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PHILEMON

Inside Terry's Office:

The Book of Philemon, More About the Prodigal Son

This shortest of Paul's prison letters carries soooooo much insight into how God relates to us and, therefore, how we desire to relate to each other. Historically, some used this book as a point of justification for the American version of slavery. To which we can only wish those who did so were champions of misconstruction and misapplication!

Although, people would sell themselves into servitude to others, they were not to be mistreated or permanently indentured. If a slave chose to be permanently indentured (because of love or quality of life) after their servitude was concluded they would ask to become a bond-servant. They would ask city leaders to nail them by the ear (small nails!) to their master's doorpost. This was the tradition Paul is referring to when he names himself a "bond-servant of Christ". This concept also overlaps with the Biblical concept of Marriage (the two becoming one) and becoming 'bonded'.

Since Onesimus had left Philemon without fulfilling the terms of his servitude Paul offers to pay what was owed so that Onesimus could return to Philemon as a "brother in Christ". Paul also addresses this letter to Apphia (Philemon's wife?) and to Archippus (Philemon's son?). We might guess that Onesimus' return to the household would affect everyone: Do they even want that unproductive servant back?, How will his actions and attitudes affect the other servants? Are there difference of opinions and feelings in the family concerning Onesimus?

To some extent, this situation reminds us of the story of the Prodigal son. In this case, the Prodigal has an advocate! Paul is willing to risk his reputation, some money, and this friendship to testify to the changes he believes have taken place in Onesimus. Paul is confident that he is not asking Philemon to do the right thing, but to receive a blessing in the changed Onesimus!

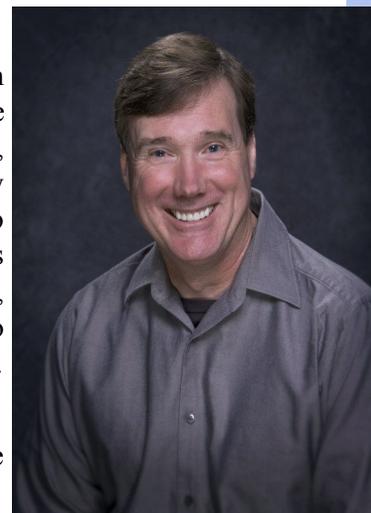
This is an example of all relationships that have been betrayed! We are not asked to go back to how things were before the betrayal occurred, but to go forward into a relationship that is better than it would have been before.

This article has now exceeded the number of words in Paul's epistle, but let me take a few more words to engrain this message: It is never (yes, 'never') God's intention that a betrayed relationship return to what it was before. God is a redeeming God who uses our failures to create something even more beautiful!

Although we are not told the details of what brought about change in Onesimus, we understand that it was complicated. We know, before Paul addressed Philemon, there was distancing, mentoring, humbling, making amends, earning trust, and willingness to reconcile by Onesimus. Then Paul makes it clear that he can't command Philemon to be reconciled to Onesimus. We can imagine that Philemon (or members of his household) may not be able to ever trust Onesimus again. Yet, Paul is hopeful and encouraging. He doesn't want this family he loves to miss out on the blessing he believes these people can be to each other ... and to the kingdom!

Please continue to pray for us as we encounter many of these same dynamics in our sessions!

In his grip! TWE



PHILEMON, USEFUL

“I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.”
Philemon 10-11, The Voice

“Onesimus means ‘profitable’ or ‘useful.’” (66 Love Letters, Love Letter Fifty-Seven, Philemon) Onesimus was a run-away slave of Philemon whom Paul met in prison and became a believer. Paul said that he was returning Onesimus and asked that Philemon receive him back as a brother rather than a slave (v. 16).

When Rob and I were in seminary and pregnant with our first child (Rachel), we were trying to sell a car. I commuted by bus daily to downtown Ft. Worth and met a lady on the bus that became a bus companion. She saw our car was for sale and said she and her husband might be interested. They came and looked at the car and we had a nice visit in which the husband told us he also had been in the ministry. They said they would like to buy our car but wondered if we would be willing to carry the note and they would make payments. They drew up paperwork and we had a lawyer friend look over the paperwork and said it looked good so we closed the deal. Soon after our daughter was born and they brought a baby gift and it all seemed very nice until it came time for the second payment and the chase was on. We never saw another payment. I remember calling them and crying, “how could you do this to us?” Several thousands of dollars and 1-2 years later, we got the car back. It had been trashed and we sold it for scrap metal. It was a hard lesson to learn. It’s been 40 years so I feel free to tell you that their last

name was Stenger (pronounced Stinger). We got stung by the Stengers!

I’m sure any of you could tell a story of how you had been wronged by someone. It is sadly a part of life. The story told in Philemon is of a slave who wronged his master but we see in Philemon a picture of relational forgiveness and acceptance. We also have a picture of how our Heavenly Father relates to people who wrong Him. It’s the greatest love story ever told! “Thanks to My Son, the power with which I love is now in you. And thanks to My Spirit, the wisdom to know what love requires in every relationship is available to you.” (66 Love Letters, Love Letter Fifty-Seven, Philemon, p. 308)

I sympathize with Crabb in this love letter who says he more often sees himself as the offended one; as more a “wronged Philemon than a wrong Onesimus.” And yet as Martin Luther says, “We are all God’s Onesimi!” We have run away and “fallen short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23) Once we recognize the truth about ourselves then we become useful. We have a story of redemption to tell.

In the forgiveness model that we use there is a process of acknowledging sin motivations. We look at those of the offender and we also consider our own sin motivations. I love this because it prepares us to forgive. The more I understand about my own sin motivations the less I have to judge others for theirs.

It is also significant to note how Paul addresses Philemon and the church. He appeals rather than commands that they receive Onesimus back as a brother. In relationship I think this is also an important model. Paul could have ordered Philemon to accept Onesimus but instead he appealed in love for him to do what is right.

We never had the opportunity to follow up with the Stengers but it has become a story

that is useful over the years. I love what Crabb hears from the Father in this Love Letter regarding those wrongful relationships:

“I have revealed My way of relating to you by telling the story of Onesimus, and reporting how Paul spoke to Philemon. I stand before you with holy arms of grace opened wide, inviting you to do what I know you most want to do and to do it as a free choice of love. You are forgiven for wrongs done against Me that are far greater than any wrongs done to you. And you are empowered and, therefore, free to relate to those who have wronged you as I have related and will forever relate to you.”

CAROL ANNE



***Enjoy Yourself and Support our Cause
at a Special Fundraising Event
For***

ORGANIZATION: Plumblin Ministries, Inc.

DATE: Tuesday, August 28, 2018

TIME: 5:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M.

LOCATION: Blaze Pizza

8115 South Olympia Avenue West, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74132



Classroom Transformation Update!

We are so very thankful to the many hands that have been involved in the Classroom Transformation Project! We were blessed with some comfy used chairs that were discarded and needed some repairs. A very Special thanks to Doug Meyer who volunteered his time, supplies and labor working on our chairs! Doug you are SO appreciated! Thank you to Anthony Elliott for donating the curtain rods! Thank you also to all of you who have donated to this fund! We have purchased new classroom tables and window treatments. We are in the process now of installing the new window treatments.

What is the Classroom Transformation Project? Plumblin Ministries, Inc. hosts a variety of classes and seminars. We are working to make our classroom into a more welcoming environment designed to encourage class/seminar participants to feel comfortable sharing their hearts with others.

Our goal is to be able to make many additional changes in the future as funding allows! Our FUNdraising Nights are going into this fund as well as any specific designated donations! To date we have raised just over \$3000.00 of our \$12,000.00 goal. James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

If you would like to partner with us for this project, donations can be sent to:

Plumblin Ministries, Inc.

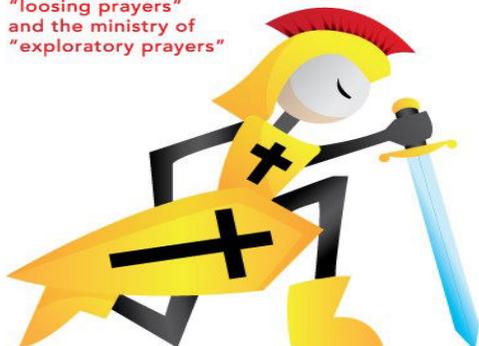
8222 East 103rd Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74133

Stickman's Prayers

Plumblin's newest book, *Stickman's Prayers* has been published and is now available at Plumblin!

stickman's prayers

the everyday practice of
"loosing prayers"
and the ministry of
"exploratory prayers"



Michelle Carpenter
Terry Ewing
Erin Garcia
Margo Hanne
Carolyn Knippers
Carol McNamarra
Sue Merrill

Would you be surprised to know that the "Prayer of Jabez" was a joke?

Would you be happy to know what kind of prayers are appropriate for you to pray for yourself and what kinds are meant for you to pray for others and others for you?

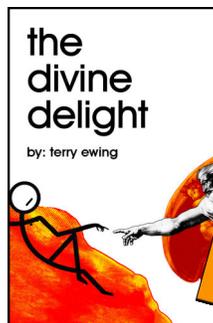
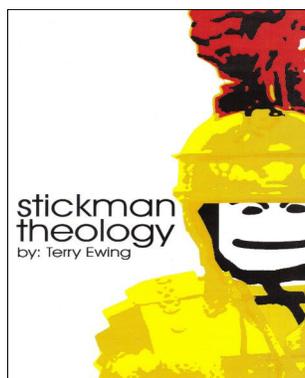
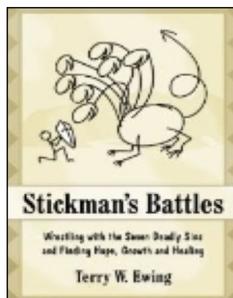
Would you like confidence and freedom to simply enjoy your personal and ministry prayers?

Praying is the most natural thing in the world for Christians; an on going conversation with our best friend, counselor, and confidant; gratitude to our Savior and provider; intercession on behalf of our friends; requests to our Creator. In this regard, a book on prayer may seem presumptuous. When you write a book on Prayer aren't you suggesting that some are praying wrongly, or, at least could be praying better?

That really is not the kind of message we look to promote. So...why the book?

The *Stickman's Prayers* serves two purposes. First, to challenge some ideas that other teaching and preaching concerning prayer has promoted. And, to offer simple encouragements to personal prayer and prayer ministries.

Available at Plumblin for a suggested donation of \$10.00 each



Did you know you can download

Stickman Theology

On your KINDLE?

Did you know that when you shop on Amazon, you could be helping to financially support Plumblin? Through the Amazon smiles program, **Amazon will donate a portion of the sales to Plumblin.** All you need to do is go to smiles.amazon.com, designate Plumblin Ministries, and start shopping! Amazon will then donate 0.5% of the total sales price to Plumblin. Please remember to bookmark that page and you can help us as you shop!

FALL CLASSES



Looking for a change?

Tired of getting the same results?

Come learn a new way!

PLUMBLINE MINISTRIES, INC. has

NEW classes starting soon!

Soul Care - Unit 1: Foundation—Starts September 6th

Cost: www.plumblonline.com for various options

CoDependency—When good behaviors are taken too far or when I need you to be okay for me to be okay, you may need the skills taught in the codependency class.

Starts—Sunday, September 9th—10 weeks—2:00 P.M. to 4:00 p.m.

Cost—\$70.00 plus book

Boundaries—Why do I say yes, when I want to say no? Do I feel controlled by others? Do I feel a need to control others? Get help with questions like these and many more by learning about BOUNDARIES!

Starts Tuesday, September 18th—10 weeks—6:30 to 8:30 p.m

Cost \$70.00 plus book

Safe People—Learn how to identify the nurturing people we all need and want in our lives as well as how to be that person for those in our lives!

Starts Wednesday, September 12th—10 weeks—6:30—8:30 p.m.

Cost \$70.00 plus book.

PLUMBLINE

MINISTRIES

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