

Use the following thoughts and questions to have a spiritual conversation as a family. Don't emphasize having the right answer, but focus on spending time discussing the Word as a family.

Scripture

Philemon 8-22

Session Summary

Social structures should not determine the nature of our relationships. No one's status, job title, or skills makes them superior to anyone else in God's family. God shows no partiality, so we shouldn't either. If you find yourself in a position of power or authority, humble yourself. If you find yourself in a weak or lowly position, lift your head. Our kingdom identity transcends all other categories and should determine how we relate to each other. So, those who may naturally be enemies or hostile can now be friends. This is what the gospel can do—it turns the social structures of the world upside down and re-creates our relationships in Christ.

But there are significant barriers that prevent us from living as Paul instructed Philemon in this letter. It is natural to gravitate toward people who are like you, whether in interests, looks, abilities, or many other categories. There's social pressure to be friends with people who look and act like you, and we get segregated into cliques. But the gospel is calling us to rise above those external identities. You are not primarily defined by your status, ethnicity, nationality, or interests, but by the fact that you are a child of God. We are family, and it would be unfitting for us to act as anything less. The church should be a community of reconciliation. Paul said that we should "aim for restoration" (2 Cor. 13:11) and "be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thess. 5:13). This kind of love should characterize our churches, and it can only happen as each person seeks to right wrongs and show the grace that God has shown to us.

- How might we struggle to get out of our comfort zones to build relationships with people who are different from us?
- What are some of the stereotypes or social norms that are barriers to friendship and unity?
- How can we be a family that shows the love that Paul had for Onesimus?
- How can we show Christian love and unity by befriending Christians who are different from us?

Each person in your family should think of someone that is a Christian who they are not close friends with. It may be because of their hobbies, interests, or something else. Challenge them to reach out to another Christian who may not have many friends and show them God's love and acceptance. Discuss how these efforts went at the end of the week.