

Introduction:

- A funny thought:
 - A truck driver was driving along on the freeway. A sign comes up that reads, "LOW BRIDGE AHEAD". Before he knows it the bridge is right ahead of him and he gets stuck under the bridge. Cars are backed up for miles. Finally, a police car comes up. The cop gets out of his car and walks around to the truck driver, puts his hands on his hips and says, "Got your truck stuck, huh?" The truck driver says, "No, I was delivering this bridge and ran out of gas."
 - Friend of mine bought some London Bridge Trousers while in England. They weren't much good they kept falling down.
 - A lost hiker is on one side of a raging river when he sees a buddhist monk on the other side. There are no bridges. He has no boat. He shouts out to the monk on the opposite bank. "How do I get to the other side?" The buddhist monk shouts back: "You are on the other side."
- *"But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." (2 Timothy 4:5, NKJV)*
- *"Yet preaching the Good News is not something I can boast about. I am compelled by God to do it. How terrible for me if I didn't preach the Good News! If I were doing this on my own initiative, I would deserve payment. But I have no choice, for God has given me this sacred trust. What then is my pay? It is the opportunity to preach the Good News without charging anyone. That's why I never demand my rights when I preach the Good News. Even though I am a free man with no master, I have become a slave to all people to bring many to Christ. When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ. When I was with those who follow the Jewish law, I too lived under that law. Even though I am not subject to the law, I did this so I could bring to Christ those who are under the law. When I am with the Gentiles who do not follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of Christ. When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings." (1 Corinthians 9:16-23, NLT)*
- I was thinking about bridges as they are related to war. I asked myself, "I wonder how many war movies that have to do with bridges?" Bridge over Toko Ri; Bridge to Far; Bridge Over Remagen; Bridge On River Kwai. I looked online and discovered that there are over 103 movie titles with the word 'bridge' in it. Why? Bridges have to do with obstacles and overcoming obstacles are why bridges exist, and movies are good.
 - In WWII and other wars, when an army retreated often they would burn/destroy the bridges so that invading armies could not enter. Then I thought, "When Jesus triumphed over death, hell, and grave; the enemy/Satan began his retreat and started burning every bridge he could." Hell does not want heavenly bridges built into lives, communities and nations because people will cross over the obstacle of hell itself!
 - Bridges will always be important and during wartime they get even more important. There will probably always be one side trying to blow them up and another side trying to cross them.
 - The majority of Christians, after two years, will no longer have friends that are in the world. Therefore we have to become bridge builders.

I. Who Needs A Bridge?

- A. Bridge: a structure carrying a pathway or roadway over a depression or obstacle (such as a river), a means of connection or transition. bridge, dental bridge, bridge in music, bridge of your nose, in billiards use your hand as a bridge.
1. Bridges connect one point to another that is separate by an obstacle.
- B. Who needs a bridge? First and foremost, lost people need a bridge.
1. Ie. When I was lost I was separated from God! There was no way for me to get back to God. The chasm of sin that separated me from God was uncrossable. Ro 3:23 I needed a bridge! Jesus
 2. The God of this world has blinded the eyes of people from seeing the truth. Another obstacle. *"If the Good News we preach is hidden behind a veil, it is hidden only from people who are perishing. Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God."* (2 Corinthians 4:3-4, NLT)
- C. Disconnected believers need a bridge (backsliders).
1. John 15:12 says that we are to love one another...just like He loved us.
 2. People disconnect because of moving to a new location and failing to find a church.
 3. People disconnect because they have never been taught the importance of being connected to a local church.
 4. People disconnect because they no longer see the church as relevant to their lives.
 5. Regardless of the reason, they are disconnected and they need a bridge to cross over. *"And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him."* (2 Corinthians 5:18, NLT)
 6. We must build a bridge to them.
- D. The hurting Christian needs a bridge.
1. Heb 10:24-25. Don't forsake assembling together...provoke each other to good works.
 2. We live in the real world. In the real world, people get hurt (whether intentional or not) Sometimes that hurt keeps them from moving forward...
 3. That hurt becomes a chasm that must be crossed. They need a bridge to help them get over it and get on with their life of service to Christ. *"Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other."* (Romans 12:10, NLT)

II. You and I Are Called To Build Bridges

- A. When Prophet Bob Jones was with us at one of our conferences he said, "I see bridges all over this county." There was lots of bridge work going on at the time.
- B. First we have to see recognize the need! That becomes our motivation = recognition of the need. Ie. As kids, my cousins and I would play along this small creek and we would want to get to the other side. We saw the need for a bridge. So that became the project of the day. It was our motivation!
1. If we don't see the need, we will never build bridges! In fact, We may wind up building barriers instead. I have been having fun with the question I gave a few weeks ago: *"If you*

could overcome one personal challenger or problem this year what would it be?" That is a start of a bridge.

2. If the gospel is real, then the gulf (the obstacle) is real!
 - a) There is a great gulf between darkness and light...between eternal life and eternal death.
 - b) There is a great gulf between fulfilling our God-given purpose as believers, and just existing. Between having life and having it more abundantly.
3. Consider Paul's motivation for building bridges. 1 Co. 9:16-23
 - a) "*How terrible for me if I do not preach the Good News.*" vs 16
 - b) Paul saw the need...and was moved to action. That is the definition of compassion. Compassion didn't begin with the Apostle Paul, it was demonstrated to us by God in giving us His Son, Jesus.
 - c) It was demonstrated in the life of Jesus in His giving of Himself as a sacrifice for our sin. Ro 5:8. Building bridges into others lives will often be a sacrifice.
 - d) Compassion will move us to be bridge builders; and the lack thereof will result in our doing nothing! *He became all things to all men that he might reach some.* vs 23. That is a bridge building thought.
- C. Our ability is our availability. We have to make ourselves available to God to do this.
 1. We are reminded that we can do ALL things...through Christ. Do we believe it? Do we live like we believe it?
 2. Do we tap into Holy Spirit within us to begin to build bridges across the chasms that we might reach those in need?
 3. In order to build a bridge, there must be solid contact made. I am afraid that we have forgotten what it is to be lost. What it means to be disconnected or hurting... We cannot expect them to build a bridge to us. We must go to them! Build a bridge.
 4. There are all kinds of bridges. Sometimes two flat stones make a bridge. Simple. Sometimes a board or fallen tree make a bridge. Simple. Sometimes it takes years to build a bridge. The important thing is that we never forget about bridge building to people who do not know they are perishing.

III. To Build A Bridge

- A. The Message must not change. The method might but the message is Truth! It never changes.
 1. But if we water down the gospel message in hopes of reaching more people we may successfully see a greater response, but to what benefit?
 2. It is the gospel...the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ...that is the power of God unto salvation.
 3. Methods may change, but the Message must never change!
 - a) An in your face Gospel is not as effective as it was 15 years ago. In fact 49% of Millennials feel it is wrong to evangelize people. Yet 94% of Christian millennials think that Jesus is the best thing that could happen to their friends. What that tells us is that

- they do not want to offend their friends or make them feel bad or rejected. 40% of millennials believe that if you disagree with them they are being judged by you.
- b) Jesus is still the Way, Truth and Life!
- B. Look at our text tonight. v19-22
1. Paul said he was willing to be all things to all men...why? That he might be used of God to see some saved.
 2. He was willing to make whatever changes were necessary to build bridges into peoples lives.
 3. Jesse and Heather Krenz are in Chipepo by the will of God to build bridges there. We heard last week of the feeding program. It built a bridge into the heart of the community.
- C. What must change...we must change.
1. We must develop a servant spirit. What are bridges we can build into our community.
 - a) Ie. Suntime Elementary. Testing week.
 2. We must be totally real with people. The religious spirit within us has to go.
 3. We must put aside our personal preferences that we might reach folks.
 4. We must be willing to make a sacrifice to build a bridge.
 5. A popular word around Christian circles is the word 'Outreach'.
 - a) Go into the world and not be a part of it. That is what Jesus did.
 - b) For us to have a ministry that reaches out, we must be willing to do the reaching!
 6. Oh preacher, that is not my cup of tea...tell it to the One who called you.
 7. Paul made it clear that this wasn't optional!
 - a) "Yet preaching the Good News is not something I can boast about. I am compelled by God to do it. How terrible for me if I didn't preach the Good News! If I were doing this on my own initiative, I would deserve payment.
 - b) But I have no choice, for God has given me this sacred trust." (1 Corinthians 9:16-17, NLT)
- D. God is calling this morning for us to be bridge builders.
1. Who will you build a bridge to?
 2. Look at the card in your bulletin.

Conclusion:

- There are many different kinds of bridges in this world. Some are wooden, some are stone, and others are fabricated of steel. Some are small some are massive, but they all function basically the same way. They span a chasm. They make it possible for someone to pass from one side of the chasm to the other side.
- Why were bridges built? The builders were motivated by the need! Let me apply this to our ministry here at FCC. In our community there are people all around us who are on the other side of the chasm. They need a bridge to cross over.
- Fill out your card and pass it to the aisle.