

Reconciled Week 2 - Message Outline

MAIN IDEA: In Christ, we have a new purpose.

TEACHING TEXT: ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us...
2 Corinthians 5:18-20 NIV

WHAT DO WE WANT STUDENTS TO KNOW? Because of all that God has done for us, we have been called to join Him in His mission to reconcile the world to Himself. He has commissioned us as ambassadors, representatives of His Kingdom, to show and tell the good news of what He's done to everyone. And, one of the best ways we can do that is, as far as it depends on us, to live as peacemakers.

WHAT DO WE WANT STUDENTS TO FEEL? Hopeful that they have been invited into a purpose that is bigger than themselves. Confident that Jesus is with them every step of the way as they represent Him to the world.

WHAT DO WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO? Work with Jesus to restore broken relationships.

THE OUTLINE

TENSION: To kick this message off, I need to get something off my chest. When I was in MS, specifically 6th and 7th grade, I was the master of dysfunctional and broken relationships. If you've ever heard of "the secret lives of Mormon wives" or "the real housewives of whatever county", imagine that, but more like **"The Real Middle Schoolers of Tulsa Oklahoma."** Check this out. (Also, I'm changing peoples' names because there's no way any of them wants to remember any of what I'm going to tell you.)

GRAPH 1 In sixth grade, I dated Suzy, who was best friends with Lucy, and I was friends with Brody. Suzy was the first girl I ever went on real dates with. Our mom's would drop us off at the mall or the movie theater, we'd hang out, and then our parents would pick us back up and we'd text until super late at night, and all that fun stuff. So, I was absolutely devastated to find out, several months into dating, that my girlfriend, Suzy, got caught smooching my boy Brody! Everybody thought Brody and I were going to go scuffle. But, instead, I did something way worse. I started dating Lucy! So Suzy and Lucy, who had been best friends, became enemies! And, if that was the end of the story, it would be bad enough, but we're just getting started.

GRAPH 2 The next year, in seventh grade, Suzy starts dating an eighth grader, we're going to call Derrick. And Lucy had moved to Texas so I was single. One night, I got a phone call from Suzy. And she starts asking me if I still have feelings for her and letting me know that she has feelings for me. And when I admit that I do, all of a sudden, I hear the voice of Derrick telling me he's going to beat the snot out of me for making a move on his girlfriend! This whole call was an ambush! A few days later, I'm walking down the hall outside of the school gym when I see

Derrick out of the corner of my eye, right before he attacks me from behind, but because I saw him coming, I was ready, I flipped around, and threw him headfirst into the concrete stairs right behind me. The fight got broken up, we were taken to the VP's office, and after hearing both sides of the story, Mr. Harris looks at Derrick and says, "So let me get this straight, you, an eighth grader, attacked a seventh grader, from behind, and still got dusted?" Because Derrick was sitting there with a big ole goose egg on his forehead and I didn't have a scratch on me. And then we both got suspended for a week.

GRAPH 3 But, don't worry, the story's still not over. Several years later, I promise I'm not making this up, Lucy moves back to Oklahoma, and her mom starts dating Suzy's dad, they get married, and Suzy and Lucy, who were best friends, and then mortal enemies, became step-sisters.

And, to be clear, I am very aware of how crazy, messy, and not okay all of that is. That's why I'm telling you this story! Because if the good news and the grace of Jesus is powerful enough to change someone like me from a total scumbag into a minister of reconciliation, then I promise you, Jesus can do the same for you... 2 Corinthians 5 puts it this way:

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us... 2 Corinthians 5:17-20 NIV

When we put our faith in Jesus, He makes us new people, and, if you're taking notes, the main idea of the message today is this: **In Christ, we have a new purpose.** *Let's pray.*

TRUTH: We are in a message series called *Reconciled*, where we are learning together about the new people we become, the new perspective we're given, and the new purpose we have, when we become followers of Jesus. For those of you who have said yes to Jesus, you have a new purpose. To be ministers and messengers of reconciliation. What does that mean?

Reconciliation is the act of repairing broken relationships. Because of Jesus, our relationship with God has been fixed, and now, we have been called to partner with Him to repair our relationships with others, and to help others restore their relationship with God. So, what do we do? It's simple, but not easy. In John 13, Jesus tells us:

³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34-35 NIV

How do we fulfill our purpose as ministers of reconciliation? **Love one another the same way Jesus loves us.** That kind of love, love that is true and gracious, just and merciful, that never gives up, that is willing to sacrifice, brings healing where sin has wreaked havoc. And, when people who don't know Jesus see the way we love each other, they will know that we belong to

Jesus. People will know who He is because of the way we love! Do you see it? The quality of our relationships has the potential to be the most attractive or the most off putting thing about our faith.

APPLICATION: All this sounds great in a sermon, but what happens when... your best friend starts dating the person you're into? Or your teammate starts trashing you behind your back? Or your friend who brought you to Jesus walks away from God? How do we live reconciled to God and to people, when it's far too easy to let bitterness and division fracture our relationships with others? Thankfully, Jesus outlines the process we're meant to follow, and He modeled the posture we're meant to have, to love others well. Here's what He says:

15 "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over." Matthew 18:15 NIV

Step 1: Go and talk to them about what happened. Almost eleven years ago, shortly after becoming a Christian, I was 19 years old, and I was on my way back to the house with my dad and little brother after attending church and serving on the Host Team. My dad was driving, and the car behind us started getting really aggressive. So my dad, being my dad, decided to get real aggressive back. When the other car tried to pass us, my dad blocked them. When the other car honked, my dad gave them the peace sign minus one. But the other one. Eventually, my dad gets this other car to pull off the road into a parking lot, and because I know my dad, before he even has a chance to stop the car, I jump out of the front seat, run around to the other side of the car, hold my dad's door closed so he can't get out, and hold the other driver back so that they don't get into a fight. After finally deescalating the situation enough for the other guy to get back in his car and drive off, I get back into our car and talk to my dad about what happened. I specifically remember saying, "Dad, that's not okay, I'm a Christian now! We have to be better than that." I could've done nothing and said nothing, but that wouldn't have been helpful for anyone. When a fellow follower of Jesus, a friend or family member, sins, go and talk to them about what happened, don't just talk about them to someone else. Often, this is all it takes. Because they listen, and reconciliation happens. But, that's not always how it goes.

16 "But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'" Matthew 18:16 NIV

Step 2: Go back and bring someone with you. Unfortunately, for my dad, my conversation with him did not cause him to change his ways. And it wasn't just one conversation that I had with him. Around that same time, there was an incident in the parking lot of a restaurant where my dad tried to pick a fight with someone else, and my whole family was there. So, not only was I telling him that wasn't okay, there were multiple other voices saying the same thing. Which is sometimes what it takes for people to take their sin seriously. Hearing from multiple voices and perspectives that what they're doing is not okay. Because it's easy to convince yourself that one person is wrong, but it gets a lot harder when several people are telling you the same thing.

17 "If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church..." Matthew 18:17 NIV

Step 3: Bring in your spiritual community. This doesn't mean you email Pastor Craig, or DM the LCSwitch instagram page. This is about bringing in your (and their) spiritual community. For most of us, that will look like talking to your small group leader and your youth pastor, so they will help you figure out the best path forward.

"... and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector." Matthew 18:17 NIV

Step 4: Treat them the way you would treat a non-believer. Treat them the way Jesus treated non-believers. With grace upon grace. Because, if after all of this, they still aren't willing to change, then what they need more than being called out on their sin is to be called into a relationship with Jesus. So pray for them, love them, and share the gospel with them so that they will start following Jesus and He will lead them to change. **This is the approach I eventually had to take with my dad. I invited him to join me at a men's ministry in Tulsa called Band of Brothers, where for 12 weeks, a hundred something guys would gather together on Thursday nights, and break up into small groups of five to seven, to learn what it means to be men of God, to pray for each other, and to hold each other accountable. And it was there, in this group, that my dad was challenged to stop pretending and start being the man he was made to be. And it was alongside those guys, that my dad finally repented, he changed his ways, he devoted himself to Jesus, and he finally started to become the husband and father he always wanted to.**

CONCLUSION: This is the process. But, just as important as the process is the posture we carry as we go through these steps. Because if we walk through this process poorly, things will get worse, not better. So how do we do it well? Jumping to Ephesians 4, the Apostle Paul tells us this: **As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble (Humbly.** Before we put a finger at them, we look in the mirror. Recognizing that we are sinners who need the grace and mercy of Jesus.) **and gentle; (Gently.** We don't shame them or condemn them because they've sinned. We gently and kindly tell them the truth, just like we would want someone to do for us.) **be patient, bearing with one another in love. (Patiently.** We don't demand they change overnight, because we know that real change takes time. And we don't give up at their first misstep. We stick by them through it all.) **3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. (Making every effort.** We don't phone it in, we don't cut corners, and we don't go through the motions. We bring our best because excellence honors God, it inspires people, and it's what we would want them to do for us.) **4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called;** Ephesians 4:1-4 NIV

Humbly. Gently. Patiently. Making every effort. Just like Jesus did with us. When He humbled Himself, becoming one of us, and He gently invited us to enter into His Kingdom, He patiently suffered for us, bearing with us as He walked through the pain of torture and death, until rising from the grave and sending His Spirit to fill us and lead us into all truth. He made every effort for you. So make every effort to serve Him by loving others the same way He has loved you.