

HEARING THE WORD



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Philemon
Leaders Guide

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Nigel Barge, January 2019

Scripture Quotations taken from

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Resources

The *New Bible Dictionary* 3rd edition, published by Inter Varsity Press
The *New Bible Commentary* 21st C edition. A commentary on every Bible book, IVP
www.blueletterbible.org

Hearing the Word: A Tool for Bible reading



LOOK – What does it *say*?

- 1) The Text
 - a) What questions does it raise -
Who, What, When, Where, Why, How?
 - b) What surprises you?
- 2) The Context?
 - a) the surrounding text
 - b) the Book of the Bible
 - c) the whole Bible
 - d) the place in the Bible Story



LEARN – What does it *mean*?

- 1) What type of writing is it?
- 2) Answer the questions
- 3) Summarise the passage



LISTEN – What is the *message*?

- 1) Which is the main point?
- 2) Which is the key verse?



LIVE – How should we *respond*?

- 1) What does it show about God,
(Father, Son, Holy Spirit) :
 - a) His nature and character?
 - b) His grace*
 - c) Jesus / his salvation**
- 2) What should I do?

* God's undeserved generosity is evident throughout the Bible, and it is perfectly expressed in Jesus.

** The Bible, from 'the fall' onwards, describes God's plan of salvation through his Son. Thus, *all* the Scriptures speak in some way of Jesus (Luke 24:27)

INTRODUCTION

Reading ‘Letters’ in the Bible

Whatever we read, we adjust to its style, sometimes without noticing. We don’t approach a newspaper, a car manual, a cookery book, a poem, a scientific report, a TXT MSG and a Shakespeare play in the same way. We take into account the purpose for which it was written and the way in which the writer uses words.

Since the Bible also has many styles – law, poetry, history, wisdom, prophecy, letters and visions – we need to allow for the style if we are to discern what God is saying. Philemon is a ‘Letter’.

The New Testament contains letters written by the Apostles to various parts of the church of their day. The first thirteen of them are from Paul, named after their *destination*,- nine to the church in a locality, four to a person (Timothy, Titus, Philemon). They are printed in order of length, not date of writing. One, perhaps by Paul, is written for Christians from a Jewish background (Hebrews). The others are named after their *author* (James, Peter, John, Jude) with a numeral *in front of* the name to separate a first, second or third letter from the same person. They are part of the Word of God and as such they not only *were* authoritative for the church then, but they *are* authoritative for the church of all time.

Since this part of the Word of God is written *as letters*, in the first instance they must be read as such. So we need to take into account that letters are:

a) *Relational.*

A letter is addressed to a particular person or group of people and its contents apply to them.

So in the Bible, we must remember that in the first instance Paul (or James, Peter, John or Jude) is addressing named churches or individuals It is only once we have grasped what they are saying to *them* that we may generalise as to what God might be saying to *us*. NB The two will *always* be consistent.

b) *Occasional.*

Letters are one side of a ‘conversation’ between two people. They refer to matters in which details of situations and people are assumed to be common knowledge. A third party reading a letter needs to ‘read between the lines’ to work out the other side of the story.

We have to try and understand the situation to which this Bible letter was written, so as to grasp how the writer was addressing *it*. Only then may we ask how God might apply this Word to our own circumstance.

c) *Dated.*

Letters are written at a particular time and place, and within a particular culture. So in the Bible, these first-century letters are expressed within the habits and traditions of that day. In discerning what God might be saying to us, now, we need to separate any instruction that is ‘time-bound’ from principles that are timeless.

d) *To be read as a whole.*

When we open a letter from a friend today, we read the whole thing. We recognise it is a single communication whose contents are thus all related.

So with letters in the Bible; every part must be viewed in the context of the whole letter. Thus, reading a whole Bible letter *right through*, before analysing its parts, is good practice.

PAUL'S LETTER TO PHILEMON

Purpose and occasion

The apostle Paul is a prisoner under house arrest, probably in Rome in Italy (see Acts 28:16) awaiting trial. *Philemon* is one of several letters written from prison (also to Ephesus and Colosse in W Turkey, and Philippi in N Greece)

The letter concerns three individuals: Paul, the writer; Onesimus, a runaway slave he had met in Rome; and Philemon, the slave's owner. Philemon probably lived in Colossae, since that is where Paul is sending Onesimus (v12; Colossians 4:9) a town Paul himself had not visited (Colossians 2:1).

Under contemporary law, a slave owner could wreak almost limitless vengeance on a runaway slave like Onesimus. Frightful penalties also awaited those who harboured runaways. In the Roman Empire, William Barclay says, there were 60 million slaves in a total population of possibly 120 million. Obviously the situation was precarious. Any ‘whiff’ of rebellion was therefore crushed instantly and absolutely. ‘A rebellious slave was promptly eliminated.’

The difference in this case was that first Philemon, then Onesimus, had become Christians through Paul’s ministry (v10,19). Onesimus had probably robbed his master (v18) when he ran away (v15). In the providence of God, he had met Paul in Rome and been converted, perhaps becoming his servant. The name ‘Onesimus’ in Latin means ‘useful’. Paul appears to make a play on the word: ‘... was *useless* to you... but now *useful* to you - and to me’ (11).

Paul mentions Epaphras, Philemon’s fellow-townsman (see Colossians 4:12). Quite possibly the presence in Rome of someone who knew Onesimus’ background in Colosse put pressure on Paul to deal with the situation and send the slave back home to ‘face the music’.

In this letter, Paul pleads with Philemon to receive Onesimus back as he would receive Paul himself. Paul would dearly have loved Onesimus to stay with him but knows he needs Philemon's permission for this (14). He offers to pay all of Onesimus' debts himself (18).

While the letter is addressed to Philemon and (we guess) his wife and son, Paul asks that it be read to the church that meets in their house. It is delivered by Tychicus, who is also carrying the letter to Colosse, accompanied by Onesimus, whom he there calls 'our faithful and dear brother' (Col 4:9).

Questions

We believe that '**All** Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work'. (2 Timothy 3:16)

That raises two questions:

- Why is this brief, *personal* letter included in the New Testament?
- Since Paul *could* have 'pulled rank' as an apostle and *ordered* Philemon to treat Onesimus well, why does he choose to leave the life and death decision of his beloved 'son' to the vagaries of a master's whim?

Could it be there is an 'antitype' here, a matching-but-opposite event to what God has done in Christ? Could this be its purpose and place in revealing Christ 'in all the Scriptures' (Luke 24:27)?

Earthly story: *A 'father' agrees with a 'son' that he should go back to a foreign country and re-engage as a slave. He is guilty of a capital offence — desertion — and could be condemned to death. The 'father' pleads for undeserved mercy on behalf of his son, that he should live.*

Spiritual story: *The Father agrees with His Son that he enter the world as a servant. He is totally innocent of all wrongdoing, yet it is the Father's will that he should be condemned to death. So his Son dies that others might live when God bestows his undeserved mercy on them.*

Abbreviation convention: **Phm.** = Philemon; **Phil.** = Philippi

Greetings and thanksgiving

Background information

Paul's opening follows the usual pattern of all letters in those days: who it is from; to whom it is addressed, and greetings to them. This one is full of grace, tact and affection.

Word List

1 *Paul* an apostle *see* Acts 9:15

Timothy native of Lystra *see* Acts 16:1, became a fellow-worker with Paul; later he led the church in Ephesus *see* 1 Tim 1:3

2 *Philemon* leader of house-church in Colossae

Apphia ? Philemon's wife

Archippus ? their son, quite possibly the leader of church in Laodicea: *see* Colossians 4:17

3 *grace* Greek, *charis*, love freely given by God when we sinners do not deserve it.

peace Greek *eirene* (the OT *shalom*), spiritual well-being

4 *saints* forgiven sinners, fellow believers. The term (*lit* holy ones) is used because God reckons believers as holy, in Christ.

6 *Sharing faith* Greek *koinonia* = fellowship amongst believers (Acts 2:42)
Lit. 'So, as the fellowship of your faith works, you may become in full knowledge of every good thing in us for Christ'

Bible connections

3 *grace and peace also used at* Rom 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:3; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:2; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:2; Jude 1:2

4 *a prayer with thanksgiving typical at start of Paul's letters; see also* Romans 1:8; 1 Corinthians 1:4; Philippians 1:3; 4:6; Colossians 1:3; 3:17; 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 1: 2; 5:17,18; 2 Thess. 2:3; 1 Timothy 2:1; 2 Timothy:1:3; 1 Galatians 1:6.

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 1 *Why 'a prisoner of Christ Jesus'?*
Why Timothy, not Epaphras, Mark etc who are mentioned in v23?
Who is 'our' dear friend?
What is he a 'fellow-worker' at?
- 2 *What is the difference between 'fellow-worker' and 'fellow-soldier'?*
What is 'the church that meets in your home'?
- 3 *Why 'grace'?*
Why 'God our Father'?
What does 'the Lord Jesus Christ' mean?
- 4 *Why 'my God'?*
Why is 'prayers' plural?
- 5 *Why faith in the Lord Jesus and love for all the saints?*
- 6 *What does (lit) 'fellowship of the faith' mean? (see p5)*
Why would fellowship among the faithful give a full understanding?
- 7 *Why would their love have given him such joy? . . .*
... and such encouragement?
Why does he call him 'brother'?
Who are the saints?
How has he refreshed the hearts of the saints?

What surprises or confuses you?

- 1 - 7 *'Why doesn't he get to the point sooner?'*

2) The Context

- 1) surrounding passage
- 1 *Prisoner of Christ Jesus (v9)*
Our brother (vv 7, 16, 20)
- 2) whole Bible
- 1 *Prisoner of Christ – Ephesians 3:1 is the only other occurrence in NT*
Crucified with Jesus (Galatians 2:20)
Doing the Lord's will (Luke 22:42)

Friend (*John 15:15*)

- 2 Church in house (*Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:5*)
- 3 Jesus is Lord (*1 Corinthians 12:3*)
Jesus is one with the Father (*John 11:30; 17:11; Philippians 2:6ff*)
- 4 Always thank God (*1 Corinthians 1:4; Colossians 1:3; 1 Thess 1:2*)
Enter his gate with thanksgiving (*Ps 100:4*)
- 5 The saints (*2 Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:2*)
- 6 Blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Heavenly places (*Eph 1:4*)
- 7 Son of encouragement (*Acts 4:36*)

LEARN

- 1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?
 1 *He is held by the Romans but a willing prisoner of Jesus.*
Timothy was leader of the church in nearby Ephesus, perhaps known to Philemon.
'Our' means Paul and his fellow-workers.
A 'fellow worker' at fulfilling the great commission.
- 2 *A 'fellow soldier' may be a co-worker who has faced more persecution than a 'fellow worker'?*
There must have been several 'churches' in Colossae.
- 3 *Grace first because it is God's unmerited gift.*
'God our Father' - he is speaking to fellow Christians.
It means 'God ··· Jesus ··· Messiah'.
- 4 *'My' in front of God shows prayer is a two-way, personal connection.*
'Prayers' refers to praying at different times.
- 5 *Faith in Jesus, and love, are the defining marks of a Christian.*
- 6 *As believers commit themselves to love one another in faith, they prove the resource of Jesus.*
- 7 *Their love gave him such joy because it showed their faith in Jesus.*
It would have encouraged him as it would have shown the way that God has blessed Paul's preaching of his Word.
He calls him 'brother' to establish the basis of his coming appeal.
The saints are the believers in Jesus.
He has refreshed the hearts of the saints by his faithful love.

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?.

He wants to remind Philemon of the context for his request - he is a friend (1) and a brother (7) through both being linked to Jesus.

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

From Paul, without rights before Jesus, and Timothy, your brother and mine (1), to Philemon and the Christian family to whom he is accountable (2). May you enjoy God's grace to you in the peace he made through Jesus (3). I thank God in prayer for your real faith in Jesus and the proof of it - your love for all other Christians (4,5). I ask God that the fellowship of faith in Jesus may lead you into knowing all the good things that are ours in Him (6). In the past your evidence of Christian brotherliness has been a joy to me and many, and has refreshed our hearts (8).

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Christian love encourages and refreshes brothers and sisters in Christ.

2) Which verse best sums up the passage's message? **v 7**

Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints.

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

4 God is our primary benefactor.

7 God refreshes the hearts of the saints through his people.

b) His grace? .

3 Grace and peace are gifts of the Father.

6 In Christ, God has given us every good thing.

c) Jesus / His salvation?

3 Jesus is co-equal with God.

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What should I do

1 *Note - As His willing 'prisoners', we have to do what Jesus says.*

Affirm people who are your friends and fellow workers.

(Re)establish warmth with someone before asking a favour.

2 *Use the whole church when encouraging Christian behaviour.*

4 *Be thankful in your prayers for others believers.*

5 *Note - real faith in Jesus shows love for all other.*

6 *Pray for other believers that 'they may be active in sharing their faith (in Jesus) so that they may have a full understanding of every good things we have in Christ.*

7 *Be loving towards other Christians recognising the encouragement it brings to all, especially your leaders.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Study 2

Philemon 1:8-21

Paul's Request

Background information

v8 “*Therefore*” relates the main matter of the letter to his introductory remarks. It is because of the love Philemon has shown to Paul, that Paul can write the way he does. Paul blends authority with a gracious humility.

See also the Introduction to this study, p2

Word List

7,20 <i>heart</i>	<i>lit ‘bowels’</i> - the seat of the emotions
9 <i>old man</i>	or ambassador
	<i>prisoner of Christ Jesus</i> literally a prisoner, probably in Rome under house arrest (see Acts 28:16) but also held captive by the love of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14)
10 <i>Onesimus</i>	Philemon’s slave; the name means ‘Useful’
12 <i>sending back</i>	<i>gk anapempein</i> ‘refer a case to’
15 <i>for good</i>	<i>gk ‘aionios’</i> eternal
16 <i>dear to</i>	<i>gk agapeton</i> beloved (cf (1 Cor 13))
17 <i>partner</i>	<i>gk Koinonos</i> (cf <i>Koinonia</i> –fellowship (Acts 2:42))
19 <i>hand writing</i>	<i>gk cheiro ...graphon</i> a technical word for a hand written note, acknowledging indebtedness

Bible connections

<i>slaves and masters</i>	<i>see Colossians 3:22 – 4:1</i> , written to the church of which Philemon was a part. <i>Cf Ephesians 5:21, 6:5-9</i>
<i>change of status in Christ</i>	<i>Galatians 3:26-29</i>
14 <i>cheerful, not forced giving or service</i>	<i>see 2 Corinthians 9:7</i>
15 <i>divine providence</i>	<i>see Romans 8:28; Esther 4:14</i>
16 <i>a dear brother</i>	<i>Galatians 3:26-29</i>
21 <i>more than I ask</i>	<i>Ephesians 3:20</i>

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 8 *What is the word ‘therefore’ there for?!*
Why could he have ordered him?
Why doesn’t he order him?
- 9 *How is his appeal based on love?*
Why does he mention his name
Why does he mention that he is old and imprisoned?
- 10 *Why does he say ‘Onesimus became my son’?*
When was he in chains?
- 11 *How was Onesimus useless to Philemon?*
How had Onesimus become ‘useful’ to Paul and Philemon?
- 12 *What did he mean ‘his very heart’?*
- 13 *How would Onesimus be taking Philemon’s place in helping Paul while he was in chains?*
- 14 *Why did he need and seek Philemon’s consent?*
- 15 *Who were they separated, and why?*
- 16 *What did he mean ‘better than as a slave’?*
What did he mean ‘even dearer to you’?
- 17 *How would he welcome Paul?*
- 19 *Why does he point out that he is writing it with his own hand?*
- 20 *Why does Philemon ‘owe himself’ to Paul?*
- 21 *Who is his obedience to?*
What unspecified extra is Paul hoping Philemon will do, and why does he not spell it out?

What surprises or confuses you?

Why does he not ‘cut to the quick’ and say, “Be nice to Onesimus?!

2) The Context

- 1) surrounding passage,
- 8 *In Christ (6)*
- 9 *Prisoner of Christ Jesus (1)*
- 20 *Refresh my heart. (7)*

2) whole Bible,

- 9 *We love because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19)*
- 10 *Became my son (1 Corinthians 4:14; Galatians 4:19)*
- 17 *As I have loved you, so love one another. (John 13:34)*
- 21 *Welcomed back unconditionally (Luke 15:11-32)*
More than I ask (Ephesians 3:20)
Faith is the substance of things hoped for, evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:3)
Throw the first stone … he stooped down and wrote. (John 8:1-11)

LEARN

- 1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?
- 8 *'Therefore', i.e. since you are a committed and fruitful Christian.*
He could order him as an apostle, but does not because it is a civil matter that governs the treatment of runaway slaves.
- 9 *Love is mentioned since Philemon's previous love for the saints (4) has given Paul much joy. (7)*
He mentions his name to make his appeal personal.
He mentions that he is old and imprisoned to show there is no formal pressure or threat from him.
- 10 *He calls Onesimus 'his son' because he has become a Christian through Paul's ministry.*
He was in chains and was stuck in Rome. (Acts 20:16)
- 11 *He was useless to Philemon as a runaway slave.*
Onesimus had become 'useful' to Paul and Philemon as a brother in Christ.
- 12 *He meant by 'his very heart' that he truly loved him in the Lord.*
- 13 *Onesimus would be caring for Paul 'on behalf' of Philemon (who owned him).*
- 14 *He needed Philemon's consent as otherwise he would be 'stealing' his slave.*
- 15 *They were separated as Onesimus ran away.*
- 16 *'Better than as a slave' meant a servant who was a brother in Christ?*

Beloved of me as a brother in Christ - more to you as a brother in Christ and a servant.

- 17 *He would welcome Paul as an esteemed brother in Christ.*
- 19 *His 'own hand' shows that it is a really personal appeal? Or it is an I.O.U.?*
- 20 *Philemon 'owed' himself to Paul because he came to faith in Jesus through Paul's ministry.*
- 21 *Confident of Philemon's obedience to Paul.*

Is Paul's unspecified extra the hope that Philemon will make Onesimus a freeman instead of a slave? Paul omits being specific, lest it hinder the main request to spare Onesimus' life.

- 2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

He doesn't rush to ask mercy for Onesimus because this is a request, not an instruction.

- 3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

I don't command you but I appeal to you for my 'son', Onesimus, in whom we both have an interest and whom I love. (8-12) He could have served me on your behalf but that needed your permission. Perhaps God meant that you would be reunited with him as a brother in Christ. (13-16)

So welcome him as you would welcome me if he were me. I'll pay any outstanding debt to you - though I shouldn't have to remind you that you owe me your life in God. You're due me a favour, so refresh me in Jesus. (17-20) Actually, I hope you will do even more than I ask. (21)

LISTEN

- 1) What is the lesson or the main point

A brother in the Lord is our closest bond

- 2) Which verse best sums up the passage's message? **v 16**

He is very dear to me but even dearer to you as a man and as a brother in the Lord

LIVE

- 1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?
 - a) His nature and character?
- 8 *God delegates his authority for those 'in Christ' / within the church.*
- 9 *God is in control of all our circumstances - whether they seem 'good' or 'bad'.*
- 15 *Relationships in Christ are eternal / forever.*
 - b) His grace?
- 9 *God could force us but He does not, and gives us the opportunity to exercise our will and choose to obey and serve Him .*
- c) Jesus / His salvation?

16 In Jesus, everyone, even slaves, may become brothers.

Now underline the application of the Main Point

- 2) What should I do
- 8 *Don't be tempted to rely on Law rather than deploying grace.*
- 9 *Appeal to others on the basis of God's love for us.*
- 11 *Note - Everyone has a place and is useful in Christ.*
- 12 *Note - Doing the right and Godly thing may be very 'risky' and costly.*
- 15 *Note - God may work through wrong choices / events by others.*
- 16 *Cherish all your brothers in Jesus.*

Note - In Christ, your friend's friend is your friend!

- 19 *Be prepared - you have to right your brother's wrongs.*
- 20 *Realise godly living 'refreshes' your leaders.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Background information

Paul puts further pressure on Philemon to spare Onesimus by hoping (threatening?!) to visit Colossae if and when he is released from prison. There is no record that he actually *did* make that visit. He also sends greetings from his fellow-prisoner, Epaphras and several fellow-workers.

Word List

22 *one more thing* Lit ‘at the same time’. A concurrent request

23 *Epaphras* One of Paul’s friends and, like Philemon, a resident of Colossae *see* Colossians 1:7; 4:12 Name abbreviated from *Epaphroditus* meaning ‘charming’

Mark John Mark, a young companion of Paul on his first missionary journey *see* Acts 12:12,25; 13:13; probably the writer of the Gospel of Mark

Aristarchus one of Paul’s travelling companions, a native of Macedonia, possibly not Jewish

Demas a co-worker with Paul, possibly a Jew from Thessalonica, who would later desert Paul (2 Timothy 4:10)

Luke Co-worker with Paul, who calls him ‘the beloved doctor’, Author of The Gospel of Luke, and The Acts of the Apostles. Joined Paul’s 2nd missionary journey at Troas (Acts 16:11)

Bible connections

22 *duty of hospitality* *see* Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9

23 *John Mark* *see* Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37-39; Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; 1 Peter 5:13

Aristarchus *see* Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2; Col. 4:10; possibly 2 Cor. 8:18

Demas *see* Col. 4:14; *but* deserter 2 Tim. 4:10 Cf Judas (Jn 6:70, 71)

Luke *see* Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16; Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11

LOOK

1) The text

22 Why is it ‘one more thing’ … / ‘at the same time …’?

Why does Paul intimate he hopes to visit? And did he?

Why does Paul mention his prayers?

23 Why is Epaphras mentioned first and in isolation?

24 Why does he mention Mark?

Why does He mention Aristarchus?

Why does He mention Demas?

Why does He mention Luke?

Who were his other fellow workers?...

… and why were they not named c.f. Romans 16:3-24)

25 What does he mean by ‘grace’?

Why the full title – ‘the Lord Jesus Christ’?

What does ‘your spirit’ mean – as Christians they had received the Holy Spirit?

What surprises or confuses you?

22 If Paul did not in fact visit Colossae, is this an error in Scripture?

2) The Context

Whole Bible,

22 c.f. Plans to go to Spain. (Romans 15:25)

But all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do (Hebrews 4:13)

Cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1)

24 Demas - weeds and the tares (Matt 13:24-30)

Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’, will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. (Matthew 7:21-23)

25 Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit (Galatians 6:18; Philippians 4:23; Philemon 1:25)

Jesus is Lord. (1 Corinthians 12:3)

God has made this Jesus .. both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:36)

Unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:23-34)

Forgive, as we have been forgiven. (Matthew 6:12)

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

22 *Paul's 'by the way'-type remark increases pressure on Philemon to accede to his request.*

Paul's intention/hope at the time of writing is accurately stated.

Mentioning his prayers puts further pressure on Philemon: you are praying to God for me to be released; when that is 'heard', I will come and see whether my request to you is heard.

23 *Paul names Epaphras first and in isolation since he is the most important, coming as he does from Colossae, like Philemon.*

24 *He mentions Mark because he had 'run away' (Acts 13:13) but is restored and back working with Paul.*

He mentions Aristarchus as he was a loyal non-Jew?

He may have mentioned Demas as he was difficult(?) Was he already showing signs he would soon desert Paul (2 Timothy 4:10)?

He mentions Luke so as to refer to him as his faithful companion (?) and so as to add weight to the books Luke was writing(?)

His 'other fellow workers' meant other members of the church where he was (in Rome?).

If Philemon had not been to Rome, and so did not know Paul's other fellow-workers, there was no point in naming them.

25 *'Grace' means God's undeserved gift.*

Paul uses the full title, 'the Lord Jesus Christ', because Christ's authority was behind the request – God the Son, the Messiah.

'Your' spirit underlines the responsibility that Paul says Philemon has to act graciously.

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

22 *Paul was human. Scripture is not making out his travel plans are infallible.*

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

As you have been praying for me, when I get out, know that I am coming to check up on you. Epaphras from Colossae, who knows you both, is with me. So are my fellow workers Mark (a Jew), Aristarchus (a Gentile), Demas (the difficult one) and my faithful friend Luke.

May you know the gift God has given of Himself in Jesus the Messiah.

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

God's graciousness to you in Jesus should be known by you as you deal with others.

2) Which verse best sums up the passage's message? **v 25**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your Spirit.

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

22 God answers prayer.

24 God includes those in His purposes that he knows will in future desert Him.

b) His grace?

25 God expects us to treat others with the grace with which Jesus has dealt with us.

c) Jesus / His salvation?

25 Jesus is our Lord and Messiah.

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What should I do

22 Note - faith is expressed in action – 'preparing a room'!

24 Note - The church is a 'mixed bag' - it may include people who will come to deny Jesus.

Note - in seeking to influence a brother for Christ, invoking other leaders may be beneficial.

25 Receive, show and pass on the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

27 Live graciously to others, as God Jesus has been gracious to you.

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Sharing the Word

Use

'Hearing the Word' can be used alone, with another, or in a group.

Preparation

Time put in alone beforehand will greatly benefit time spent together.

Work through the stages - LOOK, LEARN, LISTEN, LIVE. *

Write down your own questions and answers.

(With good preparation and discipline in the time together, the study may be conducted in as little as 45 mins!)

Format

- a. LOOK - Any questions? (If answer is known or not!) Relevant cross references in rest of the Bible?
- b. LEARN - Answers to questions?
- c. LISTEN - Key verse and Main Point?
- d. LIVE - What does it show about God /His grace/ Jesus? What should I do

n.b. Leave plenty of time for the LIVE section!

By also eating together and a time of prayer, you will have shared something of the life of the early church! (Acts 2:42-47)

Remember!

As we gather round God's Word -

- a) Listen to the views of others.
- b) Make room for the novice. (They can join in too when you start by listing 'Any questions'.)
- c) Don't let the 'knowledgeable' dominate. Encourage everyone to think for themselves.
- d) Try to include others, especially 'seekers', in your time together.

* The **process** is explained and practiced in a four-hour course, suitable for all, called '**An Introduction to 'Hearing the Word'**

<https://hearingtheword.org.uk>

“I can read the Bible for myself!”

To show that the Bible is accessible to all,
the Rev Nigel Barge, former minister of Torrance Parish Church,
has devised a tool called ‘Hearing the Word’.

The Manual explains the basic principles of Bible reading,
teaches them by means of an interactive course,
and practices them on a single passage, Mark 10:35-45,
Participants follow in a Workbook: *Hearing the Word - Introduction*,
which includes the next six passages in Mark,
so they may follow on for themselves.

As the principles apply equally to all, the course will both
instruct the novice and refresh the ‘hardened’ Bible student!