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**BCC Staff Note:** You're reading Part Two in a four-part Biblical Counseling Coalition blog mini-series on Biblical Conflict Resolution. Read Part One by Robert Jones: [A God's-Eye View of Conflict](#). You can also read Part Three by Shannon Kay McCoy: *Uprooting Conflict at the Heart* and Part Four by Rick Thomas: *How to Help an Angry Person*.

## **The Power of the Gospel in Broken Relationships**

I have the privilege of being involved in mediations and get to see people who were previously angry and hurt by one another become reconciled. It is beautiful to see the truths and the amazing power of the Gospel worked out in broken relationships. How does this happen?

To get a start on answering that question think with me for a moment of words associated with the word Gospel. The short list would include words like: forgiveness, mercy, grace, love and a very powerful word—reconciliation.

All of these words directly relate to the mediations I do but the focus of this article is going to be on the last one. In particular, I am hoping this short article will be an encouragement to you that broken relationships can be reconciled. Instead of just giving up on the relationship or going into self protection mode so that the person doesn't hurt you yet again, there is another alternative.

## **The Doctrine of Reconciliation**

In [2 Corinthians 5:19](#) we read, "...God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them..." Reconciliation is the teaching that your relationship with your Creator has been restored. Scripture teaches us a mind boggling reality—we were made for relationship with our Creator! But something devastating happened in Genesis chapter 3 and that relationship was broken.

By the way, this is the forerunner of all our broken relationships. All you have to do is read Genesis 3 and imagine the interruption that occurred in Adam and Eve's once truly intimate relationship! As Paul teaches in the passage quoted, the gospel is about getting that relationship restored and it happens through the forgiveness of sins because "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself."

Let's think about the implications of that phrase. Doesn't it imply that God took the initiative? He is the ultimate example of a servant who saw a need and then did something about it!

Because of what happened on the cross God could take the initiative. I want to encourage you to follow His example. If reconciliation is going to take place *someone needs to be a servant and take the initiative*.

The power to do this is the same, because of what has already happened on the cross. For barriers to break down someone has to take a risk and move toward the other instead of away. Isn't this exactly what God did in Christ for us? He moved toward us instead of away and I am thankful He did! If God would've waited for me to make the first move I would still be unreconciled.

## A True Story

But what does this look like in real life? Let me demonstrate it by telling you a powerful story of reconciliation from a mediation I had the privilege of being part of. The story involves a single man and the parents of a single lady. You can start to guess the scenario.

That's right, the parents were not in agreement with their daughter's choice of a relationship and verbalized that very clearly. The young lady was not in agreement with the parent's opinion. From there it went downhill fast. The young man decided he needed to rescue the fair maiden from her distress and started to take up the cause. As you can imagine, this further compounded the problem. I was asked to be involved after the relationships were severed and they had exchanged 200 literal pages of e-mails with one another. All claimed to be followers of Christ but the e-mails sure did not read like it!

I began to meet with the young man to start to prepare him for the actual mediation. I showed him Scriptures about how important reconciliation is to our Lord. To help prepare him, I had him doing homework out of a wonderful resource titled *Peacemaking for Families*. I could tell that he was softening up, but there were some complications. First, he had been treated harshly and wasn't sure he wanted to subject himself potentially to the same treatment by being in the same room with these people. Second, he was being advised by others to "just cut your losses" and that this type of relationship problem was impossible to fix.

Notice that his focus was on what had happened to him instead of owning his own contribution to the problem.

All the while we were getting closer and closer to the mediation date and he was still threatening to back out of the process. The week before, I was on the phone trying to reassure him of the process and that the Lord wanted him to take the risk. Two days before, I was still trying to get a firm commitment. The day before the mediation he finally told me he would be there for sure.

## **Moving Toward Instead of Away**

When he showed up, I took him into my office before we went to the mediation room and prayed with him. We reviewed what the agenda would be for the mediation. We then went into the mediation room where the parents were already seated at the table. Out of deference to him, the parents allowed him to speak first. By the way, the parents had come to a place of deep repentance and were already prepared to ask his forgiveness.

When the young man began to speak, instead of focusing on how he had been hurt, he focused on his contribution to the broken relationship. His confession was beautiful (using the 7 A's of confession from *Peacemaker Ministries*—see [www.peacemakerministries.org](http://www.peacemakerministries.org)) and he asked for their forgiveness. This led to many tears and hugs as forgiveness was granted. Instead of there being an adversarial environment there was a sweet gospel environment. By the way, the rest of the mediation went very smoothly because of it!

How did this happen? Among other things, he was willing to take a risk and move toward them instead of away from them. Even though your movement toward the other person does not guarantee that the relationship will be restored, at a minimum your conscience can be clear that you followed the example of our Lord and did what He wanted you to do. He was willing to be a servant and take the initiative. *Broken relationships can be restored but someone needs to make the first move.*

## **Join the Conversation**

What seems risky about this approach to reconciliation? What is keeping you from making the first move? Where would you be if God had taken the same approach with you?