

THE CHURCH AS THE COMMUNITY OF CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS

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SESSION 3 – RECONCILIATION WITH ONE ANOTHER

I. Introduction

While reconciliation with God in Christ is personal and individual, there is a very important sense in which “vertical” reconciliation is to be marked by and experienced together with “horizontal” reconciliation.

II. Vertical Reconciliation – the wonder of being re-united with our Creator God, through Christ bringing about the *summum bonum* of life, as God intended it to be lived

Romans 5:8–11 – ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:17–21 – ¹⁷ Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. ¹⁸ Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

III. Horizontal Reconciliation – the wonder of being united with “others” – those who are “other” than my race, my culture, my ethnicity, my nationality – who now, in Christ, constitute the closest of all human relationships

Ephesians 2:11–16 – ¹¹ Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by the so-called “Circumcision,” which is performed in the flesh by human hands— ¹² remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two

into one new man, thus establishing peace,¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

In a similar way, we need to recognize the spectrum of life in the church, with male and female, old and young, rich and poor, such that all are embraced as integral persons who make up the whole of the body of Christ.

Titus 2:1-15 – ¹ But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. ² Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. ³ Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, ⁴ so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵ to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. ⁶ Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; ⁷ in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, ⁸ sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us. ⁹ Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, ¹⁰ not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect. ¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, ¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. ¹⁵ These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

And this reconciliation with one another far surpasses physical bonds, if they are not in Christ. Hear the words of Jesus:

Matthew 10:37-39 – ³⁷ “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸ “And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹ “He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

Matthew 12:46-50 – ⁴⁶ While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. ⁴⁷ Someone said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You.” ⁴⁸ But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” ⁴⁹ And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers! ⁵⁰ “For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

IV. Conclusion and Application

- A. Although the homogeneous church growth principle works, it is flatly at odds with the vision of the Church we see in the Scriptures. While being with other people just like me is natural, what is supernatural is the longing to be with, and to embrace, others who are very unlike me.

- B. How are we doing with both old and young in our churches?

- C. How are we doing with rich and poor in our churches?

- D. How are we doing in balancing family and church responsibilities?

- E. How are we doing with inclusion of male and female in biblically appropriate ways?

- F. In closing, hear the 2nd verse of the Getty's "Beneath the Cross of Jesus":

Beneath the cross of Jesus
His family is my own
Once strangers chasing selfish dreams
Now one through grace alone.
How could I now dishonor
The ones that you have loved?
Beneath the cross of Jesus
See the children called by God.

Beneath the Cross of Jesus, Keith and Kristyn Getty (Thankyou Music 2005)