

Reconciliation

Dealing with Sin in the Church - Week Four
Christ the King Adult Education
March 10, 2019

Reconciliation Defined

- Reconciliation is the ultimate goal. Throughout the New Testament we're urged to live in peace with one another (Matthew 5:21-24).

“Reconciliation is restoring trust in a relationship in which trust has been damaged.”

- Everett L. Worthington Jr., *Forgiving and Reconciling*

- In other words, it is the process of rebuilding trust and learning to live in peace after a sin has been committed.

God of Peace

1. Peace is part of God's character, for he is frequently referred to as "the God of peace" (see Rom. 15:33; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; Heb. 13:20; cf. Judg. 6:24).
2. Peace is one of the great blessings that God gives to those who follow him (see Lev. 26:6; Num. 6:24-26; Judg. 5:31; Ps. 29:11; 119:165; Prov. 16:7; Micah 4:1-4; Gal. 6:16).
3. God repeatedly commands his people to seek and pursue peace (see Ps. 34:14; Jer. 29:7; Rom. 14:19; 1 Cor. 7:15; 2 Cor. 13:11; Col. 3:15; 1 Thess. 5:13; Heb. 12:14). He also promises to bless those who do so (see Ps. 37:37; Prov. 12:20; Matt. 5:9; James 3:18).

God of Peace

4. God describes his covenant with his people in terms of peace (Num. 25:12; Isa. 54:10; Ezek. 34:25; 37:26; Mal. 2:5).

5. God taught his people to use the word peace (Hebrew *shalom* and Greek *eirene*) as a standard form of greeting (Judg. 6:23; 1 Sam. 16:5; Luke 24:36) and parting (1 Sam. 1:17; 2 Kings 5:19; Luke 7:50; 8:48). Nearly all of the New Testament Epistles either begin or end with a prayer for peace (Rom. 1:7; 15:13; Gal. 1:3; 2 Thess. 3:16).

- Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker*

Repentance, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation

- It is important to be clear about the relationship between reconciliation and repentance/forgiveness.
 - On the one hand, reconciliation depends on repentance and forgiveness
 - But at the same time, reconciliation is more than repentance and forgiveness
- The evidence of genuine forgiveness is personal freedom from a vindictive or vengeful response, but not always an automatic restoration of relationship. (Romans 12:17-21)

Hope for Reconciliation

- The spirit enables peace unlike that of the world (John 14:25-31)
- New Creation (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)

“Neither the nature of any created thing, ... nor the weakness of the flesh, can prevail against the will of God. For God is not subject to created things, but created things to God; and all things yield obedience to his will.”

- Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*

- Central to the gospel (Ephesians 2:13-16)

Practical Steps in Reconciliation

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3. **Humility, prayerfulness, and a refusal of self-righteousness on the part of the offended party.** Jesus taught his disciples to pray for those who mistreat them (Luke 6:28). It is amazing how our attitude toward another person can change when we pray for him. Pray also for strength to follow through with reconciliation (Hebrews 4:16).

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4. **Third-party accountability.** More significant issues may require some kind of third party accountability. It should be a person or organization that both parties trust. They can keep you accountable to the ground rules, and can be a sounding board for whether each is acting fairly. Some forms of accountability are:

- a. **Friends.** Sometimes inviting some mutually-trusted friends more deeply into your relationship can help. However, it may be a significant burden on the friendship, so this may not always be appropriate.
- b. **Pastoral counseling.** Since you're dealing with issues of sin, it may be wise to seek the prayer and counsel of pastors. Pastors and the church elders may also provide a form of accountability.
- c. **Professional counseling (individual and couples).** The more persistent the pattern or damaging to the relationship the more necessary some form of professional counseling.

Already but not Yet

Reconciliation may seem daunting, but we are confident that God has reconciled us to himself and to one another. Ultimately, he will bring in a complete reconciliation!

It may be incomplete for a time. There may be some circumstances when reconciliation cannot even begin (when one party will not repent or forgive), or some that may not every be completely fulfilled this side of eternity due to the depth of the hurt.

Yet, the full redemption of Christ will bring in a full reconciliation within God's people. Reconciliation is a process that God uses – perhaps more clearly than any other – to makes us ready for glory.