

The Purpose of a Servant Leader

By Frank Catanzaro

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, students will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

After reading the comments relating to 2 Corinthians 5:17–18a in the section **It's in the Book**, prepare to share a clear explanation of the term *reconcile* and the reason it is important to this lesson.

Assignment Two

After reading the comments relating to 2 Corinthians 5:18b–19 in the section **It's in the Book**, prepare to share what God has done in “the ministry of reconciliation.”

Assignment Three

Scan the entire **It's in the Book** section. Then prepare to lead the group in brainstorming ways to effectively engage in the ministry of reconciliation.

Scripture to Memorize

“And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.” Colossians 1:21–22

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will have a clear understanding of the ministry of reconciliation as the primary purpose of a servant leader.

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He and his wife, Teresa, have been married for over thirty-four years and have one son, Jonathan (a pastor in Georgia), who is married to Elissa. They have three children. Frank and his wife live in Fort Worth.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Suppose you were having a discussion with someone who considered herself to be “religious.” In addition, suppose she was a member of a denomination that requires certain activities they think are necessary for salvation. (Some denominations do, in fact, believe one must do certain things in order to be saved).

Could you thoroughly explain the difference between the reconciling work of Christ leading to salvation and the man-made works of the flesh many believe lead to salvation? Is there a clear distinction between the two in your mind?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-19 out loud.

Studying the Passage, vv. 17–18a

Verse 17. he is a new creation. In this verse Paul made a clear statement about salvation and its implications. He said that those who are in Christ are new creatures. The old spiritual condition, being dead, is gone. The new spiritual condition, being alive in Christ, has come. All things are new because we view them in the context of Christ’s life, which now is ours.

Verse 18. All this is from God. This is a dramatic statement. The Greek word translated as *all* includes the idea of a “totality or the whole.” Here Paul began an explanation of the difference between God’s work and ours. He made clear that salvation is of God and has nothing to do with our own attempts to provide it for ourselves. So often when we talk to people about their salvation, they want to reference things they have done or where they attend church. These things have nothing to do with salvation.

The Greek word translated *from* teaches that all these things are “out of” God. He has provided reconciliation on His own with absolutely no help from us. To that we can say “Hallelujah.” If reconciliation were dependent on us in any way, at some point we would fail.

Assignment One Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now give an explanation of the term *reconcile* and the reason it is important to this lesson.

Studying the Passage, 2 Corinthians 5:18a

Verse 18. reconciled. The Greek word translated *reconciled* literally means that this divine work of redemption is accomplished by our Lord. Because He is concerned for us, He has taken upon Himself our sin and has become our sacrifice. As a result, we are reconciled to God through Christ. This is great news! We are made right (reconciled) by His actions and none of our own. And this work brings glory to the Father. “Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:11).

To say it another way, it’s what God did and not what we have done that makes us right with Him. In other words, we *do* because we *are*, not we *are* because we *do*. In our culture, identity often is established by doing. This is why so many people are in crisis. They try to find their identity in what they do on a daily basis. They try to find it in their jobs, relationships, hobbies, and other aspects of their lives. So, if something changes in their lives, they experience a loss of identity.

This is a difference between disciples of Christ and others. Disciples find their identity in Christ. Jobs, relationships, hobbies, and other aspects of life can change, but our identity stays the same. We are children of God. We know who we are and our purpose for being here.

Assignment Two Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now explain what God has done in “the ministry of reconciliation.”

Studying the Passage, 2 Corinthians 5:18b–19

Verse 18. the ministry of reconciliation. God reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and then He gave us “the ministry of reconciliation.” The Greek word translated as *ministry* is a form of the word *diákonos*, which is translated as “deacon” in other passages. The term literally means “service toward a master or guest.” In other words, the reference is to a servant who doesn’t really have a choice about what he or she does or doesn’t do.

Put yet another way, we are joyfully obligated to be involved in this ministry of reconciliation as a result of what God accomplished in reconciling us to Himself. This is an important concept. Some Christians say, “I have not been called to ministry.” Actually, they have. Every believer has been called to the ministry of reconciliation. That purpose and responsibility come as a result of who God has made us to be—His children.

Verse 19. the message of reconciliation. We understand our identity in Christ and that God has given us a ministry. This phrase describes that ministry. Our role in all of this is to proclaim exactly what God has done. This is His desire. He wants the world to know that if they will come to Him through Christ, He will not count their trespasses against them. Proclaiming that message is the purpose of a servant leader.

Discussion Question

Have you been reconciled to God through Christ? Before this lesson, did you know that God had assigned to you the ministry of reconciliation? Describe a recent time that Christ spoke through you to a person who is lost—with the goal of seeing that person reconciled to God.

Assignment Three Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now lead the group in brainstorming ways to effectively engage in the ministry of reconciliation.

On Your Own

After listening to ideas from your group, invite the Holy Spirit to lead you to adopt one of those ideas. Commit to Christ that you will speak about Him to a particular person who needs reconciliation.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven.

Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart (the real you) for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something in your life for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit says to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights, and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions, and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to King Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

In 2 Corinthians 5: 18–19, we begin to understand the significance of knowing who God has made us to be and the ministry to which He has called us all. Ultimately, God has created us for His glory. By His grace and the sacrifice of Christ, we have a relationship with Him. But He has not simply invited us into relationship for our own pleasure and fulfillment. He has given us a purpose to fulfill.

Those who are in Christ are new creatures. Their dead spiritual condition is gone. Being alive in Christ has come. All things are new because we view them in the context of Christ's life, which now is ours.

Salvation is of God and has nothing to do with the attempts people make to provide it for themselves. What they have done or where they attend church has nothing to do with salvation. God has provided reconciliation on His own with absolutely no help from people. To that we can rejoice. If reconciliation were dependent on us in any way, at some point we would fail.

Because He is concerned for us, God has taken our sin upon Himself and has become our sacrifice. As a result, we are reconciled to God through Christ. We are made right (reconciled) by His actions and none of our own. This work brings glory to the Father.

It's what God did and not what we have done that makes us right with Him. In other words, we *do* because we *are*, not we *are* because we *do*.

We have received from God the ministry of reconciliation. Our role is to proclaim what God has done. This is His desire. He wants the world to know that if they will come to Him through Christ, He will not count their trespasses against them. Proclaiming that message is the purpose of a servant leader.

Are you ready to embrace that purpose?

Parent Question

According to Scripture, what is the ministry of reconciliation, and why should it be important to a servant leader?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to teenagers who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.

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