

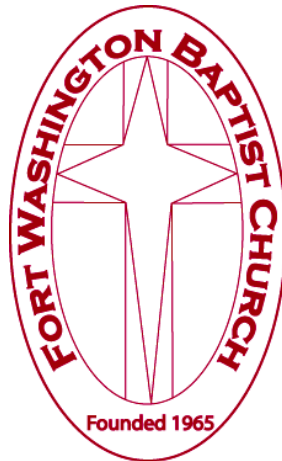
Fort Washington Baptist Church
Vacation Bible School 2024
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Vacation Bible School

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A Study on the Epistle to Philemon

“Do the Right Thing!”

Session I

What are we going to do in this Session?



- Welcome & Greetings
- Opening Prayer
- Purpose & Objectives of Session I
- Read through the Historical Context
- Identify the Key Word
- Learn the purpose of the letter then and now.
- Read through at the Outline of the Letter & the Letter
- Answer some discussion questions

Close in Prayer

Purpose & Objectives of Session I



The purpose of Session I is to read through the Historical Context of Philemon, identify the key word in the letter, clarify the purpose of the letter for then and for now, look at how the letter is outlined while reading through the letter, and then to answer some discussion questions.

Philemon

“Do the Right Thing

What is proper toward One Another!”

Historical Context:

The author of the epistle to Philemon is the Apostle Paul (1). When the letter was written Timothy (1), Epaphras, a fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus (23), Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, fellow workers with Paul, were with him (23-24). The recipient of the letter was Philemon, whom Paul called “our brother and fellow worker,” Apphia, whom Paul called “our sister,” Archippus, whom Paul called “our fellow soldier,” and to the church in Philemon’s house (2). Paul assured these recipients of this epistle that he had written all that the letter contains himself (19). Paul and all those with him sent their greetings to the recipients (1, 23-24). They

knew one another by name and had history with one another. Paul wrote this letter from a prison cell calling himself of prisoner of Christ Jesus (1, 9). He was an aged man at this time and he and Epaphras had both been imprisoned for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ (13, 23).

Philemon had a Church in his home (2). Paul gave the Lord thanks for Philemon, making mention of him in his prayers. Philemon was a man of love and faith toward the Lord Jesus and all the Saints (1:5). Paul heard about his love and faith from others (1:5). Philemon's love caused the hearts of the Saints to be refreshed (1:7). This gave Paul joy and comfort (1:7). Paul's prayer for Philemon was that the fellowship that he had in the faith with Philemon would become effective "through the knowledge of every good thing" which is in Philemon for Christ's sake (1:6). It was because of the Apostle Paul that Philemon had come to Christ and was in the faith (1:19).

Paul wrote this letter to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus (1:10). Onesimus was a runaway slave who belonged to Philemon (16). After he ran away, Onesimus encountered the Apostle Paul. Paul led Onesimus to Christ. Paul was his father in the faith (10). Onesimus was his child, his son, begotten by Paul during his imprisonment (10). Onesimus was useful to Paul (11). Paul described Onesimus as his very heart. He loved Onesimus and what happened with Onesimus was of great concern to the Apostle. He did not want his son, his heart, to suffer in any way. In the letter, Paul told Philemon that he wanted to keep Onesimus with him (13) because Onesimus was ministering to Paul in his imprisonment (13). However, Paul, knowing that Onesimus belonged to Philemon, did not want to do anything without Philemon's consent (14). Paul also did want any goodness from Philemon

toward himself or Onesimus to be from compulsion but of Philemon's own free will (1:14).

Paul knew that the right thing to do was to send Onesimus back to Philemon – so he did what was right...what was proper (12). He also wanted Philemon to do what was proper, what was right toward Onesimus (8). Paul had confidence that Philemon would (8). Paul knew he had the authority to command Philemon to do what was proper, what was right toward Onesimus, but instead of using his authority, Paul appealed to Philemon to act with love towards Onesimus --- Paul had heard about Philemon's love toward the Saints (4). He expected Philemon to act with love again. Paul explained to Philemon that things had changed between him and Onesimus. Onesimus was not the same man who had ran away from Philemon. Paul told Philemon that when Onesimus was with him, Onesimus was an unbeliever. He “was useless to you.” However, now that Onesimus was in Christ, Onesimus was now useful to both Paul and Philemon (11). Paul wanted Philemon to treat Onesimus with this new understanding of Onesimus. Paul explained to Philemon that maybe Onesimus was separated from him for this very reason, so that when he came back, Philemon would have Onesimus in his life forever – no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, now a beloved brother to Paul and much more to Philemon, both in the flesh and in the Lord (16). Because Onesimus was in Christ and Philemon was in Christ, they were no longer just a master with a slave, they were brothers in Christ. Paul wanted Philemon to treat Onesimus as a brother in Christ and not as a runaway slave.

Paul appeals to Philemon writing that if he considered Paul to be his partner then to accept Onesimus back, treating Onesimus just as he would treat Paul (17).

Would Philemon do any harm to Paul? However, he would treat Paul, Paul wanted Philemon to treat Onesimus the same way. Paul knew that there was a possibility that Philemon suffered some loss of wealth after Onesimus fled, not doing the labor he was needed for. What should Philemon do about this loss of wealth? Paul told Philemon, “if *Onesimus* has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account...I will repay you...lest I should mention to you that you owe to me even your own self as well” (18-19). If Onesimus was in debt to Philemon, Philemon was also in debt to Paul.

Paul appealed to Philemon again writing, “yes brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ” (20). Paul believed with all his heart the testimonies about Philemon, that in the past he had demonstrated love and faith toward the Lord Jesus and all the Saints (4, 7). Paul was confident in this present situation with Onesimus, that Philemon act with love again, that Philemon would be obedient to Paul’s request, that Philemon would do even more than what Paul requested...even more of what was right and proper toward his brother Onesimus (21).

Paul’s final appeal in this epistle was asking Philemon to prepare lodging for him, hoping that through Philemon’s prayers Paul would be released from prison and be able to visit Philemon and witness firsthand his love toward Onesimus – that Philemon did what was right and proper toward his brother (22). Preparing the room for Paul would also be doing what was right, what was proper for a brother who led Philemon to faith. Finally, Paul encouraged Philemon by letting him know that all the brethren with him wanted to make sure that Philemon knew they were thinking about him and sent their greetings (23-24).

Purpose of the letter then: The purpose of this letter when Paul wrote it was for Philemon to do what was right, what was proper toward Onesimus, who had done wrong and was now returning to Onesimus seeking restoration of the relationship.

Purpose of the letter then: The purpose of the letter now is that even when a brother or sister in Christ, may have done something wrong toward us, that we are to do what is right, what is proper when they return to us seeking restoration of the relationship.

The key word: In verse 8-9, Paul wrote,

“Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you to do that which is **proper**, yet for love’s sake I rather appeal to you-since I am such a person as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus”

The entire letter is an appeal from Paul to Philemon to do what is proper. The Greek verb (ανηκο) pronounced “*An-eekeo*,” is understood to mean “to have come up to, arrived at, pertain to, something that appertains to one, is due to him, to be rendered or performed by others, what is due or befitting another” (Thayer’s Greek English Lexicon). Paul appeals to Philemon to do what is befitting, to give what is due, to render or perform what is befitting your brother Onesimus.

Outline of Philemon

- I. **Do the right thing! Reach out to brothers and sisters in the family of God and church of Jesus Christ.**
 - a. Paul identified himself and Timothy as the authors of the letter (1)
 - b. Paul identified the recipients of the letter (2).
 - c. Paul gave his customary salutation/greeting to Philemon and those who were at the church in his house (3)
- II. **Do the right thing! Pray for one another, encourage one another in faith and love towards the Saints, and refresh one another's heart (4-7).**
 - a. Paul gave thanks to God mentioning Philemon in his prayers (4-5).
 - b. Paul prayed for Philemon that the fellowship of faith that he shared with Paul would be effective for the sake of Christ (6).
 - c. Paul expressed his joy that the hearts of the saints had been refreshed through Philemon's love (7).
- III. **Do the right thing! Appeal to those in Christ to do what is proper towards others in Christ (8-11).**
 - a. Paul appealed to Philemon to do what is proper, not with authority, but for love's sake (8-9).
 - b. Paul appealed to Philemon *to do what was proper* toward his son Onesimus, that he was now useful to both Paul and Philemon (10-11)
- IV. **Do the right thing! Honor what is good towards one another (12-14).**
 - a. Paul honored what was good, what was right toward Philemon by sending Onesimus back to Philemon, whom he wanted to keep with him (12-13).
 - b. Paul honored what was good, what was right toward Philemon by allowing him to respond with goodness of his own free will and not compulsion (14).

V. Do the right thing! Let each one benefit from your relationship with the Lord (15-20).

- a. Paul reasoned that he and Philemon would benefit from Onesimus, who was now a brother in the Lord (15-16),
- b. Paul asked Philemon to accept Onesimus as he would accept Paul, charging anything that Onesimus owed to Paul's account (17-18).
- c. Paul assured Philemon that he wrote the letter, would repay anything owed, and reminded Philemon that he also owed Paul (19).
- d. Paul asked Philemon to refresh his heart in Christ (20).

VI. Do the right thing! Be obedient when others ask you to do what is proper, what is right toward others (21-25).

- a. Paul was confident that Philemon would do what is right by obeying his requests toward Philemon and getting a room ready for his arrival (21-22).
- b. Paul shared greeting to Philemon from the brothers in Christ who were with Paul (23-24).

Discourse Analysis of the Letter to Philemon

I. Do the right thing! Reach out to brothers and sisters in the family of God and Church of Jesus Christ (1-3).
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Paul,
 a prisoner
 of Christ Jesus,
and Timothy
 our brother, To Philemon
 our beloved *brother*
 and fellow worker (**1**),
 and to Apphia
 our sister,

and to Archippus
our fellow soldier,
and to the church
in your house (2):
Grace to you
and peace *to you*
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ (3).

II. Do the right thing! Pray for one another, encourage one another in faith and love towards the Saints, and refresh one another's heart (4-7).

I thank my God always,
making mention
of you in my prayers (4),
because
I hear of your love
and of the faith
which you have toward the Lord Jesus
and toward all the saints; (5)
and
I pray that the fellowship
of your faith may become effective
through the knowledge
of every good thing
which is in you
for the sake of Christ (6).
For I have had great joy
and comfort in your love,
because
the hearts of the saints
have been refreshed through you, brother (7).

III. Do the right thing! Appeal to those in Christ to do what is proper towards others in Christ (8-11).

Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ
to order you
to do what is proper (8),
yet for love's sake
I rather appeal *to you*—
since I am such a person as Paul,
an old man,
and now also a prisoner
of Christ Jesus (9)

I appeal to you
for my son Onesimus,
whom I fathered
in my imprisonment (10),
who previously
was useless to you,
but now
is useful both to you
and to me (11).

IV. Do the right thing! Honor what is good towards one another (12-14).

I have sent him back
to you in person,
that is,
sending my very heart (12),
whom I wanted to keep with me,
so that
in your behalf
he might be at my service

in my imprisonment for the gospel
(13);
but I did not want to do anything
without your consent,
so that
your goodness
would not be, in effect,
by compulsion,
but of your own free will (14).

V. Do the right thing! Let each one benefit from your relationship with the Lord (15-20).

For perhaps *it was* for this reason
that he was separated *from you* for a while,
that you would have him back forever (15),
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 (16).

If then you regard me
as a partner,
accept him
as *you would* me (17).
But if he has wronged you
in any way
or owes *you anything*,
charge that to my account (18);

I, Paul, have written *this*
with my own hand,

I will repay *it* (not to mention to you
that you owe to me
even your own self as well) (19).

Yes, brother, let me benefit
from you in the Lord;
refresh my heart in Christ (20).

IV. Do the right thing! Be obedient when others ask you to do what is proper, what is right toward others (21-25).

Having confidence
in your obedience, I write to you,
since I know that you will do
even more than what I say (21).

At the same time also
prepare me a guest room,
for I hope
that through your prayers
I will be given to you (22).

Epaphras, my fellow prisoner
in Christ Jesus, greets you (23),

as do Mark,

Aristarchus,

Demas,

and Luke, my fellow workers (24).

The grace

of the Lord Jesus Christ be with
your spirit (25).

Questions:

1. What is the right thing, the proper thing to do, when someone has wronged you, caused you to suffer a financial loss, and you're able to do something to get the money back?
2. What is the right thing, the proper thing to do, if the person who caused the financial loss, did it when they were not saved, but now they're saved?
3. What is the right thing to do, if the person who led you to Christ, also led to Christ, the one who caused you a loss, and asks you to not require them to repay what you lost, but to charge it to their account, and then reminds you that your salvation is because of them – you owe them your very life?
4. What is the right thing to do, if the person who caused you a financial loss is now a brother in the Lord – do you pardon the debt, do you seek to get back what you lost – what do you do?
5. What is the right thing to do when the person who led you and the other person to Christ asks you to refresh their spirit by not requiring anything from the person who caused you the loss and tells you that maybe that loss you suffered, was so that the person might come to Christ and you could have back, not what you lost, but a new relationship with the one who caused you to suffer that loss?
6. Does your view of people change because they've accepted Christ as Lord and Savior? Do you now see someone who did you wrong as your brother or sister?
7. Should you not require them to take care of any loss they caused you when they were unsaved? Giving one's life to Christ, pardons you from the debt of sin...should you also be pardoned for losses that you caused to another or if a believer you respect appeals to you on their behalf, should you absolve the person of the loss they caused you?