

## “Doing Even More”

Scripture: Philemon 1-21

Graphics: labor day, tools, slavery

Big Truth: Because of our mission to make disciples, we are called to do even more - more than Jesus did, and more than we think we can do. The way to do even more is not through our own strength but in the power of the Spirit. Sometimes, that means doing less of what we think to focus on what the Spirit tells. It means doing the right things. It means doing everything the Spirit leads us to do. We’re entering into a new season of school and ministry. We may be tempted to do more and be busy, but Jesus calls us to do even more, in and for Him alone.

Focus Phrase: God calls us to do even more by doing less, right, and everything, in the Spirit.

### 1. Introduction

- A. **PRAY!**
- B. I have a friend that consistently goes above and beyond. Do you have a friend like that? Or an employee like that? Or a student?
- C. Here’s what I mean: when we go fishing, this friend of mine takes the fish, cleans them, filets them, packages them, vacuum seals them, AND has even been known to drive them to my house and put them in our freezer! I’d say that’s above and beyond! And not just fish, but venison and turkey and anything else that we catch, harvest, or hunt.
- D. I don’t ask this person to do those things. He just does more than is required. AND, he doesn’t resent it or do it grudgingly, because he knows that doing even more will bless the people around him...and him, I’m confident.
- E. This weekend, in the U.S., we’re observing Labor Day. According to the Department of Labor, “Labor Day is an annual celebration of the social and economic achievements of American workers. The holiday is rooted in the late nineteenth century, when labor activists pushed for a federal holiday to recognize the many contributions workers have made to America’s strength, prosperity, and well-being.” (<https://www.dol.gov/general/laborday/history>)
- F. This is truly a day to stop and reflect on our labor - our work - and how our striving and accomplishments have made a difference in our nation. It’s a day to celebrate those who go above and beyond in order to do even more than they are already doing.
- G. The title of this message is just that: **Doing Even More**.
- H. And before that starts to stress you out, thinking about your already packed schedule, doing more may not mean what you think.
- I. We’re going to read an entire book of the bible this morning right here in worship. Now, if you know about the book of Philemon, you know that it’s not

that scary - only 22 verses. It's actually a letter written from the Apostle Paul to his friend Philemon.

- J. One of my commentaries said this, "Paul wrote the book of Philemon to a slave-owner, Philemon, about the issue of a slave. The slave, Onesimus, apparently ran away from Philemon, met up with Paul and became a Christian. Paul has apparently written this letter for Onesimus to carry as he returns to his old master. Scholars disagree as to whether Onesimus was truly a runaway slave (intent on never going back) or merely ran to Paul (whom he previously knew) to petition for intervention regarding unfair treatment. Whichever the case, Paul strongly commends Onesimus and seeks to restore him to Philemon." (<https://www.homileticonline.com/members/item/93067415>)
- K. So what does this have to do Labor Day or doing more? Well, there's one line near the end of this letter from Paul to Philemon that stood out to me, as I was praying about this message.
- L. The line comes in verse 21, when Paul writes, "Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will **do even more** than I say."
- M. What are God's expectations of us as followers of Jesus when it comes to work, ministry, and how we live out our faith in Jesus?
- N. Here's where we're headed today: God calls us to do even more by doing less, doing the right thing, and doing everything, in the Spirit.
- O. Let's open our bibles to the book of Philemon...and we'll read the WHOLE THING! If you're ready, say, "Let's GO!"

## 2. Scripture

### A. READ verses 1-7

- i. What's obvious, here, is that Paul knows Philemon well. He calls him 'my brother'. There's a sense of affection and knowing, here.
- ii. And, we learn, Philemon is the head of a household. This guy has people.
- iii. The ministry he's leading in his house may be small, but it's fruitful - they have love for all the saints and faith in Jesus Christ - keeping it simple!
- iv. And they're evangelistic - they're actively sharing their faith in Jesus. And Paul wants that ministry to be more and more effective so that more and more people can come to faith in Jesus' death and resurrection and ascension.
- v. Yet, as we read this first section, we have a sense that Paul is leading up to saying something else. It's like writing a letter of critique, starting with some good stuff to build rapport.
- vi. In verse 8, Paul gets to the point...let's read that...

### B. READ verses 8-16

- i. Ah! So here's the rub: Paul is in prison. A person named Onesimus is with Paul, but apparently not in prison. Also, we learn that through Paul's teaching and discipleship, Onesimus has become a born again believer in Jesus!
- ii. And Paul, writing to Philemon, is appealing to him to do his duty! Now, we're not totally sure what that duty is, but Paul is asking Philemon to do the right thing...what he knows is his duty.
- iii. Something has changed in Onesimus - whose name actually means 'useful'. I think that's why Paul said that, formerly, Onesimus was useLESS, but NOW - because he's a sinner saved by grace - he is USEFUL to both Paul AND Philemon.
- iv. Yet, as we read on, we get to the fact that Onesimus was a slave in Philemon house! Maybe Onesimus ran away. Maybe Philemon sent him away. We're not sure. But we DO know that Paul wanted Philemon to know that Onesimus is not the same man as he was when Philemon last saw him. In fact, Onesimus is now a **brother in Christ**. Praise God!
- v. Onesimus' life has been transformed "by grace through faith in Jesus Christ," to use Paul's words in Ephesians 2.
- vi. Paul was trying to do the right thing here...sending Onesimus back to Philemon, with the assurance that Philemon would receive him, not as a slave, but as a Christian brother...free in Christ.
- vii. That's Paul's plea...his appeal to his friend Philemon. However, Paul was not done yet. Look at verse 17...

### C. READ verses 17-25

- i. Paul puts it all on the line, here. He wrote, "Receive him as if it were ME coming to you!" I'll even repay any expenses that may be owed.
- ii. Paul was so convinced that Jesus had made such a change in Onesimus' life, that he was willing to vouch for him, literally.
- iii. This is powerful! How many times in your life have you had to vouch for someone else...and you were 100% confident in that? I have to fill out references for people fairly regularly. Some I know well and would vouch 100% about. Other times, I'm less confident, but respond with truth and grace. Paul was CONFIDENT - and was willing to even repay any debts!
- iv. "Let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart!" Paul was really pouring it on.
- v. But then he wrote this (and here's Paul's confidence in Philemon):  
"Confident of your obedience (to what I've asked IN THE LORD), I am writing to you, KNOWING (assured and hopeful) that you will DO EVEN MORE than I say."

- vi. (Oh yeah, and blow up the air mattress because I'm coming to stay with you sometime.)

### 3. Application

- A. What can we learn about doing even more today? Well, Paul was **convinced** that three men who were all saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ were on a completely different level of relationship than two Christian men and an unsaved, possibly runaway, slave.
- B. I have a mentor in my life named Maxie Dunnam who has this greeting: "The love of Jesus in you greets the love of Jesus in me, and bring us together in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit!"
- C. There's an incredible Holy Spirit connection amongst the lives of those who are, "in Christ." I suspect you've felt that. When you're in conversation with someone and you find out that they are a believer, something in you clicks!
- D. It's because we're connected as equals in Christ. Galatians 3:28 makes this claim: "There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."
- E. And because of that status in Christ, as Paul appeals to Philemon, is that we're connected in Christ...we're welcomed in Christ...and we're brothers and sisters in Christ.
- F. AND, that status leads to doing even more than is expected in Christ!
- G. But what does that mean for us, practically today? We, as a church, and as individuals are expected to **do even more**. But does that mean going to more meetings, holding more ministry events, and working our schedules to jam more things in?
- H. And, listen, I'm applying this to what we do in the church, but this may be even more applicable to our schedules as we move into a new school year, new work season, or shifted family dynamic. As followers of Jesus, everything we do we do, "as unto the Lord...". Colossians 3:23-24 says, "Whatever task you must do, work as if your soul depends on it, as for the Lord and not for humans, since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ."
- I. This isn't telling us to be busier...it's telling us to do even more in Christ and for Christ!
- J. Jesus said to the disciples - to YOU - in John 14:12, "Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do **greater works than these**, because I am going to the Father."
- K. So, Doing Even More (greater things) means this:
  - i. First, **Doing Even More starts with Doing Less**.

- a. That may seem strange but this is about doing less in your **OWN strength** and more in the power of the Holy Spirit.
  - b. You can do all kinds of things. Philemon had all kinds of choices - he could've sent someone to find Onesimus. He could've had him put in jail or even had him stoned to death, possibly.
  - c. And the thing is, we don't know if Philemon actually did what Paul said. There is some extra-biblical evidence that Onesimus became a leader in the church. And simply the fact that this letter made it into the canon of scripture gives us a clue that Philemon did less in HIS own power, and more in the power of the Spirit. Welcoming Onesimus back was so much easier than seeking him out and forcing him back into slavery - knowing that Onesimus was now a brother in Christ.
  - d. When you are faced with a set of options or calendar items, I plead with you to start with **PRAYING** about your priorities. And your priorities will be different in different seasons. But, start with prayer so that you can allow the Holy Spirit to give you your priorities and not the circumstances or people around you.
  - e. You can't do everything. One rule of ministry is prioritizing serving in Jesus' name over learning about serving in Jesus' name. Making hard decisions about opportunities to attend bible study or apply what you've learn in bible study get easier when you choose to apply what you've learned.
  - f. Do less...which is actually **MORE** in the Spirit.
- ii. The second thing: **Doing Even More means doing the Right Thing.**
- a. Sometimes the right thing is the hard thing...the humbling thing.
  - b. Many times this looks like putting our insecurities and selfish nature aside to always start with thinking the best of someone else.
  - c. The right thing is never done from a place of revenge or offense. The right thing is always born out of the Spirit's best for the other. It's all about grace flowing from the Jesus in you to the Jesus in the other.
  - d. Philemon was asked by Paul to do the right thing...not the easy thing or the thing that would feel the best, from a selfish standpoint. He was called to do it because of the fact that Onesimus was a new creation in Christ.
  - e. When's the last time you wanted to react and say or do something to a brother or sister in Christ from a place of woundedness or offense instead of love for the other? It may feel right in the moment but is not **RIGHT**.
  - f. Doing the right thing is always led by the Holy Spirit and is **FOR** the **OTHER** more than you.

iii. **AND, Doing Even More means Doing Everything the Spirit Asks** of you.

- a. I suspect when Philemon read Paul's letter, he may have gotten a little hot under the collar. So, THAT's where you've been, slave!"
  - b. Yet, Paul appealed to their shared faith in Christ to ask for even more: "do your duty", "receive Onesimus", "give me this benefit", "do even more", "prepare a room for me". In essence, love me, love Onesimus, and keep loving the saints in your church.
  - c. When the Spirit leads you do something in Jesus' name, he also calls you to be obedient to that - every time.
  - d. I know there are times when you and I miss something that the Spirit is asking. Keep listening. Keep praying. AND, most importantly, keep doing even more IN THE SPIRIT and not your own power or desire.
- L. God calls us to do even more by doing less, doing right, and doing everything, in the Spirit.

#### **4. Conclusion**

- A. Our lives are in constant motion and change. We strive as we work and serve, and we find ourselves using more time and energy than we think we have.
- B. And then the Spirit taps on your heart and asks, "I want you to do even more." Our first reaction is to say no to the Spirit...I have no time!
- C. But imagine a church who, together, prays for the Spirit's priorities to rise to the top. Not a busy church, but a mission-focused church.
- D. Tomorrow is a perfect day to spend in prayer about these things. Do less. Do the right thing. And do everything the Spirit is asking.
- E. What you will find is that when the Spirit's priorities rise to the top, you will not only bless others, but YOU will be blessed.
- F. Be a friend like mine who goes above and beyond...be that friend to Jesus and those around you...go above and beyond to bless and be blessed.
- G. Let's pray!