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## Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians [review] / Lederach, John Paul

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attention capability in relation to our emotional intelligence. The common theme is that the more focused we are, the more effective we become. By understanding this aspect of cognitive science, leaders may become more effective and successful in life and work. This book can assist you in managing your emotions, being aware of others' emotions, and developing your empathy to the end of increasing cooperation and collaboration.

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## RECONCILE: CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION FOR ORDINARY CHRISTIANS

By John Paul Lederach  
Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press (2014)  
Paperback, 191 pages

Reviewed by STANLEY E.  
PATTERSON

This revised and updated edition, *Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians*, was first published by Herald Press in 1999 under the title *The Journey Toward Reconciliation*. Lederach writes of conflict and reconciliation out of 30 years of experience as a peace negotiator in many of the major hotspots of war and strife in the span of our planet. He clearly acknowledges the Anabaptist pacifist influence of his Mennonite religious heritage on his work and philosophy as a conflict mediator. He serves as "professor of international peacebuilding and director of the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame . . . and is the founding

director of the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia" (p. 191).

Lederach cites the work of James Laue (1979) and Ronald Krayhill (1980) as primary influence sources for his work. The book contains an extensive resource section that includes tools, books, biographies, and films that may contribute to readers' understanding and application of concepts presented, but there is no formal bibliography outside of this resource section.

The book effectively weaves the author's experience and testimony, academic understanding, and actual narratives of conflict intervention and efforts at reconciliation into a finished fabric of literature that held my attention throughout. The introduction of his purpose for writing the book brought forth the expectation of discovering the spiritual foundations of peacemaking. The practical goal was presented as an effort to "see how the challenges of (his) work" connected with the "faith dimensions that motivate and sustain (him)" (p. 15). His statement of task links to his purpose by again bringing the spiritual into conversation with the practical: "We face the challenge of aligning ourselves with the central vision of God's reconciling presence and work throughout human history" (p. 16).

Lederach builds his spiritual foundation for peacemaking on the footing provided by John 3:16 wherein God sacrificed his Son as a means of reconciling fallen humanity to Himself. He takes this as a primary principle of peacemaking. God models peacemaking in His willingness to give Himself in seeking reconciliation with His enemies. In this model we see God doing more than simply talking about reconciliation; He actually takes concrete steps to make it happen. This model

suggests that we experience the “changed present reality by living according to a vision of the future” (p. 26). Nicodemus was living a present changed reality as he heard the words, “For God so loved the world . . .,” spoken of the Messiah who was Himself a fulfillment of a better future.

Stories are used to illustrate the biblical principles of peacemaking—Esau and Jacob provide a rich context that informs us of the root causes and the ever present reality that conflict lurks within us. The desire to ascend and dominate enormously damaged this family even as it damaged the human race, which inherited the tendency from the fallen Lucifer (Isa. 14:13-14). It is in this narrative that we see the role of family systems—Rebekah and Jacob, Isaac and Esau—in the conflicts that require reconciliation (dealt with in the work of Cosgrove & Hatfield, 1994). It is in this story that the author introduces a powerful reality inherent in reconciliation—one must turn toward the enemy, not away from, in order for it to happen. The story concludes with reconciliation as a journey wherein three necessary encounters must take place: with self, with the other, and with God.

The life and ministry of Jesus reveal the “reconciling arts” He practiced in His communion with mankind. Lederach reverses the three necessary encounters described in the narrative of Esau and Jacob in unpacking the issue of the practice of “presence” with God-neighbor-self (p. 48). The reconciling arts demonstrated by Jesus “requires a commitment to see the face of God in others, to feel the world from their perspective, and to place ourselves not in control of but alongside the human experience and condition” (p. 56).

Lederach suggests that creation itself reflects conflict by design in the

diversity of creation and the human race specifically. He emphasizes that conflict is not sin. Rather, it is a normal process of resolving differences of perception and opinion. It is how we approach conflict that reveals the presence or absence of sin.

*Reconcile* is well-written and demonstrates a balance of ethos, logos, and pathos that sets it apart from even the best “how-to” texts on conflict intervention and management. Lederach’s use of narrative illustrated by his own rich experience as a peace builder establishes credibility at a high level. The message is clear and the purpose statement made in the introduction was honored—he established a solid biblical basis for the foundations he laid for the reader seeking to know the Christian basis for reconciling conflict. The most powerful expression was the pathos accomplished through his personal and the biblical narratives. He drew me into the suffering and the pain of conflict at a level I do not often experience. His values, beliefs, and understandings were implicit in the stories and drew me imaginatively into the life and ministry of which he writes.

My criticism would lie in what was omitted. The introduction gave promise to biblical narratives that implied studies of several, but in reality (likely editorial and publishing limitations) only one Old Testament narrative was detailed and broad strokes were given to New Testament narratives. I wished for more and believe that the book might have been richer with additional narratives and analysis similar to the one dealing with Esau and Jacob.

I recommend this book to all who would have a deeper understanding of the work of peacemaking and reconciliation. I believe this volume, in company with a methodology book such as Furlong’s (2005) and Cosgrove and Hatfield’s (1994) contribution to

conflict and the systems that support it, would make for an effective knowledge base for educating a congregation or corporate religious community in the art of peacemaking and reconciliation.

#### References

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## HUMBLE INQUIRY: THE GENTLE ART OF ASKING INSTEAD OF TELLING

By Edgar H. Schein  
San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler  
(2014)  
Paperback, 125 pages

Reviewed by STANLEY E.  
PATTERSON

Edgar H. Schein brings “50 years of work as a social scientist and organizational psychologist” to bear on this simply written but profoundly insightful book. He presents the concept of gently asking rather than telling as a means of engaging another person in the context of life and particularly leadership. The purpose of the book is framed in the response to a question Schein poses to the reader:

In an increasingly complex, interdependent, and culturally diverse world, we cannot hope to understand and work with people from different occupational, professional, and national cultures if we do not know how to ask questions and build relationships that are based on mutual respect and the recognition that others know things that we may need to know in order to get a job done. (p. 1)

He presents leadership as a relational process which involves conversation as opposed to command as a means to achieving the necessary goals toward mission accomplishment. The *gentle inquiry* is a communication technique that recognizes the need for all people engaged in the organizational community or team to feel valued and in possession of dignity. The collective outcome of a culture habit of asking rather than telling is the formation of a community that is bonded in positive relationships and mutual respect. It moves away from the concept of employee/boss to one of participants in an ordered community who are committed to pursuing a common purpose through a network of trusted relationships.

The book is ordered in a way that introduces the art of humble inquiry through short case studies that present narratives which illustrate the practice of inquiry that positively impacts relationships. These case studies are followed by a presentation that contrasts humble inquiry with other types of inquiry that mask the desire to tell rather than genuinely inquire. This temptation is presented as a natural condition of the culture of “do and tell” that marks our conditioning in the command and control models that have marked the history of leadership and management behavior.

Another element that has powerful implications for those seeking to