

BRIDGE BUILDING

*The Ministry of Reconciliation
In a World of Conflicts*

*A Bible Study
on Conflict Resolution
and Reconciliation*



CHRISTIAN LEGAL SOCIETY

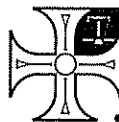
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The Ministry of Reconciliation In a World of Conflicts

A Bible Study on Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation

“Blessed are the Peacemakers
for they will be called children of God”
Jesus Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:9

Bridge Building: The Ministry of Reconciliation in a World of Conflicts is a specially prepared excerpt for use at the 1996 national conference. The study in its entirety will soon be available to members, and is one in a series of biblical studies available from Christian Legal Society to help attorneys, law professors, law students and judges better conform their legal practice to their confession of faith and allegiance to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.



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Introduction

As we begin this three-part Bible study, try to picture in your mind two “parties” in conflict perched on opposing rock cliffs. A difference of opinion or purpose, real or imagined, now divides them. They are now largely ignorant of each other’s true thoughts, but their anger towards one another is kindled or rekindled from time to time by one thing or another.

But for the Christian, starting with his or her own confession of sin and reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ, there is hope of reconciling these parties to God and to one another. Believing that God always seeks a generation of those who love God, know God’s law, seek His justice and practice the ministry of reconciliation, this Bible study has been written as a spiritual guide and encouragement.

Session 1

Bridging the Gap

Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31)

The missionaries to the Auca Indians in South America had a real problem. There was no equivalent word in the Auca language for “reconciled.” Searching for a means to express to these people the biblical idea of reconciliation with God, one of the missionaries traveling with some Aucas came to a steep, narrow ravine blocking their way. The Aucas quickly cut down a large nearby tree so that it fell across the ravine making a secure bridge to the other side. Best of all, the missionary learned that the Aucas had a special word for “tree across a ravine” which then became the missionaries’ word for “reconciliation.”

Like a tree across a ravine or a bridge “over troubled waters,” so the Christian ministry of reconciliation ultimately rests on the fact that Jesus Christ is the True Bridge Builder who gave His life *for us* so that He could give His eternal Life *to us* in order that He could live His Life *through us*.

1. How would you define conflict?

2. The Bible records examples of responses to conflicts. Discuss how each person responded to conflict in the following passages.
 - A. Abraham’s response to the conflict between Sarai and Hagar (see Gen. 16:6)

 - B. Saul’s response to David when David won the hearts of the people (see 1 Sam. 18:1-16)

C The people's response to Christ as listed in Matt. 26:1-3.

3 How do you personally respond to conflict?

4. Which one of your responses could be called "peacemaking"?

5. Define two conflicts ("any difference of opinion or purpose") mentioned in these Scripture passages:

Acts 21:15-36

James 4:1-3

6. What conflicts are you facing in your life (with God, family, profession, church, community) right now and what exists within you which may be preventing the resolution of those conflicts?

Concluding Prayer

Thank you Lord, as people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe that we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict. Help us to see every conflict with you, within ourselves or with others as an opportunity to glorify You, serve others and grow to be like Christ. Therefore, in response to your love and mercy toward us, we commit ourselves to respond to conflict according to the principles set forth in your Word.

Suggested Scripture references for further study: *Gen. 13:7, Ex. 18:19; Num. 27:14; Deut. 1:12; Judges 12:2; 2 Chron. 19:8; Ps. 31:20, 55:9; Prov. 6:14, 6:19, 10:12, 13:10, 15:18, 16:28, 17:1, 14, 19, 18:6, 20:3, 22:10, 26:21, 28:25, 29:22, 30:33; Isa. 58:4; Jer. 15:10, 50:24; Dan. 10:1; Hab. 1:3; Rom. 1:13, 13:3; 1 Cor. 3:3, 11:19; 2 Cor. 7:5, 12:20; Gal. 5:20; Phil. 1:15,30; 1 Tim. 6:4; Titus 3:9; Heb. 10:32; James 4:1)*

Session 2

Walking the Bridge

*You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye,
and then you will see clearly to remove
the speck from your brother's eye. (Matt. 7:5)*

We have all been convicted at one time or another by the admonition “don’t just talk the walk, walk the talk!” (See *James 1:22*)

Thus, the question may be fairly posed to every Christian, lawyer or non-lawyer, when presented with the biblical mandate of spanning our world of conflicts with bridges of reconciliation: Are we just talking about a ministry of reconciliation OR are we actually building those “bridges” and walking across them ourselves?

In this session, we will study the means for building and actually “walking the bridge” of reconciliation.

1. According to the following passages of Scripture, what foundations need to be laid?

A. The need for reconciliation (*Prov. 19:11*)

B. The costs of reconciliation (*Matt. 5:25-26; Lk. 14:28*)

C. The motives in reconciliation (*Phil. 2:3-5; 4:2-9*)

D. The assessment of our own limitations in reconciliation (*Matt. 7:5*)

2. The Bible tells us that it is impossible to build a bridge of reconciliation without honest self-examination, confession and repentance. (See *Prov. 28:13; Ps. 139:23-24*)
What steps are outlined in the following passages that help us in this examination?

Matthew 7:3-5

I John 1:8-9

Proverbs 28:13

In what ways can you apply these principles to your life, community and/or practice?

3. The Bible teaches that there are times and circumstances, when the Christian is to go and show another his or her fault in order to advance the bridge-building process (Matt.18:15).

The prophet Nathan's confrontation with David provides a good example of how we ought to confront a brother or sister with his or her fault (*2 Sam 12*). What instructions and examples can I learn from this passage?

Concluding Prayer

Lord, we approach you asking for wisdom and guidance to actually walk the bridge of reconciliation, getting the log out of our own eye and truly overcoming evil with good.

Suggested Scripture verses for further study: *See Ps. 133, 1; Jn. 17:23; 1 Cor. 12:12-31; Eph. 4:3,13; Col. 3:14; Gen. 39:9; Ps. 51:3-4; Isa. 55:7-8; 2 Cor. 7:10; Matt. 3:8; Lk. 15:17; Acts 26:20; Matt. 5:11-12, 38-45; Isa. 50:6-8; Rom. 12:14-21; 1 Pet. 2:20-23; 2 Sam. 12:1; Matt. 5:21-24, 18:15; Gal. 6:10; Prov. 12:18; Prov. 18:13; Prov. 28:13; Ps. 141:5; 1 Cor. 13:7; Matt. 18:5; Gal. 6:1*

Session 3

Reaching the Other Side

First go and be reconciled . then come and offer your gift. (Matt 5:24)

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

*Each of you should look not only to
your own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Phil 2:3-4)*

So we have learned that walking the talk of reconciliation can be costly and often counter the culture in which we live. True confession and repentance is costly and rare. Turning the other cheek to an enemy is both counter-intuitive and potentially dangerous to life and limb. While in the Kingdom of God reconciliation always works, in the kingdom of man it often appears to fail — perhaps that is why it is exemplified and commanded, not just suggested, by Christ.

Aside from obedience to God, the other incentive we have in seeking to restore fractured relationships, including our own, is that most people never really feel right about an unresolved conflict that cannot be overlooked. Thankfully, because God has given us all a conscience, it bothers us. Moreover, practically speaking, most of us realize that an unreconciled relationship is a source of discontent that usually threatens the future with more conflicts. Deep inside, all of us know that we earnestly need forgiveness and peace with others. While we know the grace and skill needed to sail through the “peaceful” waters between “flight” and “fight” may often escape us, most of us can be encouraged to try.

In this session, we will examine the biblical principles of forgiveness and negotiation that firmly anchor and permanently connect a bridge of reconciliation to the “other side” where the Christian must walk to be reconciled with a brother, a sister, or even an enemy.

1. God's forgiveness of us required a deliberate decision to forgive. It cannot be accomplished by feeling forgiving, making excuses or just trying to forget.
Romans 5:8-11; Eph 4:32

In what ways can we practically demonstrate our forgiveness of others?

Phil. 4:8

Rom. 12:14

Rom. 12:20

2. From the following passages, describe the difference between the restored relationship prior to resolution and after.

Matt. 5:23-24

2 Cor. 2:5-11 & 5:18-19

- Using the current personal conflicts which you named in Session 1, what practical steps of application of Philippians 2:3-5 can you take to begin forgiveness and restoration of those relationships?

Concluding Prayer

Father, we thank You for your forgiveness of us and the example it provides for us to forgive others. We ask You to grant us the power and wisdom through your Holy Spirit to restore and remain in peace with all.

Suggested Scripture verses for further study: *Ps. 130:3-4; Matt. 6:12; 1 Cor. 13:5; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13; Matt. 18:21-35; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13; Phil. 2:13*

Study Notes

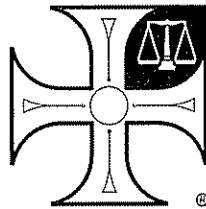
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*“All this is from God, who through Christ
reconciled us to Himself
and gave us the ministry of reconciliation...
and He has committed to us
the message of reconciliation.”*

— II Corinthians 5:18-19

Christian Legal Society is a non-profit national membership organization of lawyers, judges, law professors, law students, and supportive lay people. CLS was founded in 1961 to bring together lawyers and others who share a common allegiance to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. CLS encourages its members to share in Christ's ministry of reconciliation and equips them to work for justice, tempered by the love of God and compassion for all. Today, thousands of members and friends have access to CLS publications, conferences, and many other services. Each is encouraged to carry out the CLS mission individually and through local attorney or law student chapters around the globe.

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