

Three stories

The first

Many years ago, I had it in my head that I could touch base with my kids through their interests. They were not Christian. I had just found Jesus and was losing them fast. Their mother and friends did not like who I claimed to be. What was I to do? Then a thought occurred to me. If I can't bring Jesus to them. Why not bring them to me. I'll build a bridge.

Honestly, I had lost. I was divorced. They lived with their mom who wanted nothing to do with Jesus. In my youth, I loved AC/DC and that sort of music. I wore a jean jacket covering in unchristian badges. My long hair and wild living ruled the day. Who cared about school and God? History repeats itself far too often. My boys don't care about school and God either. My hair brained idea was to meet them on their side of the bridge and be their friend.

At my cities core is a series of shops. They were what is called head shops. These stores contained the music, badges, posters, and books I used to love in my youth. I knew that these shops held things my kids would love too. It was their type of stuff. I would extend mercy to them and they would hopefully extend mercy to me. Generally, I am a spiritual person. As my (disapproving) wife and I took the kids shopping, my spiritual Spidey senses began to tingle. Oh, how I had forgotten those stores.

There were drug paraphernalia everywhere. Loud horrid music filled our ears. The kids loved it. Me (Mr. Jesus) did not. Oh, look at the nudity, drug bongos, and horrid posters of Marylin Manson. On the way home the kids ogled over all they had bought. A bridge to friendship and Jesus? Nope. I blew that bridge up as if there never was one. I learned something that day. There is no bridge from that world to Jesus.

The second

I knew a guy who missionary dated. He was a strapping fine Christian boy. He had the looks, smarts, and a bigtime passion for Jesus. Along the way he met a catholic girl. She was raptured and stunned by this evangelical boy. They grew up in slightly different religions, but Jesus was their center. What could possibly go wrong?

In time, they got married and had two boys. There is something about life at a young age. You step into your twenties and the time goes on speed dial. This young couple served at church, held small groups, and raised their boys. Life was good for them. I had been in one of their life groups. There was not a better couple to lead us. They lived modestly just as good little Christians do. I'd have to say they were doing all the right things in a Christian marriage.

What was missing? It was the bridge between his upbringing and hers. He was raised to serve Jesus. She was raised to go to confession. He read his Bible nightly. She listened at church once a week. Live modestly? You see, one day a few years later I saw this man sitting in church alone. I had heard through the non-gossip vine that his wife had left him for another man. I fear the problem was not her or his religion. It's that the bridge only went to his side of the river. Internally, I believe she hated that. Jesus is a great bond but it's not the only bond we need. People are people.

On Facebook I was her friend. In her new found single life she went on trips. Her new home was decorated. She dressed better and looked happy. I thought she was happy before? Wrong! I'll tell you what I know. It's not that a catholic upbringing is bad or wrong. It's not that his evangelical background was good. No, it was probably more like this. They were raised with different views. Different understandings. Christians cannot connect themselves to a church

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without similar hearts. They just can't. How your raised and what you believe is important too. There is no bridge.

The third

This is where I want to begin this chapter. Many of you have seen the illustration of the cross as a bridge. There are two cliffs. One side is the world and the other is salvation or heaven. The cross with Jesus on it extends across that chiasm between both sides. I like it, it's cute. Well-meaning Christians use that illustration to point us towards Jesus and that he is the bridge. Yet, it tells an incomplete story of the bridge. It appears to be a bridge, yet it only goes one way.

God has always used the symbol of a bridge-like analogy. If we go way back to the third chapter of Genesis, we will find God blocking a bridge. Ok, I'm making an assumption here but bear with me. Eden is described as being on the east end of Eden. The Bible then goes on to say that the Tree of life was in the middle of that garden at the east end. Out of it flowed a river that broke into four rivers. After the fall of Adam and Eve they were driven out of the east of the garden. I presume it is over a bridge of the main river.

I suppose its speculation, but is it? Where were the flaming swords that God placed covering the east end? Why not come in through the west if it's just land? I suspect they were driven out in the east for a reason just as the rivers flowed east. In revelation 22 the river of life flowed east with the trees of life lining the way. They were surrounded by twelve gates to the city. I'm betting there was only one way in to Eden but twelve ways in to the new city in the book of Revelation. So, at Eden, I place a bridge just as Jesus is the bridge to God.

I am not one to love speculation. The bridge is not really the point. To me, it's all about how we get into the kingdom of God. Before the return of Christ Jesus there is only one way. It's

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either through the East end of the garden in Eden or it's through Jesus. What I'm driving at is the bridge to God is limited before his triumphal return.

Matthew 7:14 *"But small is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life, and only a few find it."*

It seems to me that there has always been a gap. Call it a bridge or flaming sword if you choose. I choose to call it sin. People hate that word. I bet they do. It's irritating to be sure. Yet, what is between God and us? A gap. I suspect people are not sure what that gulf or gap is. Hence the confusion. Sure, there is a bridge from this world of sin to holiness in heaven. Actually, no there isn't except through the living water: Christ Jesus. The illustration of the gap is what? It's Jesus depicted as the bridge between this world (sin) and heaven (holiness).

At the end of Matthew, Jesus gives the great commission. He asked his disciples to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. Did you notice that there are no restrictions?

Romans 8:39 *"neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

When I talk to my kids there is only one bridge: through the gospel of Jesus. When you date and finally pick someone as a mate there should be one main commonality. You picked someone who has already crossed the same bridge of Jesus you did. The disciples were not sent out to find or build bridges. No, they were sent to preach the gospel. In a way, the message was a bridge to Jesus.

Jesus is a narrow bridge. If you read Matthew 7:13, you find that the paths of the world are vast and wide. No bridge needed. You can't find common ground between the world and Christ Jesus. His way is the only way to God the Father. Yet, through the gospel message, God

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has made a narrow way. Remember that during Jesus teaching many people left. What did the Bible say? Few will find the narrow bridge (path). Unfortunately for a world of sinners the only way to heaven is through Jesus. This bridge goes one way. What's with the bridge?

With that said, let's explore the world of bridges. I'm going to dwell on three types, but I'm sure there may be plenty more. The symbolic nature of the bridge is found all over the Bible. One way into Eden. One way through the Red Sea. The Ark floated through the flood. I even like Abraham going one way and Lot choosing the other. I like saying it's a bridge metaphorically speaking. It's either through, over, or from one side to another. Yet, in all these things there is a gap. A connecting bridge or gulf.

In 325 AD. A group of concerned Christians had a meeting. The Christian movement was beginning to show gaps. One side had a different view of Jesus than the gospel letters described. The other side needed to be defined. Was there a bridge between these two groups? The Apostles creed defined the bridge. The answer to a bridge question between heresy and the gospels letters was no. You either believe Jesus was the Son of God or you don't.

It's the same today. There are thousands of denominations, cults, and sects of Christianity. Who is the real Christian church? It's tricky isn't it. One says Catholic. Another screams Mormon. It's just not that simple to say love is the bridge. Jesus is the way. The problem is this. Just as Abraham was on one end of the plains. Lot was clearly on another side. A different side. The men of God who came down to Sodom and Gomorrah knew there was no bridge between sin and heaven. Lot had to flee back to the other side.

The men who wrote the first creed made sure there was no bridge. No middle ground. There was Jesus (the Son of God) and nothing else. That is not totally true. I used to run a

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community event with many of the churches in my city. At one point, some of the other types of churches wanted to join in. The problem was the card we handed out to people. It listed the churches as one group. Did we all believe Jesus was the same? The gospel was the same? In the end nine pastors asked all the different churches to sign off on the apostle's creed. Some refused. Hence, no bridge. Some people preach a different Jesus. To appear unified, you can't promote different bridges to heaven.

You can date a nice man or woman. They can come from a Christian home or dating service. Each one could have Jesus tattooed on their butt. It does not matter. Did they cross the same bridge you did? It's the little things that make a path wider. Is Jesus the Son of God? Are there miracles? We can even see finer differences in our view on creation or the end of times. What is your view? Are you crossing the same bridge to the same heaven? A Muslim believes in the same God as the Catholic does, yet it's not the same God if you look at the finer differences. Trivial? In sequential? No big deal? I doubt the creed fathers would agree.

We all want a bridge so badly. Why? It's got so little to do with Jesus. It's got more to do with the friends we cherish. Girls we think are hot. Boys that turn our crank. What we desire goes a long way. So, we try and build bridges. In my way of thinking (in terms of relationships) only God builds bridges. As for the rest of us, we build messes.

I have seen a rainbow flag draped around the cross. Is it a bridge to the gay community? I am not talking about the status of gay people in heaven. My issue is us building bridges that extend past the purpose of the cross. The cross solely exists to forgive us of our sins by Jesus' sacrifice. Our beliefs do not build bridges between certain groups and heaven. Jesus' sacrifice is the only bridge.

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We invite people to church, and at some point, we ask them to join a group. To give money to a ministry. We ask them if they want to be baptized. So many programs and ministries. We have elderly pastors. There are youth, teenage, empty nest, and adult pastors. I even know of finance and preaching pastors. We've whittled it down as far as we can to build so many bridges. Those bridges run over the gospel road and bury it in the construction.

I have been doing a study of Martin Luther's 95 Theses. They are a collection of gripes against the church of his day. Luther's church (conduct) suggestions are centered around the Pope and his indulgence ministry (remission of sin through penalty payments). The real theme in these Theses is who has the right to remit sin? Is it the Pope or God? In our day we have a slightly different problem. Who has the right to make a bridge to God? Is it the church or Jesus?

It's like this. I was saved by mysterious means. There was no reason for me to go to church. Yet, why did I cry out to a God I did not believe in, while alone? One evening on the way to work I said "God, if your real, help me." Where did that come from? I was not a believer and I had loved to mock Christians. Yet, there I was calling out to an unknown God. Then I listened to a tape by a Jewish lady. She is not a Jesus believer either. Where was my bridge to God through her?

I have heard pastors say that God does not hear the prayers of the lost. How utterly stupid and arrogant is that? I can hear some Christians closing my book right here. Slap goes the covers. Boom goes the trash bin. I'll say it again, arrogant, stupid, and short sighted. Patrick, God did not speak to you when you were unsaved in your truck that night. Agreed, I was not saved, but was I being drawn in? He heard my cry.

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Was Sampson saved? My goodness, when were Moses and David saved? How about Rahab or Esther? I mean Moses was not even allowed to cross into the promise land. David was a mess in so many ways. God even said to him “don’t build me a temple”, yet he continued to gather the materials all along the way. Who is fully in-tune with God? Yet, God is always working and moving in our lives. Yes, even in the lives of unbelievers.

There was no voice answering me in my truck. Regardless of my cries for help my marriage did crumble a month later. Another month after that, there I was sitting alone in my dad’s basement listening to Dr. Laura (Jewish) telling me I need God. Should I repeat it again “alone.” What happened the next day when I declared to my Christian workmates, I was going to church Sunday? I broke down and gave my life to Jesus! Actually, no I did not. I can’t remember when or if that ever happened? Yet, I know I have, but I can’t remember when I did. Who built the bridge to heaven for me? A testimony from a Jesus follower? A church ministry? The Bible? I had, to that point, none of those things. We need to face the facts: God draws.

It’s a chicken and egg thing. Some say that God does not hear unbelievers’ prayers. Ok, fine. Then how do you make a Christian? Where do you start from? Certainly, people start as unbelievers don’t, they? If God won’t listen to sinners. If God ignores the unbelieving creation. Who can he save? Some smart whip says it’s the predestined hidden believers just waiting to be woken up. Seriously? I choose to believe that God draws and God makes a one way (bridge) to him.

It’s not that church isn’t a bridge. It’s not that people are not a bridge either. Ministry has its place. My Christian life did impact my kids. There certainly are good stories of missionary dating. Yet, the stories are so far and few between. The little bridges we build draw in so few, yet we claim it’s so big. It’s absolutely insane! I heard a pastor proclaim that we baptized 8 people

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this year. What a great year. Really? Four of those were re-dedications. Two were children and the rest were new converts. Two! Impressive?

To be fair, my current pastor's brand-new church plant of three years has had over 115 baptisms. It's awesome and stunning. Why is his bridge better? Clearly the established veteran church should blow them out of the water. I still believe the reason this new church is doing so well comes down to a statement a fellow Christian said to me. He was shunned by the church. I asked him to join a brand-new church and he said "eventually, what guarantee do you have that it won't become like them?" Like who? Old church, of course. He continued "people are people." This church is doing so well directly because they are not old church yet.

I do fear the church plant I attend will change for the worst over time. At the moment they are doing so well. Yet, what could bomb them in ten years? I believe it will be over thinking the message. They will start building little bridges. Right now, there are no good reasons for people to attend a movie theatre for church. It's in a mall. Yet, the services are growing at a stunning rate. Why? I believe with all my heart that it's God's bridge that works. He is drawing them in.

So, with that said, what draws in the lost? In essence, Jesus was a magnet. Is it because he was God's son? Not everyone believed that. I do believe that Jesus was attractive within his person. He emulated the gospel message. Practice what you preach. In most theology classes Jesus is the bridge. Come to Jesus and be saved, healed, and changed. Yet, we miss the purpose of Jesus. He came to proclaim what God was already doing. Yes, he is the bridge, but sometimes we forget "a bridge to what?"

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John 14:6 *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

Further to this is the next verse 7 of John 14 *“If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”*

The bridge is always to God the Father in heaven. How often do we focus on Christ as if he is the end goal? Jesus never thought so. He is the bridge to the Father. Does that diminish Jesus and his work? Heavens no! His eyes were on the Father. I had a guy who remarked that Jesus probably got lucky in bed before he died. It was intended to mock Jesus. What that guy missed is the game face. Jesus always had his eyes on the prize: the will of the Father.

A bridge is only as good as the other side. Chickens don't cross the road for the hell of it. There is always a reason to cross. We are about to enter my thoughts on making church better. To live the Christian life better. Yet, we will encounter people who want bridges to other things besides heaven. As Christians we must keep our eyes on the prize. The reason Jesus told the disciples to shake the dirt off their shoes was directly related to that. Keep your eyes on God the Father in heaven. Don't get lost building bridges for people. Build bridges that only go to God the Father.

The Lost

I'd like to explore just a few bridges we tend to make. Everyone talks about the lost. This is a tricky bunch. These people know of God for the most part. The un-saved have heard of Jesus. They know what church is. In most cases many people have heard scripture without even knowing it came from the Bible. Bridge making rule 101. In Matthew 7, Jesus mentions building a house on solid rock. Making a bridge to the lost will only be based on a sandy foundation. Very

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few will cross a bridge based on Jesus. They will however come across on compromise if you offer it.

Further to that first rule states that the lost will always prey on your compassion. Christians love to try. Try what? Try and love the compromise. We're doing it in the name of Jesus. They say they hate nothing and love everything. It's all love, love, and more love. If we love the lost, then they will come. However, time is an issue. The lost just can't see our God that clearly at first. It takes time. A ton of time. What makes a church think they can change a heart in one day or one month? There is no bridge. Jesus says "only" God the Father draws. Must I repeat it?

Here is the problem: it's momentary love. We will love them if they come to Jesus. A ministry exists as long as the love is reciprocated. Say a prayer that you accept Jesus just moments after you hear the good news. We invite people in and feed them. I was called a brother on my first church visit. One pastor told me that he believed church was a revolving door. Just bring them in and spit them out. Our human bridges tend to miss the point of love and a great many other things with the gospel. Faith is not built in a day.

What are the human bridges that we build? A cross draped in the rainbow. A conference for the un-saved. You know, the bring a friend event. I'm sure we can't quantify the numbers. Billy Graham spent a ton of time stirring the masses. I do believe it was God ordained. Yet, they report that about 1% of those who made a decision and came forward were found in a church a year later, why? Jesus' preaching had thousands make a decision and the church exploded. Did the church explode after Billy Graham crusades? There is no human bridge.

I went to a men's (rough stock) event to draw in man's men. In that church was swearing and dirty talk. People trying to build a smutty bridge to identify with lost dudes. How about Pub

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night. What about a pray-in at a strip club? I knew a ministry that went to a porn expo. Oh, I bet that worked! So many bridges built by well-meaning people. All the ministry structures geared towards having compassion for sin. Building human bridges built on compromise.

What drew people to Jesus? It was his person. I will remind you that they say Jesus was sinless. That would include putting himself in harm's way. Jesus picked his places to visit. They were generally safe places. He was present at a wedding feast celebration. There were family dinners. He met people where they were on a beach and at a well. Jesus was most certainly gutsy with the characters he knew. To some they were seedy people. I tend to believe they were sinners looking to be saved. Further to that, look where Jesus chose to meet them? All the sites were neutral. In a home, a wedding, and a public well. A Jesus bridge does not include places where sin is overboard.

The trouble with human bridges is the sin problem. We are asking people to recognize their sin. To be effective in this area, it's all about our eyes. Only God draws and only God opens eyes. To a human, 100,000 in a stadium listening to the gospel message is effective. 1% saved is effective. In heavens terms that is not effective by divine standards. Noah saved 7 people in 120 years. We spend far too much time trying to open eyes when it's not our job.

The trouble with the lost is twofold. One kind is looking for a way through sin. The second are looking to add God to their lives. The trouble is the bridge: there is none. You can't have porn and Jesus. There is no drug bong shop on one side and a Bible store on the other. Certainly, I have heard of a Christian pregnancy crisis center being next to an abortion clinic. Between them is a choice not a bridge. A food bank and a drug rehab facility could work together but there is no bridge. It's eyes on Jesus or eyes on vices. That's how people roll.

Extreme example but helpful knowledge

We get into trouble building bridges. I knew a church that was predominantly white. They were ashamed of their whiteness. Ironic considering, they lived in a historically white neighborhood. So, they decided it was a good idea to import other colors. They called it the bridges program. In a fish bowl it looks so good. How nice of the white people. Yet, many left because they built a bridge to other cultures and burned the one to the white people. Someone will say good. We don't need racist white people anyways. Who was the Spirit ministering to in the first place at that church? There is a saying "where you find yourself is where you are found." Why did this church choose to import ministry when ministry was already there?

Here is the kicker. Missionaries translate the Bible in other countries to speak their language. Christians offer Bibles in alternative slang to reach a different demographic of youth. It's missions 101. Reach people so that they can understand. Yet, somehow changing the culture and color of a church is deemed good. Who is on missions for the white folk? What about their culture and language? I saw a wall of (for-fathers dedications) at a university. In Canadian history, they were all white. In the name of diversity, they put up people of color and took all the white ones down. I'm telling you as plainly as I can, there is no bridge to draw people in by our own hand. All it does is create division and strife.

I feel that I could be mistaken as racist. A white people lover. Yes, I am white. What I'm illustrating is that a bridge was made to tear down a church and rebuild it. The theatre church I attend is as diverse as it gets. It began that way. It is awesome! No importing necessary, were all over the map. No bridge building needed because God drew in everyone. You can't get lost in a multi-cultural church. There is something for everyone. However, God is drawing us in. We must be mindful of who is building this church.

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Do predominantly African churches import white people? Should a family-oriented church instill a gay community? These are questions we tend to ignore. In the name of love, we should build bridges to different groups. I'm asking you why? Jesus built his church on reaching the Jews. Paul's mission was to the gentiles. They say the Ethiopian eunuch took the gospel back to Africa. Who said we must build bridges to different communities? I say let God do it. We tend to make a mess of it.

The Lost will come. Yet, if there is a bridge, it's to them. We should be bringing what Jesus has already done to the places the lost are. We serve at a food bank. We clean up a neighborhood. We visit the sick and pray for the wounded in our communities. Bring the bridge called Jesus. What would Jesus do? Be the light of the world. Some would say that ministry provides the bridge. I say that Jesus followers are the bridge.

For the lost to see clearly, we need to give them light. We are that light by being Christ like, not by inventing bridges we think might work. I always come back to Bible examples. Peter asks Jesus if he can come out onto the water. Jesus says sure. The focus of the story is Peter's eyes and Jesus' hand. Our Lord does not offer his hand at first. Instead, he is watching Peter's eyes. First, we must put our eyes on Jesus and then he offers his hand.

It's critical that we quit trying to do Jesus and God's work. Why do Parables not work for the lost? They can see the story that Jesus told. In some cases, they can see the plot, characters, and predicament. Yet, they are blind to what Jesus is driving at. When you receive Christ what do you automatically know? If we were honest it is very little. We need to spend time getting to know Christ. Then we will see. Christians need to keep their eyes on Jesus. Let his work in us work on the lost.

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If there is any bridge to the lost it takes time. Those around us that don't know Christ need to spend time with him (Jesus). Will a Bible study do that? Will a Friday night bridge club accomplish that? We need to see past the little bridges we make. Instead, spend time with people getting to know them. Do unto them as Jesus did unto you. Be their light. My wife is going through the cancer process. A few ladies from church have been dropping off meals and offering us rides. That is what Christ-like serving looks like.

It's so important to emulate Christ. Sitting in meetings devising ways to introduce Jesus is ridiculous and a waste of time. Ways to introduce Jesus? Funny enough, the way is already there before the meeting began. All around the room are people with gifts, talents, and a story. What would Jesus do? Send them out with nothing but one thing: the gospel message. No bridge needed. The message of the gospel through Christ is your bridge.

I'm tell you as plainly as I can there is no bridge to evil. Those who are rejecting the good news only want it to go away. If you change or compromise the gospel in order to accommodate the lost, all that will happen is that the gospel will change. When it changes it becomes something different? Something God did not intend it to be. What will evil do if it gets the keys to change the gospel? It will change words, intent, and church demographics. Divide and conquer. Evil will slightly change the meaning of love. It will do anything it can to make evil look less evil.

What must we do to make Jesus look more attractive to this generation? People are not going to church. I suggest that the reason people are not going is because you built human bridges that changed the message. Think about it. For two thousand years that message has survived changes in culture. There has been everything from Greco-Roman to the Renaissance. I think Martin

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Luther pinned his 95 Theses directly because of bad ministry. Religious leaders losing sight of the gospel. Check out his These #78

We say on the contrary that even the present pope, or any pope whatsoever, has greater graces at his disposal, that is, the gospel, spiritual powers, gifts of healing, etc., as it is written. (1 Co 12[:28])

I have read all 95 of them. Luther had one idea. Focus on people and not the church. Put your eyes on Christ and you will see people in need more than the church in need. Bridges to save people is noble. I know it's well meaning. Yet, the destruction is incalculable. 1% coming to Christ in a stadium of 100,000 is deplorable. Haven't we heard "give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, teach a man to fish and you feed him for life." Jesus told the woman at the well that she needed living water to not be thirsty again. Bridges give fish. Being a friend and lover of people teaches people to love others. That kind of bridge feeds for life.

Teaching takes time. Feeding is easy. In church circles we tend to stay in the four walls. We expect them to come. We start programs to draw people in. It's the bridges we build. I knew a wealthy church that had a low-income housing project right next door. Can you imagine that not one pastor has ever been next door, ever! The big question should be why? Instead, they sat in meetings talking about the validity of cell phone antennas under their cross on the roof. The validity of inviting in different cultures. Hours and hours of negotiation and prayer. Yet, right next door was 100 people in need.

God had built bridges to those people. He built a church right next door! Jesus has told the Christians to go out to the four corners of the earth. Yet, the Christians refused to send people out to the four corners of their street. God draws, so we don't have to go, we cry! We only send

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missionaries overseas! Yet, Jesus went next door. Jesus didn't just ask us to go far away. So, what bridges are we building when God had constructed one right next door?

We build bridges over top of where God is. The church plans outreach where the money is. Why is it that one wealthy church denomination (since 2014) had only one church plant east of the main roadway in my city? The honest answer is that it's not worth building bridges to the poor. The poor can't pay for it. Why does that same church not send pastors next door to the low-income housing project? The hint is low income. This is it in a nut shell. Overseas mission brings compassion for our good deeds. Helping the low income brings in nothing but it costs a "hell" of a lot.

Human bridges are useless. They extend towards money, recognition, and division. They waste a tremendous amount of time gathering and organizing. Oddly enough, if the money stops or the interest falters, the bridge is abandoned. Jesus said build on a solid rock foundation that lasts. For heaven's sake! That foundation is in us. We are the solid rock. When Jesus said to Peter that he was the rock that the church will be built on he was not kidding. We too are that rock and we need to go shine the light of God and stop trying to build bridges that don't last.

God cannot hug me. The people he sends hug me for him. God could not save me from sin. Sin is a penalty that by God's nature must be accounted for. So, he sent his Son to save me. Jesus sent the Spirit to work on me. At some point Jesus will gather the saved and bring them home to heaven. In all these instances, someone is going personally. Jesus' ministry was going, reaching, loving, and having compassion. Even on the cross Jesus still had compassion. He asked the disciples to take care of his mother. He told the sinner on the cross beside him that today you will be with "me" in paradise. The gospel is not a program or event. It's a personal encounter.

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1 Corinthians 11 is misunderstood as an authority structure. What is the headship or structure from God the Father down to the littlest creature? I'm asking you what is the essence that Paul is driving at? It's not headship. That is a human thing. Paul is saying that the bridge to heaven works this way. If God loves Jesus, then he will love us. If man loves woman, then she will love her children. We get so hung up on ministry, traditions, and power. Who owns what?

1 Corinthians 11:12 *"For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God."*

That is, it my friends. No matter what you do, believe, or invent, it all comes from God. When we try and make more than it was intended to be bad things happen. Men begin to hold power over women. Ministers start to believe they run the church. We have to make laws, bridges, and programs to make it "our" church. "Our" religion. Christ is in Christianity. It's his religion not ours. Structure has its place. As does theology and ministry. Yet, the goal is always to keep our eyes on Jesus. Why? Because his eyes are on the Father. Ask Peter. Taking our eyes off Jesus is a bad thing. Building bridges that God didn't build will only sink the church.