

Philemon

Background

The epistle of Philemon was written near the end of Paul's first Roman imprisonment around 60-61 AD. The letter was written about the same time as the other epistles we will cover during this session, Ephesians and Colossians. Both the epistles to Philemon and to the Colossians are linked as the runaway slave Onesimus, who is the subject of Philemon, is mentioned in Colossians (Col 4:7-9) along with Tychicus. It's clear that Paul sent away Onesimus (with Tychicus) after his release from prison with **this letter** in hand for Philemon.

Day 1 - Read and Memorize

1. Read the chapter at least twice. If possible, use different translations. Optionally, have the passage read to you. Many apps, including the Blue Letter Bible, have a feature that will read the Bible to you. Meditate and pray on the passage.

1. Consider and start memorizing the verse below:

Micah 6:8:

*"He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the LORD require of you
But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?"*

Day 2 - Observations

2. **Who** wrote the epistle that we call Philemon? **Who** else was mentioned as part of the introduction? Also, to **whom** is the letter addressed?

3. **Who** is the author advocating for and **what** is the social status that person held? (*Hint: you will have to look further down into the passage to get his social status*).

4. In verses 12-16, **what** is Paul doing and **what** is he asking of Philemon?

5. In verses 17-20, **what** is Paul willing to do for Onesimus' sake?

6. **What** Godly character trait is Paul appealing to with Philemon?

7. **(Optional)** Write down any **additional** observations from your study time this week not covered in the observation questions above. This is the 'who, what, when, where, why, and how' of the passage.

Day 3 - Additional Observations

8. Take note of any repeated words, thoughts, or phrases in our passage this week. Write those down below.

9. Did any parts of the passage you read make you think about other stories in the Bible? This includes similar narratives, but could also include similarity in lessons being learned by different people at different times. We call these links "purposeful parallels." If so, write those down below.

10. **Word Studies:** Use the "Blue Letter Bible" or your favorite word study method to look up the word listed below: Philemon 1:7 (NKJV), "**For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.**" - This week's word from the passage above: "*consolation*"

Write out the Greek word phonetically so you can learn how to pronounce it. What are some definitions of the word provided by the Greek dictionary? How does understanding the Greek word help you in understanding this passage more fully?

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11. **Optional Word Studies:** Look up words you are curious about in the passage in a Greek dictionary. Write the word out phonetically and how understanding the Greek word helps you understand the passage more fully.
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Day 4 - Interpret

Now that we have determined what the text says, move into interpretation. The meaning of the text is not subjective. The goal of interpretation is to discover God's intended meaning for the text we just read and provided observations for.

12. We learn in verses 8-16 that Paul met Onesimus in prison and that Onesimus was converted (v11), and Paul was sending him back to Philemon once Onesimus is released. What deeper spiritual lesson is Paul teaching Philemon with his request to receive the runaway slave that probably stole from him back as a brother?
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13. **Optional:** Write down additional interpretations from your study time down below.
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Day 5 - Life Application

Reading the Bible should change you! The purpose of reading any passage or passages is to gain life changing applications you must consider for your own life.

14. Mercy is definitely one of the foremost actions Paul is asking Philemon to take when it comes to the treatment of Onesimus upon his return. How can we take a cue from Paul's command for mercy towards Onesimus when it comes to those that have repented from their wrongdoing? What if we took this one step forward and consider mercy for those who haven't repented? How does this relate to your own relationship with God?
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15. **Optional:** Write down any additional life applications from your study time this week down below.

Day 6 - Closing Thoughts and Memory Verse

As you've had time to meditate on this week's passage, write down any closing thoughts and/or list ways this passage has challenged you. How are you going to take the application from Day 5 and make it a tangible application for you? What are some additional things that you'd like to share with your group? These are just a few ideas to jot down as you close out this week.

Notes from Teaching

Teacher: _____ **Date:** _____

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