# Reconciliation

"First be **reconciled** to your brother, and then come and offer your gift..." Matt 5:24

God commands us to *release forgiveness* to others ...so we choose to forgive as God forgave us. God commands us to *seek reconciliation* with an offended brother... but what does it mean and how do we do it?

"if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:23-24)

# What does the Bible say about reconciliation? Mankind reconciled to God

God send Jesus to enable us to be reconciled back to Himself. The action by one (God) enables the changed relationship from an enemy to a friend (mankind).

"that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Cor. 5:19)

God goes 100% of the way toward us to bring this about – because only He could.

# Reconciliation within the spiritual family

"if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you... First be reconciled to your brother" (Matt. 5:23)

Reconciliation is needed because there is mutual hostility, a measure of fault exists with both sides, and reconciliation requires mutual concession and acknowledgement of failure.

# How do we respond to the world around us?

"If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." Romans 12:18

If the world around us will not reconcile with God, then reconciliation with us will be partial at best. Regardless, God calls us to live at peace with our world, and to clearly call them to reconciliation with God.



### Partial reconciliation – Jacob and Esau

Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing... and



Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob." Gen. 27:41

"But Esau ran to meet him [Jacob] and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him,

and they wept." Gen. 33:4

Jacob was a scoundrel. He ripped off his brother and had to flee for his own safety. Esau was a proud, careless, and self-focused man. Reconciliation happened because both men acknowledged their failures and willingly sought to mend the broken relationship.

However, the reconciliation was not complete. Esau refused to come under Jacob to receive the covenant blessing given through Abraham. So they lived separate lives and walked separate destinies. In the end, Esau and Jacob (and their descendants) all suffered and missed great blessings.

# Reconciliation of brothers – Joseph and family

Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits... and we will see what will become of his dreams." (Gen. 37:20) "And Joseph remembered the dreams that he had dreamed of them..." Gen. 42:9

"So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.... And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him." (Gen. 45:4,15)

Joseph was a talented, proud, and obnoxious brother. His brothers were vindictive, heartless, and destructive people. The family was a mess.

Joseph had to reconcile – because God had a destiny for him and the family. The brothers had to reconcile – and willingly come under Joseph's authority. They all chose to humble themselves and obey, and God released His destiny for the family and for Israel as a nation.

# **Practicing Reconciliation**

# 1. Toward everyone – release forgiveness.

Forgiveness must come first. Walk through the steps of forgiveness for all people and situations that you have faced (see previous handout). Reconciliation is not possible without this step.

# 2. Toward the world around us – seek peace.

Be a people who seek peace, are peace makers, declare God's peace, and "as much as lies within us, live peaceably" with our world.

# 3. Toward our spiritual family...

### • Remember... God commands it.

Reconciliation is a command of God that we must obey. Commit ourselves to obedience.

# • Prepare to listen.

They feel strongly that we did things to them. Be willing to listen and acknowledge what we did.

# • Prepare to speak/listen with honesty.

Honest communication is critical. It is painful to give and painful to listen to, but God calls us to "speak the truth in love" to one another.

# • Prepare to release grace.

Grace...Releasing what people need – even when they may not deserve it.

#### Go as far as people are willing to go.

You may feel, they have not fully dealt with what they have done... go as far as they are willing.

#### Pray.

Pray for complete reconciliation. It may take time just as it did for Joseph.

# 4. When we need help

 Spiritual leaders need to lead, guide and protect people through this process. They cannot take one individual's position over the other.  Mature leaders, grounded in the Word of God, and sensitive to the Spirit must step forward in these situations.

# 5. Who starts the Reconciliation process?

- Either party can start the process. God is not restricted to any one person willing to start the process.
- However, generally, it will be most successful when the person with the greatest power or authority seeks reconciliation. This means pastors, elders, fathers, parents, or other leaders need to step up.

# 6. Reconciliation is a process

It often takes time. Not everyone is willing to humble their hearts, listen, acknowledge, and own their part.

- Trust is earned.
  - -- Be prepared to have to earn lost trust.
- Trust means taking a risk.
  - -- If we demand a risk-free process, we will never get to biblical reconciliation.
- God is "Jehovah Rapha" the healing God. Healing is ultimately a gift from God to both parties.

# **Relational Boundaries**

**Ensuring Integrity in relationships** 

"Good fences make good neighbours..."

**Forgive...** even if others choose not to forgive. **Seek reconciliation...** even if others refuse to acknowledge the need or choose to live with offence.

So **how do we set boundaries** in our lives and relationships so that others cannot **wound** us or **re-wound** us unnecessarily?

The Bible gives us some clear instruction on how to do this.

#### God's Command -

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and light to my path" Psalm 119:105 "My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching... For the commandment s a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life."

Proverbs 6:20,23

Boundaries are not defined by us as individuals or by any philosophical ideas. Instead, they come from God Himself as revealed by the Word of God. He calls us to use them for our personal and inter-personal standards of conduct.

When these standards are violated, then we need to release/receive forgiveness and seek reconciliation. When they are violated carelessly or deliberately, then we need to respond as God's word instructs.

#### When brothers and sisters ignore boundaries

"13 As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good. 14 If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. 15 Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother." 2 Thessalonians 3:13-15

"Good fences

make good neighbours"

Some people violate boundaries – not from evil intent, but because they are immature and careless with obedience to God's word. It

wounds, re-wounds, and continues to cause problems. Paul says to set additional boundaries...

- -- warn them.
- -- Limit our contact with them.
- -- love them and seek God's blessing for them. Remember... they are family!

# When people deliberately/sinfully cross boundaries... set tighter boundaries

"10 As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him,

<sup>11</sup> knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned." Titus 3:10-11

These people are different. They cross boundaries deliberately. Paul tells Titus (and all spiritual leaders) to watch out for them and protect the Church from these people. Warn them. Protect those being attacked. Remove these evil people from fellowship.

# "Leave them alone..." (even greater boundaries)

<sup>12</sup> Then the disciples came and said to Him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?"

<sup>13</sup> He answered, "Every plant that My heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. <sup>14</sup> Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit." Matthew 15:12-14

The Pharisees – the corrupt spiritual leaders – were abusing and mistreating God's people with teachings that were not from the Word of God. Following them and their teaching leads you into bad places. Leave them alone. Generally, they will be leaders who...

- Lack spiritual discernment and understanding.
- Are offended by corrective teaching.
- Have hidden sin, bondages, and control issues.
- Cling to leadership as their right/calling.

# Special case... When we have no choice

<sup>2</sup> "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, <sup>3</sup> so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. Matthew 23:2-3

"We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." <sup>29</sup> But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men." Acts 5:28-29

Some situations exist where we have no way out from under leaders who oppress and violate boundaries. When they speak God's word truthfully – we follow. Sometimes, we live in situations where the rules protect violators – and we are forced to live under those conditions. Like Jesus we may suffer, but choose to demonstrate love, forgiveness, grace and shine the light of Jesus to a broken world.