

SCRIPTURES FOR 5/27/07 LIFEGROUP LESSON

Philemon

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

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

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

Thanksgiving and Prayer

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

Paul's Plea for Onesimus

8Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, 9yet I appeal to you on the basis of love. I then, as Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus— 10I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains.

11Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.

12I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you. 13I 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. 14But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do will be spontaneous and not forced. 15Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good— 16no 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.

17So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. 18If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. 19I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me your very self. 20I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. 21Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

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

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

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

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!

Exodus 17:12-13

When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

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: A Changed Legacy

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:

Paraphrasing Jeff's quote from Corrie Ten Boom, "Our experiences are God's perfect preparation for our future that only He can see."

Q: Do you find this to be true? Do you find it uplifting or frustrating?

(Have someone read Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 & Exodus 17:12-13) So basically, "two are better than one," and "we should be able to rely on one another." These scriptures are like the "theme song" of LIFEGROUPS.

Q: Have you recently seen evidence of this being the case, especially in the LIFEGROUP context?

APPLICATION:

This week, Jeff suggested that, in order to see change, we must:

BELIEVE IN PEOPLE

Paul could have rejected Onesimus (he was a lowly slave and a fugitive), both Onesimus and Philemon could have discounted Paul (religious fanatic, just after my money, etc.), Philemon could have taken Onesimus captive, punished or even killed him (and in fact may have, we don't know for sure, but we can still learn from Paul's expectation of Philemon's response), both Paul and Onesimus could have been intimidated by Philemon (he is above my station, he will never accept me), but instead, in order to provide an example of Christian love, they all chose to believe in each other and in Christ.

Q: We all have certain people at certain times who we have difficulty believing in. Have you found this easier or more difficult as a Christian than you did before you were a Christian? Why or why not?

TAKE RISKS ON PEOPLE

Paul took a risk befriending Onesimus, Onesimus took a risk exposing his identity to Paul, Paul took a risk teaching Philemon and later exposing Onesimus' location to him, Onesimus took a risk endorsing Paul's letter to Philemon, hopefully Philemon took a risk on Onesimus that he had changed, and Christ took a risk (from an earthly perspective) for all of them (and us).

Q: What are the advantages to taking risks on others (*if you don't, you will never have true fellowship*)?

Q: What are the disadvantages (*they will inevitably let you down*)?

At the risk of being disappointed, we must invest in others in order to impact others. Without this investment of risk, no one will be reached. Jesus told us to "Go and make disciples," and that involves putting ourselves at risk for others.

Q: Have you taken a risk on someone with positive results? Has someone done that for you?

CONCLUSION:

A web of influence extends from you to all with whom you connect. Are you reaching out or holding back? Are you taking risks or playing it safe? Would you be where you are today, if others had held back or played it safe? Go.

OTHER ACTIVITIES:

GROUP NEEDS: _____ SHUT-IN MINISTRY: _____

WHO'S LEADING...

THIS WEEK: WORSHIP: _____ PRAYER: _____

NEXT WEEK: WORSHIP: _____ PRAYER: _____