

## Foundation for Great Relationships

Core Group Discussion Guide

04-24-2017

### Message Overview:

At some point in our lives, most of us have thought about buying a deserted island in the Pacific somewhere, living by ourselves in order to avoid dealing with a difficult relationship.

Relationships can be hard. Tucked away toward the end of the Bible is a tiny little book titled Philemon. Although this book is only one chapter long, it carries a message of hope to those who want to build healthy relationships. The relational principles contained in this book are helpful for all types of relationships: family relationships, work place relationships, as well as relationships in the church. This 6-week study of Philemon will help us cultivate great relationships, making it less likely we will want to move to that deserted island.

This week's message will focus on the first three verses of this book and will lay the foundation for all great relationships.

### Text:

- Philemon 1:1-3
- Matthew 22:37-40
- Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
- Ephesians 4:4-5

### Questions for Discussion:

1. What were the main points of this morning's message?
2. Were there any parts that spoke to you?
3. There are three relationships we have to understand at a foundational level before we can have truly great relationships: The first is our relationship with God.
  - a. Read story on page 2 of discussion guide:
  - b. How do you think the mother's sacrifice change the son? How do you think it changed the way he related to others, especially others with deformities?
  - c. Can you imagine any factors that would have made this son ungrateful for the sacrifice of his mother?
  - d. Have someone read 2 Corinthians 5:14-15.
  - e. What is it about Christ's sacrifice that "compels" us?
  - f. Which factor do you think most undermines our ability to be "compelled" by the love of God?
    - i. We don't think of ourselves as very sinful
    - ii. We struggle to believe Jesus genuinely likes us
    - iii. We find it difficult to really trust Jesus
    - iv. Other?
4. Can someone describe how a healthy and dynamic relationship with Christ affects all of our other relationships?

Note:

## **A Beautiful Gift of Love – Author Unknown**

“Can I see my baby?” the happy new mother asked.

When the bundle was nestled in her arms and she moved the fold of cloth to look upon his tiny face, she gasped. The doctor turned quickly and looked out the tall hospital window. The baby had been born without ears.

Time proved that the baby’s hearing was perfect. It was only his appearance that was marred. When he rushed home from school one day and flung himself into his mother’s arms, she sighed, knowing that his life was to be a succession of heartbreaks. He blurted out the tragedy. “A boy, a big boy ... called me a freak.”

He grew up, handsome for his misfortune. A favorite with his fellow students, he might have been class president, but for that. He developed a gift, a talent for literature and music. “But you might mingle with other young people,” his mother reproved him, but felt a kindness in her heart.

The boy’s father had a session with the family physician. Could nothing be done? “I believe I could graft on a pair of outer ears, if they could be procured,” the doctor decided.

Whereupon the search began for a person who would make such a sacrifice for a young man. Two years went by. Then, “You are going to the hospital, Son. Mother and I have someone who will donate the ears you need. But it’s a secret,” said the father.

The operation was a brilliant success, and a new person emerged. His talents blossomed into genius, and school and college became a series of triumphs. Later he married and entered the diplomatic service.

“But I must know!” He urged his father, “Who gave so much for me? I could never do enough for him.”

“I do not believe you could,” said the father, “but the agreement was that you are not to know ... not yet.”

The years kept their profound secret, but the day did come ... one of the darkest days that a son must endure. He stood with his father over his mother’s casket.

Slowly, tenderly, the father stretched forth a hand and raised the thick, reddish-brown hair to reveal that the mother had no outer ears.

“Mother said she was glad she never let her hair be cut,” he whispered gently.