



Studies in Titus and Philemon

The Odd Couple

Introduction to Philemon

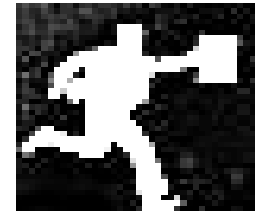


The 5 Purposes of the Purpose Driven Life

- **Worship**—You were planned for God’s pleasure
- **Fellowship**—You were formed for God’s family
- **Discipleship**—You were created to become like Christ
- **Ministry**—You were shaped for serving God
- **Evangelism**—You

Even though Felix Ungar was grateful to Oscar Madison to have a place to land after his wife left him, the two were as different as night and day. Felix was neurotically neat, while Oscar was satisfied with slovenliness. They were truly “the odd couple”. Sometimes the pairings that life brings our way are very odd, and this is the story of Philemon. Philemon was a mature and prosperous Christian who had a runaway slave named Onesimus. However, by the sovereignty of God their lives would intersect again through the apostle Paul. As Paul was in prison in Rome he had the opportunity to meet Onesimus and lead him into a relationship with Christ. Onesimus then became a valuable servant for the Lord in Paul’s ministry. Paul knew, though, that it was important to send

Onesimus home. This would allow the possibility of reconciliation with Philemon, and permit him to resume his service to him—not just as a slave, but now as a brother. In his peacemaking role Paul used a sensitive approach with Philemon. He framed his appeal by pointing out Philemon’s consistent pattern of Christian love, and by drawing on Philemon’s respect for him, the aged apostle. Paul then made a surprising appeal to Philemon. He asked that he would receive Onesimus, Paul’s child in the faith, back into his service, pointing out that although he was formerly useless, he had now become useful (the meaning of his name, Onesimus) in the kingdom. In fact Paul would have loved to have kept him there, but



Extending the Faith to the Next Generation

knew he needed to return. Finally, Paul gave Philemon a substantial assurance if he took Onesimus back. He told him that if he allowed him to return that he would pay any debt he owed out of his own pocket. He reinforced his request with the confidence that Philemon would do the right thing. Although Philemon and Onesimus were truly an odd couple, good would come out of their relationship in the Lord.

Daily Study Questions for Philemon

(For answers to questions attend an ABF or go to [www.celebrationnet.com/resources/leader resources](http://www.celebrationnet.com/resources/leader%20resources))

<p>1. Read 1:1-3. What do we know about Philemon from these verses (v1-2)? What was Paul’s situation (v3)?</p>	
<p>2. From 1:4-5 how did Paul feel about Philemon (v4), and why (v5)? Why should we be thankful for such people in our lives?</p>	
<p>3. In 1:6-7 what would allow Philemon’s faith to have a positive effect (v6)? How had he shown his love, and what effect did it have (v7)? Apply.</p>	

Philemon Daily Study Questions (cont)

4. Based on 1:8-9 what approach could Paul have used with Philemon (v8), and what approach did he use (v9)? What can we learn from this?

5. From 1:10-11 what was Paul's history with Onesimus, Philemon's runaway slave (v10)? What did Onesimus' name mean (see margin), and how had he changed (v11)? Apply.

6. Looking at 1:12-14 what sacrifice was Paul making (v12-13)? Why did he send Onesimus back to Philemon (v14), and what does this teach us?

7. In 1:15-16 how did Paul interpret why Onesimus ran away from Philemon (v15)? What was their new relationship to be like?

8. According to 1:17-20 on what basis was Philemon to accept Onesimus (v17), and what assurance did Paul give him (v18-19)? How would this affect Paul (v20)?

9. Using 1:21-22 how did Paul further affirm Philemon (v21, 22)? What principle does this teach about leading others spiritually?

10. Based on 1:23-25 what kind of ministry did Paul believe in— "lone ranger", or "team" (v23-24)? Why is v25 important in light of this letter?

11. Looking back over Philemon what can we learn about how to help people change, how to help them accept others, and how to develop partnerships in our ministry?

Scripture to Remember

*"I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ."
Philemon 6 (NIV)*

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Life Group Questions—Joshua 23-24

(Using questions based on today's message, Life Groups meet in homes to build supportive relationships with others at Celebration Fellowship that enable us to grow in Christ.)

1. Brainstorm some areas where we typically struggle to maintain the progress we've made. Why is that?
2. Talk about a time when God was faithful to you, even though you might not have been faithful to Him.
3. Discuss why you think God connects His blessings with obedience. Why is it important that the focal point of obedience should be His Word?
4. What does it mean that God's Word is a Word of perfection, a Word of prophecy, and a Word of power? Why should these descriptions motivate us to study it?
5. What are some consequences of compromise in your beliefs or behavior as a child of God? How can you keep from doing this and how can your lifegroup help?
6. Discuss anything else important to you from the message today if you have time.