



Life Group Sermon Notes

"Reconciliation: Crossing Thresholds"

Ps. Brett Fuller - February 14, 2016

Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- Have you ever celebrated a holiday in a different cultural context than your own? What was unique about it?
- What is your favorite international or ethnic cuisine (other than what you grew up with)?
- Have you ever been on a missions trip to another country? Where did you go?

Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at www.bethelworld.org

Multiethnic churches display God's reconciliation. Those called to build such relationships sense a calling from God that needs to be fulfilled. To fail to do so is to fail to fulfill God's purpose.

Acts 10:9-23 (ESV)

The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them." And Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?" And they said, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say." So he invited them in to be his guests. The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him.

1. Prayer

- It is in prayer that God so often speaks new things to our hearts and minds. If we become neglectful of prayer, we will hear less from God. Hence, it is important to learn to pray, and to develop a lifestyle habit of prayer. Furthermore, it is important to have designated times and a designated place to help us habitually focus in prayer. If we will regularly seek the Lord in prayer, there will be times when he will speak new things to us: new revelation about himself, new perspective, new direction, and more.

2. The Unclean

- All of us fall short of God's standard of moral, spiritual, and relational holiness. Yet we all too often keep our distance from certain people because we think less of them. God's heart is for all people. He wants everyone to be reconciled to himself *and* to one another. Most of us are willing to reconcile to God, but we often find it difficult to be fully reconciled to some people. True reconciliation is more than mere congenial tolerance. It is demonstrated by Christ when he died to make his enemies his friends. The theological term is "atonement," which is a compound word: at-one-ment. The heart of the issue is making two hostile parties one. This is the kind of reconciliation God wants us to work at in our relationships. He wants us close to one another.

3. Roman Soldier

- The apostle Peter, like most Jews of his time, did not mingle with non-Jewish people, never mind walk closely with them. God went to great lengths to prepare Peter to receive the company of this Roman soldier and servants. Not only were they non-Jewish, they were part of the military occupying force that governed Peter's people. Yet God wanted such people reconciled to himself. More than that, God also wanted them joined to the Jewish believers who constituted the church of God at this time. God's intention was to send a strong, clear, unequivocal message to the Jewish church and to the world that God wants people from every ethnicity to be reconciled to himself and to one another.

4. Apostle

- Although Peter had grown up in the midst of religious and cultural bias, he let go of his prejudices and welcomed those who had been strangers. He did it because of God. He was teachable, a quality we all need to embrace. Peter went with them and did what he never would have done in the past based on his upbringing and experiences. He entered their home and ate with them, preached the Gospel to them and baptized them.

Reconciliation is the heart of God toward us. We all need to know God's reconciling love and power. And we all need to extend God's heart of reconciliation to others, to any and all who are willing to receive it.

Discussion (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related point for discussion.

- Are there people who God wants you to reach out to and build bridges of reconciliation? Who are they?
- Are there obstacles in your heart and mind that hinder you from relating to particular people? What are the obstacles? How could you overcome them?
- What is a specific action step that God wants you to take next in order to live a greater lifestyle of reconciliation?

Prayer (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- Pray that God will reveal his heart to you in a way that stretches and expands your love for others who are different than yourself.
- Pray that God will expose and root out any religious, cultural, or ethnic biases that hinder our ability to see people the way God sees people.
- Pray that God will show how to work for reconciliation with someone specific.