

**Introduction:**

- *"The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by all her children."* (Luke 7:34-35, NKJV)
  - Week one: Who Needs A Bridge? We looked at the need.
  - Week two: The Biblical basis of being bridge builders.
  - Week three: Pastor Joshua, practice approach to bridge building.
- Let's purpose to become friends of sinners, today.
  - If you are going to be a friend of sinner you have to build bridges into their lives.
  - IE. Kankakee, foos ball with Ron. "If you win you get our money. If we win you have to listen to us share Christ with you."

**I. Who Needs a Bridge?**

- A. A bridge is structure carrying a pathway or road over a depression, or obstacle. Ie. A river, or chasm. Bridges connect one thing to another that is separated by an obstacle.
- B. Lost people - need a bridge. I
  1. e. Caleb and I when we hiked the AT found an older lady who was lost and we helped her get back to her car. Ie Last generational Sunday Jesse and Heather spoke of how they fed the poor in their area and that created a bridge to the heart of the people.
  2. People that do not know Jesus are like that lady (Caleb and I). They know there is more to life but they do not know how to get back to finding a purpose in life.
- C. Others who need a bridge are people who once walked with God/or knew their heavenly Father. Luke 15, the Prodigal son. Left the comfort of Father's home and almost ruined his life.
  1. People disconnect for a number of reasons.
    - a) Sometimes it is selfish like the prodigal.
    - b) Sometimes they move and can't find a church
    - c) Sometimes they just get busy with other things and forget God.
    - d) I was that prodigal. And a classmate a year younger, Tom McCann would periodically speak to me about God. He was building a bridge into my life. I did not get saved then but the seeds he planted mattered.
  2. No matter the reason, lost people and disconnected people need Jesus and we are called as Christians to build bridges into their lives.

**II. We Are Called to Build Bridges.**

- A. A bridge-builder is one who has made a commitment to understand people with different backgrounds and beliefs in order to make Christianity relevant to these people. Ie. Two phone calls: one to a friend who just lost his job, one to a friend whose parents are divorcing.
- 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! We have to see the gap and know that people without Christ are separated from God. They need a bridge builder to connect with them. IE. From Eden,

banished, cherubim, flaming sword and yet God moved immediately to build a bridge to get man back to his purpose.

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.
  - c) 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's a bridge building thought.
- C. Our ability is our availability. We have to make ourselves available to God to do this.
  1. 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.
  2. We are reminded that we can do ALL things...through Christ. Do we believe it? Do we live like we believe it?
  3. Do we tap into Holy Spirit within us to begin to build bridges across the chasms that we might reach those in need.
  4. 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.
  5. Jesus was a master at this!

### III. Change is Required

- A. What must change...we must change.
  1. We must develop a servant spirit. What are bridges we can build into our community. I.e. Suntree 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.
- B. 7. Paul made it clear that this wasn't optional!

1. *"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."* (1 Corinthians 9:16-17, NLT)
- C. Pastor Joshua preached a simple but great message:
  1. Be Smart - be clear, creative, faithful to the Word.
  2. Be Nice - *"Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."* Col 4:5-6
  3. Approach people as individuals.

#### IV. How Can I Be A Better Bridge Builder

- A. Let love be a motivating factor. Non-Christians are lost. Separated from God. Spend some time looking at the word and what it has to say about the fate/ the eternity of those who die without Christ.
  1. I don't think that fate really bothers us much anymore. It is evident when we pray.
  2. Love stirs compassion which leads to action. Compassion see the pain of people and breaks for them. Love and compassion makes our heart tender towards the condition of people not knowing Christ.
- B. Be intentional. Look for opportunities. Help people going through tough times.
  1. Be like Is. 6. "Who will go?" Response of Isaiah, "I Will!"
- C. Speak the language of the non-Christian. Get away from you "Christianese."
- D. Practice hospitality. Do the things necessary to build meaningful relationships for the sake of the Gospel for the people you want to reach.
- E. Pray for the people you want to see come to Christ.

#### Conclusion:

- Bridge building is something that we all can do better. I think we have just lost the art of doing it.
- Who can you build a bridge with that they may cross over into Christ