



Good Shepherd
Sermon-Based Study Guide
Philemon | August 17, 2025
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I. Introduction to this Study

This week in our series titled, *Ordinary*, we are looking at Paul's personal letter to **Philemon**. The letter from Paul to his friend Philemon reveals a warm, touching side to the apostle's personality and leadership style.

Philemon was a friend of Paul's who helped start the Colossian church in his own home. Some time after Paul left, one of Philemon's slaves, Onesimus, ran away. Interestingly, Paul does not deliver a discourse against slavery but instead teaches on how we are to relate to one another in Christ.

II. Connecting with One Another

When do you feel obligated to forgive someone: when they confess their sin? When they later change their behavior? When someone else interceded for the offending party?

III. Study the Text – Navigate through Philemon with knowing there is a personal conflict...

HEALTHY CONFRONTATION AND RESOLUTION – adapted from the leadership teaching of John Maxwell

- ✓ Pray through your own hurt/anger/disappointment/confusion/frustration (Wait as you "count to ten"; Are you able to be objective?)
- ✓ Initiate contact (vv.1-3; **Matt. 18:15-17** - don't wait for the other person)
- ✓ Begin with a time of prayer and a time of affirmation (vv.4-7)
- ✓ Admit you are struggling (don't tell the other person they are the problem! - vv. 8-10)
- ✓ Bring up the issue and explain you don't understand what's happened (vv. 11-13)
- ✓ Let the person respond (v.14)
- ✓ Narrow the focus (identify and prioritize the issues; vv. 15-16)
- ✓ Establish forgiveness and repentance, if needed (the prayer w/b for both people/parties to share in it; vv.17-20)
- ✓ Compromise on opinions, not on principles (the truth does matter! – vv. 21-22)
- ✓ Pray and affirm your love as you close (confident that God is at work; vv.23-25)



IV. Digger Deeper (into the Scripture Reading on Sunday)

a. Read **John 18:1-27** as context for Jesus' interaction with Peter after their breakfast by the sea in **John 21:1-14**.

Can you relate to how Peter might have been feeling since those awful moments a few nights ago, "What was I thinking?" "Why did I run?"

It has been written, "At Peter's suggestion, the seven return to fishing... [They are] rather sedentary, transformed by their experience of Jesus but living an ordinary life. The only extraordinary feature of their life now is their repeated experience of the risen Jesus."

Do you think this is a fair characterization of disciples? Why or why not? Have you ever had a season of life which was bland, ordinary, and uninspired?

How does the Risen Jesus transform the bland, ordinary, and uninspired? How has He done so in your life? How do you need Him to do so now?

b. **Read John 21:15-19.**

These verses recall Peter's three denials of Jesus in **John 18:15-18** and **25-27**.

Though Peter is fishing, Jesus seems to be inviting him to something else. What is it? Before inviting him to something else, Jesus asks Peter a question. Why do you think Jesus asks him that? And why three times!?

c. How did Jesus emphasize the connection between love and service? What hope does this story offer us? What reality does this story teach us about the cost of discipleship?

d. How can we have the depth of compassion for others that Jesus has for each of us?

e. Reflect on the truth that Peter is once again finding grace at the foot of the cross. When have you experienced God's forgiveness in a meaningful/powerful way? What hinders us from accepting and enjoying God's forgiveness?

f. (**v. 19b**) "And when Jesus said that he added this, 'Follow me!'" How have you heard these words from Jesus before? Share how these two words of Jesus might be impacting your faith journey right now.

V. Prayer

Spend time personally and within your group praying about:

- Encourage one another to keep following/trusting Jesus- Pray for one another!!!
- Ask for prayer in areas of your life where you need a deeper trust that "nothing is impossible with God".
- Ask God to give you the courage to be reconciled with those with whom you are estranged through the forgiveness of Jesus.

