

Roadmap to Reconciliation

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Brenda Salter McNeil, in her “Roadmap to Reconciliation”, challenges the reader by biblically presenting reasons humans should appreciate one another in their cultural diversity, biologically examining the average human brain in its ethnocentric nature, practically articulating how to implement new behaviors and acts to lead to transformation and wholeness in community with all peoples, and beautifully describing what a new realm living in shalom with God will look like. In her roadmap, she clearly points out that running the race toward reconciliation is not linear, but winding, and it is ever so required and rewarding to live in the discomfort and chaos of pushing past the limitations we have allowed to blur our vision of a godly desire for unity, bask in the presence of those unlike oneself with the Holy Spirit at the center, and die to ourselves with what we once knew to be correct, comfortable, and complacent.

Upon finishing “Roadmap”, I noticed how guilty I was to be like the students that McNeill led at the beginning of the Race Reversal exercise, trying not to offend other races, loving them and conversing with them but maintaining a safe distance that can be described as sustained tolerance. In my everyday life, I eat foods from other cultures, enjoy their music, enjoy learning about their worldviews as an intercultural studies major, and advocate for them as McNeill stresses in the final pages, but still stand apart from them more than I know that I should. This is simply living in a pseudo community with them which is not reconciliation and transformation, and it does not take on the posture of a spiritual approach which is necessary in order for change to come. I want a deeper relationship with others, but don’t choose to forgive an “enemy” or two who happen to be minorities because they’ve said hurtful things to me in the past for being white, and I haven’t let go of the bitterness there. I can be in community with someone who I’ve hurt or who has hurt me, but it certainly won’t look Christlike or reconciled. While sitting at the table where everyone is welcomed and everyone is enjoyed, I want to be able to joke with them and understand them to the fullest, and I can’t do that if I’m clinging to my old

pride. I need something, I need God, to rock my world in order to kickstart that change, a catalytic event, so I can lose my resistance to change in order to benefit God's kingdom of unity.

With saying all this, I see that I have acquired bits and pieces of McNeill's roadmap in my life already that are worth celebrating as landmarks in my reconciliation journey. I have humbled myself to let others prove that they know more than me about something I may have thought I understood well, I have listened in deep concern rather than for a quick retort, and I have cried tears with people not like me over the way the world has treated them. But I must not boast in myself, I must boast in the one who's worthy, knowing that he always calls us to more. It is not about having just some of those features of the roadmap to check off of a checklist, but about viewing this process as central to the gospel and needing to be lived as a Christ follower.

I have not repented of racist thoughts that have entered my mind and then turned those thoughts into words for the sake of jokes; to maintain friendships, I have not posed difficult questions that would bring us into racial reconciliation together; I have not seen the need to be racially reconciled as something spiritual.

I continue to mistakenly view reconciliation as a destination when it is a journey. I know that preservation and isolation are what I cannot allow myself to be drawn back to even if it is convenient to me, but instead must let myself be overwhelmed by the pressing of the Spirit to enact change in order to keep moving forward here. I'm all over the map with this roadmap, and I'm not used to change, but if I truly love my brothers and sisters in Christ like I say I do, I will reorient my life and hopefully work for a ministry that pursues and exemplifies this wholeness.

Bibliography

Brenda Salter McNeil, J. Derek McNeil, and Eugene Cho, *Roadmap to Reconciliation Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice* (Erscheinungsort nicht ermittelbar:

InterVarsity Press, 2016).