

Uncle Neville Naden on Reconciliation

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Neville Naden is a Wiradjuri man from central west New South and an ordained Anglican Minister. He serves with Bush Church Aid Society as well as sitting on the board of The Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship of Australia for the past 20 years. He has spoken into TEAR for a number of years including as a member of the Dhumba Committee.



I've been asked to share a little about reconciliation and what I think reconciliation is. I hope this will encourage people as they grapple with this very important subject.

My understanding of reconciliation is that there are two types. There is biblical reconciliation, which is outlined in II Corinthians Chapter 5. And then there is secular reconciliation, which the world today is seeking to grasp and seeks to implement.

Paul, in writing to the Corinthian Church says that 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.' So the work of reconciliation has nothing to do with humans. It's all of God! The work of reconciliation is God's work. That is 'biblical reconciliation. It is a positional truth. It shows how we have a relationship with God through His Son. It removes the human element from the equation,

whereas 'secular reconciliation' is based on a reciprocal arrangement. It says, "If you do something for me and I reciprocate and do something for you, then we can be one." Biblical reconciliation says that it is not what I do for you or what you do for me that makes us one, it's what Christ has done for both of us that makes you and I one.

A lot of our First Nations People say that you can't have reconciliation because there was no "conciliation/unity" in the first place. Many of our people, right across the country say that reconciliation can never happen because there was no unity, there was no oneness in the first place. They say that we are working towards something that could never be achieved, because the word in and of itself says that in order to have reconciliation, we must first have had conciliation.

I want to encourage anyone reading this to think on the lines of biblical reconciliation, because biblical reconciliation removes the human element and it works.

In biblical reconciliation there was unity at the beginning. When God created the heavens and the earth and he created humans.

We are told in Genesis 3:8, that God walked in the garden in the cool of the day. No doubt he did this for relationship purposes. He walked and conversed with Adam and Eve, and they enjoyed a wonderful time of unity and fellowship. As a result of sin entering the world this brought about a severing of this relationship with the creator. They were removed from the garden, from the

presence of God. Then from this point on the rest of the Bible is about God fixing this problem of separation, and the culmination of this work was when His Son took on the form of a man. Jesus, took on the punishment that sinful humanity deserved, 2 Corinthians 5:21. He was sent with a pre-ordained purpose to die for the sins of humanity. And so through faith in him, we can have that relationship restored. And so we give thanks to God for the wonderful oneness that all of God's children enjoy.

The other thing that we need to remember is that reconciliation does not always mean unity. And as you look at and read the gospel narrative, you see that the disciples were all reconciled because of their relationship with God and their belief and their trust in the Saviour. But there are numerous occasions where they were reconciled, but they weren't unified.

The classic example is the argument over who's going to sit at the right hand of Jesus when he comes into his kingdom. There was disagreement about that, read Mark 10:35-41. Another example is Paul and Silas at the beginning of their second missionary journey had a fall out with Barnabas, Read Acts 15:3-16:10. Silas and Paul went one way with the gospel and Barnabas took Mark and headed in a different direction. Were they reconciled? They were reconciled alright, but there was no unity. The unity that they did enjoy was severed. So reconciliation does not always mean unity.

Not only have we, the church, been reconciled to God through Christ, but we have been given the Ministry of reconciliation. It is the believers responsibility

to go out and speak to people about this wonderful oneness that we have with our creator, God.

We are called to be people of reconciliation, bringing people into a right relationship with God through Jesus. I trust that each of us are seeking to do that, because we are reconciled to God in Christ, and once we move into a relationship with God, we become a part of his family. This demands so much more of us when we understand that we have a relationship with God. God is calling us to go and bring others into that same relationship.

Churches over the years have sought to have a ministry using the foundation of reconciliation with First Peoples. And many of them do a great job and we're encouraged by that fact. But many of them do it out of guilt due to all the atrocities that have happened to Aboriginal people since colonisation. I want to suggest to you that we should never do things out of guilt. Otherwise, it just becomes just another activity. We should do it because of what God has done for us in Christ, and therefore, we should do our best to proclaim the good news of the bible. So guilt has no part to play when it comes to reconciliation with God and His people.

I believe the biggest issue for the church today is the lack of Gospel preaching, the lack of standing on the authority of scripture when it comes to these issues. We are called to be gospel people. We are called to be people of evangelism, the people who will take the gospel to the least the last and the lost, to those who are on the margins of our churches and those who are the outcasts of our society. Sometimes we get really comfortable in our congregations and we

don't seek to live out this biblical truth of reconciliation. I believe that this grieves the heart of God when we don't do that.

You might say, well, how do we do that? Well, it's not rocket science really. We do that by developing relationships. The first step in developing a relationship with anyone is to meet people. If we are serious about reconciliation, we need to set aside our comforts, go and say g'day to someone regardless of ethnicity. Begin the conversation. Begin to build a rapport. Begin to build that relationship. The more you spend time together, the more you connect with people, the more you'll understand how God wants you to serve them and they you.

So let me encourage you to venture out of your comfort zones and begin to establish relationships with people in your community, regardless of ethnicity. When we do that, I believe it pleases God.