



A 7-week Study on Biblical Reconciliation

“Restored to Bless” Discussion Guide Session 2

Key Verse: *“...bless, for to this you were called, that you may inherit a blessing.” (1 Peter 3:9, ESV)*

Point 1: God is forming a Holy Nation which includes those from every ethnicity and people group

The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. ² “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” ⁴ So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. ⁵ He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there. ⁶ Abram travelled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. (Genesis 12:1-6)

God created us in His image to experience unity in diversity, but often this is not how it works out, even in the church. Many churches gather around a cultural or ethnic “sameness”, where some are not made to feel welcome. In times of national or cultural conflict, the church is often part of the problem instead of being part of the solution, with the same divisions and hatred existing within the church as in the surrounding communities. And many people don’t see anything wrong in this. As we have seen in chapter 1, this is totally against God’s good plans. He calls us to demonstrate the power of unity in diversity.

God’s answer to this is to form a new special group of His chosen people. In the Old Testament God’s plan began with Abraham. He called him out of his country, his people and his father’s house to be the start of a new nation. This nation was to be His very own people who would be a model of life to the surrounding nations by the way they lived and related to one another. God’s plan began with Israel but “all nations” were to participate in this blessing. In the New Testament we see that this Holy Nation is made up of people who love God from every nation and ethnic group (read Revelation 5:9-10).

? What aspects of your culture/s can be redeemed and used to glorify God in the Holy Nation?

Point 2: God desires to bring blessing as every nation and ethnicity finds its place in the Holy Nation

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. ¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. (1 Peter 2:9-11)

In 1 Peter 2:9, we see Peter referring back to the call of Abraham but this time applying it in a different way. He addresses the believers in many different nations (read 1 Peter 1:1) saying to them, 'You are chosen people, a royal priesthood, a Holy Nation'. All believers from whatever background are 'the body of Christ', the Church, the Holy Nation, God's own family. By faith we are now all Abraham's children now (read Galatians 3:28-29), and in the spiritual sense, we are also commanded by God to 'leave our country, our people and our father's house,' in order to become citizens of the Holy Nation.

At the same time, we do not lose our ethnic or cultural identity as we join in the Holy Nation, but our identity becomes part of the higher, far more glorious, identity of being a citizen of the Holy Nation. Our ethnic identity is not lost but finds its rightful place within our primary identity as citizens of the Holy Nation. We now have a greater loyalty to fellow Christians than to our own ethnic group or country. The Holy Nation is where God's original intention for these relationships can at last be put into practice. But before we can experience this, we must experience true reconciliation with God and with one another.

? What difference would you see if believers in your country lived as fellow citizens in the Holy Nation?

Point 3: God desires for our church community to be source of blessing and reconciliation in our world

Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. 19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (Ephesians 2:12-22)

So why is this reality often so elusive in the Church worldwide? Last week we said that way we show God we love Him is by loving our brother, however different they are from us. We are called to become peacemakers, ambassadors of the Holy Nation, demonstrating God's love and His Kingdom in every aspect of life. Just as the descendants of Abraham were to display his light to the nations, so also are we, as citizens of the Holy Nation, to do the same. But before we can do this, we must see how the work of Jesus on the Cross reconciled us to one another and to God. When we experience true reconciliation, then we will begin to be agents of reconciliation in our relationships, inside the Church and in the world outside.

Through His work on the cross, Jesus has broken down the dividing walls between the nations, cultures and ethnic groups. In Ephesians 2:14-22 we are told that, 'His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two,' and 'in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross'. In this way God is forming from believers of all nations a special new people group, His Holy Nation, where at last, His plan of unity in diversity can be experienced and demonstrated. Can you see that EBCG is a unique expression of this reality, gathering almost 80 nations to be the Body of Christ in Geneva? Can you give an example of this reality in action and suggest some ways in which we can do even better in embracing this calling?

Pray together that God will reveal His purposes as we seek to demonstrate His power of reconciliation.

