

A Christian Wisdom of Reconciliation

Rose Castle Foundation's Research Project on the 12 Habits of Reconcilers

In John 17 Jesus prays for 'complete unity' among his followers. He asks that they may be united in love with himself and his Father, and with each other, for the sake of the world God loves. In a time of increasing polarisation within and between Christian communities, Rose Castle Foundation (RCF) has been exploring how Christians can serve God's desire for reconciliation at all levels of society.

Over the last 12 months, RCF has convened Christian scholars from the universities of Aberdeen, Oxford, Cambridge, and Durham—representing a range of ecclesial traditions and academic disciplines—to explore our [12 Habits of Reconcilers](#) for the formation of Christian leaders.

The project (generously sponsored by the McDonald Agape Foundation) has drawn on the expertise of biblical scholars, ethicists, theologians, philosophers and psychologists to explore how Christians can respond to God's reconciling love and engage across deep divides. The project team, led by Professor David Ford (University of Cambridge) and Dr Greg Ryan (Centre for Catholic Studies, Durham University), have guided researchers in rhythms of prayer, scriptural study, fellowship, and rich discussion. This intensive, year-long period of conversation and collaboration has laid the foundations for the production of cutting-edge scholarship and outreach materials in service of RCF's global mission for faith-informed conflict transformation, reconciliation and peace.

Project scholars will now contribute to an academic volume engaging deeply with each of the 12 habits, the practice of Christian Biblical Reasoning, and Christian ministries of reconciliation. We hope the forthcoming volume will be instructive for Christian leaders, seminarians, peace experts, practitioners and theologians alike. Drawing on our academic research, RCF is now beginning a programme of coordinated outreach activities, translating project findings into fresh opportunities for institutional partnerships, programmatic trials, and practical, multi-media resources for the formation of Christian reconcilers.



Christian Biblical Reasoning

A Practice for Reconciliation

Why is Christian Biblical Reasoning needed?

Polarisation among Christians in many settings is on the rise. The wounds run deep and the cries for a wisdom of reconciliation are urgent. Most Christians share a commitment to the Bible, yet, historically, approaches to community formation, difference-crossing, peace and ecumenism have neglected practices which enable Christians to read the Bible together across differences. How are Christians to engage our deepest source of wisdom in search of peace, the formation of reconciling disciples of Christ, and the glorification of God?

Led by our Co-founders, Professor David Ford OBE and Canon Sarah Snyder, RCF has been experimenting with the practice of Christian Biblical Reasoning (CBR): a fresh approach to reading Scriptures within and between divided Christian communities, which places the dignity of difference at the heart of the conversation. Rather than seeking consensus, it tries both to discover agreements and to improve the quality of disagreements. In CBR, Christians from diverse backgrounds and contexts can jointly respond to Jesus' call for unity and peace, while taking our differences seriously.



What is CBR?

CBR is a simple practice, with profoundly transformative possibilities. It fosters deep-to-deep wisdom-seeking by inviting groups to read short passages of Scripture on a theme that feels significant: a difficult or painful issue; a passage modelling reconciliation; or simply one that could surface a range of responses. Participants read the text slowly, before engaging in open conversation about what the specific words of the passage mean for them. They do not have to agree on an understanding of the Bible, and the aim is not to arrive at a shared or 'authoritative' interpretation. Instead, a carefully facilitated process invites participants to rediscover the depths, delights, and surprises of the Bible by reading familiar texts afresh through the eyes of those who see radically differently to us.

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How do we facilitate CBR?

CBR is learned by doing it, by apprenticeship over time. One session can be worthwhile, but several are far more fruitful. When facilitating CBR, we remind participants that they are not required to speak on behalf of their whole tradition or church, but simply to share how the text speaks to them and to be willing to listen to others. Participants are actively encouraged to disagree without seeking resolution or closure (though this may emerge). Sessions are designed to give participants permission to hear from those they rarely encounter without having to accept their views, or to win an argument. Biblical Reasoners are invited to experiment with the meanings of texts, seeking new possibilities even if they seem tenuous. This spirit of curiosity encourages new insights, relationships, and skills, through which participants may emerge with transformed habits, fresh wisdom, and unforeseen friendships.

Who is CBR for?

CBR is for all Christians seeking opportunities to read the Bible and other sources of wisdom across lines of deep theological, social and cultural difference. Intentionally honouring each participant's own modes of reading and living with Scripture, CBR is able to convene groups who might otherwise be reluctant to engage in reconciling spaces and processes. It allows us collectively to listen for God's reconciling words, without attempting to eradicate the deep differences in our norms, traditions, lived experiences and perspectives. CBR is a process that can develop the habits of a reconciler, and lends itself both to attention of intra-tradition wounds and divides between churches and communities. We have experimented with similar practices in churches, communities, universities, hospitals, prisons and conflict zones.

What are our hopes for CBR?

We conceive of Christian Biblical Reasoning as a parallel practice to interfaith Scriptural Reasoning, which we have been developing with our partners for over thirty years and which is core to the DNA of RCF's approach to peace and reconciliation. Our ambition is to train a global network of Christian reconcilers in the facilitation of CBR. We believe it could become a core practice in inter-and intra-Christian conflict transformation, reconciliation and peacebuilding. The basic dynamic that can occur, as discovered through Scriptural Reasoning, is that intensive deep-to-deep conversation around scripture can lead to new networks and collaborations; and these in turn can lead to longer-term covenant-like commitments together, such as new friendships, new organisations, and new movements.

