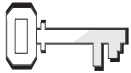


Return of the Runaway



References

Philemon; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 456-460



Memory Verse

“Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people” (Ephesians 6:7, NIV).

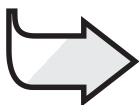


Objectives

The children will:
Know that Christian service begins at home.

Feel willing to help at home.

Respond by looking for ways to serve others at home.



The Message

I can serve Jesus at home.

Monthly Theme

We begin serving at home.

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

Onesimus, a pagan slave, wrongs his master Philemon, a Christian believer in Colossae, and escapes to Rome. He becomes acquainted with Paul, who shares the gospel with him. Onesimus listens, confesses his sins, and becomes a Christian. Paul sees that he has special gifts from God. He urges him to return home to his master, beg for forgiveness, and plan for a future of service. In a letter to Philemon, Paul tells about Onesimus’ conversion, offers to repay any debt Onesimus might owe him, and with kindness and tact, pleads with Philemon to forgive his slave and to receive him back into his service as a brother in Christ.

This is a lesson about service.

Onesimus, once a slave, became a servant of God and of God’s servant, Paul. Just as Paul encouraged Onesimus to go back home to serve his master, Philemon, and encouraged Philemon to accept his former slave as a brother in Christ, so God asks us to serve and accept one another in our homes and families today.

Teacher Enrichment

“The NT does not directly attack the institution of slavery, but it does outline principles that would eventually prove fatal to this institution. In view of the social structure of the Roman Empire Paul’s procedure could hardly be improved upon. He proclaimed the principles of Christian freedom throughout and led men to acknowledge the inhumaneness of slavery. Thus he carried out God’s plan for solving the slave problem by the slower process of growth and enlightenment, rather than by direct attack upon it” (*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 384).

Room Decorations

See Lesson 1.

Program Overview

Lesson Section	Minutes	Activities	Materials Needed
Welcome	ongoing	Greet students at door; hear pleased/troubled	See Readiness A.
1 Readiness Options	up to 10	<p><i>A. May I Show You to Your Seat?</i></p> <p><i>B. Teamwork</i></p> <p><i>C. Find the Runaways</i></p>	<p>Bibles, rope across door of Sabbath School, sign stating "Please wait to be seated."</p> <p>Bibles, large button-up shirt, mittens, cup of water, shoes with shoestrings, small sheet of paper with activity list for each child, pencils</p> <p>small cutouts of people, tape</p>
Any Time Prayer and Praise*	up to 10	Fellowship Songbook Mission Offering Prayer	<p>none</p> <p><i>Sing for Joy</i> <i>Children's Mission</i> offering container used last week <i>Sing for Joy</i> songbooks</p>
2 Bible Lesson	up to 20	<p>Experiencing the Story</p> <p>Memory Verse</p> <p>Bible Study</p>	<p>small towel or washcloth for each child</p> <p>paper napkin for each child, piece of string or ribbon for each napkin, pretty serving tray</p> <p>Bibles, paper, pencils</p>
3 Applying the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Serving at Home</i>	one inflated balloon for each six to eight children
4 Sharing the lesson	up to 15	<i>Balloon Plans</i>	uninflated balloon for each child, pens, small pieces of paper

*Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.

Welcome

See Readiness A.



Readiness Activities

Select the activity most appropriate for your situation.

You Need:

- Bibles
- rope across door of Sabbath School
- sign stating "Please wait to be seated."

A. May I Show You to Your Seat?

Prepare in advance a rope across the door of your Sabbath School room and a sign stating, "Please wait to be seated." Greet each child by saying, "Welcome to Sabbath School. May I show you to your seat?" Have an adult seat each child personally.

Debriefing

After every child is seated in this manner, ask: **Did you enjoy our seating service? Today's Sabbath School is about service—and our Bible story tells of a runaway slave who went back home to serve after he became a follower of Jesus. Let's find and read Ephesians 6:7. Read aloud. This verse asks us to serve also. Today our message is about one place we can serve:**



I CAN SERVE JESUS AT HOME.

Say that with me.

You Need:

For each group—

- Bibles
- large button-up shirt
- mittens
- cup of water
- shoes with shoestrings
- small sheet of paper with activity list for each child
- pencils

B. Teamwork

In advance, prepare a list of the following activities on a sheet of paper for each child.

- _____ Put the shirt on backward and button it up.
- _____ Scratch your head without using your hands.
- _____ Sit on your hands and get a drink of water.
- _____ Put on mittens and tie your shoes.

Divide the students into groups of four to eight. Each child should do each activity and may get help from one other person when needed. They are to check off each activity as they do it.

Debriefing

Ask: **How did you feel when you needed help?** (Frustrated at first, but glad someone helped me.) **Did you like helping someone?** (yes) **Why is it often hard to ask for help?** (Wait for responses.) **Were you afraid, uncertain, proud? There are lots of things that we can do to help others. When we serve others, we are serving Jesus. Let's find and read Ephesians 6:7. Read aloud. A very good place to start serving others is at home. That is today's message.**



I CAN SERVE JESUS AT HOME.

Say that with me.

C. Find the Runaways

In advance, cut out pictures of people from old magazines and number them. Hide

the cutouts around the room.

Give each child a number. Say: **There are (number you have hidden) pictures of runaways around the room. They are people who do not want to help, so they have run away. Can you find one? If you find yours quickly, help someone else find theirs. When all of you have found a runaway, come back to your seat.**

You Need:

- small cutouts of people, one for each child
- tape

Debriefing

Allow response time as you ask: **How hard was it to find your “runaway”?** (hard, easy, needed help, etc.) **In Bible times some people had slaves who did most of the work around the house and in the fields. Why do you think a slave might run away? Today we are going to learn about a runaway slave who returned to his master.**

Say: **At home we all help with the chores. Does that make us slaves? (No. It makes us helpers.) When we help at home, we are serving Jesus. Our message says:**



I CAN SERVE JESUS AT HOME.

Say that with me.

Prayer and Praise **Any Time**



Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). Allow time for sharing experiences from last week's lesson study and review the memory verse. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special warm greeting to all visitors.



Suggested Songs

- “We Are His Hands” (*Sing for Joy*, no. 129)
- “Love at Home” (*Sing for Joy*, no. 137)
- “This Is My Prayer” (*Sing for Joy*, no. 106)
- “The Family of God” (*Sing for Joy*, no. 139)



Mission

Share a story from *Children's Mission*. Ask: **Where did the people in today's story serve Jesus? At home? At church? In their city?**



Offering

Ask: **Are you serving by saving money at home to bring for our special offering on Thirteenth Sabbath? Can you encourage others in your family to do the same thing?**

You Need:

- offering device used last week



Prayer

Have the children form a circle and sing “This Is My Prayer” (*Sing for Joy*, no. 106) in the attitude of prayer. Then invite each of them to pray silently that God will help them to serve in a particular way at home.

You Need:

- *Sing for Joy* songbooks

Bible Lesson

You Need:

- small towel or washcloth for each child

Experiencing the Story

Let the children interact during the story. Give them each a small towel or washcloth to put on their arm.

When you say: They do:

Onesimus	Stand up with a towel on their arm and bow.
Philemon	Stand up and salute.
Paul	Stand up and make a writing motion.

Optional: Form three groups and assign a different name and activity to each.

Read or tell the story.

Paul [*stand up and make a writing motion*] was busy writing when a young man with a backpack over his shoulder came and stood beside him. The young man was dressed for travel. **Paul** [*stand up and make a writing motion*] smiled as he signed the letter he had been writing. He rolled it up and handed it to the young man.

"Here, **Onesimus** [*stand up with a towel on their arm and bow*]," he said. "Here is the letter I promised to write. It is addressed to your master, **Philemon**. [*stand up and salute*]. Give it to him as soon as you get home." **Paul** [*stand up and make a writing motion*] stood and put his arm around the young man's shoulders.

"I told him that you are like a son to me now. I know that in the past you were not as useful to him as you have been to me these past few months. But now that you have accepted Jesus and love Him, I know that you will serve **Philemon** [*stand up and salute*] just as

well as you have served me."

The young man smiled.

Paul [*stand up and make a writing motion*] continued: "We all know that he has the right to be very angry with you for running away. But I told him that you have been helping me just as he would help me if he were here. I hope that he will think about that. I also told him in this letter that even though you are still his slave, you are also a brother in Christ now that you have become a Christian."

Onesimus [*stand up with a towel on their arm and bow*] put his arm around **Paul's** [*stand up and make a writing motion*] shoulder, then put the letter in the bag he had slung over his shoulder.

"One more thing," **Paul** [*stand up and make a writing motion*] continued as the two walked toward the door. "I will pay whatever amount you owe **Philemon**. [*stand up and salute*]. He actually owes me his life, since I was the one who told him about Jesus." **Paul** [*stand up and make a writing motion*] smiled.

"I can never thank you enough." **Onesimus** [*stand up with a towel on their arm and bow*] threw his bag over his shoulder, almost ready to leave, but not quite yet.

"Just go back home and serve **Philemon** [*stand up and salute*] as well as you have served me. That is what Christians do, son; they serve one another right where they are. Now that you are a Christian too, I know that the two of you will get along a lot better." **Paul** [*stand up and make a writing motion*] gave **Onesimus'** [*stand up with a towel on their arm and bow*] shoulder a pat as he finally turned to go.

"I'd keep you here to help me if I could. But you have to go back home and be willing to serve **Philemon** [*stand up and salute*] first. Maybe someday he

will let you come back to me.”

Paul [*stand up and make a writing motion*] waved as **Onesimus** [*stand up with a towel on their arm and bow*] started down the path. “Tell **Philemon** [*stand up and salute*] to prepare a room for me,” he called after the young man. “I am trusting that God will answer his prayers, and that I will be able to come and see you both before too long.”

Onesimus [*stand up with a towel on their arm and bow*] gave one last wave over his shoulder and then didn't look back anymore. He was a little afraid of going back to the master he had run away from. But now he was a Christian, and his heart was full of the love of God that **Paul** [*stand up and make a writing motion*] had shown him. He was ready to try again to serve **Philemon** [*stand up and salute*] the way he should. After all, **Paul** [*stand up and make a writing motion*] had taught him that being of service at home is a big part of what being a Christian is all about.

Debriefing

Ask: **If you were Onesimus, how do you think you would feel about going back to your master after you ran away?** (Scared, but glad I was making things right.)

Why did Paul urge Onesimus to serve at home first? (That's what God wanted him to do.)

Where did you first learn to serve Jesus? (at home, etc.) **Does serving your family make you a slave?** (No, it makes me a helper.) **Let's remember our message:**



I CAN SERVE JESUS AT HOME.

Say that with me.

Memory Verse

Prepare in advance paper napkins for each child by writing the memory verse on each napkin, rolling the napkin, and tying it with a piece of string or ribbon. [The memory verse is: **“Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people” (Ephesians 6:7, NIV).**] Place them on a pretty serving tray. Serve each child and say, “May I serve you?”

Each child may take a napkin, open it, and repeat the memory verse. Have the children say the verse several times until it becomes familiar.

Bible Study

Say: **Paul's letter to Philemon is found in the little book of Philemon. Let's pretend that we are Paul and write his letter.**

Assign different verses to each child to write, until all the verses are assigned. Whoever has verse 25 can sign Paul's name at the end.

When everyone has written their portion, ask the children to read their verses in order until the whole letter is read. Adapt according to the children's writing and reading abilities.

Debriefing

Ask: **Do you like getting letters?** (yes) **How do you think Philemon liked his letter from Paul?** (Accept answers.)

The Bible doesn't say how Philemon reacted. Did Onesimus do the right thing by going back home to serve?

Jesus wants us to serve our family at home. What is today's message? Let's say it:



I CAN SERVE JESUS AT HOME.

You Need:

- paper napkin for each child
- piece of string or ribbon for each napkin
- pretty serving tray

You Need:

- Bibles
- paper
- pencils

3

Applying the Lesson

You Need:

- one inflated balloon for each six to eight children

Serving at Home

Prepare in advance one inflated balloon for every six to eight children in your class. Arrange each group in a circle.

Have them choose who will be Mom, Dad, brother, sister, etc., in their “home circle.” Then ask them to hit the balloon to a “family member,” thinking of something nice to say as they hit the balloon (kind Suzie, cheerful Tommy, Mom is a really good cook . . . , etc.).

When a child receives the balloon and compliment, they must hit the balloon and say something nice about someone else. Make sure everyone has a turn to hit the balloon.

Debriefing

Ask: **How did it feel to be served with nice words in your “home circle”?** (good, encouraging) **What did you think about serving your “family” with nice words?** (I had a good feeling—much better than when I serve mean words.)

Today’s lesson is about serving Jesus at home. Why did Paul send Onesimus home to serve his master again? (Because it is important to serve at home. Service for Jesus should begin in our homes or wherever we belong.)

In what ways other than using nice words can you serve others at your home? (Make beds, pick up toys, feed our pets, etc.) **Let’s say today’s message again:**



I CAN SERVE JESUS AT HOME.

4

Sharing the Lesson

You Need:

- uninflated balloon for each child
- pens
- small pieces of paper

Balloon Plans

Say: **Now we are going to use some balloons to make plans to serve members of our family.**

Have each child take an uninflated balloon and write on it an act of service at home (setting table, making beds, picking up toys, coming when called, feeding pets, etc.).

Then, on a small piece of paper have them write the name of the family member they plan to serve, insert the paper into the balloon, and blow the balloon up and tie it off. Encourage each child to give their balloon to a family member with the promise of how and when they will serve them.

Debriefing

Say: **Balloons remind me of joy. When you wrote an act of service on your balloon, it was like saying that you want to serve with joy. Is that what you want to do?** (Give the children a chance to react.) **Who wants to serve at home joyfully and not just because you have to?** (Invite the children to raise their hands.) **Now let’s say our message one last time:**

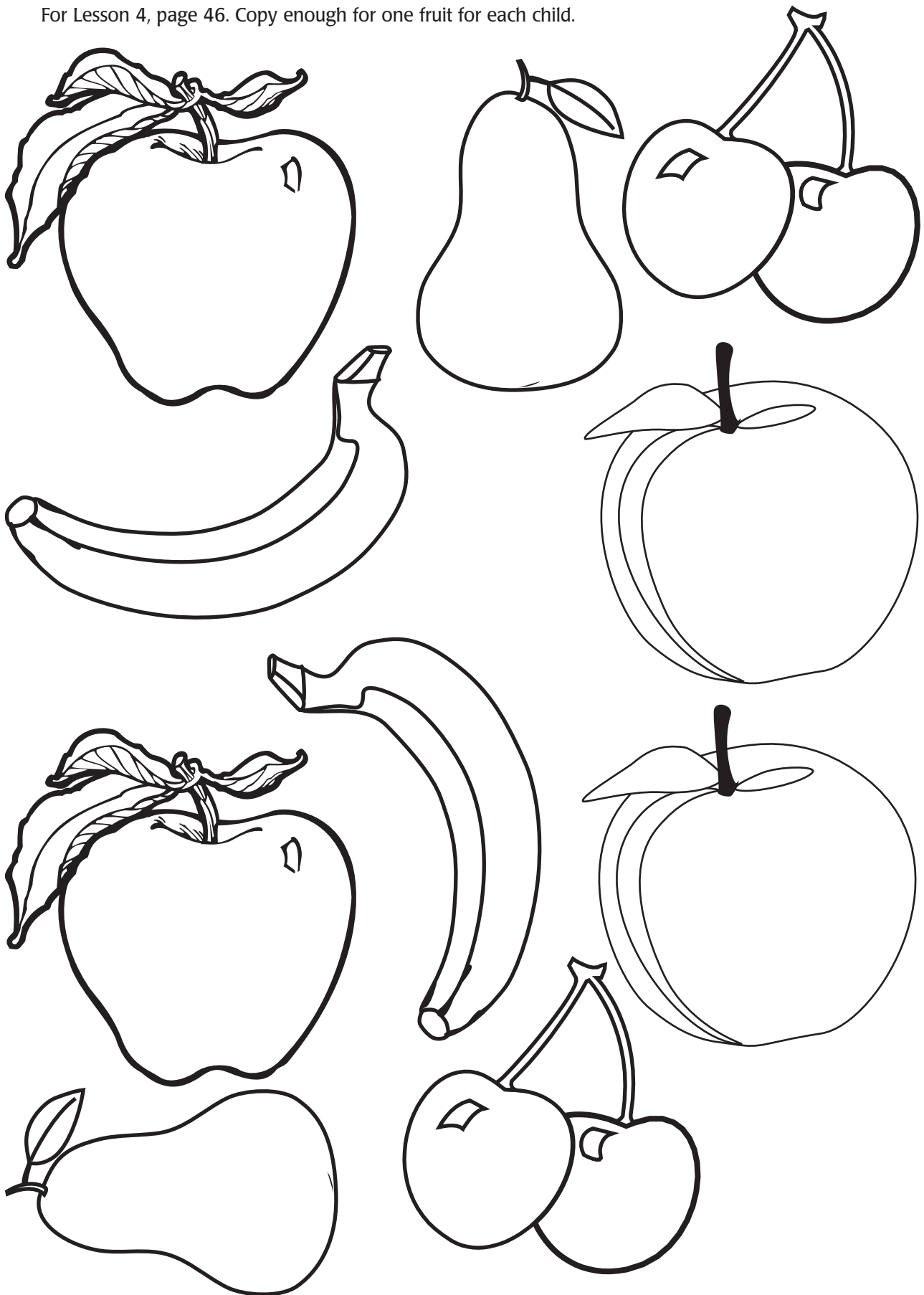


I CAN SERVE JESUS AT HOME.

Closing

Close with prayer, asking God to help the children to joyfully carry out their plans to serve at home this week.

For Lesson 4, page 46. Copy enough for one fruit for each child.



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Return of the Runaway

References

Philemon; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 456-460

Memory Verse:

“Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people” (Ephesians 6:7, NIV).

The Message

I can serve Jesus at home.

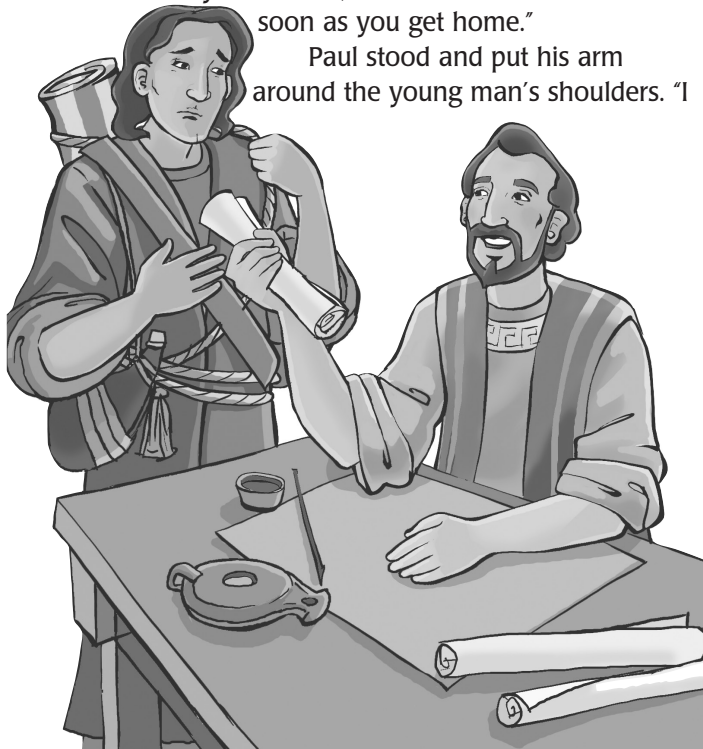
How would you like it if someone lived at your house and made your bed for you every day or cleaned your room? If you had a servant or a slave, that would probably happen.

Years ago a young man was such a slave. But he became unhappy, and he ran away. Then he met Paul. It might have happened this way . . .

Paul looked up as a tall young man came and stood beside him. The young man was dressed for travel and carried a backpack over his shoulder. Paul smiled, then looked down at the letter he had just written. He signed it, rolled it up, and handed it to the young man.

“Here, Onesimus,” he said, “this is the letter I promised you. It is addressed to your master, Philemon. Give it to him as soon as you get home.”

Paul stood and put his arm around the young man’s shoulders. “I



told him that you are like a son to me. I know that in the past you were not as useful to him as you have been to me these past few months. But now you have accepted Jesus, and love Him. I know that you will serve Philemon just as well as you have served me.”

The young man smiled shyly.

Paul continued: “We all know that he has the right to be angry with you for running away. But I told him that you have been helping me just as he would help me if he were here. I hope he will think about that. I also told him that even though you are still his slave, you are also his brother in Christ; you have become a Christian.”

Onesimus put his arm around Paul’s shoulder. Then he released Paul and put the letter in the bag he had slung over his shoulder. While his head was bent, he brushed a tear out of his eye. He hoped no one would notice.

“One more thing,” Paul continued, as the two walked toward the door. “I will pay whatever amount you might owe your master Philemon. He actually owes me his life, since I was the one who told him about Jesus.” Paul smiled as he stopped in the doorway.

“I can never thank you enough!” Onesimus exclaimed. He threw his bag over his shoulder, lingering a moment.

“Just go back home and serve Philemon as well as you have served me. Now that you are a Christian too, I know that the two of you will get along a lot better.” Paul gave Onesimus’ shoulder a pat as the young man finally turned to go.

“I’d keep you here to help me if I could. But you have to go back home and be willing to serve Philemon first. Maybe someday he will let you come back to me.”

Paul waved as Onesimus started down the path. “I have asked Philemon to prepare a room for me,” he called after the young man. “I am trusting that God

will answer my prayers and that I will be able to come and see you both before long.”

Onesimus gave one last wave over his shoulder and then didn't look back. He was a little afraid to go back to the master he had run away from. But now he was a Christian, and his heart was full of the love of God. He was ready to try again to serve Philemon the way he should. After all, Paul had taught him that being of service at home was a big part of being a Christian.

Daily Activities

Sabbath

- Take a walk with your family. Find a quiet place and share your lesson together. Imagine that you are Onesimus. Tell your family what you think will happen when you get to Philemon's house. Ask them what it was like to be a slave in Roman times.
- Read Ephesians 6:7 and tell your family what it means to you.

Sunday

- During family worship, read and discuss the beginning of Paul's letter in Philemon 1-7.
- Give a family member the balloon you decorated in Sabbath School. Or write an act of service for a family member on a balloon. Write their name on paper and put it inside. Then blow up the balloon and give it to the person as a happy surprise.
- Say your memory verse as you pretend to walk home to Philemon. Pray for people who don't have freedom to attend church.

Monday

- Read and discuss Philemon 8-11 with your family.
- Write your memory verse on a paper napkin, leaving plenty of space between words. Cut between the words. Put the napkin puzzle parts together in the right order. Why use a napkin for your memory verse?
- Sing "Love at Home" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 137). Then ask Jesus to help you serve others today.

Tuesday

- With your family, read and discuss Philemon 12-14.
- Plan to be a secret servant today at home. Do something to help a member of your family

without letting them know.

- Say your memory verse without help. Then pray for each family member.

Wednesday

- Read and discuss Philemon 15-17 for family worship. How did you serve at home today?
- Paul sent letters by messenger. Name some ways you can get messages to people who live far away. Use two ways today to tell someone that Jesus loves them.
- Make up a tune and sing your memory verse.

Thursday

- With your family, read and discuss Philemon 18-25.
- Find the names of two servants by reading the following Bible verses:
 - He took care of the family sheep. (1 Samuel 16:10-13)
 - He served God in Eli's home—his other home. (1 Samuel 1:20 and 2:11)
- Ask your family: How is being a servant today different from Paul's time?
- Draw a picture to show what your memory verse means to you. Explain it to your family.

Friday

- Today is a good day to be a servant at home. What can you do to help your family prepare for Sabbath?
- For family worship, act out Paul writing the letter to Philemon. In your own words, write what was in the letter. Pass the letter to someone in your family who will represent Onesimus.
- Read Galatians 5:13 together. How can your family live this text at home?
- Say your memory verse together.
- Sing together "This Is My Prayer" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 106).