

Spontaneous Giving

The book of Philemon in the Bible is often overlooked simply because it is so small. The whole book is one chapter with only 25 verses. It's unique not only in its size but also in its content. The book is written by the Apostle Paul to his friend Philemon about his runaway slave Onesimus. What happened was Onesimus ran away and joined up with Paul while he was in prison. He came to serve Paul but Paul knew he needed to go back and make things right with Philemon.

Setting aside the whole slave issue the book is an interesting appeal. Paul asks Philemon to take Onesimus back. His tact in doing so is interesting. He talks about Philemon's love and support for Paul and how much Onesimus has blessed him in Paul's captivity. However Paul doesn't want Onesimus help without Philemon's blessing. Paul appeals out of love for Philemon to accept Onesimus back. Paul is asking for a favor from Philemon but he says, "I would like to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains so that any favor you do will be **spontaneous and not forced.**"

When you do something spontaneous it is done out of love. When you do something because you are forced to do it you resent it and from a biblical perspective you miss the blessing God intends. Paul wanted Philemon to receive God's blessing so he asked for a favor that was spontaneous not forced.

I love that phrase **spontaneous and not forced.** It reminds me of offering time here. We work hard to show you how giving impacts not just those in this church but people around the world. Your weekly gifts matter and we need our members and attendees to be faithful in giving. It costs money to keep this building cool or warm. It cost money to do all the things we do.

Yet our focus is to help people be spontaneous in their giving. We never want people to feel forced. We never apologize for asking people to give but at the same time our tact is not to make you feel guilty. We know that gifts given spontaneously spring forth from a heart of love. Those are the kinds of gifts God blesses. Remember Paul writes in another place that, "God loves a cheerful giver!"

As our ushers come to collect this morning's offering let's give spontaneously!