**Philemon**

Author: Paul

Audience: Philemon was a personal letter from Paul with the intent of convincing him to forgive his runaway slave, Onesimus, and to accept him as a brother in the faith.

Date Written: 60 A.D. during Paul’ first imprisonment in Rome (Ephesians and Colossians written nearly the same time.

Philemon

* Member of the Colossian church
* Came to know Christ as his savior through Paul
* Lived in Colossae
* Slave owner
* Paul’s friend
* Apphia – wife
* Archippus - son

Onesimus – “useful”

* Stole from Philemon
* Ran away from Philemon
* Responded to the Good News of Jesus Christ through his interaction with Paul in Rome.

Content of the Gospel:

Roman, Greek and Jewish cultures were comprised of barriers and classifications (Jew/Gentile; Slave/Free; rich/poor; men/women; Greek/Barbarian; pious/pagan) Colossians 3:11 destroys this concept!

God has a means of dealing with the barriers that separate people.

Grace and Tact are the themes of how to deal with the barriers.

**Chapter 1**

* Paul starts the letter referring to himself as a prisoner of Jesus Christ, not ROME!
* Philemon refreshed the hearts of the people in their faith – hospitality extraordinaire.
	+ Have you refreshed anyone in their faith recently?
* Although Paul is bold enough to pull rank, he desires that Philemon’s response will be anchored in **the love of Christ**, verses obedience to authority.
* Paul has the position to engage with Philemon, not based on position, but because he has a sound relationship with him – he calls him brother.
* Paul refers to Onesimus in his letter as being “useful” to Paul and Philemon now that he was saved.
* As Paul writes Philemon, and Paul asks Philemon to forgive Onesimus, Philemon is not doubt bombarded by the following:
	+ The past barriers of classification
	+ The recent barriers of being stolen from
	+ The recent barriers of a disrespected slave master with a runaway slave
* Paul asks Philemon to receive Onesimus as he would receive Paul & anything owed should be charged to Paul’s account.
* II Corinthians 5:16a – “From now on… we regard no one according to the flesh…”
	+ Once we are in Christ, we no longer evaluate people according to the flesh, but through the lens of Christ’s love.
	+ Identify what barriers you still have up? [LA]

**The Law of Connection Paul Connects, Then Asks for Help**

1. The compliment stage (vv. 4- 7) – Paul affirmed Philemon and reminded him of his love. Good leaders begin confrontation with affirmation. They focus on positive qualities.
2. The compromise stage (vv. 8-13) – Before his appeal, Paul concedes the present status f the slave, Onesimus. Good leaders own some responsibility for the conflict and recognize their differences.
3. The Choice stage (v. 14) – Paul sought the consent of Philemon to send back Onesimus. He laid out the challenge to receive him. In this stage, leaders clearly articulate the decision in front of both parties.
4. The challenge stage (vv. 15 – 20) – Paul challenged Philemon to do what was right. He committed to steps he’d take to make things right but issued a challenge to Philemon to respond and take the high road.
5. The confidence stage (vv. 21 – 22) – Paul expressed confidence in Philemon that he would, indeed, do what was right in the sight of God. Paul believed the best about his friend and communicated his love for him.

**Problem Solving: Healthy Confrontation and Resolution**

1. Pray through your own anger. Don’t let emotion lead you. Wait until you can be objective.
2. Initiate the contact. Don’t wait for the other person. God calls us to make things right.
3. Begin with affirmation. Encourage first, then receive permission to talk candidly.
4. Admit you have a problem. Don’t say it’s the other person’s problem; admit you are struggling
5. Bring up the issue and explain you don’t understand what’s happened. Aim to clarify.
6. Let the person respond. After you lay out the issue, let the individual speak from his or her angle.
7. Narrow the focus. Identity and prioritize the issues. Go after one change at a time.
8. Establish forgiveness and repentance, if needed. Don’t stop until change occurs.
9. Compromise on opinions, not on principles. Be flexible with everything except truth.
10. Pray and affirm your love as you close. Never let the person doubt God’s love or yours.