

red carpet treatment

introduction

Read this excerpt from a letter written by a 15-year-old girl to her best friend.

“I hate it when I’m wrong. I argue with myself, agonize, and even when I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that I’m wrong, I still find it hard to acknowledge. Can you ever forgive me? Will you?” Have you ever been wrong? Have you ever been upset, hurt or angry, but still knew you were to blame? You were the one who needed to apologize, to ask forgiveness? Today’s devotional from the book of Philemon addresses this situation.

message

1. Philemon was mad at the slave Onesimus because he ran away. In those days, the penalty for being a runaway slave was death. Evidently, Philemon was a solid Christian man, respected in his community and the head of his household. And yet, like you and me, he still had to deal with the emotion of anger.
2. The slave walked into a large cosmopolitan city. Guess who he bumped into? The apostle Paul. Paul led Onesimus to Christ and was now appealing, through letter, asking Philemon to forgive him. Paul’s right to ask Philemon to forgive Onesimus was based on—
 - Mutual respect and love (Philemon 9).
 - The fact that Paul was the older of the two (Philemon 9).
 - Paul’s leading Philemon to Christ (Philemon 10).
 - Onesimus’ new “position” as a Christian, a slave to Christ (Philemon 16).
3. Paul asked Philemon to welcome Onesimus home in the same way he would welcome Paul (Philemon 17). You know what that means? That means that Paul would receive the “red carpet” treatment, a celebration reception worth remembering. Paul asked Philemon to give Onesimus the same kind of welcome.
4. Remember the letter that was read at the beginning of the devotional? Think back to the last time you had to forgive someone. It wasn’t easy, was it? Have you ever “half-forgiven” someone—forgiving the person, but choosing never to talk to him/her again? The words of the letter were honest. We must choose whether to forgive or to keep being angry.

challenge

In the everyday routine of life, we are going to have difference of opinions and relational conflicts. How we react in these times is our choice. Is there someone in your life today that needs the “red carpet” treatment of forgiveness? If so, consider the book of Philemon as a good model and source of encouragement.

