

Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0: Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness and Justice  
by Brenda Salter McNeil  
Book Review

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## Overview

Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0: Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness and Justice was written by Brenda Salter McNeil and published by IVP, an imprint of InterVarsity Press in 2015. In this volume, McNeil provides the reader with a blueprint or “roadmap” of the reconciliation process. McNeil drives us from the definition of reconciliation right on through to justice, restoration, transformation, and a future as God intended. McNeil stated that roadmap was necessary because there were too many people who “struggle to know how to lead a change process,” particularly one of this magnitude (p. 11). McNeil acknowledges that in her own work she “know[s] firsthand...[the] emotional, physical, and spiritual toll placed on those...who embody this work” (p.11). With this in mind, McNeil sets out to “inspire and empower the next generation of Christian leaders to be practitioners of reconciliation” (p.13).

McNeil points out that many have been confused about what reconciliation entails or even how to define it. McNeil reports some have a negative understanding, while others hold this term as righteous and biblical (p. 24). Given the McNeil’s years of work and study in this regard, she offers the following definition of reconciliation: “an ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God’s original intention for all creation to flourish” (p. 25). We must know that God created us all in his image and likeness and his hearts desire is that we are reconciled first to him and then to one another. It is only in reconciling to him that we can be reconciled to each other. As McNeil writes, “our theology matters” (p. 27). It does inform [us]...what we believe about God will tell us what we believe about people” (p.27). We must know that God created us all uniquely and different and is no respecter of persons. We are all love, accepted and respected the same, regardless of race, creed, ethnicity, male, female, prisoner or free, child or adult.

## Takeaways

When I first received the list of books for this course, I was thrilled to see this title, *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0*. The ministry of reconciliation and restoration is what I have been called to, as a mother, daughter, sister, friend, social worker, counselor, and ministry leader. This is my life's calling. So, to delve into a book that would speak in depth about this mission to me is priceless. Again, McNeil writes that "reconciliation is an ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance, and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God's original intention for all creation to flourish" (p. 25). To me reconciliation stretches beyond that of race, but also to me speaks to the heart of relationship, relationship with God, self and others, including family. Prior to reading this book, God gave me a vision for a parent ministry at my church, which is "to see families reconciled and restored to God and one another, walking in wholeness and living unapologetically for Christ." I, too, have reported to parents and youth alike, black and white that reconciliation is not easy and it is "messy and complicated", even painful (p. 119)). Yet, it can be "beautiful and transformational" (p. 119). And it is, indeed, oh so necessary.

Where I felt like I need more clarity is in terms of the "restoration" process. McNeil writes that restoration entails, 3 Rs: "renew," "recharge," and "reconnect" (pp. 113-114). This speaks to how people of color can find rest and relief from this thing called racism. As McNeil notes, "the posttraumatic stress that can come from a living in a racialized society" is real (p. 118). Yet, I am still trying to understand and actualize her full understanding with regards to white people in this process. I do not understand how the idea of "restoration" is not to be fully implemented in some shape or form for white people. Though McNeil makes it clear and I agree, "there is a negative impact on everyone living in a racialized society, she does not believe whites

can fully “engage in the work of reconciliation and racial justice” (114). But I believe that with “God all things are possible.” Maybe I am being naïve, but I must believe that white people too can overcome “whiteness” with the help of God. It makes sense to me that her writing of the restoration process is not as fleshed out as that of reconciliation given that this cycle was recently added to her work. I will continue to comb through this book and some more of her work in hopes of getting greater understand and revelation regarding the restoration cycle.

### **Conclusion**

Though this volume, McNeil has been shown to be an arbitrator of truth, love, justice, reconciliation. She has exhibited a heart for God’s people and encourages us all to do our part to help bring about transformation. We have a job to do and must be about our Father’s business, which is “to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God” (Micah 6:8). McNeil reminds us that the work of reconciliation does not begin with us [but] with God...[it] “is a spiritual process” (p. 94). We are to be co-laborers with God in this work. In the end, He will get the glory!