

Road Map for Relationships
Week Three Study Guide
Journey of Reconciliation

The reconciled become reconcilers. —Dr. Malcolm Tolbert

God initiated relationship with us by sending His Son to do for us something we could not do for ourselves. We are the recipients of an amazing gift—a gift for today and for eternity. We are beloved children of God.

In other religions, humans try to earn their gods' favor and are the ones continually striving to be reconciled with their deities. They are the initiators of relationship; their gods are recipients.

As Christians, we have been pursued and wooed by our heavenly Father who forgives us and wants to be in relationship with us. Through the act of receiving, we are reconciled or brought into a relationship of peace and friendship with God. Then, through us, Christ invites others to be reconciled to God and to one another. We become initiators of reconciliation. We partner with God to bring the kingdom of God to earth as it is in heaven.

Living out of our true identity matters—for us and for others. It matters today. It matters for eternity.

Day One Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21. (Pray: *Lord, give me revelation of what it means to be reconciled to You and how it makes a difference in how I live.*)

1. Use your own words and fill in the blanks--

a) From verse 15: Jesus died for me so that I might _____

b) From verse 17: Because I am in Christ, I am _____

c) Read the statements you wrote out loud and then ask the Lord for a deeper revelation of what they mean. Listen. Write down what you hear, see, or sense.

[*Reconcile*: to put people back on friendly terms; to end conflict;
to make two or more apparently conflicting things consistent or compatible (Encarta Dictionary);
to exchange, as coins for others of equivalent value; to receive one into favor (Strong's)]

2. a) From verses 18 and 19, what does it mean to be reconciled to God?

b) How did God reconcile us to Himself?

3. a) Do you honestly believe you are fully reconciled to God? If not, what makes you wonder?

Reflect on this truth: You were reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. Your sin was forgiven through Christ; His righteousness was transferred to you. Your identity as *sinner* was exchanged for Christ's identity as *saint* and *child of God*. You might call it "the great exchange."

b) Ask the Lord if you have any wrong thinking that needs to be exchanged for truth as revealed in His Word. Make the exchange. For when we can rest in His truth, we will stop thinking about ourselves and whether or not we are worthy. We will be able to focus on others, inviting them to live as saints and children of God.

c) Spend a little time resting in the beauty of these truths and in the presence of your Father. Write down any shifts in your thinking or heart attitudes.

Day Two Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-21. (Pray: *Lord, give me understanding of what it means to be Your ambassador, and make it a part of the way I live.*)

4. a) If an ambassador is an official representative of the interests of his nation abroad, as ambassadors of Christ, what nation or kingdom do we represent?

b) To whom are we sent?

c) Ask the Lord what it means to be an ambassador for Christ.

d) What appeal does God want to make through us as ambassadors for Christ?

e) Ask the Lord to show you one way He wants you to be His ambassador today.

5. God's intention is that we represent (re-present) Christ here on the earth. It's not about you. Will you allow Jesus to re-present Himself through you? Tell Him in prayer.

6. Christ gave us the ministry (service; office) of reconciliation (replacing hostility and separation with peace and friendship) (verse 18). Practically, what does that mean?

7.  **Road Trip Vista:**

a) Read John 17:20-26, Jesus' prayer to His Father. Ask the Lord to highlight a verse, phrase, or word that will give you greater understanding of His heart for reconciliation. Spend a few minutes *pondering* it with Him. Then write down your insights.

b) Pray: *Jesus, You have reconciled me to God and have given me the ministry of reconciliation. I want to be Your ambassador so the whole world might be reconciled back to God. Holy Spirit, empower me to do so. Amen.*

Day Three (Pray: *Lord, teach me to be a minister of reconciliation, and make it a part of the way I live.*)

If you had the cure for cancer sitting in your medicine cabinet, wouldn't you do everything possible to share it with the world? Why is it that as Christ-followers, even though we have the cure for the stress, fear, discouragement, and broken relationships—cancers to the soul-- that much of the world lives with, we are often hesitant to share the good news? We not only know the cure, we are carriers of the cure. Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, lives in us. He is the hope and salvation of the world.

8. Re-read 2 Corinthians 5:19. God has committed to me the _____.

Your Bible translation may read "message" or "word." It is the Greek word, *logos*, meaning "something said or spoken." As Christians, we are called to do more than live a *good life*. We are called to be initiators and to announce what has already occurred: Jesus made a way for us to be reconciled with God and with one another.

9. Read Romans 10:13-15 and Isaiah 52:7.

a) Why is it important to speak the message or word of reconciliation?

b) How does God see those who speak this message? For your response, use the above scriptures and then listen to the Holy Spirit for more insight.

10. You have been given a ministry, the ministry (or service) of reconciliation. This is not something you have to do; it is something Jesus wants to do through you. It is His work.

a) Read 2 Corinthians 12:9,10. How do these verses help you, personally, step away from fear of failure? Write your response as a prayer of declaration: *Lord, I declare that Your grace is more than enough for me...*

b) Respond to the Lord. Will you be a carrier of the cure for the cancers of the soul and spirit that run rampant in the world? In prayer, talk with Jesus about this. Ask any question on your heart, and listen. He believes in you.

Day Four (Pray: *Lord, give me Your perspective of myself and others, and let it make a difference in how I live.*)

11. Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21—this time from *The Message*. Underline things that stand out to you.

¹⁴⁻¹⁵ Our firm decision is to work from this focused center: One man died for everyone. That puts everyone in the same boat. He included everyone in his death so that everyone could also be included in his life, a resurrection life, a far better life than people ever lived on their own.

¹⁶⁻²⁰ Because of this decision we don't evaluate people by what they have or how they look. We looked at the Messiah that way once and got it all wrong, as you know. We certainly don't look at him that way anymore. Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons! Look at it! All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other. God put the world square with himself through the Messiah, giving the world a fresh start by offering forgiveness of sins. God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing. We're Christ's representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them. We're speaking for Christ himself now: Become friends with God; he's already a friend with you.²¹ How? you ask. In Christ. God put the wrong on him who never did anything wrong, so we could be put right with God.

- a) What do you think it means to live a "resurrection life?" Ask the Holy Spirit for revelation.
- b) We are to no longer evaluate others from a human point of view. How are we to look at people?
- c) What do we see when we look inside of anyone united with the Messiah?
- d) What task has God given us?
- e) How do we become friends with God?
- f) Look back at what you underlined. What's one thing that impacted you and what is your response to God?

12. Pray: *Lord, I say "yes" to the beautiful invitation to be your friend and your representative on earth. I am grateful for this life-giving opportunity. Thank you, Jesus, for making this possible.*

Day Five (Pray: *Lord, help me celebrate who I am in Christ, and let it make a difference in how I live and love.*)

13. a) We have looked at who we are:
 - seated with Christ in the heavenly realm (Ephesians 2:6)
 - in Christ (Ephesians 2:19)
 - citizens with the saints and of God's household (Ephesians 2:19-22)
 - imitators of Christ (1 Corinthians 4:16)
 - ambassadors of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19)
- b) Which one has impacted you the most the past weeks and why?
- c) How will this affect how you relate to others?

14.  **Road Trip Vista:** Based on 2 Corinthians 5:18-19:

- a) Draw a road map of your journey to being reconciled to God. (Did it begin as a child? Did the wonder of creation have a part in wooing you to God? Did God use life experiences to reveal Himself to you? Did you take any side roads or find yourself at dead ends? Put them on your map.) Use the back of a page for your map.
- b) Through a onetime event, we are reconciled to God by confessing Jesus as Lord and believing in our heart (mind, will and affections) that God raised Him from the dead (Romans 10:9,10). Reconciliation is also an ongoing process of having our minds transformed to conform to the truth of the Bible. Ask God to show you how this part of your journey has looked and how it will continue. Draw it on your map.
- c) At the same time your thinking is being transformed and reconciled to God's, you are a reconciler and ambassador for the kingdom of God on earth. Ask God to show you how to draw that on your life's road map. Ask Him for some specifics, and also be encouraged if you sense some of your roadways are "under construction."
- d) Pray over your map with gratefulness and expectation, asking God to continue the good work He's begun.