



Ambassadors  
of Reconciliation™

## Cultivating Lifestyles of Reconciliation

*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason that you have.*

*(1 Peter 3:15 NIV)*

It's never okay!

When the people finished reading the words of confession in worship, Pastor Steve faced the people with his arms raised for blessing and declared: "As a called and ordained servant of the Word, I announce that God says, 'That's okay. No problem. You *should* be sorry. Don't *ever* do it again. I forgive you, but I don't want anything to do with you! Go in peace.'"

The people froze, too shocked to move or speak. Pastor continued, "What's the matter? Isn't that the way you forgive one another? But you don't expect God to forgive you that way!" Then he immediately began his sermon on forgiving others as God has forgiven you. After preaching, he personally comforted the people with God's forgiveness.

Six weeks later, a young couple approached him. "Pastor Steve, we want to thank you for changing the culture in our home," the wife said, smiling.

"Uh, what do you mean?"

The husband explained, "Last week my wife and I had a fight in the kitchen. But we made up in the new way you taught us. Instead of stuff like 'I'm sorry *if* I hurt you' and 'that's okay,' we used the new language that you taught us. You know, things like, 'I confess' and 'I forgive you because Christ died for me.'"

His wife continued, "That's right, Pastor, we're learning to live reconciliation in our family. It's a whole new lifestyle for us."

A Christian's response to a confession should not reflect the world's way of dealing with conflict. Sin is never "okay." Sin is never "no problem." There's only one cure for sin: Forgiveness through Christ. God forgives us because Christ paid for the full price of our sins. He even forgives our poor ways of responding to others who say to us, "I'm sorry."

*Adapted from Cultivating Lifestyles of Reconciliation, a new resource from Ambassadors of Reconciliation.*

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Fruit of our repentance is demonstrated when we learn to say, "I forgive you because Christ forgave me."

At times, we take our reconciliation to God for granted. In worship. We praise God for restoring our relationship through Christ, but then we act or speak in ways like non-believers in the daily activities of our lives.

Reconciliation is not *simply* an event. We can recall specific miracles of reconciliation, ranging from Christ dying on the cross to tearful moments of exchanging confession and forgiveness. But living reconciliation means much more than certain memorable events.

To cultivate lifestyles of reconciliation means to live our lives in such a way as to reflect Christ in everything we say or do. When we sin (and we do so daily), we repent, confessing our failures to God and others. When relationships are broken, we quickly go to others to reconcile. When others sin against us, we forgive as God forgave us.

Praise God for his love shown to us: "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8b)

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**Ambassadors of Reconciliation** is a non-profit, international ministry founded to equip Lutherans and their churches for living, proclaiming, and cultivating lifestyles of reconciliation.

The ministry offers training and resources, and it helps people in conflict through counseling, consulting, and other reconciliation services. We are funded through fees for services and resource sales, as well as tax-deductible contributions. Donations help fund the research and development of new resources and assistance for people who cannot afford reconciliation services.

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5<sup>th</sup> Sunday #1