My name is Jim Fleming and this is Our Sunday School.

Our Sunday School is part of Stuart Heights Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

To prepare for this lesson, please go to oursundayschool.com for a copy of today's handout.

Now, let's get to this week's lesson.

Well good morning everybody, and welcome to Our Sunday School this morning.

I appreciate you guys being here on "I Really Love Sunday School Sunday."

So, there you go.

So we are in our very last week in Philemon today,

which is kind of crazy to say.

We've gotten another letter of the Bible finished,

and I'm excited about that.

So a couple of just FYIs about this.

As I've mentioned a few times now, we're switching translations for our next series.

So I don't have a need for these Bibles that are on the tables.

So if you have a need for the Bibles that are on the tables,

I would love for you to take them.

And they are the large print edition, which are impossible to find on the internet right now.

So there's five on the tables and I have two more up here,

so please do what you will.

I have purchased Legacy Standard large print Bibles.

I have never seen print as large as in the Legacy Standard large print Bible.

I think it's like 14 font.

It is ginormous.

So I opened the Bible up and it was, "I didn't have to move it."

So if you feel what I am saying, that's where that is.

As I mentioned last week as well, I taught a class yesterday,

so my voice sounds kind of ragged, but I'm not the one talking today.

This is our lesson where we just ask the question,

"What did God do in you through our study in Philemon?"

So let me read through Philemon,

and then I'll open the floor for you to talk.

So for the last time in this series, Philemon.

"Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

to Philemon our dear friend and co-worker,

to Ephea our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier,

and to the church that meets in your home,

grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I always thank my God when I mention you in my prayers

because I hear of your love for all the saints

and the faith that you have in the Lord Jesus.

I pray that your participation in the faith may become effective

through knowing every good thing that is in us for the glory of Christ.

For I have great joy and encouragement from your love

because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.

For this reason, although I have great boldness in Christ

to command you to do what is right,

I appeal to you instead on the basis of love.

I, Paul, as an elderly man and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus,

appeal to you from my son, Onesimus.

I became his father while I was in chains.

Once he was useless to you, but now he is useful both to you and to me.

I am sending him back to you. I am sending my very own heart.

I wanted to keep him with me so that in my imprisonment for the gospel

he might serve me in your place.

But I didn't want to do anything without your consent

so that your good deed might not be out of obligation,

but of your own free will.

For perhaps this is why he was separated from you for a brief time

so that you might get him back permanently,

no longer as a slave but much more than a slave,

as a dearly loved brother.

He is especially so to me, but how much more to you,

both in the flesh and in the Lord?

So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would me.

And if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything,

charge that to my account.

I, Paul, write this with my own hand. I will repay it,

not to mention to you that you owe me even your very self.

Yes, brother, may I benefit from you in the Lord.

Refresh my heart in Christ.

Since I am confident of your obedience,

I am writing to you knowing that you will do even more than I say.

Meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me

since I hope that through your prayers I will be restored to you.

Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings,

and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my co-workers.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Amen.

So, Philemon, what did God do in you through our study in Philemon?

Oh, I'm sorry.

I learned to appreciate those characters more through the study.

So they're real people?

Real people.

That we will meet one day.

That was probably one of the most sobering things

that a mentor of mine told me one time.

Quit berating the disciples.

You're going to spend all eternity with them.

It was like,

It's your thing.

Yes.

Who are you most excited to meet?

In the story. Obviously it's Jesus, right?

Obviously it's Jesus.

Obviously Jesus.

What else? What did God do in you through our study in Philemon?

I'm just going to walk around and hold the mic today.

I think that

the mind just went blank.

To seek forgiveness,

but don't take it for granted when you receive it.

Or that you will receive it.

Because some just won't forgive.

But seek it.

And you don't want to go from there.

Because it's not in us.

We can't influence people whether they want to forgive.

It's a yes or no deal.

And how important it is to,

how important forgiveness is to further the Gospel.

This is how it works, right?

And that it's okay to remind people that

they should appreciate,

well, the person that introduced them to Christ.

That was a wonderful little part of introspection

when we did the testimony Sunday.

Who did this? Who can you be thankful for?

How does this work?

We have this beautiful succession of people

all the way back.

It to me made me think about the genealogies in the Bible a little differently.

Like I know who my six or seven great grandfather was

through the genealogical stuff that my ancestors have done.

But I don't know who my six or seven great spiritual grandfather was.

But there's somebody.

And odds are it's a grandmother, not a grandfather.

It's beautiful.

Yeah, absolutely.

That's good.

What else?

I don't want to put you on the spot here since you're holding the mics.

Having confidence and encouragement in other believers.

And just like with how Paul had faith that

Philemon was strong in his own faith to be able to forgive in this.

There you go. That's good. Thank you.

So just to reorient, what did God do in you?

No, no, no, no. We're good. We're good.

This is how this works. I say the same thing 20 times and we have these lessons.

Sorry.

No, I'm not going to say it now.

Let me draw that out.

Yeah.

So what did God do in you through our study in Philemon?

Julie.

Julie's turning down the microphone.

Was there any conviction of sin? Was there any prompting for behavior?

Was there any recognition of, like, oh, my life does not look like that?

I mean, it should.

I saw that it's okay to use guilt with somebody.

Was that a goal?

No.

It depends on how you read Philemon, whether or not he did it right.

It depends on how you read it.

He used a lot of resources and options to, yes.

Why?

Yeah, the gospel is worth it. The gospel is worth it.

And our witness reflects what we in fact believe.

What else?

You freaked me out with the earpiece in there for a second.

I think it's an example of God's redemption or redeeming power that we have and that we have opportunity to enjoy but also to gift to others as well.

It's a picture of God's sovereignty and how he works through us but also through others and how it all works together.

So how did that impact you?

I need a lot of redemption.

A lot.

All the time.

Amen.

There's hope.

Ms. Sandra just commented online. She said, "Through and in Christ, I can have hard conversations."

I think you've positioned that very nicely, Ms. Sandra.

Yes, ma'am?

So let me tell you why I'm using the mic today.

Some of my favorite things that I learn about these books comes in these conversations.

And in the recordings, I can't hear them.

So I'm losing my favorite things.

And so I'm being selfish with the mic today by handing it to you.

I know it didn't really say in Philemon.

But I can imagine how grateful an isthmus must be to Paul.

And I need to be more grateful.

For the people who engaged.

I wonder how many of the stages of grief an isthmus went through.

Oh, you're saying that?

Oh, and I'm going with it. Okay.

That's a lot.

What else? What did God do in you in our study in Philemon?

So one of the improvements, I think an improvement, we'll see if it works or not.

I don't know.

In the Ephesians handout, which is done by the way,

is that at the end of each chapter, I've got a page now that asks this question for that chapter.

So that we'll be able to kind of track these a little better than,

well 17 years ago when we began,

I wonder what it was that God was doing in me.

Which is a little tricky, I understand.

I think God showed me that there's not just a right way and a wrong way,

but there's a good, better, best way of handling the situation.

Like, he could have written a letter and sent it and said,

"Hey, you really need to do this."

Or, "Would you consider doing this?"

But, I mean, he went above and beyond in this request.

And he sent, like you said, he sent an oesmus with the letter.

So there's like a, here's a way you can handle a situation.

There's a better way. Probably there's a best way.

And to get to that, you really have to ask God for that.

Look for that direction.

Not just kind of come up with it on your own.

Do you tend to be like me in autopilot mode?

I don't need help with that. I know how to do that.

I tend to say, "That's good enough."

And not a, "Let's look and find the best way to handle it."

What would our Christian engagements look like if we all said,

"What would the best way to do this be?"

That's mildly convicting.

Many times we know what the best way is.

We just don't want to do it.

That's a shame.

What would God do in you through our study in Philemon?

When Paul wrote about making mention of you in my prayers that you encouraged us to all pray for each other.

I thought that was a really good thing to be doing because we are a family.

We can do it.

What would God do in you through our study in Philemon?

For me it was, I think, two things.

One, it was a great reminder how important it is to greet people and stay in touch with believers.

I think in a little letter like this, the greetings take up such a big percentage of the letter that you can't just skim over them.

If you skim over them, you just cut 20% of the letter out.

That was really helpful for me to just be reminded that,

and I hope you all don't take this the wrong way,

but my circle of believers that I am friends with extends beyond this room

and should regularly engage people beyond this room.

That was a good reminder for me.

Even people in other cities.

Amazing as that is.

And then Paul's hope in things that didn't actually happen.

We're pretty confident he never actually showed back up in Colossae and got to spend the night with his friend Philemon.

But he was hopeful.

And having hope in something that might never happen is not a bad thing.

At our house, that means something.

Yeah, it will.

I think Paul's prayer, I view Philemon, the letter to Philemon, as a bit of a prayer that Paul has to the Lord on behalf of these two.

But Paul's prayer was answered.

Onesimus and Philemon have a flawless relationship today.

Like, flawless.

Could not be better.

And it will be that way forever.

And that is encouraging.

And it never ceases to amaze me the odd little corners of these letters that the Lord seems to do so much work in my own life with.

It's just these odd little places.

It's great.

So what did God do in you through our study in Philemon?

I saw your note.

That was awesome.

It encouraged me to know that God is working whether we think or see it.

Aren't you grateful for that?

I think that the kids in their development go through something called object permanence.

So they close their eyes when they're really little and they think that you've gone away too.

And then they open their eyes and they're surprised that you're there.

And it's not as if when we go to sleep at night our God disappears.

Or when we're not thinking about Him, He disappears.

I think at some point in most Christians' lives they realize object permanence as it relates to the Lord.

And I don't know if Philemon thought a lot about Onesimus or not.

Where he was and how he was doing and what state he was in.

But Paul was thinking about it.

And the Lord was working.

And His work is not thwarted.

It's beautiful.

What did God do in you through our study in Philemon?

So through this very short letter,

it's very apparent throughout the entire New Testament that Paul is walking in step with the Spirit.

That is his life.

Every day he's getting up and he's intentionally, purposefully walking in step with the Spirit.

To be sensitive to where he's leading him, what he's telling him.

He's probably the smartest man that I've ever met.

That I've ever been privileged to hear from.

He would be somebody who I would consider walking in the Spirit.

And it's really amazing how much God used him.

Or that we can see that God used him.

And not just his life and the lives of those around him, but in these certain circumstances and situations where

it really educates me to how to respond in certain situations.

So I guess what that does for me is it gives me an eagerness to walk in the Spirit.

More and more so that I can also be sensitive to God's leading hand and call.

Both in my life and how I can be useful and effective to others as well.

Amen.

Thank you.

[

silence ]

So we've got near universal shoelace examination.

That means we're getting close.

This was one of the first lectures I ever got from Darrell.

I'll round up and call it a lecture.

Quit staring at your shoelaces at the end of the service when I'm looking on somebody to call to pray to close the service.

I'm like, "Oh, I didn't realize I was doing that."

Yeah, stop it.

I'll stop it.

Yes sir.

Alright, one more question. What did God do in you through our study in Philemon?

I thought it would take longer. I reached for my water bottle.

I don't remember reading it specifically in the scripture, but one of your comments or one of your applications was that we should rejoice in these opportunities that we have.

I think that's something that I don't always remember to do, to rejoice in the fact that yes, I have a hard conversation that I'm going to have to have, but thank you God that I can do it through you and rejoice in that.

Just rejoice that God does give us the opportunities to have the conversations.

Very good.

So, pop quiz. You ready?

What's our next book that we're studying? Ephesians. Yes, you won't have to go far.

That part of your Bible is going to continue to get worn out.

It'll be okay. Has anybody read through Ephesians yet?

In preparation.

Like what?

No, like in preparation forever.

Well, that's probably a good question too.

You all read Ephesians at least once. I don't know. It's probably good.

So, next week, if you look at your weekly update, so we're TBD on Sunday school, so if you've got a text of Scripture you want to teach, let me know. I'm happy to do that.

Jules and I won't be available for Sunday school per se.

Or I won't be teaching that day. We've got something late going on the night before.

But the 23rd, we'll do an introduction to Ephesians.

I'll just give you a bit of an intro.

If you want a commentary, I am happy to get you one.

I have several that I've already started to read.

Should I tell them how many?

You weren't listening, were you?

I know, it's so, so early.

My speaking pattern is very slow this morning because I am exhausted.

I don't know if any of you are tired either, but this is good for me to be with you all.

But I have started to use in the last 12 months or so, a little bit more than I used to, a computer program called Logos.

Or Logos, however you want to say it.

And the last couple of months I have dramatically increased my usage.

And in the last three or four weeks, I finally figured out how to use it well.

So I've kind of got things set up like I want.

And basically all the stuff that I used to do with physical books and internet websites, I can do inside that tool now.

Which is really nice to have everything in one spot.

But you all remember the, watch it not be in here.

Oh it is, look at there.

You all remember the Danny Aiken book, Building a Theological Library.

So this is usually where I start with gathering commentaries for examination.

And then I'll read through a few of these.

And where I see overlap in the commentaries that they recommend, I will go and get those.

You kind of just build out a periphery of people that love the Lord and believe the Bible to be true.

And you're not going to get into a bunch of wonky snake handling weirdness that results in oddities and a mess.

But I think I've got 27.

And I've gotten through all their introductions and most of the first couple of verses.

And I've found some favorites already.

So if any of you are interested in having a physical copy of a commentary, let me know and I'll get you one of those that I've culled that are favorites of mine.

And the Christ-centered exposition is a good one this time around too.

So who knew.

I think I'm ultimately going to be a fan.

So this is where I'm at.

But if you want to go ahead and start reading through Ephesians, I think that would be a good use of our time to prepare for that.

We'll start on the 23rd. We'll do our preparing lesson on the 30th.

And then the first week in April, Lord willing, we'll get into Ephesians 1-1.

So I'm excited. I'm excited.

Alright, so that's our lesson for today.

You should have your weekly updates on the table.

So if you would, go through those.

And we've got a little extra time this morning so read through and please make any edits to the prayer requests if you would.

That's always a helpful thing.

If you were to put these weekly updates side by side by side over the last couple of months,

you'll notice that the left margin is getting smaller and smaller and smaller.

And the funk has shrunk just a little bit over time because I'm pretty sure we've got some things that can be edited out a little here.

So if you'll go through that, that'd be great.

And then when you're finished, pray as a table.

You are dismissed to go and to worship this one. Yes, ma'am?

Do we want to mention Save the Day?

Oh yeah, absolutely.

The fifth Sunday.

Go for it. Yes, ma'am.

Every month we'll have a lunch for the class.

And I encourage us to bring in family and friends, anyone that you think needs an introduction

or would appreciate an introduction to the class.

Love it. Love it, love it, love it.

So here's what I especially like about the fifth Sunday.

The fifth Sunday morning we do communion.

So we get a meal and a meal.

I love it. Awesome.

So thank you for thinking that through and helping us with that. I appreciate you.

Awesome. So let's pray as a table and then you're dismissed to go worship the Lord.

Thanks, guys.

Thanks for engaging.

And don't forget to subscribe to our podcast, YouTube channel and weekly email.

You can subscribe to all three of those at our sundayschool.com.

Grace and peace to you.