

WEEK 6: October 11–19, 2026

Reading: 2 Timothy 2–4; Titus 1–3; Philemon 1

Principal Chapter: Philemon 1

Spiritual Practice: Savor

Core Emphasis: Faith Made Effective Through Partnership, Goodness, and Reconciliation

Read a CHAPTER a Day

SMALL GROUP LEADERS' GUIDE

Leader Preparation Checklist

- ☐ **Read 2 Timothy 2–4, Titus 1–3, and Philemon 1.** Mark repeated words and themes: *endurance, faithfulness, scripture, teaching, grace, good works, reconciliation, partnership, forgiveness, dignity, and belonging in Christ.*
- ☐ **Prioritize the core emphasis.** Focus on Philemon 1:4–7, especially verse 6, while allowing the readings from 2 Timothy and Titus to illuminate endurance, sound teaching, grace, and good works.
- ☐ **Review the historical note below.** Prepare to address the letter's setting carefully, especially the realities of slavery in the ancient Roman world and the ethical challenges Paul's appeal raises.
- ☐ **Prepare for the spiritual practice: Savor.** Practice leading participants to choose a word, phrase, or verse from Philemon to carry into the coming week and beyond the end of the Read a Chapter a Day study.
- ☐ **Prepare the meeting space.** Have paper, index cards, Savor notes, or journals available. If you meet online, invite participants to have paper or a note-taking device ready.
- ☐ **Pray for each participant by name.** Ask the Holy Spirit to help the group recognize the good God is doing among them and to grow in reconciliation, courage, humility, and faithful partnership.

Historical Note on 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon:

Background: Second Timothy is a deeply personal letter of encouragement. Paul urges Timothy to remain steadfast in the gospel, endure hardship, continue in the sacred writings, and complete the ministry entrusted to him. The letter emphasizes perseverance, courage, and confidence in God's faithfulness.

Titus addresses the ordering of Christian communities in Crete. Paul emphasizes sound teaching, the grace of God that forms holy lives, and good works that express faith in practical service. Titus reminds believers that grace does not end with forgiveness; it teaches and equips us to live for the good of others.

Philemon is Paul's shortest letter, addressed to Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, and the church that meets in their home. Paul writes concerning Onesimus, who is connected to Philemon through the institution of slavery. Paul appeals to Philemon to receive Onesimus "no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother" (Philemon 1:16).

The letter invites believers to consider what it means for the gospel to reshape relationships, power, property, status, and belonging. Paul does not explicitly command Philemon to free Onesimus, and the letter should not be used to justify slavery or to minimize its violence. Rather, it confronts the church with the claim that in Christ, people are bound together as beloved siblings whose dignity cannot be reduced to social status.

Interpretive Care: Philemon requires careful interpretation because it concerns slavery. Ancient Roman slavery was a violent and exploitative institution, although its legal and social patterns were not identical to race-based chattel slavery in the modern Atlantic world. The letter has been misused in Christian history to defend slavery and racial oppression.

Do not present Philemon as a simple story of personal forgiveness or private reconciliation. It raises questions about power, ownership, dignity, repair, and how the gospel transforms relationships. Avoid asking participants to identify themselves uncritically with any single character in the letter. Philemon is a short letter with difficult implications. It concerns a relationship shaped by the institution of slavery, and we must not minimize that reality. Paul appeals to Philemon to receive Onesimus as a beloved brother in Christ. This does not erase the injustice of slavery, but it challenges the church to consider how the gospel transforms relationships of power and calls us to recognize one another's God-given dignity.

Philemon may raise sensitive concerns related to slavery, racism, class, power, incarceration, exploitation, debt, forced labor, broken relationships, and reconciliation after harm.

Do not minimize the violence of slavery or use this letter to justify coercion, submission to abuse, or reconciliation without accountability. Reconciliation is not always immediate, safe, or possible in every circumstance. It requires truth-telling, attention to power, commitment to justice, and care for those who have been harmed.

If the conversation becomes difficult, you may say, "This letter raises serious questions about dignity, power, and reconciliation. We do not need to resolve every question today. We can listen carefully, honor the gravity of the subject, and ask how Christ calls us to practice justice, mercy, and love in relationships and communities."

Opening (10 min)

Welcome & Check-In

Welcome participants by name. Acknowledge that this is the final gathering of the six-week Read a Chapter a Day study. Invite the group to bring honesty, gratitude, and openness as they reflect on what God has been doing through the daily readings.

Check-in Question: What word or phrase describes your experience of Read a Chapter a Day during these six weeks?

Opening Prayer

God of grace and reconciliation, you call us into partnership with one another and make us one family in Christ. Open our hearts as we listen to your Word. Help us recognize the good you are doing among us, receive one another with dignity and love, and live in ways that make our faith effective in the world. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Transition to Scripture

This week we read 2 Timothy 2–4, Titus 1–3, and Philemon. These writings call us to remain faithful, to live in the grace that forms good works, and to receive one another as partners and beloved siblings in Christ.

Key Themes (10 min)

As you read 2 Timothy 2–4, Titus 1–3, and Philemon this week, what words, images, or ideas stood out? These writings contain many important themes. Today, we will focus on three that help us hear Philemon: faith expressed through partnership, grace that bears fruit in good works, and reconciliation that honors human dignity.

Faith Expressed Through Partnership: Paul gives thanks for Philemon's love and faith, praying that sharing his faith will be effective. Faith is not merely private belief. It is lived and shared through relationships, hospitality, service, encouragement, and participation in Christ's work.

- Key passages: Philemon 1:4–7; 17–21; 2 Timothy 2:1–2.
- What might it mean for faith sharing to be effective in the life of a community?

Grace That Bears Fruit in Good Works: Titus teaches that God's grace has appeared, bringing salvation and training believers to reject destructive patterns and live upright, godly lives. Grace creates a people eager to do good and ready to meet urgent needs.

- Key passages: Titus 2:11–14; 3:1–8, 14.
- How do Titus and Philemon help us understand that grace is received freely and becomes visible in the way we live?

Reconciliation That Honors Human Dignity: Paul asks Philemon to receive Onesimus as more than a slave: as a beloved brother. This appeal challenges relationships shaped by power, possession, status, and exclusion. In Christ, belonging is redefined by shared dignity and siblinghood.

- Key passages: Philemon 1:8–16; Galatians 3:28.
- What does it mean to receive another person as a beloved sibling in Christ?

These final readings remind us that faith becomes effective as grace bears fruit in good works, partnerships are strengthened in love, and relationships are transformed by the dignity and belonging we share in Christ.

Historical Context (8 min)

Who Is Writing? Paul identifies himself as a prisoner of Christ Jesus; he writes with Timothy. The letter is personal but also public: it is addressed to Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, and the church that meets in their home.

To Whom? Philemon is likely a Christian householder whose home serves as a gathering place for a local church. Apphia and Archippus are included, along with the wider congregation, indicating that the appeal has communal significance.

What Is Happening? Paul writes concerning Onesimus, who is connected to Philemon through slavery. Onesimus has come into contact with Paul and has become “useful” to Paul in ministry. Paul sends him back to Philemon with a personal appeal that Philemon receive him not merely according to his social status but as a beloved brother in Christ. The letter does not give enough information to settle every historical question about Onesimus’s situation. Paul’s appeal places the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus under Christ’s lordship and within the shared life of the church.

Why Does This Matter? Philemon confronts the church with urgent questions: How does the gospel transform relationships marked by unequal power? How do Christian communities move beyond words of welcome toward relationships that honor dignity, repair harm, share responsibility, and make space for true belonging?

Philemon is a personal letter with public implications. Paul writes about Onesimus, whose life is entangled with slavery. Paul does not treat Onesimus as property or a problem to be managed. He appeals to Philemon to receive him as a beloved brother in Christ. The letter does not give us a simple solution to every question it raises, but it calls the church to examine how the gospel challenges relationships marked by power, exclusion, and unequal dignity.

- What part of this historical background helps you understand why Philemon is such a challenging letter?
- What questions does this letter raise about Christian partnership, reconciliation, and dignity?

Reflection on Personal Practice (10 min)

Invite participants to reflect on their experience of reading 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon during the final week of the study. Remind the group that Read a Chapter a Day is not simply a six-week task. It is an invitation to establish an ongoing rhythm of scripture reading, prayer, reflection, and faithful action.

Ask one or both questions:

- What has been easiest or most challenging about reading one chapter a day over these six weeks?
- Where did you experience God speaking, comforting, challenging, or surprising you through 2 Timothy, Titus, or Philemon?

Allow three or four participants to share briefly. If the group is large, invite concise responses so that several voices can be heard.

Leader Note: This final gathering provides an opportunity to acknowledge growth without making participants feel they must report dramatic changes. Some may be grateful for a new habit; some may name interruptions, questions, or continued struggles.

You might say, “Thank you for walking together through these readings. The goal was never perfect consistency or complete understanding. The goal was to make room for God’s Word in our daily lives. Consider what practice, question, verse, or invitation you want to carry forward from this experience.”

Spiritual Practice: Savor (7 min)

This week’s spiritual practice is **Savor**. Savor invites us to identify a word, phrase, or verse from scripture that remains with us and that we want to carry into the days ahead. It may be a comfort, a challenge, a question, a call to action, or a promise.

For this practice, focus on **Philemon 1:4–7**, especially verse 6.

Instruction: Provide index cards, Savor notes, or journals. If meeting online, invite participants to use a note on their phone or computer or to write in a journal.

Scripture: Read Philemon 1:4–7 aloud slowly. Then invite participants to sit quietly and consider these questions:

- What word, phrase, or verse from Philemon has stayed with you?
- What word or phrase from the wider six-week study do you want to carry forward?
- What might God be saying to you through this word for the coming week or season?

Response: As we come to the end of this six-week journey, choose one word, phrase, or verse that you want to carry with you. It may come from Philemon, from another passage we have read this week, or from any point in the Read a Chapter a Day journey. Write it down. Let it become a simple prayer, a reminder, or an invitation that can remain with you.

- Allow two minutes for reflection and writing. Then ask, “What word, phrase, or verse do you want to carry forward? If you are comfortable, share why it matters to you.”

God’s Word continues to work in us after the page is closed and the group has ended. Carry this phrase with you. Return to it in prayer, place it somewhere you will see it, and allow it to shape your attention, actions, and relationships in the days ahead.

Application & Discussion Questions (10 min)

Discussion Questions

- **Faith made effective:** What do you think Paul means when he prays that the sharing of Philemon’s faith will become effective?
- **Recognizing the good:** Where have you seen “all the good” that God is doing among people in your congregation, family, neighborhood, or community?
- **Grace and good works:** Titus teaches that grace forms people eager to do good. What is one good work or urgent need that God may be inviting us to notice?
- **Receiving one another:** What might it look like to receive another person not according to status, usefulness, power, or social category, but as a beloved sibling in Christ?
- **Partnership and accountability:** How can Christian partnership move beyond good intentions toward concrete support, shared responsibility, and repair of harm?
- **Continuing the practice:** What has this six-week reading practice taught you about how you want to continue engaging scripture?

Leader Note: If the discussion becomes abstract, return to the text: “Where do you see that in Philemon? What word or phrase helps us hear Paul’s appeal more clearly?”

If time allows, connect Philemon and Titus with John Wesley's understanding of social holiness:

- *God's grace forms us personally and communally.*
- *Holiness is expressed through love of neighbor, mercy, justice, generosity, and shared responsibility.*
- *Christian faith becomes visible through communities that honor the dignity of every person.*

Emphasize that spiritual growth is never only private. It becomes visible in relationships and concrete acts of love.

Application/Invitation/Call to Action

Allow a brief silence, then ask one or both questions:

- What is one phrase from scripture that you will carry with you after this study ends?
- What is one concrete way you can make your faith effective through partnership, reconciliation, encouragement, generosity, or service this week?
 - Examples may include reaching out to someone who feels isolated, practicing more attentive listening, supporting a local need, repairing a strained relationship when safe and appropriate, continuing a daily reading habit, or sharing an encouraging scripture with another person.

As we move into prayer, hold before God the word you are carrying forward and the next faithful step you are being invited to take.

Prayer & Sending (5 min)

Shared Prayer

Invite two or three participants to name brief prayer concerns:

- A personal need
- A relationship in need of healing, truth, or reconciliation
- A concern for justice, dignity, or the well-being of a neighbor
- A hope for continuing to grow in scripture and prayer

You may say, "As we prepare to pray, you may name a personal concern, a relationship or situation where you long for healing, a need in the church or world, or a hope you are carrying from this study."

Closing Prayer

God of grace and reconciliation, we thank you for the words of scripture and for the fellowship we have shared in this study. Help us recognize the good you are doing among us and make the sharing of our faith effective in love. Teach us to receive one another as beloved siblings in Christ. Give us courage to confront injustice, humility to seek reconciliation, generosity to meet the needs of our neighbors, and faithfulness to continue in your Word. Send us forth as partners in the gospel, bearing witness to the grace and peace of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Closing Comments

- Thank participants for their faithful engagement in the six-week Read a Chapter a Day journey.
- Invite them to continue a regular rhythm of scripture reading, prayer, and reflection.
- Encourage participants to remain connected through their local congregation, small group, Read a Chapter a Day Facebook group, and weekly email resources.
- Invite them to share the practice with a friend, family member, or ministry group.

Leader Notes & Reflection

Looking Ahead

- What scripture, question, or practice will you carry forward?
- Who might you invite into a regular rhythm of scripture reading?
- What support would help you continue this practice beyond Read a Chapter a Day?

Notes

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