

Materials I Need:

Legend:



= Option 1, Appropriate for 1st – 2nd Grade



= Option 2, Appropriate for 3rd – 6th Grade

Memory Work:

“Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good—no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother.”

Philemon 1:15-16a

Aim Questions:

1. Who wrote the book and why?
2. Who were Philemon and Onesimus?
3. How did Paul desire Philemon to treat Onesimus?
4. What lessons can you learn from this story?



Hook:




The Prodigal Son (*Reading/ Discussion*). Read Luke 15:11-32 out loud to the class. What did you like about the father’s response to his long-lost son? If you were the father, what would you have done to the prodigal son? What lessons can we learn from this story about the issues of love and forgiveness?





Slavery During the Time of Paul (*Discussion*). What do you think of when you hear the word “slavery?” Is slavery right or wrong? In today’s Bible lesson, we’re going to learn about a slave named Onesimus who had a master named Philemon. Slavery existed in both the Old and New Testaments, yet God never declares that slavery is wrong. Instead, God sets the standards for how masters should treat their slaves and how slaves should submit to their masters.


During the time of Paul, slavery was an acceptable part of Roman society. Slaves were used for all sorts of jobs, even doctors! Therefore, it wasn’t a negative or bad job to have in being a slave, as long as you had a kind and fair master. Slaves had far better financial security than those who were free and on their own to make a living. Oftentimes, a slave would choose to remain a slave, even though he could be set free, simply because he would be guaranteed food and shelter and clothing from his master.


The negative side to slavery at this time was that slaves were viewed under Roman law as the property of the master. Therefore, a master could trade, sell, or buy a slave at will. Plus, because slaves were viewed as property, abuse was common. This is why Paul wrote to Christian masters to treat their slaves with “justice and fairness” (Col. 4:1).

 **Why Is It So Hard to Forgive? (Discussion).** Why is it so hard to forgive others? Oftentimes, forgiveness means letting go of a hurt or a pain that was caused unfairly by someone else. It means that we're willing to forego any revenge and not to bring up the hurt again, either to the person who hurt us or to ourselves. **Debrief:** Our salvation is based upon God's forgiveness of us, even though we have never deserved it! Therefore, forgiveness is at the core of our own salvation. In today's lesson, we're going to learn how Christians are to respond when being hurt or sinned against. We're going to see that those who have been forgiven must learn to forgive others.

 **Bonds of Brotherhood (Discussion/Craft).** Bring in pictures from magazines of different people from various walks of life, different occupations, economic status levels, age, and physical characteristics. Talk about the probable differences between each of these people. Now ask the students to tell you what things these same people would have in common if they were all Christians. Assemble the craft page with the items from **1PHM01.GF1 Pg. 1-2** as you complete your discussion. The instructions for assembly are shown on **1PHM01.GF1 Pg. 3**.


 **Doing What Is Right Is Not Always Easy (Discussion).** Have you ever done something wrong and had a hard time admitting it, and then making it right with those whom you offended? *(Teachers: Share personal experiences to prompt ideas from the students.)* These wrong choices sometimes seem convenient for us to make, but the test really comes when we have to go back and make restitution. Doing the right thing, seeking forgiveness, and restoring that relationship can be a very difficult thing to do. Christ can give us the strength to do what is right when we place our faith in Him and act in obedience to His Word. We will hear this morning about a difficult situation where a slave stole something and ran away. He then needed to return and seek the forgiveness of his master. Will his master forgive him?

 **Going Against the Grain (Demonstration/Activity).** Illustrate or give multiple examples of "going against the grain." This might mean bringing in a sample of fabric or fur with a definite nap to it and rubbing it "against the grain." Other examples might include things such as going up on a down escalator, running back a kick-off when the other team is coming directly at you, peer pressure, swimming upstream, or walking into a strong wind. In our Bible Adventure this morning we will hear about a man who was asked by the Apostle Paul to go against everything he knew and what society expected him to do. What choice did he make?

 **What Is Forgiveness? (Discussion/Demonstration).** Bring in a "Magic Slate," "Magna Doodle," or a small simple whiteboard with dry markers. Talk about times when people have done things to you or your students that caused them to get angry. These might be times when they were treated unfairly, had their feelings hurt, or experienced physical pain at the hand of another. Write these on the board. Demonstrate the act of forgiveness by erasing these from the slate. Gone and forgotten; not to be brought up again. As Christians who have Christ living in us, we are to forgive those who sin against us just as Christ has forgiven us. Read Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 2:13-14, Colossians 3:12-17, Matthew 6:14, Matthew 18:21. Now talk about what the student's response was to the situation(s) which were brought up earlier and what (if any) corrective action might be required.



Book:
Presentation Ideas –

 **Act Out the Bible Adventure (Play).** Philemon is a short book and could be presented to the class in the form of a play. Here are some ideas to get you started. Scene I takes place in prison with Paul writing the letter to Philemon. He and Onesimus are talking about the events that transpired and about making restitution with Philemon. Scene II takes place on the journey from Rome to Colossae with Onesimus and Tychicus. There is great anxiety on the part of Onesimus as he does not know what Philemon will do when he arrives. The final scene takes place when they arrive in Colossae and enter the house of Philemon. The act of reunion and forgiveness will complete the story. If you write a script in advance the students could play the parts. This idea, however, will probably not present the Bible Adventure as clearly as if the teachers put on the play.

 **Paul in Prison (Illustration/Coloring Page).** Philemon 1:1-2, **1PHM01.GF2.**

 **Philemon Welcomes Onesimus (Illustration/Coloring Page).** Philemon 1:12-21, **1PHM01.GF3.**
Bible Adventure –

Did you know that many of the books in the New Testament are actually letters to individuals or to groups of people? Some are lengthy and cover many different issues, and some are quite brief and have only one or two issues to deal with. The book of Philemon is a brief letter from the Apostle Paul to a fellow believer named Philemon. If you're not careful as you thumb through your Bible, you might miss it, tucked away between Titus and Hebrews. But you won't want to miss its message. Though the word is never used in the book, it is a book about forgiveness. God thought it important enough to include in His Word, so let's take a look at it.

Philemon was written by Paul from his prison cell in Rome. As we read through the letter we discover the reason Paul wrote to his brother in Christ. Philemon once owned a slave named Onesimus. Onesimus grew tired of slavery and one day ran away. It is likely that when he ran he stole from Philemon so he would have money to live on. He ended up in Rome where there were so many slaves he could easily blend into the crowds and avoid being arrested. That would have been the end of the story, except that God had plans for this man's life. Those plans included Onesimus meeting Paul, either while Onesimus was on his way to Rome or after he arrived there. Through Paul's preaching, Onesimus learned of Jesus Christ, and how he could receive forgiveness for his sins and become part of God's family. He not only became a believer but also a valuable helper to Paul.

Somehow, Paul became aware that Onesimus was a runaway slave. Even though his friend was not a Christian when he left Philemon's home, he still needed to make right what he had done wrong. Paul decided, and Onesimus agreed, that the former slave should return to his master and ask for forgiveness.

While he was in prison, Paul had written letters to churches in Colossae and Ephesus. It was arranged that Tychicus, another of Paul's helpers, would hand-carry the letters to the churches. Onesimus could travel to Colossae with Tychicus, and not have to be concerned about being arrested along the way. Paul wrote a letter to his friend Philemon and sent it along as well.

As Onesimus stood once again before his master, he didn't know what to expect. Philemon had the right to do whatever he wanted with his former slave. He probably watched as his master began to read Paul's letter: "(From) Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ. . .to Philemon, our dear friend and fellow worker..." Did you notice that Paul called Philemon a "fellow worker?" Philemon was a Christian too. Paul was not concerned that Philemon would harm Onesimus because Philemon was known as a very loving person, but he was concerned that Philemon would not be able to forgive Onesimus for what he had done to him. Philemon may have had to replace Onesimus, causing him expense. Then there was the matter of the stolen property. Philemon had definitely been wronged. In the Roman Empire, runaway slaves were dealt with very harshly, and Onesimus must have known this. It tells us something about the changes Christ had made in this man's life that he was willing to go back to Philemon.

In Paul's letter, he praised Philemon for the reports he had heard about the way he had shown love to the believers in Colossae. Paul hoped that Philemon would continue to be a good example to the church in his treatment of Onesimus. Then Paul moved on to the main reason for the writing of his letter--the problem of what to do about Onesimus. Because Paul was an apostle, he knew he could have ordered Philemon to free Onesimus and Philemon would have obeyed, but Paul did not. Instead, he asked Philemon to do the right thing--to take Onesimus back and completely forgive him. Paul wrote that Onesimus had become a Christian and was very useful to him, and could be useful to Philemon. (Onesimus actually means "useful.") Onesimus had been changed from the inside out and was now able to be used for God's glory. Paul saw God's hand in all these happenings and wrote to Philemon: "Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good--no longer a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother."

Next, Paul asked Philemon to release Onesimus so that he, Paul, could continue to have Onesimus work for the LORD in Rome. Again, Paul did not want to force Philemon to do this, but asked him to do it out of love for him and also for Onesimus, his new brother in Christ. Paul also offered to pay back whatever Onesimus had stolen, since Onesimus was not able to do this himself. Paul did not want anything to

stand in the way of these two brothers in Christ making peace with each other. Philemon knew he already owed Paul more than he could ever repay. It was the apostle who had told him about Christ and led him to put his faith in the LORD. Paul wrote that if Philemon would do what he asked--forgive Onesimus and accept him as a brother--he would be very joyful indeed.

Paul closed his letter by expressing his confidence that Philemon would do what would bring glory and honor to God. Not only would he forgive Onesimus, but he would release him to minister to other believers. God had transformed the hearts of both the slave and his master so that both could be free to do what God had called them to do.

The Christian faith radically changed the Roman Empire's practice of slavery. It didn't do this by preaching about the evils of slavery, but by changing the hearts of sinful men to hearts of love and kindness toward others. As a result relationships were changed. Masters still owned slaves, but the hearts of both master and slave were so different after being saved that their relationship showed the love of God, not the selfishness of man. That's why Christianity was never meant to be a tool to change society outwardly, but a tool to change hearts from the inside out. That's the only change that will have any kind of lasting, eternal effect.

The book of Philemon is a good picture of Paul's words about forgiveness in Ephesians 4:32: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you." We see examples of forgiveness in this letter in several ways:

1. Philemon chose to see the usefulness of a fellow believer to the body of Christ (vs 10).
2. Philemon received back his former slave who had sinned against him (vs 12, 15).
3. Paul and Philemon both trusted in the sovereignty of God to make good out of the sinful actions of Onesimus.
4. When forgiveness was given it brought joy to the entire body of Christ.

The Bible is filled with warnings that believers will miss out on God's blessing and may even be punished by God for refusing to forgive a brother or sister in Christ. We live in a culture where heroes are the ones who go after those who offend them. Families break apart because of unwillingness to forgive. God commands us to forgive. To refuse to do so is rebellion against Him. If you take one thing with you today to remember and to put into practice, let it be this: when we sin, we sin against God alone. If someone has offended you, they are really sinning against God. If that person goes to God for forgiveness and they receive it, who are you to refuse to forgive them? He is more just and holy than we are, so if He can forgive, shouldn't we forgive, too? Our sins against God are so huge, they make others' offenses against us seem insignificant in comparison. Take the Apostle Paul's words to heart: "... forgiving one another, just as in Christ, God forgave you."



Look:



Kids on Stage (Play). Now it's the students' turn to put on a play for each other. Working in your small groups, choose a Bible Adventure of your own which shows God's mercy and forgiveness. Then perform these for the rest of the class. Use the LOOK time to review and discuss the text and prepare short scripts. Take turns during the Took time to perform these skits in front of the class.


Teachers: Do your homework in preparation for this activity so that all your students will need to do is follow your directions. Time will be limited. Possible suggestions:

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Matthew 18:21-35 | Parable of the unforgiving servant |
| John 13: 1-20 | Forgiveness illustrated in the washing of the disciples' feet |
| Luke 15:10-32 | Prodigal son |
| Luke 15:1-7 | Rejoicing over a lost sheep which has been found |
| Luke 15: 8-10 | Woman rejoices after lost coin is found |
| Luke 17: 1-6 | Concerning forgiveness |
| Exodus 23:4 | Release of neighbor's donkey |
| Proverbs 24:17 | Do not rejoice when your enemy falls |

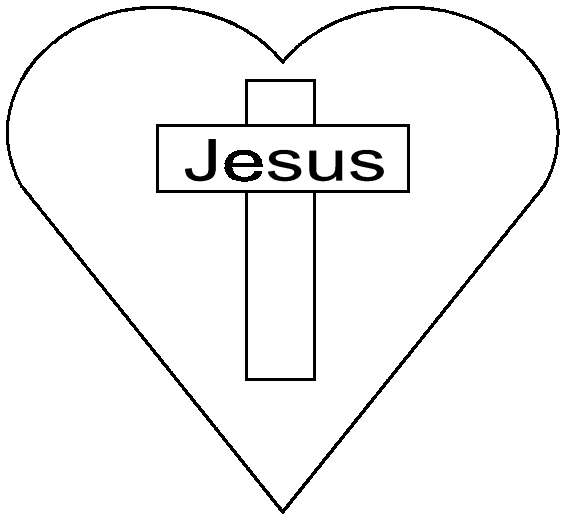
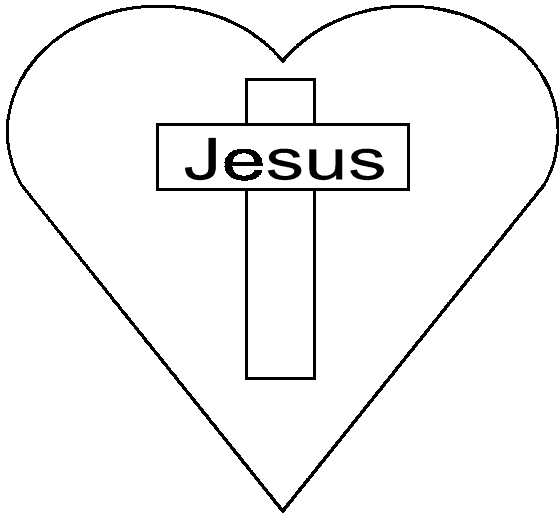
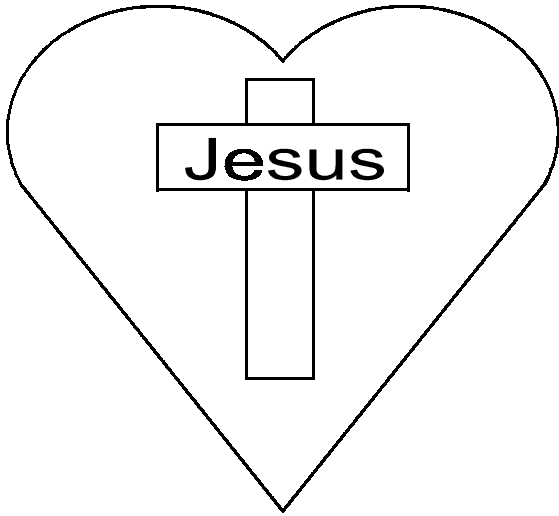
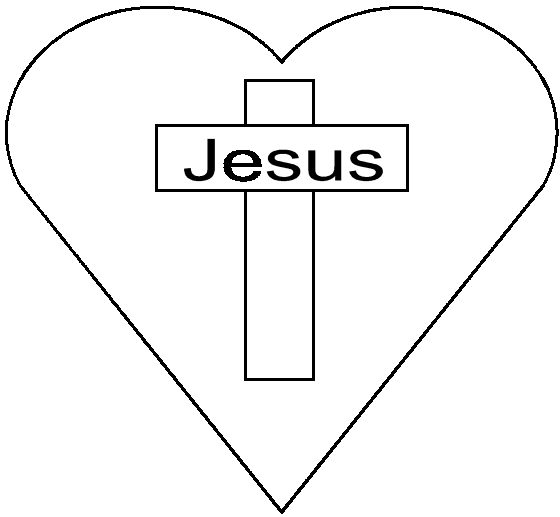
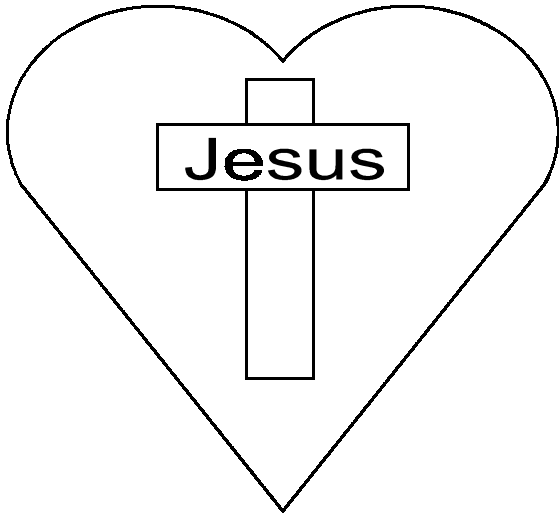
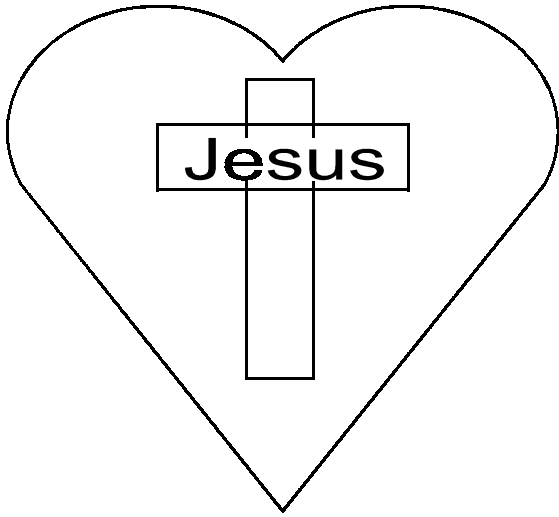
- Radical Change (Craft).** When Onesimus became a Christian he was *radically* transformed. This craft shows his heart before (on his way to Rome), and afterwards (as he returns to Colossae). Each student will need labels from **1PHM01.GF4 Pg. 1**, paper, scissors, glue, crayons, **1PHM01.GF4 Pg. 2** copied onto white paper, and a piece of construction paper. Follow the instructions on **1PHM01.GF4 Pg. 3** to verify the proper way of assembling this craft.
 - What Does Forgiveness Look Like? (Word Search).** Find the words listed on this worksheet that belong in a forgiving heart. If they don't belong, cross them out, **1PHM01.GF5**.
 - Passage Review Questions (Worksheet).** This booklet contains many questions from the Scripture passage covered in today's lesson. Students may work on them in class and complete them during the week at home, **1PHM01.GF6**.
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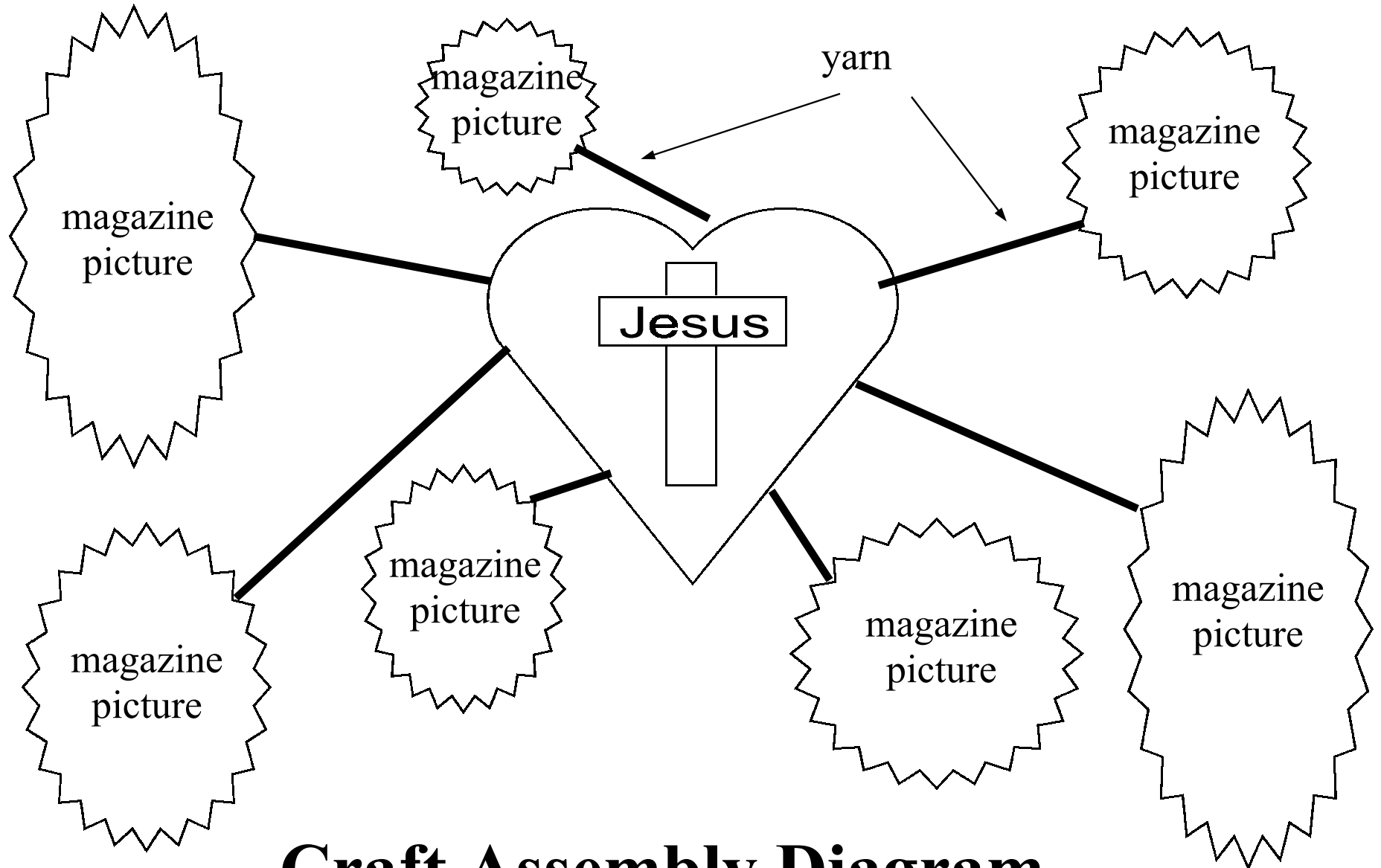
Took:

- From Useless to Useful (Worksheet).** We learned today how Onesimus was transformed when he became a believer. He now wanted to do what was right and return to Colossae, seeking forgiveness from Philemon. When we become Christians, we too are transformed into new creatures. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 and use **1PHM01.GF7** to fill in some of the ways we are different from before.
* **Teachers:** Use this time to talk with your students about making a decision to follow Christ. If they have a hard time filling in the worksheet and describing that transformation, they may be primed and ready to be lead to Christ this morning.
- My Picture of God's Forgiveness. (Drawing/Display).** Display these drawings on the wall at the end of class, and allow the students to describe their drawing to each other, **1PHM01.GF8**.
- The Cost and Consequences of Forgiveness (Worksheet and Discussion).**  In application from today's Bible Adventure, or from personal experience, let's look and think together on the question of what happens during the process of forgiveness. Use **1PHM01.GF9** as you discuss and record your thoughts. Be sure to consider the viewpoint of both the person who did wrong (the offender), as well as the recipient of that wrong action (recipient). At the conclusion of your discussion, write a brief statement about the results of reconciliation and the benefits of restoration.
- How is God Using Me? (Worksheet/Discussion).** Read Philemon 1:11. As Paul pleads with Philemon to forgive and release Onesimus, he notes the change which has transformed Onesimus into someone who now can be useful for the Kingdom. Ironically the name Onesimus means "useful." Has God transformed you? What are some ways which we can be useful to God as He furthers His Kingdom? Write your ideas in the areas shown in the picture **1PHM01.GF10**. Color the picture.
- Today's Secret Message (Memory Verse).** Use this worksheet to help learn this week's memory verse, **1PHM01.GF11**.

Bonds of Brotherhood
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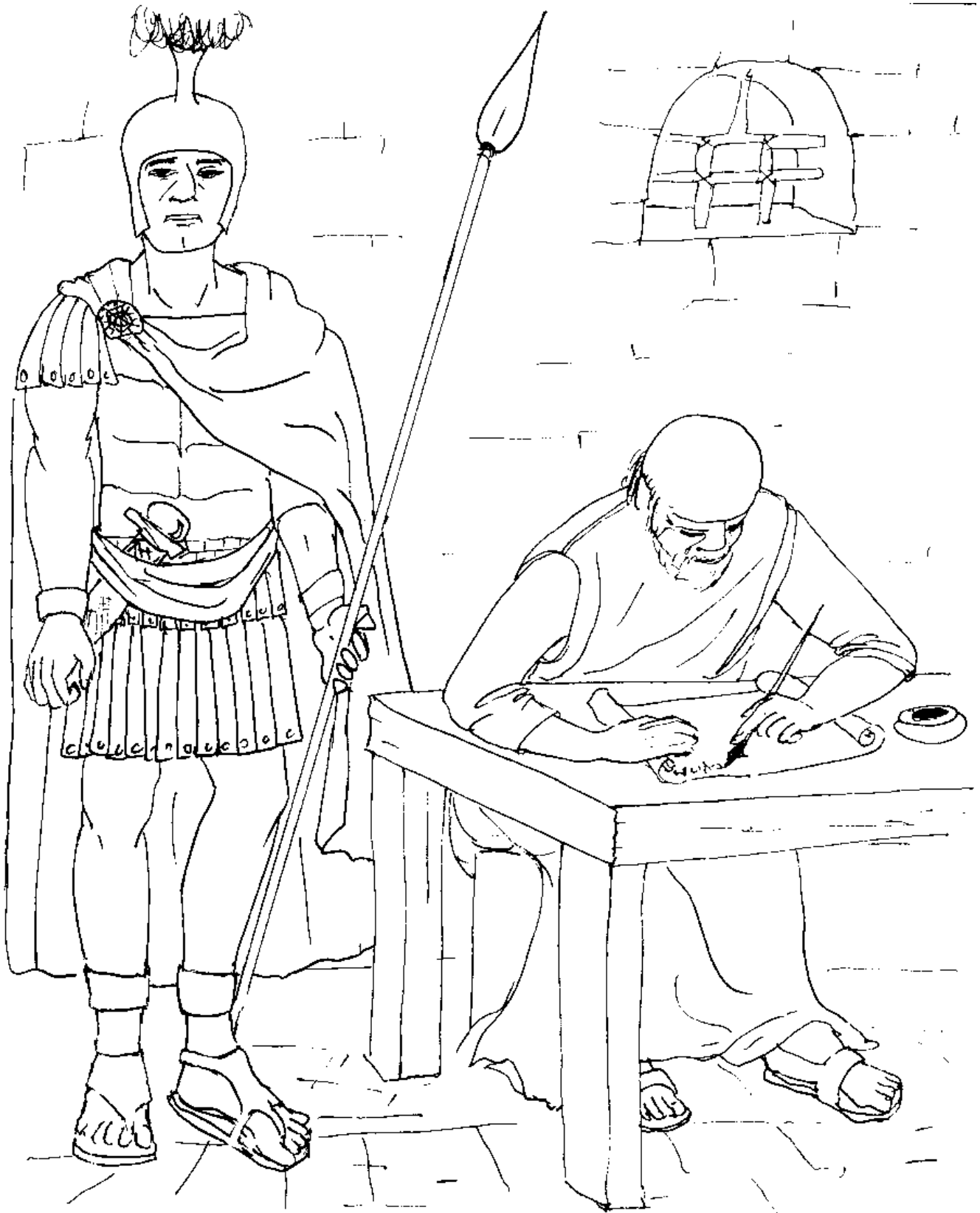


Bonds of Brotherhood



Craft Assembly Diagram

Paul in Prison



Philemon Welcomes Onesimus



Radical Change

Radical Change

Radical Change

Radical Change

Radical Change

Rome Colossae

Rome Colossae

Rome Colossae

Rome Colossae

Rome Colossae

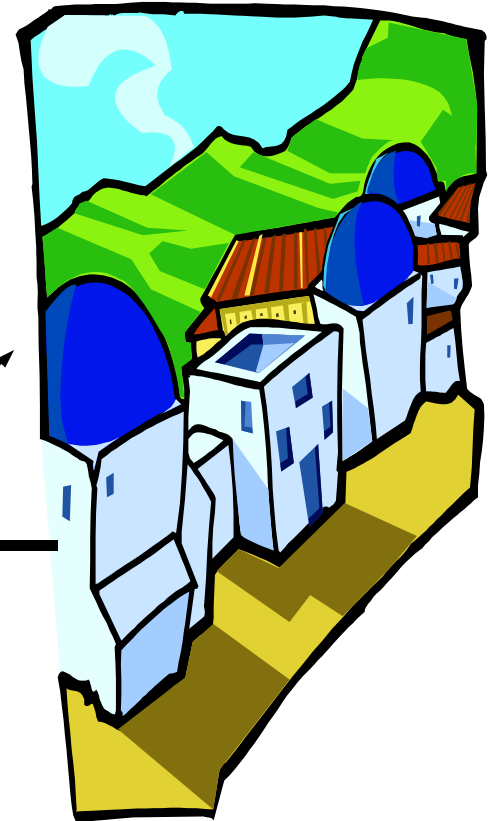
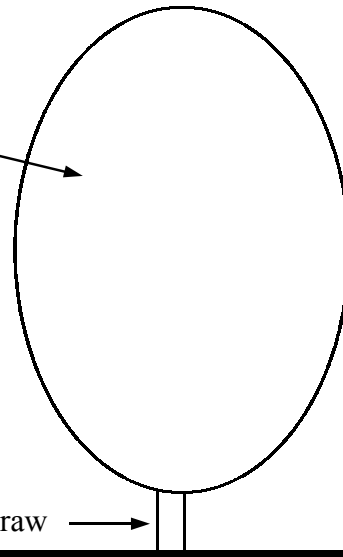
Radical Change



Radical Change

Color the pictures of Onesimus on his way to Rome and returning to Colossae. Cut out and glue pictures back to back on the straw. Make slit where shown, and insert straw through the slit. Move the straw back and forth in the slit, and spin the straw to reveal the flip side, radical change of Onesimus.

Make slit in page, and insert straw.

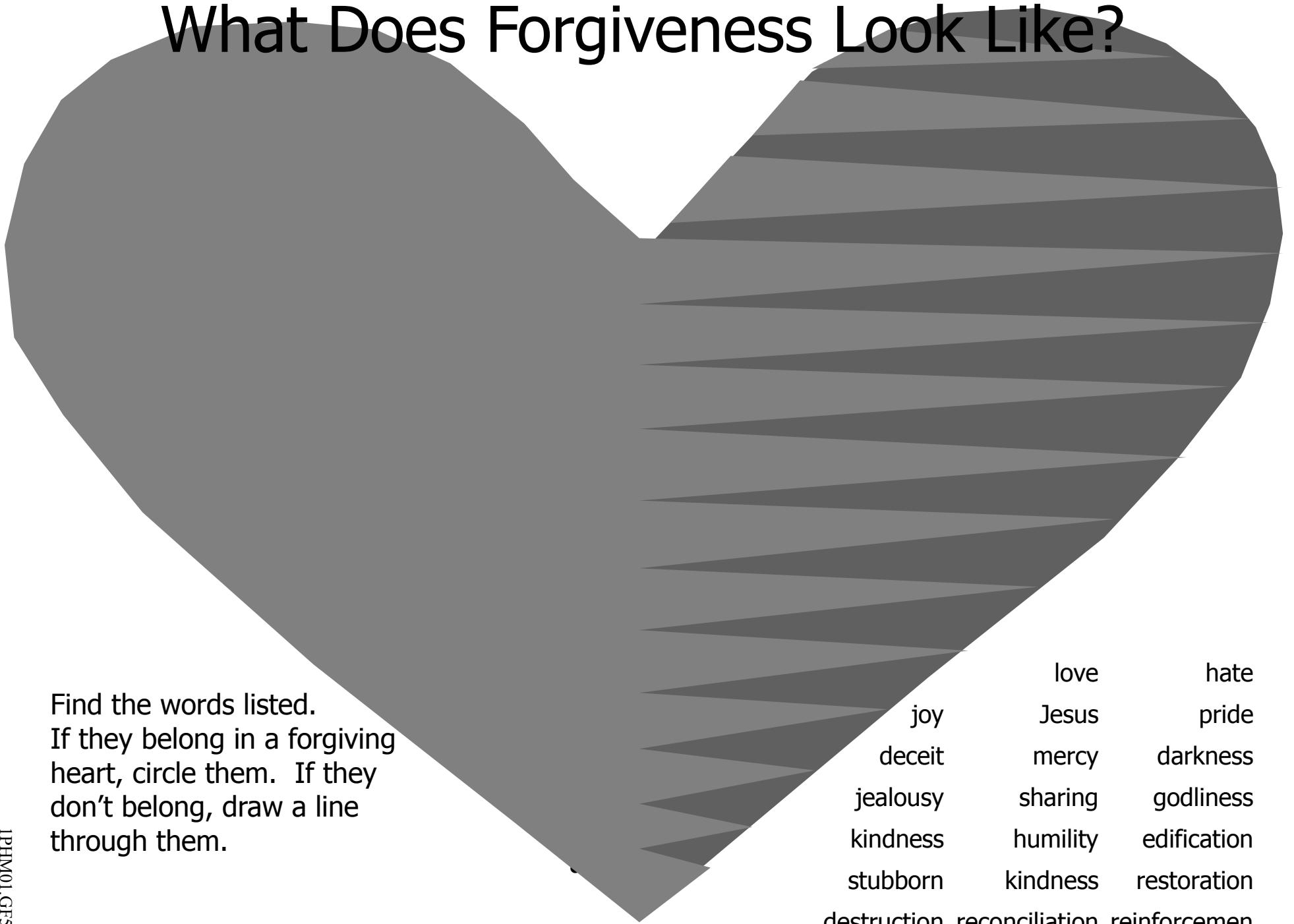


Paste pictures of Rome and Colossae on the right and left sides of the sheet of construction paper. Glue labels as shown..

Rome

Colossae

What Does Forgiveness Look Like?



Find the words listed.
If they belong in a forgiving
heart, circle them. If they
don't belong, draw a line
through them.

| | | |
|-------------|----------------|---------------|
| | love | hate |
| joy | Jesus | pride |
| deceit | mercy | darkness |
| jealousy | sharing | godliness |
| kindness | humility | edification |
| stubborn | kindness | restoration |
| destruction | reconciliation | reinforcement |

Passage Review Questions

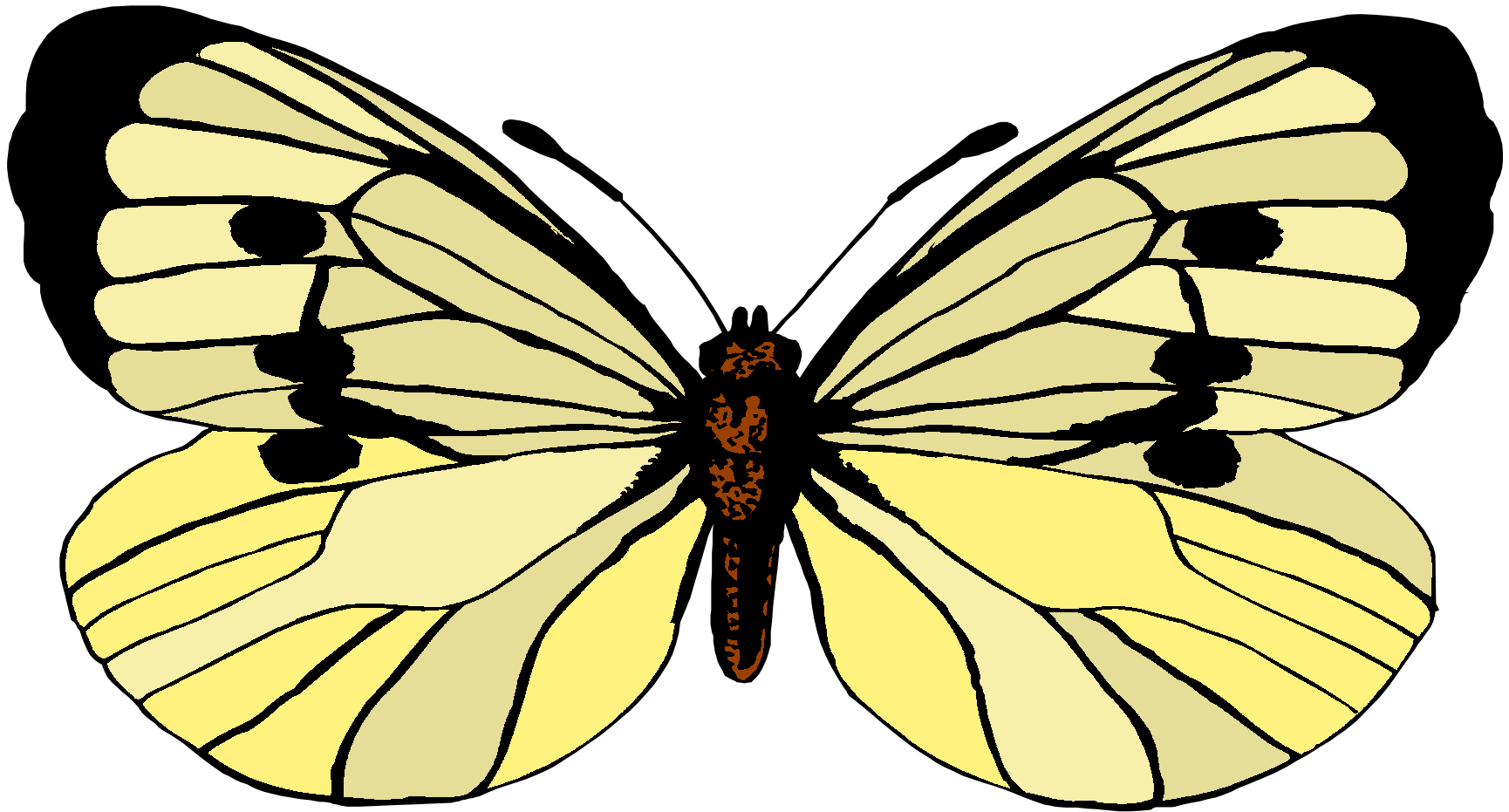
Philemon verses 1 - 25

1. Who wrote the book of Philemon? vs. 1
2. To whom was the book addressed? vs. 1
3. When did Paul remember these people in his prayers? vs. 4
4. Why was Paul so thankful for these believers? vs. 5
5. What does Paul encourage these believers to actively do?
vs. 6
6. Who's love gave Paul great joy? vs. 7
7. Who was Paul pleading on behalf of in verses 8 through 11?
8. Who was Paul sending back to Philemon? vs. 12
9. Why did Paul want to keep Onesimus with himself? vs. 13

10. Why was it better that Onesimus left than originally staying with him? vs. 15-16
11. What had Onesimus become when he met Paul in Rome?
vs. 16
12. What did Philemon "owe" Paul? vs. 19
13. What was Paul's wish in verse 20?
14. What was Paul confident that Philemon would do? vs. 21
15. What else was Philemon to prepare for Paul? vs. 22
16. Who sent his greetings in verse 23?
17. Who else sent their greetings in verse 24? List four.

| | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 3. |
| 2. | 4. |
18. How did Paul close his letter to Philemon? vs. 25

From Useless to Useful



Color the butterfly. Inside the sections, write ways in which you have been transformed into a new creature since you have become a Christian.

New Creatures in Christ



My Picture of God's Forgiveness

The Cost & Consequences of Forgiveness

Let's look and think together on the question of what happens during the process of forgiveness. Discuss and outline below some of the costs and consequences which may occur through the process of forgiveness.

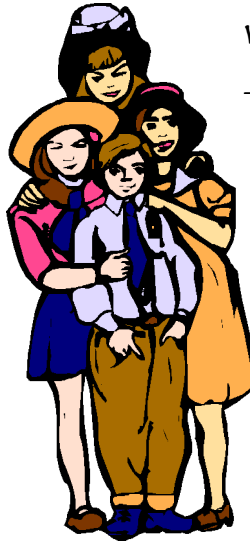
Consider these both from the viewpoint of the one who did wrong (wrongdoer), and the recipient of that wrongdoing (recipient). Then at the conclusion, write a brief statement about the results of reconciliation and the benefits of restoring that relationship.

| Cost | Consequence |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| For the Wrongdoer | For the Wrongdoer |
| For the Recipient | For the Recipient |
| Results of Reconciliation | Benefits of Restoring a Relationship |

How is God Using Me?



In my family _____



with my friends _____



at home _____



at school _____



in my neighborhood _____



at church _____

TODAY'S SECRET MESSAGE

TO FIND OUT WHAT THE MESSAGE SAYS, FILL IN
THE BLANK SPACES WITH THE VOWELS IN THE
BOXES.

(CROSS THEM OUT AS YOU USE THEM.)

SECRET MESSAGE

P__rh__ps th__ r____s__n h__ w__s
s__p__r__t__d fr__m y____ f__r __ l__ttl__
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Philemon 1:15-16a

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