Character Counts: Building a Life That Pleases God
Reinstatement of a Runaway
Philemon

🔑 The Heart of the Matter

Philemon is the shortest and most personal letter we have from the pen of Paul the apostle. Grasping its implications rests upon an understanding of the life of a slave in the first century, who was nothing more than a piece of property in the hands of his or her master. Paul addressed Philemon, a slave owner, on behalf of Onesimus, Philemon's former slave. Onesimus had escaped from Philemon and fled to Rome. While there he came to know Christ as Savior under the influence of Paul. This letter requested that Philemon reinstate his runaway slave and accept him back in a spirit of forgiveness.

🧭 Discovering the Way

1. Introduction (Philemon 1–3)
Paul, a prisoner in Rome, wrote a letter to his friend Philemon.

2. Commendation (Philemon 4–7)
Philemon's faith and love comforted and encouraged Paul, who prayed that Philemon might be effective in living out his faith.

3. Intercession (Philemon 8–17)
Paul appealed to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus, urging Philemon to welcome him back as a brother in Christ.

4. Obligation (Philemon 18–22)
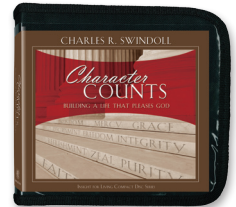Both Paul and Philemon were obligated to cover debts for one another.
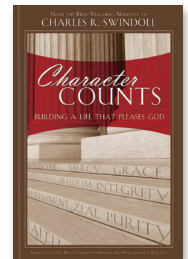
➡️ Starting Your Journey

As we read this first-century chronicle of a runaway slave returned to the fold, we see five comparisons in the relationship between God and His people: *Every Christian was once a spiritual fugitive*; *our guilt was great and the penalty was severe*; *grace allowed the right of appeal*; *Christ said, "Charge that to my a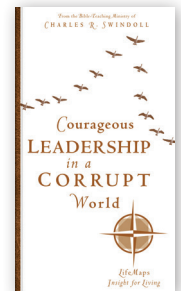ccount"*; and *our master has now accepted us back*.