



Studies from Philemon

bridgeBUILDERS

Becoming a Bridge Builder

The Context: A Fractured Relationship (1–3)

Paul introduced a revolutionary concept of **spiritual equality** that challenged the social hierarchy of the time. He essentially asked Philemon to go beyond the legal requirements of his day and treat a former slave as an **equal** in Christ.



The Commendation: Building Bridges with Truth (4-7)

Bridge Builders See the Good by **Focusing on the positive:**

Not manipulation—BUT genuine grace-based encouragement to act like the Christian Christ made us.

Paul is making this appeal not rooted in **GUILT**, but in **GRACE**.



Statement of Truth:

Bridge builders construct bridges
between others to cross and not
walls that obstruct.



Biblical Principles for effective Bridge-Building

Principle 1: Operate from Love, Not Law (8–9)

Paul could command
("boldness in Christ" = apostolic authority)
but chooses to appeal "for love's sake."

The Appeal is in Christ, otherwise it is in vain.



Biblical Principles for effective Bridge-Building

Principle 1: Operate from Love, Not Law (8–9)

Love has nothing to do with the question of “if”
we will act.

Love is about HOW we will act.



Biblical Principles for effective Bridge-Building

Principle 1: Operate from Love, Not Law (8–9)

Paul wants to fix this but can't. He is dependent upon both of them to do the right thing.

He is trusting Onesimus to return to Philemon
He is trusting Philemon to forgive and receive Onesimus



Statement of Truth:

Love pleads,
while Law demands



Biblical Principles for effective Bridge-Building

Principle 2: Believe that God Changes People (v10-11)

Onesimus (meaning: “useful”) was formerly useless (runaway, thief) but now useful to Paul and can be to Philemon. Paul employed a literary play on his name.



Question:

Do you really believe that God
changes people?

KEY WORDS: **BUT NOW v11**



