

Begin Again
Session #1: Be first

Explain the reason for this series at this time. Resetting the target.
Recalibrating the machine.

Revisiting and rebuilding the foundations before building anything.

Begin again for Beaverton.

There is a tendency to "drift". **This is an unintentional, slow movement away from what the core purpose is.** It's getting one's eyes off the center and onto the shiny object. In our case, the shiny object might be a million different things, but they all have to do with the season of COVID. **There's fear and then there's time to overreact and to make other things the issue instead of keeping the main thing the main thing.**

Overreaction Monday during football season.

Here's the center of our target or the foundation for everything we are and everything we do. "Be a Bridge, Build a Bridge."

This saying seems repetitive, but let's take a closer look.

You must "Be, first"...This is a statement that can be read two different ways.

- A challenge to be the first one to arrive..."**Be first in line**...be first to cross the finish line...**be first be the best.**

Or Be, first. The first thing you want to do is just to be present. I'm not going to try to do anything, **I'm just going to be who I was created to be in this present situation or context.** There's a sense that your presence is what is needed, not something that you decide needs to be done there.

- It's a "get the lay of the land" kind of thing before you start trying to bring some agenda into the situation. **See how your just being there changes things before you try to change things.**

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

- **Personal "be" that leads to Kingdom build!**

Jesus is our example. What did he build? The greatest movement the world has ever seen. He built the church. He changed the world. **But, that all started by him simply being the obedient Son of God, Messiah and rightful King.** He had to be the King to initiate the Kingdom of God here on earth.

We have to be, before we can do things like start Cultivate at the mall, and become 1 church with 2 locations. We have to be something before we can build a disciple making church to the 3rd and 4th generation.

This whole thing began with God's Word. This part of Paul's letter to a group of new believers in the city of Corinth is what is **the engine for my new "being" and the foundation upon which kingdom building is happening.**

Bible study rule #1: Look for repetition. If mom says it more than once before she goes out the door, then it's probably important.

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 5:17-21**

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

- 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.

Since this has been done for you, now go because Jesus wants to continue what He did for you, through you, to others.

Here's how Paul breaks it down.

Task or ministry...Literally meaning, **"executing the commands of another."**

Word or message...Strong words that set this up, **"he gave us"**. It's really stronger, more accurately **"committed to us."**

Combine task and 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 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.

- **Army Rangers or Navy Seals...you have to be special in ability and training to do it. They get the toughest missions.**

Being given this task and this message makes us bridges.

We are to be used by God to create a bridge for someone who is separated from the love, purpose, peace, and hope we have in Christ.

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.

It's not natural in our culture to be a bridge. It's more natural to be a wall.

The culture of the American church doesn't naturally by default produce ambassadors or human bridges.

I've got to change as the pastor of a church that produces human bridges or ambassadors for Christ.

There are three 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.**

You are created to be an 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 kings' 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 (Check for updated survey).

I don't want you to do anything. Don't take action. Don't make an action plan. **Don't start building anything.** View yourself differently.

Here's a phrase we use around here that may help.

- "I am one in whom Christ dwells..."

I was an enemy and now I have been reconciled. Since I have been reconciled, Christ lives in me. That makes you someone that **this world desperately needs.** Your **presence is significant** if you view yourself as representing Christ as his ambassador before you do anything. **Be before you do.**

Viewing myself differently means I must view my context/situation differently.

- "and I live in his unshakable Kingdom."

I was an enemy, now I'm reconciled and he lives in me and I live where his loving authority is acknowledged. His Kingdom.

Forgetting who we are and where we live is deadly.

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. **Christian black-ops or navy seals.**

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 struggle with this in two ways.

- 1. We struggle seeing ourselves as disciples.** If that word is a problem, then just use **apprentice**. It means the same thing.
- 2. We have a hard time seeing ourselves as the ones who make disciples or show people how to follow Jesus.**

We have been taught that being Christians is about what I think is true about Jesus. Yes, believing the right things about Jesus is important, but we have taught people that it stops there. Jesus is about His Kingdom, which we are a part of and that is going on right here, right now, and it continues into eternity. **What we have thought is only about eternity and denies the power that is within us when we view ourselves properly as Jesus views us.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81CLwwTJccg>

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. Just get them into the store.

Let me say it again. I don't want you to do anything. I'm not going to ask you to **make a commitment** to anything. I'm not asking you to **quit your job** and go to seminary, or Africa. **I'm asking you to view yourself as someone who has within her the raw materials that are necessary for not only being an apprentice of Jesus, but also what is necessary for helping other people follow Jesus.**

Doing and building come later.

Here's my warning. If you start viewing yourself that way, your heart will change, your desires will change, and you will look up and realize, "Wow, I'm acting like a disciple."

What can you do to get started? We will talk about that at the end.

Change the way you view the church.

We together have to be before we do. We have to view ourselves as a community in the way we operate in this town and this world represents Jesus.

A church can be a bridge or it can be a castle with a moat around it.

Just think about how powerful and spirit filled and empowering our worship on Sunday morning could be if we believed that when it was over we were going to go out there and represent Christ. Talk about worshipping with desperation. **Talk about celebrating that we are no longer enemies of God, but now his ambassadors.** It would not matter what songs we sing, how clever the sermon is and if we used media flawlessly. Those things would be irreverent to the outcome. **We will worship together and fellowship together differently because we know we leave as ambassadors.**

- **Our goal is to become a church that makes disciples who make disciples to the 3rd and 4th generation.**

You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others. 2 Timothy 2:2

- **When I say discipleship**, you immediately think of **two things, information and program**. We stop viewing the church that way.
- We don't view the church as **consumers**. It is not **an organization that I receive from but rather a community through which Jesus transforms me and sends me on mission**.

Surrender to what he wants you to become.

"I want to make sure I've crossed the line of faith."

"I want to begin **training my mind** to view myself the way Jesus views me."

I asked my players what it means to train.

"Training is doing today what you can do so that tomorrow you can do what you couldn't do today."

Then I asked them, "**What do you want to be able to do on the tennis court by the end of the year that you can't do right now?** Now what can you do today in practice that will teach your body to start doing the right things that will later enable you to do that thing you can't do?"

It's not about bearing down. Wanting it bad enough. Trying really hard in a match to **not double fault** or get your forehand cross-court.

Training to be a bridge.

1. Do your exercises.

"I was God's enemy but now I have been reconciled to God through Jesus and have been commissioned as his ambassador."

"I am one in whom Christ dwells and I live in his unshakable Kingdom."

Find a trigger that helps you remember to say this many times each day.

2. Memorize 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Over the length of this series memorize this.

3. Train with other ambassadors.

Come and See logo

Bridge Groups logo

You have to be first before you can build.

- "Be a Bridge, Build a Bridge"

Come back next week and we will talk about building. But this step can't be skipped.