

Reconciliation

Genesis 33:1–20 (ESV)

ANNOUNCE: Maximum Life+ App now available in Apple App Store and Google Play Store.

INTRODUCTION: *Mrs. Smith was in court for the death of her third husband. The lawyer asked, “What happened to your first husband?” He died of mushroom poisoning. The lawyer asked, “What happened to your second husband?” He died of mushroom poisoning, also. Then he asked, “What happened to your third husband?” He died of a brain concussion. Why is that? Because he wouldn’t eat mushrooms.*

Well, murder is one way to deal with problems, but I want to suggest a better way. Scripture calls it **reconciliation**. And reconciliation may be one of the greatest keys to the future of this or any church.

The greatest moves of God I have ever witnessed personally were on the heels of reconciliation.

ILLUSTRATION: The year was 1998 - I had preached a sermon entitled the Pathway to Peace, and encouraged students in Gatlinburg, TN, to do what Paul commanded in **Romans 12:18 (ESV)** ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

That night, God compelled me to very specifically have no music for the invitation, but to simply sit down and wait. After preaching, I sat down for what seemed like an eternity; it was likely about 5 minutes, in total silence. I began to doubt God when, suddenly, a young lady stood up and confessed that she needed to be reconciled to her stepfather. Through tears, she said, “he has always been so good to me, but I’ve made life very difficult for him, and I’m so sorry”. I said, “Young lady, why don’t you call him and tell him how you feel?” She did, and he forgave her. It seems as if the flood of revival fell on that place. We were up until 2 or 3 AM, leading people to Christ. But it began with reconciliation.

CONTEXT: The last time we were together, we saw Jacob, who had sent his entire entourage across the ford of the Jabbok, which was a crossing point on the Jabbok River, a major eastern tributary of the Jordan River.

He was alone, anticipating his encounter with Esau that would soon take place - a man who had spent the previous 20 years contemplating how he might murder Jacob. Jacob had already been told that Esau was approaching with an army of men.

There alone in the night, Jacob is attacked, not by Esau, but by the Lord Himself. What follows was an all-night long battle royal, which ended with a simple touch of Jacob’s hip, rendering him helpless. Now recognizing his attacker, Jacob locks in and refuses to release Him until He presents a blessing.

In a moment, Jacob's perspective radically shifted from

- The **fear** of man (Esau) to the fear of God.
- From seeking blessing via **deception** to seeking his blessing by **faith**.

Having settled things with God, Jacob is now ready to face Esau.

That's how it works, by the way. ***Reconciliation with Man begins with Reconciliation to God.***

The word ***Reconciliation*** means ***to restore harmony.***

Two common modern uses:

- **Financial/Accounting Context:** Bank statements and financial reports must be reconciled to ensure numerical harmony, as errors must be corrected since "numbers don't lie."

ILLUSTRATION: Congress has to develop a ***reconciliation package*** that combines the budgets of different House committees. This involves adjusting revenue, debt limits, deficits, and spending to achieve harmony across the committees and create an overall unified budget.

- **Relational Context:** When harmony between two individuals has been lost, reconciliation should be the heartbeat of the believer.

Scripture teaches that the first relationship that must be reconciled is our relationship with God. You see, you may believe God exists, but have no *harmony* in a personal relationship with Him.

Colossians 1:21–22 (ESV)

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now ***reconciled*** in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,

2 Corinthians 5:17–21 (ESV)

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;

Peace with God *produces* Peace with Man.

James tells us that ***war within results in war without*** - **James 4:1–2 (ESV)**

¹ What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ² You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel....

So before you can successfully “live at peace with all men”, you must first make and maintain peace with God.

Proverbs 16:7 (ESV)

⁷ When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

That means that while people may persist in viewing you as an enemy, they will not be able to make war with you effectively, because you have been a peacemaker.

Matthew 5:9 (ESV)

⁹ “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

So, reconciliation with man begins with reconciliation with God.

But how many of you know that reconciliation with man is far more difficult than reconciliation with God? You see, God knows your heart, He knows your thoughts, He knows if you are genuinely repentant.

While people may have a measure of discernment, scripture tells us, **1 Samuel 16:7 (ESV)** “⁷ ...man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”

What that means is - reconciliation with God is by grace through faith, but reconciliation with man often requires a measure of works.

ILLUSTRATION: You see, the moment you repent and believe in Christ, you are added to the (big C) Church. But your private, personal faith doesn't add you to the roll of a local church. We must hear your profession of faith and see you testify to that faith through baptism. Why? We simply cannot see your heart.

In the same way, Jacob made reconciliation with God through one simple encounter, but reconciliation with Esau may be more complex.

Proverbs 18:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ A brother offended is more unyielding than a strong city...

In the time remaining, I want to show you **four requirements for reconciliation directly from the text:**

1. Reconciliation Requires *Initiative* - Someone has to take the first step.

TEXT: Genesis 33:1–20 (ESV)

¹ And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two

female servants. ² And he put the servants with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all. ³ He himself went on before them

Notice that previously he sent others out first, and he stayed behind... now Jacob is truly leading - leaders go first. If reconciliation is needed, the leader initiates it.

Whatever had happened in the life of Esau for these last 20 years, Esau had not taken the initiative when it came to reconciliation - that step must be taken by Jacob. Jacob must take the long, hard walk across the room, or in this case, the valley, and initiate reconciliation.

Have you ever done that? You see, there are three ways that people tend to deal with conflict.

- a. **Fight** - this is where we hurt people for hurting us. We repay evil with evil.
- b. **Flight** - this is where we run from our conflict as if to pretend they aren't happening.
- c. **What's Right** - This is when we acknowledge the conflict, absorb the pain, and lay the groundwork for reconciliation.

Scripture teaches that God was the initiator in our reconciliation.

1 John 4:19 (ESV) ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us.

Romans 2:4 (ESV) ⁴ ... God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

So God took the first step toward reconciliation.

Romans 5:8 (ESV)

⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

So if you have experienced the reconciliation of God, you ought to express that reconciliation - like Christ, you be the initiator.

Be willing to TALK TO THE PERSON rather than ABOUT THE PERSON. That would solve 90% of the problems in churches and families.

Reconciliation Requires Initiative...

2. Reconciliation Requires Humility - *Reconciliation always goes low before it goes forward.*

³ He himself went on before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

Sevenfold bowing was a customary act of respect of a vassal to his overlord. Esau was not Jacob's overlord, but nevertheless, he conveys his deep humility by this action.

Tone is often as important as substance when it comes to reconciliation.

- **Proverbs 15:1 (NAS)** ¹ A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

ILLUSTRATION: Jesus gives the example of the ***Prodigal Son***. Remember how he approached the father? I am not even worthy to be called your servant.

⁴ But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. ⁵ And when Esau lifted up his eyes and saw the women and children, he said, “Who are these with you?” Jacob said, “The children whom God has graciously given your servant.” ⁶ Then the servants drew near, they and their children, and bowed down. ⁷ Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down. And last Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down.

You see, the family is following suit - oftentimes moments of reconciliation are amazing opportunities for discipleship. Allow your kids to see you repent, ask for forgiveness, and walk in humility.

1 Peter 5:5 (ESV)

⁵ ...Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Reconciliation Requires Initiative, Humility...

3. Reconciliation Requires Restitution - *Grace repairs what sin damaged.*

Now remember, Jacob, through deception, had stolen the birthright, which would be very costly for Esau. If reconciliation were to occur, there would have to be an attempt to set things right.

⁸ Esau said, “What do you mean by all this company that I met?” Jacob answered, “To find favor in the sight of my lord.” ⁹ But Esau said, “I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.” ¹⁰ Jacob said, “No, please, if I have found favor in your sight, then accept my present from my hand. For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God, and you have accepted me. ¹¹ Please accept my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.” Thus he urged him, and he took it.

Repentance must become as famous as sin is notorious.

In **Acts 19:18–20 (ESV)** Paul testified that the repentance among the Ephesians was sincere because, ¹⁸ Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. ¹⁹ And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the

value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. ²⁰ So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

In **Luke 19:5–9 (ESV)**, Zacchaeus's repentance resulted in a fourfold restitution.

⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “**Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.**” ⁶ So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. ⁷ And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” ⁸ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” ⁹ And Jesus said to him, “**Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.**”

ILLUSTRATION: Several years ago, I read an ad in from the classified section of a local newspaper in Nairobi, Kenya. The ad says it all - I, Allan Harangui, Alias Waniek Harangui, of P.O. Box 40380, Nairobi, have dedicated services to the Lord Jesus Christ. I must put right all my wrongs. If I owe you any debt or damage personally or any of the companies I have been directing, I will make it right. Please contact me or my advocates, J.K. Kibicho and Company Advocates, P.O. Box 73137, Nairobi, for a settlement. No amount will be disputed. God and His Son Jesus Christ Be Glorified.

I wonder if anyone here today needs to make restitution? Perhaps you cannot make full restitution, but could you make an attempt?

Reconciliation Requires Initiative, Humility, Restitution...

4. Reconciliation Requires *Boundaries* - Peace does not require proximity.

¹² Then Esau said, “Let us journey on our way, and I will go ahead of you.” ¹³ But Jacob said to him, “My lord knows that the children are frail, and that the nursing flocks and herds are a care to me. If they are driven hard for one day, all the flocks will die. ¹⁴ Let my lord pass on ahead of his servant, and I will lead on slowly, at the pace of the livestock that are ahead of me and at the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in **Seir**.” ¹⁵ So Esau said, “Let me leave with you some of the people who are with me.” But he said, “What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord.” ¹⁶ So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. ¹⁷ But Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built himself a house and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called **Succoth**.

¹⁸ And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Paddan-aram, and he camped before the city. ¹⁹ And from the sons of Hamor, Shechem’s father, he bought for a hundred pieces of money the piece of land on which he had pitched his tent. ²⁰ There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.

Jacob indicated that he would come to Esau in Seir, but when we get to the end of chapter 33, he settles, not in Seir, but in Shechem. There are a couple of reasons for

this - Shechem was in the territory God promised to Abraham in Canaan, but there is also another reason.

Reconciliation doesn't always result in the restoration of Intimacy.

There are times when we are called to live at peace with someone, but not necessarily continue on as if nothing happened.

ILLUSTRATION: In my backyard, we have a small garden. It is surrounded by a stone boundary marker. Now the boundary isn't to keep people out, but to protect what is growing inside. Sometimes, we need relational boundaries to protect what God is doing in our lives.

We never look more like our Savior than when we reconcile with one another.

Initiative → "Someone has to take the first step."

Humility → "Reconciliation always goes low before it goes forward."

Restitution → "Grace repairs what sin damaged."

Boundaries → "Peace does not require proximity."

CONCLUSION/INVITATION: How do you find the power to do that? Recognize that when it comes to God, He is always the most offended party. Yet, in order to reconcile you to Himself, he gave the ultimate gift in His Son, Jesus Christ. He paid the price, not you. He took the pain, not you.

He who was the most innocent party paid the ultimate debt of restitution - so that you could be reconciled to Him forever and forever.

Now, explain to me how you can't be reconciled to your fellow man...