

# Study Guide Questions for *Reconciling All Things*

## INTRODUCTION

1. What motivated you to read this book? What do you hope to learn or gain by reading it?
2. In what ways can you relate to Chris's and Emmanuel's stories?
3. Chris and Emmanuel describe a sense of "deep restlessness about what it means to live faithfully in a broken and divided world" (p. 11). How have you experienced restlessness? What makes you restless?
4. On page 13, Chris shares how his life experiences have taught him that "reconciliation is a long and fragile journey." What life experiences have shaped the way you understand reconciliation? What lessons about reconciliation have you learned in your life?
5. Both Chris and Emmanuel feel the call to live in the divide between very different locations: Korea and America, Duke and West Jackson, Duke and Uganda. In what ways have you felt called to live in the midst of divisions or between diverse places?

## RECONCILING ALL THINGS

6. Chris and Emmanuel come to learn that “the church’s brokenness was at the heart of our restlessness” (p. 16). How do you see the brokenness of the church in your city or in the world? How might the church’s brokenness be a part of what makes you restless?
7. This book suggests that hope rests in a deep conviction that “the way things are is not the way things have to be” (pp. 18-19). How have you experienced the truth of this statement? What signs of hope have you seen in places or situations of deep division?

### **CHAPTER 1: PREVAILING VISIONS OF RECONCILIATION**

1. What do you think of when you hear the word *reconciliation*?
2. Chris and Emmanuel start this chapter with stories of deep division and brokenness. In which of these stories was it most difficult for you to imagine reconciliation? In what ways were you surprised by the continuation of the story at the end of the chapter?
3. On pages 24-25, the authors write of the need for reference to a specific “beyond” in seeking reconciliation. What do they mean by this? Why is it important to have someone or something “beyond our landscapes of brokenness?”

*Study Guide Questions for Reconciling All Things*

4. Chris and Emmanuel list four models of reconciliation that they find lacking in some way. Briefly describe each model and list one strength and one weakness of the model.
  - a. Reconciliation as Individual Salvation
  - b. Reconciliation as Celebrating Diversity
  - c. Reconciliation as Addressing Injustice
  - d. Reconciliation as Firefighting
5. How do your ideas about reconciliation fit into the models listed? Were any of the critiques difficult to understand or receive? Why?
6. Where is there division and brokenness in your life and community? In what ways, if any, can you already see or imagine God working in those situations?

**CHAPTER 2: STEPPING BACK**

1. Think of a situation that needs reconciliation. When you think of that situation, what is your first impulse? In other words, does that situation make you want to start a program, cry, lobby your legislators, talk with friends, etc.? What is your gut response to the problem?
2. What do the authors mean by “stepping back”? How is “stepping back” not running from the problem? What is gained by taking the time to “step back”?

## RECONCILING ALL THINGS

3. Chris and Emmanuel suggest that the Christian story can be summed up in 2 Corinthians 5:17-19. What does this passage tell us about God's role in reconciliation? What about our role? How are the two connected?
4. On pages 43-44 the authors write, "Reconciliation is not the goal of human striving but is instead a gift God longs for us to accept." What does this mean? What might it look like on the ground to treat reconciliation as a gift rather than as a goal or task?
5. Chris and Emmanuel suggest that reconciliation is about a "quiet revolution." What do they mean by this? How does this challenge our dominant notions of reconciliation? How is reconciliation as a quiet revolution comforting or encouraging?
6. Chris describes his own conversion from desiring to be a "fixer" to seeing his need to be changed and taught by the very people he desired to "fix." Can you relate to Chris's desire to be a "fixer"? What would it look like for you to undergo a similar conversion to Chris's?
7. How does our desire to be "fixers" shape our understanding and practice of mission work? How might our church missions and ministries change if we were equally interested in being "fixed" ourselves?
8. Think back to your "gut response" from the first ques-

tion. How do the insights of this chapter affect your response to the situation you named? How can reconciliation be received as God's gift in that situation? What could you do to begin grounding your response in God's story? How might you need to be transformed in order to respond to the situation?

### **CHAPTER 3: RECONCILIATION IS A JOURNEY WITH GOD**

1. When have you felt disheartened and frustrated in seeking reconciliation? What, if anything, enabled you to continue on the journey?
2. On page 49 the authors write, "Even for God, reconciliation is not an event or an achievement, but a journey from 'old' to 'new.'" Why does this distinction matter? How does reconciliation as a journey challenge our conventional ideas and desires concerning reconciliation?
3. Chris and Emmanuel suggest that reconciliation is a task for all Christians, not just professionals or those with a special call or gifting. They even say that ordinary Christians can be better equipped for the work of reconciliation than professionals. How is this true? Does this assertion change how you think of your own role in reconciliation?

## RECONCILING ALL THINGS

4. What does it mean to be an “ambassador”? How does being an ambassador for Christ affect the way we live in the world?
5. On page 53 the authors write, “God’s gift of a call to be ambassadors of reconciliation intends to upseat other lords—power, nationalism, race or ethnic loyalty as an end in itself—and give birth to deeper allegiances, stories, spaces and communities.” Where have you seen faith change allegiances? How is the “upseating of other lords” both difficult and life-giving?
6. What do Chris and Emmanuel want to highlight when they speak of us as “jars of clay”?
7. Reread 2 Corinthians 4:7-10. Why are the hardships involved in reconciliation an indispensable part of the journey? What is the good news of this passage?
8. How have you experienced being hard pressed, perplexed, persecuted or struck down as an ambassador of reconciliation? In what ways, if any, can you see God sustaining you in the midst of those hardships?

## CHAPTER 4: HOW SCRIPTURE RESHAPES US

1. When you think of reconciliation, what do you think the role of Scripture should be?
2. How is reconciliation about taking the time to cultivate

*Study Guide Questions for Reconciling All Things*

daily peaceful habits? What habits do you need to work on cultivating? (See pp. 58-59 for ideas.)

3. What do we learn about God and ourselves when we take time to rest in the midst of great conflict and need? Why is it so difficult to rest in such situations?
4. How does our nation seize and grab in an attempt to be in control of our destiny (see p. 62)? How do you see this desire for control on a local level? How do you see the desire to control in your own life? How is that desire causing you to lose God's "gifts of harmony and peace"?
5. Chris and Emmanuel describe "original sin" as "the attempt to secure for ourselves what can be received only as a gift" (p. 63). How do we fall prey to that temptation even in our attempts at reconciliation?
6. What do Chris and Emmanuel mean by "madness" on page 65? What examples of people living by this hopeful madness do you find most inspiring, either from Scripture or your life experience?
7. Why is imagination necessary in the journey toward reconciliation? How does Scripture give us a new imagination?
8. What do we learn from the story of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17? How might you apply these lessons to a specific conflict in your community or life?

## RECONCILING ALL THINGS

9. What is the difference between “peaceful coexistence” and “new creation”? What is at stake in differentiating between coexistence and community?
10. How are justice and peace related?
11. How do the biblical insights from this chapter change your understanding of reconciliation? How will they change your approach to reconciliation?

### CHAPTER 5: THE DISCIPLINE OF LAMENT

1. What do you think of when you hear the word *lament*? How has lament been a part of your life in the past?
2. Lament requires a certain boldness in the way we speak and cry out toward God. How are Martin Luther King Jr., the psalmist, Jesus and Rachel bold in their laments? What, if anything, keeps you from speaking and crying to God in this way?
3. Chris and Emmanuel suggest that speeding through the journey of reconciliation can mask “the true depth of trauma in our world” (p. 82). How is this the case, and why is speed so tempting? How can lament slow us down?
4. Why does location matter?
5. Part of lament is acknowledging our own complicity in



*Study Guide Questions for Reconciling All Things*

situations of violence and division. Think of a conflict situation that is important to you and ask, “How am I part of the problem?” You might also ask, “How is the church part of the problem?” Why are these questions so difficult to answer?

6. How does lament both break and rebuild us? Why are both the breaking and the rebuilding important?
7. How do the practices of pilgrimage, relocation and confession help us unlearn speed, distance and innocence? How might you bring these practices into your church or life? What, if anything, would be the challenges to instituting these practices where you are?

**CHAPTER 6: HOPE IN A BROKEN WORLD**

1. What gives you hope in a world torn apart by conflict?
2. How is hope different than optimism or success?
3. Chris and Emmanuel explain that Christian hope is about being “seduced and transformed by things hoped for, things not seen” (p. 97). How have you experienced being transformed by things not seen? What specific visions have “seduced and transformed” you?
4. What is the role of friendship in Christian reconciliation? How is friendship different than a truce?

## RECONCILING ALL THINGS

5. What are “prophetic presence” and “prophetic distance”? Why are both necessary?
6. How does reconciliation take place in “the small, the weak and the ordinary”? How does this challenge your ideas about reconciliation?
7. Chris and Emmanuel write, “Beauty, rest and celebration don’t just refresh us. They reshape our goals and vision” (p. 107). How is this true? What sort of vision is formed by taking time for beauty, rest and celebration?
8. Has this chapter awakened any sort of hope or new vision in you? If so, how would you describe that hope?
9. Think of a specific situation that needs reconciliation. How might your response to that situation be reshaped if you work out of a hope for things not yet seen?

## **CHAPTER 7: WHY RECONCILIATION NEEDS THE CHURCH**

1. Do you think the church is a help or a hindrance to reconciliation? Explain.
2. What does it mean for the church to be an “interrupting community”? What are we interrupting and why? How does the story about the foot washing at Pattaya display the sort of interruption to which we are called?

*Study Guide Questions for Reconciling All Things*

3. On page 113 Chris and Emmanuel write, “This is the very nature and essence of the church: to exist as the sign of a reality beyond itself.” What does it mean to be a “demonstration plot,” to “point beyond the conflict” instead of mediating it? How do these distinctions change our approach to reconciliation?
4. What can we learn from the woman in Luke 7 who interrupts dinner to anoint Jesus’ feet?
5. Chris and Emmanuel suggest that St. Francis was able to interrupt the economy with a reminder of God’s providence only because he wrestled with “the concrete reality of his own context” (p. 117). Why does attending to the details of a location matter? What are the realities of your own context with which you must wrestle?
6. How do the authors define *incarnation*? What does incarnation have to do with relocation, being an ambassador or having patience? Why is incarnation necessary for reconciliation?
7. The life of the church as described in this chapter is to “be at once local and yet foreign, incarnate and yet interruptive, ordinary and yet ever fresh” (p. 122). How is your church doing this already? Where does your church fall short of this vision? What are some specific ways you could imagine your church doing the above?

**CHAPTER 8: THE HEART, SPIRIT AND LIFE  
OF LEADERSHIP**

1. Who do you think of as a “leader” in reconciliation?  
What would you say are important characteristics of a leader?
2. Chris and Emmanuel suggest that Christian leadership is about seeing a gap, allowing yourself to be disturbed by it and responding. What sorts of gaps disturb you? How have you responded, or how might you respond?
3. What does it mean to “belong to the gap”? What would it look like for you to belong to the gaps that disturb you?
4. What do leaders “know,” and what don’t they “know”? How have you experienced feeling “in over your head” in the journey of reconciliation? What has helped you continue in the face of unknowing?
5. How do suffering and the pursuit of new life work together in the life of a Christian? Why are both necessary?
6. What do we learn from Archbishop Odama about the importance of belonging to God in the journey toward reconciliation? What specific practices might you institute in your own life to enable you to draw closer to God and hear God’s guidance more clearly?

7. Chris and Emmanuel list several gifts that God gives in the journey of reconciliation: prayer and meditation, the church and Christian community, theological reflection, and Sabbath. How have you experienced these gifts in your life? Which of God's gifts, if any, have you left unopened? How might you open those gifts in your life?

#### **EPILOGUE: GOING THE LONG HAUL**

1. Throughout this book, Chris and Emmanuel have painted a vision of reconciliation as the difficult, daily work of shaping beloved community between strangers and enemies. What have you found most compelling about this vision?
2. Are you coming away from this book with any new longings or urges? Any new laments? Are you newly mindful of "gaps" in your life, city or world?
3. How has reading this book humbled you? How might God be calling you away from grandiose plans and into small, daily acts of love and grace?
4. Chris and Emmanuel end the book with ten theses for recovering reconciliation as the mission of God. Which of these most surprises you? Which strikes you as most difficult? Which comes to you as good news?

## RECONCILING ALL THINGS

5. If you were to write an “Eleventh Thesis,” what would it be?
6. How is God calling you to participate in and point to the new creation? How will you move forward in your particular journey of reconciliation after reading this book?
7. What sort of partners will you need in the particular journey to which God is calling you? Who are particular people, groups, churches or organizations that you need to be in conversation with?
8. What spiritual disciplines might you need to put in place in your life to undergo this particular journey? Would a Bible study on a particular topic help your discernment? A daily prayer practice? A preparatory time of prayer and fasting? Enjoying Sabbath anew? What tools can you already tell you will need in this journey?
9. What scares you in this journey? How do you already feel “in over your head”? In other words, where do you already need to work on resting in God’s provision?
10. What most excites you about this particular journey? How would you describe this particular “hope for things not yet seen”? How will that vision or hope help to sustain you along the way?