

TITUS & PHILEMON STUDY GUIDE

AUTHOR

Both letters identify **Paul** as the author (Titus 1:1; Philem. 1:1).

In Philemon, Timothy is also named as an author, though it is unlikely he participated in the actual writing. The most reasonable conclusion is that Timothy is named due to his close ministry ties with Paul and responsibilities over the region. It is also possible that Timothy met Philemon as he and Paul traveled through Colossae (Philemon's home) during Paul's second missionary journey, so naming him would be a greeting from a fellow laborer of Paul's in the region.

DATE

Philemon was written while Paul was in prison, most likely at Rome. Some believe Paul may have been imprisoned at Ephesus for the writing of Philemon, for it would be more likely to have run into the runaway slave, Onesimus, from that location. However, tradition has held that Paul wrote Philemon from Rome, making a likely date of around AD 61.

1 Timothy and Titus cover very similar content, so it's likely they were written around the same time following Paul's first imprisonment in Rome.

Let's take a look at a possible chronology for Paul and the pastoral epistles he wrote during these different periods:

- 61-63 AD – Paul's first imprisonment in Rome
 - Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and **Philemon**
- 63-65/66 AD – Paul freed for additional missionary work.
 - 1 Timothy, **Titus**
- 65/66 AD – Paul arrested again, 2nd Roman imprisonment, and martyrdom
 - 2 Timothy

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



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TITUS

Look up the following verses and note what you learn about Titus before you read the book.

- Gal. 2:1-3

- 2 Cor. 7:6-9

- 2 Cor. 7:5-16

- 2 Cor. 8:6, 16-24

- 2 Cor. 12:18

- 2 Tim. 4:10

- Titus 1:5

- Titus 3:12

PHILEMON

Look for details about Paul & Philemon's history as you read and make notes below.

LITERARY STRUCTURE

TITUS	PHILEMON
Appoint Elders & Rebuke False Teachers (1:1-1:16) Instructions to Various Groups (2:1-10) The “Why” for Christian Behavior (2:11-15) Christian Behavior: Good Works (3:1-11) Closing (3:12-15)	Paul’s Prayer for Philemon (1:1-7) Paul’s Plea (1:8-19) Paul’s Personal Requests (1:20-22) Conclusion (1:23-25)

SLAVERY

We need to take a brief look at first century slavery, which was quite common in the Roman world, some estimating that nearly 400,000 residents of Rome were slaves (about a third of the total population).! Though slavery was common and upheld by the government, sentiments against slavery began to be voiced, especially against the harsh treatment of slaves. Many masters freed their slaves, but the freed slaves often discovered their previous enslavement was preferable to their freedom due to not being able to support themselves.

Roman slaves were viewed strictly as property and masters held the right to do as they wished with them. Slave uprisings and calls for better treatment led to first century laws forbidding a master to turn his slave over to the beasts without proper judgment. Sick slaves were to be freed, castration of slaves was outlawed, and further reforms continued into the second century.

Not all slaves were mistreated, for many masters considered their slaves as part of the family and took care of all their needs. Some were placed in high positions within the household and valued slaves were protected, allowed to marry, own property, and establish financial resources. Many masters viewed slaves as a worthy investment, so mistreatment of one’s slaves was to lack wisdom.

Slaves in the Jewish communities had a very different situation, for there were laws regulating the industry and most Jews could not afford slaves or had little interest in having slaves.

For slaves who ran away, the penalty was harsh – including the possibility of death. Masters had freedom to punish runaway slaves, and recent slave uprisings caused the government and masters great concern. Because slaves were viewed as personal property, to not return a slave to his/her owner was to participate in theft. This created a tough situation for the church. Paul took great care not to have the church come under blame as an instigator and supporter of uprisings or unrighteousness. Instead, he chose to sow theological seeds which would produce societal changes through the transformation of people’s hearts. If Christian slaves served their masters well, it would help preach the gospel. The same would be true of Christian masters and their treatment of slaves. Slave and master alike submit themselves as bondservants of Jesus, bringing equality and empathy for each other. And, as the Lord continued transforming hearts, slavery would be only one of the many societal institutions which would change.

OBSERVATION WORDS

Take note of what you learn about each of these. **For God, Jesus, & the Holy Spirit, note what you learn & also specific references to how Jesus & the Spirit are represented.**

TITUS

- Elder
- Grace
- Faith
- Sound doctrine
- Good deeds

PHILEMON

- Slave
- Brother
- Fellow/partner
- Love

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

- What did the Lord teach YOU through these books?
 - Titus
 - Philemon
- What did you learn about God the Father?
- What were some ways Jesus & the Holy Spirit were represented? What are some things you learned about each of them?

TITUS

- Compare the qualifications for leaders in 1 Timothy & Titus. What is the same; what is different?
 - 1 Tim. 3:1-13
 - Titus 1:5-9

- Based on this book, what do you think is the purpose of church elders and church government? How does this compare or contrast with how you see churches functioning today?

- What are the specific instructions to various groups within the church?
 - Older men

 - Older women

 - Younger women

 - Younger men

 - Slaves

- What is the tie between Titus 2:11-14 and 3:3-7 regarding a believer's behavior? How does Paul explain Christ's work and its application to the believer's lifestyle?

PHILEMON

- What do you learn about the following individuals?
 - Philemon

 - Onesimus

 - Paul

- Put yourself in Onesimus' shoes. What do you suppose he's thinking, feeling, praying for?

- What do you learn about conflict resolution from this book?
 - What is the conflict?

 - What is Paul's approach and request?

 - What are Paul's hopes/expectations?

 - Why is Paul asking what he's asking?

- Put yourself in Philemon's shoes. Onesimus has done wrong against him – possibly stolen or damaged property – and has run away. How would YOU respond to Paul? **Write a letter back to Paul explaining your thoughts and final decision. Think it through and be creative!** (You're going to share your letter, so have it ready!)

Key Word, Verse, & Chapter – How do you summarize each book?

▪ **Titus**

- Key Word
- Key Verse
- Key Chapter

▪ **Philemon**

- Key Word
- Key Verse
- Key Chapter (*this will be fun!*)