



SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Monthly Bible Study

P H I L E M O N

A Brother Beloved

Search the Scriptures

PROGRAM GUIDE

Read the selected passage every day, making notes and highlighting things that stand out as you proceed day by day. Use the study guide questions as a way to make you slow down and examine (meditate on) the things you are reading. Record your answers to the study guide questions in a notebook or other place where you have plenty of room to answer the questions in as brief or lengthy manner as you choose. Set a goal for a Level realistic to your situation, but set goals that push you toward an ever increasing fellowship with the Lord through His Book.

LEVEL 1 - TREMENDOUS EXPERIENCE IN LEARNING GOD'S WORD

(BUT DO NOT BE SATISFIED TO STAY AT THIS LEVEL)

- Read the passage every day for the entire month (or period of the study).
- Answer at least 2-3 questions from each chapter of the study, or 25-50% of the total questions in the study guide.
- Complete at least 3 of the "Searching the Context" questions, and at least one of the "Searching Deeper" questions added to the end of the study.

LEVEL 2 - INCREASING GROWTH IN BIBLE UNDERSTANDING, ALONG WITH DEVELOPMENT OF SOLID STUDY METHODS

EVERYTHING IN LEVEL 1 PLUS:

- Read the passage out loud at least once during the month (preferably to someone else if possible), and listen to the passage being read at least once.
- Attend the discussion meeting with those from your church. Offer some of the insight you have gained in your own studies and listen closely to the insights of others, jotting down additional notes of things learned from others throughout the course of the discussion.
- Do a basic outline of the passage, noting only the broad divisions of content and labeling them.
- Handwrite a copy of the entire passage, paying attention to all spelling and punctuation.
- Memorize at least one "suggested memory verse" from each chapter of the passage.

LEVEL 3 - WILL RESULT IN A COMPREHENSIVE GRASP ON THE TEXT

EVERYTHING IN LEVELS 1 AND 2 PLUS:

- List every term in the text that could be considered difficult or even somewhat unfamiliar, look it up in a trustworthy dictionary, such as Strong's or Vine's Hebrew and Greek Lexicons, and write out the definitions next to the appropriate terms. This will form a very helpful, working dictionary for you during the course of the study, as well as for future reference when using your own notes as resources for continued study of the passage.
- Attempt an answer for every question on the study guide, and complete all of the bonus challenges and questions.
- Have a regularly scheduled time with someone else where you discuss the passage, the study questions, and how the Lord is impacting your life because of it. This could be a friend, accountability partner, spouse, or your children.
- Do a thorough outline of the passage, noting the broadest divisions of content and working down to the smallest divisions. Give your outline some pattern of uniformity which makes it consistent and easier to remember. The major headings could rhyme, start with the same letter, or simply be the same amount of words. Be creative and enjoy this part of the challenge.
- Memorize every "suggested memory verse" from each chapter of the passage.
- Anyone who takes the time is more than capable of completing these studies at this level of intensity. Try it!

EXTRA TIP 1: *the intense focus on a single passage is properly and immensely aided by the necessary perspective of the whole of Scripture. "Cover to cover" reading and a survey understanding of the Bible are each valuable parts of the journey into a greater relationship with God through His Word.*

EXTRA TIP 2: *Resist seeking help from outside resources such as Bible commentaries until you have completed the month of study. It is okay to know what someone else has learned in the passage, but patiently seek to learn all you can simply trusting the Holy Spirit to instruct you.*

EXTRA TIP 3: *Diagram sentences in the text, especially those you find difficult or complicated. It will help to anchor your thoughts to the main subjects of the passage. (Relearning sentence diagramming might be necessary, but it is worth the extra effort.)*

The road from the pig trough of the far country to the arms of the Father would have felt impossibly long to a Prodigal Son, again and again rehearsing the lines, always wondering if it might not be better to go back. Yet time after time the wisdom of even that difficult decision overrode the deceptive allure of the easy decision, and the Prodigal marched on until at last coming face-to-face with the Father he had shamed. Of course, 2000 years after the Lord Jesus conveyed that parable, you and I know the beautiful ending, and it is possible young Onesimus did even then. But as he made his way from Rome to Colossae, he too must have questioned the wisdom of this decision. Because for Onesimus, there would certainly be no waiting father. There might perhaps be only an angry master. But might there not also be a brother beloved to welcome this prodigal?

After abandoning his place at Philemon's house, he had never considered that he might be discovered in the crowded, bustling streets of Rome. It was not, however, his old master that found him there; it was the Sovereign Lord of Heaven that found the young fugitive and directed his steps to a prison cell - turned classroom - where the renowned Apostle Paul was continuing his ministry for the Gospel. Having found the true freedom that comes only in Christ Jesus, Onesimus also found purpose in serving his new Lord by serving His Apostle. Perpetuating no cheap Gospel, however, Paul soon sent Onesimus back to Philemon, yet he did not send him alone. Obviously, he was not free to accompany Onesimus to Colossae; so, in place of his own presence with Onesimus, Paul sent another comforter with him. It was this Epistle we call Philemon, a letter to speak on behalf of the estranged servant. It was something which could serve as payment toward his considerable debt, for Paul had declared he would stand good for all that Onesimus owed!

The Epistle to Philemon was written and delivered at the same time as the Epistle to the Colossians. It is one of the few epistles directed specifically to an individual, though Paul's salutation indicates that it was meant to be read by the entire assembly meeting at Philemon's house as well. Still, there is an unmistakably personal tone to Paul's message. The scent of this letter is from the very flower of grace – a grace both preached and practiced by Paul and which Philemon had experienced full well. The power of the Gospel to enact change in the heart and the power to change a society are clearly portrayed here, even as Paul confronts the very difficult issue of slavery, which permeated the world of ancient Rome. The close-knit family of the Church is the undeniable answer to all questions about whose we really are. We are privileged to have this personal correspondence of the great Apostle preserved for us 2000 years later, continuing to offer freedom to the captive and healing to the culture that will yield to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

SEARCHING THE CONTEXT

Some questions to further solidify our understanding of the context of 1 Thessalonians:

1. What would you consider the key verse to properly understanding the Epistle to Philemon?
2. This letter from Paul highlights a few main characters. List them and describe briefly the role they play in the story we are encountering.
3. If you had to describe the letter to Philemon with one word, what would it be?

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE

These are excellent exercises for any student of the Word of God, and especially for those just beginning to gain a good grasp of the Scriptures. However, they are also quite helpful when establishing a working overview of the passage.

1. What are the two qualities of Philemon highlighted by Paul in verse 5? How does he know that these things are true of him?
2. Paul says that Philemon's blessing would come from a response that was not born of necessity. Rather, he says that the blessing would come from responding how? (verse 14)
3. What is the source for Paul's confidence? (verse 21)

STUDY TIPS AND EXTRA CHALLENGES FOR THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON

- ◆ At least one time during this month, write out the complete epistle, being careful to keep spelling and punctuation correct. However, do not divide your handwritten version into verses. Instead, allow it to look and read like what it is - a letter from one man to his dear friend and brother in Christ.
- ◆ **Set a goal to read the entire Epistle 100 times during this study.** That will require an average of almost 4 readings per day.
- ◆ Print out a copy of the epistle that you can freely mark on, then go through and highlight some different things in different colors. Such as:
 - Every mention of the Lord, whether by proper name or pronoun (he, him, etc.).
 - Each occurrence of the word *whom*.
 - Every time the writer identifies himself in any way.
 - Every use of the word *fellow* in a compound word (for example: *fellowsoldier*).
- ◆ Find a recording of someone reading the Epistle and listen to it, sometimes as you follow along in the text, and other times without the text in front of you. (Record yourself reading it if you have the capability.)

MONTHLY CALENDAR

Use this calendar as a checklist of your reading each day. You can simply put a check inside the appropriate box for each day of reading accomplished, or you can sum up your reading for each day in only one word. Try to refrain from repeating any word you have already used.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY

SUGGESTED MEMORIZATION

Philemon 4-6.....17-19

As a participant in the "Search the Scriptures" Monthly Book Study, you are invited to a discussion group to share your thoughts and listen to others thoughts concerning this passage of scripture.

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PHILEMON

¹ Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, ² And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house: ³ Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **⁴ I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, ⁵ Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; ⁶ That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.** ⁷ For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother. ⁸ Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, ⁹ Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ. ¹⁰ I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: ¹¹ Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me: ¹² Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels: ¹³ Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel: ¹⁴ But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly. ¹⁵ For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; ¹⁶ Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord? **¹⁷ If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. ¹⁸ If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account;** ¹⁹ I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides. ²⁰ Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord. ²¹ Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say. ²² But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you. ²³ There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus; ²⁴ Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers.

²⁵ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.