

**TITLE AND NUMBER:** 253 A dear friend



**REFERENCE AND KEY VERSES:** Philemon 1:4-7

I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus. I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people.

**LOOKING FURTHER:** Philemon 1:1-3; Psalm 1:3; Isaiah 40:31

### What does the Bible passage tell us?

What is it that makes someone a special friend? It might be a common interest, supporting the same football team, or enjoying similar music. Friends are committed to supporting and encouraging one another. If we need help with a particular project or situation, we know we can call on a good friend.

In today's passage, Paul describes Philemon as a dear friend and fellow worker. He gives three reasons. Firstly, Philemon shares Paul's love for God's people. Secondly, he shares Paul's faith in Christ Jesus. And finally, Paul describes him as a partner in the Gospel; someone who is carrying on Paul's work in his local area. For this, Paul gives thanks to God; not just for what Philemon has done for him, but for what he is doing for his church.

Paul concludes by recognising that Philemon has brought him great joy and encouragement because he has 'refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people.' That is a lovely description. But, how might Philemon have done this?

Many people find it refreshing to walk or sit by a stream or river. Psalm 1:3 talks about the person who meditates on God's Word being like a tree that is planted by streams of water. Isaiah 40:31 promises that those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength. Philemon must have been a gentle and caring pastor and teacher who fed God's people gently with spiritually nourishing truths from God's Word.

We can all play a part in refreshing the heart of God's people. How wonderful to have the reputation of being a dear friend, not of Paul but of Jesus Himself.

### Reflection

- Who has refreshed your heart? Give thanks to God for them. Maybe you could also encourage them in some way.
- Who do you know who needs their heart refreshing? Ask God to lead you to a word or action by which you can help meet their need.

Write or draw something you read in this Bible Study that stood out to you.



Do you have any questions about this week's Bible Study?



How does this week's message apply to your life?



What can we learn about God from this week's passage?



What would you like to ask God this week?



Has God responded to your prayers this week in the way you had hoped for?  
It's okay to talk to God about this.

