

UPPER ROOM BIBLE STUDY CLASS

“Reconciliation: God’s Bridge to Us; Our Bridge to Each Other”

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Winter, 2021

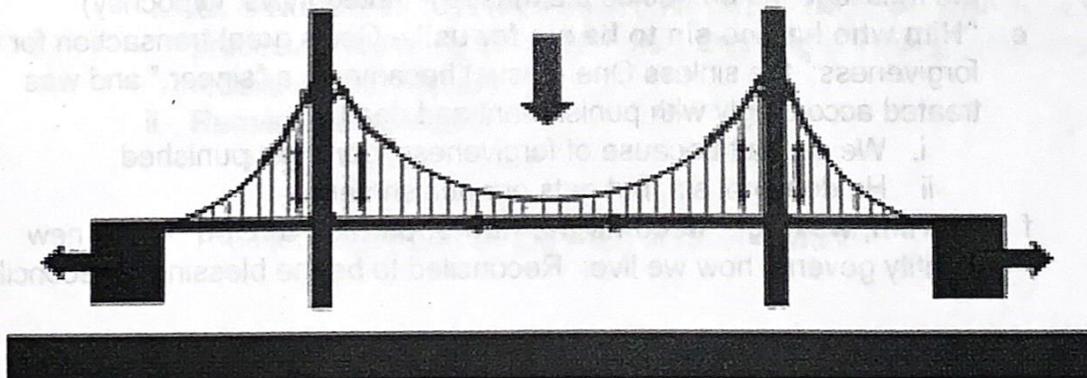
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Session 1: Why Reconcile?

1. Differences are inevitable among sinners. So what else is new? This should be no surprise to anyone, especially Christians! In today’s world, it seems that everywhere we look, someone is offended, hurt, angry, or misunderstood by disagreement with someone else. It’s true in individual relationships, in families, in churches and businesses; and in the society. The level of conflict escalates easily, as people react instead of respond; resent instead of forgive; justify instead of make amends, and seek retribution instead of seeking mutual good.
2. Is there any solution? Is there any way for Christians to influence a better way – to be part of a solution instead of adding to the problem? That’s the focus of our series on “reconciliation.” Reconciliation will be defined as the bridging of separated parties in the tension of repentance, forgiveness, and the restoration of trust. The reconciler is the one who facilitates the bridging, either by initiating his/her own need for reconciliation and/or helping others reconcile. Each side often feels it is justified in its position, and will attempt to pull others into agreeing with it by labeling the other as wrong, sinful, ungodly, etc.
3. The graphic below illustrates the “bridging” roles the reconciler will manage:

Suspension Bridges

- Works by Tension and Compression



4. The reconciler recognizes that the tension is essential to the bridge's life, but it must be balanced. Too much pull in any one direction will topple the bridge. Too little pull will render it instable. If the stanchions of the bridge are not firmly secured into the bedrock, the bridge will sway in the current and eventually fail. The goal of the process of reconciliation, then, is to maintain the integrity of the bridge, so that the two sides can remain connected and be of use to each other and the world.
5. The starting point, for a Christian, is always God – who in His love for the world – sought to solve our need for, but our inability to achieve on our own, reconciliation with Himself. As God's grace in Christ makes reconciliation with God possible, that same sufficient grace feeds our reconciliation with other people. It is an inside-out flow. It is also an intersectional flow from one entity to another.

6. **2 Corinthians 5:17-21.**

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:^[a] 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^[b] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- a. "the old is gone, the new is here!" – out of the gift of Baptism comes a "new creation," a new self – born again (John 3) – with a heart of repentance and faith: committed to ministry.
- b. "All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ" – the totality of God's love for sinners gives new birth, and the gift of reconciliation with God, through Christ.
- c. "gave us the ministry of reconciliation" – a ministry of reconciliation with God, is the believer's to share and exercise in his/her relationships. As God has reconciled Himself to us, we are to reconcile with each other.
- d. "He (God) has committed to us the message...we are Christ's ambassadors" – the ambassador not only shares the message; he lives the message; he embodies the message (integrity vs. hypocrisy).
- e. "Him who had no sin to be sin for us" – God's great transaction for our forgiveness: the sinless One (Jesus) became as a "sinner," and was treated accordingly with punishment and death.
 - i. We sin, but because of forgiveness, don't get punished.
 - ii. He does not sin, but gets our punishment.
- f. "in Him, we might become the righteousness of God" – Our new identity governs how we live: Reconciled to be the blessing of reconcilers!

7. What is the difference between “forgiveness,” “reconciliation,” and “trust?”

a. Reconciliation = $\frac{\text{Forgiveness}}{\text{Sin(s)}} \times \text{Trust}$

- i. To offer or receive forgiveness is to release the burden, stopping holding the sin against the other, to abolish the debt, and to unbind the soul, both privately in one’s heart and/or publicly.
- ii. **Psalm 130:4.** *But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.*
- iii. **Jeremiah 31:34.** *For I will forgive their wickedness, and will remember their sins no more.”*
- iv. **Matthew 18:35.** *“This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”*

b. To trust is to have trustworthy confidence that we’re in this together, aligned, and mutually reliable working toward the same goals.

- i. **Exodus 18:21.** *But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.*
- ii. **Proverbs 12:22.** *The LORD detests lying lips, but He delights in people who are trustworthy.*
- iii. **Luke 19:17.** *‘Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’*
- iv. Trust is earned through “trustworthy” behavior: keeping promises, fulfilling responsibilities, honesty and integrity, and paying attention to the small things, when no one is looking.
- v. There are two kinds of trust:
 1. Reliability Trust
 2. Heart Trust

c. To pursue reconciliation is to work toward the bringing together of the two parties, in forgiveness, restoring the working trust between them.

- i. As SIN separates us from each other, RECONCILIATION (R) is the process of restoring the connection; forgiving (F) the sin (S); and rebuilding the trust (T)
- ii. Remember the Math!
 1. $R = \frac{F}{S} \times T$
- iii. The Reconciler guides the work of reconciliation