Preschool–Grade 5

Paul and Onesimus Craft

Paul's letter to Philemon · Philemon 1:1–25 · print page 2 for each child (and page 3 for the harder level)

What it looks like finished



Easy and medium



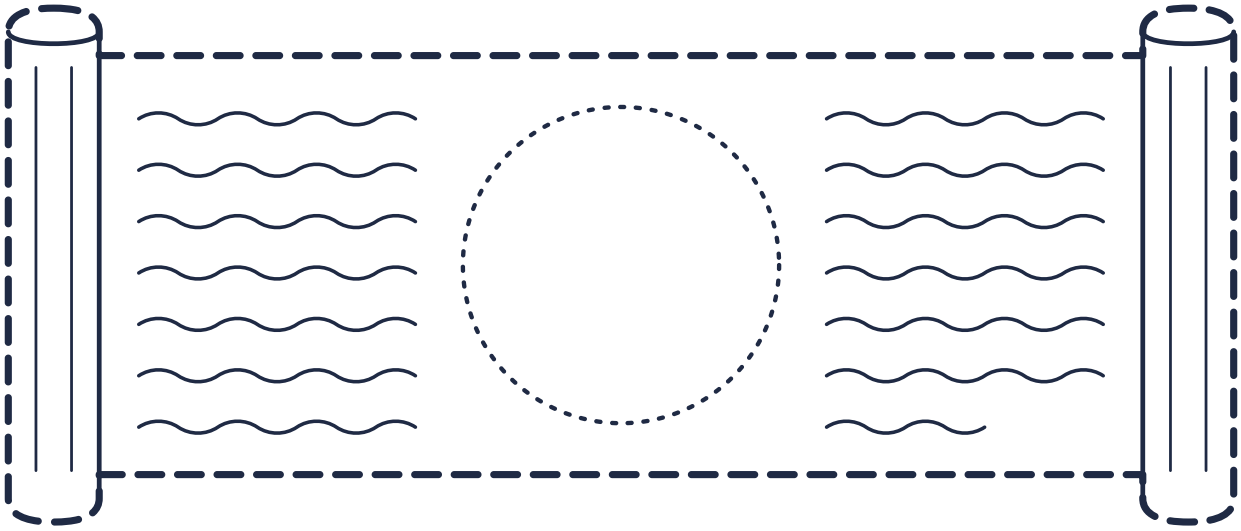
Harder

Both levels are a light yellow letter, Paul's letter to Philemon, with rows of writing on both sides. In the middle, in a green round frame, is the child's drawing of Onesimus, the man the letter is about: "a brother beloved" (Philemon 1:16). Medium (left): a flat card with a brown roll printed at each end. Harder (right): a letter that really rolls up, with a craft stick rolled into each end and a piece of yarn to tie it closed.

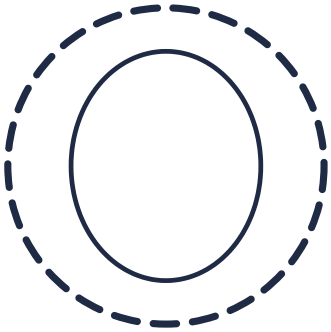
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Name: _____

✂ Cut on the dashed lines



card: the two rolls brown, the letter light yellow. Leave the dotted circle white.



Onesimus: draw him; frame green

Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?

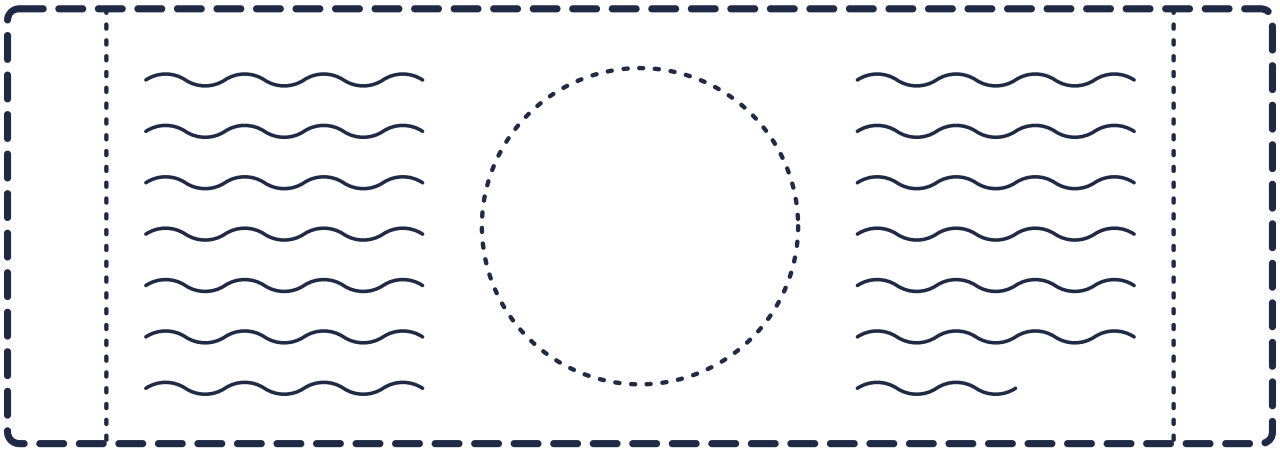
Philemon 1:16 (KJV)

verse strip: glue it on the back of the card

Color each piece the way its label says. Draw Onesimus in his window. Cut out the card, the Onesimus piece and the verse strip. You also need a glue stick.

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Name: _____ ✂ Harder level



letter: color it light yellow. Glue the Onesimus piece from page 2 on the dotted circle. Tape a craft stick on each end, past the dotted line, and roll the ends in.

How to make the harder level

1. From page 2, make the Onesimus piece (draw Onesimus, color the frame green) and cut out the verse strip. The harder level uses this rolling letter instead of the page 2 card.
2. Color the letter on page 3 light yellow. Cut it out on the dashed line.
3. Glue the Onesimus piece on the dotted circle. Turn the letter over and glue the verse strip in the middle of the back.
4. Lay a craft stick along each end of the letter, on the strip past the dotted line, so the stick ends poke out at the top and bottom. Tape it down with clear tape. Roll each end in toward the middle, around its stick, one turn.
5. Roll the letter closed and tie it with the yarn. Tell it: Paul wrote, "I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it" (Philemon 1:19). Untie it and open it: Onesimus is in the middle, "a brother beloved" (1:16)!

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For the teacher

See it finished: a photo of the finished craft is at vbshq.com/crafts/onesimus-craft
Time: 15 to 30 minutes, depending on the level · **Ages:** 3 to 11, in three levels · **Cost:** under 50 cents a child for the easy and medium levels
You need: page 2 printed once per child (cardstock is sturdiest), crayons or markers in brown, light yellow and green, crayons for drawing Onesimus, scissors and glue sticks. For the harder level, also page 3 printed once per child (plain paper rolls best), 2 craft sticks, clear tape and a 12-inch piece of yarn for each child.
Before class: for preschoolers, cut out the card, the Onesimus piece and the verse strip ahead of time.

Three ways to make it

- **Easy (preschool, ages 3–5), about 15 minutes, no scissors:** before class, cut out each child's pieces. Kids color the letter and its rolls, draw Onesimus, and glue him in the middle of the letter (help with the glue). Help them glue the verse strip on the back.
- **Medium (grades K–2), about 20 minutes:** follow the steps below. Kids color, draw, cut and glue. This is the craft in the first photo.
- **Harder (grades 3–5), about 30 minutes:** make the Onesimus piece from page 2, then glue it on the letter from page 3, tape a craft stick at each end, roll the ends in and tie the letter with yarn. This is the craft in the second photo.

Steps (medium level)

1. **Color:** color the two rolls at the ends of the card brown and the letter light yellow. Leave the dotted circle white.
2. **Draw:** in the window of the Onesimus piece, draw Onesimus from his waist up, a grown man with short hair. Color the frame green.
3. **Cut:** cut out the card, the Onesimus piece and the verse strip on the dashed lines.
4. **Glue:** glue the Onesimus piece on the dotted circle in the middle of the letter.
5. **Verse:** glue the verse strip on the back of the card, and read it together.
6. **Tell it:** Paul wrote a letter to Philemon about Onesimus, "my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds" (Philemon 1:10). Point to Onesimus in the middle of the letter: Paul asked Philemon to receive him "Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved" (1:16), and wrote with his own hand, "I will repay it" (1:19).

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Questions to ask while kids work

- Who wrote the letter? *(Paul, with Timothy, Philemon 1:1)*
- Who was the letter to? *(Philemon, and the church in his house, 1:1–2)*
- Point to Onesimus. What did Paul call him? *("My son," 1:10)*
- Onesimus was once unprofitable. What was he now? *(Profitable, to Philemon and to Paul, 1:11)*
- How did Paul ask Philemon to receive Onesimus? *(As a brother beloved, 1:16; "as myself," 1:17)*
- What did Paul say he would do if Onesimus owed anything? *("I will repay it," 1:18–19)*
- Point to the letter. How did Paul write that part? *(With his own hand, 1:19)*
- Where was Paul when he wrote? *(He was a prisoner of Jesus Christ, in bonds, 1:1, 1:10)*

Tips

- **Old Bible words explained: prisoner** means someone held so they can't go free; **bonds** means being a prisoner; **begotten** means Onesimus came to know the Lord through Paul, so Paul called him "my son"; **unprofitable** means not useful; **profitable** means useful; **above a servant** means more than a worker; **a brother beloved** means a brother you love; **ought** means anything; **put that on mine account** means count it as mine; **repay** means pay it back.
- **What the Bible says:** Paul wrote this letter to Philemon (Philemon 1:1) and wrote part of it "with mine own hand" (1:19). The Bible doesn't describe the letter. The rolls, the rows of writing lines and the colors are the craft's simple picture, and the writing lines are not real words.
- **No one is drawn on the template:** each child draws Onesimus in his window as a grown man with short hair.
- **Keep to what the letter says:** it never says Onesimus ran away or stole. It says he "departed for a season" (1:15) and "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought" (1:18). It doesn't tell how Philemon answered.
- **Preschool:** pre-cut everything. Use glue sticks, not liquid glue. Let every child point to Onesimus and say, "A brother beloved!" (Philemon 1:16)
- **Teach the story first:** this craft goes with the free Paul and Onesimus lesson and word search at vbshq.com/bible-stories/onesimus.

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