

## The Healing of Relationships

2 Corinthians 5:18-20

In the middle of a conversation with a friend, talk turned to our plans for the holidays. I sensed his anxiety level rising as he took a deep breath and revealed that he would be spending some of the time with relatives. It was obvious that he was as excited about the visit as he would have been about a root canal.

I asked, "Is there a problem? It doesn't seem like you're all that up for the visit." He responded, "As a matter of fact, I'm not. It seems like every time we get together there is always conflict. No, I'm not."

Since then, I have thought a lot about my friend and his expectation of being with "family." I've wondered how representative his expectations are of other families as they plan for their time "together." Still further, it occurred to me that these kinds of holiday conflicts occur only once or twice a year; in a sense they are scheduled. But what about the unscheduled conflicts we each face every day in our homes, marriages, at work, or through the simple everyday encounters with people, regardless of where we find ourselves.

Just a few days ago I was visiting with one of our junior high young ladies. We were talking about how fortunate she was to be a part of a family with parents who loved not only her and her brother but truly loved each other. Then I asked her, "How many of your friends live in broken or dysfunctional homes?" Her answer was, "I would guess about 90-95%; my friends talk about it all the time." She went on to say that most of her friends were "Christians."

We live in a world of conflict whether it is between two individuals in a family, within the workplace, or among nations. On my way back from Detroit, I visited with a wonderful Jewish woman from Boston. We talked about her heritage and the holocaust, and she voiced her fear that her grandchildren would not grow up knowing of the sorrow and brutality of conflict. Then she made an interesting statement. "There is no small amount of evil in our world, and it is sinister."

Are we simply to expect conflict and live with it? Are we better off if we ignore it and those with whom we have conflict? Or are we to confront conflict head-on and let the chips fall where they may?

Perhaps there is no better time to address conflict than the season of Christmas. Solving conflict is the very reason that God chose to reveal Himself in the person of Jesus. And that He did in such a way that defies imagination and possibility. His method and purpose has the potential of transforming every conflicted relationship into one of supernatural peace.

### Life Response

1. This week MEMORIZE and MEDITATE on 2 Corinthians 5:19, "*...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.*"
2. As you focus on 2 Cor.5:19 in context of vs 18-20, think about the breadth of the impact true reconciliation can have on your own life and those around you. (Discuss as a family or Care Group.)
  - . . . your personal relationship with God.
  - . . . your influence of hope upon those around you who do not know Christ.
  - . . . your relationship with other believers, those with whom there is stress or broken relationship.

3. How responsive are you in taking the initiative to be reconciled to another person (especially those with whom you once had a relationship)?
4. Are there barriers you have put up that would hinder the opportunity for reconciliation?
5. Imagine if each of us at FBC would take the initiative to go to those within our own church family, as well as those outside, and begin the process of reconciliation in obedience as His ambassadors?

*“God was in Christ” is a great word, the meaning of which is not exhausted by the birth and life of Jesus. We must go on, and include the cross.”*

*(In the context of the Christ work of reconciliation.) - G. Campbell Morgan*

#### THE PURPOSE OF GOD . . . IS RECONCILIATION

☉ The Prince of Peace

☉ Jesus of Nazareth

The Essence of Christmas -

“God was in Christ Reconciling the World to Himself” 2 Cor. 5:19

#### THE PROVISION OF GOD . . . FOR RECONCILIATION 2 Cor. 5:19

God’s Standard Man to God never God to man

“Not counting their transgressions against them”

God’s Initiative vs 18 All things from God who reconciled us to Himself  
vs 19 God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself

God’s Motivation Love – John 3:16; 1 John 4:19  
Rom. 5:8

God’s Sacrifice Rom. 5:9-11

#### **Reconciliation cannot take place without sacrifice**

God’s Peace Rom. 5:1-2

**Principle:** For reconciliation to take place one must remove the barrier of separation.  
Man can’t (Rom. 5:6) → But God did (Eph. 2:13-16)

#### THE PRACTICE WITH GOD . . . IN RECONCILIATION 2 Cor. 5:18-20

The Privilege: God has entrusted us with Christ’s ministry  
vs 18 “gave US”  
vs 19 “committed to US”

vs 20 Ambassadors of God / “entreating through US”  
The Passion:

Malachi 2:5-7

“We beg”

An obsessive anxiety – Why? 2 Cor. 5:11-13

The Personalization: (herein most often lies the Problem) If we have been given the ministry of reconciliation, should we not do the ministry as God did it?

**Principle:**

*To practice the principle of removing all barriers between others and myself.*

Will I set the standard?

Will I take the initiative?

Will I be motivated by love?

Will I sacrifice?

Will I bring peace?