

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9).

## **Introduction**

If you are in the field of counseling, you certainly cannot attempt to reconcile people to each other if you are not practicing peace and reconciliation in your life. For one cannot give that which he does not possess. Start with yourself. Search your heart and see how many people you hold a grudge against. After that pray for forgiveness for yourself and for those you have a discord with.

## **How to Administer Reconciliation**

*"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector"* (Matthew 18:15-17).

As a counselor, you have to be careful and tactful when admonishing someone or attending a session in which two people will be rebuking each other. There are five principals to be considered:

1. With a heart open to peace and reconciliation, admonish with the aim of reconciling and not exposing mistakes.
2. With objectivity, talk about the action itself and not about your interpretation of it or your analysis of the person's character. Starting by verbalizing judgmental statements will not help much in reconciliation. For example, say "what you said hurt my feelings." Versus "your action is worthless" or "you are crazy".
3. With attentiveness, listen to the other's point of view. Chances are that the offender is already occupied with what he has to say to defend himself. Be a good listener.
4. With humility, confess your mistakes "*Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much*" (James 5:16).
5. With candidness, ask for forgiveness.

These five major principals are highly recommended in bringing about reconciliation. However, they are not a complete guarantee that peace and reunion will take place. This is because reunion involves consent from both sides. Sometimes hard heartedness from one side stands as an obstacle for reconciliation to take place.

## **The Importance of Privacy**

As the common saying goes, "too many spoons spoil the broth". The interference of too many people may do more harm than help and complicate issues instead of resolving them. Our Lord Jesus Christ's recommendation is that reconciliation takes place "*...between you and him alone...If he will not hear...*" (Matthew 18:15,16) implies the possibility of failure for reconciliation to take place.

## **Essential Traits**

A counselor should be:

1. Wise, "*He who wins souls is wise*" (Proverbs 11:30)
2. Fair, without any bias towards any side
3. Accepted by both sides

## **Higher Authority**

If the people in strife do not hear from the counselor, then go to a higher authority, the church. If the person refuses to reconcile or comply by what the church recommends, the church will then admit that you have done your part and will give you absolution to receive Holy Communion and pray with a free conscience. The Midnight prayer "you accepted the tax collector and saved the harlot" implies that once repentance is expressed, forgiveness is available at any time after so long. The best example offered by

our Lord is that of the Prodigal Son who has never given up nor did his father lose hope in his return waiting expectantly for him. St. Paul, in his message to the Corinthians concerning the sinner, wrote, "*Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him*" (2 Corinthians 2:8), keeping doors open for his return. When we incorrectly say that God did not reconcile, it is because of the refusal of people to return to Him. The best catch was that of the thief on the right side who at the last moment stole the kingdom by asking for forgiveness which was not denied him even when Christ should have been busy with His own agony.

## **Conclusion**

Peace and reconciliation are integral parts of worship. We cannot call God our Father if we do not have peace and love with one another. As St. John said in his epistle "*If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?*" (1 John 4:20). Therefore it is the responsibility of every faithful Christian and counselor to strive to have a free conscience towards God and people.

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