



GOD'S ROAD TO RECONCILIATION

BY MIKE GREGORY

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Reconciliation! Where do we begin? Spiritually, the safest place to begin is God's Word. Start with 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 where we are admonished to first, ourselves, be reconciled to God. These verses force us to ask the critical question: Is my life truly reconciled to God as he intends? To answer, I must be willing to open up the deepest recesses of my mind, will, and emotions to God. When I do, I will be taking the first step toward being a minister of reconciliation.

The onus still rests largely with us to assure we are thinking in a truly godly manner as we seek to reconcile with others.

As human beings, our natural tendency is to justify our actions and beliefs based upon our personal experiences, emotions, and acquired knowledge. In this process, we are quite adept at developing concepts of reality that are rather self-focused. If we consider the diversity of experience and belief systems in a world population headed toward 8 billion people, it should be no surprise that each of us will face challenges in being Christ-like ambassadors of reconciliation.

God directs us in Matthew 5:23-24 to first go and be reconciled to others; then come and offer our gift. Couple these verses with Matthew 7:3 regarding the potential "plank" in our own eye and the onus still rests largely with us to assure we are thinking in a truly godly manner as we seek to reconcile with others.

Application of the aforementioned verses puts us on a firm foundation to ensure we have proper position to seek reconciliation with others, but there are additional steps needed as well. The first of these is prayer. I have the greatest success in reconciliation when I have invested myself thoroughly in prayer, and have rallied the support and involvement of fellow Christians in prayer regarding the situation. We should also seek the wise counsel of others as God directs. Not wise

counsel to build our case against another person or to gossip, but a fully self-transparent discussion, trusting God to reveal blind spots, strongholds, hidden agendas—anything that has not been placed in submission to God.

All of these are keys to successful reconciliation, to fulfilling our role as ambassadors for Christ. How do I know this is true? The answer is simple:

In June of 2012, my wife came to me and advised me she was moving out. She no longer wanted to share life with me, other than being there for our adult children. She had a long list of the ways I had failed her, and she no longer wanted to invest in our relationship. In March of 2014, she successfully obtained the divorce she had desired. However, behind the scenes, during those twenty torturous months, I was committed to all the aforementioned aspects of reconciliation. I had to go through the process of facing where I truly stood with God. I had to humble myself in ways I'd never considered before. I found peace and comfort for my pain with Jesus, and I relied on the Holy Spirit to direct me. Brothers and sisters in Christ rallied to support my marriage in prayer. In this process, I was blessed with wise counselors, but the responsibility fell to me to test everything, keeping what was good in terms of counsel, as directed by God.

Then two weeks after our divorce my wife called me to say that God had awakened her from a sound sleep and told her she needed to return to our marriage. Reconciliation followed over the next month, the divorce was annulled, and we've been together ever since. God's pathway to reconciliation worked for me. It can work for you as well. Follow his ways. Praise him!! 🙏



Mike remains a work in progress in the hands of his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Mike and his wife, Sandra, attend Maple Glen Mennonite Church in Grantsville, Maryland.



Lean In

BY MIRIAM ROGGIO



Last summer we took our dog through obedience school. I think the process was more for us than for her, but she is doing well. She is a toy fox terrier and loves to hunt. Our obedience school trainer taught us a game of hide-n-seek for the dog. When one of the kids goes to hide and then calls her to come, her ears perk up, and she leans in toward the sound. And then off she goes in their direction! The purpose of the game is to make it so rewarding to come when she hears our voice that if she were ever in danger or starting to go in the wrong direction, she would come right away when we call.

I was talking to my son about trusting Jesus the other day. I encouraged him to listen for the truth of Scripture and then let his heart lean in or turn toward the truth.

We saw...that she first had to recognize our voices, trust that we cared for her.

Perk up your ears, so to speak.

We talked about how trust is when you can't see yet how things will work out, but you know that God loves you and he wants the best for you.

John 10:27 says, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me" (NIV).

Listen and lean in.

Looking ahead into uncertainty.

Listen and lean in.

New goals, dreams, and challenges are surfacing.

Listen and lean in.

We get to choose how we spend our days and with whom.

Listen and lean in.

The verse in Proverbs 3:5 is such a familiar one, but I have appreciated the wording in it.

"Trust in the Lord with ALL your heart and LEAN not on your own understanding..."

I can lean on his understanding and lean towards his ways. That will keep me on the right path.

Sometimes, leaning in for us looks like re-focusing on Scripture or playing worship music. Sometimes, leaning in looks like stopping to pray a prayer of thanks or to ask for wisdom. Sometimes, it looks like the hard work of cultivating relationships or planting the seed of the gospel.

We saw with our puppy that she first had to recognize our voices, trust that we cared for her, and then keep leaning in and seeking until she found us, sometimes for a long time without getting distracted.

My kids and I are learning that following God is not exactly the same, but sometimes a similar process. The first step to trust and obedience is perking up our ears to listen, then leaning in and moving towards his voice. And then running into his arms and toward his good plan for us! 🐾



Miriam works part-time as a nurse practitioner in a rural health clinic with an emphasis on caring for Hispanics and as a nurse educator in university settings. She and her family attend Johnsville Mennonite Church (Ohio), where her husband Matt is the pastor.



“Mistakes Were Made”

(Part 5)

BY DAPHNE EDMONSTON

The Narrow Path Between Legalism and License

The Jews struggled, the early Christians struggled, and we are still struggling to walk the narrow path Jesus trod in balancing love and obedience. Mistakes have been made in every era of church history and by every historic stream of Christianity—including Mennonites.

It is very easy to fall off the narrow path into a ditch on one side or the other: legalism or license. Mennonites have tended toward legalism, as have most other historic streams of Christianity.

Why do we continually slip off the path? There are probably as many answers to this question as there are movements and personalities behind them. I am suggesting two main categories of mistakes that cause us to end up in the ditch of legalism and then will discuss how to avoid the ditches altogether.

The first category is primarily negative. It comes in many disguises, but boils down to fear of condoning sin. We lack love and grace with people because we are afraid that, if we are too full of grace and mercy, they will feel free to keep on sinning. Another way this manifests is that we are afraid to befriend those living in sin because we will be seen as accepting of sin. This is a sure way to plummet into the ditch.

The second category seems to spring from a positive motivation—the fear of not doing all that is expected. If we keep all the “do’s and don’ts,” we know that we are “good.” We also have a list by which to judge others and call them to account. This may seem noble, but it is also a fall from Jesus’ narrow path.

In slipping from this path, we lose the vital force that Jesus provided for us. God has called his people to radical love, grace, and forgiveness. This is the power of the gospel. There is a pressing need for us to find and persevere on the narrow way while holding fast to Jesus’ commandments.

Love is key. “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love” (1 John 4:18 NASB).

Biblical love keeps us solid and grounded enough that we can risk being around those who do not look, think, or act in comfortable ways. Grounded in this love we can risk sharing our lives with “outsiders” in the hope that the Holy Spirit will draw them into the family of God.

Jesus walked this narrow path of love and obedience as an example to us. He invites us to follow in his footsteps.

He was secure in his relationship with his Father. He spent much time in prayer. He had fellowship with his disciples—and with sinners. He was accused of being a drunkard, a law breaker, and consorting with prostitutes and other cast offs.

But Jesus never took sin lightly or ignored it. He dealt with it lovingly and directly as when healing the sick man at the Pool of Bethesda. He said, “Do not sin anymore” (John 5:14). Jesus also embodied obedience to the Father when he prayed, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done” (Luke 22:42 NRSVA).

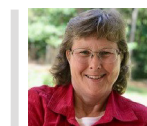
Jesus’ life and teaching are a clarion call to love and obedience. We read in the Great Commandment and the Great Commission that we are to love God, self, and others rightly and go make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching observance to all that Jesus commanded.

This is the balance Jesus taught. It begins with Love and ends with Obedience. Jesus says simply, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

We must love fully and even uncomfortably, but never compromise Jesus’ commandments. We must be diligent and discerning not to mistake our cultural, denominational, or personal preferences as his commandments. There have always been Pharisees!

The early Anabaptists laid out solid biblical principles in the Schleithem Confession. Yet it is not hard to see how committed people—in their zeal for Christlikeness—have overemphasized various inflexible and legalistic standards (i.e., dress, food, entertainment, transportation, etc.) that are not expressly scriptural.

This is a struggle we will contend with until Jesus returns! But let us not grow weary in choosing to walk the narrow path of love and grace in obedience to all that Christ has commanded. 📖



Daphne is married to David, pastor of Trinity Church in Prospect, VA. She has an MA in Christian Apologetics and loves Bible study, church history, discipleship, hiking, and gardening. Daphne and David have two children and five grandchildren.



Sharing Hope: Ukraine Giving Update

BY ROSEDALE INTERNATIONAL



In February, as Russia invaded Ukraine, CMC and Rosedale International (RI) put out an urgent request for support of the Ukrainian Mennonite Brethren (MB) Conference. Together with Multiply, the mission organization of MB churches, CMC and RI gathered donations to equip Ukrainian believers as they served their neighbors in the midst of war. The response was overwhelming; since that initial request for aid, Multiply has received a total of \$163,891.31 from CMC.

Recently, RI received a report from Vic Wiens, MB Interim General Director, which detailed how the funds have been used. He shared, "With God's grace and thanks to your generous donations, MB pastors, church planters, and key Multiply workers are working as the hands and feet of Jesus in the midst of this crisis.

"For years, the churches of the Ukrainian MB Conference have been focused on a holistic Gospel which cares for the needy and marginalized. Now in war, they continue to serve, offering their buildings as shelters. In Dnipro, a partner church daily receives 50-70 people who are seeking refuge and safety, drawing them into hopeful gatherings of worship, Scripture reading, and prayer. In Zaporizhzhia, a center which has served at-risk youth and families for years has now converted their offices into dorms for refugees, even installing a shower.


"Your gifts have also enabled Multiply to purchase and maintain the vehicles used to transport supplies to MB churches in Ukraine. Multiply workers in Germany, Austria, and Lithuania have partnered with these churches to cross the border into Ukraine, dropping off supplies and loading evacuees to transport back to safety. In the city of Molochansk, women from an MB nursing home use these supplies to prepare care packages for the disabled and vulnerable. MB churches in other cities are doing likewise, working with social services to respond to needs that are overwhelming the civic government infrastructure.

"Multiply global workers from Austria, Germany, Lithuania and Central Asia have been mobilized to Moldova, Poland, and Hungary to bring critical resources to meet immediate

needs and are collaborating with local churches to create long-term strategies. In Moldova, Multiply workers are conducting disaster management and trauma counseling seminars for evangelical leaders, bringing several churches and Christian organizations together to unite their efforts. In Kishinev, churches and workers have formed the Christian Association for Refugees, a coalition with a centralized database to help refugees. This kind of collaboration is happening all throughout the region, and Multiply has received numerous invitations to work together into the future, including evangelism among refugees. Your donations have made all of this possible, and are keeping hope alive."

CMC churches—your outpouring of resources has had a profound impact on the lives of our suffering brothers and sisters and all they have served during this crisis. This impact will last far beyond the present day as Multiply workers and MB churches build connections and provide a tangible picture of what a servant gospel looks like.

As Vic concluded, "In the midst of this crisis, hearts are broken and traumatized—but also open to the Gospel. Along with anger and bitterness, there are also expressions of love and the pursuit of peace. Together, we are living and sharing hope.

"Though this war may be far from over, we fix our eyes on Jesus, our Risen Savior who has won the battle. We are sincerely grateful to you for giving generously to Multiply so that we can continue to support efforts to bring relief and hope to many during this crisis. We pray that the global Church will continue to collaborate effectively in these efforts and be faithful as an instrument of healing and peace, so that together the world may know Jesus." 

To view the latest reports and prayer updates, go to multiply.net/ukraine-in-crisis.



Rosedale International is the mission arm of CMC, working to take Jesus to the ends of the earth by fully engaging CMC churches in maturing and multiplying disciples, especially among the least reached.



multiply 2022

July 22-24 | McHenry, MD
Garrett County Fairground

THRIVE

What is the Multiply conference?

An oft-debated question among the planners of CMC’s Multiply Conference is, “What is the purpose of our annual gathering?” Is fellowship the primary purpose? Is it to be an equipping event for ministry leaders? Is it meant to be primarily inspirational? Those are all good things, and we hope they all happen at Multiply 2022, but those things can also be experienced at many other conferences. Is there a unique purpose for which we gather each year? We propose that amidst the other reasons we gather, **the overarching purpose is to celebrate our life together as a body and recommit ourselves to the mission to which God has called us.** As a body made up of local churches, a Bible college, and a mission agency, we have stories to tell of God’s goodness and how he has been at work in our midst. Let’s tell those stories! And let’s be inspired to embrace anew our mission to mature and multiply churches locally and globally.

JOIN US JULY 22-24!!
GARRETT COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS
270 MOSSER RD
MCHENRY, MD 21541



EXPO BUILDING



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

MAIN SESSIONS – Expo Building
Worship Leader – Annette Miller

FRIDAY EVENING 6:30-8:00 pm

Our Stories

As a body made up of local churches, a Bible college, and a mission agency, we have stories to tell of God's goodness and how he has been at work in our midst. Let's tell those stories! And let's be inspired to embrace anew our mission to mature and multiply churches locally and globally.

What It Means to Thrive – Video montage

Children's Feature – Jim Miller

Our Stories

SATURDAY MORNING

Plenary Session 1 9:00 am

Introduction of New Congregations

Moderator's Address – Phil Swartzentruber

Our Story

Seminar & Table-Talk Session 1 10:15 am

Where Are We Now? Understanding Rural – and Why It Matters – Brad Roth

In this session, we'll look at characteristics of rural and ask how rural's unique contours shape the work of the church. How can we see, love, and impact our communities for the sake of the Kingdom?

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Seminar & Table-Talk Session 2 1:15 pm

More with Less in God's Country – Brad Roth

In this wounded moment, God is calling the church to both more and less: more love for him and passion for sharing the gospel, and a let-go-and-let-God passionate *less* that depends on God's presence and power. How can we learn the art of more-with-less for God in rural places?

Seminar & Table-Talk Session 3 2:30 pm

How to Light a Fire: Prayer in the Rural Church

–Brad Roth

The church is a divine-human alloy guided by the Holy Spirit and sent into the world. Prayer keeps the supernatural nature of the church front and center and fuels God's people for mission. In this session, we'll talk—and practice!—prayer to spark a new fire in our lives and congregations.

Special Events - 4:00 pm

See Special Events box



www.cmcrosedale.org



For more information and to register, visit our website.

SATURDAY EVENING 6:30-8:00 pm

Plenary Session 2

What It Means to Thrive – Video montage

Children's Feature – Jim Miller

Introduction of CMC Church Planting Catalyst

Our Stories

Characteristics of a Thriving Church – Wes Furlong

SUNDAY MORNING 10:00-11:30 am

Children's Church - in children's area

Plenary Session 3

Christmas Project Thank You – Video

Passing of the Baton – CMC Moderators

Our Stories

Video - Rosedale International

God's Mission for the Church – Wes Furlong

YOUTH SESSIONS – Cherry Glade Mennonite Church

Saturday - 10:45 - 3:30 (Lunch c/o RBC @ Cherry Glade)

Theme: *But God...*

Speakers: John Risner, Richard Swartzentruber, Eric Miller, and Keegan Wright

- Spiritual gift testing & identification
- *God's Design for Our Gifts*
- *Practically Using Our Gifts*

Prizes for the largest youth group, most miles traveled, and "coolest" t-shirts

Experience REACH 3:45-4:45 pm for interested young adults

CHILDREN'S CLASSES Nursery - 8th grade

Theme: *A Thriving Spiritual Life*

Registration & Check-In - At the barn-like stage between 4-H Building and Beef Building

Additional care for nursery/preschool children will be available during the Friday and Saturday evening sessions, 6:30-8:00 pm.

To register your children, visit our website.

SPECIAL EVENTS

- **CMC Multi-Agency Reception** Friday Evening
- **Second Wind Bluegrass Band** Saturday Evening
- **Hymn sing at the old Cherry Glade Meeting House** Saturday, 4 pm
- **Round Table with RI field workers** Saturday, 4 pm back of Expo building by display tables.
- **Experience REACH** - Come see what serving with REACH could look like for you! Saturday, 3:45 pm @ Cherry Glade