

## Philemon

This is the shortest letter that we have written by Paul. It was written to a man named Philemon about another man Onesimus. What do you know about each of these men? What does it say in the introduction to this book in your Bible or other reference materials?

Verses 1-7 set the tone for the letter.

What do you get out of the salutation in verses 1-3? What greetings have you used in both formal and informal communications? What all does Paul say here right off the bat?

In verses 4-7 Paul writes a little bit about Philemon. What spoke to you here? What might have spoken to Philemon's heart?

Do you get any letters that speak this way to you?

In verses 8-16 Paul gets down to business. What persuasion does he use?

Did you pick up the play on words in verse 11? Hopefully your Bible has a footnote to note this.

Do you feel that what Paul is asking in verse 14 is really voluntary when Philemon reads this letter? Was he set up to reply positively by the earlier comment in verse 8?

I tend to ask people and freely let them know they can say "No" if this is not the right thing or the right time. I would rather have someone be honest with themselves and me rather than lie and say "Yes" and then regret it or not do a good job. I am aware that there are pastors who voluntold people rather than to ask for volunteers. Has that ever happened to you?

Verse 16 has been interpreted differently over the years. Was Onesimus a slave of, or a brother (perhaps indebted to) Philemon?

In verses 17-25 Paul wraps up the letter believing that Philemon will do what he is asking and maybe even more! We do not know if Philemon did this or not. What would you do? What do you think Philemon did do?

Paul signs the letter as a promissory note to pay off what ever debt that Onesimus owes Philemon. Of course there is a twist in verse 19!

What do you know of the people mentioned in the closing? And what speaks to you in the benediction?