

January 4 2024
Ministry of Reconciliation Part 2

2 Corinthians 5:17-20

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God, who through Christ **reconciled us to himself** and **gave us the ministry of reconciliation**; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and **entrusting to us the message of reconciliation**. 20 Therefore, **we are ambassadors for Christ**, God making **his appeal through us**. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Happy New Year! This is the first Sunday of 2024! Last Sunday, on the front of the paper, I had you write down “one” word that you desire or hope for in 2024. Some of you wrote:

- **Change** (I want my life to change in 2024)
- You want “**Hope**” for Job, finance, relationship and so forth.
- **Increase** in Prayer life or to read the Bible daily.
- **Exercise** or **better health**.
- Reconciliation, Joy, Growth, Discipline, New Life, Progress

Now If you haven’t done so, please write it down before we begin.

For those who have already written it, then I would like for you to start praying and asking the Holy Spirit, “***Lord, what must I do from my end to work towards the word that I have chosen? Or, Lord, show me what I must do to begin this journey? What are my first steps?***” It’s one thing to write about it, it’s whole new level to act upon it. So, it’s important to ask the Holy Spirit to activate the Word.

[Give people a few minutes to process and to pray though]

Next Step on your journal

Write down your Scripture:

1. A Bible (verse, chapter, book) for the season of your life.
2. A Bible verse from the promise of God.

Write down a scripture verse that is in the season of your life, or a chapter (i.e. **John 3**), or Bible books (OT & NT). Example: like the **Book of Ruth**: Ruth she is a Moabite and she married into an Israelite family. They lived in Moab, but then her father-in-law, husband, and her only brother in law, all passed away. In this season of her life, ***she had one bad situation after another.***

So Ruth had a choice whether to remain in her home at Moab and re-marry or to go with Naomi, her mother-in-law, back to Judah. You have to remember for Ruth, she has no friends or family in Judah. But Ruth decided to support her mother in law and go **to Judah**. So can you imagine trying to survive without food, money, and security.

But because of her decision, her testimony and her character spread like wildfire. Because of her heart and character, she won the eyes from a “great” person, by the name of Boaz. When Boaz heard of her **faith** and **character** and that she was **single**, this man fell in love. They eventually got married. So this story went from tragedy to prosperity. I love this story.

Maybe, that is where some of you are. You have life issues one after another and you want to do what is right. So maybe you want to pick a story out of the 66 books that would describe ***what outcome you would you want for 2024.***

My wife Jackie did that. She read the story of Joseph in Genesis and fell in love with this man. So Jackie ended up praying for a man like Joseph to be in her life. Now she is married to a man named Joseph.

So consider picking out a story in the Bible to be your 2024.

**For some of you it might be overcoming temptation or sin:
(Maybe that is your goal for 2024)**

Many years ago, I was in a season where temptation was so strong and so overwhelming that I asked God for help. And this is the scripture verse that I wrote down for that year, or for that season. I said, ***“I am going to memorize this verse!”***

1 Corinthians 10:13 New Living Translation

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. **And God is faithful.** He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, **he will show you a way out** so that you can endure.

So, every time a temptation got strong, I would say this verse in my mind. Sometimes out loud when I’m alone. So whatever that temptation: for some of you it might be **anger**, or **unforgiveness**, **anxiety**, **sexual temptation**, but **whatever it is in the season of your life**, write the scripture verse, chapter or book.

Writing Down a Promise From God

Example: Many years ago, I made a promise to God, that if God helps me find a good wife, then I will build Him a church. I said, ***“God give me a ‘good’ wife and I will build you a church.”*** So God gave me a “great” wife and now we have a “great” church, NBCC.

So if you have made any promise to God, then it’s time for you to fulfill it or start to work on it. Or, maybe **this is the year for you to start asking for God’s promise though His Word.**

This is a promise from God that someone wrote many years ago This person was going through a tremendous amount of stress, so she wrote these verses for her season of life.

Matthew 11:28-30

28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

So whatever season of your life that ***you are dealing with*** or that ***you are going through*** or that ***you are entering into***, then write the Bible verses, chapter, book or promise. Remember, this is just to get started, but it's important to get started as we move forward 2024.

So let's write it down. [Give everyone a few minutes: 2-3 minutes]

What is the best way to move spiritually forward in 2024?

In front of me you have a “jenga” blocks. Essentially, your goal is to take one piece of the block out without having the the block fall.

[Show example with big “jenga” blocks]

3 Common Ways People Move Forward:

One of the ways in which we move forward is like this. In 2022 (two years ago), all of us whether it be from our experiences in life, or the decisions we made (good or bad) has led up to 2023. Our past **experience** and **decisions** in life are the building blocks for the future just like the story of Ruth. “***Our past makes our future***.” So our past in 2022 made our 2023.

This is how some people move from year to year:

Some people just move from year to year. They are not moving forward but just ***surviving from year to year***. Have you ever felt like that, where you feel, you are living year to year?

In year 2023, some people did not learn anything from 2022 or that they **did not make any positive changes** in 2023 from 2022. So what happens to many people is that they end up ***repeating the same issues in life year after year.***

History tells us, that if we don't learn from our past or change from our past, then we will just keep repeating the past. Then ***our past becomes a stumbling block for us to move forward in life.***

Remember, ***your past is the footsteps to your future. Every experience you go through and every decision you make becomes a footstep to your future.*** So today, you given an opportunity to **make “good” decisions for 2025.**

So, when we don't learn or make any positive change from the past, it is like this:

[Show illustration with the entire “Jenga” moving from one end to another: It's hard to move the entire “Jenga” to another.]

The point of the illustration is that it is very hard to move forward in life with all the pieces of “Jenga” at the same time. This is what it's like when we do not learn from the past. We take ***with us all of our “jenga”*** wether we like it or not. All the “jengas” will fall upon us at some point in our lives. You can try to forget your past, ***but your past will always follow you,*** if you never reconcile your past.

Moving the Best Steps

For some people and I would say that for most people, they just take the ***best or the good things from 2022 and moved to 2023.***

[Show illustration of you pulling out one piece of “jenga” and placing it to build upon another. Pick out some church members to pull out a block. Notice that some people **will not move the bad ones** over]

The problem with is that if you only take the good pieces but then you still have to deal with all the **hard pieces [Show illustration of trying to shake the hard pieces] that are still left**. Remember, you are still moving forward with the negative or hard blocks, even when you only pick the “good” blocks, because your past experiences and decisions will follow you.

The main problem is, that most people do not go back and take care of the “**Hard or negative blocks.**”

So the best way for us to move **forward spiritually** is for us to go back and **reconcile the past**. You have to take the “negative or the hard blocks” and move it forward.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20

18 All this is from God, who through Christ **reconciled us to himself** and **gave us the ministry of reconciliation**; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and **entrusting to us the message of reconciliation**. 20 Therefore, **we are ambassadors for Christ**, God making **his appeal through us**. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Reconciliation (Greek Word: katallassō, pronounced kat-al-las'-so) means exchange, as coins for others of equivalent value, **return to favor with** or **to receive one into favor**.

God is wanting us to reconcile the past with Him first and foremost. When you do that, then His favor and blessings follow, but we must make things right (**Dealing with All the hard and negative blocks**).

When your able to reconcile the past, then **He is entrusting to us to be a massager of reconciliation**.

Why? Why does God want us to be reconciled to Him?

Matthew 11:28-30 New Living Translation

28 Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and **I will give you rest.** **29** Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find **rest for your souls.** **30** For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”

[Setting the context] Here is Jesus speaking to the Jewish people and making an extraordinary claim that **Jesus alone knows the Father.**

Matthew 11:26-27

26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. **27** All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

So does this mean that if I am tired from work or that I have stress from work, then God will give me rest from work or people that I have conflict with? Help me understand!

This is important to understand: The Father is the one who hands out all the resources, all the strength, all the fiancées, all the emotional support. Jesus is the one who brings salvation and takes us to the heaven to the Father.

Here in Matthew 11, Jesus is claiming, “**If you are struggling and tired, I can give you rest.**” But Jesus is not talking about the physical rest, He is talking about the **rest for your soul.** Now, what is our soul? Our soul is our identity with Christ.

So what is your identity, or you calling, or your purpose? What has God called you to do, so He can give you meaning in life?

- You are a **child of God**,
- you are an **ambassador for Christ**,
- you are a **messenger of reconciliation**,
- your identity in God will not be shaken.
- ***You are a messenger of reconciliation so that those who believe can receive the favor of God.***

Jackie (Pastor Joseph Choi's wife) story of reconciliation.

For many years, Jackie resented her mother. As a single Korean mother trying to feed her three little daughters was very difficult throughout 1970's to 1990's. Jackie's father passed away when all three were just infants and survival through Jesus Christ was the only means of keeping her mind in sanity. So she pushed her own daughters to write out the entire Bible in Korean and pushed them towards church and prayer.

Because she was not home most of the time, the three children had to learn and adapt to survival. Though eventually the three daughters grew in faith and walked with God, there were still a sense of abandonment and the spirit of rejection from their mother. They understood the situation she was in, but the past bitterness, unforgiveness, and build up of relational separation took its toll.

It was in God's perfect timing for her to go back seek her mother's connection. After the covid-19 reopened, Jackie's mother decided to quit her job as a hair stylist. She was cutting hair for decades and used her gift to feed and shelter her daughters. She even used much of her gift to evangelize all those who would come for hair cutting. Many came to the faith in the Lord through her passion to bring many to Christ.

After her retirement, she then pursued her passion back into relationship with her daughters. She worked hard to reconcile and make things right before God. She would bring food, flowers and all that she could do to pursue after Jackie. When Jackie finally realized that it was her mother's love language to find ways of giving, she let go of her bitter heart. Jackie would in turn pursue after reconciliation with her mother.

Jackie's mother had a stroke and ended up in the ER. When someone has a stroke, you have a two hour window to save that person's life (one side of the body being impaired or death). However, the doctors were not able to administer to her the life saving medication till five hours later. She was slurring in her speech and could not move her left side of her body. The doctors did everything they could, but it was too late.

However a miracle occurred. She was able to move her upper body straight and started to talk to her daughters as if she had no stroke at all. Jackie said, "How was this possible?" Even the doctors were uncertain and stunned at what transpired. So for three days straight, while in the hospital, the three daughters and their mother talked, laughed, prayed, worshipped, read the Bible together and fellowshiped. What is interesting is that this was her final desire and prayer request that she would have a worship time with her daughters and God answered.

Then after the three days, she had a massive hemorrhage in her brain. She passed away on October 22, Sunday 2023. The doctor said that as a neurologist, and with over 30 years of practice, he has never seen in which a person has a stroke, then cured of stroke, to have a massive hemorrhage. This was never witnessed before, but we all know that it was a miracle working of the Lord, reconciling the three daughters and their mother to have the final worship. God in His perfect timing brought about their final reconciliation and healing.

Front of Paper:

- First, is there anything from your past, that you need to make things right before God? (i.e. sin)
- The second, is if there is **anyone** from your past that you need to make things right before God.

Now remember, this is just between you and God. You know when we get so busy in life, we have a tendency to just move on and don't spend anytime reflecting on our relationship with God.

In the Back: As an ambassador of reconciliation, is there anyone that you would like to reach and help that person come to the reconciliation with God?