

## Pastor's Winter Book Club 2022

*Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water, and Loving the Bible Again*

By Rachel Held Evans

### Session #8

February 23 at 6pm on Zoom and February 24 at 10:30am in the Fellowship Hall

For Session #7 Read "The Letter" and "Church Stories"

**Zoom Link for Wednesday, February 23 at 6pm:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84865582248>

Or use meeting ID: 848 6558 2248

### Opening Prayer

#### Warm up question:

After reading this book, what parts of the Bible are you inspired to explore in more depth?

### "The Letter"

**Read Philemon** (As its read aloud in book group, imagine what it would be hear it read the first time)

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker, <sup>2</sup>to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: <sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God <sup>5</sup>because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup>I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ. <sup>7</sup>I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.

<sup>8</sup>For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, <sup>9</sup>yet 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. <sup>10</sup>I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. <sup>11</sup>Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful both to you and to me. <sup>12</sup>I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you. <sup>13</sup>I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel; <sup>14</sup>but I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced. <sup>15</sup>Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back forever, <sup>16</sup>no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother—especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. <sup>17</sup>So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. <sup>18</sup>If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. <sup>19</sup>I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self. <sup>20</sup>Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ. <sup>21</sup>Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. <sup>22</sup>One thing more—prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be restored to you. <sup>23</sup>Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, <sup>24</sup>and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers. <sup>25</sup>The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

1. What do you notice about this letter?
2. How did the story "The Letter" inform your reading of this letter?

3. What's your reaction when you hear that the Bible says, "slaves obey your masters" and "wives submit to your husbands"? Did you know the context of these instructions before reading this chapter? Did adding context change your reception of them?

### **"Church Stories"**

*No one lives in general—not even Christ or his church.*

4. What challenged you or resonated with you from this chapter? What did you highlight or hope to discuss with our group?
5. How would you answer the question, "Why letters?" regarding the inclusion of the epistles in Scripture?
6. How is the experience of engaging the epistles a bit like the experience of engaging wisdom literature?
7. "Following Jesus is a group activity, and from the beginning, it's been a messy one; it's been an incarnated one," the author writes on page 206. When we consider the Scandal of Particularity, what guidance do we find in the letters?
8. How has the apostle Paul been regarded in your faith community? Is he lauded to the point that he is held in as high esteem as Christ himself, or is he grumbled about and largely ignored? Do you see his words as illuminating, brilliant, problematic, sexist, outdated, timeless—or perhaps all of the above?

### **"And Then"**

*We live inside an unfinished story*

9. What are some of the other stories (told by our culture, by our country, and even by our religious communities) that compete for our allegiance and imaginations?
10. What are some of the most important stories—from Scripture, from your community, from your life—that you want to pass on to your children, or to the next generation?

## **Sharing Joys and Concerns**

## **Closing Prayer**