How, Exactly, Does One Reconcile?

It’s time for the followers of Jesus to embark on the prophetic journey that leads to reconciliation and transformation around the world. Many of us may already be aware of the need for reconciliation in our own backyard. We understand the realities playing out in our own neighborhood, our school, workplace, political system and culture at large. But a lot of us don’t recognize the prophetic role we can play both at home and abroad. We aren’t yet fully aware of injustices and inequality in our communities, and this understanding and awareness is absolutely essential if we are to be God’s agents of reconciliation. We cannot ignore the plight of the people around us, and as globalization continues its relentless march onward, we cannot turn a blind eye to the world beyond our national borders either. We have to face the realities here at home, and we must also embrace the stories of people all around the world.

There is a growing group of young Christian leaders who long to heed this prophetic call to local and global reconciliation. And many of us have tried desperately over the years to build communities of reconciliation on our own, relying on “trial and error” and a mix of reconciliation models like “embracing cultural diversity” and “tolerance-based education.” But these models haven’t been sustainable in the long run and have left Christian leaders feeling depleted and doubting that we can actually lead people to the kingdom vision of racial, ethnic and gender reconciliation.

We need a clear sense of direction. Where are we going and how will we get there? We can see the inequality and the injustice in our lives and in the world, and we are ready to rise up. But . . . how? How, exactly, do we do this? How, exactly, does one reconcile? What is the process? What are the practical steps? We see the need, and we believe we have been called to reconciliation, but we don’t know how to go about it. We lack the tools, models and practical examples that can show us the way forward. We don’t know where to start or what the process entails. We need a roadmap to guide us through common points of interest and past the social terrain and political boundaries that will arise as we journey together and encounter challenging questions like these:

- How do we reconcile with our next-door neighbor?
- How do we reconcile with our coworkers or the folks at church?
- How do we respond to current events?
- How do we hold differing life experiences in tension?
- How do we embrace diversity in our communities?
- How do we reconcile with laborers in other countries who are being paid an unfair wage to make our clothes? Or the aid workers and missionaries abroad who might be doing more harm than good? How do we reconcile with people in India or Pakistan or Russia whom we have never met but whose lives intersect with ours in
ways both big and small through our consumerism and social media?

With more than twenty-five years of consulting experience with churches, colleges and organizations, I’ve been calling people to reconciliation for a long time, but in some ways I’ve been remiss because I haven’t fully explained how to go about it. It’s like telling your kids that they need to make their own dinner when you’ve never taught them how to cook! So I’ve developed a groundbreaking model that I call the Reconciliation Roadmap. Certainly there have been various methods used for reaching harmony before this one, but this approach is a proven process that is based on years of research, practical experience and qualitative data. While I believe it can be applied to all areas of reconciliation, I will focus in this book on the specifics of racial and ethnic reconciliation.

The Reconciliation Roadmap is both individual and systemic. It deals with personal relationships and larger social realities. I’ve used spiritual, psychological, cultural and social strategies to build this model with a practical framework that will help people participate in God’s reconciling work together.

This is the book I always wished I had when working in reconciliation. Much of what I learned about leading people in this process was gained through trial and error. Now I want to share the principles I’ve learned to empower you, the everyday reconciler—the person of God who understands the need for reconciliation and wants to take action. This is also a prophetic call to the church for this time and this unique season. My hope is that this model will illuminate and energize our imagination for what is possible, so together we can create a new reality of reconciliation in various communities around the world.

— Adapted from the Introduction
Reconciliation Is a Journey

You have been tackling reconciliation issues for a long time. What brought about the idea for this particular book, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*?

**Brenda Salter McNeil:** This is the book I wish I had as an emerging reconciler. There are many who have been doing this work of reconciliation but don’t have a resource for how to define what it is or how to do it. There is also a growing sense of motivation in the church, but a lack of direction, tools and guidance.

Who is *Roadmap to Reconciliation* for?

**Salter McNeil:** This book is for established and emerging leaders in the realm of reconciliation. The divisions in our society across race, class and gender are more substantial than ever, and our world is in desperate need of thoughtful, credible, Spirit-led reconcilers. I see young leaders across our country who have heard the call of God to step into this void, but are consistently frustrated by the lack of viable resources for them to grow and succeed as leaders. My prayer is that *Roadmap to Reconciliation* will become a gift to those leaders.

What is the main idea you hope to convey to readers?

**Salter McNeil:** *Roadmap to Reconciliation* is a one-stop resource to inspire, equip and train an emerging generation of leaders. Reconciliation leaders will walk away from this book with a clearer sense of vision based on a proven model, a deeper theology to teach and lead from, a more coherent language with which to talk about it, a guiding set of principles from which to orient themselves along the journey, numerous real-life examples to be inspired by, and a comprehensive plan for approaching this call from a Christ-centered, missional perspective.

What do you hope readers learn or take away from *Roadmap to Reconciliation*?

**Salter McNeil:**

- to inspire those who have heard the voice of God calling them to the ministry of reconciliation to proceed boldly with courage and conviction
- to equip reconcilers by deepening the theological roots for reconciliation while also developing a concrete model with applicable tools for the task ahead
- to frame reconciliation as an ongoing journey, and develop language that can chart progress and name landmarks as reconcilers progress down this path
- to increase the capacity of reconcilers to fuse both personal relationships and structural justice into a comprehensive approach
- to see that reconciliation is a deeply spiritual endeavor, and encourage them as they learn to be led by the Spirit and renewed daily by the power of God
An Expert in Racial and Ethnic Reconciliation

The Rev. Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil is an associate professor of reconciliation studies in the School of Theology at Seattle Pacific University, where she also directs the Reconciliation Studies program. She is an author, speaker and thought leader with more than twenty-five years of ministry experience in the field of racial, ethnic and gender reconciliation. Her mission is to inspire and equip young Christian leaders to practice reconciliation around the world and to build communities that partner with God to bring relational healing and social wholeness.

Prior to coming to Seattle Pacific University, Salter McNeil spearheaded a faith-based speaking, training and consulting firm specializing in biblical reconciliation with Christian colleges, churches and organizations. She was also on staff with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship for fourteen years, where she served as a Multiethnic Ministries Specialist in Southern California and Chicago, Illinois. These experiences were foundational to the development of the principles, concepts and strategies that guide her practice of reconciliation from a Christian perspective. Salter McNeil is recognized internationally as one of the foremost leaders of reconciliation and was featured as one of the fifty most influential women to watch by Christianity Today in 2012. She is the coauthor of The Heart of Racial Justice and the author of A Credible Witness.

Originally from Trenton, New Jersey, Salter McNeil is now an ordained pastor in the Evangelical Covenant Church and is currently serving as a teaching pastor at Quest Covenant Church in Seattle, Washington, in addition to her position at Seattle Pacific University. She is married to Dr. J. Derek McNeil, who is the senior vice president of academic affairs at The Seattle School of Theology and Psychology. They have two children.

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“What I know – as a longtime friend, fellow pastor and colleague in kingdom ministry – is that Salter McNeil walks the walk. For her, this isn’t just a course she teaches as a university professor, a sermon she preaches at a church or a set of consulting principles she imparts to institutions or organizations. This is a calling, a deep conviction, and a journey she has devoted much of her life to, and it has permeated every aspect of her life.”

— Eugene Cho, from the foreword

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