



Biblical Principles for Christian Military Service

Inductive Bible Studies for Military Christians

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The following five inductive Bible studies are written to help members of the military faithfully serve as disciples of Jesus and as members of their nation's military. They can be conducted in single sessions or split into smaller studies. They are not intended to push the norms from any particular nation's military upon another nation's military. Instead, **they are designed to help us serve our Lord by understanding key biblical texts about military service, discuss the Lord's requirements for military service, and discern what God requires of us in our military service.**

Our lives serve a dual purpose. As Christians, we live as stewards of God's creation and redemption in the ways we conduct ourselves in this world. As members of the military, we also live as stewards of our nations' military power in the ways we conduct ourselves in the performance of our duties. Thus, our character, our competence, and our convictions combine in the ways we interpret the values that form our identity as Christians serving in the military. The same dual purpose was true for biblical leaders who also served as soldiers. Their relationships with God informed their values and convictions in the ways they served. Thus, their character mattered just as much as their competence.

In the military, virtue-based character drives performance. The philosopher Aristotle defined virtues as the practical motivations and behaviors that allow human beings to live well. They accomplish this by desiring what is honorable and rejecting what is shameful in the life situations they encounter. Aristotle suggested that there are four main virtues – prudence (self-discipline), justice, fortitude (courage), and temperance (moderation in action) that guide our voluntary actions, and they cannot be coerced by fear or punishment. **Such virtues are the foundation of military service, and traditional definitions of military character.**

There are many exemplars of human virtues who display good examples of self-discipline, justice, courage, and moderate behavior in their military service. **But Christians' primary exemplar is Jesus** (Hebrews 12:1-3), who commanded the standard for our behavior: "A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one." (John 13:34-35)

Later the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Galatia and explained that the Holy Spirit bears fruit in human behavior through acts of "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 5: 22-23). His teaching invites us to define our practice of traditional virtues as fruits of the Holy Spirit in obedience to Jesus' command for us to love one another.

You may be thinking that practicing the fruits as the Holy Spirit as military virtues is difficult, and it is. But it is not impossible with Christ. As Christians, the formation of our moral principles

and ethical practices begins with the Gospel accounts of our Lord's life and the ministry of the apostles.

The following inductive biblical studies are designed to help us practice Christian virtue in obedience to our Lord's command. Each of the following studies explores texts from the books of Luke and Acts where Roman soldiers, during the performance of their duties, encounter John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter, and Paul. You will be asked how their encounters with Jesus and the Kingdom of God shapes your identity and your virtue as a soldier.

- First, a group of Roman soldiers asked John the Baptizer, "What does God require of us?" Their question and John's answer to them sets the foundation for Christians serving in the military.
- Second, a Roman centurion (company commander) requests Jesus' help on behalf of his sick servant. His compassion and his interaction with Jesus say much about faithfulness, responsibility, and accountability in the performance of military duty. How do we view authority? What is our duty to care for others?
- Third, a Roman centurion is stuck in a moral and ethical dilemma while performing a terrible duty. He conducts an execution and then witnesses Jesus' redemptive work on the cross. In doing this, he makes a candid comment that some people claim as a statement of faith. Are we ever placed in similar circumstances? If so, how do we handle them?
- Fourth, a Roman centurion is seeking depth in his relationship with God, and he encounters the Apostle Peter. Because of this encounter, his home becomes a church for family, friends, community, and unit members. More importantly, his home becomes a model for the growing church. Who is included and influenced by our faith and prayers?
- Fifth, Roman centurions are performing their legal duties by delivering prisoners, including the Apostle Paul, to Rome. They assume risk and encounter storms during this duty. In these texts, the centurions' characters, convictions, and competency as soldiers have an active role in the transmission of the gospel. How does our faithful performance of duties serve God's purpose for creation?

Each of these Bible studies can be done in one or two sessions. They begin with prayer and then focus on a key text from Luke and Acts. Each study is inductive, so it includes several questions to help the group focus upon the primary text. Each study also includes additional texts to help the leader prepare the session. These additional texts and questions can be used by the group for deeper study of the primary text. They provide examples of other people dealing with the same issues. Finally, each study ends with a prayer using an appropriate Psalm.

May these studies bless you and strengthen you in faithful service to our Lord.



Study 1

Values Associated with Targeting, Discipline, and Strength

What does God require of us as soldiers?

John the Baptizer and the Roman soldiers (Luke 3:14)

Opening prayer.

As Christians we belong to Christ, and through His life we have been brought into the kingdom of God (Ephesians 2:3-5). Thus, **every aspect of our lives is a living stewardship of our faith, and under his authority. This includes our service as members of our nation's military.** Our nations expect us to perform our duties, and our service requires our careful consideration for uses of lethal force and how we act under stress. Luke 3:14 links the moral values of our faith with our ethical practices because it raises questions about our stewardship of power and violence. Early Christian leaders only permitted believers to serve in the military and use lethal force in defense of their neighbors.

In this text, Roman soldiers oversaw a crowd, similar to main security missions we participate in today. While there, they asked John the Baptizer a question: "What does God require of us?" John used three key words to answer their question. The first word literally means, "violent robbery or terrify" as opposed to stealing by stealth. The second word means to accuse falsely, and this is linked to the commandment not to bear false witness (Exodus 20:16). The third word means to "have unflinching strength," and this can be connected with God's command for Joshua to be strong and courageous in the face of fear and uncertainty (Joshua 1:19).

A fearful, stressed, and discontented soldier is a dangerous soldier to him/herself, to comrades, and to society. Thus, John the Baptizer's answer to the soldiers invites us to consider our levels of "unflinching strength" under stress, our honesty, and our targeting.

Read Luke 3:1-17 and answer the following questions:

- What happened at the river? What were the professions of the different people who asked questions to John? What kinds of questions did they ask?
- Why are the answers to these questions important for faithfully serving God?
- Does John's answer apply to individuals or groups? Why?

Now focus on Luke 3:14:

- Do you think the Roman soldiers asked John a different kind of question than the other groups? What was different or similar in their question?
- What three things did John tell the soldiers?
- Do you think John was only talking about ethical and spiritual practices involving money? What else could he have meant?
- What do you think the Roman soldiers were expecting John to say?
- Why didn't John require the soldiers to leave the military?
- What other military activities apply to John's answer?

- How do we practice proper use of authority and power?
- How do we maintain ourselves in times of hardship and fear?
- Does John's answer apply to individuals or to your units? Why?

Now read Luke 13:1 about soldiers behaving wrongly.

- Where do other people factor into how we measure the consequences of our actions?
- How do these passages connect with practices of military distinction, necessity, the unnecessary suffering of others, and proportionality?
- How does John's answer apply to our stewardship of air, sea, land, cyber, and space power?
- How do Jesus' and John's words guide our answers to these questions?

Final questions:

- What are the virtues and values that God requires of those in military service?
- The four basic principles for targeting in the *Law of Armed Conflict* are distinction, military necessity, prevention of unnecessary suffering, and proportionality. How do you think John's answer to the Roman soldiers applies to these principles?
- Do John's final words to the crowd offer any grace to the crowd and to the soldiers? What is this grace? How do the fruits of the Holy Spirit inform John's answer to the soldiers (Galatians 5:22-23)?
- What standards do you think God will use for judging our actions as military members?
- How will the above verses inform your values and practices?

For further study:

- Read Psalm 62 – as a soldier, King David struggled with similar issues. How does his prayer help you answer these questions? Notice:
 - Verse 3 – situations of improper attacks
 - Verses 5-8 – situations of trust under fire
 - Verse 10 – situations of extortion and misuse of power
- Read 1 Samuel 24 – David spared Saul's life:
 - What were David's reasons for not killing Saul? (moral values)
 - What were David's orders to his soldiers? (ethical practices)
 - How does this passage relate with John's answer to the Roman soldiers?
- Read Joshua 2:
 - David killed Goliath (1 Samuel 17:31-58) and showed the same courage as Joshua (Joshua 1:9).
 - How did the soldiers treat Rahab differently than their other enemies?
- Read Deuteronomy 20. What did God require from Moses and the tribal soldiers in warfare? Why do you think these things were required?

Closing prayer – pray together Psalm 62.



Study 2

Values Associated with Authority, Obedience, and Care

“Say the word...for I myself am under authority.”

Jesus and the Roman centurion (Luke 7:1-10)

This text is similar to the Roman soldiers interacting with John the Baptizer at the Jordan river. Here a Roman soldier, who was an outsider to Israel and an invader, voluntarily contacts Jesus on behalf of his sick servant. We do not know the details about the sickness - we only know that this Roman commander was so motivated by his concern for a subordinate that he reached out to a foreigner for help. We do know that he was respected by the people because the Jewish elders described him as “worthy,” but he felt unworthy. However, what is amazing about this event is that **Luke tells us this Roman commander is the only person in the New Testament whose faith “amazed” Jesus.** The way Luke reports their interaction, we can see that what amazed Jesus about this Roman’s faith comes from the Roman’s ethics as a commander.

The rank of centurion is given to a commander of 100 soldiers. At that time in history, a citizen of Rome could enlist in the legions and be assigned to a century consisting of 100 soldiers (about the size of a modern infantry company). The commander for each century was selected from the most proven soldiers in its membership. Thus, this centurion was probably chosen because he was the most proven leader in his company. This is a different system than a commander being assigned to a company by senior command. Centurions were home grown.

Furthermore, the modern word "sergeant" comes from the French word "sergent," meaning "a servant, valet or court official," which in turn derives from the Latin word "serviens," which also means "servant" or "soldier." Some historians have commented that the sick servant may actually have been one of the centurion’s sergeants. This would help explain the concern of the centurion for his servant.

The important feature in this biblical text is how Jesus’ healing is responsive to a situation that seems to follow the order and discipline of a military unit. A commander is concerned about the welfare of a member of his unit, and he makes a request of Jesus that seems to follow the three of primary rules in the chain of command: 1) you never make your boss come down to you, 2) what goes up, comes back down, and 3) you can delegate responsibility but never authority. All of these rules are working in Luke’s text. The Roman soldiers considered John the Baptizer and Jesus as their superiors, and in turn John and Jesus do not send the soldiers away empty. What does this text have to say for us?

Opening Prayer.

Read Luke 7: 1-10 and answer the following questions:

- Why do you think the centurion sent local elders to Jesus instead of going himself? Why do think they went to Jesus? Was it compulsion, public manners, saving reputation, petitioning for a favor, or something else?

- How do you think the centurion treated his servant?
- Military leadership includes our care for subordinates. Why do you think the centurion cared for his servant? Was it to maintain unit end strength, or concern for the health and well-being of a unit member, civilian servant, or a slave?
- What other health care options could have been available to the centurion?
- Why do you think he decided to ask Jesus for healing for his servant?
- Why do you think he believed that he was not worthy to have Jesus come into his home?
- Why do you think the centurion insisted that Jesus only had to say the word for his servant to be healed? Do you ever feel this way? Why?
- Why do you think Jesus was amazed by the centurion's behavior?

Read Matthew 8:5-13:

- What are the similarities and differences between Matthew's and Luke's account of this event?
- How do these similarities and differences help you understand this text?

Final questions:

- In his letter to the Romans, Paul writes, "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval." (Romans 14:8) How do the centurion's actions demonstrate Paul's instructions for Christian behavior? He thinks he is unworthy, but Jesus commends his faith – do you think Jesus judged him more worthy than he judged himself? Why?
- How do you evaluate the centurion as a leader? Do you think he followed his superiors as well as he expected others to follow his orders?
- What do you think this text says about the virtues of fidelity, responsibility, and accountability in a commander? What do they say about the authority and humility of a leader?
- Although he wasn't a Christ-follower, the centurion displayed attributes that are associated with fruits of the Holy Spirit. Do you think the virtues he displayed guided his actions as a commander? How can they be a guide for us?
- Would you want to serve under this centurion? Why?

Other texts:

- Read 2 Samuel 23 about David and his mighty men.
 - This chapter focuses on the initiative, bravery, and deeds of David's mighty men. They are acting like heroic soldiers. What were they doing?
 - Focus on verses 13–17. What did they do for David? What did David do in these verses? What reason does David give for his action?
 - What does this text say about David's virtues as a godly leader?

- How are David's actions similar to those of the centurion in Luke 7? How is he acting differently?
- **Read Psalm 15.**
 - How you think this psalm of David applies to the centurion?
 - How do you think this psalm applies to our military service?

Closing prayer – pray together the words of Psalm 15.



Study 3

Values of Candor, Allegiance, Self-Awareness, Reconciliation

“Surely this man was righteous.”

Jesus and the centurion at the cross (Luke 23:44-49)

The centurion at that cross was in command of the military detail that executed Jesus. He was responsible for killing Jesus. It wasn't personal. It wasn't political. The centurion was under orders, and Jesus was judged to be an enemy of Rome. So, he did his duty by leading his soldiers to torture and kill a condemned prisoner. Perhaps some of the soldiers who met with John the Baptizer served in the unit, and so were also a part in Jesus' death. After reading Luke 23:44-49, do you think the centurion was at peace after carrying out his orders?

Moral injuries happen to warfighters when their actions violate their moral virtues. Their conflicting emotions and thoughts reveal their spiritual, psychological, and social struggles. They experience these struggles because they have a conscience. As Christians, we can experience these same struggles because of our faith. These struggles require some type of reconciliation between our moral values and life practices.

Some warfighters report a feeling of relief and joy at the conclusion of a battle against an identified enemy. Moses and the Israelites celebrated after their enemies died in the Red Sea (Exodus 15), and David celebrated after killing Goliath by taking his weapons (1 Samuel 17). There is cause to celebrate in the death of a perceived evil. But at the same time, there is a cause to mourn the death of innocence. There is also a cause to repent and cleanse ourselves from the consequences of our own actions after we have crossed moral boundaries in the performance of our military service (Numbers 31: 1-24).

Some say the centurion at the cross was the first Christian because he recognized Jesus as the Son of God at the cross (Matthew 27:54 and Mark 13:39). Luke records the centurion's words differently. The Romans nailed the charges against Jesus over his head, they pounded a crown of thorns into his head to mock him – and then they watched him die. After watching how Jesus endured his death, their commander spoke with the candor of a veteran: “Truly this man, was righteous.” In a sense, the centurion said, “Jesus was right, and Rome was wrong.” Do you think this was a courageous or foolish thing for a soldier to say?

We don't know if this centurion became a Christian in this moment. Like everybody else, he reached the wrong conclusion at the cross because he spoke of Jesus in the past tense. Like the disciples, he didn't know that Jesus would be resurrected. But yet he spoke with the candor of a veteran who didn't rejoice over the death of supposed enemy. Like the centurion with the sick servant, it may have felt this was a moment of truth that made him feel unworthy. He concluded Jesus was right. Do you think this meant that he judged his own actions as wrong?

Opening Prayer.

Read Luke 23: 44-49 and discuss the following questions:

- What do you think the centurion saw and did at Jesus' execution?
- We can assume that the centurion was following orders. Do you think he would have evaluated his actions in the same way?
- What virtues does this centurion exhibit?
- Do you see any of the virtues in this centurion that are associated with fruits of the Holy Spirit? What are they?
- Is the centurion's confession the integrity of a bad conscience or an act of faith?
- How does this centurion follow, or fail to follow, John the Baptizer's criteria for soldiers? How is he similar to or different from the centurion in Luke 7?

Other texts: Read the story of David, Uriah, and Nathan in 2 Samuel 11 and 12. In the first two Bible studies, David is a good exemplar of godly virtues in a soldier. As a king, however, he is something different.

- What happens in these texts?
- How does David fail as a leader? What restores him?
- Does David display the same kind of self-assessment as the centurion at the cross?
- Do the same virtues that he displayed against Goliath, and with his mighty men, now served to condemn him as a king?
- David is morally injured by his actions. What does David do when he becomes convicted of deeds?

Read Numbers 19.

- What does God command Moses and Aaron to do with soldiers returning from battle?
- Why does He require soldiers to do this? Do you think this can be a spiritual and psychological cleansing as well a physical "warrior wash"?
- What do you think this has to do with soldiers like the centurion at the cross?

Read Psalm 51. This is David's confession for killing an innocent man.

- What issues was David talking about? What do you think he is saying? Could this psalm have been helpful to the centurion at the cross?
- How was David changing? What verses describe his changes?
- Are these verses helpful to you, especially in light of dealing with the consequences of your service?

Final questions:

- What role do you think the centurion's candor can have for us? What lessons do you take from this centurion?
- Where do we draw the line between our military duty and our faithful stewardship? How do the fruits of the Spirit guide you during these times?

- Have you ever been in similar positions to those of the centurion at the cross, or King David before Nathan? What did you do?

Closing prayer -- pray together Psalm 51.



Study 4

Values of Faith, Family, Community and Church

“We are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.”

Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10:1-48)

This study is different than the other studies because it involves how God uses the personal practices of a centurion named Cornelius and the Apostle Peter to change the spiritual direction of Cornelius, his family, his community, his unit, and the Church.

If you are of non-Jewish ethnicity, you belong to the church of our Lord because God used a Roman centurion named Cornelius, his family, and his community to change the Apostle’s Peter’s bias of who can, and should, belong to the body of Christ. The gospel of our Lord crosses many human boundaries. This text shows how God, through the work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, crosses cultural, civilian/military, and spiritual boundaries.

God used Cornelius’ personal discipline applied to his spiritual life, not his personal discipline applied to his military position, to make this change happen. Think about this. Cornelius was saying his personal prayers, and was then willing to gather his family, friends, and his community (which probably including some unit members) at God’s command. Cornelius’ self-identity and discipline included more than himself. God honored this and used this as an opportunity to build His church. In this lesson, we be examining what this means for us in our faith and in our relationships.

Opening prayer.

Read Acts 10:1-48.

- What happened in verses 1-8?
- Cornelius is a Roman - who might he have been praying to? What do you think Cornelius was praying about?
- How did God respond to his prayers? What was Cornelius’ reaction?
- Why did God answer Cornelius’ prayers? What did the angel tell him?
- Who did Cornelius trust with the mission? What made this soldier devout?

Focus on verses 9-24.

- What do you think Peter was praying about?
- God’s answer presented Peter with a problem - what was the problem? How did he respond to God?
- How did God answer Peter’s objection? What three things did He tell Peter to do?
- Look at verses 19-22. Notice the devout soldiers brought two “battle buddies” with them. How did the soldiers describe their commander? How did Peter respond?

Focus on verses 25-33.

- How did Cornelius react when Peter showed up at his house? How did Peter respond?
- Notice verse 27 – why was there a large crowd at Cornelius’ house? Who was in the crowd?
- In verses 28-34, what did Peter tell Cornelius? Why was he hesitant to go to Cornelius’ house? Why did he think Cornelius was unacceptable to God? How did Cornelius respond to Peter? What did he want Peter to do?

Focus on verses 33-48.

- How did Peter respond to Cornelius? What did he tell Cornelius that God was doing with them?
- What did Peter proclaim to the crowd gathered at Cornelius’ home?
- What happened after Peter spoke?
- How did the crowd respond?
- What did Peter do and say when he witnessed God’s actions and the peoples’ response?

Final questions:

- How do our families, communities, and units link with military service? How does our faith link with them?
- How do we practice our spiritual relationship with God while serving in the military? How do you connect your military discipline with your spiritual disciplines?
- What lessons can we take from these verses?
- Do you think that Peter and Cornelius were displaying the virtues of a soldier in these texts? What were those virtues? How did they display the fruits of the Holy Spirit?

Other texts: Read 2 Chronicles 20:1-30. In these verses, foreign invaders were a threat to the people of God. Notice how the king included family members and the community in a faithful plea to God.

- Who delivered the people of God from the threat?
- What lessons did they take from this scripture?

Read Acts 11: 1-18. Notice that God was changing the identity of the community He protected.

- What was the church’s spiritual bias?
- How did the church react to Peter’s ministry with Cornelius?
- What did Peter tell them?
- What did they do with Peter’s explanation?

Read Acts 15:1-22.

- What God did with Peter and Cornelius, God was doing with Paul and Barnabas. What was God doing?
- How did the church in Jerusalem react? What did that mean for the future of Christ’s church?
- How is this still happening today? Where do you witness this happening?

Read Psalm 128.

- How do you think this psalm could be the prayer of Cornelius, Peter, Paul, and the church?
- What is the blessing of God and the peace of Christ that applies to the church?

Closing prayer – pray together Psalm 128.



Study 5

Values Associated with Risk, Purpose, and Mission Success

“Everyone reached land safely.”

Paul and Julius on the road to Rome (Acts 27)

In the previous studies, we examined soldiers who interacted with people outside of their units on some spiritual level. Those soldiers asked a strange religious preacher a question about what God required of them. They requested healing from a traveling rabbit for a unit member. They noticed the righteousness in an enemy of the state, and they invited a stranger into their home and community to hear about God. All of these events included their professional character coming into contact with the Kingdom of God – whether they realized the full importance of these meetings or not.

In each of those events, soldiers assumed some type of risk as God entered their lives. Maybe that was not a dangerous risk like a soldier accepts in combat, but it was a risk to the way they performed their duties and to their character. Ask yourself the following questions: How did these soldiers accept risk in talking with John the Baptizer, and by changing how they operated? How did the centurion accept risk when he cared enough for his community and his servant to depend upon a foreign healer? How did the centurion at the cross accept risk when he declared Jesus righteous against the government’s charges against him? How did Cornelius accept risk when he became a Christian, and invited others to be baptized with him? How did God accept risk when John, Jesus, and Peter interacted with Roman soldiers on a spiritual level?

The same questions could be asked about all the people we examined in the other texts contained in this study. Each of them accepted some type of risk, and their acceptance was due to what they considered as their purpose. Each event led to mission success for the Gospel because God used their military characteristics to fulfill His purpose in Christ. What does this say about us?

In 2 Timothy 2:3, the Apostle Paul encouraged a young Christian named Timothy to “endure hardships as a good soldier for Christ.” He did so for the mission of sharing Christ. In this study, we will examine the actions of centurions and Roman leaders who accepted various risks for the purpose of delivering Paul to Rome. In the additional texts, we will examine the accepted risks of Stephen, Onesimus, and Philemon. We will close with examining Paul’s use of Roman armor to explain the protection God provides us in our missions.

Opening prayer.

Read Acts 23:12-35. These verses tell the story of a plot to kill Paul.

- What happened in this passage? What do you think about the actions of the commander? Was it a risk to protect Paul? Was it careerism for him to take credit for uncovering the plot to kill Paul? How can unrighteous motives lead to righteous acts?

- What do you think about using 200 soldiers for a protection detail? What level of risk did Felix, the commander, and the two centurions accept?
- Have you experienced anything similar?

Read Acts 27. Paul went through two trials in front of Festus and Felix, and he was sent to Rome because of his appeal to Caesar. That was Paul's right as a Roman citizen. A centurion named Julius was ordered to take him to Rome.

- Look at verse 3. What do you think about Julius' kindness? How did he accept risk by allowing Paul to stay with friends? Do you think he was a weak soldier? Why did he allow that?
- Focus on verses 23-41. Their journey was difficult, and they encountered a storm in which they ran aground.
 - What did Paul advise Julius to do? Why did Paul do that? What did Paul know that Julius didn't? Why did Julius listen to Paul?
 - How did they deal with risk and mission accomplishment?
- Read verses 42-44 again.
 - What did the soldiers want to do to the prisoners? Why did they want to do it?
 - What did Julius (the commander) do? Why do you think he did that? Do you think he was acting like the centurion at the cross, Cornelius, and the centurion in Luke 7? How? How do you think he acted in similar ways to John the Baptist's instructions to the soldiers in Luke 3? Did he complete his mission?
 - What did God accomplish through Julius' actions?

Final questions:

- What do you think of Julius as a soldier? Was he similar to or different from the centurions described in Acts 23?
- How did he display the virtues described by Aristotle (prudence [self-discipline], justice, fortitude (courage), and temperance (moderation in action)? How did he display actions which are associated with the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)? How will you use Julius' example in your military service?

Other texts:

- Read Acts 7 and Acts 8:1 – What happened to Stephen? Why did Paul approve?
- Read Galatian 1:11-14 – later in his life, Paul reflected about what he did. What did he learn? Did the Roman leaders in Acts 23-26 and Julius act with more mercy than Paul did? Why?
- Read Philemon. Why did Paul send Onesimus back to Philemon? What risks did Philemon, Onesimus, and Paul take? What did they accomplish? How is that similar or different from the risks that Peter and Cornelius took in Acts 15? (Note: The first recorded bishop of the church in Ephesus is Onesimus. What do you think happened?)

- Read Ephesians 6:10-18. How do these verses apply to Julius, Paul, Stephen, Philemon, and Onesimus? How do they apply to Christians at risk? How do they apply in your service?

Closing prayer -- pray together Psalm 144. Do you think this could be the prayer of Julius, Paul, Stephen, Philemon, and Onesimus? How is it your prayer?



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