



The Barnabas Letter

To encourage, enrich and equip

Volume 3 No. 1

May/June 1999

In Focus

Phyllis Kilbourn

This decade has witnessed an unprecedented outpouring of ethnic hatred and violence. The wars waged in this decade have been ethnic cleansings of one sort or another: Liberia (the Gio tribe); Rwanda (the Hutus); Iraq (the Kurds); and most recently, Kosovo (the Albanians). Global inner cities, where many Rainbow workers serve, also have their own challenges resulting from ethnic hatred.

I believe we will witness this ethnic hatred with its resulting violence more and more as we enter the new millennium. Indeed, Americans are also the target of much ethnic hatred and more than one country would love to practice ethnic cleansings on Americans.

In fact, two summer teams were canceled this year due to rage against Americans for our involvement in Kosovo. All this hatred and violence causes one to wonder how we can bring about true reconciliation in the midst of the resulting carnage.

Yet, we must because we have a Scriptural mandate to become involved in ministries of reconciliation. The Lausanne Covenant clearly draws this out:

We affirm that God is both the creator and the judge of all men. We, therefore, should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men from every kind of oppression. Because mankind is made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, color, culture, class, sex or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he should be respected and served, not

exploited The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist.

Myron Ausburger states, "Our task as evangelists is to create a theological and cultural environment in which the reconciling love of Christ is shared, for we are agents of God's peace" (2 Cor. 5:20). [The Peace Maker]. He goes on to explain that, rightly understood, evangelism is the ultimate in peacemaking for it calls persons to reconciliation with God. Evangelism cannot be an appendage to our theology, rather it is an essential aspect of a theology of reconciliation, and reconciliation is the only way to

reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

(2 Cor. 5:17-20)

So, how do we begin fulfilling this overwhelming mandate? According to Jonathan Nambu, we start the ministry of reconciliation one person at a time, beginning with those nearest us to whom we may need to be reconciled. Only as we experience personal reconciliation, first with God and then with those around us, can we effectively reach out to others in deep healing and reconciliation.

Make every effort to live in peace with all men

Hebrews 12:14a

peace. As "peacemakers" we are called to win persons to Christ.

Evangelism as a theology of reconciliation, one that calls all persons to be reconciled to God and to all He is doing in the world, makes for a challenging study. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul expresses this need for reconciliation as essential to our theology of evangelism:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was

As Jonathan points out, "Reconciliation with God sets us up for being agents of reconciliation with others." Jonathan also provides us with some penetrating questions that enable us to explore how we are handling reconciliation issues in our lives. Responding to this inventory is a good primer to equip and prepare us for the scriptural mandate of becoming a peacemaker.

May the Lord grant you much wisdom as you share in Jesus' ministry of reconciliation to children and their parents who have been broken and scarred through racial hatred and violence. Don't forget, everyone is precious in His sight!

BRINGING TOGETHER AGAIN

By Jonathan Nambu
Samaritana Transformation Ministries, The Philippines

Reconciliation. Such a big word. What exactly does it mean? And what is its significance to us? In some contexts, reconciliation means working with two different figures or ideas and bringing them into agreement, or making a melody that is dissonant and chaotic harmonious.

In the world of relationships, reconciliation has to do with bringing together again. It means restoring and settling relationships, making things right anew, turning enemies into friends. To reconcile one person to another is to win them over to each other, to earn or regain the trust of one to the other.

Reconciliation is the process of dropping differences, hurts, mistrust, and bitterness in order to embrace the other. To be reconciled is to open our clenched fists and soften our hardened hearts so that we can freely give and receive once again.

IMAGES IN SCRIPTURE

Several important pictures of reconciliation are found in Scripture. A familiar image of reconciliation is that of the father receiving back the wayward son (Luke 15: 11-32). In this parable told by Jesus, the father endures the pain and shame of allowing his son to make foolish decisions, and then wait patiently until the son "comes to his senses" and returns. Reconciliation sprouts in the fertile ground of patience, love, receiving, and the willingness to endure pain and shame. A second image of reconciliation is found in Paul's epistles (Romans 5:10-11;

Ephesians 2:11-22; Colossians 1:21-23). Here God is seen actively pursuing, overcoming, breaking down, creating something new,

waiting, releasing and receiving back again. Reconciliation at times means pursuing, and it always means paying a high price.

*God's willingness to take us back
and His relentless pursuit*

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A big warm embrace and a powerful intervention.

paying a high price. Reconciliation here is built by decisive acts, powerful initiative and again, costly suffering.

Most of us have experienced God's reconciling and re-reconciling us in both ways—a willingness to take us back and a relentless pursuit. A big warm embrace and a powerful intervention.

1. Are you aware of both of these images in your experience?

2. Do you feel the high cost of your reconciliation to God?

MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation with God sets us up for being agents of reconciliation with others. In 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 Paul says that we have been given the "ministry of reconciliation". God has "called us to settle our relationships with each other" (The Message). The ministry of reconciliation is a high calling and brings with it a blessing (Matthew 5:9). But initiating and engaging in reconciliation is a hard and painful road to walk. It involves loving and

RECONCILIATION IN YOUR LIFE

1. Who are the people in your life right now with whom you have a hard time being at peace? Are there those who you feel have broken relationship with you and hurt you?

*What will it look like
for you to walk the
path of
reconciliation?
What will it cost?*

2. What will it look like for you to walk the path of reconciliation with them? Might it involve releasing and patiently waiting, or pursuing and intervening, or both?

3. What will it cost?

4. Ask God for the courage and grace to live, this day, a life of reconciliation and restoration with those around you and close to your heart.