

Book of Philemon

DATE: February 16, 2020

Preparation: <i>(What I need to do and items to gather before I begin to teach.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bibles to use in class • White board or Poster paper • Markers
Lesson Title:	The New Testament Book of Philemon Continue your NEW Testament Wall display by hanging the “Philemon” wall card.
Scripture Reference(s):	Philemon 6 <i>“I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ”</i>
Emphasis or Theme:	How to Forgive Someone
Introducing the Story: <i>(What you might say or do before the story to help create an interest or curiosity.)</i>	<p>BEFORE CLASS: Hang your “Philemon” wall card on your New Testament wall display.</p> <p>SAY: The Book of Philemon is another letter written by Paul to a <u>specific person</u> – a slaveowner named Philemon. The book of Philemon isn’t the shortest book in the Bible, but it is only 1 chapter long – only 335 words in all! It is a short, sweet, very personal appeal from Paul to grant grace and forgiveness of a person who has done something wrong.</p>
LESSON: Telling the Story Through the Bible: (Outline the story here. Then describe the method you will use to tell the story. Examples might include showing pictures, props, visuals, drawing as you tell, using puppets, costumed characters, dramatic storytelling or any number of other methods.)	<p>SAY: This is a story about a friend of apostle Paul’s named Philemon (<i>fi-LAY-moan</i>). Philemon is a good guy. He loves Jesus and the other believers. He is a church leader in the Colossae area and has even held church in his home. Apostle Paul considers him a beloved brother and a fellow church worker. But Philemon was also a slaveowner.</p> <p>Philemon is about to find himself in a very awkward situation. He owned a slave named Onesimus (<i>oh-NAY-see-muss</i>). Onesimus ran away and stole money from Philemon. Somehow, he met Paul during his travels. At that time, Paul had been put in jail because of his outspoken views about Jesus. The leaders at that time felt Paul was getting to many followers and becoming too powerful. But that didn’t stop Onesimus from finding him. While he was in prison, Paul shared the gospel with Onesimus. As a result, Onesimus became saved by the Holy Spirit! He became a believer in Jesus and a brother in Christ. Onesimus stayed a while with Paul and assisted him while Paul was in prison in Rome.</p> <p>Soon, Paul told the runaway slave that he must return to his old master. He told him that returning and asking for forgiveness for his mistakes was the right thing to do as a Christian. Now remember, Onesimus was still a slave, and by law, his master, Philemon, could have him put to death for stealing and running away.</p> <p>ASK: How do you think Onesimus was feeling about returning to his master after running away? Nervous? Scared? What do you think that Philemon, his master, was going to do when Onesimus shows up on his doorstep?</p> <p>SAY: Well, Paul didn’t send Onesimus back to Philemon alone. Paul sent Onesimus back to his master with a letter, asking Philemon to forgive Onesimus and take him back. But that wasn’t all . . . Paul asked his friend Philemon to receive Onesimus not as a slave, but as a brother in the Lord. This letter urges him to do something unheard</p>

of: *forgive a slave and accept him as a brother?!*

READ: Philemon 15-16, “*For perhaps he was for this reason separated from you for a while, that you would have him back forever, 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.*”

SAY: WOW! Paul not only asks Philemon to forgive his slave for stealing and running away, but he also asks that he welcome him back as a brother and not a slave! Now that would be true forgiveness. Paul continues his letter . . .

READ: Philemon 17-19, “*So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account.*”

The book of Philemon is not just a letter asking his friend, Philemon, to accept and forgive someone. Paul is addressing his message to all of us! He is asking that whatever a person has done wrong to hurt us, we should accept and forgive them.

Paul tells Philemon that whatever Onesimus has done or whatever Onesimus owes him in money, that Paul will repay him. He assures him this in the name of the Lord. I think Paul has made Philemon an offer that he can't refuse, and truly saved Onesimus' life by helping him to find Jesus and return to his home as a brother and no longer a slave.

Paul's teachings in Philemon are excellent lessons we can use in real life:

- How to obtain salvation
- Forgiving one another
- Treating other believers the way God would
- Overcoming any differences we may have with one another
- Putting others' interests above our own

This book has been cited through the centuries as a biblical argument against slavery. Paul does not make any direct attacks on the notion of slavery, but he does hold Philemon to a standard higher than that of the surrounding culture. Punishment for runaways was severe, but Paul told Philemon not only to withhold punishment, but to embrace Onesimus as an equal. Because of Paul's teachings of Jesus Christ, Philemon does just this – he allows Onesimus to become a free man and his brother in Christ.

DISCUSSION ACTIVITY: Discuss how differently this story could have gone if the people involved had made a different decision. What if . . . (*Allow students to respond to the following scenarios.*)

- Paul kept Onesimus with him, instead of letting Philemon do the right thing and return to his master for forgiveness?
- Instead of returning to his master, Onesimus ran away again and did not faithfully bring Paul's letter to Philemon and ask for forgiveness?
- Philemon did not forgive Onesimus when he returned and made Onesimus a slave again (or worse)?

The book of Philemon a wonderful example of how church leaders and members can approach difficult issues. It teaches us that when we use our Christian values and

	beliefs, we can face even the most difficult problem.
Learning Activities: (Games, crafts artwork, songs, memory verses, or other activities that bring fuller meaning to the scripture or make application to the lives of the students.)	1. Bible Scripture Activity 2. Break the Chain with Forgiveness Craft 3. Prisoner Ball and Chain Craft Activity
Review: (Solidify learning by repeating facts, themes, or even the story itself through games, crafts, activities, or visual aides.)	1. The Book of Philemon was written by which apostle? PAUL 2. Who was Philemon? Paul's friend; slaveowner 3. Who was Onesimus? Philemon's slave 4. What did Onesimus do to disobey Philemon? He ran away and stole money 5. What did Philemon do when Onesimus returned? He forgave him and set him free.
Closing: (Prayer, last song, . . .)	Repeat and recite together Recite: Hayr Mer