



MINISTERS OF RECONCILIATION

Here's a story. When my wife and I were still new at dating one another, we were enjoying our first Christmas together with her family. She was 18 and I was 20. They had their traditions and I was learning all about them. At the time, my family life was a little messy so being a part of her family gathering meant more to me than she knew. While we were doing the traditional handing out gifts on Christmas Eve, I received one from her mom and dad. It was a pretty big box. I opened it and there was a new pair of Ostrich skin boots. I was taken aback because I knew they were expensive. I said one too many times that they shouldn't have done that. It cost too much. Eventually, her mom said, looking a little irritated, "Do you not want them?" I caught on quickly that I went overboard and assured her how grateful I was. Why did I protest so much? I guess because it was too lavish in my mind and I didn't think I deserved it. I wasn't one of the family. I was just dating Cindy. That was the first taste I would get of how generous her parents were and still are. That's how so many people react to God and what he has done.

If you have ever received something from someone that felt over the top, extravagant, or too much, how did you react and why?

TALK ABOUT IT

[Read 2 Cor. 5:14-15.](#)

Russ described reconciliation as "a plea based on a truth": God has already made a way through Jesus, so we are invited to respond.

How does knowing God took the first step affect your willingness to approach him?

Why might someone believe that God welcomes other people but struggle to believe that God welcomes them?

How can a Christian who has followed Jesus for years experience that same struggle?

[Read 2 Cor. 5:17-21.](#)

In your experience, what is at the heart of strained or broken relationships?

APPLY IT

“Broken soundtracks” are repetitive thoughts that hold us back.

What spiritual soundtracks have you experienced—such as “God could never use me” or “I’ll never change”? Share only what you feel comfortable sharing.

What would it look like for you to accept and show that you are a new creation because of Jesus?

Where do you still let the old crowd out the new?

Russ said to be like Christ, we must change our thoughts to change our direction.

How is your thinking holding you back from fully embracing Jesus’ call to be like him?

PRAY

We need to get our heads and hearts right and in sync to embrace Jesus’ calling to follow him. Pray for giving us permission to retire our broken soundtracks about God and replace them with something true which is God has already reached out to us, and we can believe he is FOR us.