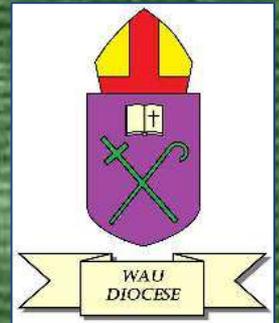


# Reconcile

*Moving Forwards in Peace*



*A Lent Study Course for 2015*  
*themed on reconciliation*

*Created by the Episcopal Church of South Sudan and  
Sudan, Diocese of Wau*

# Reconcile

## Verb

**Pronunciation:** With the stress on the first syllable

1. To restore a friendly relationship; to bring back harmony.
2. To make things compatible or consistent.
3. To make the net difference in credits or debits to make a financial account balance.
4. Settle an argument or quarrel.

**Synonyms:** Accommodate, accord, arbitrate, assuage, conform, conciliate, harmonize, integrate, intercede, mediate, placate, propitiate, rectify, resolve, reunite, regulate, settle

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.” – Unknown Author

## *A Forward By the Rt Rev Moses Deng Bol*

Lent is a time of year that is specially set aside for Christians to grow and learn more about their faith. As a Church in South Sudan, in the North Eastern corner of Africa we face many challenges but one of them is not enthusiasm for our faith.

It gives me great pleasure to be able to offer this course of learning. This is an easy course to use and will work as well in North America as it can in South Africa or South Sudan.

The course focuses on aspects of reconciliation and it draws on stories from the Bible to allow people to learn together and grow. Much of the learning is done through discussion, enabling the sharing of fellowship as well as knowledge. I really hope that this course is fun to attend as well as challenging and instructive. The world needs to look beyond peace to see how it will heal the wounds of conflict especially for us now in South Sudan. Reconciliation is a personal thing that we all need and need also between different peoples. Jesus brought this to us in his teachings and the Bible shows us too how important this is. Without reconciliation peace is just a time of preparation for war.

The internet also allows us to make this course something we can all share together and I really hope that you will make time to connect with us in Wau during lent, share your insights with us and everyone else trying this Lent Study course. In this way we can all reach out in fellowship and perhaps learn more from each other. It's an exciting idea.

Whatever you decide to do it is my prayer that this course will help you to grow in the knowledge and love of God and bring you closer to Jesus as the events of Easter approach.

I would like to thank my staff for all the hard work that they put in to preparing this course and I would like to wish you every blessing in your time of study this lent.

Every Blessing *+Moses*

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# *Notes for Course Leaders*

This course is intended to be used anywhere by anyone so there is a lot of scope in our notes for using this course in your own culture and location. There is no real need for anything else than one copy of the course. The Bible verse is provided and everything can be done verbally. If you want them worksheets can be printed for each week to give to those who attend. We hope that keeping things simple will help those with few resources and focus the minds of those that do. The important part of the course is the discussion of the Gospel. We hope that the following notes will help give you the confidence to provide a good learning environment and run a successful course.

## *Prayer for Your Lent Course*

We feel that it is important to pray for the work of this Lent Study course. Encourage your church family to pray for the Lent course, the people attending and leading it. If you have regular prayers said in services or in vigils include the Lent Study course during Lent so that all of your work is offered to God and may be blessed at the same time. If several people are leading the Lent Study course they may find strength in a short time of prayer before and after the sessions.

## *Be Welcoming*

Ensure that all the people coming to the course are made welcome. Pick a location to hold the course that is comfortable and suitable to all those that may come. Help to make people feel at ease by offering hospitality if you can. If you can offer a drink or something to eat this helps a lot. It may be that all you can offer is a hug and a smile, this can work really well. Most people are nervous at the beginning of a meeting like this, especially if they are people that do not know one another and are new to church.

## ***Greet one another and share names***

When everyone has gathered and been made welcome take the time to introduce yourself and any helpers that are with you. Then suggest that everyone should introduce themselves in the same way so that there are no strangers and everyone is known. If someone refuses that's OK they will probably change their mind later. Always introduce new people if they join in the following weeks. Helping people to feel relaxed and part of a group will make them much more open to sharing in the group which is important for the course to succeed. Ask people at this point every week if they have any prayer needs so that at the start of the course they can be prayed for. This also helps people to feel included in a group of friends.

## ***A Safe Space***

Before you begin each course session agree with everyone that this is a safe space because nothing that is said will be repeated away from the group. There is a strong element of trust to this but making people understand that the group is a safe space to talk is important to allowing people to be truly honest when sharing with the group.

## ***Presenting the Course sessions***

Plan ahead and be organised so that you can take your time. Have a way of beginning such as lighting a candle, ringing a bell or singing a song. Ensure everyone knows that from this point on they are in session. Say prayers for the group remembering any needs that were given earlier.

Discussions often take more time than you think. Discussing the questions asked for each Gospel passage are important to the course. As the leader you will know the answers and it may be that you need to

guide the discussions if people are straying too far from the point. Use this time to add knowledge that people may not have seen from the passage themselves. Be careful to prevent differences of opinion becoming arguments. It is OK to have different views and disagree but people should have respect for one another. Also remember that it is possible that people will learn other valuable things from each session so try to be open to this possibility.

It may be best to select a reader to read the Gospel aloud for each session and if you cannot provide worksheets listen to it read several times. The version given is the Message Bible version. There is no harm in using other versions of the Bible if they are more familiar or people bring their own Bibles. This may help discussion which is a good thing.

Take care to allow plenty of time for the questions so that people can say what they think and talk thoroughly. At the end of the questions encourage people to see how the session applies to the life around them.

## ***Sharing with Others***

It may be that in your location there are several churches. Our Lent Study Course can also be used as a tool to share fellowship with other Christians. It can be a way to share resources and spread costs, perhaps allowing you to do together something that you could not do alone. If you consider sharing our course with other churches remember to respect your neighbours and seek to work with them in faith.

## ***Sharing on Our Website -***

We would like to connect anyone using this Lent Study course in faith by using our website. We are asking for responses from each Lent Study group. A forum has been created on the internet that anyone can join and exchange in fellowship. We hope that many people will look at these messages, be encouraged and even learn something. Each session includes a short time to think of what to send. The forum for Reconcile can be found using this link. [http://bitly.com/reconcile\\_lent\\_course](http://bitly.com/reconcile_lent_course) Simply type it in to any web browser and sign up.

## *Summing up and Going with Grace*

Talking about the Gospel is very important and the way that this course teaches. But it is also just as important to draw the discussion to a point and finish the session with the group realising that they have learned something and been challenged.

Every session has a summing up passage that draws the session to a conclusion. There is also a prayer set on the theme that everyone should be encouraged to join in with. If in your location you cannot provide worksheets this prayer could be repeated several times to allow people to join in.

Take a moment to ask the group how they think they might apply what they have learned in their lives. Think about what message your group would like to send us in Wau and perhaps a member of your group could be asked to do that. Also fix a date for the next session so that everyone present knows it.

It may be that particular needs or concerns will have been raised during the session. This is a time that can be set aside to pray for these needs or the people that they affect.

Finish each session with the Grace prayer this will help to re enforce the idea of unity and fellowship. If it is possible and suitable in your location say this prayer holding hands and looking at one another as you pray. Doing this helps people to feel connected by the love of God and so as they go God's love goes with them.

When all the people have gone say a prayer for those that attended and anyone helping you to present this Lent Study Course.

It is also wise to make a note of anything that went particularly well or even particularly badly so that you can also learn from each session. If there is anything that you would like to share with us about what worked well or not we would be very glad to know it.

## *What if They Want More ?*

Part of the aim of this Lent Study course is to reach out to people and make them think about Jesus. This can have a strong effect which may result in two things.

A person may feel that a session has left them with questions or a need to talk about serious events in their lives. It is important to be prepared for this and be ready to meet this need if it comes. Helping a person at this time can be an important step to them accepting Jesus in to their lives.

Attending the Lent Study course may encourage people new to faith but feeling the call of God to come to your church. This is a time of exploration for them and your church should be ready for this possibility too. It is important to help such people start their journey of faith with confidence and love.



## *The Lent Course Authors:*



**Rt Rev Moses Deng Bol**

Bishop Moses leads the Diocese of Wau and is entrusted by Archbishop Daniel Deng to lead the peace and reconciliation efforts in the Bahr el Ghazel cluster area of South Sudan. Bishop Moses is passionate about peace and reconciliation.



**Reverend Paul Lueth Kat and Regina Paul**

**Returning to Forgiveness – Week 2 - Do You Love Me? – Week 6**

Rev Paul serves the Diocese of Wau as Evangelism Coordinator and is currently away at study with his wife Regina. Regina is a strong Mothers Union supporter and Rev Paul also runs an evangelism charity called Transforming the World in Christ (TWIC).



**Rev Abraham Ngor**

**Escaping the Slavery of Hatred – Week 3**

Rev Abraham was an Archdeacon until he gave up his position to go for study in Uganda to improve his self. He currently at works at African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries (ALARM).



**Rev Nathaniel Maral**

**A Lot to Accept – Week 4**

Rev is the Diocesan Secretary and acting Diocesan Development Coordinator. He is always very much in demand. Nathaniel studied at Cavendish University Uganda gaining a Bachelor of Science degree in International Development, Human Development and Global Political Economy.



**Reverend Peter Angui Akook -**

**The Ultimate Forgiveness – Week 5**

Rev Peter co-ordinates the Wau Diocese Theological Training by Extension program. Peter is passionate about his faith, seeks to do further studies in theology and is helping to set up the new Gogrial Area Diocese.

## Lent Course Week 1

# A Meeting of Two Brothers

By Rt Rev Moses Deng Bol



Please read the Bible accounts below:

### Genesis Chapter 25 Verses 23 to 24

23 God told her, two nations are in your womb, two peoples butting heads while still in your body. One people will overpower the other, and the older will serve the younger. 24 When her time to give birth came, sure enough, there were twins in her womb.

### Genesis Chapter 33 Verses 1 to 14

1 Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming with his four hundred men. He divided the children between Leah and Rachel and the two maidservants. 2 He put the maidservants out in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last. 3 He led the way and, as he approached his brother, bowed seven times, honouring his brother. 4 But Esau ran up and embraced him, held him tight and kissed him. And they both wept. 5 Then Esau looked around and saw the women and children: "And who are these with you?" Jacob said, "The children that God saw fit to bless me with." 6 Then the maidservants came up with their children and bowed; 7 then Leah and her children, also bowing; and finally, Joseph and Rachel came up and bowed to Esau. 8 Esau then asked, "And what was the meaning of all those herds that I met?" "I was hoping that they would pave the way for my master to welcome me." 9 Esau said, "Oh, brother. I have plenty of everything - keep what is yours for yourself." 10 Jacob said, "Please. If you can find it in your heart to welcome me, accept these gifts. When I saw your face, it was as the face of God smiling on me. 11 Accept the gifts I have brought for you. God has been good to me and I have more than enough." Jacob urged the gifts on him and Esau accepted. 12 Then Esau said, "Let's start out on our way; I'll take the lead." 13 But Jacob said, "My master can see that the children are frail. And the flocks and herds are nursing, making for slow going. If I push them too hard, even for a day, I'd lose them all. 14 So, master, you go on ahead of your servant, while I take it easy at the pace of my flocks and children. I'll catch up with you in Seir."

## Setting the Scene

South Sudan, like some other parts of the world is a place where people that are brothers fight viciously against one another. People that are from different tribes see themselves as different people and superior to one another. There is a long history of mistrust between among tribes and even families which often is used to get them to support wider political agendas. In a country where if we worked together there could be plenty for all many are starving and homeless because of fighting. Great atrocities have occurred because one tribe or family wants to dominate in an area; even stealing each other's cows. It is hard for many to see past hatred and so reconciliation seems far away. There is therefore a need for forgiveness and respect for one another based on the understanding that all human beings are created in God's image and likeness irrespective of their tribe, race or gender.

### Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:

1. People can be different and argue, even in families. Some have more and some less. People are often jealous of others or fearful. Can you see examples of this in your family, culture or country?
2. Why does Jacob approach Esau in the way he does?
3. How does Esau react? Is this the way you would react?
4. Why is it so important to Jacob for Esau to accept his gifts?
5. Are Jacob and Esau reconciled? How easy is it to trust someone you once feared or hated? What is required to strengthen this situation?
6. Is it impossible for people who feel wronged to be reconciled?
7. Jacob found it hard to meet Esau but made a strong effort to reconcile himself with Esau. What does the Bible teach us in this story?

8. What part can we play to aid reconciliation in families, between tribes and countries?

### **Summing Up**

Jacob and Esau have a lot to be angry about with each other but they are reconciled as brothers after years of bad feeling which reflects the fact that no problem is too great. After all, even though they were two different kinds of people they were family, as South Sudan is really one people – a family of tribes. The first step to reconciliation between brothers, peoples or nations is mutual respect and forgiveness. The reading is very honest and typical as an example, there is fear to overcome and trust is hard to establish but it shows reconciliation working for real, as it might now, given a chance.

### **Pray together:**

Dear Father you put peace in our hearts and whisper it in our ears but we often do not listen and let our hearts fill with fear or anger. Teach us to listen and accept what you want of us so that we may lead by example and show others the way. Give us the strength and courage to trust in you when all the world will not listen. Bless us with your holy spirit and fill us with your peace.

Amen

## For the Week Ahead

Matthew 5:23-24

This is how I want you to conduct yourself in these matters. If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you, abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right. Then and only then, come back and work things out with God.

“In the coming week think about things that prevent you from forgiving someone that you might be reconciled with. Are you holding a grudge or a hatred for someone, group or tribe that is getting in the way of your relationship with God? Do your own actions condemn you? The answers may not be simple or easy but pray about that this week and ask God to help.”

**“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all,  
now and evermore.  
Amen.”**

# *Lent Course Week 1 Leaders Notes*

## *A Meeting of Two Brothers*



By Rt Rev Moses Deng Bol

Prepare ahead ensure that you are ready for the session well ahead of people arriving. Once people have gathered, greeted one another and pray for each other. Then share the Bible accounts below.

### Genesis Chapter 25 Verses 23 to 24

23 God told her, two nations are in your womb, two peoples butting heads while still in your body. One people will overpower the other, and the older will serve the younger. 24 When her time to give birth came, sure enough, there were twins in her womb.

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## Setting the Scene

South Sudan, like some other parts of the world is a place where people that are brothers fight viciously against one another. People that are from different tribes see themselves as different people and superior to one another. There is a long history of mistrust between among tribes and even families which often is used to get them to support wider political agendas. In a country where if we worked together there could be plenty for all many are starving and homeless because of fighting. Great atrocities have occurred because one tribe or family wants to dominate in an area; even stealing each other's cows. It is hard for many to see past hatred and so reconciliation seems far away. There is therefore a need for forgiveness and respect for one another based on the understanding that all human beings are created in God's image and likeness irrespective of their tribe, race or gender.

**Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:**

**Allow people to talk and then using the notes for each question draw the discussion to a common answer.**

1. People can be different and argue, even in families. Some have more and some less. People are often jealous of others or fearful. Can you see examples of this in your family, culture or country?

In South Sudan often people who are from different tribes live in very different ways and in different areas. This can easily make people suspect that they are up to no good or are to blame when bad things happen. Sadly sometimes these fears are well founded. In South Sudan recently and even now terrible things have been done by people who could be called country men or brothers. Sadly some people are taught to hate anyone who is not like them.

2. Why does Jacob approach Esau in the way he does?

Jacob has not had a good relationship with Esau and is fearful of what may happen. So he places those most dear to him closest to protect them and observes every ritual of respect for an older brother and forces his family to do the same. Jacob hopes this will prevent his brother from being angry, he could easily kill him or his family so Jacob is taking care.

### 3. How does Esau react? Is this the way you would react?

Esau reacts with joy at meeting his brother. This is a real surprise, there has been 20 years of bad feeling. But people do change and I am reminded of this proverb - In the LORD's hand the king's heart is a stream of water that he channels toward all who please him.(Pr 21 – 1). God gas a way of getting things done.

### 4. Why is it so important to Jacob for Esau to accept his gifts?

We must remember that in this time the culture was that of the East and in the East acceptance by a superior is a proof of friendship, and by an enemy, of reconciliation. Jacob has bad feeling with his brother who was also his elder. So it was on both accounts that Jacob was so anxious that his brother should receive the cattle. In Esau's acceptance Jacob had the strongest proof of a good feeling being established. It was the only way Jacob felt he could know his bothers heart.

### 5. Are Jacob and Esau reconciled? How easy is it to trust someone you once feared or hated? What is required to strengthen this situation?

Yes. At that moment they are reconciled. It is an unbelievable moment. But Esau offers to travel with Jacob and protect him which is a strong sign of friendship. The next step is trust, Jacob may not have trusted this reconciliation at first, which may be why he did not allow Esau to travel with him. He may also have worried that the situation was fragile and may break down. But building trust is the next step so that everyone can see that reconciliation is real and not just words. As Jacob shows this may not just come naturally and sometimes great bravery is required.

### 6. Is it impossible for people who feel wronged to be reconciled?

No, but it is difficult because if you feel wronged you often want justice or what you believe to be justice before you feel that you can be reconciled. The justice may – just like an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth may just cause more harm and make things worse. People who are very proud can make reconciliation very difficult. It can be very hard to be reconciled if very bad things have happened to you and sometimes people are willing to be peaceful even if they are not fully reconciled. This at least gives people time to think and accept reconciliation. Time is known to heal some wounds. Reconciliation can be very hard but it is not impossible. Jacob and Esau had bad feeling for 20years.

## 7. Jacob found it hard to meet Esau but made a strong effort to reconcile himself with Esau. What does the Bible teach us in this story?

Although it can be hard to be reconciled it is worth the trouble. Although at the end of the reading Jacob and Esau parted, they parted in peace not anger even if Jacob was still fearful of Esau – instead of going to Seir as he said Jacob actually went to Succoth. The story teaches that we must make every effort to respect each other and behave well to each other so that we may find it in our hearts to reconcile. God does not remove every obstacle from our way and sometimes there is a good reason. If Esau and Jacob had not met there could never have been any reconciliation. The same is true today reconciliation can only come if we meet with a heart for peace no matter who we are.

## 8. What part can we play to aid reconciliation in families, between tribes and countries?

We must look to find ways of getting people who would rather not meet to meet and see each other in new ways. This does not matter if it is great generals or squabbling children. We may not always be able to participate in events between countries but we can try to support people that are involved. The internet offers many ways to do this and we should search them out. We should also look to set an example to others of peace and encourage those who for one reason or another will find this hard. There is a phrase that Jesus once used when he said we should be as wise as serpents and gentle as lambs. Reconciliation needs of us great care and many practical considerations, just as Jacob arranged his family in meeting Esau. It also requires of us to be forgiving and accepting as Esau was when he met with Jacob. By showing the way and encouraging others and participating when we can we may do the most possible to bring and accept reconciliation.

### Summing Up

Read the passage below to the group and then ask for a time of silence to prepare for prayer.

Jacob and Esau have a lot to be angry about with each other but they are reconciled as brothers after years of bad feeling which reflects the fact that no problem is too great. After all, even though they were two

different kinds of people they were family, as South Sudan is really one people – a family of tribes. The first step to reconciliation between brothers, peoples or nations is mutual respect and forgiveness. The reading is very honest and typical as an example, there is fear to overcome and trust is hard to establish but it shows reconciliation working for real, as it might now, given a chance.

Encourage everyone to say this prayer. If it is not practical to have enough sheets to share out teach the prayer by repeating it.

### **Pray together:**

Dear Father you put peace in our hearts and whisper it in our ears but we often do not listen and let our hearts fill with fear or anger. Teach us to listen and accept what you want of us so that we may lead by example and show others the way. Give us the strength and courage to trust in you when all the world will not listen. Bless us with your holy spirit and fill us with your peace.

Amen

If the need is felt allow others to share prayers on this theme in a time of free prayer.

### **For the Week Ahead**

Before arranging to meet again for next week talk about how people feel they may be able to see the world differently and how this may affect the way they want to live. Read the Gospel passage

New Testament Quote Matthew 5:23-24

This is how I want you to conduct yourself in these matters. If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you, abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right. Then and only then, come back and work things out with God.

“In the coming week think about things that prevent you from forgiving someone that you might be reconciled with. Are you holding a grudge or a hatred for someone, group or tribe that is getting in the way of your relationship with God? Do your own actions condemn you? The answers may not be simple or easy but pray about that this week and ask God to help.”

Arrange to meet next week and finish saying the Grace together. In so far as is practical encourage people to say the grace holding hands and sharing a smile with each member of the group to encourage a positive feel of inclusiveness.

**“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all,  
now and evermore.  
Amen.”**

When all the people have left make a note of anything that came up in the group session that may be useful in the life of your Church group or community.

Spend a short time in prayer to give thanks to God and pray for the people that have attended.

## Lent Course Week 2

### Returning to Forgiveness

By Rev Paul Lueth Kat and Regina Paul



Read the Gospel account below:

#### Luke Chapter 15 verses 11 to 32

11 Then he said, "There was once a man who had two sons. 12 The younger said to his father, 'Father, I want right now what's coming to me.' 13 It wasn't long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. 14 After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to hurt. 15 He signed on with a citizen there who assigned him to his fields to slop the pigs. 16 He was so hungry he would have eaten the corncobs in the pig slop, but no one would give him any. 17 "That brought him to his senses. He said, 'All those farmhands working for my father sit down to three meals a day, and here I am starving to death. 18 I'm going back to my father. I'll say to him, Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; 19 I don't deserve to be called your son. Take me on as a hired hand.' 20 He got right up and went home to his father. When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him. 21 The son started his speech: 'Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son ever again.' 22" But the father wasn't listening. He was calling to the servants, 'Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Then get a grain-fed heifer and roast it. We're going to feast! We're going to have a wonderful time! 24 My son is here - given up for dead and now alive! Given up for lost and now found!' And they began to have a wonderful time. 25 "All this time his older son was out in the field. When the day's work was done he came in. As he approached the house, he heard the music and dancing. 26 Calling over one of the houseboys, he asked what was going on. 27 He told him, 'Your brother came home. Your father has ordered a feast - barbecued beef! - because he has him home safe and sound.' 28" The older brother stalked off in an angry sulk and refused to join in. His father came out and tried to talk to him, but he wouldn't listen. 29 The son said, 'Look how many years I've stayed here serving you, never giving you one moment of grief, but have you ever thrown a party for me and my friends? 30 Then this son of yours who has thrown away your money on whores shows up and you go all out with a feast!' 31 "His father said, 'Son, you don't understand. You're with me all the time and everything that is mine is yours - 32 but this is a wonderful time, and we had to celebrate. This brother of yours was dead, and he's alive! He was lost, and he's found!'"

## Setting the Scene

In South Sudan there has been much fighting. People have fought for liberation, people have fought in tribal conflicts, people have fought cattle thieves and recently there has been civil war. The fighting is filled with violence that affects women and children and breaks all rules of society leaving many dead, many raped and many homeless. It is very hard for people that have suffered so much to accept the repentance of others who may have done these things and hard for those who have done this to think they can be forgiven. The parable of the prodigal son shows how reconciliation is not so straight forward for some as it is for others and that material things sometimes get in the way of what is truly important. It reflects the difficult and complex nature of South Sudanese culture where so many are lost to sin and violence. Forgiveness and reconciliation offers a way back to a life that has a future.

### Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:

1. Is the Prodigal Son's request an insult to his Father?
2. What does it say about the Father that he gives it? Does the Son deserve this?
3. When bad time come and the Prodigal son is hungry what does he realise about his father's relationship with his own servants?
4. What can we learn about the actions of the Prodigal son?
5. Does the Father's reaction to the Son's return match the Son's expectations? Are they reconciled? Would you react this way?
6. Is the reaction of the older son justified? Is his inheritance secure? What does the Father's reaction teach us?
7. Do we allow material things to get in the way or spiritual things? How do we treat people who are truly sorry for their stupid mistakes? Do we expect to be reconciled with God for our own mistakes? Are there limits to that?

8. In life reconciliation is not always easy. Do our relationships reflect the love that God has for us. Does reconciliation mend lives? What do you think happened in the days after the feast was over?

## Summing Up

The parable teaches us that no matter how far we stray from God there is always a welcome greeting if we return. Forgiveness is given willingly to those who repent and change their ways. This was a shock to the older son in the story who found it hard to accept such reconciliation. Indeed even the young son did not expect it. We can be very surprised by God and the depth of the love that God has for us. We sometimes try to make God fit our own thinking instead of trying to think about what God wants.

The days after the feast may have been very difficult, filled with sulking, accusations and arguments. But what is important is that despite his actions the Father loved the son and was pleased to be reconciled with him on his return. However difficult there can be reconciliation and that is important to know.

## Pray together:

“Our Father who is in Heaven full of love and mercy, forgive us all our transgressions, lead us and guide us with a thousand angels and open our sight, understanding and give us courage to know the love you have for us and show it in our daily lives.

Amen”

## For the Week Ahead

New Testament Quote 2Cor 5 17-18

19 In other words, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting people's trespasses against them, and he has given us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making His plea through us. We plead with you on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God!"

"In the coming week think about how open you are to reconciliation with others. Do we always show others the mercy and forgiveness that God shows us? Pray about that this week."

**"May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all,  
now and evermore.  
Amen."**

# Lent Course Week 2 Leaders Notes

## Returning to Forgiveness

By Rev Paul Lueth Kat and Regina Paul



Prepare ahead ensure that you are ready for the session well ahead of people arriving. Once people have gathered, greeted one another and prayed for each other. Then share the Gospel account below:

### Luke Chapter 15 verses 11 to 32

11 Then he said, "There was once a man who had two sons. 12 The younger said to his father, 'Father, I want right now what's coming to me.' 13 It wasn't long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. 14 After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to hurt. 15 He signed on with a citizen there who assigned him to his fields to slop the pigs. 16 He was so hungry he would have eaten the corncobs in the pig slop, but no one would give him any. 17 "That brought him to his senses. He said, 'All those farmhands working for my father sit down to three meals a day, and here I am starving to death. 18 I'm going back to my father. I'll say to him, Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; 19 I don't deserve to be called your son. Take me on as a hired hand.' 20 He got right up and went home to his father. When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him. 21 The son started his speech: 'Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son ever again.' 22" But the father wasn't listening. He was calling to the servants, 'Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Then get a grain-fed heifer and roast it. We're going to feast! We're going to have a wonderful time! 24 My son is here - given up for dead and now alive! Given up for lost and now found!' And they began to have a wonderful time. 25 "All this time his older son was out in the field. When the day's work was done he came in. As he approached the house, he heard the music and dancing. 26 Calling over one of the houseboys, he asked what was going on. 27 He told him, 'Your brother came home. Your father has ordered a feast - barbecued beef! - because he has him home safe and sound.' 28" The older brother stalked off in an angry sulk and refused to join in. His father came out and tried to talk to him, but he wouldn't listen. 29 The son said, 'Look how many years I've stayed here serving you, never giving you one moment of grief, but have you ever thrown a party for me and my friends? 30 Then this son of yours who has thrown away your money on whores shows up and you go all out with a feast!' 31 "His father said, 'Son, you don't understand. You're with me all the time and everything that is mine is yours - 32 but this is a wonderful time, and we had to celebrate. This brother of yours was dead, and he's alive! He was lost, and he's found!'"

## Setting the Scene

In South Sudan there has been much fighting. People have fought for liberation, people have fought in tribal conflicts, people have fought cattle thieves and recently there has been civil war. The fighting is filled with violence that affects women and children and breaks all rules of society leaving many dead, many raped and many homeless. It is very hard for people that have suffered so much to accept the repentance of others who may have done these things and hard for those who have done this to think they can be forgiven. The parable of the prodigal son shows how reconciliation is not so straight forward for some as it is for others and that material things sometimes get in the way of what is truly important. It reflects the difficult and complex nature of South Sudanese culture where so many are lost to sin and violence. Forgiveness and reconciliation offers a way back to a life that has a future.

**Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:**

**Allow people to talk and then using the notes for each question draw the discussion to a common answer.**

1. Is the Prodigal Son's request an insult to his Father?

No, the son was requesting his right then father honoured him and gave him his right.

2. What does it say about the Father that he gives it? Does the Son deserve this?

The son told to his father that I need my right in my Father's family and the father accepted his voice, he respected him enough to allow him to have what belongs to him early. The Father showed care for his younger son.

3. When bad time come and the Prodigal son is hungry what does he realise about his father's relationship with his own servants?

The son thinks back to his father and that it is good to go to my father to beg him to allow me to work like servant to him, at least he could eat in the house. The Father cared about the people around him, even his servants.

4. What can we learn about the actions of the Prodigal son?

We learn the way when you fall into sins you can think back to your Father who cares for you and run to him and he will have mercy on you, even if you have behaved badly.

### 5. Does the Father's reaction to the Son's return match the Son's expectations? Are they reconciled? Would you react this way?

The reaction of his Father is different from the expectation of the son because the son knows that when he arrives at home his father may expel him, that is why he hides himself to be sent begging to his father first. This is way that reconciliation comes to two people, as a surprise to somebody that needs forgiveness. I want my reaction to always be this way.

### 6. Is the reaction of the older son justified? Is his inheritance secure? What does the Father's reaction teach us?

The reaction of older son is easy to understand but not justified, the Father teaches us forgiveness when someone does wrong to you. You can forgive him or her welcome him or her as your son or brother, sister or daughter. The inheritance is not so important.

### 7. Do we allow material things to get in the way or spiritual things? How do we treat people who are truly sorry for their stupid mistakes? Do we expect to be reconciled with God for our own mistakes? Are there limits to that?

We should follow spiritual things rather than material things, we should treat people kindly who truly repent to us; to forgive them and welcome them as our brothers and sisters with a sincere heart. Yes, we want to be reconciled with God because we have sinned against God because we are not perfect. We cannot put limits on God because God is our Father that loves us and wants us to be reconciled.

### 8. In life reconciliation is not always easy. Do our relationships reflect the love that God has for us. Does reconciliation mend lives? What do you think happened in the days after the feast was over?

It is true reconciliation is not easy, it is hard work, takes time to forget the past and needs commitment from both sides to really reconcile each other. The love God has for us is like the love of the Father in the story and we should try to have this love too. In the days after the feast probably life continued the same but differently and beginning a new life.

## Summing Up

Read the passage below to the group and then ask for a time of silence to prepare for prayer.

The parable teaches us that no matter how far we stray from God there is always a welcome greeting if we return. Forgiveness is given willingly to those who repent and change their ways. This was a shock to the older son in the story who found it hard to accept such reconciliation. Indeed even the young son did not expect it. We can be very surprised by God and the depth of the love that God has for us. We sometimes try to make God fit our own thinking instead of trying to think about what God wants.

The days after the feast may have been very difficult, filled with sulking, accusations and arguments. But what is important is that despite his actions the Father loved the son and was pleased to be reconciled with him on his return. However difficult there can be reconciliation and that is important to know.

### Pray together:

Encourage everyone to say this prayer. If it is not practical to have enough sheets to share out teach the prayer by repeating it.

“Our Father who is in Heaven full of love and mercy, forgive us all our transgressions, lead us and guide us with a thousand angels and open our sight, understanding and give us courage to know the love you have for us and show it in our daily lives.

Amen”

If the need is felt allow others to share prayers on this theme in a time of free prayer.

## For the Week Ahead

Before arranging to meet again for next week talk about how people feel they may be able to see the world differently and how this may affect the way they want to live.

New Testament Quote 2Cor 5 17-18

19 In other words, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting people's trespasses against them, and he has given us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making His plea through us. We plead with you on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God!"

"In the coming week think about how open you are to reconciliation with others. Do we always show others the mercy and forgiveness that God shows us? Pray about that this week."

Arrange to meet next week and finish saying the Grace together. In so far as is practical encourage people to say the grace holding hands and sharing a smile with each member of the group to encourage a positive feel of inclusiveness.

**"May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all,  
now and evermore.  
Amen."**

When all the people have left make a note of anything that came up in the group session that may be useful in the life of your Church group or community.

Spend a short time in prayer to give thanks to God and pray for the people that have attended.

## Lent Course Week 3

# Escaping the Slavery of Hatred

By Rev Abraham Ngor



Please read the New Testament reading below taken from Philemon

### Verses 8 – 21

8 In line with all this I have a favour to ask of you. As Christ's ambassador and now a prisoner for him, I wouldn't hesitate to command this if I thought it necessary, 9 but I'd rather make it a personal request. 10 While here in jail, I've fathered a child, so to speak. And here he is, hand-carrying this letter - Onesimus! 11 He was useless to you before; now he's useful to both of us. 12 I'm sending him back to you, but it feels like I'm cutting off my right arm in doing so. 13 I wanted in the worst way to keep him here as your stand-in to help out while I'm in jail for the Message. 14 But I didn't want to do anything behind your back, make you do a good deed that you hadn't willingly agreed to. 15 Maybe it's all for the best that you lost him for a while. You're getting him back now for good - 16 and no mere slave this time, but a true Christian brother! That's what he was to me - he'll be even more than that to you. 17 So if you still consider me a comrade-in-arms, welcome him back as you would me. 18 If he damaged anything or owes you anything, chalk it up to my account. 19 This is my personal signature - Paul - and I stand behind it. (I don't need to remind you, do I, that you owe your very life to me?) 20 Do me this big favour, friend. You'll be doing it for Christ, but it will also do my heart good. 21 I know you well enough to know you will. You'll probably go far beyond what I've written.

### Setting the Scene

Our new country of South Sudan is torn apart by its leaders who are struggling for power and not caring for the life of their people. Vulnerable people are the victim of suffering during the current conflict in South Sudan in particular. Over ten thousand people have died and more than 2 million are displaced from their homes. Innocent people are suffering due to displacement, hunger, disease, killing, torture, abduction etc. Women and girls are being raped, young children are forced to be child soldiers, people's property is destroyed and above all, the killing of innocent civilians due to their ethnicities. The dangerous effect of the conflict is the bitter division among the people of one nation. Hatred is rooted among the people and that lets them kill themselves along the line of ethnicity without mercy or forgiveness at all. Therefore, there is a great need of committing to prayers in order to bring healing, reconciliation and stability to this nation. There should be a serious commitment from faith base communities to conduct trauma healing, conflict resolution, peace building and reconciliation.

## Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:

1. Why do you think that Onesimus had gone to visit St Paul?
2. What kind of person is Philemon? How might other people expect him to treat Onesimus now?
3. Are there people in your culture that seem to have fewer rights or are more vulnerable than others?
4. What does St Paul ask of Philemon that is so unusual. What does more than a slave mean?
5. Does Onesimus deserve what St Paul is asking for? Does Philemon have to do as he is asked because Onesimus repented?
6. Are there ever times when forgiving a person would allow them to see the world differently and change as a person. Has anyone ever forgiven you?
7. What do you think happened to Philemon and Onesimus? Why is this letter in the Bible?
8. What lesson can we learn about reconciliation from this story and how can we use this lesson in our life?

## Summing Up

Philemon had a massive advantage over Onesimus. As a slave he was vulnerable. There was a barrier between them made by their culture. This is true of many cultures including the tribal culture in South Sudan. There are people who have few rights because of who they are and people who are hated because of what others like them have done. Philemon is reconciled with Onesimus, his former slave that stole from him, at the request of St Paul. This shows that people can see things differently through faith and change their ways to forgive. In the eyes of God the barriers created by our cultures do not exist. There was no one that Jesus would not heal or forgive. South Sudan and the world could benefit a lot from this lesson. How many lives could be saved and improved by being reconciled?

## Pray together:

“Dear Lord Jesus Christ; thank you so much for dying on cross for the sins of all mankind. May your will be done as you have said in the Bible that we should have to forgive other people who do wrong things to us. May you fill us with your Holy Spirit in order to love and forgive one another. I am praying specially for our torn nation; may you bring peace and unity back to our people. In Jesus name I pray.

Amen”

## For the Week Ahead

“In the coming week think about the way you understand the world and try to see if there are ways that hatred can affect you. Does the way you understand the world allow you to forgive everybody and be reconciled with them ? pray about that this week.”

**“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
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## Lent Course Week 3 Leaders Notes

### Escaping the Slavery of Hatred



By Rev Abraham Ngor

Prepare ahead ensure that you are ready for the session well ahead of people arriving. Once people have gathered, greeted one another and pray for each other. Then share the New Testament account below taken from Philemon.

#### Verses 8 -21

8 In line with all this I have a favour to ask of you. As Christ's ambassador and now a prisoner for him, I wouldn't hesitate to command this if I thought it necessary, 9 but I'd rather make it a personal request. 10 While here in jail, I've fathered a child, so to speak. And here he is, hand-carrying this letter - Onesimus! 11 He was useless to you before; now he's useful to both of us. 12 I'm sending him back to you, but it feels like I'm cutting off my right arm in doing so. 13 I wanted in the worst way to keep him here as your stand-in to help out while I'm in jail for the Message. 14 But I didn't want to do anything behind your back, make you do a good deed that you hadn't willingly agreed to. 15 Maybe it's all for the best that you lost him for a while. You're getting him back now for good - 16 and no mere slave this time, but a true Christian brother! That's what he was to me - he'll be even more than that to you. 17 So if you still consider me a comrade-in-arms, welcome him back as you would me. 18 If he damaged anything or owes you anything, chalk it up to my account. 19 This is my personal signature - Paul - and I stand behind it. (I don't need to remind you, do I, that you owe your very life to me?) 20 Do me this big favour, friend. You'll be doing it for Christ, but it will also do my heart good. 21 I know you well enough to know you will. You'll probably go far beyond what I've written.

#### Setting the Scene

Our new country of South Sudan is torn apart by its leaders who are struggling for power and not caring for the life of their people. Vulnerable people are the victim of suffering during the current conflict in South Sudan in particular. Over ten thousand people have died and more than 2 million are displaced from their homes. Innocent people are suffering due to displacement, hunger, disease, killing, torture, abduction etc. Women and girls are being raped, young children are forced to be child soldiers, people's property is destroyed and above all, the killing of innocent civilians due to their ethnicities. The dangerous effect of the conflict is the bitter division among the people of one nation. Hatred is rooted among the people and that lets them kill themselves along the line of ethnicity without mercy or forgiveness at all. Therefore, there is a great need of committing to prayers in order to bring healing, reconciliation and stability to this nation. There should be a serious commitment from faith base communities to conduct trauma healing, conflict resolution, peace building and reconciliation.

**Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:**

**Allow people to talk and then using the notes for each question draw the discussion to a common answer.**

1. Why do you think that Onesimus had gone to visit St Paul?

Probably he went to visit St Paul so that he should be reconciling him with his master Philemon.

2. What kind of person is Philemon? How might other people expect him to treat Onesimus now?

He was a great leader who was converted to Christianity. He also seemed to be loving and a humbled person. Other people expected him to punish Onesimus because he was just a slave who misbehaved. So, he deserved to be punished as it was the culture in those days. In another view others may have expected Philemon to forgive Onesimus though he did bad things to his Boss. Others also expect him to forgive and make reconciliation with him because St Paul had asked him to forgive.

3. Are there people in your culture that seem to have fewer rights or are more vulnerable than others?

In our community in South Sudan there are people such as slaves, thieves, prostitutes, prisoners, poor or vulnerable people, children, women and many other people that have fewer rights than others.

4. What does St Paul ask of Philemon that is so unusual? What does more than a slave mean?

St Paul was asking for forgiveness and reconciliation as well as well as Christian love. More than a slave means to be better than a slave. This means that when Onesimus became a Christian, then he became more than a slave though he should have remained to serve his master after coming back.

5. Does Onesimus deserve what St Paul is asking for? Does Philemon have to do as he is asked because Onesimus repented?

Yes, Onesimus deserves what St Paul was asking for because of his repentance and conversion to Christianity. Philemon has to do as he was asked because his servant has become a new person, more than a slave.

6. Are there ever times when forgiving a person would allow them to see the world differently and change as a person. Has anyone ever forgiven you?

It is very common that when someone forgives another fellow person, then the forgiven one should be challenged by this action taken by the one who has forgiven them. Therefore that can let him or her change completely. Personally yes, I have been forgiven several times by several people since the time that I was a child soldier from 1980 up to this moment.

7. What do you think happened to Philemon and Onesimus? Why is this letter in the Bible?

The problem was that Onesimus stole some things from his master and ran away; after his conversion then they were reconciled by St Paul. Onesimus probably continued to serve Philemon. The letter is written in order to teach others how to forgive and reconcile. It's a real life example.

8. What lesson can we learn about reconciliation from this story and how can we use this lesson in our life?

We can learn the lesson of forgiveness and reconciliation and we should live by the same example; by being ambassadors for peace and reconciliation in the world.

## Summing Up

Read the passage below to the group and then ask for a time of silence to prepare for prayer.

Philemon had a massive advantage over Onesimus. As a slave he was vulnerable. There was a barrier between them made by their culture. This is true of many cultures including the tribal culture in South Sudan. There are people who have few rights because of who they are and people who are hated because of what others like them have done.

Philemon is reconciled with Onesimus, his former slave that stole from him, at the request of St Paul. This shows that people can see things differently through faith and change their ways to forgive. In the eyes of God the barriers created by our cultures do not exist. There was no one that Jesus would not heal or forgive. South Sudan and the world could benefit a lot from this lesson. How many lives could be saved and improved by being reconciled?

### **Pray together:**

Encourage everyone to say this prayer. If it is not practical to have enough sheets to share out teach the prayer by repeating it.

“Dear Lord Jesus Christ; thank you so much for dying on cross for the sins of all mankind. May your will be done as you have said in the Bible that we should have to forgive other people who do wrong things to us. May you fill us with your Holy Spirit in order to love and forgive one another. I am praying specially for our torn nation; may you bring peace and unity back to our people. In Jesus name I pray.

Amen”

If the need is felt allow others to share prayers on this theme in a time of free prayer.

### **For the Week Ahead**

Before arranging to meet again for next week talk about how people feel they may be able to see the world differently and how this may affect the way they want to live.

New Testament Quote Colossians 3:13

"Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others."

"In the coming week think about the way you understand the world and try to see if there are ways that hatred can affect you. Does the way you understand the world allow you to forgive everybody and be reconciled with them ? pray about that this week."

Arrange to meet next week and finish saying the Grace together. In so far as is practical encourage people to say the grace holding hands and sharing a smile with each member of the group to encourage a positive feel of inclusiveness.

**"May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
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Amen."**

When all the people have left make a note of anything that came up in the group session that may be useful in the life of your Church group or community.

Spend a short time in prayer to give thanks to God and pray for the people that have attended.

## Lent Course Week 4

### A Lot to Accept

By Rev Nathaniel Maral

Please read the Gospel account below.



#### Luke Chapter 1 Verse 26 – 38

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to the Galilean village of Nazareth 27 to a virgin engaged to be married to a man descended from David. His name was Joseph, and the virgin's name, Mary. 28 Upon entering, Gabriel greeted her: Good morning! You're beautiful with God's beauty, Beautiful inside and out! God be with you. 29 She was thoroughly shaken, wondering what was behind a greeting like that. 30 But the angel assured her, "Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: 31 You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus. 32 He will be great, be called 'Son of the Highest.' The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David; 33 He will rule Jacob's house forever - no end, ever, to his kingdom." 34 Mary said to the angel, "But how? I've never slept with a man." 35 The angel answered, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Highest hover over you; Therefore, the child you bring to birth will be called Holy, Son of God. 36 "And did you know that your cousin Elizabeth conceived a son, old as she is? Everyone called her barren, and here she is six months' pregnant! 37 Nothing, you see, is impossible with God." 38 And Mary said, Yes, I see it all now: I'm the Lord's maid, ready to serve. Let it be with me just as you say. Then the angel left her. Blessed Among Women

#### Setting the Scene

Among the South Sudanese, they pronounce that war is the only way to beat your enemy. That is people's belief and in their perspective they say, to reconcile with a person shows that you are not strong. They also believe who is strong is also big. The fundamentally politicized ethnicity, especially beholden from the perspective of the two major warring parties of the Dinka and Nuer tribes is primarily rooted in the idea of "born-to rule." Both groups are convinced, although misguidedly, in a sense of entitlement to exercise exclusive political power. Each party has an indirect historical claim of some numerical advantage and participation in the liberation struggle that led to the independence of South Sudan. Both parties have perceived ethnic/clan dominance.

In thirteen months of civil war, we have committed crimes among ourselves, murder of civilians, gang rape, the mass destruction and looting of civilian property. These are the atrocities we have made during these thirteen months conflict. In my practical studies among these two ethnic groups Dinka and Nuer they claimed it is difficult to live together, to reconcile, or to accept one another and

when I look in to it the wounds these two communities have, it was not issues of today but it was from their grand fathers and fathers. However, it is difficult for them to accept one another, to forgive atrocities from one tribe to another. It's a lot to accept.

This session teaches us that God's will can be a lot to accept. Whether we accept one another, with all the difficulties and atrocities we have made.

### **Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:**

1. How would you feel if a stranger came to you and told you that you were part of God plan?
2. Do you think that Mary believed the angel straight away?
3. Do you think that Mary was ever scared of what she was told would happen?
4. Do you think what God asked was difficult for Mary?
5. Do we sometimes have to reconcile what God wants of us with who we are inside and the world around us? Does this display faith in God?
6. Are we ever beautiful inside and out? What does this mean and what can we do about it?
7. Does Mary's response to the angel set an example of faith? Is she reconciled with God, what does she teach us?
8. How can we bring the faith that Mary had to accept a very difficult thing into our lives to accept other difficult things and be reconciled with them?

### **Summing Up**

This session teaches us that God's will can be a lot to accept. Whether we accept one another, with all the difficulties and atrocities we have made or we accept what God wants of us The response of Mary teaches us about accepting and responding, it is difficult sometimes to accept and reconcile ourselves. But the Bible teaches us to accept one another with all the atrocities he or she has made.

Mary is faced with a huge challenge but responds with an act that is lifelong witness to God working in this world. Mary reconciles what God wanted of her when she is visited by an Angel and does what must be done however much it affects her life. This shows witness of faith and it's huge value and also shows how women are also part of the way God works in our world. Reconciliation is for all.

### **Pray together:**

Our Father in heaven, we are standing before you Lord, because you have forgiven us our sin through your Son Jesus Christ. May you yield us with a spirit of acceptance and forgiveness for one another. I'm praying for myself and all those in my immediate and entire people of the Republic of South Sudan, may we not only love but accept and enjoy each other. Let your love, joy, peace, and patience be at the heart of our relationships with one another, along with your kindness and goodness. May we be willing to love each other as unconditionally as you love us. As we shall be going through this week session, we ask you Lord to fill and guide us with your Holy Spirit. I ask all this in the name of Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen!

### **For the Week Ahead**

“In the coming week think about these things. Are you challenged by God ? Are you trying to do the things that God wants? Does the way you live give an example to others? Are you truly reconciled to God?”

**“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all,  
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Amen.”**

# Lent Course Week 4 Leaders Notes

## A Lot to Accept

By Rev Nathaniel Maral



Prepare ahead ensure that you are ready for the session well ahead of people arriving. Once people have gathered, greeted one another and pray for each other. Then share the Gospel account below.

### Luke Chapter 1 Verse 26 - 38

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to the Galilean village of Nazareth 27 to a virgin engaged to be married to a man descended from David. His name was Joseph, and the virgin's name, Mary. 28 Upon entering, Gabriel greeted her: Good morning! You're beautiful with God's beauty, Beautiful inside and out! God be with you. 29 She was thoroughly shaken, wondering what was behind a greeting like that. 30 But the angel assured her, "Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: 31 You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus. 32 He will be great, be called 'Son of the Highest.' The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David; 33 He will rule Jacob's house forever - no end, ever, to his kingdom." 34 Mary said to the angel, "But how? I've never slept with a man." 35 The angel answered, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Highest hover over you; Therefore, the child you bring to birth will be called Holy, Son of God. 36 "And did you know that your cousin Elizabeth conceived a son, old as she is? Everyone called her barren, and here she is six months' pregnant! 37 Nothing, you see, is impossible with God." 38 And Mary said, Yes, I see it all now: I'm the Lord's maid, ready to serve. Let it be with me just as you say. Then the angel left her. Blessed Among Women

### Setting the Scene

Among the South Sudanese, they pronounce that war is the only way to beat your enemy. That is people's belief and in their perspective they say, to reconcile with a person shows that you are not strong. They also believe who is strong is also big. The fundamentally politicized ethnicity, especially beholden from the perspective of the two major warring parties of the Dinka and Nuer tribes is primarily rooted in the idea of "born-to rule." Both groups are convinced, although misguidedly, in a sense of entitlement to exercise exclusive political power. Each party has an indirect historical claim of some numerical advantage and participation in the liberation struggle that led to the independence of South Sudan. Both parties have perceived ethnic/clan dominance.

In thirteen months of civil war, we have committed crimes among ourselves, murder of civilians, gang rape, the mass destruction and looting of civilian property. These are the atrocities we have

made during these thirteen months conflict. In my practical studies among these two ethnic groups Dinka and Nuer they claimed it is difficult to live together, to reconcile, or to accept one another and when I look in to it the wounds these two communities have, it was not issues of today but it was from their grand fathers and fathers. However, it is difficult for them to accept one another, to forgive atrocities from one tribe to another. It's a lot to accept.

This session teaches us that God's will can be a lot to accept. Whether we accept one another, with all the difficulties and atrocities we have made.

**Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:**

**Allow people to talk and then using the notes for each question draw the discussion to a common answer.**

**1. How would you feel if a stranger came to you and told you that you were part of God plan?**

I would feel afraid, because it is very difficult to hear the voice or to speak to God. In the Dinka traditional belief, they believe that there is God but it is very distant. You can't see, touch or speak to Him. Therefore, you can be afraid when an angel appears to you and says you are part of God's plan. Accepting God's will when it is not what we had planned is very difficult. Mary was afraid of how it will happen; it was not in Mary or Joseph's plan to have a child. Also if a woman is not married and has no idea how she will support herself and a child she will worry. However, the most difficult but important lesson that Mary teaches us is her willingness to accept suffering, was when she responded to angel and said "Yes" to the angel, she prepared herself to whatever was to come. This is undoubtedly easier said than done for anyone, but she showed us that it is possible to go through distress and still remain faithful. Mary exemplified the strength and courage it takes to accept what God has planned for her which sometimes can be difficult for others to accept.

Yes, you can be afraid first as Mary was; we fear the unknown, we doubt ourselves and we are not sure if we are ready. However, Mary demonstrated her courage and faith in God when she opened herself to God's will. Hers was an unconventional pregnancy that had severe consequences in her life, and yet she accepted it with an open heart.

**2. Do you think that Mary believed the angel straight away?**

No, Mary took time to believe what the angel was telling her, it was very difficult for Mary to understand the angel when the angel was saying you will conceive a child through the spirit of God. Here in verse 34 Mary asked the angel the question which everyone should

ask "But how? I have never slept with a man." So Mary asked the angel several times on how it would be, although she knew it will be God's plan.

### 3. Do you think that Mary was ever scared of what she was told would happen?

Extremely, Mary was very scared, when the angel appeared to her and said you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end. Mary responded with a voice of fear 'how will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?'

What made Mary to scared?

- 1- How will she conceive without man, it is impossible to conceive a child without man.
- 2- Mary was scared because of the relationship she had with Joseph, she was thinking that if she conceived before their wedding it will break there relations.

She was scared, as I have mentioned above but the Angel quickly calmed her fears and in a few short sentences revealed her future. Mary was to be the mother of the Messiah! He would be the Son of God, the Son of David, ruling an eternal kingdom from David's throne. All of the promises of the Old Testament concerning this coming one were mentioned in the angel's words. His name would be "Jesus." Immediately Mary recalls back to the prophecies of the prophets in the Old Testament. In conclusion, Mary overcame her fears because of the faith she has.

### 4. Do you think what God asked was difficult for Mary?

In Matthew Chapter 19, verse 26, Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. Yes, it is difficult to Mary as a human being, but to God is not difficult to ask Mary. Moreover, the Bible said "Nothing is too difficult for God (Genesis 18:9-15)" God made Sarah the wife of Abraham become pregnant in old age, Hannah mother of Samuel, Elisabeth mother of John and Mary herself. There was one exciting statement Mary made by saying "'I am the Lord's servant, may it be to me as you have said.'" Here Mary shows how ready she is to respond to God's call.

### 5. Do we sometimes have to reconcile what God wants of us with who we are inside and the world around us? Does this display faith in God?

Yes we can reconcile as God wants us, we can do that when the spirit of God is inside us and we follow his commands, but without God you can't make it. Reconciliation is a huge commitment both parties make either as individuals or people around you. For example in

South Sudan we have committed serious atrocities such as raping, killing and destroying property among ourselves, these atrocities have created hatred among individuals and ethnic groups. These wounds are magnified when we see conflict between churches, ministries, people groups, and political ideologies. With so much tension, it might seem impossible that we could get past these injuries to ever accomplish anything useful, much less eternal. However, on the other hand it is possible to reconcile when we have Jesus Christ in us. God wants to bring healing to all of our wounds and relationships, the ones we have personally experienced and even ones we have inherited historically; things like racism and prejudice that are frequently passed from one generation to another. He even wants to see things made right between nations who have wronged each other and treated each other with injustice.

Perhaps we will never see the full picture of reconciliation happen in this lifetime especially in South Sudan. Nevertheless, it is God's heart for His people, so we continue to spread the message and actively work to build community in places where it has been broken or is lacking altogether.

This level of reconciliation and healing is only possible when our hearts have been transformed by the truth of who God is. Then, as our hearts are changed from the inside out and our relationships are restored, we can link arms to work towards reformation.

## 6. Are we ever beautiful inside and out? What does this mean and what can we do about it?

Yes, we can be beautiful inside and outside when the spirit of God is dwelling in us, and without His spirit inside us we will not be beautiful like Mary. This is what the angel said to Mary, you are beautiful with God's beauty, beautiful inside and out! God be with you. The angel was meaning spiritual and physical beauty within Mary. As a Christian we have to show our beauty both inside and outside in the republic of South Sudan by being faithful, forgiving, living in peace with others, being honest, and loving one another.

## 7. Does Mary's response to the angel set an example of faith? Is she reconciled with God, what does she teach us?

Yes, Mary's initial response was to be greatly troubled and to fear, which was the response of other faithful brothers who had been visited by an angel. Although Mary questioned the angel Gabriel, how will this be, since I am a virgin? She quickly showed humility and faith in God's word, and she said behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word. In this way all Christians should humble themselves before God, recognizing that they are God's servants and believe God's word. Mary's life set an example of faith to us today in our Christian lives through humility; Mary went on praising and praying to God for that great news. When she came to praise God she used words which had already been inspired by God. Mary stands as an example to Christians of someone with a faithful knowledge of Scripture and who used it in her praise to God.

First, her humility is again evident. She spoke of her humble estate and described herself as God's servant. She also acknowledged her need of a Saviour. She recognized her own sin, and position before God.

Second, Mary's thankfulness should be noted. My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, from now on all generations will call me blessed, for he who is mighty has done great things for me. Mary is an example of what it means to have a thankful spirit.

Third, Mary remembered God's former dealings with his people. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. All Christians should imitate Mary by examining the way God has worked through history and how he has dealt in the lives of his saints since God is the same yesterday, and today and forever. (Hebrews 13: 8)

## 8. How can we bring the faith that Mary had to accept a very difficult thing into our lives to accept other difficult things and be reconciled with them?

It was not easy for Mary to accept, when the angel appeared to her, but because of the faith that she has, she accepted the call. Mary also worried how it was possible to conceive without meeting with a man. First, Mary is an enduring model of willing obedience to God. Mary too often is pictured as the submissive woman or wife when in fact she submits to God as his servant. Mary did not know what her willingness to obey God's invitation to be the mother of the Messiah would bring into her life. She only knew that the Lord was the most important person. She had a heart that was willing to submit to God even before she was asked.

Most of us think it would be easy to obey God if we had a visit from an angel like Mary did or if we heard God's audible voice. What we haven't grasped is that a willing heart is developed and nurtured as we obey what we already know. Our problem is not in getting more direction from God but in obeying what we already understand.

Mary had learned the value of quiet reflection. In her song of praise to God, she reflects out loud on the marvellous character and wonderful works of God. Her song appears from her own meditation on who God is and how he is working in her life and in the life of the believing community around her.

Mary reconciled with God through accepting a call from an angel, through the birth of Jesus Christ. The sacrament of reconciliation is an experience of the gift of God's boundless mercy. Not only does it free us from our sins but it also challenges us to have the same kind of compassion and forgiveness for those who sin against us. When we look at South Sudan's conflict we question how the communities can reconcile or individuals too, but to answer that question we have to accept one another and forgive ourselves with all the atrocities we made. Another question is how possible is it to be reconciling as a community or a nation. First, know how God has forgiven you or me. Second, show humility and faith to others. And finally, remember that God has forgiven you; therefore, you need to forgive others.

In Yei South Sudan, in 2014 someone was asking preacher, can we forgive Dinkas? and the preacher said yes! We can forgive Dinkas because Christ has forgiven them and all Mankind including Dinkas. However, many South Sudanese have deeper wounds among themselves and it is difficult for them to reconcile. But we need to learn from this story of Mary and the Angel, Mary accepted a called, through that acceptance Mary made reconciliation with God.

## Summing Up

Read the passage below to the group and then ask for a time of silence to prepare for prayer.

This session teaches us that God's will can be a lot to accept. Whether we accept one another, with all the difficulties and atrocities we have made or we accept what God wants of us The response of Mary teaches us about accepting and responding, it is difficult sometimes to accept and reconcile ourselves. But the Bible teaches us to accept one another with all the atrocities he or she has made.

Mary is faced with a huge challenge but responds with an act that is lifelong witness to God working in this world. Mary reconciles what God wanted of her when she is visited by an Angel and does what must be done however much it affects her life. This shows witness of faith and it's huge value and also shows how women are also part of the way God works in our world. Reconciliation is for all.

## Pray together:

Encourage everyone to say this prayer. If it is not practical to have enough sheets to share out teach the prayer by repeating it.

Our Father in heaven, we are standing before you Lord, because you have forgiven us our sin through your Son Jesus Christ. May you yield us with a spirit of acceptance and forgiveness for one another. I'm praying for myself and all those in my immediate and entire people of the Republic of South Sudan, may we not only love but accept and enjoy

each other. Let your love, joy, peace, and patience be at the heart of our relationships with one another, along with your kindness and goodness. May we be willing to love each other as unconditionally as you love us. As we shall be going through this week session, we ask you Lord to fill and guide us with your Holy Spirit. I ask all this in the name of Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen!

If the need is felt allow others to share prayers on this theme in a time of free prayer.

### **For the Week Ahead**

Before arranging to meet again for next week talk about how people feel they may be able to see the world differently and how this may affect the way they want to live.

New Testament Quote Luke 1:46-55

46 Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord. 47 My spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour, 48 for he has looked at the humble state of his handmaid. For behold, from now on, all generations will call me blessed. 49 For he who is mighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name. 50 His mercy is for generations of generations on those who fear him. 51 He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52 He has put down princes from their thrones. And has exalted the lowly. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things. He has sent the rich away empty. 54 He has given help to Israel, his servant, that he might remember mercy, 55 As he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his seed forever."

"In the coming week think about these things. Are you challenged by God? Are you trying to do the things that God wants? Does the way you live give an example to others? Are you truly reconciled to God?"

Arrange to meet next week and finish saying the Grace together. In so far as is practical encourage people to say the grace holding hands and sharing a smile with each member of the group to encourage a positive feel of inclusiveness.

**“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all,  
now and evermore.  
Amen.”**

When all the people have left make a note of anything that came up in the group session that may be useful in the life of your Church group or community.

Spend a short time in prayer to give thanks to God and pray for the people that have attended.

## Lent Course Week 5

### The Ultimate Forgiveness

By Rev Peter Angui Akook

Read the Gospel accounts below:



#### Mathew 27: 45-52

45 From noon to three, the whole earth was dark. 46 Around mid-afternoon Jesus groaned out of the depths, crying loudly, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" 47 Some bystanders who heard him said, "He's calling for Elijah." 48 One of them ran and got a sponge soaked in sour wine and lifted it on a stick so he could drink. 49 The others joked, "Don't be in such a hurry. Let's see if Elijah comes and saves him." 50 But Jesus, again crying out loudly, breathed his last. 51 At that moment, the Temple curtain was ripped in two, top to bottom. There was an earthquake, and rocks were split in pieces. 52 What's more, tombs were opened up, and many bodies of believers asleep in their graves were raised.

#### Mathew 28: 1-10

1 After the Sabbath, as the first light of the new week dawned, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to keep vigil at the tomb. 2 Suddenly the earth reeled and rocked under their feet as God's angel came down from heaven, came right up to where they were standing. He rolled back the stone and then sat on it. 3 Shafts of lightning blazed from him. His garments shimmered snow-white. 4 The guards at the tomb were scared to death. They were so frightened, they couldn't move. 5 The angel spoke to the women: "There is nothing to fear here. I know you're looking for Jesus, the One they nailed to the cross. 6 He is not here. He was raised, just as he said. Come and look at the place where he was placed. 7 "Now, get on your way quickly and tell his disciples, 'He is risen from the dead. He is going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.' That's the message." 8 The women, deep in wonder and full of joy, lost no time in leaving the tomb. They ran to tell the disciples. 9 Then Jesus met them, stopping them in their tracks. "Good morning!" he said. They fell to their knees, embraced his feet, and worshiped him. 10 Jesus said, "You're holding on to me for dear life! Don't be frightened like that. Go tell my brothers that they are to go to Galilee, and that I'll meet them there."

**Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:**

1. What is being described in the first passage?
2. Did Jesus ever explain why this needed to happen?
3. What is important about the temple curtain tearing in two?
4. What is significant about Jesus dying for us in this way?
5. How does what Mary and the others expected to find at the tomb differ from what they actually find in the tomb?
6. What has happened to Jesus? What does that tell us about the power of God and how much God loves us?
7. Does this event reconcile us with God, if so how?
8. If we are reconciled with God through Jesus how should we try to live our lives?

## Summing Up

Read the passage below to the group and then ask for a time of silence to prepare for prayer.

This weeks readings remind us that Gods plans are not like the plans we make, are not restricted by the rule our lives are held by and that truly in God's name anything is possible.

Mary had gone to mourn and was suddenly confronted by the person that she thought was dead. People needed to be told. He is risen – he is risen indeed!

It is only when we come to consider the meaning of this that we really can understand the message that Jesus brings. Reconciliation is what God wanted and nothing can get in the way of that. All your sins can be forgiven and you can be as a person reborn. This gives you the ability to forgive others and live life in a very different way, a way that is reconciled with God.

South Sudan is a community with different levels of authority and power with the resources available always needing to be shared in one way or another. It is filled with tribes that have fought each other at one time or

another and there is a history of revenge that colours the thinking of many people. So to seek reconciliation is a difficult thing but the sure and certain knowledge of the forgiveness of God makes this easier. Tribes don't need to fight like children. Some might call this common sense, but in practice it starts with forgiveness and requires love as a credible policy. Reconciliation is the first step of real peace.

### **Pray together:**

“Our Father and our God we thank you for the gift of your dear son Jesus Christ to come to this old sinful world and to have died on the cross in order to free us from the bondage of the Devil and reconcile our lost intimate and special relationship with God the Father. Thank you for raising Him from death to life and thank you for your ultimate forgiveness upon the human race. Help us to be able to forgive others as you did through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen”

### **For the Week Ahead**

New Testament Quote - Romans 5:10 – 11

10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, since we have been reconciled, will we be saved by his life? 11 Not only this, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation.

“In the coming week think about how you behave as a person. How does the way you live display to the world the fact that Jesus died so that your sins may be forgiven. Pray about that this week.”

**“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all,  
now and evermore.  
Amen.”**

# *Lent Course Week 5 Leaders Notes*

## *The Ultimate Forgiveness*



By Rev Peter Angui Akook

Prepare ahead ensure that you are ready for the session well ahead of people arriving. Once people have gathered, greeted one another and prayed for each other. Then share the Gospel accounts below:

### *Mathew 27: 45-52*

45 From noon to three, the whole earth was dark. 46 Around mid-afternoon Jesus groaned out of the depths, crying loudly, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" 47 Some bystanders who heard him said, "He's calling for Elijah." 48 One of them ran and got a sponge soaked in sour wine and lifted it on a stick so he could drink. 49 The others joked, "Don't be in such a hurry. Let's see if Elijah comes and saves him." 50 But Jesus, again crying out loudly, breathed his last. 51 At that moment, the Temple curtain was ripped in two, top to bottom. There was an earthquake, and rocks were split in pieces. 52 What's more, tombs were opened up, and many bodies of believers asleep in their graves were raised.

### *Mathew 28: 1-10*

1 After the Sabbath, as the first light of the new week dawned, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to keep vigil at the tomb. 2 Suddenly the earth reeled and rocked under their feet as God's angel came down from heaven, came right up to where they were standing. He rolled back the stone and then sat on it. 3 Shafts of lightning blazed from him. His garments shimmered snow-white. 4 The guards at the tomb were scared to death. They were so frightened, they couldn't move. 5 The angel spoke to the women: "There is nothing to fear here. I know you're looking for Jesus, the One they nailed to the cross. 6 He is not here. He was raised, just as he said. Come and look at the place where he was placed. 7 "Now, get on your way quickly and tell his disciples, 'He is risen from the dead. He is going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.' That's the message." 8 The women, deep in wonder and full of joy, lost no time in leaving the tomb. They ran to tell the disciples. 9 Then Jesus met them, stopping them in their tracks. "Good morning!" he said. They fell to their knees, embraced his feet, and worshiped him. 10 Jesus said, "You're holding on to me for dear life! Don't be frightened like that. Go tell my brothers that they are to go to Galilee, and that I'll meet them there."

**Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:**

**Allow people to talk and then using the notes for each question draw the discussion to a common answer.**

**1. What is being described in the first passage?**

The first passage has described in detail how the process of crucifixion, burial and resurrection had taken place or was done. The time indication is that the first event described in this first passage from 12:00 PM to 3:00 PM Jesus was crucified and until after three hours when Jesus cried out loudly, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" So Jesus last prayer after three hours on the cross is the one that is being described in the first passage.

**2. Did Jesus ever explain why this needed to happen?**

Jesus did explain it plainly, that the son of man would undergo tribulations and sufferings, torturing, would be killed and buried but will rise again back to life after three days. That was planned by God as the only way to reconcile humanity back to God. He said He was sent in order to save the world and to fulfil this was to undergo such a horrible and unbearable pain and suffering so that His blood would cleanse everyone and set humankind free from the bondage of the Devil.

**3. What is important about the temple curtain tearing in two?**

The important thing about the temple curtain tearing into two is the set example of what is going to happen in the near future when Jesus body is buried. That the tomb will be torn apart and all other tombs will open up themselves as well so that all who died may rise back to life again. What was happening in the temple was actually for those who don't comprehend God's plan to see that this powerful act of God was going to take place as planned by God in three persons – A Trinity.

**4. What is significant about Jesus dying for us in this way?**

The significant thing about Jesus dying for us in this way is that God's love for us is real love, unique love, unconditional love, special love and fantastic love. God intends to still maintain our special relationship with Him, with our neighbours and with other creatures. This special relationship was disorganized by the Devil, but God's love for humanity has never been distorted by any of the corrupt evil doers. For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son Jesus Christ that whoever believe in Him may not perish but have eternal life.

## 5. How does what Mary and the others expected to find at the tomb differ from what they actually find in the tomb?

Mary and the others were actually coming to the tomb mourning and with sorrow, thinking that the body of their master was still laid there in the tomb. But what they found was that Jesus was raised to life from the tomb. Likewise, their sadness changed into joy and happiness though they were terrified by the presence of an Angel who instructed them not to be looking again anymore in search of Him. The Angel of the Lord urged them to go to where Jesus disciples, brothers and sisters were and report to them the Good News about Jesus resurrection.

## 6. What has happened to Jesus? What does that tell us about the power of God and how much God loves us?

Jesus Christ has been harassed, rejected, mocked, insulted, arrested, treated as criminal, killed and buried- but was raised back to life again after three days. This tells us that the power of God is far beyond human understanding and control because the king failed to understand and control what God set to have been doing in the process of salvation of the whole human race including earthly kings or rulers. God's love for man is best seen in creating man resembling Him.

## 7. Does this event reconcile us with God, if so how?

This event indeed reconciles us with God through the blood of Jesus Christ that poured out because of our sins, which is once and for all. We say it when pray that "Almighty God we have sinned against you and against our fellow men, in thoughts and words and deeds through negligence through weaknesses through our own deliberate fault..... Forgive us our sins for the sake of your son Jesus Christ Amen". We are commemorating the Holy Eucharist in remembrance that He died for us and through Him we are forgiven.

## 8. If we are reconciled with God through Jesus how should we try to live our lives?

We should try to live our daily lives through servant hood as Jesus once did with biblical principles of humility and simplicity. We should also be prayerful people in our daily lives. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, since we have been reconciled, will we be saved by his life? Not only this, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation. Mankind is reconciled with God when Jesus is killed and resurrected, the ultimate act of forgiveness and an opportunity for the whole world to change because the sins we create are paid for by Jesus and forgiven by God. We have no excuses to live other than in reconciliation with God because we are forgiven.

## Summing Up

Read the passage below to the group and then ask for a time of silence to prepare for prayer.

This weeks readings remind us that Gods plans are not like the plans we make, are not restricted by the rule our lives are held by and that truly in God's name anything is possible.

Mary had gone to mourn and was suddenly confronted by the person that she thought was dead. People needed to be told. He is risen – he is risen indeed!

It is only when we come to consider the meaning of this that we really can understand the message that Jesus brings. Reconciliation is what God wanted and nothing can get in the way of that. All your sins can be forgiven and you can be as a person reborn. This gives you the ability to forgive others and live life in a very different way, a way that is reconciled with God.

South Sudan is a community with different levels of authority and power with the resources available always needing to be shared in one way or another. It is filled with tribes that have fought each other at one time or another and there is a history of revenge that colours the thinking of many people. So to seek reconciliation is a difficult thing but the sure and certain knowledge of the forgiveness of God makes this easier. Tribes don't need to fight like children. Some might call this common sense, but in practice it starts with forgiveness and requires love as a credible policy. Reconciliation is the first step of real peace.

## Pray together:

Encourage everyone to say this prayer. If it is not practical to have enough sheets to share out teach the prayer by repeating it.

“Our Father and our God we thank you for the gift of your dear son Jesus Christ to come to this old sinful world and to have died on the cross in order to free us from the bondage of the Devil and reconcile our lost intimate and special relationship with God the Father. Thank you for raising Him from death to life and thank you for your ultimate forgiveness upon the human race. Help us to be able to forgive others as you did through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour Amen”

If the need is felt allow others to share prayers on this theme in a time of free prayer.

### **For the Week Ahead**

Before arranging to meet again for next week talk about how people feel they may be able to see the world differently and how this may affect the way they want to live.

New Testament Quote - Romans 5:10 – 11

10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, since we have been reconciled, will we be saved by his life? 11 Not only this, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation.

“In the coming week think about how you behave as a person. How does the way you live display to the world the fact that Jesus died so that your sins may be forgiven. Pray about that this week.”

Arrange to meet next week and finish saying the Grace together. In so far as is practical encourage people to say the grace holding hands and sharing a smile with each member of the group to encourage a positive feel of inclusiveness.

**“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
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When all the people have left make a note of anything that came up in the group session that may be useful in the life of your Church group or community.

Spend a short time in prayer to give thanks to God and pray for the people that have attended.

## Lent Course Week 6

### Do You Love Me?

By Regina Paul and Rev Paul Lueth Kat



Please read the Gospel accounts below.

#### Luke Chapter 22 Verse 33 - 34

33 Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death." 34 Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."

#### Luke Chapter 22 Verse 59 - 62

59 And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean." 60 But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. 61 And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." 62 And he went out and wept bitterly.

#### John Chapter 29 Verses 15 to 19

15 After breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Master, you know I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." 16 He then asked a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" "Yes, Master, you know I love you." Jesus said, "Shepherd my sheep." 17 Then he said it a third time: "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was upset that he asked for the third time, "Do you love me?" so he answered, "Master, you know everything there is to know. You've got to know that I love you." 18 I'm telling you the very truth now: When you were young you dressed yourself and went wherever you wished, but when you get old you'll have to stretch out your hands while someone else dresses you and takes you where you don't want to go." 19 He said this to hint at the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. And then he commanded, "Follow me."

## Setting the Scene

People who love to be at peace with everyone in South Sudan are often labelled as either “cowards” or “fools”. For it is believed that a strong minded people could never be insulted and be unable to refute such insults or allegations. It is this brutally simple culture that allows cycles of revenge acts that can continue without halt. Whether it is a revenge of insults, killing or mere fighting, it seems a strong people must have revenge to keep respect. Many people try to pay back something the way it was given at first without any thought for dialogue, thinking of it as justice. When the victim is seen to be finding out how the incident took place, then the rest who seem to be taking sides would never themselves tolerate such incidences. They would react prior to provocation and violence would come as a result.

### Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:

1. When Peter denied knowing Jesus three times was he scared?
2. Have you ever done something that you promised you would not because you were very scared?
3. Do you think that Peter and Jesus were good friends?
4. How do people normally react when a friend betrays them? What do people expect?
5. How do you think Peter felt when Jesus came to him at Lake Galilee? What was he expecting?
6. Why do you think Jesus asked Peter if he loved him three times? Why did that upset Peter?
7. How do you think Peter felt after talking with Jesus? How does it feel to be reconciled with someone you should hate? Was Peter changed by this reconciliation?
8. How can we be reconciled to those who have wronged us badly or perhaps how can we be reconciled if we have done serious wrong? What good might it do to be reconciled?

## Summing Up

Jesus was fully God and fully Human. He knew that Peter would not keep his promise because no sane person would in that situation. But for Peter his denial meant that he had betrayed the person that he believed was God with us. It must have been a crushing burden made worse by the reports of the risen Christ. Then to meet Jesus must have been a very strange thing. But as always Jesus was teacher and healer. Instead of condemning Peter Jesus cooks him breakfast, forgives him and gives him the task of taking this new faith forward.

In a heartbeat Peter is reconciled and the past is gone. The future is now different also because he is no longer hiding away. People that are reconciled behave very differently from people that are not. There are no walls or barriers, no fear and no problems. Anything and everything can be possible.

Forgiveness is a powerful tool that allows healing and makes peace, it is the very foundation of reconciliation. Not just a lack of fighting, but a real living peace. Living as Jesus showed and as God wants, in accord with the spirit brings all the benefits of peace and makes life a joy.

Do not wait for reconciliation to come to you, go out and look for it. Change one life - your own, and you will soon find that you will change others too.

In South Sudan and in many other places too change is needed, it will not always be easy but you have the power within you to bring this change, through reconciliation. It's the way to real peace – peace be with you.

## Pray together:

Father, we fail you and you forgive us, we become your enemies in our ignorance and you forgive us. Father, we turn away from all your word and commands and you forgive us when we ask to try again.

We open our hearts and minds and ask your son Jesus to come and make us into a new person so that we can be reconciled with each other.

Thank you God, for the gift of forgiveness. Amen.

### **For the Week Ahead**

“Nothing that is worth doing was ever easy, reconciliation may not be easy but without it the future is dark. Being reconciled to God can give people the strength to do amazing things and make the world better a better place. Reconciliation with each other builds peace and ensures a better future for everyone. Make a choice, choose peace, start with forgiveness and be reconciled. Think about this in the next week and then forever.”

**“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all,  
now and evermore.  
Amen.”**

# *Lent Course Week 6 Leaders Notes*

## *Do You love Me?*

By Regina Paul



Prepare ahead ensure that you are ready for the session well ahead of people arriving. Once people have gathered, greeted one another and pray for each other. Then share the Gospel accounts below.

### *Luke Chapter 22 Verse 33 - 34*

33 Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death." 34 Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."

### *Luke Chapter 22 Verse 59 - 62*

59 And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean." 60 But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. 61 And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." 62 And he went out and wept bitterly.

### *John Chapter 29 Verses 15 to 19*

15 After breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Master, you know I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." 16 He then asked a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" "Yes, Master, you know I love you." Jesus said, "Shepherd my sheep." 17 Then he said it a third time: "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was upset that he asked for the third time, "Do you love me?" so he answered, "Master, you know everything there is to know. You've got to know that I love you." 18 I'm telling you the very truth now: When you were young you dressed yourself and went wherever you wished, but when you get old you'll have to stretch out your hands while someone else dresses you and takes you where you don't want to go." 19 He said this to hint at the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. And then he commanded, "Follow me."

## Setting the Scene

People who love to be at peace with everyone in South Sudan are often labelled as either “cowards” or “fools”. For it is believed that a strong minded people could never be insulted and be unable to refute such insults or allegations. It is this brutally simple culture that allows cycles of revenge acts that can continue without halt. Whether it is a revenge of insults, killing or mere fighting, it seems a strong people must have revenge to keep respect. Many people try to pay back something the way it was given at first without any thought for dialogue, thinking of it as justice. When the victim is seen to be finding out how the incident took place, then the rest who seem to be taking sides would never themselves tolerate such incidences. They would react prior to provocation and violence would come as a result.

**Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:**

**Allow people to talk and then using the notes for each question draw the discussion to a common answer.**

**1. When Peter denied knowing Jesus three times was he scared?**

Yes, Peter was scared because he fear for death. If the people had known he was a disciple of Jesus he would have been arrested and killed.

**2. Have you ever done something that you promised you would not because you were very scared?**

Yes, most people have, it is hard to face some consequences or situations. It shows you have broken not just a promise but the confidence of the person that you had promised to stand with. Promises are easy to make, Jesus knew that.

**3. Do you think that Peter and Jesus were good friends?**

They were good friends, as God revealed to Peter knowing Jesus as messiah, as Jesus said you know me because of my Father, they had shared three years together in close contact sharing a life of mission. Peter is a best friend to Jesus.

**4. How do people normally react when a friend betrays them? What do people expect?**

They feel discouraged so the friend can expect to be cut off socially and your relationship no longer grow again. Some people may also seek revenge for being betrayed.

5. How do you think Peter felt when Jesus came to him at Lake Galilee? What was he expecting?

Peter must have been surprised and probably frightened because he could not know what to expect, but in his heart he expects the coming of Jesus will be as a friend and saviour to him. Because this is what Jesus always was.

6. Why do you think Jesus asked Peter if he loved him three times? Why did that upset Peter?

Jesus wants Peter not to give up with ministry Jesus gave him. Jesus wants Peter also to be strong in friendship with him despite everything. Peter was sad because Jesus asked him three times.

7. How do you think Peter felt after talking with Jesus? How does it feel to be reconciled with someone you should hate? Was Peter changed by this reconciliation?

Peter felt that a way had opened to him for restoring the relationship and peace between Jesus and himself. It must have felt very good to be needed and to feel forgiven for breaking his promise. It feels good to be reconciled, it is like carrying a large rock a long way and then putting it down – the burden is gone. Peter was very changed by this, he lived the rest of his life attempting to do the thing that Jesus asked of him and be reconciled with all people.

8. How can we be reconciled to those who have wronged us badly or perhaps how can we be reconciled if we have done serious wrong? What good might it do to be reconciled?

Reconciliation is coming from God, as human beings we must try our best to call each other and think about the ways we are living and the times we had not done wrong for each other. That way you can make contact and call upon different people among you to be reconciled to you. It means forgiving one another, sometimes quite difficult things. It means seeking forgiveness if you have done bad things and being willing to change to a different way of life. People that can be reconciled will know the peace of God.

## Summing Up

Read the passage below to the group and then ask for a time of silence to prepare for prayer.

New Testament Quote - Col1:21 -23

21 And you were at one time strangers and enemies in your minds as expressed through your evil deeds, 22 but now he has reconciled you by his physical body through death to present you holy, without blemish, and blameless before him - 23 if indeed you remain in the faith, established and firm, without shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard.

Jesus was fully God and fully Human. He knew that Peter would not keep his promise because no sane person would in that situation. But for Peter his denial meant that he had betrayed the person that he believed was God with us. It must have been a crushing burden made worse by the reports of the risen Christ. Then to meet Jesus must have been a very strange thing. But as always Jesus was teacher and healer. Instead of condemning Peter Jesus cooks him breakfast, forgives him and gives him the task of taking this new faith forward.

In a heartbeat Peter is reconciled and the past is gone. The future is now different also because he is no longer hiding away. People that are reconciled behave very differently from people that are not. There are no walls or barriers, no fear and no problems. Anything and everything can be possible.

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Do not wait for reconciliation to come to you, go out and look for it. Change one life - your own, and you will soon find that you will change others too.

In South Sudan and in many other places too change is needed, it will not always be easy but you have the power within you to bring this change, through reconciliation. It's the way to real peace – peace be with you.

## **Pray together:**

Encourage everyone to say this prayer. If it is not practical to have enough sheets to share out teach the prayer by repeating it.

Father, we fail you and you forgive us, we become your enemies in our ignorance and you forgive us. Father, we turn away from all your word and commands and you forgive us when we ask to try again.

We open our hearts and minds and ask your son Jesus to come and make us into a new person so that we can be reconciled with each other.

Thank you God, for the gift of forgiveness. Amen.

If the need is felt allow others to share prayers on this theme in a time of free prayer.

## **For the Week Ahead**

Talk about how people feel they may be able to see the world differently and how this may affect the way they want to live.

“Nothing that is worth doing was ever easy, reconciliation may not be easy but without it the future is dark. Being reconciled to God can give people the strength to do amazing things and make the world better a better place. Reconciliation with each other builds peace and ensures a better future for everyone. Make a choice, choose peace, start with forgiveness and be reconciled. Think about this in the next week and then forever.”

Finish saying the Grace together. In so far as is practical encourage people to say the grace holding hands and sharing a smile with each member of the group to encourage a positive feel of inclusiveness.

**“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all,  
now and evermore.  
Amen.”**

When all the people have left make a note of anything that came up in the group session that may be useful in the life of your Church group or community.

Spend a short time in prayer to give thanks to God and pray for the people that have attended.

## *Connect With Wau Diocese*

It has been our pleasure to provide this Lent Study Course. We have done this for free because we have been able to and also we really want to share the Good News of Jesus with as many people as possible. We hope that it has helped you to grow in faith and knowledge.

As an Anglican diocese in South Sudan we have many practical needs that require help. So we would very much like you to consider making a donation to Wau Diocese or partnering with us in our work. Practical help can be just as valuable as money.

Please contact us to receive our quarterly newsletter, called Renewal, we would very much like to share our news with you. Lots of useful information and contact details can be seen on our diocese website:

[www.wau.anglican.org](http://www.wau.anglican.org)

### **Here is our address:**

ECS Diocese of Wau  
Hai Mozephin, Opposite Wau Teaching Hospital  
C/O ECS Provincial Office  
P.O. Box 110 Juba South Sudan  
Africa

Tel: +211912239089/+21195958118

Email: [bishop@wau.anglican.org](mailto:bishop@wau.anglican.org)

