

# Study Buddies

## Quick Bible Reference Guides

### PHILEMON: The Power of Love and Forgiveness

*Note: This resource was prepared based on the Contemporary English Version of the Bible. It is always good to use more than one Bible version as a reference. This practice will enable you to compare the languages of the translations and gain a fuller understanding of the text.*

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#### Overview

This brief “book” is a letter that Paul wrote to a wealthy church member named Philemon. Like many of the wealthy people who lived during this time and in this culture, Philemon owned a slave. The purpose of this letter was to reconcile Philemon with his slave, Onesimus.

Beyond human circumstance, this letter captures the necessity of love and forgiveness.

It also touches upon equality in the body of Christ no matter what station in life one has been dealt.

#### Key Points and Verses

Please read the whole book to gain the fullest experience. These points are just a few highlights encapsulated from the text.

- The meaning of “Onesimus”—usefulness vs. uselessness
- vs. 8-10 Courage in Christ; Love in Christ
- vs. 14 Kindness from the heart
- vs. 16 No longer a slave but a brother
- vs. 19 Unpaid debt?

#### Study Questions

1. Paul tells Philemon that he is in jail “for serving Christ Jesus”. What do you think this means? Can you think of other people who have been imprisoned because of their faith? How can Christians help people in this situation?
2. Everything we know about the wealthy Christian Philemon and his slave Onesimus is contained in this letter. What significant change has Onesimus experienced since leaving his master's household? (10). How did this change his relationship with Philemon? If Onesimus had intentionally run away from his master Roman law would have allowed Philemon to punish him severely, perhaps even have him put to death. What does Paul encourage Philemon to do instead? (12-20).
3. What does Philemon have to say about how Christians should treat one another? What can be learned from Paul's example and the actions he took on behalf of his friend Onesimus?

#### Something to Think About

If Onesimus probably ran away, why do you think that the text phrases his escape as: “was taken away” [CEV], or “was separated/parted from” [NIV/RSV]? What meaning do you attribute to the passive voice in this verse?

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Dear Group Leader:

If you're looking for a straightforward resource to enhance study time with your group, you have come to the right place. Study Buddies give a brief synopsis of the Bible book you wish to study and highlight key points and verses throughout the text. There are also thought-provoking questions included to get the discussion going.

These study sheets were prepared based upon the Contemporary English Version of the Bible. But when studying, it is always good to use more than one version as a reference. We encourage this practice because it will enable you and your companions to compare the language of the translations and gain a fuller understanding of the text.

Study Buddies can be used at church, in the home, or in the workplace (where permitted) **free of charge**. Here are a few ways for you to get the most out of them:

- Use in church classroom settings for both adult and youth groups. Add a little flavor by touching upon topics that are relevant to your community. Are you in an urban setting? Rural? Suburban? How does your community compare to the communities and people of the Bible? Find ties that will make the lessons personal and relevant to the specific circumstances that you are facing.
- Use with people who don't know much about the Bible. Maybe they are new Christians or people who are uncertain about what the Bible is about. These sheets can act as a primer to basic Bible knowledge about the contents of each book and why it was written.
- Use during family time with your teens and pre-teens as a reinforcement to the lessons learned in church. While your son or daughter may already think that they're adults, these study sheets can help you help them transition into adulthood with grace and compassion.
- Finally, use with your neighbors, co-workers, friends and loved ones who have expressed an interest in the Bible. Form a small in home group and increase your awareness of what the Scriptures are saying. Try to develop bonds that will help each of you remain faithful to God and his Word.

We hope that you'll find these study sheets to be an excellent starting point for your lessons.

Sincerely,  
*American Bible Society*