

RECONCILIATION

I read an article by Charles Hauss this week from a website called “BeyondIntractability.org” which bills itself as “a free knowledge base on more constructive approaches to destructive conflict.” Here are a few of the things he says ...

In the last few years, reconciliation has become one of the “hottest” topics in the increasingly “hot” field of conflict resolution. It refers to a large number of activities that help turn the temporary peace of an agreement which ends the fighting into a lasting end to the conflict itself.

Reconciliation is a rather new concept in the new field of conflict resolution. As is the case with any new concept, there is no standard definition that all scholars and practitioners rely on. However, almost everyone acknowledges that it includes at least four critical components identified by John Paul Lederach -- truth, justice, mercy, and peace.

Reconciliation matters because the consequences of not reconciling can be enormous. In Fen Osler Hampson's terms, too many peace agreements are “orphaned.” That is, the parties reach an agreement that stops the fighting but does little to take the parties toward what Kenneth Boulding called stable peace, which can only occur when the issues that gave rise to the conflict in the first place are addressed to the satisfaction of all.

At the most basic level, reconciliation is all about individuals. It cannot be forced on people. They have to decide on their own whether to forgive and reconcile with their one-time adversaries.

Even though reconciliation mostly involves people talking to each other, it is not easy to achieve. Rather it is among the most difficult things people are ever called on to do emotionally. Victims have to forgive oppressors. The perpetrators of crimes against humanity have to admit their guilt and, with it, their arrogance.

Reconciliation is NOT a new concept to Christians – in fact, although we don’t use the term as much as we use words like grace, forgiveness, mercy and love, we would not even have salvation without reconciliation! Jesus gives us one side of the reconciliation process in this passage ...

Matthew 5:23-24 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

There it is – even though you have done nothing wrong, you inconvenience yourself and go to the perpetrator with an offer of a restored relationship!

Romans 5:8-10 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

That is the “forgiveness side” of reconciliation, but it is like one side of a handshake – you can’t have a handshake without TWO parties!

Here is the part that most people miss, certainly all the people who believe that God is so “nice” that He will let us all into Heaven regardless of what we do! The “other side” of the reconciliation process involves a change in the person who is being forgiven, so that relationship can be restored!

John 3:16-18 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Forgiveness does not establish relationship, only reconciliation does - God forgave the whole world, but we still have to choose to be reconciled!

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath **reconciled** us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of **reconciliation**; To wit, that God was in Christ, **reconciling** the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of **reconciliation**. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye **reconciled** to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

In the Bible, men are invited to be “reconciled” to God; that is, they must change their attitude and accept the provision God has made.

NOT ONCE IS GOD SAID TO BE “RECONCILED” TO US – IT WAS WE WHO NEEDED TO BE “RECONCILED” TO GOD!

HOW DID GOD DO THIS? BY TAKING THE PUNISHMENT HIMSELF!

Colossians 1:19-22 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight:

Ephesians 2:14-18 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Every spiritual truth has a natural outgrowth in our everyday lives ...

- **It only takes ONE person to forgive, but the relationship cannot be restored until TWO people choose to be reconciled.**
- **Forgiveness depends on ME, but reconciliation depends on US.**

Well that's good then, Pastor ... I can "forgive" them and never speak to them again, never restore the relationship. How would you feel if God had taken that attitude toward you? He not only forgave us, but he absorbed the punishment that we should have received into Himself (He became sin!).
GOD PROVIDED, PAID FOR, AND INITIATED RECONCILIATION!

Colossians 3:13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

Ephesians 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

**WHO DO YOU NEED TO FORGIVE TODAY?
(THAT HAPPENS WITHIN YOU)**

**WHO DO YOU NEED TO BE RECONCILED TO TODAY?
GOD? SOMEONE ELSE?**

**WHO HAS OFFERED YOU RECONCILIATION AND YOU'VE REFUSED?
GOD? SOMEONE ELSE?**

**RECONCILIATION DOESN'T HAPPEN "WITHIN YOU" – IT HAPPENS
"BETWEEN" YOU AND SOMEONE ELSE!**