

Reconciliation in the Public Square

In his comments Michael Cassidy will share out of the deep experiences of himself and his teams in the arenas of seeking reconciliation all across Africa, first in the Church and then spilling over into the Society and the Public Square. Michael will illustrate his points via stories out of reconciliation endeavours, for example in South Africa, Rwanda, Burundi, Zimbabwe, and elsewhere. He will also share about nation-changing gatherings and backstage Second-Track Diplomacy in the years running up to South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994. Some of the latter contributed significantly to South Africa coming through to a peaceful resolution of its deep conflicts in the years leading up to 1994. He will also articulate some of the key principles of what he calls "The Politics of Love," this being the title of one of his important books written before Apartheid came down. Michael believes some of these principles are relevant for many other situations around the world, as for example when he shared them in Northern and Southern Ireland.

Michael Cassidy, founder of African Enterprise, has been involved in evangelism, teaching and leadership ministries since 1962, the year he launched AE in Pietermaritzburg. Today, AE has evangelistic teams in Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe. He has been instrumental in calling together several major gatherings of church leaders over the years and also played a leading role in behind-the-scenes negotiations in the run-up to the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994. Michael has written numbers of books the latest being a treatise on John chapter 17, entitled *The Church Jesus Prayed For*. He is currently writing his memoirs. He is also an avid sports fan, particularly cricket, rugby, and tennis. He and his wife, Carol, live in Hilton, near Pietermaritzburg in South Africa. They have two daughters, a son, and eight grandchildren.

Introduction:

Clearly we live in an alienated world. Alienation is everywhere. Wherever humans are clustered from private homes, to organisations, churches, denominations, political parties, business houses, universities, you name it, you will find alienations. This is a major concern and ministry challenge for all Christians because of the central place given to reconciliation by both Jesus ("Go: First be reconciled" Matthew 5:23), and by the Apostle Paul: "God has entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19). This is not a ministry we can evade or avoid. And certainly not in the Africa and South African context which have been the major contexts of our African Enterprise ministry.

I. Reasons for Alienation

- A. Selfishness (e.g. in marriage partners)
- B. Tribal Histories (Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda)
- C. Racial Animositities (White and Black in South Africa)
- D. Ideological Conflict (e.g. Socialism/Capitalism, democrat/republican, conservative/labour)
- E. Religious Differences (e.g. Sunni versus Shiite; Protestant versus Catholic in Ireland)

II. Required Abilities in the Reconciler

- A. To deal with one's own heart first.
- B. To *understand* the context (e.g. Men of Issachar – 1 Chronicles 1:32)
- C. To see the problem as all about people.
- D. To help protagonists humanise and forgive the enemy.
- E. To help protagonists hear and see the other side (*audi alteram partem*).
- F. To bring protagonists into a cooperative and partnership posture in facing the problem, rather than an adversarial one (i.e. 'what's the problem? Let's talk about and tackle it together.')
- G. To embrace two loves – love of God and love of nation.
- H. To make known Peter and Cornelius Principle (Acts 10), i.e. we each have the key to our protagonist's prison, but not our own.
- I. To work secretly when required (one can't be a newsmaker and a reconciler at the same time).

III. The South African Context (where issues mainly racial)

NB: If Christians are to be reconcilers in the world/market place, it is important they become reconciled themselves, hence in South Africa our convening major gatherings of Christians across racial and denominational lines with a view to facilitating reconciliation initiatives in the market place.

Now some examples of reconciliation initiatives out of the South African context.

IV. Other Contexts of Reconciliation Ministries

For example: (Zimbabwe (1980s); Israel (1982); Middle East (MECLA – 1986); Rwanda (1995); Burundi (early 2000); North and South Ireland (1995-1996).

V. Conclusion

We must not forget: “God has entrusted to US (not State, academia, military or business) the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Further Reading

- *I Love Idi Amin*, by Festo Kivengere
- *My Enemy My Brother*, by Hanna Shahin
- *Faith Under Fire*, by Antoine Rutayisire
- *Politics of Love*, by Michael Cassidy
- *A Witness For Ever*, by Michael Cassidy