

Life Group Notes Week beginning 24 March 2019 2 Cor. 5. 11-21
OUR GOD OF SUFFERING AND RESCUING - RECONCILING US TO HIMSELF

This subject brings us into the heart of the gospel, and the meaning of Easter.

1. What does the word 'reconciliation' mean in our world today? Think of any examples you know, at personal, local, national or international level, where there has been reconciliation; and of examples where it has failed. What is necessary, for reconciliation to take place? Can it ever be one-sided?
2. Why do human beings need to be reconciled to God? Read Genesis chapter 1 verses 27-31, and chapter 3. verses 8-13. Do you hear the Lord God's voice in verse 8 as angry or sad? For Old Testament examples of God's desire for people to be reconciled to him, see Isaiah 1. 18; and 30. 15, 18.
3. Note in Isaiah 30. 18, above, that 'the Lord is a God of justice'. This means he can't ignore sin. 2 Corinthians 5. 21 is a pretty shocking statement. Read the prophecy in Isaiah 53. 2-6 for further light on this. Do you feel able to personalise this, by putting 'my, I, and me' in place of 'our, we and us'?
4. Paul is passionate about sharing the message of reconciliation. But he wasn't always good at personal relationships, especially with the Corinthian church, as we may infer from verses 11-13. Yet he taught that the death of Jesus also brings reconciliation between people - look at Ephesians 2. 14-18. Have you experienced this?
5. What does an ambassador do? (2 Cor 5. 20) We may not all be evangelists, but if we are believers, we are all called to demonstrate God's redemptive love. Muthuraj Swamy, whose book 'Reconciliation' is the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book 2019, says 'My conversion was based on what happened at church, where people witnessed to Christ and were kind and caring towards others in the fellowship, rather than on Christian doctrine or Bible verses about ultimate truth.' Does this shock you or encourage you? Does it absolve us from 'imploping people to be reconciled to God'?

Use a song such as 'How deep the Father's love for us' to lead you into worship as you contemplate the reality of Jesus' self-sacrifice on our behalf.