

Paul, the People Person (Philemon)

Paul was a people person! Did Paul have his enemies? Yes! But not because of his personality. Because of the offense of the gospel.

Paul was a thinker, theologian, missionary, and mover and shaker. But Paul also was a Friend. The one page letter to Philemon illustrates his ability to relate one on one.

Philemon is Paul's most personal letter to an individual (Paul wrote pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus and dealt with church issues. Paul also wrote a personal letter to the Philippians to thank the entire church for its concern for him in prison).

In Philemon, Paul defuses a potentially explosive situation between two friends. Philemon, a wealthy slave owner (verses 2, 22), and a close friend of Paul's at Colosse, had slave to run away with money (verse 18), Onesimus to Rome where Paul was imprisoned.

Onesimus is in deep weeds. Runaway slaves could be tortured or killed (Acts 19:10).

Paul writes this letter to Philemon to encourage all of us to build relationships in order to influence others.

1. We Must Treat People Respectfully to Build Relationships (1:1a)

- A. Paul does not call himself an "apostle" as he does seven times (Colossians 1:1). In Colossians, Paul is dealing with heresies (Col 2:16) and writes authoritatively.
- B. In Philemon, Paul identifies himself as a "prisoner." Paul will refer to his imprisonment five times (verses 1, 9, 10, 13, 23).

2. We Must be a Team Player to Build Relationships (1:1b-2, 23, 24)

- A. Paul was not a "Solo" who demanded things be done his way.
- B. If we can fulfill alone the dream God has given us, our dream is too small.

3. We Must be Positive Concerning People to Build Relationships (1:1-2, 23, 24)

- A. Paul's team was not a "Dream Team."
- B. Paul still gives positive one sentence biographies.
- C. We can't focus on the negatives (Mt 7:3).

4. We Must Treat Others the Way God has Treated Us to Build Relationships (1:3)

- A. God has been and is gracious to us (Eph 4:32).
- B. God is at peace with us (Mt 6:12).