

# Study Series: Philemon

*Discussion questions about the overall message*

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1. In your words, state an important message you learned about Christian community and relationships after reading Paul's letter to Philemon.
2. Many people have turned to the themes of Philemon to help them break from all kinds of oppressive and harsh situations. What people today might be especially inspired by the letter to Philemon? What do you think the letter has to say with respect to activism?
3. How has your reading of Philemon helped you? How has Philemon strengthened your faith? What did you find troubling about this book?
4. Complete these sentences:

After reading Philemon, I believe....

After reading Philemon, I wonder....

# Study Series: Paul's Letter to Philemon

*Discussion questions from key passages in Philemon*

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1. Paul describes himself as a “prisoner for (or of) Christ Jesus.” Why is this significant?
2. Onesimus' name literally means 'useful' or 'profitable.' In verse 11, Paul makes a play on words in which he suggests that Philemon's attitude and actions toward Onesimus indicates that he [Philemon] views Onesimus as 'useless' or 'unprofitable.' How does Paul make his case, using the pun, that Onesimus is 'useful' and lives up to his name?
3. Most biblical scholars have understood verse 18 to indicate that Onesimus may have stolen from Philemon. Can you think of anything else Paul may have meant by it?
4. In verses 9 and 10, Paul indicates that he has a request to make, but in the original language and grammatical construction he never seems to state his actual request. Determining what this request is represents the interpretive crux of the entire letter, both for us and for the original recipient(s). Therefore, what do you think Paul is really asking of Philemon? (Be sure to look at everything from verses 8-22.) Furthermore, why do you think Paul is so ambiguous and vague, especially after saying he has the right to order Philemon (verse 8; cf. verse 14)?