been before, if not physically. Our brothers and sisters may come alongside us and address the source of our current struggles. God

may take us back to a prior time or situation where we still need healing. The risen Jesus did this with Peter, asking Peter if he loved him three times, taking him back to the three times Peter denied Jesus the night he was betrayed.

Jesus has no rivals, and he is the one on this journey with you. Because of God's power beyond measure, the place which was once terrifying can become a place of peace. Because of God's presence, the place of rejection, shame, failure or humiliation, can become a place where you can hold your head high. A place of bewilderment can become crystal clear because God is by your side.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you lead your group through a progression of engagement with the Bible passage and the speaker's message, helping them understand and apply the teaching.

LEAN IN

These are icebreaker/warm up questions, mostly just to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. What example or story stood out to you in Sunday's sermon?
Why was it significant to you?
2. What was your high/low for this past week (or since group last met)?
What was the best thing that happened and the worst thing that happened?
3. Last time we met, we talked about... (mention whatever you talked about). Has anyone had a chance to put that lesson into practice? Has it has an impact on your life in anyway?
4. What is one thing that you're looking forward to this week?
What's one that you are dreading?

LOOK DOWN

These are questions on the passage and observations about what's been read.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. Paul writes to Philemon that he could order him, and yet appeals to him on the basis of love. Is there an area of your life where you have perhaps not been commanded, but feel a tug on your heart to respond on the basis of love?
2. Why do you suppose Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon instead of allowing him to remain in Rome?
3. Why do you think Paul uses familial language, referring to Onesimus as his son?
4. In John 21:15-17 Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves him. Why do you think Jesus would echo Peter's three denials of Jesus (John 18:15-18, 25-27) with this question three times?

LOOK OUT

These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. In Ephesians 1:19, the Greek phrase hyperballon megethos is translated as "power beyond measure," "more than enough," or "surpassing power." Why do you think Paul used such emphatic language to describe the power of God available to us?
2. How does it make you feel knowing that God - who is described as having "power beyond measure," or "surpassing power," goes with you?
3. In the Greek, the name Onesimus means useful. Why do you think Paul uses a play on words, saying that Onesimus was formerly useless to Philemon, and yet is now useful to both he and Paul?
4. See Colossians 4:7-9. How does Onesimus' purpose change by returning?

**DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS,
CONT.**

LOOK IN

These are questions that help you consider personal application.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. Where or who may God be inviting you to return to?
2. What does returning look like for us today?
3. Who are the people who God has given to you to journey with?
4. Has there been a place where the Holy Spirit has already returned with you to?
What healing took place in the process of returning to a place of brokenness?

LIVE IT OUT

These action steps help apply this week's message to day to day life.

Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. Where may God's Spirit be leading you to return to?
2. Will you let Him take you there? Why or why not?