

7. How does Paul emulate and involve our Savior's atonement and our Father's forgiveness in the situation (Philemon 17-18)? How does he indicate that this proves decisive for sanctity-of-life concerns (Philemon 3, 25)? How can we go about not just announcing but also enacting the Gospel for endangered neighbors?

8. How can we identify ourselves with both unborn and incapacitated neighbors (John 15:5; Philippians 2:13)? How does Jesus identify with them – and with us (Hebrews 2:17; Matthew 25:35-40)?

9. How does Paul surround Philemon and Onesimus with community (Philemon 1, 23)? How might we extend community to someone facing a surprise pregnancy? Someone suffering a terminal diagnosis? A victim of discrimination? An immigrant?

Paul's Most Pro-Life Epistle

A Bible Study ...



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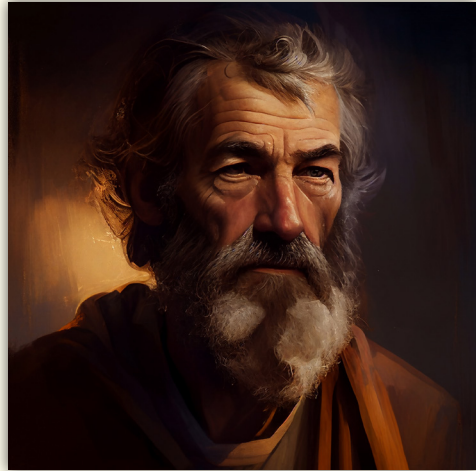
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Item LFL120B



More than just a few isolated verses of Scripture declare the sanctity of life. Every word on all of the pages proclaims how God creates, redeems, and calls every member of our race special and precious. The message of human worth and purpose by His grace and not one's own worth proceeds from the heart of the Gospel and pertains to the heart of it.

Among the most straightforwardly For Life expressions in the Bible is the Epistle to Philemon. While it doesn't directly address abortion or euthanasia, this little letter does deal with a similar dehumanizing practice: slavery. Slaves in classical culture had the legal status of neither persons nor citizens but property. Householders could dispose of slaves, like animals, as they saw fit. St. Paul the Apostle eloquently and winsomely appeals against it, explaining and embodying how the coming of Christ Jesus advocates for receiving every neighbor as gift and treating even the least of these as privilege—no matter what size, skills, or circumstances.



1. Who is Philemon? Who is Onesimus? What history appears to have happened between Paul and Philemon? Between Philemon and Onesimus? Between Paul and Onesimus?
2. How does Paul frequently prefer to introduce himself in his letters (Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:1)? Why would this designation prove especially appropriate in this case? How does he refer to himself here instead (Philemon 1)? How does this capture and convey the same humility? What do the two statuses have in common?

3. By not calling himself servant or slave, Paul leaves himself free to take the posture of master with regard to Philemon. How does Paul imply this relationship without openly asserting it (Philemon 8, 19-20)? And how does this dual dynamic of authoritative but unassuming reflect the Lord God's relationship to humankind (Philippians 2:5-8)? What does this imply about Philemon? About Onesimus?
4. How does this establish and emphasize the common ground between Paul and Philemon? What are some common grounds we might identify and highlight between us and neighbors experiencing life issue situations?
5. Paul has a keen liking for more intimate terminology. What kind of relationship does he want to foster between Philemon and Onesimus (Philemon 1, 7, 10, 16, 20)? How does this exalt Onesimus and entirely undermine the logic of slavery? What does this suggest about the ultimate intent of For Life speaking and serving (Philemon 15-16)?
6. How does this affect the tone and manner in which Paul engages with Philemon (Philemon 8-9, 21)? How might it shape the approaches we employ in advocating for the sanctity of life (1 Peter 3:15-16; Romans 12:14)?