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Racial Reconciliation: Not the Kumbaya Version

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Reclaiming the Definition of Reconciliation

I believe that reconciliation is a spiritual and political process that restores broken relationships after a form of injustice and oppression. Relying largely on our reading and discussion of the book *Radical Reconciliation: Beyond Political Pietism & Christian Quietism*, I have concluded that reconciliation is not a singular act. It is a process by which multiple sides of an injustice come together to do the work of bringing about restoration of our relationship with God and with one another. It is not linear, nor is it ever complete. It is dynamic. Each part begins and continues. Reconciliation is a work that must be intentionally pursued and revisited. We must always be looking to continue the process and work of reconcile as a way of preventing a return to alienation.

The process includes as least the following:

- **Resistance** – that the oppressed & those who stand with them stand firm in resisting powers of oppression and any forms of injustice that is against the will of God.
 - “Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and his powerful strength. Put on God’s armor so that you can make a stand against the tricks of the devil. We aren’t fighting against human enemies but against rulers, authorities, forces of cosmic darkness, and spiritual powers of evil in the heavens. Therefore, pick up the full armor of God so that you can stand your ground on the evil day and after you have done everything possible to still stand. So stand with the belt of truth around your waist, justice as your breastplate, and put shoes on your feet so that you are ready to spread the good news of peace. Above all, carry the shield of faith so that you can extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is God’s word.”
Ephesians 6:10-17
- **Recognition** – that those who have participated in perpetuating injustice must acknowledge the injustice and their complicity.
 - “I harassed those who followed the Way to their death, arresting and delivering both men and women into prison. The high priest and the whole Jerusalem Council can testify about me.” Paul’s recognition of his participation in injustice in Acts 22:4-5
- **Repentance** (and forgiveness) – that the participants in injustice repent to God and those oppressed, while the oppressed work to forgive.
 - “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have more than enough food, but I’m starving to death! I will get up and go to my father, and say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son. Take me on as one of your hired hands.’ ’ So he got up and went to his father. “While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion. His father ran to him, hugged him, and kissed him.” Luke 15:17-20
 - “Watch yourselves! If your brother or sister sins, warn them to stop. If they change their hearts and lives, forgive them.” Luke 17:3

- **Repair** (and/or repay, replace, reparate) – that the participants in injustice work to repair damage, repay what was lost, replace what was taken, or reparate for irreparable harms committed.
 - “Look, Lord, I give half of my possessions to the poor. And if I have cheated anyone, I repay them four times as much.” Luke 19:8

- **Reconstruct** – that there is no true reconciliation when the structure does not change. A new structure should be sought in a way that dismantles the power structure and builds a new one with equity for those who have endured injustice.
 - “On that day I shall raise up the meeting tent of David that has fallen, and repair its broken places. I will raise up its ruins, and I will rebuild it like a long time ago; So that they may possess what is left of Edom, as well as all the nations who are called by my name, says the Lord who will do this. The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when the one who plows will overtake the one who gathers, when the one who crushes grapes will overtake the one who sows the seed. The mountain will drip wine, and all the hills will flow with it. I will improve the circumstances of my people Israel; they will plant vineyards and drink their wine; and they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant them upon their land and they will never again be plucked up out of the land that I have given them, says the Lord your God.” Amos 9:11-15

- **Restored Relationship** – that relationships are restored and nurtured in a way that shows a commitment to never allowing the injustice to return.
 - “While we were still weak, at the right moment, Christ died for ungodly people. It isn’t often that someone will die for a righteous person, though maybe someone might dare to die for a good person. But God shows his love for us, because while we were still sinners Christ died for us. So, now that we have been made righteous by his blood, we can be even more certain that we will be saved from God’s wrath through him. If we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son while we were still enemies, now that we have been reconciled, how much more certain is it that we will be saved by his life? And not only that: we even take pride in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, the one through whom we now have a restored relationship with God.” Romans 5:6-11