



Be a Bridge, Build a Bridge

Session 1: BE FIRST

May 14, 2017

Eagle Ridge Church of God

2808 Waldo Avenue • Midland MI 48642 • www.erchog.org

Greetings from Exponential conference in Orlando and Sedona, Arizona...

This is the beginning of a new teaching series called "Be a bridge, build a bridge." If you are new to Eagle Ridge Church of God, you may not know that this is our new mission/vision statement. That may not mean much to you because everyone has a mission statement.

- We are serious about allowing this to be the dog not the tail.
- This is our true north when it comes to evaluating anything.
- We have redesigned our governance to help us keep this the focus
- We are hiring a new staff person because pursuing this mission demands we do. On target to have someone in place by Sept. 1. Please pray!
- In our staff, each person is evaluating their goals by asking, "Does this help my area of ministry stay true to developing people who are bridges and building bridges into our community and culture."

It may sound repetitive at first glance.

- "Be" comes first then "build" second.

How did we get here? Consultation. Become outwardly focused or die.

- Being obedient to this challenge has led to growth, new families, a new energy, our largest baptismal service and finances better than at any time in my 10 years here.

This whole thing began with God's Word. Which means it began with Jesus. He is the subject of everything. This part of Paul's letter to a group of new believers in the city of Corinth is what gave birth to "Be a bridge, build a bridge."

Paul has just spent a number of words defending his ministry against people who are trying to lead this young church away from the Jesus he met on the road to Damascus.

- See if you can find any repetition...repetition is the key to success.

16 So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! 17 This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! He begins with the definitive statement about new life begins with Jesus. Then...

18 And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. There was a separation between God and people and that was our sin. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. 19 For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. 20 So we are

Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" 21 For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

I challenge everyone to memorize 18-21 in any translation you like. Even Italian. Kids and youth, I will make worth you time.

Reconciliation is the key idea. What did you learn about what Paul means by repetition?

- It has an accounting definition...all the accounts with money going out and coming in now add up. A bill was collected and recorded now it all adds up.
- It has a relationship definition...a marriage to the Hatfield's and McCoy's coming together after someone brings them to the same place to discuss what separates them.
- Two enemies, two groups with something that separates them. There is something keeping them apart that seems insurmountable.

Paul is saying that all those who have had what separates them from God reconciled (accounting, we owed something) and what separates removed (relational) through Christ's death and resurrection now Paul is to become reconcilers.

Here's how Paul breaks it down.

- Task or ministry...Literally meaning, "executing the commands of another."
- Those who were described by this same word are Moses, the apostles, the prophets, evangelists, elders...
- Word or message...Strong words that set this up, "he gave us". It's really stronger more accurately "committed to us."

Combine task & message

- Paul is saying that it's his task to reconcile people to God through Christ and that very message has been committed to him to speak

I don't believe that Paul is a special case. I don't believe that this task or ministry is only for special people like Paul. And I don't think that message of reconciliation to God through Christ is only for an elite group of really good Christians like Paul.

Being given this task and this message as disciples, followers of and apprentices of Jesus is what makes us bridges. We are to be used by God to create a bridge between someone who is separated from the love, purpose, peace, and freedom and hope we have in Christ. That's what it means to "Be a bridge."

If this task this message is for all Christ followers then, how do we truly become bridges that people walk across to meet the one who loves them and created them and wants to be in relationship with them?

To be a bridge we must change

I've got to change as the pastor of a church that produces human bridges or ambassadors for Christ. There are 3 key changes that we need to make if we want to become bridges.

Change the way you view yourself

- You were an enemy, whether you knew it or not, separated from God
- Only reason you aren't is what Jesus did
- Ambassador... One who is sent by his leader to represent him, to speak on his behalf to people who he wants to have a relationship with.
- To be an ambassador, one who speaks for God is like going on behalf of a king to the king's enemies to tell them that they are no longer enemies. He announces amnesty to all the rebels fighting against and resisting the king.

Here's the problem: we just don't view ourselves as representing Jesus.

"The hustle and bustle of daily life prevents many people who see themselves as religious, and who acknowledge the significance of religion in their lives, from consciously thinking of themselves as a representative of Jesus Christ. One-quarter of adults (27%) say they "always" are mindful of being Christ's representatives; one-sixth (17%) say they are "often" aware of that mantle; and one-fourth are "sometimes" conscious of that privilege. The remaining 30% of the nation claim they rarely or never think of themselves in this light."

George Barna, *Index of Leading Spiritual Indicators*

Here's another verse that we tend to read as the responsibility or calling of a select, elite few. You know, people like me with a seminary degree and a title.

Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted! 18 Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. 19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:16-20

We don't see ourselves as the ones who make disciples.

Just invite and leave the serious stuff to me. That's not being a bridge that's being a guy on the road dancing with a sign trying to get people to come into a business. Doesn't have to know the product. Don't talk or ask people what they are looking for just point them to the door. Don't get involved with people leave that to the salesperson.

It's life on life

My commitment to personally make disciples, not just preaching at people, which is easier.

- With my boys
- With Brad & Lewis
- With my tennis players & their parents

Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. 12 Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. 13 This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be

mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-13

My responsibility, elders responsibility, staff's responsibility is to equip you to become, human bridges, ambassadors, people who make disciples.

What can you do to get started?

- Look around at who God is placing in your life.
- Apprentice series
- Talk about the sermon and what is God saying to you.
- Reflect on your life, your successes and failures of living for Christ in this world with someone

Change the way you view the church

- One of our goals is to become a church that makes disciples who make disciples.
- When I say discipleship you immediately think of two things, information and program.
- We are not a church that produces disciples who makes disciples who makes disciples...not yet!

Accept God's call on your life

This is what it means to be a disciple of Christ. It's not an add-on. We are to be someone who is willing to share your life with others so that they can learn to follow Christ with you.

- A bridge must take you to the other side or it isn't a bridge. It's a cliff, or a long fall it's an ER visit.

This may mean there are some things that you are doing that will need to stop so you can share your life with someone.

Here are some resources that have challenged and formed my thinking in this area:

- Becoming a Level 5 Church
- Spark (Igniting a culture of multiplication)
- Exponential network gives these and other resource away for free...Someone pull it up on your phone right now.
- Relational discipleship network
- Discipleshift (Five steps that help your church make disciples who make disciples)

I'll put these on the sermon text that will be on the website. That's where you can listen to the sermon and also see my notes.

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