



A 7-week Study on Biblical Reconciliation

“The Awful Power of Prejudice” Discussion Guide Session 1

Key Verse: *"A new command I give to you, love one another."* (John 13:34)

Point 1: We were created to be in right relationships with one another and with God

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one — ²³ I in them and you in me — so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (John 17:20-23)

Welcome to our new church-wide Bible study together. During the next 7 weeks the community of EBCG will gather in more than 15 small groups, each day of the week, to listen to one another and to the word of God. Following from our recent workshop led by the team from “Healing Hearts, Transforming Nations”, we will go deeper into an understanding of Biblical reconciliation and restored relationships. Wherever we look in our world today we encounter conflict. Conflict between nations, generations, tribes, cultures and even conflict in our closest relationships.

Last week we studied the conflict between Jacob and Esau in the book of Genesis. We also saw the power of reconciliation, when we are able to move beyond fear and brokenness to bridge the divide, bringing healing and restoration. The world is full of people who have been harmed and need healing and our personal pain often causes us to inflict pain on others. Jesus shows another way. In John 17, he prayed for us, that we would experience oneness in a world of brokenness and alienation. God has a strategy to use His Church to be agents of healing in a broken world.

? *What does Jesus mean by “one as we are one”? Why is oneness so important (v 23)?*

Point 2: The Trinity is the perfect model for a right relationship based on love

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. ¹³ This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. (1 John 4:7-16)

In every situation of conflict there are broken relationships. People are wounded and angry and want to argue, debate, accuse or justify. Before we start looking at healing these broken relationships, it is important to discover what God wants. What is reconciliation? How will we know when we have achieved it? We will begin this study together by going back to the very beginning, before any of us were created. The Trinity is the perfect model of relationship. Before the world began, Father, Son and Holy Spirit were living eternally in an amazing circle of relationship.

Consider some of the characteristics of the way the Trinity relates to one another: • love • trust • perfect unity • working together • different in role and interdependent. What we see here is perfect love with each complementing the other. God is one and each person of the Trinity is different but this difference is never a problem – it is what makes Him Father, Son and Holy Spirit! What we see in its most perfect form is unity in diversity. This is the model of perfect relationship, enjoying one another throughout eternity. When God said, “Let Us create man in Our image” (Genesis 1:26), it was in the image of a relational God that He created us. This is the oneness of John 17.

? Why do we have so much difficulty experiencing the oneness of God in our relationships?

Point 3: Prejudice denies the image of God and rejects God’s plan for unity in diversity

⁴ Now he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. ⁷ When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” ⁸ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” ¹¹ “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?” ¹³ Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:4-14)

When we ask why there are so many conflicts in the world, most people think of land issues, economic or social injustices, and so on, almost no one thinks of the poison of prejudice. We can define prejudice as a pre-conceived harmful opinion of another group or their rights. All conflict between people groups begins in our minds so we need to understand better how destructive prejudice is. Prejudice is sin because it denies the image of God in another person and rejects God’s plan of unity in diversity. Prejudice condemns whole people groups that God loves and that Jesus died for, prejudice causes pain and disregards Jesus’ commandment to love one another.

In John 4, we see many clear examples of Jesus’ desire to overcome prejudice. He sets an example, traveling through a region the Jews generally avoided and specifically defying the norms of his day to speak with a Samaritan woman. Can you see in this passage how Jesus points to the solution of internal transformation as a key to reconciled relationships? What is the “living water” that Jesus is referring to? (Read John 7:37-39.) Over the coming weeks, we will see that Jesus came to restore our relationship with God and to release us to the ministry of reconciliation. The Church is the Body of Christ on the earth and can reject the poison of prejudice and bring healing and restoration in our relationships. Let’s believe for this in our community at EBCG!

? Have you experienced racism? Take time to pray together for healing from these experiences.

