

The Forgotten Ministry – Reconciliation

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here!

18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

20 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. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Ephesians 2:14-18

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.

The Various Ministries in the Church:

- The five-fold ministries: Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds, Teachers.
- Practical ministries: Feeding, Hospitality, Orphan Care etc.
- Other ministries: Music, Special Ministries etc.

You get to choose which ministry you want to be involved in – based on your skills and preferences.

The Missing Ministry:

- "God **gave us** the ministry of reconciliation" (v. 18b).
- That's the ministry of everyone who is a believer
- That's the missing ministry
- It is not optional, it is part of the job description of anyone who is "a new creation"
- Other ministries are optional and depend on your personal gifts and preferences

Etymology of 'Reconciliation'

- Greek: root word *katallasso* meaning restoration to favour.
- Latin: prefix re- "back" + conciliare "bring together."
- My definition: "re-link" after a "de-linking" situation.

WHY IS THIS MINISTRY MISSING IF IT IS SO POSITIVE AND BEAUTIFUL?

1. **It's easier to remain divided.** In real life it's cheaper to build a wall than to build a bridge.
 - **Reconciliation requires the cross**, which many of us professing Christians are not willing to bear. I feel compassion for those of you who have finished the ExCom having strengthened your wall of hostility.
 - **Reconciliation requires courage**, it is for the brave. It's easier to be a coward and attack, judge, vent, or bleed on others.
 - **Reconciliation requires maturity**, and many of us are happy to grow old and die without becoming mature... Who are our reconcilers today? Maturity means looking at the one who

disagrees with you and discerning what is really behind their disagreeing. Is it their pain, their fear, their past, their present experiences. People often don't come out and expose their inner pain, and some do not even admit their inner pain to themselves. You have to discern it, and that takes stillness and spiritual maturity.

- **Reconciliation involves loss** – but I want to assure you – it is perceived loss. Yes, it may hurt to let go of your position – but the moment you let go of it for the sake of reconciliation – you will realize that you have gained freedom. It's indeed a long walk to freedom for some of us. And sadly, some of us will never access this freedom in our lifetimes.
- **Reconciliation feels foolish.** “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.” Be a fool for Christ.

HOW TO BE A RECONCILER ACCORDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

Step 1: Be reconciled with God. *“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself.”*

You cannot reconcile with others when you have not received or experienced God's amazing and undeserved reconciliation yourself. God's reconciliation is not a cheap reconciliation, it is highly valuable and was highly expensive for God.

When God reconciled himself with us, we were undeserving, unmeriting, unworthy.

Step 2: Be reconciled with yourself. *“If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come.”*

Face your regrets, your shame, your guilt, your fears, your weaknesses. These cause you be divided within yourself. If God can forgive you and reconcile with you, then you ought to forgive yourself. Forgive your past. If you do not forgive yourself, you will be the type of person that is always looking for a scapegoat in others. “The problem with this church... with so-and-so...” is a sign that you focus too much on the problems of others while possibly hiding from facing “the problem with yourself.”

Step 3: Be reconciled with others. *“Regard no one from a worldly point of view” (v. 16).*

A challenge to go against the grain, against natural inclinations and instincts...

Worldly point of view sees only the outward appearance of another – the tip of the iceberg. But there's more to a person than the tip of the iceberg that they show you.

- If you can't reconcile with someone because they took something from you, find healing, otherwise that person owns your inner life, your emotions, your thinking time. Without reconciliation you are CAPTURED.
- Grudge holding gives us control over the relationship. Reconciliation means you relinquish control and start a new relationship path. Don't be afraid to relinquish control.
- Watch your tongue. Don't be so opinionated. The things you have said and declared will now imprison you because reconciliation with the other side would contradict the declarations you made.
- The fear of being hurt or rejected can prevent you from reconciliation. Leave the fears to God and do your job, which is to seek reconciliation.

After all, our UPCS vision statement says that we are: “A reconciled community of believers...”

Step 4: Reconcile others. *“Gave us the ministry of reconciliation.” “Committed to us the message of reconciliation.” “We are therefore Christ's ambassadors,”* – for reconciliation. Note the context for this “ambassadors” verse that we preach a lot about – the context and theme for which we are to be

ambassadors is for the ministry of reconciliation! Therefore you are an ambassador of Christ IF you are practising the ministry of reconciliation.

That's the forgotten ministry of reconciliation. To bring about reconciliation between people. Instead, many of us enjoy watching people fighting; adding fuel to the fire of the conflict; being entertained by the conflict; taking advantage of people's conflicts; benefitting from people's conflicts.

Did you know that deep inside, people want to be reconciled but have no one to facilitate it, encourage it or enable it. They need a catalyst. They need a facilitator. They need a go-between. God is calling you to be that reconciler that the world is looking for and needs. Initiate reconciliation, create reconciliation, and promote reconciliation.

It is the missing ministry.

The Ishmaels and Isaacs among us need reconciliation. The Jacobs and Esaus among us need reconciliation. The ideologically conservative and liberal among us need reconciliation. The haves and the have-nots need reconciliation. God *"made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility."*

"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God."

At the Lord's Supper remember that Jesus was broken so that we could be reconciled.

CONCLUSION

God is already forcing us as a church to build bridges...

- I see God forcing us into situations of reconciliation where it's either reconciliation or it's a stalemate...
- DA and ANC in government – it's either reconciliation or ...
- Reconciliation in the UPCS leadership...
- Reconciliation in decision-making...

Reconciliation requires supernatural power – only people with supernatural power can do it.

Dunamis – power. The power to build bridges not walls.

Warning: if you are a bridge, the occupational hazard is that you will get trampled from both sides.

But be comforted: when God gives you a ministry, he also gives you the anointing, to be able to do it. It cannot be done in your own strength.

Reconciliation with others is the right atmosphere or conditions for God to send us a revival.