

Begin Again
Session #2: Time to build

We are resetting the target...**securing the foundation.**

It may sound repetitive, but it's not.

"Be comes before build," that was last week. You can find this on the website

Who you are, is then revealed in what you do and ultimately build in your life. For Eagle Ridge it's the same.

To be a bridge, we need to **change the way we view ourselves.** Do you see yourself as representing Christ? Do you see yourself as "one in whom Christ dwells and I live in his unshakable Kingdom." **You are designed to be a bridge that helps people walk across to get to God.** You are an **ambassador representing** those who my leader is separated from, but who he desperately wants to be in relationship with.

Now that we understand what it means to be, **we can start to build.**

You are going to build something, the question is what.

We, as Eagle Ridge Church of God, are going to build something, the question is what?

How about a bridge over space that separates people from the God who created them and has revealed himself in Jesus Christ.

Here's where all of this got started; you guessed it, the Bible. I challenged everyone to **memorize** this.

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ For **God was in Christ, reconciling the world to****

himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. (God has reconciled people to himself through Christ's death. He sent Jesus to us to bridge the divide that sin caused in our ability to know God.) 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

"Reconcile."

- **Two enemies, two groups with something that separates them.** There is something keeping them apart that seems insurmountable.

"Ambassador" or human bridge.

- Sent by his leader to people with whom the leader wants to have a relationship. **Has to leave home that is familiar, to go where the leader sends her.**

In both of these images that Paul is using to describe what a Christ follower is supposed to do, they both include "going."

Go, don't wait for an invitation.

- **The person wanting to connect does the work.** The builder of the bridge does it so that people can get to where they need to go.
- That's what God did through Christ...**"while we were yet sinners."**
- **This is the foundation** for this whole sermon and series. Paul had to go and we have to go, **to the other side of the chasm.**

Look at Jesus' last words after his resurrection before rising up to heaven. 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. (This is my world now so **I can choose you**

to continue to do what I've been doing.) 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

"Go" is the primary command or imperative. It precedes "make disciples". It does not say build a building, invite people to it, and make disciples.

Yes, invite people to worship, but that **cannot be a substitute for the ambassador who goes** to those who are separated from his leader or the bridge that needs to be built so that others can have access to a relationship with God that they were created to enjoy.

- The rest of this stuff is irrelevant if we don't get that **getting up and going is job #1.**

Where do we build? We break the huddle and head, where...(to build the other side of the bridge).

Where there is brokenness and need.

Today we have representatives of **three organizations** that represent places where you meet people and build into their lives.

- Adoption option.
- Forgotten Man Ministry.
- Young Lives...who are making our building their home.

In October, we will highlight our **faith promise ministries** that you can financially support, but also volunteer.

- Open Door.
- SHARE.
- Pregnancy Resource Center.
- Caregiving network.

We now have a **neighbor across the woods**. This is not a Christian organization, but we plan to bless them...Shelter House.

Where we haven't already gone and people are drawn.

Listen to this story from the book of Acts. This takes place after the church has spread from Jerusalem, to Judea, Samaria and then into the province of Asia. ¹¹ So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, ¹² and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days. ¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. ¹⁴ One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵ And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us. Acts 16:11-15

To understand what is happening in this verse, we use two terms. The terms are important to know as we go, but also the order in which they are presented.

- The bridgehead and then the "person of peace."

A strong position secured within enemy territory from which to advance/attack.

That's what Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke were looking for when they went to the place of prayer by the river. They were looking for that secure place where there just might be people who God has prepared to hear the message of Jesus. This was a place where Jews and God-fearing gentiles would go probably because there weren't enough numbers to make up a synagogue. This place of prayer was behind enemy lines, secure, and, therefore, a place from which the movement could spread.

If you are a part of Eagle Ridge Church of God, you know **the story of Cultivate** the coffee shop that we opened in our local mall.

- This was **about multiplication**, not simply addition.
- This was about **going where we saw a need and a place where God's presence was needed**. The people who work in and around the mall have needs. Many of them are struggling economically and relationally.

Cultivate is a bridgehead, is a secure position within a territory that has been stolen by the enemy from which love, service, relationships can advance the mission of Jesus and the advance of God's Kingdom.

Remember Jesus wasn't a military leader, he was a revolutionary of a different kind. **We don't view the people of the mall as our enemies; no, they are our friends, our mission, and God's beloved. The enemy is the one who has so distorted this world we live in that many of them have been separated from the one who loves them and died for them.**

That's what a bridgehead is. But at the bridgehead they needed to meet someone like Lydia, who God had prepared to hear the message. That is who we call the "person of peace". Here's where this comes from. Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. ⁵ Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' ⁶ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. Luke 10:4-6

That person, or son of peace, is someone who is open to you and what you bring. If they are open to you and what you bring, then that means that the Holy Spirit is already at work drawing this person to God.

And do you notice what happens when the bridgehead is found and the person of peace is spotted? That's where the movement spreads. It says that her whole house trusted in Jesus. That probably meant servants, workers, and any family members in her house. And from that spreading a church is planted there in her house.

Where there are signs of separation from God?

Remember the impediment that we are called to build a bridge over? Do we really believe that Jesus is "The way, The truth, and The life?" There is only one way to the father. When you see him, you see the father. He is the reconciler.

- **Do we have a soul burden? Or are we just trying to build something here that will help us protect our kids from the world and get some Novocaine to numb us until we can slip into heaven.**

There is a gravitational pull we are going against. The culture we have and the American church has that makes building bridges difficult.

Or what will talk us out of doing this. This is what will change those two passages into something **charming and idealistic**, but cannot happen to something that is only for an elite, professional, Navy Seals of Christianity.

- That's the culture of the church in America and **culture eats vision for lunch.**

That brings us to the very important question...**What keeps us from going and building?**

There are two evil twins that fight against us being a bridge and building a bridge. The first one is...**Scarcity thinking.**

- I don't have enough.
- I am not enough.
- Based upon fear.
- If that is true, then *God* must not really be good because he has everything and is stingy with what he has so I'd better hold what is mine.
- **It keeps us from sending or releasing, we only collect and hold on to...that's money, time, our best people.**

We decide that there isn't enough and what little we have is ours and we must protect it. I must squeeze it because once it's gone, it's gone.

That's a temptation for a church with building debt and a history where people left. But here's what you did.

- **Building friendship park when we were broke.**
- **Hiring a new staff person with owing so much on our building and who will spend half of his time somewhere over there that will not immediately impact us and our needs.**
- **Starting a new campus from an existing church in a pandemic.**

Attraction as our mission.

Building bridges means you need to work on both sides...attraction as our mission only builds on one side. It's not a bridge, it's a theme park. The church with its worship services and programs are like bait. It is to attract people like a piece of cheese attracts a mouse. They do the work.

Attraction as a mission is based on consumerism...provide what people want, scratch their itch and they will come. This model of growth is dead. They don't want our cheese. They have spiritual lactose intolerance.

- **60% of the culture would not come to a church for any reason.**

When we are afraid of running out and when we simply want to attract people and add them to our numbers, hoarding will take precedence over sending. Ambassadors and bridge builders get sent. They don't build warehouses. The best people get sent.

- **The church is more like an airport, not a warehouse.**

I stink as an attractional pastor. I tried it and failed miserably. Eagle Ridge Church of God is not good at attraction as a mission and that has been frustrating in the past. "Why aren't we growing? What do we need to do in order to grow."?

God put it in my heart and in the hearts of our leaders that we needed to together build a bridge as a congregation, where we go and send. We start something new that isn't simply a conduit to attract and draw people back to the mothership.

While we were still broke, we hired Matt as our point person for planting something new in our community that can be another platform for starting discipleship groups.

Both Cultivate and Beaverton Campus are additionally points from which disciples can make disciples. They are bridges, but they aren't about getting more people into one place.

This is not "attract and then add". This is going. This is building a bridge. This is multiplication.

- **What is young grows faster than what is old.**

None of this is possible if we allow scarcity and fear to hold us back. Or holding onto that old failed model of only building on one side of the divide hoping to attract people.

"...I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Matthew 16:17-19 (NIV)

We are to build bridges, He builds His Church.

This is the picture of the Kingdom of God moving forward in such a relentless, unstoppable way that the gates of hell have no chance.

Listen to these words one more time..." 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!"

Our mission is to make disciples who operate as reconcilers, bridge builders, ambassadors for Christ wherever they are. Our vision is to strategically build bridges into our culture where there is brokenness, and people who are separated from the love, forgiveness, and purpose we have in a relationship with God.

What is God saying to you today? How are you to respond obediently to what he is saying? Here are some ways. **Steps of Obedience**

✓ **Memorize your orders.**

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! ¹⁸ 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. 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

✓ **What would it mean for me to "go"?**

Maybe it is to contact the office and join one of our ministry partners. Maybe it is to go to Deb and tell her you want to start volunteering at Cultivate and learn how to be a bridge there.

✓ **Who might be the person(s) of peace near me?**

Be comes first...have you stepped over the line?

What is God telling you right now about what you are actually building. Is it a bridge? It's time to start building.

