



CONNECTING THIS WORLD TO THE NEXT

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One of the most important decisions that we must make in life is what to do with life. Each person has been allotted approximately seventy or eighty years of life on this earth to spend in any way he or she sees fit. Some spend it poorly, with riotous living, or selfish ambitions that benefit no one when they are gone. But some desire to spend their lives wisely, doing good on this earth, and to make an impact before they die. For most people, this choice is made as a young adult. For those of us in that stage, there is a lot of pressure to choose something that will make a difference. But what does it mean to “make a difference”? What can we do to make the greatest impact on our world? The answer can be summed up in one word: reconciliation.

In II Corinthians 5:17-19, Paul writes, “Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation,” (NKJV). The obvious takeaway from this passage is that God Himself came down to this world as the man Jesus Christ and reconciled us to Himself; He did not hold us accountable for our sins, but took them upon Himself and paid the price that we deserved to pay. This is the ministry of reconciliation: God reconciles us to Himself, repairing the relationship that was broken by sin, and allowing us to once again enjoy a right relationship with Him.

The wonderful part of this passage is, of course, that Jesus died for our sins, but overshadowed by that wonderful revelation is a call to action. Paul writes that God “has given us the ministry of reconciliation... and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” What does this mean? It means that God has called each of us into the ministry that He began when Jesus died on Calvary: the ministry of reconciliation. Now we can’t forgive sins, nor can we force anyone to accept the grace of God, so how can we possibly take part in the ministry of reconciliation? While it is true that we cannot forgive sins, or fill anyone with His Holy Spirit, we can facilitate the process of reconciliation by connecting sinners to Jesus, the one who *can* forgive sins and fill people with the Holy Spirit.

Paul helps us understand how we can be ministers of reconciliation in II Corinthians 5:20, where he writes, “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.” While many people may not be familiar with the word *reconciliation*, everyone should know what an *ambassador* is. An ambassador is someone who represents a certain party to another party, and who facilitates communication between them. Countries have ambassadors whose primary job is to facilitate and build a relationship with other countries. Ambassadors help explain the customs, rules, and desires of their home country to members of other countries. They also represent the interests and desires of their home country the rest of the world, and must always be on their best behavior, so as to present a positive example of the country which they represent. Essentially, the job of an ambassador is to build and strengthen the relationship between a foreign party and the party that he or she represents.



This is the ministry of reconciliation which God has given to his disciples: to help build and strengthen relationships between Him and His people. We do this when we introduce people to Jesus Christ, through bible studies, church services, or simply by telling them about Him. We do this when we direct people deeper into the word of God so that they can know Him better. We do this when we baptize people in water and pray for them to receive the Holy Spirit. We do this when we disciple people through the rest of their lives, for a relationship with Jesus is never complete, and must always continue to grow. The choice of developing a relationship with God is up to every person, but we can help make people aware of that choice, and can shepherd them into making it correctly. This is the ambassadorship that God has given to those He has redeemed.

But just as we cannot force anyone to reconcile with God, no one can force us to sign-up for the ministry of reconciliation. God has given it to us, but He will not force us to take it. We have to *choose*. This is what free will truly is – not the freedom to do whatever we want, but to choose to do what is right, what God wants us to do.

This choice has far-reaching consequences, for there is a spiritual battle raging throughout the cosmos and the outcome will determine the fate of the entire universe. The stakes don't get any bigger. Jesus tells us in Matthew 12:30 that there are only two sides to this battle: "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad." We must choose which side to serve, and the choice is not "who to believe in," but "whom you will serve," just as Joshua asked the Israelites when they began to settle into the Promised Land. To serve is an action, and the way God has called us to serve is on His side, in the ministry of reconciliation.

As young adults, we are Hyphens in more than just name. A hyphen is a punctuation mark that connects to two words that cannot be written as one. As language evolves over time, a curious thing happens to hyphens. Some of them disappear, and leave two words unconnected as in "fire hose," (formerly "fire-hose"), but some disappear and leave behind one compound word instead of two as in "today," and "tomorrow," (formerly "to-day," and "to-morrow"). As Hyphens, we are not quite a part of the current generation, nor are we part of "the next generation." We are somewhere in-between, connecting both generations to each other. It only makes sense that we would also be hyphens connecting this world to Christ through the ministry of reconciliation. Let's be the kind of Hyphens that make an impact by leaving people at one with Jesus when we disappear, and not separated from Him.

Do you want to make a difference in your world? Sign-up for the ministry of reconciliation.