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.

Welcome to Our Sunday School. Glad you guys are with us today.

So, let me ask you a question.

Let me ask you a question.

How many of you brought your handout today?

Did you bring your handout today?

You're not going to get 10 points like Brian Sermon a couple weeks ago.

Nothing like that.

How many of your handouts says part one?

You have both?

Darla's prepared. No telling where we're at.

We are actually starting part two today.

Starting part two today.

So, I'm excited about that.

What page are we on, Dave?

We are on page 16 also.

So, this is our preparing for the next...

Usually it's the next pericope.

And it's not technically the next pericope today.

Because copyright.

So, you guys know that I can only put half of a book of the Bible in one of these bound books.

So, we had to split Philemon kind of sort of in the middle of a thought.

And I really hate that.

But that's kind of where we are.

We're going to walk through our process today.

This is on page 16.

So, if you've got your handout, head over to page 16.

And what's the first step in our process?

Pray with others.

Pray with others.

So, in our Little Red Book,

I actually have some sample prayers.

I'm just going to read through one of those.

So, let's pray for help with this particular text.

And our attitudes here, our fear,

because we are coming before the Holy God.

Dependence, because we rely on a Holy God.

Wait, you're on the wrong page.

No, I need this prayer.

Oh, okay. Great.

For my attitude.

Oh, for your attitude? Okay.

Well, we are not getting into that today.

I was just going to read it.

Fantastic. Fantastic.

And expectancy, because God does what only God can do, which is fantastic.

So, our actions are to pray for hearing, for illumination, and for wisdom.

So, our work here is to pray for help with the text.

So, let's pray for help with the text.

Father, we thank you for your Word.

What a beautiful gift it is.

What a wonderful thing you have given to allow us to understand,

to engage, to know you.

We come fearfully, depending on you and expecting wondrous things.

We ask you to help us hear what the Spirit is saying.

We ask for the Spirit to illuminate the text.

And we ask for you, Father, for wisdom, to live out your truths,

not so that we can accumulate and store up knowledge

from self-arrogant Pharisees,

but to look like our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

So, what's our step number two?

To hear.

To hear. So, what do we hear?

Just like whatever you saw that was cool on Facebook?

Is that the thing?

Not what you saw on TikTok.

The Word.

Sorry.

That's as relevant as you're ever going to see me get.

So, that's all the hip cool is gone right there.

So, we're going to hear the Word of God.

And our attitudes here are respect and deference.

And I know you guys have heard this before, but I like to say it periodically.

I don't know if you've ever had a conversation with someone,

and they tell you something that sounds incredibly theologically suspect,

and then the next thing out of their mouth is,

"And the Lord told me that."

Like, "Oh, well, can you show me which page the Lord told you that on?"

Because I don't think it aligns with many of the other pages of what he wrote down.

Like, if we want to hear God speak, we read His Word.

If you want to hear God speak audibly, we read it out loud.

And that is...

You haven't heard that joke. Okay, there you go. Cool.

So, we're going to read it out loud, and we're going to defer to whatever it says.

And this is crazy-level humility that we do not find anywhere else in our society.

Right? Like, what else do you walk into and go, "I will do whatever it says"?

Eh... not really.

I actually don't want you to have that attitude with anything else.

Like, that would be really dangerous.

So, our actions are to read the Bible aloud, and to hear the Bible read aloud,

and to hear the text.

So, I'm going to read through all of Philemon.

And I would encourage you not to read along.

I would encourage you just to listen to the words, and ask the Lord to help us understand.

So, 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, brother,

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 for 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 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 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.

Ah, is God's Word not beautiful?

Just this spectacular record of how significant the gospel actually is.

And I love that when we read the text, we all, and if I could put it in the southern vernacular,

shut up and sit still. Right? Because God is communicating.

And I don't mean like Jim, I mean like God is communicating and it is significant.

I have said it several times and I am regularly confused and ashamed

at the number of times when I hear God's Word being read

and everybody just keeps talking like it is no big deal and everything is fine.

But the second we start praying to God, everybody stops and gets quiet.

And I almost think we have got that totally backward.

Like if God is speaking, like if God himself walked in and began to speak,

oh but wait, he just did. Right?

So, I love how we respect the Word. This is a beautiful thing and I think it reflects how we view God himself.

So, process step number three is to what?

To think. And I will tell you, I don't think we do this enough personally, collectively,

in our society, in our churches, but we are going to think with others.

The way we can do this with others is that we are thinking about the same thing.

Obviously, I cannot jump into Julie's thoughts and we think together.

Like I am not a Vulcan, I can't do the mind-meld thing.

While that would be cool, it is not possible.

So, our attitudes here are to think with humility.

My thoughts are not the greatest thoughts in the universe.

I wrote that out the other day. I was writing out some things and I wrote,

my thoughts are not the greatest thoughts in the universe.

I don't like writing that, I don't like saying that, but they are not.

But with delight, because we actually get to think about God's Word.

And with steadfastness, that this idea of thinking diligently about something is not easy.

And we do not live in a society that lends itself towards sustained, dedicated thought on a particular topic.

So, I gave Darla a book this morning and the title of the book is

"Keeping the Heart" from John Flavell.

He wrote that in probably 1605 or 18, something like that.

And the Puritans, they would have these arguments that would be multiple paragraphs long.

Even during the Great Awakening, Jonathan Edwards' sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."

I don't know if you've ever tried to read it.

It is almost indecipherable to a modern reader, because the logic is so intertwined and tight and complex,

and you have to hold the same thought for probably two and a half to three minutes to get the point of what he is making.

And most people, eight, ten, twelve seconds in, "Squirrel!"

Right? I mean, it's a joke, but it's the way our brains work and they're wired because of what we feed it on a regular basis.

So this idea of steadfastness, don't give up when it gets difficult, I think is really, really important.

So our actions, what do we do? We think about God's Word day and night.

There are multiple hundreds of commands in the Bible to think about God's Word for every one command to read God's Word.

And I think we get the go-do here backward very often.

It's think about it, think about it, think about it, think about it, think about it, think about it, read it for the purpose of thinking about it.

It's not read it for the purpose of storing up knowledge, it's to read it to continuously think about Scripture.

So, if you would, grab your text there, maybe grab your Bible, and I don't think I've got it all in one page anywhere in here.

There are two pericopes. Pericopes is just one of those sections with a heading.

So, pericope one starts with verse eight, for our purposes today we'll start with verse 15.

So 15 to 22 is option one, and then 23 to 25 is option two.

So if you would, pick a pericope at your table that you want to collectively think about.

So I'll give you a minute, pick a pericope and then we'll come right back.

I'll give you a tip, there's no wrong answer here.

So the answer to the question is either one or two.

This is a true dichotomous choice here.

Alright, so what do we got? Dave what's your table? One or two?

One.

Julie what's your table? One or two?

Two.

Two, excellent.

Shanda, one or two?

One.

One and one, awesome. So we've got three ones and a two.

Excellent, perfect. So here's what we're going to do.

We're going to think slowly about the text. We're going to spend about five minutes.

And here's what I would encourage you to do.

I would encourage you to think with something in your hand.

So that you can mark on the text, so that you can, questions, so that you can, like,

"Oh, this is a thought." Great, like capture that. Don't let that go fleeting away.

So write it kind of wherever you want, but write those questions, those observations down.

Because that's what we're going to do something with in just a second.

So I'll give you five minutes and let's think.

Now think is not talk. So think is think. So let's think.

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It always amazes me how quickly five minutes goes.

So your questions, your observations, your thoughts.

Process step number four is to study with others.

So this, our attitudes here are resolve.

I don't know what you think about group projects.

They're not necessarily my favorite thing in the world,

but as we've talked about several times,

Christianity is not an individual assignment.

It is a group assignment.

So we resolve to do this recognizing that we are incomplete.

I am not self-sufficient.

I am not able to do this on my own.

I am not the body of Christ on my own

and with an attitude of teachableness,

which I'm not sure is a word, but I really like it.

So we have to be teachable.

And the way you put that into the next part of speech

is have a teachableness.

So we're going to be teachable.

So we talk to teachers.

We use available resources.

So I would encourage you to take a minute,

share the questions and the observations with each other,

and then pick two or three that you want to focus on

for the next five minutes or so.

And there's lots of resources available to you.

There's cross-references in your Bible.

There's footnotes in your Bible.

You have the copy of the handout,

so there could be some answers in there.

You can look words up in other places,

but share those questions and observations.

Pick a couple, and then we'll come back at about 9.33

and start the share process.

So got it?

Hut, hut, hike.

Let's go.

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which is remove yourself from the thrones of your own heart, and go out there first,

no matter what your personal feelings are.

>> There you go. Cool. Alright. Somebody else? Was the question or observation, then what did you learn from studying it?

>> It's a question more than anything else. We're not really sure that there is going to be an answer to that.

>> Ho ho! Can you say that again, Dave? >> We're not really sure that there's going to be an answer to that.

>> Do you know how many questions I have about the Bible that I know that I will never know the answer to

while I'm here, and that it's okay? To hold that tension is okay. So what's the question?

>> Well, the question is, what actually made Onesimus no longer a slave?

Was it that Onesimus became a believer, accepted the gospel and became a believer?

Or was it that Philemon accepted the gospel and became a believer? Or was it that both of them did?

>> Good question. >> So what really made him no longer a slave?

And along those same lines, if Paul is paying for any of Onesimus' debts, to a certain extent,

Paul may have purchased a slave, and therefore in some people's minds he's participating in the system.

>> So that's a great question. I don't know that the text actually says he was no longer a slave.

>> No longer as a slave. >> Right? What's the words right before?

So that you might get him back permanently no longer as a slave.

We're going to take a deep, deep, deep, as low as my voice can go, deep dive into that,

and to take a look at the different options and the way to interpret that.

I'll tell you right now, I think he was still a slave.

Because if he wasn't, well according to the text actually, because if he wasn't, Paul's ask makes no sense.

So we'll get there. But great question. I love the question.

I didn't think we'd get there today. All right, Thessa, what do you got?

You did the second part, yes. Verses 23, 24, 25. So what was the question or observation?

A couple. So which one would you like to focus on?

>> The ending, where Paul says, "with your spirit."

Why the choice of words for "with your spirit"?

He uses that ending in 2 Timothy relations and Ephesians, but all the rest of his letters is just "with you."

So was it just a Paul thing? Or is there something in particular here?

>> So let me piggyback with more questions.

Should the S be capital or should the S not be capital?

Because that's not in the original language.

So we have to kind of interpret a little bit there.

That's wonderful. And then is the "your" singular or plural?

So we can actually know that one. That's a great question.

I haven't read that far ahead yet and thought enough about that.

That's wonderful. That was Julie's question. Yay, Julie! All right!

Woo-hoo! Fantastic. All right, so, Shanda's table.

She had the first section, right, 15 to 22. So what was your question or observation?

>> We have several as well.

>> Which one do you want to go with?

So just in case you're wondering, my desire is that you guys walk out of here with way more questions and a high degree of frustration.

That's the design. Because I wanted to drive you to the text.

>> I think it kind of piggybacks on their question about this slave to brother relationship.

How do you do that switch? How do you do that flip so easily?

>> Do you think he did it easily?

>> No.

>> Because he had to get a what? He had to get a letter telling him to do it, right?

>> Yeah, it's a big shift. It's a big shift.

I love that we get an opportunity. So one, that's a great question.

But I love that we get an opportunity to make this intensely personal.

Like, how significant is the gospel really? Like, can it bear that burden?

And it can. Yes!

We can handle that. What else can we pile on it?

Yes. All the things.

Wonderful. Wonderful. Wonderful. Wonderful. Wonderful. No.

We are at time. So we have one more step. What's our last step?

The step that we forget with everybody, right? Is to invite. To invite, invite, invite.

And we invite with urgency and with obedience because the greatest tragedy in the world today is that people are dying and going to hell today.

So we invite. Like, there's a real need. And we are commanded to invite.

We invite those inside, those that are members of our Sunday school, and those that are outside, those that are not members of our Sunday school.

So if this is your first time ever doing this, please come back. We'd love to have you again.

If this is your thousandth time, we haven't got there yet.

If this is your 500th time, please come back. We'd love to have you do this again.

So this is what we do. So invite, invite, invite.

And then the last reminder for me is, we've got comment. Actually, next to the last reminder.

If you have gotten a commentary, quotes are due to me by Thursday night so I can bake those into the lesson for Sunday.

And then if you want one for Colossians, for, ugh, because I had to, I'm going to blame it on table number four here.

So this is the, I just randomly assigned you a number by the way. So this is just the way my brain works.

For Philemon, if you want a, you're lucky I didn't say Ephesians because I'm neck deep in Ephesians right now, which is fantastic.

But if you want a commentary, I'm happy to get you one. Just let me know.

And the last announcement is on your weekly update. So is there anything that's highlighted on your weekly update?

What is highlighted Shanda? To be determined, February the 2nd. I don't have a teacher yet for February the 2nd.

So if you're a member of our class and you want to teach that day, if you've got a text that you're like, this has been glorious.

I want to share this. Then please let me know and we'll get you scheduled. Otherwise we will skip February the 2nd and come back on the 9th and do whatever's next.

So there's that. Alright, so the last step for us is to pray as a table.

So once you are finished praying as a table, gather up your stuff, get in the sanctuary because it's time to go worship our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Because He is worthy and we can do it. So let's do that. Alright, thanks for coming today guys. Appreciate you.

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 OurSundaySchool.com. Grace and peace to you.