

## SCRIPTURES FOR 5/6/07 LIFEGROUP LESSON

### Philemon

1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker, 2 to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home:

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### Thanksgiving and Prayer

4 I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, 5 because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints. 6 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. 7 Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints.

#### Paul's Plea for Onesimus

8 Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, 9 yet I appeal to you on the basis of love. I then, as Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus— 10 I appeal to you for my son Onesimus,<sup>[a]</sup> who became my son while I was in chains. 11 Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.

12 I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you. 13 I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. 14 But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do will be spontaneous and not forced. 15 Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good— 16 no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord.

17 So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. 18 If he has done you any

wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. 19 I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me your very self. 20 I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. 21 Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

22 And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers.

23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. 24 And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.

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

### Ephesians 5:8

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light

### Colossians 1:21-22

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation

### Ephesians 2:12-13

In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope. 13 But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ.

NOTE TO LEADER: There is a lot of material here. Familiarize yourself with it so you know which stuff you are most comfortable with and what you will cut if you get short on time. Try to keep the lesson/discussion 20-30 minutes in length. Good luck and let me know if you have any questions. - Ed



# CHANGED: Changed Lives

## Jeff Browning

**NOTE TO LEADERS:** All items in *italics* are for your information and not designed to be read aloud.

### OPENING:

ICEBREAKER or GET YA THINKIN' QUESTION: \_\_\_\_\_

OPENING PRAYER NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_

### INTRODUCTION:

*(have someone read Philemon)* So Paul is in prison, writing a letter to Philemon, a wealthy Christian man and a product of Paul's ministry, on behalf of Philemon's runaway slave, Onesimus, who also crossed Paul's path and had chosen to follow Jesus. This book describes three guys who have a common bond – a sort of fraternal brotherhood – that is, through the power of Jesus Christ, they were living drastically changed lives. This is a lot like being in a fraternity or something like that; if you are in a town where one of your "brothers" live, you always have a place to stay, etc.

**Q:** In what ways are these sorts of fraternal bonds "good?" (*help, friends, etc.*) (e.g., VFW, frat/sorority, Elks, etc.)

**Q:** In what ways are they not so "good?" (*isolation, cliques, segregation, prejudice*) (KKK, militias, cults, frat/sor, etc.)

**Q:** What can we do to make sure we are the "good" kind? (*share our changed lives, evangelize, reach out*)

### DIG DEEPER:

Paul also uses some clever wordplay to loosen Philemon up. ("He was useless to you, but now he is useful [Gr: onesimus] to you and to me"), and in verse 7, Paul compliments Philemon for having "refreshed the hearts of the saints." The Greek word translated "heart" is *splagchnon* (pr: SPLONK-non), which means "intestines or bowels," which, to the Hebrews represented the seat of the more tender emotions like compassion and mercy. There are several other Greek words that we would interpret as "heart" that are more generally about emotions or passions, but Paul picked this particular word.

**Q:** Why is this important in this context? (*he paid Philemon a compliment before appealing to his compassion/mercy*)

### APPLICATION:

Jeff encouraged us to identify with Onesimus in three ways:

#### **DON'T DENY YOUR PROBLEM, FACE IT**

Onesimus could have probably continued to run, but as a Christian, he felt obligated to be honest and come forward, even at risk of execution.

**Q:** Do you have any "problems" you are running away from? What's the worst thing that could happen if you faced it?

#### **DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT**

Jeff said we could choose between three problem-solving strategies: CURSE IT (complain about it and blame others for it), NURSE IT ("Woe is me!" – look for sympathy), or LET GOD REVERSE IT (trust God).

**Q:** Obviously the right choice is the third, but what's wrong with the first two?

#### **QUIT LOOKING BACK**

Trust God for life change. (*have someone read Ephesians 5:8*) Through Christ, darkness leads to light (*have someone read Colossians 1:21-22*), alienation gives way to reconciliation (*have someone read Ephesians 2:12-13*), and you are no longer far from God but near.

**Q:** Are there things in your past that are holding you back?

**Q:** What do you need to do to move forward?

### CONCLUSION:

Like Paul ("chief of sinners"), Philemon, and Onesimus, you can experience positive life change.

### OTHER ACTIVITIES:

GROUP NEEDS: \_\_\_\_\_ SHUT-IN MINISTRY: \_\_\_\_\_

WHO'S LEADING...

THIS WEEK: WORSHIP: \_\_\_\_\_ PRAYER: \_\_\_\_\_

NEXT WEEK: WORSHIP: \_\_\_\_\_ PRAYER: \_\_\_\_\_