

## WEEK OF OCTOBER 15



DAY  
1

## RECONCILIATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The primary passage in the New Testament about reconciliation is 2 Corinthians 5:11-21. Read this passage first.

Reconciliation is a uniquely New Testament concept, at least as it is described by the Apostle Paul. Jesus' death on the cross is the most crucial and important foundation for all reconciliation.

The need for reconciliation is fundamentally because of sin in our hearts and in the world. That is the first truth – that we are not reconciled with God and with others because of sin.

This can and should lead to an acknowledgement that we are wrong (confession) and repentance (turning from sin). All of this is in response to the Holy Spirit stirring in our hearts and minds that our relationships are broken and need repair.

How are these relationships repaired, resulting in this reconciliation? By Jesus sacrificing himself for our sins. It is his death and resurrection that gives us hope, and the possibility of reconciliation with God and with others.

As a consequence of being reconciled to God we are called to become reconcilers:

*He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. (2 Cor. 5:20)*

The message of the Kingdom of God is that God is reconciling himself to the world through Jesus Christ. And that is the message we are called to live and proclaim every day. The more we embrace, understand, and live out this reconciliation with God the more we are his messengers to a world desperate for whole relationships.

DAY  
2

## THE NEED FOR FORGIVENESS

Today I really messed up. Perhaps you did too. My mistake wasn't huge, but it did cause some hurt on the part of someone that I really love. When I realized my mistake, it was too late to change anything. The hurt had been done. And I found myself apologizing and trying to make things right. I was really, really hoping that person would forgive me.

Have you hurt someone else and had to ask their forgiveness? Or have you ever struggled to forgive someone who deeply hurt you? Forgiveness is a tricky, messy, sticky matter.

As Christians, we have the perfect model of forgiveness. We don't have to pretend with God because he knows us well, even better than we know ourselves! Psalm 139:23-24 (MSG) says:

*Investigate my life, O God,  
find out everything about me;  
Cross-examine and test me,  
get a clear picture of what I'm about;  
See for yourself whether I've done anything wrong—*

*then guide me on the road to eternal life.*

But when God examines us, he also freely offers forgiveness. Micah 7:18-19 says:

*Who is a God like you,  
who pardons sin and forgives the transgression  
of the remnant of his inheritance?  
You do not stay angry forever  
but delight to show mercy.  
You will again have compassion on us;  
you will tread our sins underfoot  
and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.*

When we ask God for forgiveness, he forgives. What an incredible model for our own lives! God delights in showing mercy. May we be people who do the same.

DAY  
3

## JUSTIFICATION

Begin by reading Titus 3:3-8; Romans 3:23-25, 5:1-2, 10:9-11.

One of the most powerful themes that shaped the Protestant Reformation in the 1500s was the theme of justification by grace through faith. We are sinners who have no excuse. We cannot atone (make payment) for our own sin. We cannot satisfy the demands of the law for obedience and conformity to the law (i.e., God's will for our lives). We are not righteous or just on our own. We are unrighteous and often unjust (and unloving, unforgiving, uncooperative), and in Paul's words, we actually invent ways of doing evil. You can read the sad story in Romans 1:18-3:20).

Therefore, we need God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. We need God to justify us when we are unjustifiable. We need God to make a way for us who have no excuses and no options. We need God to pay the penalty and take all the repercussions for our sins. We need God to declare us righteous (innocent, blameworthy, clean) when we are far from that.

All this is included in the great theological theme of justification by grace through faith. God forgives us, accepts us, reconciles us, redeems us, and brings us into his family because Jesus took the penalty for our unrighteousness on the cross. He paid the price, he suffered the just punishment, and we were declared righteous.

As you can probably tell, this is a big, big part of our salvation. For many of the Reformers it was the central act of God – to justify us by grace through faith.

In God's eyes, you are righteous, innocent, clean, free, just, loving, merciful, and so much more. God declares these things to be true about you. And the ongoing life as a Christian is God making you what he declares you to be. This belief changed all of Christian history. Much of Romans is Paul explaining this belief and all its implications. It is a profound and beautiful Word of Life.

DAY  
4

## RECONCILED RELATIONSHIPS

Bishop Desmond Tutu was the chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. For many years, South Africans experienced apartheid, a system of racial segregation. Despite being the minority, whites dominated economically, politically, and socially. After the end of apartheid, Nelson Mandela was concerned about the rocky transition to true democracy. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission offered people amnesty from their crimes if they would fully and truthfully admit to them. It also gave these people the opportunity to ask for forgiveness from their victims.

Reflecting on the work of forgiveness, Bishop Tutu wrote, "Forgiving and being reconciled to our enemies or our loved ones is not about pretending that things are other than they are. It is not about patting one another on the back and turning a blind eye to the wrong. True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the pain, the hurt, the truth. It could even sometimes make things worse. It is a risky undertaking, but in the end it is worthwhile, because in the end only an honest confrontation with reality can bring real healing. Superficial reconciliation can bring only superficial healing."

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a powerful example of the beauty that comes from restoring relationships. A lot of ugly things were exposed, but once they were out, relationships were made right.

In our lives, we have experienced the ultimate act of reconciliation through the cross. Romans 5:10 says, "For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!" We, who have been reconciled, then become agents of reconciliation in our world.

## ***PERSONAL REFLECTION & LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION***

*You can always pick any idea from the sermon or the daily readings and biblical passages and talk about those ideas. A good format is to have each LifeGroup member share one idea that was most powerful for them.*

**Day One:** Begin by reading 2 Corinthians 5:18-21. What do you think the ministry of reconciliation means? What has this looked like in your life? Have you ever experienced reconciliation? Have you ever experienced a relationship being restored?

**Day Two:** How often do you ask others for forgiveness? Who do you need to ask for forgiveness?

**Day Three:** What do you think about the word justification? How have you experienced this idea in your own life?

**Day Four:** Have you ever seen a relationship restored? What was that like? What was necessary for that to take place? Is there a relationship in your life that you would like to be restored? What do you think God is asking of you?