Read Philemon. One of the beautiful lessons of Paul's letter is that genuine spiritual growth is best cultivated through love, not coercion. Paul had the authority to tell Philemon what he ought to do, but instead he chose to appeal to him for love's sake. He wanted Philemon's goodness to flow from a willing heart rather than from a sense of compulsion. Paul understood that obedience motivated by love reaches deeper than compliance motivated by pressure. This is an important lesson for the local church today. Our elders are called to shepherd God's people, helping us see the richness of God's grace, the power He provides, and the joy of serving one another in Christ. Their encouragement may sometimes come through gentle reminders, invitations, or opportunities to serve. Rather than overlooking these appeals or assuming they are simply asking more of us, we can recognize the love behind their desire to see every member grow and participate in the work of the Kingdom.

Paul's appeal to Philemon was rooted in the transforming power of the Gospel. Onesimus had been a runaway slave, but through God's providence the Gospel had changed his identity. With that change came a new way of relating to him. What a powerful picture of the church! We are not simply individuals who happen to gather in the same place; we are brothers and sisters who have been brought together by the grace of Jesus. When we recognize how deeply God has loved us, we become more willing to forgive, more eager to encourage, and more ready to use our abilities to strengthen the Body of Christ. The Lord can take lives that once seemed unproductive and make them fruitful in ways we never imagined.

Genuine service must come from a willing heart. Love cannot be forced, neither can the most meaningful service in Lord's church be produced simply by assigning tasks or applying pressure. God invites us to respond to His grace with grateful hearts, trusting that He will equip us for the work He places before us. Perhaps you have sensed an invitation from the leadership here to become more involved, to use a gift you have neglected, or to step into an area of service that feels unfamiliar. Consider that such encouragement may be an expression of love, and that God can work through you. You do not have to possess every skill, answer every question, or feel completely ready before you begin. The same Lord who has shown you extraordinary grace can provide the wisdom, strength, and opportunities you need to serve His people.

Prayerfully consider these questions: How have your elders or other leaders encouraged you toward greater faithfulness, and how might you respond more thoughtfully to the love behind their appeals? What might God be inviting you to do for the Body of Christ that you have hesitated to pursue, and how could trusting God's provision help you take the next step? How could remembering the grace God has shown you inspire you to serve more willingly, love your fellow Christians more deeply, and help others discover the joy of belonging to Christ?

Weekly Memory Verse:

"I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for the sake of Christ."

Philemon 6

Weekly Affirmation:

I Won't Only Express My Gratitude to God In Words, But In Deeds

October 2026 Growth Goals

- ○ Read the Books of 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon
- ○ Watch the Bible Project video on these books *(available on the website)*.
- ○ Memorize one of the weekly memory verses.
- ○ Celebrate God's goodness each week. Publicly give God credit in conversation with others for the ways you see Him working.