



# abcLinks

connecting personal and small group studies with this week's sermon

For the sermon on April 25-26, 2009

## this week's coreverse

So if you consider me a partner,  
welcome him as you would  
welcome me. If he has done you  
any wrong or owes you anything,  
charge it to me... I will pay it back...  
I do wish, brother, that I may have  
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 ask.

Philemon 1.17-22

## usingabcLinks

### Personal Bible Studies (inside pages)

- Personal studies that explore Scripture passages related to this week's sermon. They are broken down into three or four days. Some days you will simply read, meditate or think about a passage of scripture. Other days you will be asked to dig into a passage through reading, studying, answering questions.

### Small Group Discussion (back page)

- Small group questions that connect with the sermon and your personal Bible study. This series of questions act as a funnel to help your group discussion flow in a purposeful point.
- If you are not in a small group, contact one of our small group staff members to get more information on ABC Small Groups or go to [adabible.org>smallgroups](http://adabible.org>smallgroups).

See [adabible.org>message](http://adabible.org>message) recaps & Links for *ABCLinks* archives.



## Part Two of a Two Part Sermon Series

### "The Plea"

**R**estitution: an act of restoring or a condition of being restored a) a restoration of something to its rightful owner; b) a making good of or giving an equivalent for some injury. (Merriam Webster)

*A lawyer notified a Michigan judge this week that former Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick can pay only \$6 monthly restitution, not \$6,000. The lawyer, Michael Alan Schwartz, who just joined the ex-mayor's legal team, told the Detroit Free Press he may also try to have Judge David Groner taken off the case. He said Groner has a conflict because his brother-in-law is chief assistant to Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy. Kilpatrick was allowed to move to Texas after his release from jail and is working there as a salesman for a subsidiary of a Michigan company, Compuware.*

*In his court filing, Schwartz said Compuware pays Kilpatrick \$10,000 a month. He detailed monthly expenses of \$9,994, including \$2,700 in rent and \$900 for lease of a Cadillac Escalade. "I don't think he was ordered to live a more modest lifestyle," Schwartz said. "Is it better Mr. Kilpatrick drives a beat-up Yugo?" When he pleaded guilty to perjury, Kilpatrick agreed to pay the city \$1 million in restitution. He admitted lying in a deposition about his romantic relationship with his chief of staff and their role in the firing of top police officers.*

*UPI News, March 28, 2009*

I've always been intrigued by the natural tendency of humans to avoid the consequences of the wrongful things that we do. We are runners, justifiers, blamers and deflectors when it comes to absorbing the results of our sinful behavior. From the comfort of being behind a newspaper, it's easy for us to be disgusted with Mayor Kilpatrick's flippant and even arrogant approach to the judgment levied against him. Where's his remorse? Where's the repentance? They are nowhere to be found, as far as we can see. Instead, it appears that denial, delay and legal maneuvering are the cards he's playing. But, are we so different? Are we any more willing to restore what our sin has broken? Are we willing to return to the ones we've harmed and attempt to restore what was lost or stolen because of sin? And, are we willing to forgive those who have robbed us of money, dignity, time or respect? Restitution is hard, brave work.

Our story this week is about a runaway servant named Onesimus. He may have robbed his master, Philemon, then fled to the crowded streets of Rome. Though we don't know why Onesimus was indentured to Philemon, we do know that the consequences of a slave running from his master could be punishable by death. Something amazing happens to Onesimus. He finds Paul... then he finds God. His heart is transformed. He's a new man because he now has given his life to Jesus. Paul then calls him to stop running and return to Philemon, to do the right thing. Paul has words for Philemon as well. He encourages his friend to accept Onesimus back... but not as a slave, instead as a brother.



ada bible church  
8899 cascade road se  
ada, mi 49301  
616.868.7005 | [adabible.org](http://adabible.org)

### Author information

Phil Niekerk, small groups pastor



# personal bible studies

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Paul wrote this short letter from Rome in about 60 AD, while under house arrest (Acts 28.30-31). He writes to his wealthy friend, Philemon, who was part of the church in the city of Colosse. Philemon was a landowner who had come to faith under Paul's teaching. In this letter, we get a clear indication that the church in Colosse was meeting in Philemon's home. However, his slave, Onesimus, had run away to Rome. We are not told why he ran. Slavery was common in the day and often a person would become an indentured servant because they owed money they could not pay back. Perhaps this was the case with Onesimus.

We are also not told how Onesimus found Paul. Did he seek Paul out? Did he have a run in with the law and bump into Paul in confinement? In any regard, Paul and Onesimus connect. And, their interaction becomes meaningful and life changing for Onesimus. Paul writes to Philemon about his connection with Onesimus. Paul is giving important relational guidance to both Onesimus and Philemon.

Our study today will focus on the three characters of our story and how they relate specifically with one another.

## Paul and Philemon

Read Philemon 1.1-7.

Describe Paul's relationship with Philemon. Circle or list the words that best indicate Paul's feelings for Philemon. What do you see in Philemon's character from Paul's words?

Read between the lines a bit. What were some of the things that could have happened between Paul and Philemon over the years?

Who has been the "Paul" in your life? Who is your spiritual father or mother? Who encourages you most to walk obediently?

## Paul and Onesimus

Read Philemon 1.8-25.

Describe Paul's relationship with Onesimus. Circle or list the words that indicate how Paul views Onesimus.

What has happened to Onesimus? How has he changed?

Paul seems to be attempting to convince Philemon that Onesimus has changed. Would you think that may be difficult for Philemon to believe? Why or why not?

Do you believe that people can change? Think about the old boyfriend/girlfriend who was a jerk to you that you bump into at Meijer...the father who belittled you... the pastor who disappointed you... the child who disrespects you... etc. What causes us to doubt that people can change?

## Philemon and Onesimus

Read Philemon 1.8-25 again, this time looking for the new relationship that Philemon is to have with Onesimus.

What is Philemon's new way of relating to Onesimus? Put yourself in Philemon's sandals. How difficult would that be for you to do? What would be the natural alternative, or opposite, to restoration and forgiveness?

## Who do you need to be?

There are several potential implications to us in this story. You may be in a situation in life where you need to do what one of the characters in the story did. Read the descriptions below and determine which fits you best.

### I need to be a *Paul* today.

Is there someone in your life, in whom you've invested spiritually, who needs to be challenged to do the right thing and make steps of restitution to someone they've harmed?

Is there someone who you need to challenge to open their heart to forgiving someone and restoring them?

### I need to be an *Onesimus* today.

Is there someone you are running from? Is there someone to whom you have caused harm and are avoiding? Are there consequences of your sin that you are hiding from?

How has Jesus' death on the cross changed your identity? How has his forgiveness freed you from running?

What are your next steps to restoring a broken relationship?

### I need to be a *Philemon* today.

Is there someone who you need to receive back in good standing? Is there someone who desperately needs your forgiveness?

How will you accept that person? Are you willing to erase their relational debt? Are you willing to never hold their sin against them again?



# small group discussion

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## leanin

When have you had a run-in with the law? Did you fess up, try to talk your way out of it, run or plead for mercy? What was the outcome?

## lookdown

Re-tell the story from Philemon in three different ways. Have someone tell it from Onesimus' perspective. Next, have someone else tell it from Paul's. Finally, from Philemon's viewpoint.

What were the differences in perspective?

## lookout

What would be a modern day version of this story? What are the typical endings to situations like this?

Define forgiveness. What does it mean for someone to truly forgive another person?

Define restitution or restoration. What do these things look like when they happen?

## lookin

Work through the exercise below together. Encourage each other to offer honest but gentle answers. Pray for courage and grace for one another as people move toward obedience in restoring friendships.

### Who do you need to be this week?

I need to be a *Paul*.

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I need to be an *Onesimus*.

Is there someone you are running from? Is there someone to whom you have caused harm and are avoiding? Are there consequences of your sin that you are hiding from?

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