

## ***Reconcile – Part 2***

### **Diagram from last week**

The key that helps us to make the turn and opens the door to the journey towards reconciliation is forgiveness.

### **We Became Less Than**

At the beginning of creation there was no disruption – the world, people and God were in perfect harmony and unity.

At the core of every conflict that causes a moving away and a wound to another is sin.

Sin means to lack – to be less than. When someone chooses to sin they are diminishing themselves. Sin makes us less than we were created to be.

### ***The first relationship to be broken was our relationship with God.***

Instead of being right with God, sin makes us lesser than. It creates a divide between us and God. A divide that cannot by our own efforts be bridged because the divide, the chasm is too far. It required a perfect sacrifice, a reckoning for the sin that divided us.

God rich in mercy, truth, justice and peace reconciled us back into a relationship with God by coming to earth as a man and dying a sacrificial death on the cross and rose again from the dead to bring eternal life to those who choose to receive Him as Lord and Saviour.

### ***The second relationship that is broken is the one with others.***

When we sin against somebody else we are making them less than that which God intended them to be.

Forgiveness becomes the key that helps us make the turn towards

reconciliation and opens the door to the journey of reconciliation. We apply what God has done for us towards others – we extend or ask for forgiveness.

## **What Does the Bible Say About Forgiveness?**

Failure to forgive breeds anger and resentment that may remain as bitter judgement.

God forgives those who forgive others (Matthew 18:21-35).

In Ephesians 4:32 God instructs us to forgive one another as He forgives us.

*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.* Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)

God forgives because it is beautiful and loving to forgive (Romans 5:8; 1 John 1:9). He doesn't forgive begrudgingly but does so to shower upon us the richest blessings that we don't deserve.

## **What Does Forgiveness Look Like?**

- *Forgiving is not forgetting*
- *Forgiveness is a choice* (Romans 12:19)
- *Forgive completely* (Matthew 18:27)
- *Forgive repeatedly* (Luke 17:4; Matthew 18:21-22)
- *Forgive sacrificially* (John 3:16)
- *Pursue Forgiveness* (Hosea 2:14-15; Romans 12:17-21)

## **Steps to Forgiveness**

### ***1. Choose to forgive now***

Don't wait to forgive until you feel like it. You may never feel like it. Freedom

from Satan's grasp is what you will gain straight away, not necessarily an immediate change in feelings.

- Ask God to bring to mind the people you need to forgive.
- As you remember these people, hurtful thoughts may come to mind – allow this to happen, even if it hurts. This will help in a genuine forgiving heart.
- Don't say, "Lord, please help me to forgive" or "Lord, I want to forgive." Say, *"I choose to forgive (name the person) for (name what they did to hurt you) even though it made me feel (share the painful feelings)."*

## **2. Actually cancel the debt**

Through prayer, express to God that you are relinquishing the right to exact vengeance upon the offender at any level and that you are releasing your hold on bitterness and revenge. *"Lord, I choose not to hold any of these things against (name) any longer. I thank you for setting me free from the bondage of my bitterness toward (name). I now ask you to bless (name)."*

## **Steps towards Reconciliation (Matthew 18:15-17)**

### **1. Go Directly to the Person (Matthew 18:15)**

Be aware of what is required to find true reconciliation (Psalm 85:10).

- Truth
- Mercy
- Justice
- Peace

Avoid bringing other people in and don't slander the other's name by gossiping about them. The tone and posture you carry when talking to the other person will affect the outcome of your conversation.

**2. Take Someone Else with You (Matthew 18:16)** – a non biased representative who has both parties best intentions in mind.

**3. Involve the Church (Matthew 18:17a)** – Our Elders and counselling team are here to help coach people towards reconciliation, to mediate if needed and to help discern the next right step to keep things from escalating.

4. *Treat them like a Pagan* (Matthew 18:17b) – Jesus is saying continue to treat them with love and pursue them in the hope that you might be able to start the process of reconciliation.

What if the process of reconciliation is one sided and the door towards reconciliation seems permanently closed? There is no doubt this is painful and your journey with God through prayer will deepen as you gain a new perspective of the Father's love and forgiveness. The very least you can do is to forgive and set yourself free.

How long do you hold the door open to reconciliation? God demonstrates to us that restoration and redemption is still possible even in the bleakest of circumstances.

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. How difficult do you find it to forgive others? Explain your answer.
2. How does the parable of the unmerciful servant (Matthew 18: 21-35) extend Jesus' teaching on forgiveness and dealing with others in reconciliation?
3. Based on this parable, is God's forgiveness of us limited or unlimited? Conditional or unconditional? In what way might we need to change our response to others to mirror God's response to us?
4. Spend some time alone with God moving through the steps of forgiveness.
5. Read Psalm 85:10. Which characteristic do you most strongly identify with after conflict in desiring to reconcile with others? Truth/Mercy/Justice/Peace How does this affect the way you reconcile? How are all four aspects so important to bring complete reconciliation?
6. Who is it that you need to be reconciled with? What aspects of Matthew 18:15-17 do you need to do?