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Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0 - Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness and Justice

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Brenda Salter McNeil, an Author, Christian Leader, and Scholar, is a proficient authority in the field of racial justice and reconciliation. Dr. McNeil's narrative on Roadmap to Reconciliation presents a pragmatic, biblical, and authentic structure for practicing racial reconciliation between individuals, the Church, the community, and the world. The author pulls from her experience as a believer and a black woman to guide individuals and communities looking to participate in reconciliation.

The book appears separated into sections dealing with the current racial issues in America, including its impact on biblical formation for reconciliation in the Church. This is illustrated in nine chapters concluding with "A Vision of a Flourishing Future."¹ Dr. McNeil's need to find an appropriate definition for the term that best fits the condition of reconciliation became the first point that grabbed my attention. I, too, recognized that reconciliation must be rooted in the image of God and that it is an essential component that must be part of a Christian's walk. She defined her new definition of reconciliation as: "Reconciliation is an ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, contrition, and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God's original intention for all creation to flourish."² This definition extends a clear roadmap to me for my current and future ministry. It persuades me to ask, "How can one

¹ Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap To Reconciliation 2.0: Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness And Justice*. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2020), Contents Page.

² *Ibid.*, p.26.

truly reconcile without forgiveness and contrition? How can one derive justice without the key components to reconciliation?” This will permit me to exercise my spiritual understanding when managing issues related to reconciliation.

Dr. McNeil’s narrative confirmed that we, as individuals and the community, have much work ahead of us. My worldwide view is that we live in a broken system that urgently needs repair, and at times, we fail to recognize that God is the ultimate reconciler. Dr. McNeil shared the story of a Pastor committed to diversity and reconciliation who asked his members to list: “three Scriptures that supported their belief in multiethnic ministry.”³ After they completed the exercise, he realized that most of the congregation could not. He thus became enlightened to the fact that for the Church’s advancement, there was a clear need for his congregation to understand how God feels about reconciliation and multiethnicity. Therefore, reconciliation is a process that will take time for the Church and the world to achieve.

I agree with the author’s “Daring to go public” phase. As believers, we often remain behind the curtain of our safe lives and allow fear to silence our voices regarding matters that go against the grain of our humanity. Yes, I know it requires courage to stand up and speak out, but as Dr. McNeil acknowledged: “The preparation phase is where we face those genuine concerns and prepare for sustainability over the long haul. We do this by naming the fear, assessing the risk, and speaking the truth in love instead of letting our fears paralyze us. This is when we get ready to go public.”⁴ Dr. McNeil encourages the reader, the Christian to move beyond fear and elevate our thinking to the example God sent forth in reconciliation. I am not sure I disagree with much that was outlined so transparently in this well-prepared narrative.

Dr. McNeil penned an impactful narration, forcing me to examine my theology and ministry. It allows me to investigate how I relate to other faiths and communities. The story of

³ Ibid., p. 94.

⁴ Ibid., p. 95.

the woman at the well who encountered Jesus is a classic example of how Jesus modeled reconciliation. He crossed cultural boundaries and engaged with those considered outcasts or not a member of his culture. He accepted her in spite of knowing her background and showed her the way to spiritual enlightenment. She, in turn, received the living water of compassion, understanding, and the hope that she was seeking. Their transformative conversation that led to reconciliation provides a blueprint for Christians to use as a guide in how we can bridge the gap in in reconciliation. The author discussed that the strength and understanding gained from working on cross-cultural connections, can help us defeat stereotypes and biases. Dr. McNeil touched on the essence of what reconciliation resembles, and this insight will impact my theology and ministry.

Bibliography

Mc Neil, Brenda Salter. *Roadmap To Reconciliation 2.0: Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness And Justice*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2020.