

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

The Reconciling Power of the Holy Spirit

Old Testament: Genesis 33:1-17

¹Now Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two maids. ²He put the maids with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all.

³He himself went on ahead of them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near his brother. ⁴But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

⁵When Esau looked up and saw the women and children, he said, 'Who are these with you?' Jacob said, 'The children whom God has graciously given your servant.' ⁶Then the maids drew near, they and their children, and bowed down; ⁷Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down; and finally Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down.

⁸Esau said, 'What do you mean by all this company that I met?' Jacob answered, 'To find favour with my lord.' ⁹But Esau said, 'I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.'

¹⁰Jacob said, 'No, please; if I find favour with you, then accept my present from my hand; for truly to see your face is like seeing the face of God-since you have received me with such favour. ¹¹Please accept my gift that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have everything I want.' So he urged him, and he took it.

¹²Then Esau said, 'Let us journey on our way, and I will go alongside you.'

¹³But Jacob said to him, 'My lord knows that the children are frail and that the flocks and herds, which are nursing, are a care to me; and if they are overdriven for one day, all the flocks will die. ¹⁴Let my lord pass on ahead of his servant, and I will lead on slowly, according to the pace of the cattle that are before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir.'

¹⁵So Esau said, 'Let me leave with you some of the people who are with me.' But he said, 'Why should my lord be so kind to me?'

¹⁶So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir.

¹⁷But Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built himself a house, and made booths for his cattle; therefore the place is called Succoth.

New Testament: Philemon 1:1-25

¹Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker, ²to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the church in your house: ³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God ⁵because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith towards the Lord Jesus. ⁶I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we* may do for Christ. ⁷I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.

⁸For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, ⁹yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love-and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. ¹⁰I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. ¹¹Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful* both to you and to me. ¹²I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you. ¹³I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel; ¹⁴but I preferred to do nothing without

your consent, in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced.

¹⁵Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back for ever, ¹⁶no longer as a slave but as more than a slave, a beloved brother- especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

¹⁷So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. ¹⁸If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. ¹⁹I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self.

²⁰Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ.

²¹Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. ²²One thing more-prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be restored to you.

²³Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, ²⁴and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow-workers. ²⁵The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

General Concept: The Holy Spirit heals broken relationships.

N/K/YE: The Holy Spirit brings back our friends.

ME/OE: The Holy Spirit enables us to become friends again with each other.

Y: The Holy Spirit enables people to be reconciled and to mend their broken relationships.

A: The Holy Spirit enables us to strive for healing and wholeness in our relationship with each other and with our God and with God's creation.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Jacob, through the help of his mother Rebekah, deceived Isaac when Jacob disguised himself as Esau to receive Isaac's blessing. He then fled in fear of his brother's anger. Rebekah then instructed Jacob to go to her brother Laban in Haran until Esau's anger would subside. Jacob stayed with Laban and as the years went by, Jacob married Laban's daughters Rachel and Leah. God blessed Jacob with children and vast properties. After his good relationship with Laban turned ill because of false accusation, Jacob was forced to go back to his homeland as instructed by God in a dream.

Jacob prepared himself to meet Esau with fear and anxiety after knowing that Esau will bring four hundred men to meet him. During Jacob and Esau's reunion, Jacob bowed down and humbled himself before Esau, hopeful that Esau has forgiven him and has forgotten the sins he committed. Esau showed Jacob no grudge and hatred when he embraced Jacob and welcomed him and his household warmly. In return, Jacob offered to Esau livestock as his act of thanksgiving for receiving him and his whole family favorably.

The letter to Philemon was written while Paul was imprisoned in Rome. The letter is a plea that implies for Philemon to accept and forgive a certain Onesimus who must have been a runaway slave whom Paul met and converted. The letter of Paul is to remind and encourage Philemon to uphold his Christian faith and character since runaway slaves would usually face harsh punishment, even death, when caught. Paul hoped that Philemon would treat Onesimus as a brother in Christ and receive him as a member of the community of faith.

The stories of Jacob and Philemon illustrate how the power of the Holy Spirit inspires individuals to forgive and lead people toward reconciliation despite the predicament and

amidst the anger. Both stories show that through the power of the Holy Spirit, the hearts and minds of those whom it convicts will know humility, learn acceptance and become willing to mend broken relationships all in God's perfect time.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Reconciliation completes the cycle of repentance and forgiveness. But a relationship once broken cannot be the same again. It is either thoroughly diminished or terminated or it turns into an enmity. Thus, the goal of reconciliation is not just to restore an old relationship but to raise it to a new level. It is a process of re-creating a new and better relationship out of the old one.

Two images in the Bible of creating a new reality out of the old one may illustrate the essence of reconciliation. The creation story in Genesis 1 depicts God's act of creating order in the universe from out of a state of chaos—"without form and void." A broken relationship is a non-relationship, that is, void of the things that make a true relationship, such as affection, trust, mutual respect and appreciation, and loyalty. Instead of order, harmony, continuity and predictability that characterize authentic relationship there is confusion, conflict or disengagement. God brought order, rhythm, sequence and harmony to create the uni-verse.

The other biblical image that demonstrates the meaning of reconciliation is the image of the new being in Christ - "everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (2 Cor. 5:17.) The old being which is given to corruption and decay and headed towards death is rendered a thing of the past because a new one opposite it has come into being. The old may still be remembered but it has no more power to impose its will on the new.

The Genesis account shows the Spirit of God "moving across" the chaos for God to transform it into the universe. In Paul's Letter to the Galatians, the Spirit is God's power that renews and sanctifies the church. The church becomes a new creation as a fruit of reconciliation with God.

In the aftermath of wars and violent revolutions, various attempts have been made to constitute what is known as Reconciliation Commission. So far, these efforts ended up in failure largely because the protagonists at the opposite sides of the table didn't go through the process of forgiveness and repentance. The roots of the conflict, basically injustice, were not undone (repentance) - while the injuries suffered by the other party have remained open wounds (forgiveness). And neither side could agree on a common agenda of a new order.

It is in situations like this that the church ought to "let its light to shine" which means letting the world know that the church knows a few things that make for peace. First, the conditions for reconciliation - forgiveness and repentance - must be satisfied. And second, the establishment of a radically new order should be on top of a common agenda. It is by following the leading of the Spirit that the enormously complex and tedious process of reconciliation may find completion.

Nursery/Kindergarten Level

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. tell that the Holy Spirit helps believers bring back their friends;
2. perform activities that will restore friendships; and
3. express one's joy for being able to bring back one's friends

II. Concept: The Holy Spirit brings back our friends.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), song chart, pictures of the story, art materials

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the children with smile. Create a good atmosphere of learning.
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, may your guiding hands lead us this morning and may the reconciling power of the Holy Spirit be with us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen!"
3. Opening songs:

"The More We Are Together"

The more we get together, together, together

The more we get together the happier are we

For your friends are my friends and my friends are your friends

The more we get together the happier are we.

"I've Got Peace"

I've got peace like a river (3x) in my soul halleluiah

I've got joy like a fountain (3x) in my soul

B. Getting Ready

Prepare the children to play these games.

1. For **N/K**: Open the Basket Game
 - a. Tell the students to stand and find a partner. Tell them to hold hands. Every pair should have a student stand between them.
 - b. There will be one student outside as the "butterfly".
 - c. Begin the game by saying "OPEN THE BASKET". Every pair holding hands holds the hands up. Everyone attempts to change position and the butterfly should choose his or her basket too.
 - d. Continue saying "Open the Basket" until all of them have had the chance to play the "butterfly".
2. For **YE**: Tug of War Game
 - a. Divide the class into two equal groups. The pupil who does not have a group becomes the line person who watches if a group crosses the line drawn between the two groups.
 - b. Each group forms a line. Each pupil must wrap his or her arms around the waist of the pupil in front of him or her. The pupils in front of each line must lock arms. When the line person says, "Tug!" each pupil must pull the one in front.
 - c. The team that crosses the line loses the game.

C. Learning Time

1. Talk Time. (For both N/K and YE)
 - a. Ask the pupils if they like the game and why.
 - b. Guide them to say that the first game may have been fun because everyone had a chance to be the butterfly. The second game may not have been fun at all because they had to pull and one team lost.
 - c. Ask the pupils in the losing team what they felt when they lost. Explain that it is hard to lose because we feel that something was taken away from us and we want to fight back.
 - d. Draw the attention of the class to the story by saying that two brothers fought a lot in today's Bible story. Find out who these two brothers are and why they fought a lot.
2. Present the story.

Jacob and Esau Reconciled

(Based on Genesis 33:1-17)

A long time ago, there were brothers named Jacob and Esau who fought with each other. Esau was mad because Jacob deceived him. Jacob stole Esau's right to inherit all their father's riches. Esau wanted to kill Jacob!

Then, Jacob escaped Esau's anger. His mother Rebekah sent him to stay with her brother far away. He stayed there for a long time. He had wives and children. He had become a rich man.

One day, Jacob sent a messenger to tell Esau that he wanted to see him. He wanted to share with him his cattle, donkeys, goats and sheep. When the messenger came back, he told Jacob that Esau would come with 400 strong fighting men.

Quickly, Jacob sorted his family, putting his wife Rachel and his youngest son Joseph at the back that they might be safer there. He thought Esau was still mad.

Jacob, with courage in his heart, stood ahead to meet his brother Esau. As soon as he saw him he bowed low, but Esau rushed towards him and flung his arms round his neck. They cried and hugged each other happily.

How thankful Jacob was because Esau had really forgiven him!

"Let's journey home together," Esau suggested but Jacob could only travel slowly. He had small children and young animals to look after. They could not walk as quickly as Esau's strong young men. So the brothers said, "Goodbye!" They were friends once again.

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

Ask these questions.

1. Who are the two brothers who fought a lot? (Jacob and Esau)
2. Why did they fight? (Jacob stole Esau's birthright to own their father's possessions. Esau wanted to kill him.)
3. How did Jacob escape? (His mother sent him away to stay with her brother.)
4. What did Jacob do to tell his brother that he was sorry for what had happened? (He sent a messenger to tell his brother that he wants to share his possessions with him.)
5. What happened when Jacob and Esau met each other (They hugged and kissed each other. They became friends again.)
6. Who helped Esau reconcile with Jacob? (The Holy Spirit)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: Who helps us to say sorry for the wrong things we have done or when we forgive one who has wronged us? (The Holy Spirit)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the memory verse: "But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him...." (Genesis 33:4a)
2. Reflective commitment. Tell the children to think of one situation when they said sorry to one they have wronged and this person gave his or her forgiveness. Allow them to share one by one, taking note of what they did to become friends again.
3. Craft work, "Peace Stick" (if this is too complicated for the younger children to do, the teacher can assemble the peace stick up to a certain point and the children can just complete or decorate the peace sticks.)
 - a. Prepare these materials: paper towel roll, uncooked rice, rubber bands, ribbon, tape, wrapping paper, pair of scissors, markers, glue.
 - b. Tell the class to follow these steps.
 - 1) Cut wrapping paper to fit around the roll. Glue the paper onto the roll. Decorate the roll.
 - 2) Cut a square paper to cover one end of the roll. Secure the cover with a rubber band.
 - 3) Scoop some rice and fill more than half of the roll with it. Cover the other end of the roll with paper. Secure it with a rubber band.
 - 4) Cut two pieces of ribbon and tie them onto each end of the roll.
 - c. Tell the children who made the peace sticks that these symbolize making peace with someone they had wronged. Ask them to whom they would give the peace stick and what they would say to mean sorry.
 - d. Remind the children that reconciliation is the power of the Holy Spirit within us. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide us and help us. Be happy when we regain friends again.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Reflective action: "I am willing to reconcile with my friends."
3. Closing song: "I've Got Peace"
I've got peace like a river (3x) in my soul halleluiah
I've got joy like a fountain (3x) in my soul"
4. Closing prayer: "Loving God, you give us angels that meet us on our way. You always forgive us whenever we do wrong, when we hurt others and when we hurt you. Thank you for loving us so much even when we wrong you. Stay with us this week and help us to be your faithful servants. We pray in Jesus name. Amen."

Middle Elementary/Older Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. discuss the letter of Paul to Philemon to find the meaning of forgiveness and restoration;
2. state that the role of the Holy Spirit in the story;
3. explain how the church acts to make reconciliation possible among members; and
4. express one's joy for being able to bring back one's friends.

II. Concept: The Holy Spirit enables us to become friends again with each other.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), song chart, pictures of the story, copy of Paul's Letter to Philemon (preferably NIV), Sunday School Theater costumes for Philemon and Onesimus (may be white drapes for Philemon and tattered toga for Onesimus)

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the children as they arrive. You can feel the Holy Spirit by being friendly and happy.
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, thank you Jesus for gathering us today! May this day a fruitful learning experience to us! This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen!"
3. Opening song: "Mushi-mushi Ollah"
Mushi-mushi, Ollah olla, hellow hello, kumusta ka
Mushi, Ollah, Hello, Kumusta ka
Mushi, Ollah, Hello, Kumusta ka
Kumusta ka halina't magsaya pumalakpak, pumalakapak
Ituro ang paa, padyak sa kanan, padyak sa kaliwa
Umikot ka umikot ka, humanap ng iba.

B. Getting Ready

1. Present the game: "Newspaperball Fight". Prepare these things: sheets of newspaper, chalk or masking tape, timer and paper towels or wet wipes. Give the instructions.
 - a. Divide into two groups. Mark two equal-sized areas of the classroom using chalk or maskingtape to draw the line. Each group must have equal amount of old newspaper.
 - b. Give the signal. Each pupil must make newspaper balls and quickly throw them to the side of the opposing team within two minutes. The goal is to throw more balls on the opponents' side.
 - c. (At the end of the game, count the balls. The team with less balls in the area wins the game. The kids collect the balls and dispose of them. The pupils clean their hands with paper towels or wet wipes.)
2. *Cool Down/Talk Time.* Ask: How did your hands look after the newspaper ball fight?(Our hand got very dirty.) How is the newspaper like sin? (Our sins tarnish our whole being. Our sins separate us from God's goodness.) How are the paper towels like God's grace? (When we ask God's forgiveness, God's grace cleanses us and restores us to our path to becoming one with God.)
3. Tell the pupils that they are to read an epistle in the Bible. An **epistle** is a book in the Bible that was adopted from a letter that Paul wrote to early Christians. Ask the pupils what they know about the different parts of a letter. Guide them to generalize the following:

- a. Heading – where and when the letter was written
- b. Greetings/Salutations – a way of saying “Hello!” to the recipient of the letter.
- c. Body – the message and wish of the sender. The sender also explains the message.
- d. Signature – the sender signs his or her name here.

C. Learning Time

1. Give background of the text. Say that Paul, who was in prison in Rome, wrote to Philemon, a prominent Christian probably a member of the church at Colossae and the owner of a slave named Onesimus. This slave had run away from his master, and then somehow he had come in contact with Paul, who was then in prison. Through Paul, Onesimus became Christian. Find out in this epistle what Paul asked Philemon.
2. Let the pupils work in pairs (dyad) or in a small group of three (tryad). Reproduce this copy of Paul’s epistle to Philemon and distribute to each dyad to tryad. Pupils read it together and note the highlights of the letter.
Highlights:
 - a. Heading (where & when the letter was written)
 - b. Greetings (For whom were the greetings? How did Paul consider Philemon? Where was their church at that time?)
 - c. Body (What were the two things that Paul wanted to happen with regard to Onesimus?)
 - d. (Why do you think Paul considered Onesimus his son?)
3. Divide the class into six groups. Tell each group to discuss the verses and make their insights.
 - a. Group 1: Salutation, verses 1-3
 - b. Group 2: Philemon's love and faith. Verses 4-7
 - c. Group 3: Paul's plea for Onesimus Part 1, verses 8-14
 - d. Group 4: Part 2, verses 15-18
 - e. Group 5: Part 3, verses 19-22
 - f. Group 6: Final greetings and benediction, verses 23-25

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

As a class, summarize the points in the highlights:

1. Where and when was the letter written? (Paul wrote the letter while he was in prison in Rome. At that time, the early Christians were persecuted for believing in Jesus.)
2. For whom were the greetings? (To Philemon, Apphia, Archippus and the whole church) How did Paul consider Philemon? (as a dear friend and fellow worker in Christ) Where was their church at that time? (meeting in the house of Philemon)
3. What were the two things that Paul wanted to happen with regard to Onesimus?
· Paul asked Philemon’s permission to keep Onesimus to help him while he was in prison. Paul offered to pay Philemon anything his slave had taken, and to bear the wrong he had done him. He would send Onesimus to deliver his messages and to assist him in other ways that Philemon used to do for Paul.
4. Paul appealed to Philemon to forgive Onesimus for running away. (Philemon owned Onesimus like he would own a piece of property because Onesimus was Philemon’s slave. Running away from a master was a big offense.) Paul also asked Philemon to welcome Onesimus not only as forgiven slave but as a Christian brother.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Say: Paul writes to Philemon to make an appeal for Onesimus to be reconciled with Philemon not as slave but as Christian brother. Ask: Who do you think helped Paul to make an appeal and Philemon to reconcile with Onesimus? (The Holy Spirit)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the memory verse: "Your love, dear brother, has brought me great joy and much encouragement! You have cheered the hearts of all God's people." (Philemon 1:7)
2. *Sunday School Theater.* Ask: How do you think Onesimus asked for Philemon's forgiveness for running away? How do you think Philemon responded to Paul's appeal for Onesimus to be forgiven by and reconciled to Philemon not as slave but as Christian brother? Show your response by acting out this scene. (Use the dyads/tryads to show this response. Have each pair put on the costume.)
3. *Stating the Truth.* Say: Earlier in our game we compared the way paper towels removed the dirt on your hand to God's grace. When we ask God's forgiveness, God's grace cleanses us and restores us to our path to becoming one with God. How do you think Philemon was instrumental in extending God's grace to Onesimus? (Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Philemon made reconciliation possible in the church. He showed that one could still be our brother or sister even if this person had done us wrong. God's grace cleanses out sins.) "God's grace cleanses us of our sins. We could also be like Philemon when we forgive, reconcile and restore our relationships with our brothers and sisters."
4. Engage in a short dialogue. Divide the class evenly. (If the class has odd number of students, the last one will be partners with the teacher.) Each of the members of the first group thinks of ways to ask for forgiveness. Each of the members of the second group thinks of ways to say that s/he forgives. Then, the teacher says, "Find a partner in the other group!" and each member of the first group delivers the line asking for forgiveness and the other person responds by giving words of forgiveness. Reconciliation completes the cycle of repentance and forgiveness. We know the fact that the reconciling power of the Holy Spirit leads them to a new life of relationship. Be friends again.

G. Closing Worship

1. Tell the class to recite the memory verse.
2. Reflective song: "Forgive, My Friend" (CPG # 167;) or a related song available in the local church)s
 Forgive me, my friend, oh have I hurt you?
 I made you cry with pain and sorrow
 But now I know that Jesus loves you so
 He loves us all; so lets love each other too
 Our Lord has said: Father forgive them
 For them who caused him sorrow, pain and shame
 But now I know that Jesus loves you so
 He loves us all: so let's love each other too.
3. Offering
4. Closing song: "For You, I Am Praying"
5. Closing prayer: "Dear God, we thank you for the reconciling power of the Holy Spirit. May that power be with us! This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen."

Youth Level

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. explain the meaning of reconciliation by analyzing the stories of Esau and Jacob and Philemon and Onesimus;
2. discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in the two stories and relate it with the restoration of broken relationships among the people;
3. explain how the church acts to make reconciliation possible among members; and
4. express one's appreciation and joy to what the church does to restore broken relationships.

II. **Concept:** The Holy Spirit enables people to be reconciled and to mend their broken relationships.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), song chart, picture of two persons hugging each other, cardboard, scissors, glue, thread

III. Learning Experiences

A. *Opening Worship*

1. Welcome time: Greet the learners personally and warmly. Let the students participate in the preparations needed for the session.
2. Opening prayer: "Our heavenly Father, we humbly come to your presence. May your Holy Spirit help us realize our wrongdoings so that we may repent and ask for forgiveness. We know this will renew our relationship with you. This is our prayer in your Son's name. Amen."
3. Opening song: "What a Friend We Have in Jesus"

B. *Getting Ready*

1. Make a big puzzle from a picture of two persons hugging each other. You can cut it to several pieces glued in a cardboard or any hard material. Let the students put the puzzle together. Then the teacher says- "Our lesson for today is about "The Reconciling Power of the Holy Spirit."
2. Help the children to unlock the meaning of these difficult words by showing situations based on experience.
 - a. Forgiveness
 - b. Reconciliation
 - c. Restoration
3. Tell the class that they are to read an epistle in the Bible. An **epistle** is a book in the Bible that was adopted from a letter that Paul wrote to early Christians. Ask the pupils what they know about the different parts of a letter. Guide them to generalize the following:
 - a. Heading – where and when the letter was written
 - b. Greetings/Salutations – a way of saying "Hello!" to the recipient of the letter.
 - c. Body – the message and wish of the sender. The sender also explains the message.
 - d. Signature – the sender signs his or her name here.

C. *Learning Time*

1. Group the students into two groups.
2. Assign the first group to read Genesis 33:1-17. Encourage the first group to role play the message of the passage which is about the meeting and reconciliation of Jacob and Esau.

3. Assign the second group to read Philemon 1:1-25. Ask the second group to role play the reconciliation of Onesimus with Philemon as Christian brothers.
4. Process the role playing done by both groups and assist the class to realize the need to repent and ask for forgiveness before reconciliation happens.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

As a class, summarize the points in the highlights:

1. Where and when was the letter written? (Paul wrote the letter while he was in prison in Rome. At that time, the early Christians were persecuted for believing in Jesus.)
2. For whom were the greetings? (To Philemon, Apphia, Archippus and the whole church) How did Paul consider Philemon? (as a dear friend and fellow worker in Christ) Where was their church at that time? (meeting in the house of Philemon)
3. What were the two things that Paul wanted to happen with regard to Onesimus?
 - Paul asked Philemon's permission to keep Onesimus to help him while he was in prison. Paul offered to pay Philemon anything his slave had taken, and to bear the wrong he had done him. He would send Onesimus to deliver his messages and to assist him in other ways that Philemon used to do for Paul.
4. Paul appealed to Philemon to forgive Onesimus for running away. (Philemon owned Onesimus like he would own a piece of property because Onesimus was Philemon's slave. Running away from a master was a big offense.) Paul also asked Philemon to welcome Onesimus not only as forgiven slave but as a Christian brother.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Say: Paul writes to Philemon to make an appeal for Onesimus to be reconciled with Philemon not as slave but as Christian brother. Ask: Who do you think helped Paul to make an appeal and Philemon to reconcile with Onesimus? (The Holy Spirit)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Discuss the memory verse: "But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept." (Genesis 33:4)
2. Present the following to the class and ask them for their comments and insights.
 - a. Reconciliation takes place between Jacob and Esau, and between Philemon and Onesimus. Broken relationships are restored.
 - b. The Holy Spirit enables people to be reconciled and to mend their broken relationships.
 - c. Led by the Holy Spirit, the church is a channel of reconciliation, a channel of healing broken relationships between God and God's people, between persons and the rest of creation. Thus, the ministry of reconciliation is an important element of the church's ministry in building a trustworthy and peaceful social order.
3. Have the class make a book mark with the symbol of a dove that signifies the Holy Spirit. Let the students depict reconciliation between people and the rest of creation.
4. Make a Faith Journal. Encourage the class to make a reconciliation-commitment entry. They will choose the person they will write about.

G. Closing Worship

1. Tell the class to recite the memory verse.
2. Offering
3. Closing song: "For You, I Am Praying"
4. Closing prayer: "Dear God, we thank you for the reconciling power of the Holy Spirit. May that power be with us! This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen."

Adult Level

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. explain the meaning of reconciliation and its role in healing and wholeness of relationships among people and with God's creation;
2. tell one's insights on how the broken relations between Esau and Jacob was restored and how Onesimus was restored to the household of Philemon;
3. discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in the reconciliation ministries of the church; and
4. express one's appreciation and joy to what the church does to restore broken relationships.

II. Concept: The Holy Spirit enables us to strive for healing and wholeness in our relationship with each other and with our God and with God's creation.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), song chart

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: "Our heavenly Father, we humbly come to your presence. May your Holy Spirit help us realize our wrongdoings so that we may repent and ask for forgiveness. We know this will renew our relationship with you. This is our prayer in your Son's name. Amen."
3. Opening song: "What a Friend We Have in Jesus"

B. Getting Ready

1. Tell the students to share any experience of conflict, whether their own or other people's. Ask them to express their feelings about it.
2. Tell the class that they are to read an epistle in the Bible. An **epistle** is a book in the Bible that was adopted from a letter that Paul wrote to early Christians. Ask the pupils what they know about the different parts of a letter. Guide them to generalize the following:
 - a. Heading – where and when the letter was written
 - b. Greetings/Salutations – a way of saying "Hello!" to the recipient of the letter.
 - c. Body – the message and wish of the sender. The sender also explains the message.
 - d. Signature – the sender signs his or her name here.

C. Learning Time

1. Divide the students into two groups.
2. Assign the first group to read Genesis 33:1-17. Encourage the first group to role play the message of the passage which is about the meeting and reconciliation of Jacob and Esau. Have the class recall that Jacob ran away from his brother, Esau because of an unresolved issue. Emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit at the time when Jacob's heart was right with God that he decided to repent for his wrongdoing and ask Esau for his forgiveness. It is at this moment that Jacob made peace with his past and moved forward to be the person God wants him to be. As a result, reconciliation was made possible.
3. Assign the second group to read Philemon 1:1-25. Ask the second group to role play the reconciliation of Onesimus with Philemon as Christian brothers. Like Onesimus, who was reconciled with Philemon through the Holy Spirit, the ultimate act of sacrifice of Jesus made us reconciled with God. Jesus intercedes in our behalf.

As we are reconciled with God, we become a new person.

4. Process the role playing done by both groups and assist the class to realize the need to repent and ask for forgiveness before reconciliation happens.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

As a class, summarize the points in the highlights:

1. Where and when was the letter written? (Paul wrote the letter while he was in prison in Rome. At that time, the early Christians were persecuted for believing in Jesus.)
2. For whom were the greetings? (To Philemon, Apphia, Archippus and the whole church) How did Paul consider Philemon? (as a dear friend and fellow worker in Christ) Where was their church at that time? (meeting in the house of Philemon)
3. What were the two things that Paul wanted to happen with regard to Onesimus?
· Paul asked Philemon's permission to keep Onesimus to help him while he was in prison. Paul offered to pay Philemon anything his slave had taken, and to bear the wrong he had done him. He would send Onesimus to deliver his messages and to assist him in other ways that Philemon used to do for Paul.
4. Paul appealed to Philemon to forgive Onesimus for running away. (Philemon owned Onesimus like he would own a piece of property because Onesimus was Philemon's slave. Running away from a master was a big offense.) Paul also asked Philemon to welcome Onesimus not only as forgiven slave but as a Christian brother.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: Do you agree that God through the Holy Spirit enables us to strive for healing and wholeness in our relationships with each other, with our God and with God's creation? Why or why not?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Encourage the students to share any experience where they got entangled in a conflict. Have them share what kind of resolution was reached to enable reconciliation.
2. Tell the class that conflicts happen everywhere, including the church. These conflicts are sometimes healthy and unhealthy. They are healthy when they become avenues for building positive relationships. They are unhealthy when they escalate the problem and break relationships that result in shameful and hurting consequences for the ministers and congregations.
3. Draw from the class some programs that will determine healthy ways of dealing with conflicts in the church with the end in view of reconciliation between conflicting parties.
4. Ask the class to make a commitment-statement to continue participating in the ministry of reconciliation of the Church.

G. Closing Worship

1. Reflective Action: I am open to engage myself in the reconciliation ministry of the Church.
2. Offering
3. Closing song: "For You, I Am Praying"
4. Closing prayer: "Dear God, we thank you for the reconciling power of the Holy Spirit. May that power be with us! This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen."