
Philemon

Reason for the Book of Philemon

The book of **Philemon** is Paul's letter from jail on behalf of a slave named Onesimus who had wronged his master and escaped.

Theme

The theme of Philemon is forgiveness.

Paul urged Philemon to forgive Onesimus and accept him back as more than a servant – as a beloved brother in Christ.

Key Verses

Philemon 1:17-18 If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me. But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. NKJV

Key Words

- love (5, 7, 9)
- beloved (1, 2, 16)
- brother (1, 7, 16, 20)

Key Characters

Paul (little)	apostle and leader, spiritual father of Onesimus, pictures Christ as our redeemer who pays our debt and restores our relationship to God
Onesimus (profitable)	the run-away slave who became a believer, pictures us running in sin from our maker until we allow Christ to intercede for us and pay our debts to restore our relationship with God
Philemon (friendly)	a faithful and loving leader, a prominent member of the church at Colosse which met in his house, master of Onesimus, pictures God the Father who owns us

Personal Reflection and Application

Read the short book of **Philemon**, which explains the need to forgive those who have wronged us. **Mark is one of the last names that Paul mentions in his letter to Philemon.** Interestingly, this is the same Mark who abandoned Paul earlier in his ministry. The ordeal caused Paul to split with his beloved ministry partner, Barnabas. Paul forgave Mark and came to rely on him in ministry. Philemon knew what had happened.

By placing Mark's name strategically at the end of his letter, Paul makes the point that he had learned to forgive and was asking Philemon to learn to forgive also.

- Who do you need to forgive?
- From whom do you need to ask forgiveness?
- Pray, asking God to infuse you with a forgiving spirit.

Small Group Conversation Guide

Read [Philemon 22](#). Do you make plans to receive God's answer to your prayers? Do you ask others to pray for you?

Do you express confidence that God will answer their prayers? Take a few minutes to pray for one another in your group.

Leadership Principles from Philemon

Character is Key

Read [Philemon 8-21](#). Notice the tone that Paul used to make his request.

- What can we learn from this example as we interact with others?
- Did Paul use his position to leverage influence or did he use his character?

True leadership comes from the character of the leader, not from position or title. As a leader, are people following you because they have to or do they follow willingly because of your character?

Something to Find in Philemon

Look for why Philemon was supposed to forgive Onesimus.