

Philemon: A Primer on Forgiveness

Overview and Lesson One

PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

The purpose of the book of Philemon is to promote _____ or _____ in the church.

1. As long as the church is made up of _____, the church must be _____.
2. Forgiveness matters because _____ matters.
3. One of the ways a church's health is measured, is not by how few their flaws are, but how lavish their _____ is.

CONTEXT OF THE BOOK

Written by the apostle Paul from Roman imprisonment.

Sent in conjunction with the letter to the Colossians.

Date of writing is approximately A.D. 60-62.

- A. Surrounds a conflict between two believers in the church of Colosse...

1. Philemon

2. Onesimus

- B. The issue of slavery in the New Testament

Lesson One: Partners in Forgiveness

Philemon 1-2

Paul enlists two groups of people in the church to serve as partners with Philemon in his forgiveness.

I. Spiritual Leaders (Verse 1)

A. Why does Paul uniquely introduce himself as a “Prisoner of Christ Jesus?”

1. It is a statement of trust in God’s _____.
2. It is a statement that sets forth an _____ for Philemon.

There is no forgiveness without _____.

B. Spiritual leaders need to lead by example in sacrificial & selfless living...specifically in the arena of forgiveness.

There cannot be unity in a church where _____ prevails.

C. Paul and Timothy address Philemon as “our beloved brother.” Apart from expressing affection for Philemon, what is implied?

1. That Onesimus (who is also called a beloved brother in v. 16) is just as much a beloved brother to Philemon’s spiritual leaders, as Philemon was.

2. When there is division between people in the church, it is the job of the spiritual leaders in the church to model Christlike love to both the _____ and the _____ so that unity is promoted.

II. Paul not only includes church leaders as partners in forgiveness, but he goes on to enlist Philemon's _____ as partners. (Verse 2)

A. Apphia — Most likely Philemon's _____.

B. Archippus — Could be Philemon's _____.

C. The Church

1. Paul makes this issue a _____ issue.
2. It is the part of the _____ church to get behind reconciliation of broken relationships.

Discussion Questions:

1. Oftentimes, a local church's greatest threats do not exist on the outside, but creep from the inside as the bitterness of factions and divisions rot out its health. *What are some specific ways that a shortage of forgiveness damages the life of the church?*
2. Forgiveness requires sacrifice in some shape or form. *What are some things (even rights) we have to "give up" in order to forgive the repentant?*
3. Accountability comes at the expense of privacy. *What are some appropriate ways we can welcome accountability, especially in regards to our relational life in the church? How can this take place while safeguarding against gossip?*