

The Pursuit of Reconciliation

The enemy of God wants the people of God to handle conflict like this: Becoming hateful, bitter, hurtful, angry, unwilling to change, unwilling to apologize, unwilling to forgive, and unwilling to make peace.

He will throw conflict in our direction, but how should we handle it? When conflict comes,

CHRISTIANS PURSUE RECONCILIATION.

What does reconcile mean? The root of the word means to have a total change. To change completely.

What exactly is changing? the relationship between two people. To reconcile means to have a change in relationship from hostility to peace. Reconcile means enemies become friends.

But you may be asking today, what if I am not motivated? What if I don't want to pursue reconciliation?

Let me offer you 5 motivations to reconcile.

Motivation #1 - Reconciliation refreshes the hearts of spiritual mentors. **v.20**

20 Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.

I want you to think of someone who is a Christian spiritual mentor to you. How would you like for that person to say about you, “he or she refreshes my heart!”?

The word refresh carries the idea of rest from work - from labor. We can be sure Paul was laboring hard in prayer over this situation and for both of these men. If they reconciled, Paul would find rest from that labor.

Motivation #2 - Reconciliation is the expected standard of Christian conduct. **v.21**

21 Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

If Paul was writing to you, appealing to you on behalf of someone who’s hurt you, and asking you to forgive that person, would Paul include this sentence in that letter to you?

Reconciliation is the expected standard of Christian conduct, but I think this could expand into the expectation of all Christian conduct. Obeying the will of

God, and going above and beyond time and time again. That's the kind of reputation that Christians ought to develop.

Motivation #3 - Reconciliation is **not** something to **drag your feet on**. **v.22**

22 At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.

Philemon, I'm coming to visit! And when I do, I will be excited to hear what happened with you and Onesimus!

Paul was very hopeful that he would be released from prison and get to travel again, but how does Paul expect to be able to travel again? Through the prayers of God's people. Through the prayers of men like Philemon.

I can't help but read this statement and think about how Paul coming to Philemon is a small picture of what it feels like to anticipate Jesus coming back.

The apostle John said, "My little children, abide in him (in Christ), so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming." 1 John 2:28. If you are harboring unforgiveness in your heart

today, would today be a good day for you if the Lord appeared? Or would you feel a bit ashamed that you didn't do something you know you should have?

Motivation #4 - Reconciliation is noticed by others.
v.23-24

²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, ²⁴ and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

Paul had a crew of many different men and women that he did life with. He surrounded himself with believers who wanted to chase after God's will - people who ministered with him.

10 weeks ago we learned many lessons about God from these men (Colossians 4:10-14).

From Epaphras - God knows the effort of prayer warriors.

From Mark - God gives second chances.

From Aristarchus - God appreciates burden-bearers.

From Demas - God has warned us about the distractions of this world.

From Luke - God uses those who make great sacrifices for Him.

I bet those men who were with Paul were all hoping to see Philemon and Onesimus reconcile. Do you have people in your life that are watching from the sidelines hoping you would reconcile with that person? Reconciliation and lack of reconciliation doesn't go unnoticed by others.

Motivation #5 - Reconciliation requires grace. v.25

25 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

The entire church would need an attitude of grace - grace with their spirit.

Why would you be willing to pursue reconciliation with someone who wronged you? Because that's what God did for you.

Ephesians 5:1 says to be imitators of God. Do you want to imitate God? Pursue reconciliation, just like God pursued reconciliation with you.

