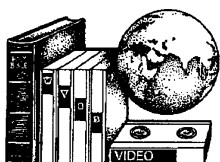


# World Video Bible School®

Established 1986



## P H I L E M O N

*This set of notes is designed to be used by non-credit students of World Video Bible School® and correspondent students enrolled in the Video Bible Institute (VBI). VBI students should pay particular attention to the syllabus. Students not taking the course for credit may bypass the syllabus and use the notes as they see fit for their spiritual enrichment.*



World Video Bible School® / Video Bible Institute  
130 Lantana Lane  
Maxwell, Texas 78656-4231

512+398-5211 (voice)  
512+398-9493 (fax)  
[biblestudy@wvbs.org](mailto:biblestudy@wvbs.org)  
<http://www.wvbs.org>

All contents © World Video Bible School.® However, permission is granted to make copies as needed provided copies are not produced for resale and proper credit is given.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Syllabus. ....	Page 1
Introduction.....	5
Thought Analysis. ....	7
Outline. ....	9
Exposition.....	11
Summary. ....	21
Additional Lessons. ....	23



# Syllabus

## **I. GENERAL INFORMATION.**

- A. Instructor: Roy C. Deaver.
- B. This course consists of 3 lessons on 1 DVD.
- C. Each class is approximately 38 minutes long.

## **II. DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE.**

- A. This is an in-depth study of Paul's epistle to Philemon.
- B. Attention will be given to practical applications of principles found in this book.
- C. Students will study God's love for all mankind (slave and free), see God's providence at work in the lives of these Christians and understand special responsibilities Christians have for one another.

## **III. INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS.**

- A. Required.
  - 1. Bible (ASV, KJV or NKJV).
  - 2. 3 video lessons.
  - 3. Course notes.
- B. Optional: Any good (conservative) commentary on Philemon.

## **IV. REQUIREMENTS.**

- A. Read the entire book of Philemon at least five times.
- B. View all 3 video lessons in their entirety.
- C. Read the class notes in their entirety.
- D. Complete all memory work (explained below).

- E. Submit a term paper (explained below).
- F. Take one written test.
- G. Have a combined grade average of at least 70.

#### **V. MEMORY WORK.**

- A. Memory verses must be written (or typed) from memory then mailed to VBI for grading. Verses must come from the ASV, KJV or NKJV according to what you indicated on your VBI enrollment application.
- B. All verses must be written out or typed at one sitting. You may study more and start over if you make a mistake, but you must still start again from the beginning and write all the verses at one sitting.
- C. For this course the following verses must be memorized from Philemon:  
  
4-7  
10,11  
15,16  
21,22
- D. Memory work is due when you mail VBI your written test.
- E. Hint: A good method of memorizing is to write the verses on flash cards that can be easily reviewed throughout the course.

#### **VI. TESTS.**

- A. There is one written test on Philemon.
- B. When you near the end of the course contact us and request the test.
- C. When you receive the test you have permission to look at it and study it.
- D. However, when you take the test you must do so completely from memory with no help from notes, Bible, textbook, etc.

#### **VII. TERM PAPER.**

- A. Write a verse by verse commentary on Philemon. Be sure you comment on all 25 verses individually. Comments could include one or more of the following: an explanation of the verse, a definition of a key Greek word in

the verse, a helpful reference for the verse elsewhere in the Bible, a lesson we learn from the verse or a practical application of the verse.

- B. The paper should be a minimum of five pages double spaced. If handwritten the paper should be a minimum of seven pages single spaced.
- C. The paper is due when you mail VBI your test and memory work.

#### **VIII. GRADING.**

- A. Memory work, term paper and test will be graded separately.
- B. Final grade is based on an average of all assigned work with the test counting twice.
- C. You may request that a grade be explained or reconsidered, but in any case VBI will have the final say.

#### **IX. CREDIT.**

- A. Credit will be issued, including a certificate, only after all work has been successfully completed, tapes have been returned (if rented) and all fees for this particular course have been paid in full.
- B. May God bless your study of His inspired word!





## INTRODUCTION

The book of Philemon is a marvelous little one chapter book of the New Testament, given to us by the Holy Spirit, written for us by the apostle Paul, treasured by those who take the time to ponder its beautiful messages.

In this beautiful little letter we have:

1. God (through the Holy Spirit) as the author;
2. The apostle Paul (as the inspired writer);
3. Philemon (as the person addressed, the owner of the runaway slave); and
4. Onesimus (who had left Philemon and had gone to Rome, where he had come into contact with Paul and who had been brought to Christ by Paul, in Rome). According to God's will Paul was sending Onesimus back to Philemon.



## A THOUGHT ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK OF PHILEMON

I. Author?

The Holy Spirit.

II. The writer?

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ.

III. Written from?

Rome, where Paul was a prisoner.

IV. Written to whom?

Philemon, principally.

V. Written when?

62 A.D. One of the four prison epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon).

VI. Written why?

Onesimus was a slave belonging to Philemon of Colossae. Onesimus had run away, had made his way to Rome and had come in contact with the apostle. Through Paul Onesimus became a Christian. Paul had come to have a deep regard for this man and wanted to keep Philemon with him— but would not do so without the consent of Philemon. Therefore, Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon in company with Tychicus (see Col 4:7-9) and also wrote a special letter in his behalf. Paul asked Philemon to receive him—Onesimus—“as a brother” and expressed confidence that Philemon would do even more than this! Paul wrote to request a Christian reception for Onesimus.



## **SKELETON OUTLINE OF PHILEMON**

### **PURPOSE:**

To request a Christian reception for Onesimus; to bring about genuine reconciliation between Philemon and Onesimus and, at the same time, to bring to the world some great and wonderful lessons from God to men.

- I. Paul expresses his appreciation for Philemon (verses 1-10) and
- II. Requests for Onesimus a Christian reception (verses 11-25).

### **BRIEF OUTLINE OF PHILEMON:**

- I. Paul gives the salutation. . . . . 1-3
- II. Expresses his appreciation for Philemon. . . . . 4-7
- III. States his purpose in writing. . . . . 8,9
- IV. Expresses his feelings about Onesimus. . . . . 10-16
- V. Makes known his request. . . . . 17-20
- VI. Expresses confidence that Philemon would do even more than requested. . . . . 21
- VII. Expresses confidence that he (Paul) would shortly visit Philemon. . . . 22
- VIII. Sends greetings from those persons with him. . . . . 23,24
- IX. Expresses a closing prayer. . . . . 25

Note: We propose to study these nine sections carefully.



## PHILEMON EXPOSITION

### I. The Salutation, verses 1-3.

#### A. Paul refers to the source of the letter.

1. Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus and
2. Timothy our brother.
3. Cf. Phil 1:1; Col 1:1.

#### B. Paul specifies those addressed:

##### 1. To Philemon:

- a. "Our beloved;"
- b. "Our fellow worker."

##### 2. To Apphia:

- a. "Our sister;"
- b. Probably the wife of Philemon.

##### 3. To Archippus:

- a. "Our fellow soldier;"
- b. Probably the son of Philemon and Apphia.
- c. Consider: Col 4:17.

##### 4. "To the church in thy house:"

- a. Note that a church met in the house of Philemon;
- b. Note also: Onesimus belonged to Philemon; Onesimus was of Colossae, Col 4:9. Evidently, therefore, it was the church of Colossae which met in the house of Philemon.

#### C. Paul express the salutatory prayer.

1. Paul prays God's favor and its consequent peace to be upon those addressed.
2. This favor and peace would come from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

D. Observations:

1. Philemon and his family were evidently people of considerable material means and were using their means to the glory of God.
2. These had become Christians and were anxious to extend the gospel message to others.
3. Philemon, like Lydia, was generous and provided a meeting place for the church.
4. We should always be concerned about God's favor, and its consequent peace.

II. I thank my God..." verses 4,5.

- A. Paul mentions his thanks for Philemon.
- B. He states that he "always" expressed his thanks.
- C. He states that he always expressed his thanks to God.
- D. He states that he always expressed his thanks in his prayers.
- E. Paul mentions that he was ever thankful for Philemon because of the love and faith which he had and which he had manifested:
  1. Toward the Lord and
  2. Toward all the saints.
- F. Observations:
  1. Paul always had and expressed appreciation for faithful Christians.
  2. Paul "always" mentioned individuals and congregations in his prayers.
  3. Christians must be characterized by genuine brotherly love.



III. "...that..." verse 6.

- A. Paul mentions the "request" element of his prayers for Philemon.
- B. He prayed that the "sharing" of Philemon's faith (his manifesting it) would promote the knowledge of all the good to be had in Christ.
- C. Observations:
  - 1. The Christian's faith must be shared by word and by deed.
  - 2. Philemon was practicing what the Lord taught. He was exerting proper Christian influence. Cf. Mt 5:16.

IV. "...joy and comfort..." verse 7.

- A. Paul mentions that he had found great joy and comfort in Philemon's love.
- B. This was the case because Philemon's love was so wonderfully manifested to others.
- C. And this was the case because Philemon's love had refreshed the hearts of the saints.
- D. Observations:
  - 1. The Christian's life is a life to share with others.
  - 2. It must be a delight to God Himself when a Christian:
    - a. Manifests proper concern for all persons;
    - b. Refreshes the hearts of the saints.

V. "...I rather beseech thee..." verses 8-10.

- A. Paul mentions that his authority "in Christ" would enable him to command Philemon to do that which was proper.
- B. He states, however, that the course of love dictated:
  - 1. That he not command, but rather,
  - 2. That he "beseech" Philemon.
- C. He, therefore, beseeches Philemon as

1. Paul the aged; and
  2. Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus.
- D. He beseeches Philemon on behalf of a certain one:
1. “My child,”
  2. “Whom I have begotten in my bonds;”
  3. Even “Onesimus.”
- E. Observations:
1. Paul had authority to command. He was an apostle of Jesus the Christ, an ambassador of the King. What he did command and teach must be heeded!
  2. Paul was cautious in the exercise of his authority. It is easy for one to abuse authority. Authority inherently involves the responsibility to use that authority according to God’s will.
  3. Paul was loving and humble and kind. He often used the word “beseech”—a term denoting love, kindness and humility.
  4. Paul’s great love, consideration, humanity (Christianity) is shown in his anxiety to plead the cause of another—to help someone else. Cf. Gal 6:10.
  5. As Onesimus had the apostle Paul to plead his cause, we have the Christ Himself to plead our cause before the throne of grace. “Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25). “And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous...” (1 Jn 2:1).

VI. Onesimus, verses 10-14.

- A. Paul beseeches Philemon in behalf of Onesimus.
- B. He calls Onesimus his “child.”
- C. He mentions that he had converted Onesimus while he (Paul) was a prisoner.

D. He mentions that Onesimus was once “unprofitable” to Philemon, but that now he was “profitable” both:

1. To Philemon and
2. To Paul.

Note: This is a play on the name “Onesimus,” which means “helpful, profitable.”

E. Paul states:

1. That he was sending Onesimus back to Philemon and
2. That in doing so he was sending his own heart.

F. He stresses that he (Paul) wanted to keep Onesimus with him:

1. That he (Onesimus) might minister to him (Paul) in behalf of Philemon, but
2. That he would not do so without the consent of Philemon in order that the goodness of Philemon would be of “free will,” and not of “necessity.”

G. Observation:

1. Onesimus is another evidence of Paul’s unceasing labors. Even while a prisoner, Paul continued to teach, and his labors were rewarded. We must never cease to teach and to preach the gospel. And, our labors will not be in vain (1 Cor 15:58).
2. Though Onesimus was Paul’s spiritual child, Onesimus did not call him “Father Paul.” The Corinthian brethren did not call him “Farmer Paul” (Cf. 1 Cor 3:9) or “Builder Paul” (1 Cor 3:10ff). The Thessa-lonian brethren did not call him “Nurse Paul” (1 Thess 2:7).
3. Conversion changes one from the “unprofitable” side of God’s ledger to the “profitable” side.
4. The case of Onesimus shows that conversion demands restitution (restoring, making things right) so far as is possible.
5. If Onesimus could minister to Paul in Philemon’s behalf (verse 13), then there are at least some things which when one does through another he does himself. Cf. 2 Cor 8:23; Lk 10:33-37.

6. Paul was concerned about doing all things honorably. Cf. 2 Cor 8:20,21; Rom 12:17. He did not want “of necessity” help from Philemon, but only “free will” assistance. God has the same attitude toward our giving. Cf. 2 Cor 9:7.
7. “Goodness” is not only an attribute, but a work or works. Philemon’s ministering to Paul through Onesimus would have been Philemon’s “goodness” (verse 14).

VII. “...for a season...” verses 15,16.

- A. Paul mentions that “perhaps” Onesimus was parted from Philemon “for a season” in order that Philemon might have him “for ever”—no longer as a servant only, but as a beloved brother in Christ.
- B. Upon his return, Onesimus would be a “servant” and much more than a servant.
- C. He would be a “brother.”
  1. Peculiarly dear to Paul and
  2. Even dearer to Philemon—both:
    - a. As a servant and
    - b. As a fellow Christian.
- D. Observations:
  1. This is a marvelous reference to God’s providence, for if what Paul here says were not even possible, then there would be no point to the statement whatsoever. Hence, the passage shows:
    - a. The fact of God’s providence;
    - b. Paul’s belief in God’s providence; and
    - c. How God can and does work through men and their affairs.
  2. Note the equalizing influence of the Gospel of Christ. The same message goes to all. All stand alike before God. All Christians are in the same “family.” They are all “brothers and sisters in Christ.”

VIII. "...receive him..." verse 17.

- A. This is a key portion of the book. Paul requests a Christian reception for Onesimus.
- B. Paul says to Philemon: "If therefore you regard me as a partner, receive him (Onesimus) as you would receive me."
- C. Observation:

How Philemon received Onesimus would be clear evidence of his attitude toward Paul. Just so, our reactions to the Lord's instructions are clear evidence of our attitude toward Him and toward the Father. Cf. 1 Jn 5:3; Jn 14:15.

IX. "...put that to mine account..." verse 18.

- A. Paul allows the possibility that Onesimus had "wronged" Philemon or "owed" him something.
- B. The "if" construction (in the Greek New Testament) indicates the reality of the situation. The extent of the wrong would probably depend in the great measure upon Philemon's attitude and reckoning—the loss and the cost which the "run away" and absence had occasioned.
- C. Paul says: "If this is the case, charge it to me."
- D. Paul emphasizes:
  - 1. Put it to mine account;
  - 2. I write it with mine own hand;
  - 3. I will repay it.
- E. Observations:
  - 1. As Paul pleaded the cause of Onesimus, and was willing to take the debt of Onesimus, just so the Christ pleads our cause and took our debt. "Jesus died and paid it; On the cross of Calvary."
  - 2. Paul wanted complete and perfect fellowship between Philemon and Onesimus. This would require genuine repentance on the part of Onesimus and complete forgiveness on the part of Philemon. We must be willing and anxious to correct our mistakes. We must be forgiving.

- X. "...even thine own self..." verse 19.
- A. Paul gives a gentle (yet pointed) reminder that Philemon himself owed himself to Paul.
  - B. This refers to the fact that Paul had converted Philemon, probably while in Ephesus.
  - C. Observation:  
We are—in a special way—indebted to those who taught us the truth and led us to the Christ.
- XI. "...let me have joy..." verse 20.
- A. Paul again pleads that Philemon will do what he (Paul) beseeches him to do.
  - B. To see Philemon and Onesimus fully reconciled, as brethren in the Lord, would be an occasion of joy to Paul. To this end, Philemon would have to receive and forgive. Paul pleads: "Let me have joy of thee in the Lord."
  - C. Observation: Christians must be anxious and glad "to receive and to forgive."
- XII. "...even beyond what I say..." verse 21.
- A. Paul expresses confidence that Philemon will do:
    - 1. Not only what has been requested, but
    - 2. Even more than has been requested.
  - B. This probably refers to Paul's confidence that Philemon would set Onesimus free.
  - C. Observations:
    - 1. It is good to have and to express confidence in others.
    - 2. It is good to be deserving of the confidence of others.
    - 3. The gospel of Christ abolishes slavery. Cf. Mat 7:12.
- XIII. "...prepare me a lodging..." verse 22.
- A. Paul asks Philemon to prepare for him a lodging.

- B. He thus expresses confidence that he would soon see Philemon. Cf. Phil 2:19-24.
- C. To this end Paul asks for the prayers of Philemon.
- D. Observations:
  - 1. There is power in prayer. If Paul needed the prayers of others, how much more do we need the prayers of others.
  - 2. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jas 5:16).

XIV. Epaphras, verse 23.

- A. Paul sends the greeting of Epaphras.
- B. He calls Epaphras “my fellow prisoner in Christ.”
- C. Cf. Col 1:7; Col 4:12.
  - 1. Epaphras was of Colossae and possibly was the one by whom that church was established.
  - 2. He was a faithful bondservant (slave) of Jesus Christ.

XV. “...my fellow workers...” verse 24.

- A. Paul here refers to Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke. He calls these his “fellow workers.”
- B. Cf. Col 4:10,14. Paul here mentions specifically: Aristarchus, and Mark, and a man named Jesus Justus and Epaphras (who was of the church in Colossae). Luke was with him; Demas was with him at that time; but by the time of 2 Tim 4:9-11 Demas had forsaken him; only Luke was with him.

XVI. Concluding Prayer, verse 25.

- A. Paul prays the Lord’s grace be upon Philemon.
- B. This is common in Paul’s conclusions. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.”





## SUMMARY OF THE BOOK OF PHILEMON

In the salutation Paul identifies himself as the writer, specifies those addressed and express the salutatory prayer. Paul mentions the “thanksgiving element” in his prayers for Philemon and then refers to the “request element.” He refers to his great joy and comfort which he found in Philemon’s love. Following the course dictated by love Paul besought Philemon in behalf of Onesimus.

Paul explains in detail his feelings about and concerns for Onesimus. He makes special reference to God’s providence in connection with Onesimus and pleads with Philemon to “receive him.” Paul accepts to himself any indebtedness which Onesimus had to Philemon. He gently reminds Philemon of his (Philemon’s) own spiritual indebtedness to him (that is, to Paul). He makes another strong appeal for Philemon to do as requested, expresses confidence that Philemon will do even more than requested and states that he (Paul) expected to visit Philemon shortly. He sends greeting from Epaph-ras, makes particular mention of his “fellow workers” and expresses his concluding prayer.



## ADDITIONAL LESSONS FROM PHILEMON

1. The honorableness of Paul is clearly reflected in this little book. In Rom 12:17 Paul enjoins: "Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men." In 2 Cor 8:20,21 he says: "...avoiding this, that any man should blame us in the matter of this bounty which is ministered by us: for we take thought for things honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." He desired to keep Onesimus with him, but would not do so without the consent of Philemon. Paul would not seek to exert undue pressure upon Philemon.
2. One of the great lessons set out in this book is the fact that repentance demands restitution (making things right) so far as it is possible for things to be made right. Onesimus, a slave, had run away from Philemon his master. He had learned the gospel and had become a Christian. His genuine repentance would compel him to go home, to go back to his master and to make things right with him.
3. The book of Philemon makes reference to the Bible doctrine of the providence of God. Paul says (verse 15): "For perhaps he was therefore parted from thee for a season, that thou shouldst have him for ever..." This statement is similar to that of Mordecai, recorded in Esther 4:14—"...and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"
4. In the book of Philemon we learn something about how the gospel of Christ dealt with the problem of slavery (which practice was characteristic of the Roman Empire). The gospel did not demand immediately that all the slaves be set free. Such would have precipitated even greater persecution. It did set out sacred principles (for both masters and slaves) when and where applied, would bring slavery to an end. Where men do unto others as they would have others do unto them THERE CAN BE NO SLAVERY!
5. The man Philemon stands as a wonderful example (1) in Christian stewardship, (2) in concern for the church, (3) in brotherly love and (4) in Christian influence. His wonderful love and faith were (1) toward the Lord Jesus Christ and (2) toward all the saints.
6. Paul wrote to Philemon, in behalf of Onesimus. As Onesimus had another (Paul himself) to plead his cause, just so we have another (the Christ Himself) to plead our cause. John says: "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world" (1 Jn 2:1,2). The word "advocate" is the translation of the Greek PARAKLATOS, which means the one who is called to stand by our side and to plead our cause—The Counsel for the Defense.
7. Philemon and Onesimus are exemplary in reconciliation. On the part of Onesimus, reconciliation would demand sincere repentance. On the part of Philemon reconciliation would demand genuine forgiveness. The very theme of the Bible

is reconciliation—reconciliation between God and man. God has worked out and has provided the perfect sacred plan by which this reconciliation is possible. God is willing and anxious to forgive. And, he commands all men everywhere to “repent” (Acts 17:30). God had done His part; man must do his part!

8. This letter teaches us much about genuine Christian love, compassion and concern for others. Though Paul was in extremely difficult circumstances himself he was still thinking of others and was still working constantly in behalf of others. In a very special and very loving way he was anxious to help his friend and fellow Christian, Onesimus.
9. Paul said to Philemon, about Onesimus: “But if he hath wronged thee at all, or oweth thee ought, put that to mine account; I Paul write it with mine own hand, I will repay it: that I say not unto thee that thou owest to me even thine own self besides” (Phile 18,19). In a sense, Onesimus symbolizes all human beings. All persons because of their own sins have wronged the one to whom they belong. All men owe a debt to God, which debt they cannot pay! Like Paul, our Lord has said: “Put that debt no my account! I will take care of it!” The Lord will take the debt of each and every one who will believe upon Him and obey His will. He will make possible complete reconciliation.

Paul says: “We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:20).