

# Principles of Reconciliation

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The first principle of reconciliation is that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." Therefore reconciliation begins with God. Yet it isn't only that God was "*in Christ*," but also that Christ is "*in us*." If so, then the process that began with God in Christ, is continued with Christ in us, giving us the same "hope of glory." If we are also "*in Christ*," then God's reconciliation is continued *in us*. Reconciliation is manifested in oneness with Him and with each other.

Yet somehow, in spite of the prayer of Jesus that we be one, dispute, discord and divorce still produce differences in brethren that are rationalized as being irreconcilable. The flesh still capitalizes on "doubtful disputations" and indulges in "stupid controversies." Where differences are reconciled, the Light shines. Grudges evaporate. False accusations are displaced by forgiveness. Disputes about "greatness" are set aside for service. Marriages regain their warmth. Ecclesias survive their dilemmas. Positions defer to Scripture. And wasteful divisions "that neither we nor our fathers could bear," are ended for good.

The following principles have been compiled to show specific aspects of reconciliation as God sees it, as Christ practiced it, and as it must be evinced in us in our "ministry of reconciliation." What follows is only a selective list of principles on reconciliation. They are those that stood out to me as being particularly relevant to *division between brethren* during an eight-month consideration of reconciliation. By selecting principles that apply to attitude, I have not meant to imply that reconciliation in the truth is not dependent upon sameness of mind around doctrine. Faith begins with doctrine. This series is directed toward conflict that originates from flesh and functionally separates true brethren.

## Principles:

### 1. "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children" [ Exo 34:7 ]

*Time doesn't change the importance of reconciliation.*

It is a disconcerting realization that the sin of discord can be passed to the fourth generation. Although God is merciful, His punishment of guilty fathers visits the sin upon their children *to the third and the fourth generation*. As children of division, we have the choice to make or break the cycle. We can offer the necessary sacrifice to save our children from growing up with the stigma of a community separated from another of "like precious faith," or we can perpetuate it. We are compelled to end division for the sake of our children.

### 2. "and has followed me fully" [ Num 14:24 ]

*Reconciliation requires following God fully.*

When God commanded Israel to take the land, the congregation was in an emotional uproar. There were two spirits. Most people wanted to do the wrong thing. Driven by fear, they said "we are not able to go." But Caleb had said, "we are well able to overcome it." Motivated by faith alone, Caleb ignored human reasoning and focused on the *fruit of obedience*. The Lord asked of the fearful, "how long will they despise me, and how long will they not believe in

me?” Of Caleb he said “he has a different spirit, and has followed me fully.” That spirit was the Spirit of Christ, always deferring against human reasoning to the will of the Father. Reconciliation commands us to let there be no schism among brethren. How can we follow God fully? As we consider how to close an unrighteous schism, perhaps there are two spirits—that which says “we are not able,” and that which says “we are well able,” *because it is the Lord’s command*.

3. **“how long halt ye between two opinions”** [ 1Kin 18:21 ]

*Halting between opinions stifles reconciliation.*

This is especially noticeable when the opinions are “*certainly should*” and “*certainly shouldn’t*.” Two opinions, two judgments, two positions in controversy; or matters too hard—ambivalence stops us in our tracks. In the Law, when matters too hard emerged, they were settled by the judgment of the priests in a place where the Lord chose. We have only one priest, and the place he has chosen is below the Table, in humility serving one another. Dispute overrides service; yet the Lord made humility a priority over bread and wine. When the years of controversy are prolonged, what might have been accomplished in works is wasted in indecision. Reconciliation isn’t accomplished in a halt. Schisms are ongoing, self-canceling cycles of unproductive consumption.

4. **“for the thing was done suddenly”** [ 2Chr 29:36 ]

*When God works reconciliation, it doesn’t need a lot of time.*

It didn’t matter how long the doors of the temple had been stuck shut from disuse, and the Passover ignored. When Hezekiah determined to reconcile Israel, it took only eight days. All those of a “*free heart*” brought a sacrifice to the Lord. Their hearts were not *bound up* with personal considerations or fettered with fear. When the Passover was finally restored, it didn’t take very long. “Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced because of what *God had done for the people, for the thing came about suddenly*.” But it only involved the immediate company of Hezekiah. Israel remained to be convinced. So a proclamation was made throughout all Israel that they should come and keep the Passover. When the couriers went out with the message, they were scorned and mocked. Only a few responded at first, “*humbled themselves*” and came to Jerusalem. Others from Judah came when the hand of God gave them “*one heart* to do what the king commanded...by the word of the Lord.” Afterward “*many people came together...a very great assembly*.” Likewise, it doesn’t matter how long our communities have been held apart by contention, all those of a “free [or willing] heart” can be of “one heart” *and do what the king commands*.

5. **“as the thou hast said, so must we do”** [ Ezra 10:12 ]

*It doesn’t matter what is required; reconciliation leaves no option.*

When the priests of Israel realized they had disobeyed God, sinned and led all Israel astray, it wasn’t a question of *what* should be done, or *how* it should be done. It didn’t matter to them that it seemed impractical, imposing, or even inconceivable. Knowing that the sin was the same as their fathers, they did what was required to repent. Their repentance accounted for

the fact that Israel's "*ekklesial*" relationship to God was dependent on *familial* repentance. God had commanded them to refrain from admixture with the surrounding nations. When they realized they had sinned, they did what the Lord commanded without consideration of an option, or regard for themselves. It was *reconciliation by self-sacrifice* and *obedience*.

6. **"and they put them away with their children"** [ Ezra 10:44 ]

*If reconciliation requires setting personal feelings aside, it is still right.*

It was almost an incomprehensible act of faith for the priests of Israel to put their wives and children away in reconciling Israel to God. They had abandoned the Law. They intermarried with the nations around them. Jesus echoed this weakness when he said: "*Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.*" For believers, this principle is perfectly acceptable on occasions where people are converted to the Truth from conventional Christianity. Beyond that, the principle becomes unthinkable. Yet the Lord tells us that there will be times when we will be called upon to sacrifice a personal relationship, or a rote tradition, in order to follow him. Thus on several occasions, it appeared to the Pharisees as if Jesus was violating the law, when in fact *he was keeping it*.

7. **"yea seven are an abomination"** [ Pro 6:19 ]

*Reconciliation is blocked by discord that mutates into tradition.*

The seventh abomination that God hates is "*a man who sows discord among brethren.*" But what of those who cultivate it? And how is it that the same God who "loved the world" *hates the sower* of discord? Why so strong? The answer may lie in the word "sow." It has been God's intent from the start to sow the seed of faith, reaping its fruitfulness in the world. Anything that reverses this process runs against the very purpose of God. In addition to *spreading* discord in the field around him, the sower also propagates it for future generations. The seed of discord then spreads still further in the "wind of doctrine." The traditions of men are not only contagious they are socially genetic. We inherit wrong attitudes as easily as we inherit false doctrine. Discord mutates into family or church tradition, and tradition can be taught for doctrine as it was in Israel and has been for two thousand years in the apostate church. Every Christadelphian recognizes the tendency for schism to be sown from generation to generation. We know that contentions are passed from fathers to children. And we know that it is a legacy unforgiven if unrepented of, when it is *between brethren*. As God hates the sower, he surely hates the discord. Reconciliation converts discord to fruit.

8. **"only by pride cometh contention"** [ Pro 13:10 ]

*It follows therefore that only by humility comes reconciliation.*

Pride is like fault. It only seems to lie in others. Everyone recognizes that there has been *contention* among Christadelphians for a hundred years. Yet mysteriously, the fault can't be isolated. Or it is always somewhere else. When the finger is pointed, the blame itself is

divisive. Yet the pointed finger is the very thing God says *ruins worship*. So “let a man examine himself.” Each of us should examine only ourselves to discover how in all this we might be contributing to contention, by pointing the finger, or by holding to opinion in the name of doctrine. When we are humble enough to admit our part of the problem without insisting on isolating the part of others, reconciliation naturally follows.

9. **“do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes”** [ Pro 26:12 ]

*Reconciliation is impossible when a man is right in his own eyes.*

No man has ever been more *right* than the Son of God. How easily he might have suggested crucifying the world, and saving himself. How persuasively he could have argued his own position. Yet it would have been impossible for God to reconcile the world unto Himself if Jesus had stood on his own rightness. Reconciliation was achieved only because Jesus knew that the Father was *more right than himself*, so he laid himself upon the cross to declare that righteousness, claiming none for himself. In other words, even the Son of God was not wise in his own eyes. How much more should we, in our relative ignorance and weakness, remember to assign rightness to God alone, never thinking more of ourselves than we ought to think? Reconciliation is dependent upon humility. Self-rightness nullifies it.

10. **“The fire which never says enough”** [ Pro 30:16 / Jam 3 ]

*In every place where reconciliation has been set aside for a century, the fire of controversy has never yet said enough.* Fire spreads. The tongue is a fire. When contention spreads, “the tongue stains the whole body,” and so there is a stain on the garment. At what point do we say “enough” to the “unrighteous world among our members?” It is time to say enough, and end divisions wherever they are, lest the Lord returns to find us burning the forest instead of the lamp.

11. **“I do not delight in the blood of bulls ”** [ Isa 1:11 ]

*God doesn't delight in tradition or ritual. Reconciliation operates on the heart.*

Wouldn't you think that Israel could have realized that there was more to worship than sticks, stones, animals and fire? Burnt offerings were a commandment of the Law, and yet the prophet Isaiah still had to remind Israel that the commandment was only there to teach the lesson of real obedience from the heart. Samuel clarified the distinction when he asked, “*Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.*” When we make the ritual the religion, we are in danger of making a bull or a goat out of the sacrifice of Christ. Surely, in the same sense, the Lord does not delight in bread and wine, but in One Body, crucified flesh, and newness of life.

12. **“and confessing my sin”** [ Dan 9:20 ]

*Reconciliation is impossible without the confession of personal sin.*

No one would question the faith and stellar character of Daniel at the time he received word of God’s intent to “make reconciliation for iniquity.” He was “greatly beloved.” How is it that he is found in the same context confessing *his own sin* in addition to the sin of his people? What was his *own* sin? To him the mystery of the Kingdom had been revealed. He was He was fearless and faithful in prayer unto death. An “excellent spirit” was in him. What iniquity did he present in supplication before the Lord that elicited a personal visit from the angel Gabriel? Was it perhaps that he had grown accustomed to Israel’s breach with God? Was it that his favor and position in Babylon had made him complacent about the initial conditions in Israel by which she was brought into captivity? Could it be that he had begun to regard the word of the Lord as a “burden?” We can’t know, but what we do know is that it was not until he *confessed his sins*, that the Lord hearkened to his prayer. On the other hand, accepting a condition of sin obviates its confession and stultifies reconciliation.

13. **“I hate divorce;”** [ Mal 2:16 ]

*Divorce and Discord are the same. God hates them both. Reconciliation cures them both.*

“Irreconcilable differences” is a term of humanism—a term of breach—an accommodation of the flesh. No follower of Christ should ever be found using the reasoning of the world to justify a sin that degrades the glory of God as much as disunity among brethren. God’s “hatred” of human wickedness is utter enmity against it. Hatred is the strongest opposition cited by God against various forms of evil. For God to say that he *hates* discord and divorce means that they directly and entirely violate his righteousness. It also means that for us to disregard his command to reconciliation is an unacceptable level of indifference to his word. If we love God, we hate the things he hates. If we love righteousness, we love reconciliation.

14. **“first go and be reconciled to your brother”** [ Mat 5:24 ]

*Reconciliation is a priority over the breaking of bread*

The only reason Jesus would command us to reconcile *before offering our gift at the altar* is that atonement is meaningless if it is selfish. For sacrifice to God to be regarded as unselfish, it should be drawn from personal reconciliation. Were we to accept the covering of our own sin at the altar without providing for the covering of sin with our brethren, we would miss the point of the atonement. “*For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy.*” This simple idea is at the heart of every lesson Jesus taught about transgression and forgiveness. “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us” is another way of making reconciliation with God dependent on reconciliation with one another. The one gift we know we can bring to the Lord at the altar of his covenant is the gift of reconciliation. If it is to be done first, then it is always urgent.

15. **“whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery”** [ Mat 5:32 ]

*What if reconciliation is related to the second coming of Christ?*

There is an eerie implication in this statement from the Sermon on the Mount. But it is not realized unless marriage is considered in its larger context of the second coming of Christ. The Lord will take the role of a Bridegroom in order to fulfill His father's promise that He would betroth us to Him forever. The faithful will be the Bride. We can't know what the proportion of the faithful raised will be to the faithful living at the time of the second coming of Christ. All we know is that he said, *it is adultery to marry a divorced woman*. If we are the Bride, or part of the Bride, and we have divorced our brethren in our heart, will he marry us?

16. **“that they may be one”** [ Joh 17:22 ]

*Reconciliation follows regard for this prayer.*

When the Lord faced his death, he knew that it meant the final conclusion to God's reconciliation in him. Once he was obedient unto death, His father had succeeded in reconciling the world unto himself. The mystery was not only revealed, it was also *accomplished*. It was a turning point in God's very existence, in that when the seed was planted in righteousness, an immortal son would be born to God, and as an effect the world would be saved. What then was the one thought, the single priority, the most earnest desire on the Lord's mind as he prepared his disciples for his obedience? It was that they would “*be one*,” even as he was one with his father. It was that they would make a testimony of love and righteousness, by which the Truth could be proclaimed to a dark world. It was that they had every reason to continue the reconciliation he demonstrated. It was that reconciliation was in effect the last will of the Lord before he gave himself for us. It was that unity was at the heart of the Body of Christ. Can we disregard his prayer and nullify *in ourselves* the Glory he shared with his father?

17. **“that the world may know that thou has sent me”** [ Joh 17:23 ]

*Reconciliation isn't much of an issue where there is no preaching.*

According to Jesus, our “being one” is important because of the world's perception. Jesus knew that the ministry he was appointing would be dependent upon the unity of his followers. Our relationship with each other is part of our testimony to the world. Jesus specifically states this when he prayed that we “be one.” His reason was “that the world may believe that thou has sent me.” (Joh 17:21) In other words, *the importance of unity is that it affects the perception the world has of Christ by the testimony of our beliefs and behavior*. Furthermore, the implication made by Jesus is that the world may not know that He is “the son of the Living God” to the extent that there is schism among us. Being of a desire to preach the Truth, we cannot accept the stigma of division in the background of our testimony.

18. **“be of the same mind and judgment”** [ 1Cor 1:10 ]

*Sameness of mind isn't an accidental consequence; it is an act of spiritual will.*

In several places the apostles give us a simple command to *those within*. “Be of the same mind,” “speak the same thing,” “agree in the Lord.” This is not the wisdom of the world. The world teaches that affinity is happenstance—that agreement is more an influence of chance than deliberation. Deliberate agreement can seem like mindless capitulation where independent thinking is viewed as the ultimate self-fulfillment. But for brethren in the Lord nothing could be further from the truth. Agreement comes first as a result of having the same faith based upon God’s word—of letting *his* mind be in us. Then it comes from a deliberate intent to agree. “*Agree with one another, live in peace.*” (2Cor 13:11) In Romans 12, we are told to “*mind not high things*”—that is to *not* have sentiments or opinions about lofty, or esteemed things, “but to condescend to men of low (or humble) estate.” “Be not wise in your own conceits,” means to not elevate intelligence or mental acquirement. When the intellect is strong, humility requires deliberate discipline. Intellectually challenging brethren with debate is contrary to a spirit of reconciliation. It is at this very point that knowledge puffs up when instead, love should be building up.

19. **“I am of Paul, and I of Apollos”** [ 1Cor 1:12 ]

*Reconciliation is in obvious need where brethren group under names.*

Christadelphians have more exposure in this reproof than they should, given their knowledge of God’s word. I am of Thomas, and I of Andrew, and I of Williams—or whoever else. The context is an earnest appeal that “*you all agree. And that there be no dissensions (or divisions) among you.*” What exactly do we think he means by this in the context of our identification with books written by men as if they came from God? Books may be good, but if they become banners of schism, the identification is wrong. It is a misappropriation of the intent to edify. Paul implies that if we are divided, we are not in Christ, since Christ is not divided. He accentuates the exhortation by asking in whose name we are baptized—in men, or in Christ. The force of his exhortation is that reconciliation is *dependent on agreement with Christ*, and agreement with Christ is not dependent on the “eloquent *treatise*” of men.

20. **“I have no need of you”** [ 1Cor 12:21 ]

*This thought obviates reconciliation.*

To ignore reconciliation is to reject the body of Christ. If the Lord had been content with his own righteousness, his spiritual caliber, his distinction from sin, his position with God, or his understanding of the Truth, he might have said, “*I have no need of you*” to all the rest of us. But if he had, we would be yet in our sins. Though he was perfect, he recognized that he was to be the head of a much larger body—a body composed of thousands of interdependent parts, with a variety of purposes, “*from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.*” By enabling the flesh of that body to be covered with the robe of his righteousness, “*he did not count their trespasses against them.*” Neither should we, lest we be found not needing the Body of Christ, and by implication, not being a part of it ourselves.

21. **“there should be no schism (discord) in the body”** [ 1Cor 12:25 ]

*Discord confuses reconciliation.*

In the figure of the one Body, Paul tells us that God has made greater and lesser parts—parts with greater and lesser honor. He further says that God has adjusted the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part. What does this suggest of the prominent, the dominant, the eloquent, or the vocal? Where is the honor in the debate? What is the value of complex disquisitions? Where is the “simplicity that is in Christ” found in the tumid machinations of textual particle physics? Without any uncertainty, Paul says that “those parts of the body that seem to be weaker, are *indispensable*.” Who are the weaker among our members? Are they the women who keep silent? Are they the quiet doers of those complex exhortations? Are they the visitors of the sick? Are they the innocent younger, or the wearied elder? Are they the washers of feet, or the poor and the maimed? Who are they—the leaders or the servants, the scribes or their readers? Was it the meek and lowly who made division that has torn families in half and separated the beloved of the Lord? The spirit of reconciliation demands that there be no schism in the body, because the body should be nourished, not torn.

22. **“have the same care one for another”** [ 1Cor 12:25 ]

*Reconciliation places equal value on both communities.*

How can we have the same care one for another, if we don’t associate with one another? Can we all suffer together if we are disjoined? What kind of body is disjoined? Is the body of Christ disjoined? Is it dystrophic? Is it atrophic? Can we all rejoice together if we are out of touch with the honor that would otherwise give us cause to rejoice? If we place value on one part and none on another, or if we associate with one part and ignore the other, then we miss the mark of *impartial care* for one another.

23. **“love does not insist on its own way”** [ 1 Cor 13:5 ]

*Insisting on our own way obstructs reconciliation.*

This is very easy to understand, but so very difficult to put into practice. It is difficult because we are inherently proud. Non-insistent love cannot come from emotion because it is so unnatural. In fact, emotion prevents it. Emotional guile manifests itself in intransigence, anger, and factionalism. It quickly subverts the discipline of deference to brethren. The flesh asserts itself in relentless contention, arrogant dominance, or hardness of heart. When we don’t insist on our own way, reconciliation is easy. When we insist that the other side does not insist on its own way, reconciliation is impossible.

24. **“He has given us a ministry of reconciliation”** [ 2Cor 5:18 ]

*Reconciliation is our primary work in the truth.*

The reason reconciliation is a priority is that the reconciling work of God in Christ can only be continued through the work of his body. If God’s reconciliation “didn’t count their sins against them,” we are charged with the same in our “*ministry* of reconciliation.” It is a message of restoration through forgiveness. We are “ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.” And what is that appeal? What is at the root of reconciliation? It is the *covering of sin*. Reconciliation only works in as much as sin is covered. Where there is discord there is sin. Although it may have been sin that divided us in the past, it is *only in its covering* that we can be reconciled in the present.

25. **“party spirit...a work of the flesh”** [ Gal 5:19 ]

*Party spirit always argues against reconciliation.*

Why is it that there are clearly defined parties, party platforms, party explanations, and party terms, but no one seems to want to assume responsibility for “*party spirit*?” Do you have it? Or is it always in someone else—there on the other side of a pointed finger? Or perhaps it is nowhere, since judgment is required to identify it, and none of us can judge. But there is an ominous warning attached to this devious work of the flesh. And the warning is only useful in *self-examination*. Not only does Paul enumerate the works of the flesh for us, he says they are *plain*. What he means is that they are *publicly manifest*, or *externally apparent*. That means party spirit shows. The warning is plain enough too: “*those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*” Party spirit is *dangerous disunion*. Reconciliation dissolves it.

26. **“that he might reconcile both unto God in one body”** [ Eph 2:15 ]

*Reconciliation breaks down dividing walls and preaches peace.*

We were once separated from Christ, being alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. But now since Christ has broken down the dividing wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile, making us both one—making us all one in Christ—you would think that we would understand the importance of keeping a dividing wall of hostility from being set up in yet another way—between brethren. When Jesus came and preached peace, he preached it to brethren who were “*far off*,” so that the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord. The temple of the Lord has no walls of hostility, and is not built upon division. Reconciliation removes the stones from the walls of pride that divide brethren.

27. **“submitting yourselves one to another”** [ Eph 5:21 ]

*Submission is the means of reconciliation.*

It may not be readily apparent how dependent reconciliation is upon submission. Submission runs against the human grain. But it was the submission of Jesus, even to the cross that enabled the world to be reconciled to God. Without his submission, we would be yet in our sins and without hope. Submission is the means by which reconciliation can be achieved. It is an extraordinarily simple frame of mind, and an extremely difficult thing to concede. Everything in us defies authority, and especially as it might be embodied in another human being, or worse, a consensus. But if ever there was an opportunity to take a stand against submission, it was when the world brought the son of God to trial in a Roman court. Yet, he was as submissive as a lamb brought to the slaughter. Opening not his mouth, he proved that the way of reconciliation is through submission. Ultimately, it relinquishes all control to God, to whom it really belongs. The passage also says, “*be submissive to one another.*” This has been used to argue that submission is dependent on mutual observance. That is, the flesh says, if you aren’t submissive, then I don’t have to be. But the Lord still kneels below us at his own table, saying “I am among you as one who serves.” This is the way of reconciliation.

28. **“let each esteem other better than themselves.”** [ Phi 2:3 ]

*Reconciliation works when we treat our brethren as if they are better.*

This statement immediately follows one of Paul’s most earnest appeals. He says, “if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the *same mind*, having the *same love* being in full accord and of *one mind*.” “In humility,” he continues, “count others better than yourselves.” What claim can be made of esteem at the table of the Lord if we meet on the other side of a shameful schism? What is the same love, if it isn’t the love shown us in humility by the son of God, who though he was the King, esteemed ignorant, selfish, disputing disciples as being *better*. What others are there to esteem, if they are not those brethren we might not naturally esteem in the spirit of Christ? Reconciliation follows esteem.

29. **“a morbid craving for controversy, and disputes about words”** [ 1Tim 6:4 ]

*Reconciliation calls for a certain treatment of overstressed controversy and dispute.*

We know that Paul argued daily in the synagogue. He was forced to debate with heretics. So it is in the understanding of the need to contend (that is to struggle, *not strive*) for the Faith that he pleads with brethren not to debate one another. He commands brethren to suppress intellectual contention, because in the extreme it incites heresy. He says, in effect, that when strife manifests itself in debates about trifles or quarreling about words, that this does not agree with the sound words of the Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching which accords with godliness. He says further that such behavior even *defrauds* “the truth,” though it may pretend to defend it. If “party spirit” is a work of the flesh, then, like the wrath of man, it cannot work the righteousness of God. When to contend and when to “*do...service*” is

dependent upon whether they are “*brethren*...faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit.” We are commanded to avoid controversy with brethren, and to “*teach and exhort*” one another to *service*. According to Paul, to teach otherwise is proud and ignorant. (v.4) It defies the spirit of reconciliation.

30. **“love the brotherhood”** [ 1Pet 2:17 ]

*If we love the brotherhood, we will reconcile for the sake of its strength.*

It is so simple. Love the brotherhood. What is love of the brotherhood, but love of the one Body. The brotherhood is the whole body of Christ. We don’t know it on any other basis than its composition from people of faith. There is only One Faith. That Faith is the assurance of the Kingdom, and the conviction that God’s own Son is the living savior of this world. Those who believe in the gospel, its promises, its diligent seeking, its accountability, and its reward, are brethren. They compose the brotherhood. All are beloved of the Lord. They love his word. They believe the Truth. Love the brethren who love the Truth. Love the brotherhood in reconciliation.

31. **“and his Bride has made herself ready”** [ Rev 19:7 ]

No man knows the day nor the hour. Nor does the Bride. We don’t even know the specific conditions that will initiate the final departure from heaven, the blast of the trumpets, the expanse of light, the feet on the mountain. All we know is that they will precede the marriage of the Lamb to His Bride. That great union of Heaven and earth will herald the entrance of Christ into a world damaged by disunity in nations, disunity in families, and general disunity with God. But in all the disparate admixture of weak and strong influences, there will be one Body of people who had the might of faith to go the other way—to build up instead of break down. They were those who had heard the impassioned appeal of the Lord to *be one*, and made it their gift at the altar. They were those who never let the flesh separate them from their service and their love of one another. They were the faithful. They were the Bride who, clothed in fine linen, found a way to make righteousness out of relationships. How was it that the Bride had made herself ready? What did she do? Did she fulfill the prayer of the Lord to *be one*, reconciling herself in unity, perfecting her beauty in purity of faith and in *one spirit*? Was it the deliberate creation of “*one spirit*” that made her ready for marriage?