



The Book of Philemon

DEVOTIONAL | JUNE 22

RECEIVE

The Book of Philemon is a short letter (just 25 verses) in the New Testament. It is a personal letter from the Apostle Paul to his friend Philemon on behalf of his dear brother and friend, Onesimus. This text addresses a matter of friendship, reconciliation and the power of Christian love.

REFLECT

Introduction and Gratitude | Philemon 1–7

1. What do you think made the dynamics of Paul and Onesimus' relationship unique? One was an enslaved person, the other a Roman citizen with status and power. There is inherent tension in their dynamics, what do you think this was like for them?
2. What qualities of Philemon's character does Paul highlight in verses 4–7? Why do you think Paul commends him the way he does? How does Paul finesse the power dynamics in play?
3. In what ways does Paul express gratitude for Philemon? What role does gratitude play in our own friendships, and how does it strengthen them?

Advocacy and Intercession | Philemon 8–14

4. Why does Paul appeal to Philemon rather than command him in verse 9? What does this teach us about respect and humility in friendships?
5. Paul refers to Onesimus as “my son” and “my very heart” (verses 10–12). How does this language demonstrate the depth of Paul’s friendship with Onesimus?
6. How does Paul’s willingness to mediate between Philemon and Onesimus model the role of a peacemaker in friendships?
7. Why do you think the role of peacemaker is such a challenge in our time? What could this story tell us about how to navigate our divided times?

Reconciliation and Transformation | Philemon 15–25

8. In verses 15–16, Paul emphasizes Onesimus’s transformation into a “beloved brother.” How does reconciliation change the nature of relationships?
9. Paul offers to repay any debt Onesimus owes (verse 18). What does this gesture teach us about self-sacrifice?
10. How does the inclusion of greetings from Paul’s companions in verses 23–24 reflect the importance of community in nurturing friendships?
11. What lessons from Paul’s closing remarks (verse 25) can you apply to maintaining and blessing friendships?

BLESSING

Lord thank You for the example of friendship we find in this passage. We are grateful that You are a God who befriends us, and we are on the receiving end of Your reconciling love and mercy. Help us to learn from Your example so that we might befriend others and live in a way that reconciles the broken spaces in our world with friendship and grace. Amen.