

## **Healing Our Broken Humanity**

### **Chapter 8: Reconcile Relationships**

“Reconciliation isn’t an easy or simple process. It involves lament, repentance, and forgiveness. It requires justice, authentic partnerships, and equality. Notice that reconciliation doesn’t come first. Reconciliation is only possible after lamenting the past, repenting of our complicity, seeking forgiveness, relinquishing power, restoring justice, relishing diversity, and reinforcing agency.”

Brenda Salter McNeil: “Reconciliation is an ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God’s original intention for all creation to flourish.”

Reconciliation happens at many levels: Human beings are reconciled to God, “but God also enables individuals, socioeconomic groups, races, and genders to reconcile, and humanity to reconcile with creation. Through this ministry of reconciliation, God shows the world what God intends the world to be.”

Revelation 7:9-10: “After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. <sup>10</sup> They cried out in a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!’”

“This is a vision of a new community worshipping God. This community comes from every society, ethnicity, gender, class, nationality, age, and it seeks to bring God’s peace and reconciliation to the world. This is a vision for human flourishing, of peace, and shalom, of forgiveness and justice, of faith, hope, and love.”

“Reconciliation is a process and journey aimed at transforming all humanity and creation, which requires lament and memory, and which needs the church to truly be the church. Reconciliation requires a certain kind of just, courageous, and peaceable leadership. You discover this kind of leadership through the work of the Spirit, as God transforms your heart and mind.”

“This type of reconciliation requires a personal and corporate change of heart. Only God can make this possible as he leads us to repentance, justice, humility, peace, community, and a transformed spirit...this kind of personal and collective change and transformation requires community practices for making peace.”

## **How Do We Practice Reconciliation?**

*Develop a biblical theology of reconciliation:* It is important to have our thinking shaped by the teachings and stories of scripture

*Pursue the five landmarks of reconciliation:* Brenda Salter McNeil says that there are five primary landmarks in the process of reconciliation, they are:

- catalytic events
- realization
- identification
- preparation
- activation

*Embrace the practices of reconciliation:* Sharing life together with people different from ourselves; practicing solidarity with those who suffer; working to see the world from below; subverting racial hierarchies in church and society; embracing new social imaginations; seeking God's kingdom; and engaging in critical self-examination.

*Practice peacemaking and nonviolence:* Stanley Hauerwas says that peacemaking and nonviolence are "the hallmarks of Christian moral life" and that nonviolence is "integral to the shape of Christian convictions." Peacemaking and nonviolence aren't passive. They are active, courageous, and public exercises of forgiveness, love, and reconciliation.

## **Practices, Challenges, and Activities for Small Groups**

*Consider and respond to biblical passages.* Reconciliation is at the heart of the gospel and of the Christian faith. Read the following passages closely as a group, and reflect on what they mean for your ministry of reconciliation: Romans 5:10-11; 11:15; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Ephesians 2:14-17; Colossians 1:19-22. Think about ways you can respond to these passages practically in your community and neighborhood.

*Work through Roadmap to Reconciliation by Brenda Salter McNeil.* Read the book in a small group over eight weeks and put into practice the exercises at the end of each chapter.

*Watch movies and documentaries together.* Develop a list of movies that stimulate discussion about race, justice, and reconciliation. Get together regularly with your small group for meals and to watch the movies on your list. Discuss what you learn from them. Consider inviting friends from minority groups to watch with you.

## **Discussion Questions**

Do you agree with Brenda Salter McNeil's definition of reconciliation? Would you modify it in any way?

Are you aware of forms of racism in your own life? How have they been expressed?

Why is the order of stages in reconciliation important?

Why do we need a biblical view of reconciliation that frames our purpose and posture in reconciliation? How do we develop this biblical view of reconciliation?

Looks at the core practices of reconciliation. What would you add to these practices? What would you change about this list?

What needs to change for you and your church to play your part in the work of reconciliation?

What steps will you take to apply this practice fully and in the long term?